



# Give and Take

A Chab Dai Study on the Impact, Perceptions & Management of Short-Term Volunteers in the Human Rights Sector in Cambodia

**Chab Dai Coalition, April 2015**

**Author: Julia Smith-Brake, M.Sc.**





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**Chab Dai Coalition** is a faith-based coalition that has been working in Cambodia since 2005 with the aim of addressing human trafficking and exploitation through coalition building, advocacy, and research. Chab Dai is committed to addressing human trafficking and exploitation through facilitation of cross-sector and multi-organisational collaboration, and by improving the capacity of stakeholders through technical training, program support, and organizational development.

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April 2015

#### GIVE AND TAKE

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Phnom Penh  
April 2015

Reference: Smith-Brake, J. (2015). Give and Take: A Chab Dai Study on the Impact, Perceptions & Management of Short-Term Volunteers in the Human Rights Sector in Cambodia. Phnom Penh: Chab Dai Coalition.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank the Chab Dai vision team, Ms. Helen Sworn, Mr. Ros Yeng, and Ms. Orng Muiyen, for their approval and encouragement of this research, and especially Ms. Helen Sworn, for helping develop the initial research idea.

I thank those who took the time to share their expertise with us: the focus group and interview participants, including representatives from Chab Dai members and partners, as well as the volunteers who took the time to complete our lengthy survey.

For their review of and input on the methodology, review of the draft before finalisation, and input on dissemination, I would like to thank the research advisory committee: Helen Sworn, Tony Janzen, Siobhan Miles, Glenn Miles, Sue Causton, and Tania DoCarmo.

I would like to deeply thank the Research Assistant and Research Team for putting their time and energy towards this study, most of which on a volunteer basis. They enabled a timely completion of this project by doing secondary research, assisting and note taking during interviews and focus group discussions, transcribing interviews, and providing input during the analysis of the data.

Front cover photo: Lok Chanmakara

*People give, but don't be in a hurry to take.*

*~ Cambodian proverb*

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## ACRONYMS

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| CCHR    | Cambodian Center for Human Rights                                  |
| CDC     | Chab Dai Coalition   |
| CV      | Curriculum Vitae   |
| CIDA    | Canadian International Development Agency                          |
| CWDA    | Cambodian Women's Development Agency                               |
| FGD     | Focus Group Discussion   |
| HR      | Human Resources  |
| ICC     | Intercultural Communication Competence                             |
| IJM     | International Justice Missions                                     |
| LGBTQ   | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual, Queer/Questioning |
| LICADHO | Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights     |
| NGO     | Non-Governmental Organisation                                      |
| TOR     | Terms of Reference   |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Research Purpose

Short-term volunteering has drastically gained in popularity in recent years, despite equally growing concerns of its potential negative impacts. Much of the discussion around the benefits and challenges of having short-term volunteers in organisations lacks evidence and feedback mechanisms leave impact to be assumed rather than objectively evaluated. The purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions of short-term volunteers and host organisations and leaders on the impact the former bring to the organisation, the best volunteer management practices in the human rights sector, and how short-term volunteers may be better utilized to the benefit of both the host organisation and the volunteer's own experience.

## Research Methods

This was a practitioner research in that it was conducted with the purpose of informing future volunteer programs within the organisation that conducted the research, as well as informing the larger NGO community that utilizes volunteers in the human rights sector. The primary research methods consisted of Volunteer Surveys conducted among short-term volunteers (volunteering from 1-6 months) in the human rights sector in Cambodia, interviews with leaders and managers in NGOs with experience in volunteer management, and focus group discussions with Khmer NGO staff with experience working with volunteers. The primary research was strengthened by a literature review on the voluntourism sector.

## Research Subjects

A total of 32 short-term volunteers completed the Volunteer Surveys; 78% were female and 22% were male, and they came from 12 different countries. All volunteers had some form of post-secondary education, with the majority holding an undergraduate or Masters degree. Many of the volunteers (69%) identified as Christians.

Fourteen interviews were conducted with NGO leaders and managers with experience managing short-term volunteers; 57% (8/14) were expat leaders and 43% (6/14) were Khmer leaders. The expat leaders had between one and 20 years of experience in Cambodia. Three focus group discussions were also conducted to explore the perceptions of Khmer staff on working with expat short-term volunteers.

## Main Findings

Themes from leader interviews were analyzed using triangulation. A number of comparisons were also made based on the volunteer surveys; such as, comparing motivations for volunteering with level of education, religious affiliation, age, and previous volunteer experience. Other comparisons include findings from Khmer interviewees versus expat interviewees.

### **Main Findings: Volunteer Surveys**

#### *Participant Profiles and Experience*

Participants in the Volunteer Entry Survey were largely made up of young Christian females from Anglo-Western countries, with some level of post-secondary education, volunteering in Christian host organisations. Most volunteers were encouraged or required to prepare for their volunteer position in some way, either by reading the host organisation's website, items from a recommended reading list, or specific items sent them by the host organisation. Most volunteers were mainly self-funded. A majority of respondents had either moderate or low prior involvement in the human rights issues in which they were volunteering; however, a higher number of respondents stated that the specific work they were doing with the Host Organisation was related to their current or prior work experience and/or their area of studies.

#### *Volunteers' Expectations*

No matter how much "work experience" the volunteer brought to the position they would hold with the Host Organisation, most respondents expected to have at least a moderate impact on the programs in which they were volunteering. In contrast, findings differed based on level of education achieved, with undergraduate students having the highest expected impact. The greatest correlation, however, was seen in comparing expected impact with a clear understanding of one's objectives as a volunteer for the Host Organisation, with higher expected impact corresponding to clearer outlined objectives. Survey participants' responses on how said impact would be achieved were divided into four categories: responding to needs, abilities and hard work, sustainability, and setting clear objectives.

Most volunteer respondents expected their volunteer experience to very much or extremely impact their own lives. Responses as to how their lives would be impacted were divided into four categories: learning, planning, changing, and gratitude/perspective.

#### *Volunteer Management*

Volunteer respondents saw their host organisations as moderately- to well-organized. When asked to expand on the question, one respondent stated, “There seems to be discrepancies between the organisation based in the US and the organisation based in Cambodia.”

### **Main Findings: Leader Interviews**

#### *Participant Profiles*

The research team performed 14 interviews with organisation leaders. The interview participants represented a variety of types of organisations working in human rights in Cambodia. The majority worked for organisations doing direct counter-trafficking work, but others represented organisations working in child protection, women’s rights, land dispute issues, domestic violence, LGBTQ issues, and general human rights.

#### *Word Analysis*

The 14 interviews resulted in over 42,500 words of transcript; a selective word analysis was done in order to draw out patterns and themes in issues brought up by interviewees. Some words and themes that arose frequently included “needs,” “team,” “emotionally stable,” and “partners.”

#### *Volunteer Recruitment & Management*

The volunteer recruitment and management practices of organisations differed greatly and ranged from formal and well managed to informal and ad hoc. Some organisations recruit volunteers as they would a staff member, sometimes even head hunting a particular volunteer consultant, while others relied solely on choosing volunteers from potential applicants who contacted them on their own. Most organisations expected volunteers to adhere to the same policies as their own staff, particularly when it came to Child Protection Policies and Codes of Conduct. Supervision practices ranged from informal and irregular to very regular check-ins and formal evaluations.

