

International Service Perspectives from Weltwärts and ICYE Volunteers

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Background

This research looks at a variety of outcome areas on international volunteers serving with the Weltwärts and ICYE volunteer sending-programs. Findings from this report fall into three general categories. The first category explores differences between prospective volunteers and those who returned from international service. Differences in the following outcomes are explored: international social capital, open-mindedness, international understanding, intercultural relations, life plans, civic activism, community engagement, media attentiveness, and financial contributions. The definitions and discussions of these concepts are provided below, and are explored in greater detail in other sources.¹ This report also examines differences in these outcomes between the Weltwärts and ICYE volunteer-sending programs.

Volunteers also provided their perspectives on how international service affected host-communities. Returned volunteers rated their perspectives on the accountability, reciprocity, and the equity of their service placement. In addition, they rated whether activities matched local priorities, and whether the community requested and wanted their services. Volunteers also assessed their effectiveness across a variety of activity areas, from caring for children to influencing public sector reform. Finally, volunteers described whether they made a lasting contribution to community members, along with what these contributions might be. The outcomes assessed include skills transfers, money or other resources, or even possible problems they may have triggered in host communities.

Conceptual Definitions

International social capital measures how frequently respondents communicate with their personal and organizational contacts that live in other countries. It further assesses whether respondents use these contacts to link people or organizations to useful resources and to advocate for issues. According to previous studies of volunteers serving with other programs, volunteers have used these contacts to coordinate humanitarian aid projects, exchange opportunities, research trips, internships, or return trips to the host country.² These contacts may also be used to facilitate future employment opportunities or to leverage resources for host communities.

Open-mindedness measures one's capacity to look at situations from multiple perspectives, to be flexible in their thinking and ideas, and to see various sides of a disagreement. Open-mindedness is a willingness to try new things, to consider new facts, and to change views based on consideration of these facts.³ The open-mindedness concept is often associated with concepts of tolerance, peace, acceptance of diversity, and reduction of stereotypes and prejudice.⁴

International understanding measures how much people think about problems of nations outside their own as well as how these problems might be solved. It specifically assesses their understanding of issues related to global poverty and economic development. Previous studies of returned international volunteers indicate that young people gain an enhanced

understanding of other countries, minority issues, immigration, and inequality, as well as an enhanced global perspective overall.⁵

Intercultural relations measures one's relationships with people of other cultural, ethnic, or racial backgrounds, including their interest in developing relationships with people from different cultures.⁶ Often, volunteers are living outside of their country and culture for the first time, possibly learning another language and interacting with people who are very different from themselves. Previous research suggests that international volunteers who interact with people who are different may increase their interest in and understanding of, other cultures.⁷

International life plans addresses a person's desire to work in a career related to international or social and economic development. International service often provides opportunities to broaden horizons and explore career directions. Previous research indicates that international service may lead to educational and/or occupational changes toward international careers.⁸

Civic activism focuses primarily on the political processes of civic engagement. It includes boycotting, petitioning, attending political meetings, discussing politics, and contacting others to promote an issue.⁹ Civic activism is considered an important component of an active and inclusive democracy, social justice and socioeconomic equality, and overall civic health.¹⁰

Community engagement focuses on non-political engagement, including local involvement and participation in communities. In order for people to make a positive impact on society, they must learn the importance of engaging in local community activities such as volunteering and participating in local groups, clubs, and organizations.

Media attentiveness is a straightforward concept measuring how frequently respondents keep informed about local and international news. The concept of *financial contributions* is also clear-cut, measuring how often respondents contribute money to local nonprofits or national organizations.

Methodology

Research Design

Data for this report are taken from a survey administered by Volunteer and Service Enquiry of South Africa (VOSESA). VOSESA administered an adapted version of the Center for Social Development's International Volunteer Impacts Survey (IVIS).¹¹ This survey was implemented using a cross-sectional design to assess volunteers' perceptions on key outcomes. In order to understand if outcomes differ between outgoing and returned volunteers, prospective volunteers were compared with returned volunteers who served earlier with one of two volunteer-sending programs.

Study Population / Volunteer-Sending Programs

ICYE has facilitated placements of over 20,000 participants in over 30 countries since 1949. On average, ICYE currently sends approximately 800 long-term volunteers into the field each year. On average, volunteers serve for 35 to 45 weeks. Volunteers typically serve in a support capacity alongside staff and local volunteers providing educational, care, training, administrative and material support services in a variety of community based organizations. Most volunteers come from Europe and Latin America. Volunteers serving with ICYE are typically young, with a current average age of 22 years. Volunteers are mostly female (68%). Volunteers serving in host-countries typically live in urban and semi-rural settings and board together with other volunteers in live-in projects, independent living arrangements or with host families.

Weltwärts is an initiative launched by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany, which has sent approximately 10,000 volunteers to developing countries (according to the OECD country list) since 2008. In 2010 alone, weltwärts sent around 4,288 international volunteers into the field. The volunteers are between 18 and 29 years old and serve for between 6 and 24 months, during which time they work in partner organizations undertaking a range of activities intended to support development. The volunteers must be German citizens. The average weltwärts volunteer is 20 years of age and 60% are female. Volunteers may live in rural or urban settings, with or without host families.

Survey Administration

The adapted version of the International Volunteering Impacts Survey (IVIS) measures key outcomes of service from the perspective of volunteers. It is designed to measure outcomes before and after international service. During the adaptation process, the volunteer-sending programs involved in this study commented on the questionnaires and helped adapt the questions slightly to meet the context of European volunteers. The survey was administered electronically to outgoing volunteers (2010-2011) as well as returned volunteers (2005-2009) across the two programs.