#### *Length of Time in Country*

Overall, the consensus was the longer a volunteer stays, the higher the potential impact they will have on the program they are volunteering with. Additionally, many interviewees stated volunteers have very little impact if they stay for the less than six months, and some are even opposed to hosting a volunteer for under six months.

#### *Maturity Level of Volunteer*

A frequent theme on what leaders look for in potential volunteers is a certain maturity and emotional stability. Some stated this in terms of “Christian maturity,” but overall the sentiment was to have an individual who had a level of resilience, self-awareness, and life experience to be able to deal well with a new culture and temporary environment. Some talked about this in terms of the age factor, preferring to take on older short-term volunteers and not take on younger ones, especially “gap year” volunteers.

#### *Impact on Direct Care Program Beneficiaries*

For organisations working directly with survivors of human rights abuses, leaders were especially aware of the potential attachment issues that risk developing with the coming and going of short-term volunteers. Overall, these organisations had strict policies and practices in place to limit the interaction between short-term volunteers and vulnerable clients; however, a smaller number showed little awareness or concern for these risks.

#### *Power Dynamics*

There were interesting findings on the power dynamics between foreign volunteers and local staff. In general, Khmer leaders, managers, and staff brought these issues up more than expat leaders and volunteers, leading to the supposition that expat workers are either less aware of these issues or do not think them as important as they may actually be. Most interestingly, Khmer staff in focus group discussions spoke of the way foreign volunteers interacted with and treated Khmer staff, seen by the latter as superior and abrasive. This may be accounted for at least in part by a difference in cultural working practices.

### *Cultural Orientation*

On the whole, many organisations do not orient their short-term volunteers adequately, especially with regards to cultural difference and working with Cambodians. When asked about cultural orientation, most leaders spoke of teaching volunteers how to get around, a few Khmer words and phrases, and a few superficial cultural practices to be aware of.

### *The “Ideal” Volunteer*

Apart from issues discussed in previous sections, Host Organisations were seeking short-term volunteers who had relevant experience and skills and who were able to contribute concretely the organisation’s mission. Leader interviewees also emphasized their preference for volunteers who demonstrated independence, humility and open-mindedness, and the ability to work well alongside Cambodians.

### **Discussion & Recommendations**

An important result of analysis included the tension between “self-centered” and “selfless” motivations of individuals to volunteer abroad; although, to a certain extent, both types of motivations were disclosed by most volunteers, there was a sense of discomfort about being motivated by self-serving objectives.

Comparisons between volunteer surveys and leader interviews show a disparity between what each group expects from short-term volunteers. Short-term volunteers demonstrated some unrealistic expectations about some aspects of their volunteer experience in Cambodia, either in the relationships they wished to form and maintain, in the impact they thought they would have on the Host Organisation, or in how sustainable their work and impact would be.

Furthermore, comparisons between volunteer surveys and leader interviews demonstrated a gap in understanding, and therefore communication, between short-term volunteers and Host Organisations.

### *Developing a Framework for Effective Volunteers*

In order to best utilize volunteers and ensure they have a good experience and a realistically positive impact, the keys are preparation, orientation, and structure.

Recommendations for Host Organisations included:

- Creating needs-based volunteer programs and setting clear objectives and job descriptions for potential volunteers;
- Preparing adequately for the logistics of hosting an expat volunteer;
- Setting guidelines on how volunteers fit into the staff framework and to whom the volunteer will report; and,
- Developing or adapting an orientation and training plan for new volunteers, specifically relating to working in a cross-cultural environment.

Recommendations for Sending Organisations included:

- Working primarily in support of Host Organisations;
- Ensuring orientation and training mirrors the reality on the ground; and,
- Allowing a high level of control to Host Organisations in volunteer selection.

Recommendations to Potential Volunteers included:

- Researching prospective Host Organisations and entering into the application process informed and well thought-through;
- Preparing before arriving in country and entering the experience with humility, openness, and a willingness to learn; and,
- Setting and managing expectations as well as putting into place personal support networks for regular debriefing.

# DEFINITIONS

## **Chab Dai member**

A faith-based organisation, legally and financially independent from Chab Dai, which has been granted membership in the coalition. Membership is conditional on an organisation having legal status with a Cambodian government ministry, having an organisation-wide child protection policy, working specifically on trafficking issues within Cambodia.

## **Chab Dai partner**

An organisation with which Chab Dai collaborates, but which is not a Chab Dai member.

## **Khmer**

The majority of Cambodian nationals and their language.

## **Leader**

For the purposes of the study, “leader” refers the organisation representative interviewed for the study.

## **Organisation**

### *Host Organisation*

Refers to the primary organisation with which short-term volunteers are working in Cambodia during the survey period.

### *Sending Organisation*

Refers to the company or organisation that recruited the volunteer and/or organized their volunteer trip; this category could also refer to the headquarter office of an international organisation.

For example, the head office of an NGO in the USA would be the Sending Organisation, and the field office in Cambodia with which the volunteer is directly working is the Host Organisation.

## **Participant vs. Respondent**

Throughout the report, “participant” and “respondent” are use interchangeably to refer to the study subjects.

## **Self-Centered vs. Selfish**

Some of the conversation around people’s motivations to volunteer abroad has to do with the contrast between self-advancement and selfless acts. In this discussion it is important to define correctly what we mean by “self-centred,” and to use the proper terminology. For this reason, when referring to volunteers’ motivations being “self-centred,” the definition of this is, “Concerned chiefly with one’s own interests,” but does not include the definition more associated with “selfish,” “lacking consideration for others.” Particularly in the case of people giving their time, resources, and talents for free, the latter and former aspects of the definition must be separated.

## **Short-Term Volunteer**

For the purposes of this study, due to time constraints as well as the need for a defined and objective volunteer type, “short-term volunteer” refers to expat volunteers in Cambodia for one to six months.

# INTRODUCTION

The short-term volunteer sector has grown in the past three decades and, in Cambodia, especially in the last 10 years. A simple Google search brings up hundreds of advertisements and opportunities for volunteer placements in the country and region. Volunteer “placement agencies” are replacing or partnering with travel agencies to send people, mainly from affluent societies and classes, to developing countries for as little as a few days to many months to volunteer.

Volunteer work in Cambodia is not covered by the Cambodian Labour Law; it is a largely ad hoc work class and goes mostly unregulated and unmonitored. There are large numbers of short-term volunteers working in the human rights sector in Cambodia, especially in counter-trafficking work. Short-term volunteer programs in NGOs range from disorganised and un(der)-managed to well-structured and established. There is little collaboration around sharing lessons learned and best practices in short-term volunteer management.

## Purpose & Objectives

Short-term volunteering has drastically gained in popularity in recent years, despite equally growing concerns of its potential negative impacts. Much of the discussion around the benefits and challenges of having short-term volunteers in organisations lacks evidence and feedback mechanisms, and leaves impact to be assumed rather than objectively evaluated. The purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions of short-term volunteers and host organisations and leaders on the impact the former bring to the organisation, the best volunteer management practices in the human rights sector, and how short-term volunteers may be better utilized to the benefit of both the host organisation and the volunteer’s own experience. The study explored these issues within the human rights sector in Cambodia; because of the nature of the study as Practitioner Research, staying within the sector of the organisation that produced the study was deemed valid for applying the findings and recommendations to current and future programs.

The study’s objectives were encompassed in specific research questions outlined as follows:

### *Primary Research Questions*

1. What is the motivation of short-term volunteers coming to Cambodia? How do volunteers perceive their experience impacting their future plans and worldview?
2. What is the impact of short-term volunteers on the programs and organisations with which they interact?
3. What are the perceptions, expectations, and lived experience of volunteers and organisations regarding the volunteer’s work and contribution?

### *Secondary Research Question*

1. How do organisations compare in how they host, interact with, and manage foreign volunteers?
2. How do volunteers first become involved with organisations? How does this relate to volunteers’ motivations, expectations, and lived experiences?
3. How do volunteers’ past experiences (work, skills, education) match with the work they are doing on the ground?

## Contextual Framework

The Human Rights Sector accounts for a large portion of NGOs in Cambodia; not all organisations involved in human rights work are active in advocacy or legal protection and implementation. For the purposes of this study, the Human Rights Sector refers to any and all NGOs working in human rights-related areas, including but not limited to human trafficking, forced labour, women's rights, land rights, children's rights, and other legal issues. Many of these NGOs are involved directly with these beneficiary groups in support and development roles, others focus on the legal frameworks in place to work towards systemic changes for these groups.

The research team gathered primary data from three participant groups:

1. Short-term volunteers, defined as expat volunteers working in the human rights sector in Cambodia from one to six months;
2. Leaders and managers from human rights organisations hosting short-term volunteers, who were directly responsible for supervising or managing these volunteers; and,
3. Khmer staff from human rights organisations that have interacted with short-term volunteers in their everyday work, but did not directly manage or oversee volunteers.

Study participants were working or volunteering with organisations dealing with issues of sex trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, rape, and gender-based violence. However, the short-term volunteers working in these organisations may not have been working directly in human rights work (e.g. as a lawyer or case worker). For example, some volunteers may have been working as teacher trainers in an aftercare program for survivors of exploitation. In other words, it was not the type of work that was deemed "human rights" work, but instead the mission of the host organisation.



# METHODOLOGY

The vision for this research began through conversations with practitioners about the potential, benefits, and challenges of hosting and utilising short-term volunteers in programs that provide services to vulnerable people. Chab Dai has also been asked, as a resourcing and coalition organisation, for support, information, and advice on how to manage volunteer programs. The data for this study was collected between May and December 2014.

## Practitioner Research

Chab Dai's ethos includes the value of Knowledge for Sharing; Chab Dai is "committed to addressing issues of abuse, exploitation and trafficking by working together and providing opportunities for learning" ([www.chabdai.org](http://www.chabdai.org)). Chab Dai conducts research to inform strategy and programs in order to increase the effectiveness of counter-trafficking efforts in Cambodia.

Gillman and Swain's (2006) definition of practitioner research encapsulates well the aim of the present study:

Research concerned with issues and problems that arise in professional practice. It is conducted by practitioners and aims to bring about change, or influence policy in the practice arena. Practitioner research provides a framework for formulating practice knowledge and allows such knowledge to be disseminated to other professionals... Through practitioner research, practitioners become researchers into their own practice and engage in a continuing process of professional development.

Practitioner research is also an extension of action research. Newton (2006) defines action research as "a type of applied social research that aims to improve social situations through change interventions involving a process of collaboration between researchers and participants." Chab Dai's ethos of collaboration extends to bridging the gap between academia and practice; Brammer and Smith-Brake's (2013) review of a decade of trends and influencing factors in counter-trafficking in Cambodia recommended an increase in academic partnerships and linking coalition members with best practice and research in order to increase professionalism in the counter-trafficking sector (p. 77).

## Research Methods

The research utilised both primary and secondary methods, including a literature review of studies of the short-term volunteer (or "Voluntourism") management sector, interviews with NGO leaders or volunteer managers, focus-group discussions with NGO leaders and Khmer staff, and an extensive survey among short-term volunteers in Cambodia during the research period.

### Secondary Research

A review of literature was conducted on issues pertaining to the experiences and management of short-term volunteers in developing countries. Where possible, sources were covered from the sectors of human rights, social justice, and development work.

### Primary Research

All participants involved in primary research for this study were from the human rights sector in Cambodia. Surveys were conducted among 32 short-term volunteers, in Cambodia for one to six months during the research period. All short-term volunteer participants were from outside Cambodia (although one participant had triple citizenship, including Cambodian). Interviews were conducted with 14 NGO leaders and managers with experience managing short-term volunteers. Focus group discussions were conducted with a small number of Khmer NGO staff with experience working and interacting with short-term volunteers. The purpose of the FGDs was to glean perspectives on cross-cultural challenges and experiences between Khmer workers and foreign volunteers.

## Ethical Framework

The research team intentionally did not include program beneficiaries (i.e. victims/survivors of human rights abuses) as study participants. For one thing, many short-term volunteers do not have much, if any, direct contact with program beneficiaries or clients. Also, the main aim of the study was to look at the perspectives of short-term volunteers themselves and their perceived impact and management by NGO leaders. Finally,

taking into consideration the potential negative impacts of short-term involvement with vulnerable populations, the research team did not want to perpetuate the very challenges and negative effects it was seeking to understand. Research with victims of human rights violations needs to be carefully prepared and examined; ethical considerations need to come first. As the present research is more for the benefit of volunteers and organisations, it was determined primary research with program beneficiaries was not crucial to the success of the subject's exploration.

### **Informed Consent**

All participants in the study, including survey respondents, interviewees, and focus group discussion participants, gave their consent to participate in the study and were informed they were not required to answer any question they did not wish to and could withdraw from the study at any point. See the Appendices for the Consent Forms and information provided to each participant group. Most interview participants provided written consent, but in some cases, such as when the interview took place over Skype, consent was provided verbally (and was recorded).

### **Research Limitations**

#### ***Sample Size & Bias***

This study is a qualitative research; therefore, the sample size is quite small because it is not a prevalence study. In addition, although the study was aimed to gather data from the human rights sector at large, because of the nature of the research organisation's work mainly in counter-trafficking, most of the data was collected from representatives of counter-trafficking organisations and, further, member organisations of Chab Dai Coalition. Although representing a significant proportion, Chab Dai members do not represent all counter-trafficking organisations in Cambodia. For this reason, the data may be biased towards findings on counter-trafficking and faith-based organisations. The findings, therefore, cannot be generalised to the whole of the human rights sector in Cambodia; however, they can indicate the reality for a portion of the sector, and lessons may still be gleaned from the evidence presented.

Unfortunately, the qualitative nature of the present research is reflected in most of the existing literature on overseas volunteering. The research arena on this subject must be wary of making too ample generalizations based on these small sample sizes. On the other hand, similar findings across these studies can enable some broader triangulation.

#### ***Language***

All interviews and the online survey were conducted in English and, although all Cambodian and foreign participants, for whom English was not their first language, had a very good to excellent ability in English, there may be something lost when communication is not in one's mother tongue. Both the interviewer and the participant may have missed some implications or inferences. As much as possible, the interviewer refrained from providing leading questions or example answers (as a means of demonstration) to the interviewees, in order to minimize the chances of skewing the data.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on short-term volunteering overseas is relatively new, as the sector itself has really only begun to be developed in the last 20 to 30 years. In most of the literature, the term “voluntourism” has been employed to cover all types of short-term volunteering abroad, although some scholars are narrower in their definitions.