The sample for ICYE included outgoing volunteers prepared to serve during 2010-2011, and alumnae that served from 2005-2009. All ICYE volunteers completed the survey in English. These surveys were administered to ICYE volunteers serving in developing countries across multiple continents. Given the passage of time since 2005, many of the ICYE alumnae email addresses were no longer relevant. Consequently, approximately 380 emails bounced back when sending the email invitation to ICYE volunteers to participate in the survey. In the end, VOSESA compiled functioning emails for just over 1,250 ICYE volunteers. VOSESA administered the survey to all ICYE volunteers directly. An estimated 18 percent for ICYE volunteers completed the survey, resulting in a 14 percent response rate for returned volunteers, and 31 percent for outgoing volunteers.

VOSESA surveyed a sample of outgoing 2010-2011 Weltwärts volunteers and returned volunteers that served during 2008-2009. Weltwärts surveys were administered to a sample of volunteers serving in African countries only. Weltwärts volunteers had the option of completing

the survey in English or a translated survey in German. The majority of Weltwärts volunteers chose to complete the surveys in German. A total of 17 German sending organizations agreed to participate in the study. VOSESA administered the survey to volunteers with 7 of these programs directly, and the remaining ten organizations agreed to send an email invitation from VOSESA inviting their volunteers to participate in the study. It is unknown how many of these ten organizations actually sent the survey to volunteers, or if they followed-up to encourage response. Consequently, it is not possible to determine the exact response rate for Weltwärts volunteers. However, 13 of these organizations confirmed that they sent the survey to 478 volunteers, indicating a response rate of less than 23 percent.

In total, around 1750 volunteers received the survey. Of these, 455 responded resulting in a total response rate of around 26 percent. As a conservative measure, this response rate also includes emails that bounced back or never reached potential participants. Of those responding to the survey, 71 percent fully completed the survey. See Table 1 for details about the sample response rate.

Table 1: Approximate response rates by volunteer group

Respondent Group	Administered Survey	Respondent to Survey	Completed Survey
Weltwärts Outgoing Volunteers	~200	55	40
Weltwärts Returnees/Alumnae	~350	100	69
ICYE Volunteer Survey- Outgoing	255	97	79
ICYE Volunteer Survey- Returnees/Alumnae	970	203	136
Total All	1750	455	324

Despite the low response rate, gender and age demographics between the respondent samples and the volunteer populations are relatively comparable for both programs. (See Table 2.) Reliable demographics are only available for volunteer age and gender. Respondents from both programs are slightly older (by about one year) than volunteers in the population. Likewise average gender differences vary by about one percent. Similarity between the samples and volunteer populations indicate that non-response bias may not be a significant concern.

Table 2: Age and gender differences between the respondents and the volunteer population

Age	Respondent mean	Population mean
Weltwärts Outgoing Volunteers	21 years	20 years
ICYE Outgoing Volunteers	23 years	22 years
Gender (percent female)	Respondent percent	Population percent
Weltwärts Outgoing Volunteers	59%	60%
ICYE Outgoing Volunteers	61%	60%

Because of the inclusion of multiple facilitating programs (particularly for Weltwärts), it was not possible to know the demographics makeup of the total sample that received the survey.

However, demographics for survey respondents are listed in Table 3. Although some of the statistics in this table appear to indicate possible systematic differences between prospective and returned-respondents, a logistic regression indicated no statistically significant differences between groups, excluding age. In cases where percentages appear to be higher, this could reflect natural changes over time (i.e. slightly more returned volunteers are married, have received a Bachelor’s degree or higher, and earn a higher individual income). Naturally, returned volunteers are also slightly older. Based on these findings, comparing survey responses from prospective and returned volunteers as a pseudo-longitudinal proxy may be justified.

Table 3: Respondent characteristics by volunteer group

	Prospective Volunteers (<i>n</i> = 104)		Returned Volunteers (<i>n</i> = 142)	
Demographic Category	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Gender				
Female	69	60%	135	67%
Male	47	40%	68	33%
Marital status				
Married	2	2%	21	10%
Not married	111	98%	182	90%
Education				
Less than Bachelor’s degree	74	64%	114	57%
Bachelor’s degree or higher	41	36%	87	43%
Individual income				
Less than €20,000	55	90%	126	87%
€20,000 or more	6	10%	19	13%
	Mean	<i>sd</i>	Mean	<i>sd</i>
Age	22.7	3.85	25.6	4.43

Analytic Methods

Analysis methods aim to identify differences in key outcomes between prospective and returned volunteers, as well as correlations between outcomes, and differences between programs. Significance tests used composite measures of key outcome areas. Each major outcome area reported on in this study is composed of multiple survey items from the adapted IVIS. Although slight variations have been made to some indicators, each of these composite variables was re-tested for reliability. Table 9 in the Appendix displays indicators that compose each of these variables, along with their associated internal reliability coefficients.

Independent t-tests are used to determine significant differences in outcomes between prospective and returned volunteers. Propensity score matching was not possible given the relatively small n-size of responses. Pearson’s correlations are used to examine correlations

between concepts. In order to understand differences between volunteer-sending programs, a logistic regression is employed using volunteer program as the dependent variables (ICYE = 0, Weltwärts = 1), along with nine composite outcomes as independent variables. In addition to controlling for outcome variables, the logistic regression controls for the category of volunteer (outgoing = 0, returned = 1).