For the purposes of this study, the literature review will cover, where possible, research from the sectors of human rights, social justice, and development work, and not areas outside these sectors, such as short-term medical relief trips and conservation voluntourism. Where possible, the literature reviewed will focus on “short-term” being defined as one to six months.

This section will first cover the history of short-term volunteering, specifically in how it is framed as a neoliberal construct; secondly, it will explore the definitions of “voluntourism,” and how the literature has developed both positive and negative views of the sector; thirdly, it will briefly explore the phenomenon of student and “gap-year” volunteering; fourth, it will look at what the literature has said about volunteer motivations and expectations, followed by what it says about the impact of short-term volunteering; and, finally, it will touch on the issues of cross-cultural adaptation in the context of short-term experiences abroad. Little, if any, of the literature, makes a clear distinction between “voluntourism” and “short-term volunteering abroad;” therefore, for the purposes of this literature review, the terms will be deemed synonymous.

## Neoliberalism & the New Humanitarianism

The framework of neoliberalism has enabled a new form of humanitarianism, starting in the late 21<sup>st</sup> century. Through the view of Western societies as more “just” and “enlightened” (as defined below), short-term volunteers, and perhaps Western development workers more broadly, may inadvertently victimize the people and communities with which they interact during their overseas experience.

In the mid-1980s, there began a rapid expansion in the NGO landscape, accompanied by a growth in volunteering abroad. NGOs are now important stakeholders in international development and civil society (Mostafanezhad, 2014); by extension, people volunteering abroad may also view themselves as, and may in fact also be, important stakeholders in this landscape. This expansion, showing a cultural, economic, and political neoliberalism (coming mainly from the “West,” or “developed” countries), as well as a growing focus on individuals as “moral consumers,” has led “volunteer tourism [to represent] a growing consumer consciousness of global economic, social and political inequality” (Mostafanezhad, 2014, p. 3). In other words, volunteer tourism is the neoliberal consumer’s response to global injustice.

Georgeou’s (2012) work on aid volunteering argues, as summarized by Cahill (2013), “individual and organisational volunteer impulses and empathies to “do good” internationally have, since the 1970s, been variously harnessed and transformed by neoliberal understandings and processes to serve the agendas of global capitalism and the national interests of donor-state agendas” (p. 137).

Neoliberalism has been defined by a number of scholars, including Harvey (2005) and Blomgren (1997). Thorsen & Lie (n.d.) provide a summary definition in their exploration of the history and thought around neoliberalism:

Neoliberalism is...a loosely demarcated set of political beliefs which most prominently and prototypically include the conviction that the only legitimate purpose of the state is to safeguard individual, especially commercial, liberty, as well as strong private property rights. [...] Neoliberalism could also include a perspective on moral virtue: the good and virtuous person is one who is able to access the relevant markets and function as a competent actor in these markets. [...] Individuals are also seen as being solely responsible for the consequences of the choices and decisions they freely make: instances of inequality and glaring social injustice are morally acceptable, at least to the degree in which they could be seen as the result of freely made decisions” (p. 14-15).

In relation to volunteering abroad, academic discourse has linked the volunteer and development sectors with a need to see those being “helped” as victims, whether these are victims of poverty, corruption, violence, or

injustice, in order to be deemed in need of liberation and to fit the neoliberal framework of victimhood (i.e. they are not responsible for the inequality or injustice they face).

This risks leading the short-term volunteer, by being in the overseas context for a limited period of time, to see their position as “saviour” or, at least subconsciously, as superior by virtue of coming from a more enlightened, “just” society. Most volunteers are unaware of these neoliberal dynamics and underpinnings, just want to “do good,” and see themselves as being good “global citizens” without any political agenda (Georgeou, 2012; cited in Cahill, 2013, p. 137).

## The Age of Voluntourism

As noted above, overseas short-term volunteering has been largely synonymous with “voluntourism,” and the literature has been instrumental in making this link. This section will provide an overview of the definitions scholars have offered of “voluntourism,” the negative and positive views of the sector, as well as a brief look at gaps in the literature on voluntourism. One of the major limitations of voluntourism literature is its strong qualitative bias; there is very little quantitative research in the sector and research samples tend to be very small and short-term. Although these limitations should not be ignored, the volume of literature as a whole can be useful in extrapolating lessons learned and best practices.

### *Defining Voluntourism*

Much of the literature on overseas volunteering in recent years has been framed in the context of volunteer tourism or “voluntourism.” Stephen Wearing (2001) posited the foundational definition for Voluntourism, the definition to which most academics refer: voluntourists are people who “volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that may involve the aiding or alleviating of the material poverty of some groups of society, the restoration of certain environments, or research into aspects of society or environment” (cited in Ho, 2009).

Since then, there has been a division among stakeholders on what to include in the “voluntourism” spectrum. A broad approach would include every travel experience that has anything to do with service; for example, ecotourism, service-learning, gap year trips, and mission trips. The narrow approach defines voluntourism as organized through the tourism sector and is typically less than six months in duration; these experiences can either be “volunteer-focused” or “vacation-focused.” The literature on voluntourism also typically focuses on groups of voluntourists working or traveling together rather than on individual experiences within existing NGOs.

Butcher & Smith (2010) define voluntourism as a form of “life politics” and reject the notion that this is merely a slightly altered version of neo-colonialism; they argue voluntourism is a form of individual politics that eschews politics of Left and Right.

Another category of voluntourists, who would not define themselves as such, are religious people, not only, but, predominantly Christians, traveling to foreign countries to volunteer in mission-oriented or Christian NGOs for a short period of time. The idea of “calling” enters into the motivation in these instances, and these volunteers may want to see themselves as more than voluntourists.

### *Pro- and Anti-Voluntourism Literature*

There exists a large volume of literature on the demographic profiles, as well as the motivations and expectations of voluntourism participants (more on this below). The literature is divided among those who would fit more into a “pro-voluntourism” framework, and those who are more “anti-voluntourism.” On the whole, it is a spectrum, with scholars on both sides nuancing their stances with caveats both for and against voluntourism.

Many “pro-voluntourism” authors emphasize the sector is mutually beneficial for participants (volunteers) and hosts (community members and organisations). For instance, Crabtree (1998) found service-learning projects that empower both volunteers and host communities and argued they are, in fact, critical in addressing broader social justice issues. Crabtree nuanced the potential negative consequences of overseas service-learning by emphasizing the need for proper preparation and volunteer project design. Also, whether voluntourism and service-learning are the same is dubious, as the latter is education-based (often based in academic institutions), while the former is often based in the tourism/business sector. This demonstrates further the need for differentiation within the overseas short-term volunteering spectrum.

Jones (2005), while conceding to several caveats in his study (e.g. his sample was narrow, making it difficult to extrapolate his findings), found the young participants volunteering abroad experienced a “noticeable” transformation in three areas: personal development, cross-cultural experience, and the development of a “global perspective.” He concludes by supporting the position that voluntourists can gain significant personal benefits from volunteering abroad, and will hopefully extend those benefits to others later on in life.

“Pro-voluntourism” proponents emphasize the benefits for volunteers, covering both personal benefits (e.g. personal and professional development) and the attitudinal shifts that occur as a result of volunteering abroad (e.g. becoming a “global citizen”). There is an assumption that emerges from the literature that attitudinal shifts are, for all intents and purposes, permanent and will lead to long-term behaviour changes. This has not been studied and more longitudinal research is needed to examine this issue.