Results

Differences between Prospective and Returned Volunteers

Significance testing between prospective and returned volunteers indicates statistically significant differences in five of the nine outcomes. Differences in the means within each outcome are summarized in detail in Table 4. Returned volunteers are more likely than outgoing volunteer to report higher international social capital, open-mindedness, intercultural relations, civic activism, and community engagement. Ratings on the four remaining measures of international understanding, life plans, media attentiveness and financial contributions are higher for returned volunteers, but are not significantly different from outgoing volunteers statistically. This finding is not entirely consistent with expectations. It should be noted that international understanding trends toward significance ($p = .08$), and would be significant using a one-tailed hypothesis test.

Table 4: Differences between prospective and returned volunteers

<i>Factor</i>	<i>mean</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Factor</i>	<i>mean</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Int'l Social Capital</i>			9.66*	.00	<i>Civic Activism</i>				
Prospective	3.14	1.19			Prospective	2.86	1.44	2.15*	.03
Retrospective	4.43	1.20			Retrospective	3.23	1.61		
<i>Open Mindedness</i>			3.56*	.00	<i>Community Engagement</i>			1.98*	.05
Prospective	5.26	0.75			Prospective	5.37	1.15		
Retrospective	5.52	0.58			Retrospective	5.08	1.50		
<i>Int'l Understanding</i>			1.74	.08	<i>Media Attentiveness</i>			.41	.68
Prospective	4.86	1.37			Prospective	5.53	1.19		
Retrospective	5.14	1.39			Retrospective	5.59	1.23		
<i>Intercultural Relations</i>			5.23*	.00	<i>Financial Contributions</i>			1.15	.25
Prospective	5.37	1.19			Prospective	2.89	1.76		
Retrospective	6.01	1.03			Retrospective	3.13	1.87		
<i>Life Plans</i>			1.31	.19					
Prospective	4.50	1.45							
Retrospective	4.76	1.86							

* $p < .05$

Correlations between Outcomes: A higher rating on each composite measure was significantly correlated with higher ratings on other composite measures in the survey, with a few notable exceptions. Volunteers' ratings of international social capital were not associated with local

community engagement (in their home country). Likewise, financial contributions were not associated with open-mindedness. Although the correlations on these measures were positive, they were not statistically significant. (See Table 5). Significant positive correlations between concepts likely indicate a propensity for some respondents to consistently rate themselves higher or lower than other respondents. However, it may also indicate that increases in one category are legitimately associated with increases in another outcome category. This may be particularly true in cases where correlations are high, such as between intercultural relations and international social capital ($r = .54$) or open-mindedness ($r = .59$).

Table 5: Correlations between IVS outcome subscales ($n \approx 335$)^a

	IC	OM	IU	IR	LP	CA	CE	MA	FC
International Social Capital (IC)	--								
Open-Mindedness (OM)	.33**	--							
International Understanding (IU)	.36**	.47**	--						
Intercultural Relations (IR)	.54**	.59**	.40**	--					
Life Plans (LP)	.27**	.26**	.23**	.30**	--				
Civic Activism (CA)	.45**	.29**	.45**	.38**	.38**	--			
Community Engagement (CE)	.10	.28**	.25**	.16**	.12*	.29**	--		
Media Attentiveness (MA)	.14*	.29**	.33**	.21**	.12**	.21**	.31**	--	
Financial Contributions (FC)	.29**	.10	.15**	.17**	.20**	.41**	.15**	.15**	--

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, ^a Cases with missing data are excluded

Differences between Programs

Comparing outcomes between programs, volunteers from ICYE rated themselves higher than volunteers from Weltwärts on all measures, with the exception of community engagement and media attentiveness. (See Table 6.) However, these findings do not take into account differences in the status of volunteers (outgoing and returned). In addition, because the majority of Weltwärts volunteers completed the survey in German, differences may be an artifact of item wording or language differences.

Table 6: Mean Differences between Volunteer Programs

Outcome Category	Program	N	Mean	sd
International Social Capital	ICYE	158	4.52	1.25
	Weltwärts	75	4.23	1.06
Open-Mindedness	ICYE	157	5.63	0.55
	Weltwärts	74	5.29	0.58
International Understanding	ICYE	157	5.32	1.38
	Weltwärts	74	4.74	1.34
Intercultural Relations	ICYE	157	6.25	0.91
	Weltwärts	74	5.48	1.07

Life Plans	ICYE	150	4.93	1.80
	Weltwärts	71	4.40	1.94
Civic Activism	ICYE	151	3.36	1.70
	Weltwärts	72	2.97	1.37
Community Engagement	ICYE	152	5.00	1.60
	Weltwärts	71	5.23	1.23
Media Attentiveness	ICYE	152	5.59	1.35
	Weltwärts	70	5.59	0.93
Financial Contributions	ICYE	151	3.45	1.90
	Weltwärts	70	2.46	1.63
Weeks served internationally (returned vols.)	ICYE	192	32.65	17.99
	Weltwärts	93	47.08	65.51

In order to better understand differences in outcome ratings controlling for type of volunteer, a logistic regression indicates that only three differences are evident between programs. Controlling for type of volunteer, returned Weltwärts volunteers are more likely to indicate higher international social capital, while returned ICYE volunteers are more likely to indicate higher intercultural relations and financial contributions to local or national nonprofits. (See Table 7.) To the degree that these differences are not due to survey error, they may reflect varying priorities between programs, inherent differences in volunteers participating in the programs, or a number of other systematic differences.