Other scholars are more towards the “anti-voluntourism” end of the spectrum. The focus of “anti-voluntourism” is mainly on the unbalanced benefits of voluntourism in favour of volunteers rather than of host communities and organisations. Unfortunately, the literature finds voluntourism can foster dependence and exploitative practices as well as reinforce negative stereotypes among volunteers towards host communities.

Guttentag (2009) directly addresses the issue in his article, “The possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism.” The article provides a concise review of the existing voluntourism literature that extolls the virtues of the sector, while also effectively highlighting and deconstructing its potential negative consequences. Overall, the author finds the following possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism: neglecting host communities’ desires, hindering work progress by organisations on the ground, completing unsatisfactory or unnecessary work, disrupting local economies, reinforcing conceptualizations or stereotypes of the “other,” and rationalizing poverty. Guttentag nuances this review with an effective balance of both the positive and negative sides, stressing that by being aware of the potential negative impacts of voluntourism, organisations and volunteers themselves may then mitigate them.

## Volunteer Motivations & Expectations

Short-term volunteer expectations have been found to often depend on the type of person the prospective volunteer is and what type of experience they personally seek. Andereck, McGehee, Lee & Clemmons (2012) divide short-term volunteers into five categories: the unadventurous, the humanists, the community involved, the labourers, and the nonsocial.

### *Self- Vs. Other-Centered Motivation*

Brown’s (2005) study, defining voluntourism as volunteering while on vacation, but where vacation is the primary purpose, identified four major motivational factors in short-term volunteering: cultural immersion, giving back, seeking camaraderie, and seeking educational and bonding opportunities. Interestingly, three of the four motivational factors identified were “self”-centered, rather than “other”-centered. The same study found younger participants felt their experience would affect their long-term career and life goals. McIntosh & Zahra’s (2007) study of Australians volunteering with Maori communities in New Zealand also found the participants’ motivations for volunteering were a desire to be deeply meaningful, a confirmation of one’s own identity, and self-change. Mangold’s (2012) study found youth’s choice to “help” abroad was more for personal benefit than professional advancement, and their motivations were founded in privilege and power, wanting to “do their part” but also explore and have fun in a foreign country before progressing into their next life stage. Tiessen’s (2012) study on Canadian youth volunteers in the CIDA program also confirmed motivations were largely based on personal growth, rather than on achieving the program goals assigned to them.

Lough, McBride & Sherraden (2009) confirm the findings on short-term volunteer motivations of the other studies in one of the only quantitative studies in the field. The strength of each type of motivation was found to vary with age and type of work being done during the volunteer experience. The perceived impact on host communities also appeared to be tied to the nature of the work performed.

Dykhuis (2010) found another theme emerge in interviews with teenage voluntourists in orphanages in Guatemala. Several participants in the case study directly or indirectly referenced a desire to “witness poverty,” further lending to a voluntourist culture of objectifying and stereotyping poverty in the developing world.

## Impact of Short-Term Volunteering

As the motivations of short-term volunteers, as seen above, are mainly centered around self realization or the personal development of the volunteer, it is unsurprising that much of the literature around the impact of short-term volunteers shows little or no benefit to host organisations or communities.

Butcher & Smith (2012) posit voluntourism provides limited (if any) benefit to local communities in the form of immediate development and the vast amounts of money paid to participate in such excursions could be put to far better use. Instead, the authors state the value of short-term volunteering is in the promotion of a cosmopolitan approach to global issues that will pay dividends when young participants advance through their respective careers.

Other literature further implies the longer-term impact applies to the short-term volunteers themselves, not the Host Organisation or community. Bamber and Pike's (2013) study on International Service Learning projects among student voluntourists concludes that overseas volunteering is defined, not by the finite experience itself, which was defined by many participants as "life-changing," but more by the degree and depth of the reflection following the experience. Bailey and Russell's (2012) study, although finding a predisposition to civic engagement among voluntourism participants compared to non-participants, also found overall increases among participants in cognitive, affective, reflective, civic attitude, and openness indicators in the post-test. While the authors acknowledge the multiple limitations of the study (e.g. unaccounted variables), they contend that voluntourism, especially among young participants, can foster ongoing and increased civic engagement later in life.

Corti, Marola & Castro's (2010) case study of a voluntourist project in Morocco concluded that, despite the project generally benefitting voluntourists, community participants and stakeholders alike, voluntourists' motivations favoured personal benefit rather than altruistic reasons for volunteering in the first place. The study did find a level of economic redistribution occurred as a result of voluntourists from developed countries visiting developing areas; however, they did not explore the comparable benefit of simply sending money to the host NGO rather than spending the money as voluntourists.

In light of the above findings, Palacio's (2010) ethnographic approach to voluntourism is appropriate, particularly in his proposal for a change in the discourse around voluntourism, from a development and aid focus to an international and intercultural understanding focus. Therefore, it is also relevant to look at literature on cross-cultural adaptation and understanding among voluntourists.

## Cross-Cultural Adaptation

There is little literature on what organisations and sending agencies are doing to prepare short-term volunteers for adapting to a new environment and culture, or whether organisations even require any such training or preparation. Some literature points to the difficulties of actually identifying what comprises cross-cultural adaptation and how it relates to voluntourism. The field of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) has gained momentum in this conversation. Over the last five decades, ICC has had numerous different labels, including cross-cultural adaptation, cross-cultural effectiveness, intercultural understanding, cross-cultural competence, global citizenship, global competence as well as assimilation, acculturation, coping or adjustment, and integration (Wiseman, 2002; Deardroff, 2011; Kim, 2002). Cross-cultural adaptation may be best understood as a change in one's own cultural identity (Kim, 1988).

According to Kim (1988), ICC refers to "the process that people go through when trying to adjust to the differences they encounter in new cultural environments, thus becoming better suited for dealing with the extant challenges encountered in unfamiliar environments." Singh and Doherty (2004) relate this process to the transformations brought about by globalization and its basis in the tension arising out of relationships between Westerners and non-Westerners, or even colonizer and colonized.

There is some limited literature on how volunteers adapt culturally and what they get out of short-term volunteer experiences from interacting with a different culture.

Raymond and Hall (2008) conducted focus groups and interviews with volunteers, analyzing their findings using the Appreciative Inquiry framework,<sup>1</sup> on their experiences with new and different cultures. A limitation in the study was the lack of identification of “good practices” to instill cultural competency. However, Raymond and Hall did find that while cultural tolerance may increase among short-term volunteers, deeply embedded beliefs do not change. Although short-term volunteers felt they gained a greater understanding and appreciation of the host culture than mere “tourists,” they still made use of sweeping generalizations of host culture nationality and race. In fact, assuming that one will naturally gain cultural competency may highlight stereotypes about the “other” being helpless or less fortunate, and may hinder authentic solidarity. In addition, especially for very short-term volunteers (i.e. two weeks or less), making memories took precedence over building relationships with local people.

Mangold (2012) found, among youth short-term volunteers, young volunteers are struggling with the transition from adolescence to adulthood and often end up trying to define or even find themselves abroad, making cultural adaptation more of a struggle. Other challenges found among youth volunteers included a lack of maturity, language barriers, and homesickness. These issues could very well affect older volunteers, but the added transitional struggles of youth exacerbate these challenges.