Table 7: Logistic regression of differences between Weltwärts and ICYE outcomes

Independent variables	B	S.E.	Wald	df	p
Volunteer Status (outgoing)	-.10	.32	.09	1.00	.76
International Social Capital	.32*	.14	5.27	1.00	.02
Open-Mindedness	-.09	.27	.12	1.00	.73
International Understanding	-.12	.12	1.06	1.00	.30
Intercultural Relations	-.80**	.17	22.62	1.00	.00
Life Plans	-.05	.08	.39	1.00	.53
Civic Activism	.17	.11	2.21	1.00	.14
Community Engagement	.04	.11	.12	1.00	.73
Media Attentiveness	.19	.12	2.46	1.00	.12
Financial Contributions	-.36**	.08	18.27	1.00	.00
Constant	3.16	1.25	6.43	1.00	.01

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Volunteers' Perspectives on Host-Community Outcomes

Host community accountability and reciprocity: The majority of volunteers from both programs indicated that they felt primarily accountable to the local community in which they worked—although many also felt ambivalence or uncertainty towards the locus of accountability. (See Figure 1). In addition, most volunteers from both programs believed that service activities

matched local priorities and that the host community requested and wanted these services. However, volunteers from the two programs diverged widely in their perceptions of equality with host community members. In contrast to ICYE volunteers, the majority of Weltwärts volunteers perceived significant differences in the social status between themselves and host community members.