Seminal researchers on cross-cultural adaptation Ward, Kim and Gudykunst (as cited in Kristjánsdóttir, 2009) all argue anxiety and uncertainty are intrinsically linked to adaptation, and would be difficult for an NGO to help volunteers navigate because of the unpredictable nature of everyday experience. This may be exacerbated during a short-term experience. Both Kristjánsdóttir (2009) and McIntosh & Zahra (2007) argue that placing the responsibility to “fit in” to a host environment solely on the volunteer is unrealistic.

## Gaps in the Literature

As mentioned above, much of the literature on volunteer tourism and volunteerism has been qualitative, case-based, and limited in scope (Bailey & Russell, 2012).

Much of the “pro-voluntourism” literature promotes voluntourism on the basis of the potential impact it has on the volunteer’s personal development and positive change in his global worldview. A research gap relating to this is the short-term nature of studies on volunteering; many of the benefits found in studies on short-term volunteers have not been proven to be permanent or long-term in the lives of short-term volunteers. There is a weak, if any, causal link made between a volunteer’s short-term attitude change and longer-term behaviour change. For instance, McGehee’s (2002) study on voluntourism and social movements had a major flaw in that, though concluding with a “pro-voluntourism” stance based on increased motivation of participants to engage further in social action, the study measured intent rather than actual change in action or behaviour of participants. McGehee & Santos’ (2005) study, with a slightly larger sample size, reached the same conclusions, with the same focus on intended, rather than actual, increased activism and social consciousness.

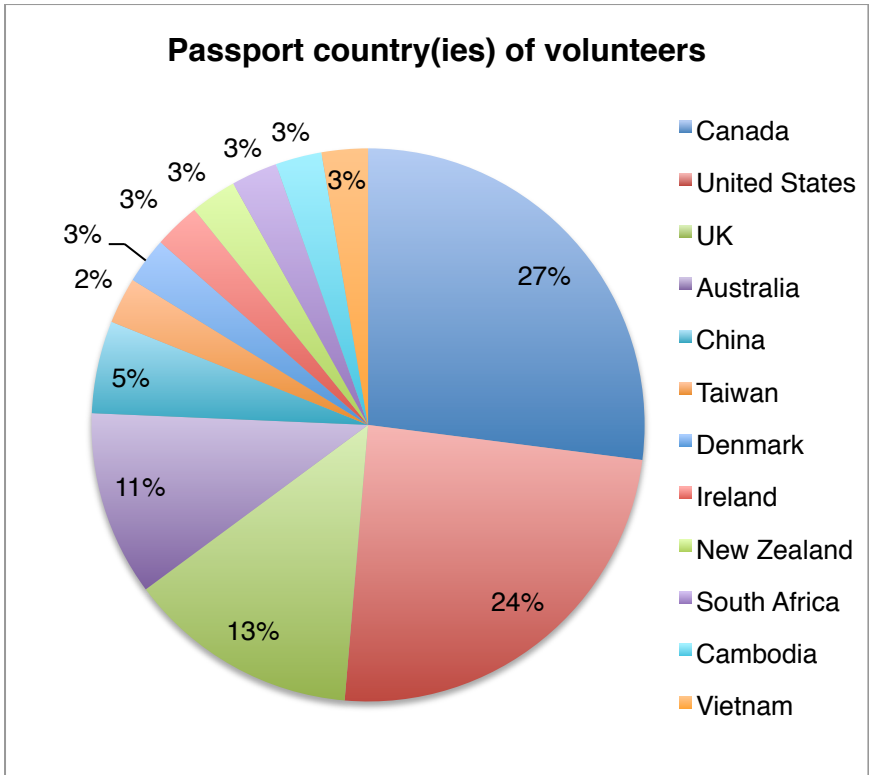
Another gap lies in the relative silence of the literature on short-term volunteers’ specific impact on host organisations and beneficiaries; for instance, do volunteers enhance or diminish the capacity of NGOs, and how do the latter perceive volunteers?

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<sup>1</sup> Appreciative Inquiry entails a guided discussion in four stages: “what is,” “what might be,” “what should be,” and “what will be” (Raymond & Hall, 2008, p. 534).





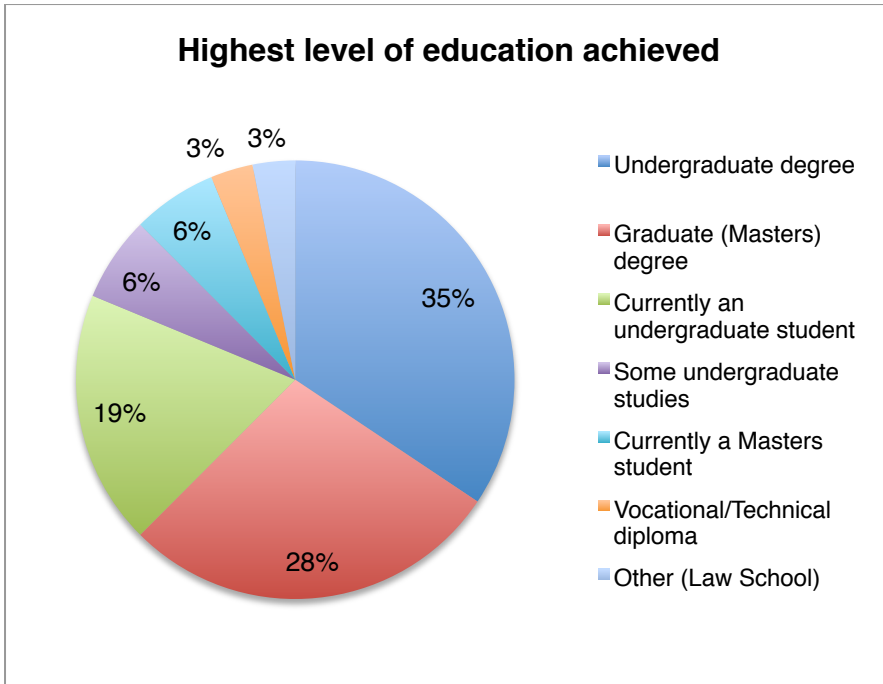


**Chart 2. Passport Country(ies) of Short-Term Volunteer Participants (n=32)**

As seen in the chart above, over 50% of respondents were from North America (27% from Canada and 24% from the U.S.A.) Although 32 respondents answered the question, there were a total of 37 responses, as four respondents had multiple citizenships: three had dual citizenship (UK/USA, UK/Ireland, Canada/Taiwan), and one had triple citizenship (South Africa/Cambodia/Vietnam).

Of the 32 respondents, 59% (19/32) stated being single, while 38% (12/32) stated being in a relationship: one respondent stated being in a common law relationship, seven stated being in a long-term relationship, and four stated being married. One person chose "Would prefer not to answer" the question about their relationship status.