Figure 1: Perceptions of community accountability

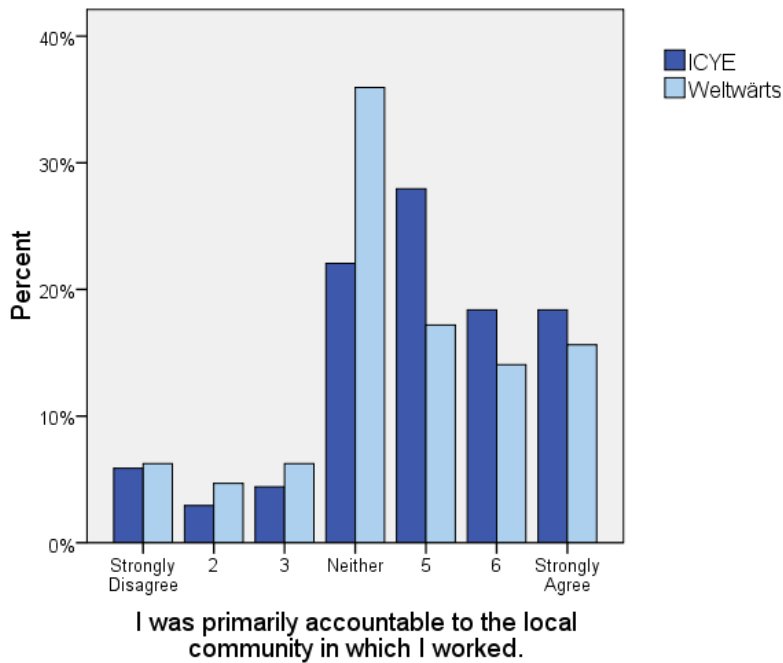


Figure 2: Local relevance of services

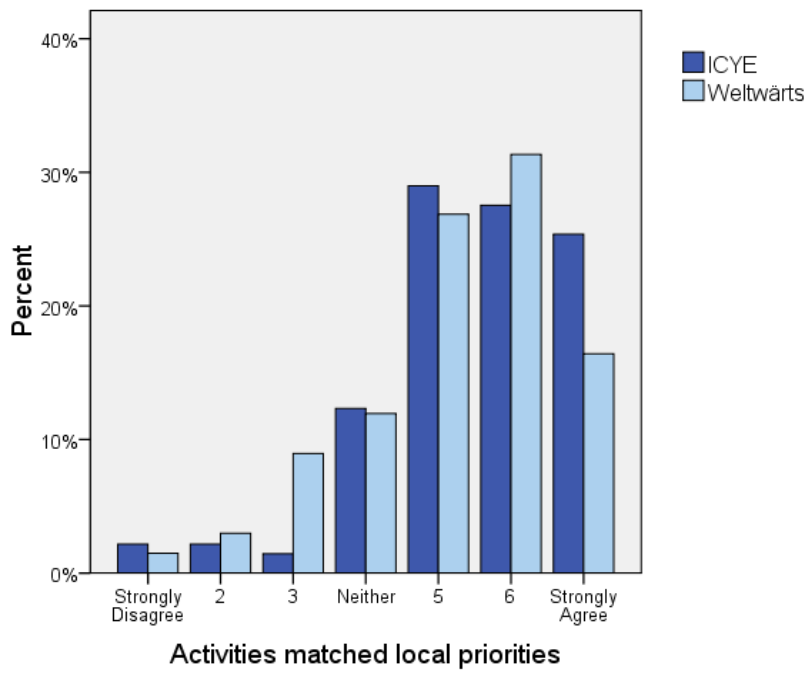


Figure 3: Demand-based service provision

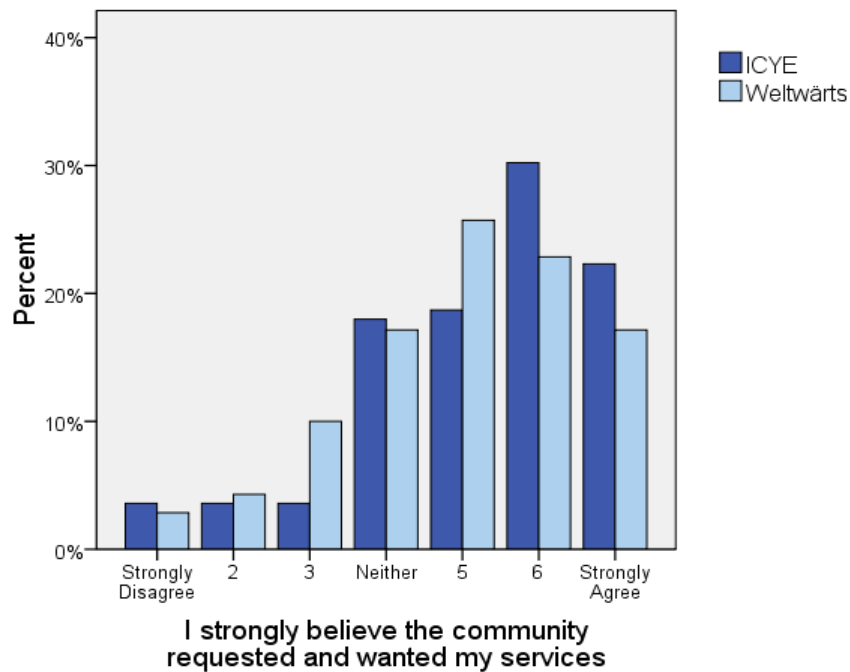
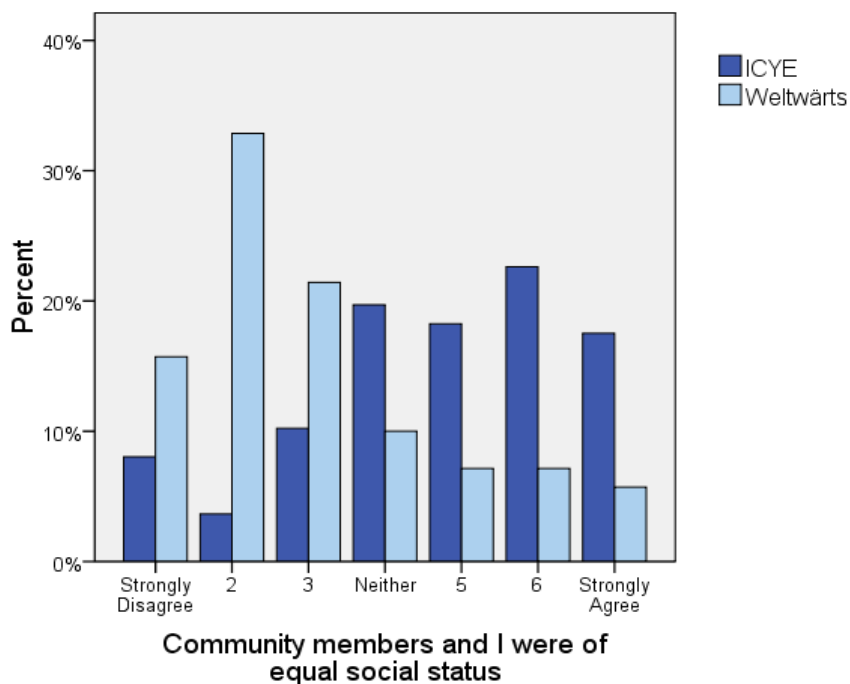


Figure 4: Perceptions of social equality



Perceived Effectiveness: Across nearly all outcome categories, returned volunteers from ICYE rated themselves more highly than returned volunteers that served with Weltwärts, with four exceptions. Weltwärts volunteers were slightly more likely to report being effective at promoting cross-cultural exchange; tutoring or teaching children, youth, or adults; providing economic and social opportunities for youth, and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria or other infectious diseases. On the other hand, ICYE volunteers reported being much more effective at building or providing housing, providing disaster and humanitarian response and preparedness, helping to introduce legislation and influencing public sector reform, lobbying the host country government for increased resources to an organization, caring for infants and/or children in a daycare facility, and providing medical or dental health care or prevention. (See Table 8). These differences may reflect variations in program priorities or may indicate differences in the effectiveness of programming.

Table 8: Perceptions of Activity Effectiveness by Volunteer Program

Activity	ICYE	Weltwärts	Δ
Promoting cross-cultural exchange	5.90	5.93	-.03
Caring for children in a daycare	5.86	4.69	1.17
Providing physical therapy	5.79	4.86	.93
Tutoring youth or adults	5.50	5.51	-.02
Distributing food, crafts, etc.	5.30	4.42	.88
Supporting conflict resolution and peace	5.28	4.47	.81
Improving access to information technology	5.18	4.52	.65

Providing primary education	5.15	4.57	.57
Providing assistance for the elderly	4.98	4.06	.93
Strengthening civil society	4.95	4.41	.54
Helping learn English	4.82	4.80	.02
Building or providing housing	4.79	2.45	2.34
Providing other medical/dental care	4.77	3.76	1.01
Empowering women and families	4.75	4.33	.41
Improving management capacity	4.69	4.48	.21
Promoting environmental sustainability	4.56	4.41	.15
Providing economic and social opportunities for youth	4.56	4.72	-.17
Providing disaster response and preparedness	4.52	2.75	1.77
Reducing child or maternal health	4.43	3.72	.71
Encouraging micro- or rural development	4.37	3.73	.64
Lobbying host government	4.32	3.11	1.21
Combating infectious diseases	4.29	4.55	-.26
Helping read or write in local language	4.14	3.28	.86
Influencing public sector reform	4.02	2.73	1.29

The majority of volunteers from both programs believed that they made a lasting contribution to the organization or community members. Most of these perceived contributions came in the form of skills transferred to the host organization. In comparison, few volunteers provided money or other resources directly to the host organization or community members, though Weltwärts volunteers were more likely to provide resources. The majority of volunteers serving with both programs did not believe their presence may have caused some problems in the community, though Weltwärts volunteers were more likely to believe they may have caused problems.

Figure 5: Perceptions of sustainable contributions

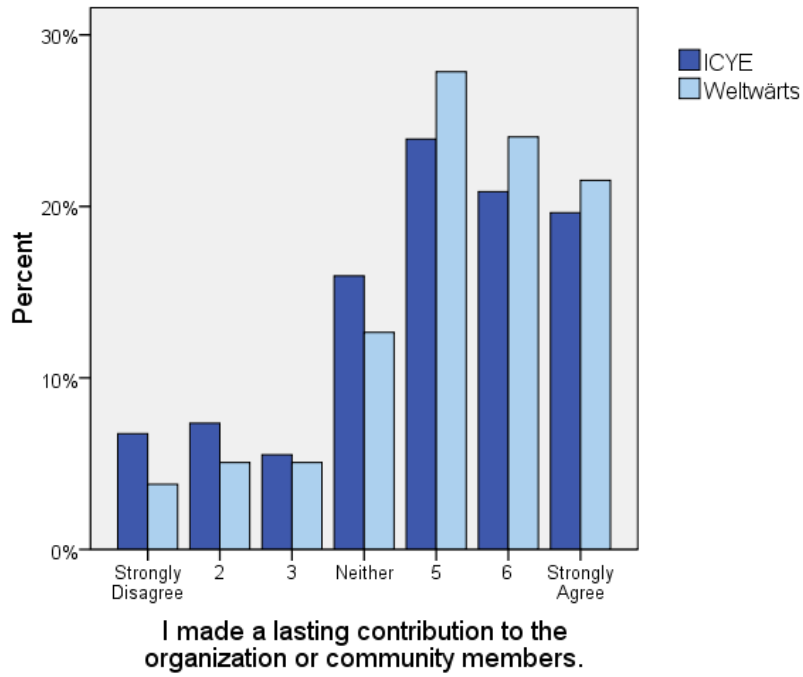


Figure 6: Perceptions of useful skills-transfer

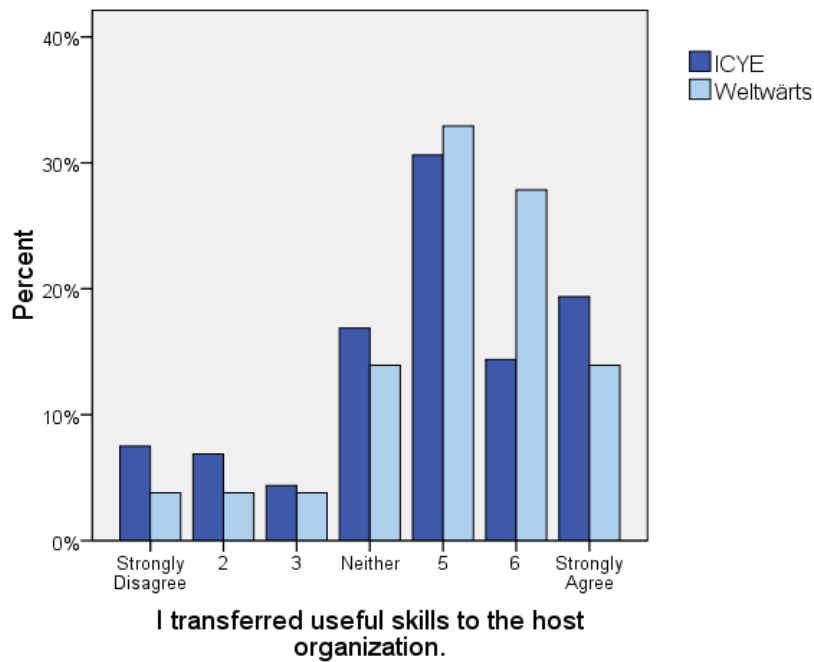


Figure 7: Direct monetary or other resource provisions

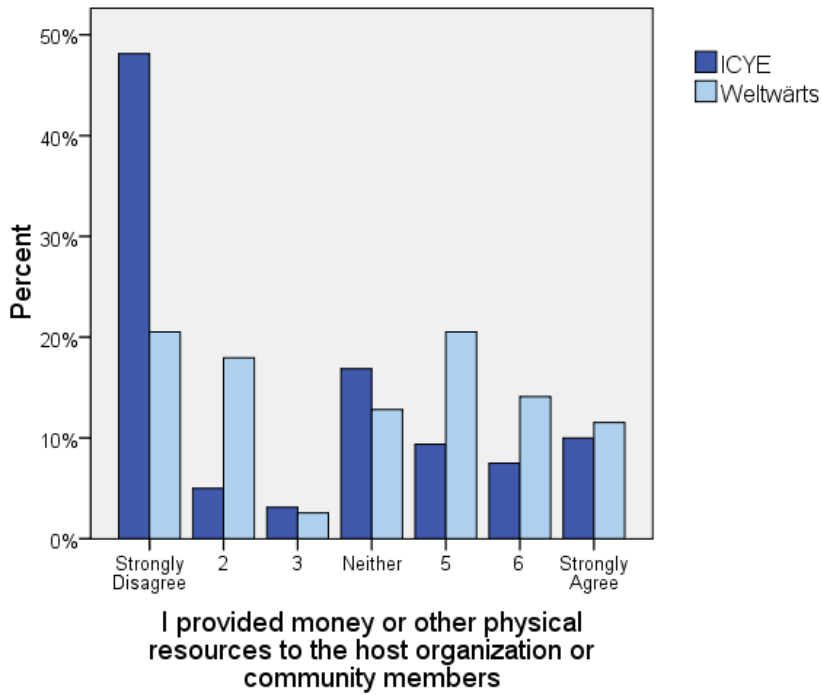
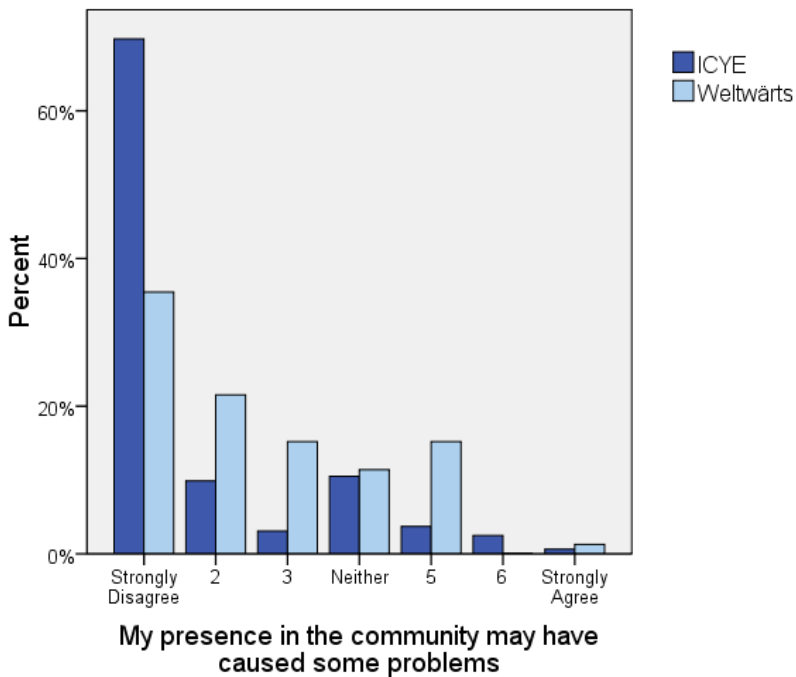


Figure 8: Perceptions of perceived problems



For the sake of promoting effective practices and institutional accountability, the potential problems perceived by volunteers will be described briefly. The majority of volunteers expressed cultural misunderstandings and culture shock that may have affected their success. These differences included variations in lifestyles, cultural practices and values, and language. A few Weltwärts volunteers expressed an explicit realization that, “German values don't match the local situation.” These differences did not seem insurmountable, however. Most volunteers concluded their open-ended responses stating that both sides benefitted from the intercultural exchange. One difference that was difficult to overcome, however, was the language barrier. Some volunteers believed they were a “burden to the organization” because they were not able to work effectively or to perform needed tasks due to language barriers. This was described as particularly problematic during the first few months of the placement.

A few volunteers also felt they were not needed by the organization; that the organization had to “make up” tasks for them to accomplish, and that these tasks did not have significant practical value to the organization. As one volunteer, who ended up leaving her placement, stated, “I felt more like a burden than a contributing person, I had to make up my own project later on which wasn't easy...” Another volunteer remarked, “Sometimes it was obvious that they had a hard time encountering stuff for me to do, and at times, I felt extremely insignificant.”

Given the time and manpower required to train and integrate new volunteers, some volunteers felt that they were a drain on host-organizational resources. If some form of financial compensation was provided to the hosting organization, this may have been perceived as less of a problem. However, some volunteers expressed concern that the organizations and community needed to use their own resources to host them. As one volunteer expressed, “The local organization I stayed with didn't get any resources from the [sending] organization, and even needed to pay or provide my lunch meal. My host family also did not receive enough money for feeding me”.