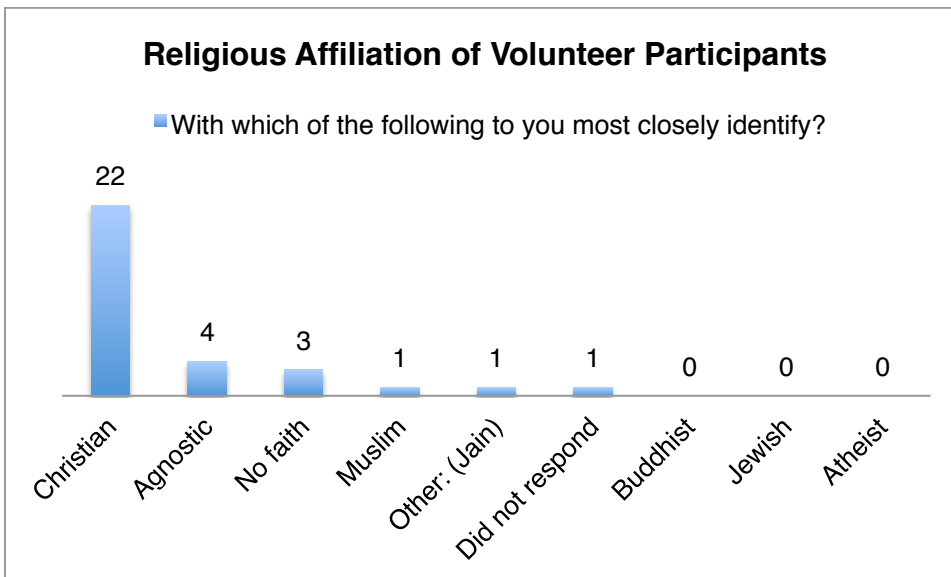
All respondents had a level of education higher than a high school diploma; 35% (11/32) had an undergraduate degree, another 28% (9/32) had a graduate (Masters) degree. The chart below outlines the survey participants' highest level of education achieved.



**Chart 3. Highest level of education achieved by short-term volunteer participants (n=32)**

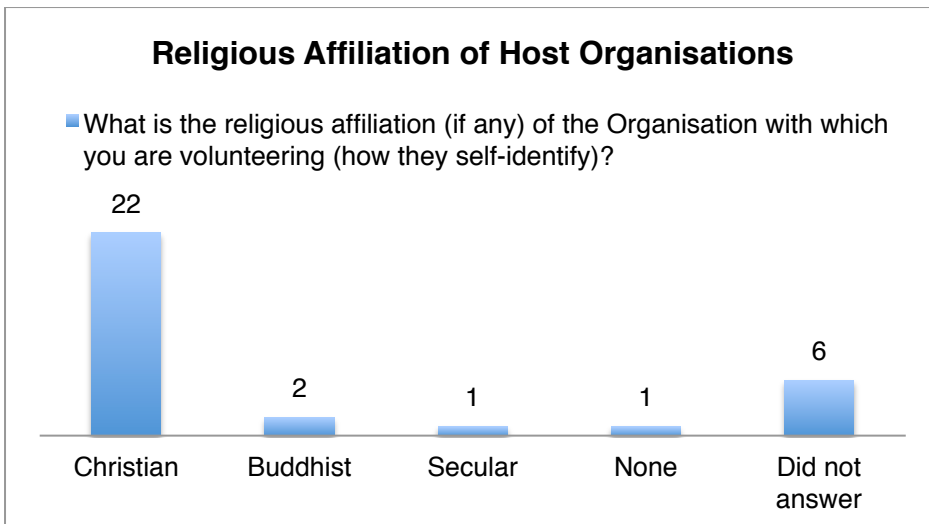
The highest level achieved was a graduate (Masters) degree. A number of participants either had some undergraduate studies or were partway through an undergraduate or graduate degree. Eight participants (25%) were currently students while volunteering.

In answer to the question, “With which of the following do you most closely identify?” 69% (22/32) of respondents chose “Christian.” The chart below shows the results of the question on religious affiliation, including answer options not chosen by any respondents.



**Chart 4. Stated Religious Affiliation of Volunteer Participants (n=32)**

The high number of self-identified Christians may be explained by the high number of self-identified Christian organisations with which participants were volunteering. The majority of participants (69%, or 22/32) stated they were volunteering with a Christian host organisation. The self-identified religious affiliations of host organisations are shown in the chart below.



**Chart 5. Stated Religious Affiliation of Volunteer Host Organisations (n=32)**

The data may be skewed towards both Christian volunteers and Christian host organisations due to the sample being taken largely from the research organisation’s membership, which is entirely Christian.

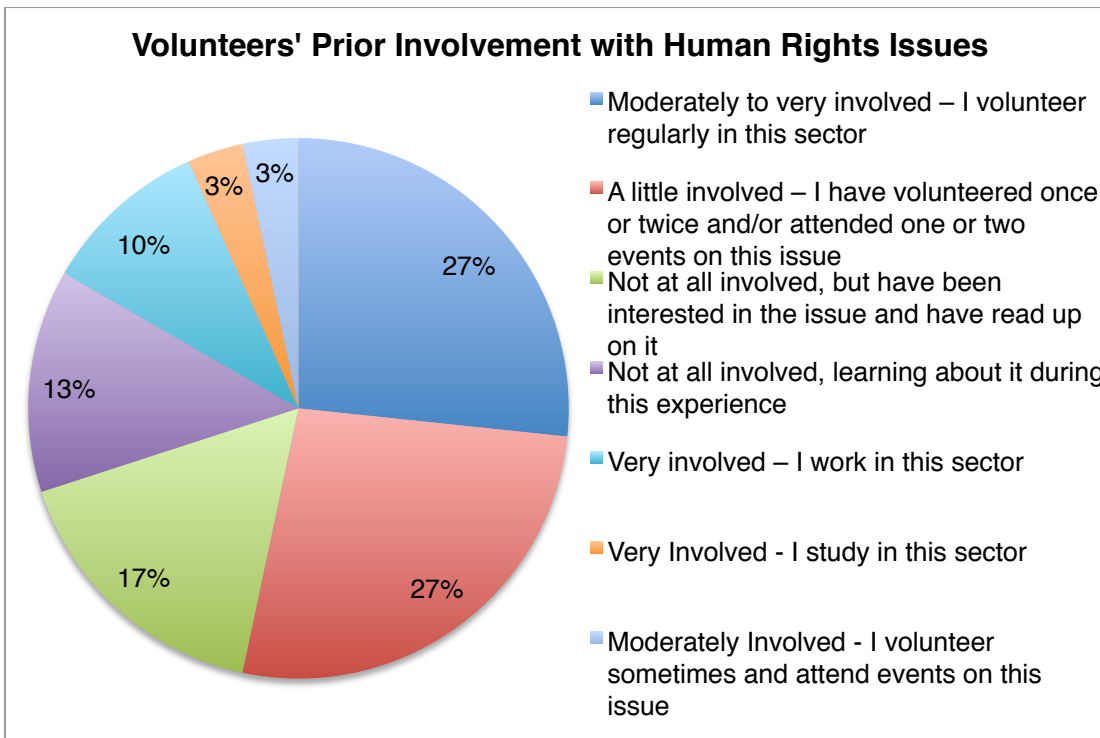
In conclusion, participants in the Volunteer Entry Survey were largely made up of young Christian females from Anglo-Western countries, with some level of post-secondary education, volunteering in Christian host organisations.

#### **Volunteer Preparation & Funding**

Most volunteers were encouraged or required to prepare for their volunteer position in some way, either by reading the host organisation’s website, items from a recommended reading list, or specific items sent them by the host organisation. Only three volunteers (10%) stated they were not encouraged or required to read anything by their host organisation. However, 36% of volunteers received no cultural orientation either prior to or during their time in Cambodia; 50% received cultural orientation prior to arriving in country, and 14% received cultural orientation prior to and upon arrival in country (no respondents stated only receiving cultural orientation once they were in the country). See Appendix 2 for a complete list of resources stated by participants to have informed their knowledge of the issues.