The relatively short duration of the service placement was also a concern from some volunteers. In addition to the resources needed to train and integrate new volunteers, the lack of continuity and quick turnaround may have had a negative effect on the intended beneficiaries. This was a particular concern for organizations working with children, who may require greater stability and permanence—or who may become attached to volunteers. As expressed by one volunteer, “I think the kids couldn't handle the quick change all the time...with the flood of foreign volunteers and visitors coming and going, the kids' social aptitudes suffered.”

A final area of concern for volunteers was a possible negative effect on the attitudes and identities of host community members. Because many neighboring organizations and communities do not receive volunteers, this may lead to perceived inequity in service provisions. As illustrated in one case, “There was some animosity towards the people I helped from their neighbors that did not receive the same, or any, assistance”. Realizations of inequity may also negatively affect the identity of host community members, and may create animosity

when, “The community is confronted with the life of a rich White person, who can afford and is allowed to travel wherever she wants—while they cannot”. As another volunteer stated, “there was envy from community members against me as a rich German.”

These challenges should be considered in relation to the many potential positive benefits and contributions that volunteers also expressed. Although the great majority of volunteers did not believe that their presence in the community caused problem, expressions from volunteers that perceived or witnessed challenges may help inform ways to improve future service placements—thereby improving the experience for both volunteers and host community members.

Discussion

These survey data have a number of limitations that constrain definitive conclusions. They are based on cross-sectional design; lack non-volunteer comparison groups, and have possible response and non-response biases. Nonetheless, these findings are a valuable addition to current research on IVS, which has only begun to compare differences across models over time.

Of all the perceived outcomes on international service, the one with the largest effect size for both programs was related to international social capital. Compared to prospective volunteers, returned volunteers reported being more closely connected with organizations that work internationally, and well as frequently corresponding with acquaintances or contacts that live in other countries. Returned volunteers did not only keep in contact but they also reported using their international contacts to link people or organizations in host communities to useful resources, to advocate for people or organizations internationally, and to give money or other useful resources directly to contacts living in other countries.

The findings also highlight some interesting correlations between outcomes. For instance, volunteers who stay closely connected with organizations and contacts internationally also tend to interact more frequently with people from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds. They are also more likely to report having many friends from different racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, and a greater interest in forming friendship or working with people of different backgrounds. Given high correlations between increases in international social capital, intercultural relations, and open-mindedness, it is likely that relationships formed during international service tend to promote greater open-mindedness and a desire to form additional relationships with people from diverse cultures and backgrounds—even after returning home. Although the direction of these relationships is a bit tenuous, a virtuous circle is likely formed where exposure to cultural diversity leads to a greater openness toward forming friendships with diverse people, which then results in even greater exposure to diversity, etc. One important implication of this finding is that building and maintaining relationships with people in other countries may result in a volunteer’s desire to build relationships with diverse people upon returning home.

Findings also indicate that international service affects returned volunteers' community engagement and civic activism in their home countries. Upon returning home, volunteers seem to become more interested in joining local groups, projects, or clubs. They seem to have a greater increase interest in volunteering locally as they find time to make positive differences in their home communities. Increased civic activism is an important finding considering that some development theorists assert that true social change can only be realized as people living in countries of higher power and influence become engaged *in their own home countries* to change the laws and policies that negatively impact developing countries. It is encouraging that returned volunteers are more likely to report helping to raise awareness of global issues, of attending political gatherings, and of writing media and organizations to voice their views on globally important issues.

The problems expressed by volunteers may help elucidate how volunteers programs can increase the benefit of international service for volunteers and host communities. For instance, a greater emphasis on language preparation prior to service would greatly decrease the number of complaints and challenges expressed by volunteers. In addition, preparatory sessions that orient volunteers toward cultural practices and values of the host community could help reduce culture shock, along with many of the misunderstandings expressed by returned volunteers. Increasing service duration is another change that may increase perceived outcomes on host communities. Longer service durations, along with service continuity between volunteer placements may also help reduce contributions to host communities. Keeping volunteers in placements for a significant duration may help reduce the amount of staff time needed to orient and integrate new volunteers. In addition, it may help reduce distractions and the disruption of services experienced by intended beneficiaries (particularly when children are the intended target of services).

It is unknown why Weltwärts volunteers expressed a greater perception of inequality with community members in comparison with ICYE volunteers. Whatever the case, a number of volunteers from both programs expressed concern that disparities in equity and power may have a detrimental impact on host community members as they confronted all that they did not have in relative comparison with more wealthy and privileged volunteers. While this is potentially problematic, there may also be a latent upside to this outcome. Awareness and consciousness-raising of differences in power and privilege is often perceived as a key factor in organizing, empowering, and mobilizing communities to work towards change. Volunteers or host-program staff members with knowledge of community organization principles may help catalyze these realizations towards "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it."¹²

To gain a holistic picture of outcomes of international service, findings from the perspectives of volunteers should be integrated and compared with perceptions of host-community members. Returned volunteers often label their experiences were "transformational" or life-changing (as did 85% of volunteers taking this survey). In line with these changes, volunteers often perceive that they benefit more from the service experience than host communities. While the service experience clearly provides many positive benefits to volunteers, understanding impacts from

an inclusive perspective requires the voice of both community members and volunteers. When the perspectives of both parties combined, a more holistic picture may come into view. With good programming, it is anticipated that both volunteers and communities would report being equal benefactors of international service.

Appendix

Table 9: Measurement of Key Outcomes ($n \approx 335$)

International social capital ($\alpha = .84$)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Used international contacts to link people or organizations to useful resources• Closely connected with an organizations that works internationally• Used connections to advocate for people or organizations internationally• Given money or other useful resources to contacts living in other countries• Many friends acquaintances or contacts that live in other countries• Frequently correspond with people in other countries
Open-mindedness ($\alpha = .63$)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before making a decision• Flexible in thinking and ideas• Look at situations from many points of view• Willing to try new things• Hard to see from others point of view (transposed)• Strong appreciation of other nations cultures and customs• Work very effectively with people who are different from self
International Understanding ($\alpha = .83$)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perceived understanding of the reasons for global poverty• Perceived understanding of how low-income countries can develop economies
Intercultural Relations ($\alpha = .80$)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frequently interact with people from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds• Many friends from different backgrounds: racial, cultural, ethnic or language• Interest in working/forming friendships with people of different backgrounds• Comfortable talking about diversity with people of different cultures
Life Plans ($\alpha = .80$)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan to pursue an internationally-related field of study• Plan to pursue a field of study related to social or economic development• Plan to pursue a career related to social or economic development• Plan to pursue a career in an internationally-related field
Civic Activism ($\alpha = .85$)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frequently attend gatherings on political issues• Frequently write or email media and orgs. to voice views on an issue• Often help raise awareness of global issues
Community Engagement ($\alpha = .84$)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Find the time to make a positive difference in community• Interested in joining local groups projects or clubs• Perceived ability to make a difference in community• Interested in volunteering
Media Attentiveness ($\alpha = .78$)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep informed about international news• Keep informed about local news
Financial Contributions ($\alpha = .83$)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contribute money to national organizations• Contribute money to local nonprofit organizations

Note: The response set for each item is weighted from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

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