The vast majority of volunteers stated they funded their volunteer work either by self-funding or fundraising among their friends, family, and church/community networks. Only 23% (7/30) stated either the host or the sending organisation funded some, or all, basic costs. This was mainly in the form of lodging for the volunteer and some organisations covered the volunteer’s airfare.

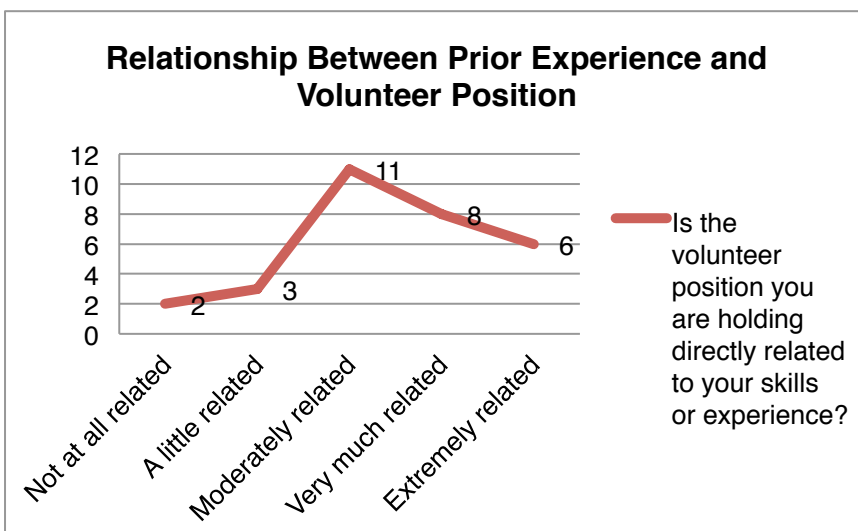
Volunteer respondents were asked, “How involved would you say you are \*with the issues\* (addressed by the Host Organisation) in your current country of residence?” The chart below shows how respondents answered this question.



**Chart 6. Volunteers' Involvement with the issues Addressed by the Host Organisation Prior to Volunteer Experience (n=30)**

The results show a varied response, with an equal number of respondents (27% in each category) stating they were moderately involved, volunteering regularly in the sector, and a little involved, volunteering once or twice or attending an event on the issue. Another 30% stated not being at all involved in the issue, while 10% stated working in the sector in which they were volunteering.

Volunteers were also asked if the volunteer position they were undertaking was related to their prior experience, skills, and areas of study. The first chart shows the stated relationship between prior experience and skills and the current volunteer position; the second chart shows the relationship between the volunteers' areas of study and the current volunteer position.



**Chart 7. Relationship Between Volunteer's Prior Experience and Volunteer Position (n=30)**

As seen above, just over a third of respondents stated their skills or experience was moderately related to their current volunteer position, while just under half stated their skills or experience was very much or extremely related to the volunteer position.

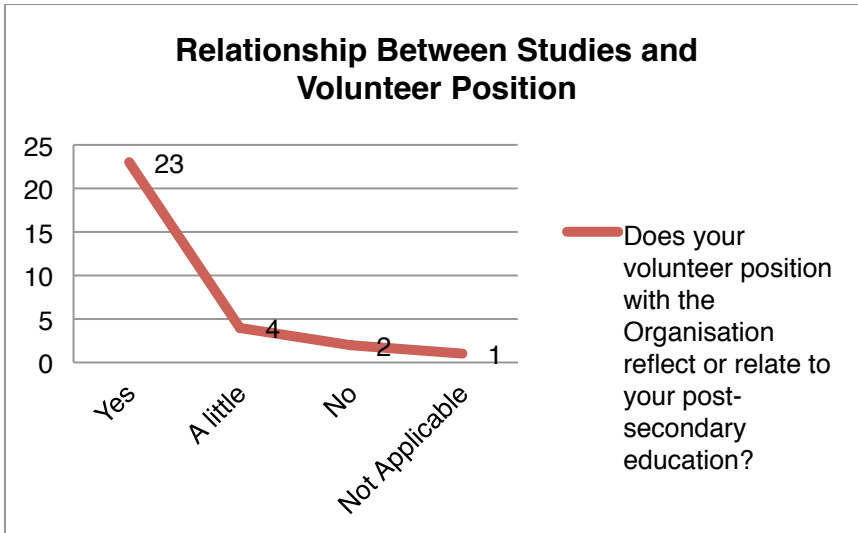


Chart 8. Relationship Between Volunteer's Area of Studies and Volunteer Position (n=30)

Overwhelmingly (77%, or 23/30), respondents stated their area of studies (post-secondary education) related to their current volunteer position. Another four respondents stated it was a little related, and only two stated it was not at all related.

### Volunteer Participants' Experience & Expectations

Approximately half (15/32) of volunteer participants stated this was their first overseas volunteer experience (16 stated they had volunteered abroad before and one did not answer). Of the 16 respondents who stated they had previously volunteered overseas, 10 had previously visited Cambodia. In addition, of those 16, 10 also stated their previous overseas volunteer experience directly influenced their decision to volunteer in Cambodia this time.

Just over half (17/32) of respondents stated having previously gone on a Short-Term Mission (STM)<sup>2</sup> and, of those, 59% stated the STM directly influenced their decision to volunteer abroad. Participants were also asked, "Whether or not you have been on a STM, would you like to expand on your views or experiences of STM?" The text boxes below show some of the responses given.

Perceptions of volunteers who stated they had not previously been on a STM:

*"At this point in time, I do not desire to participate in a STM. I prefer a longer experience in order to more fully understand and appreciate the culture. I also feel a longer experience enables me to provide a more valuable contribution to the mission or volunteer work." (Male, 18-24, no religious affiliation stated)*

*"Depending on what type of work and how long the STM is, it can be somewhat an inefficient way of carrying out missions, as it is natural to desire long-term relationships and not short-term. To increase their effectiveness, STMs should have clear outlines of their programs and long-term objectives. They should also provide cultural sensitivity training." (Female, 18-24, Christian)*

*"[STM] can be good as long as it does not try to convert people. Religions all share similar values of helping each other." (Male, 18-24, Christian)*

<sup>2</sup> The survey provided the following definition of Short-Term Mission: "A religious (e.g. church, faith-based) group trip lasting 1-4 weeks."

Perceptions of volunteers who stated they had previously been on a STM:

*“The trip I went on was with a church that made tri-yearly visits and had long-term volunteers at the organisation we visited, so I feel like we were not as damaging or bad as I feared we could be, and really I think it was great for my own personal growth, but I would never do something like it again, because it’s too selfish.” (Female, 18-24, Agnostic)*

*“I realized during some STM’s how ineffective they were for a long-term vision. It might actually hurt the people we were reaching out to because they would be inconsistent.” (Female, 18-24, Christian)*

*“I struggle to see how a STM can be entirely effective simply due to the amount of time.” (Male, 25-30, Christian)*

*“My experience was with a ministry that built houses... Now, five years later, I don’t agree with this type of STM nor do I fully endorse most short-term missions opportunities offered by the West. I find many of them to be exploitative of the receiving culture.” (Female, 18-25, Christian)*

*“STM gives you a glimpse of the needs of that country and helps you see what God is doing there.” (Female, 36-45, Christian)*

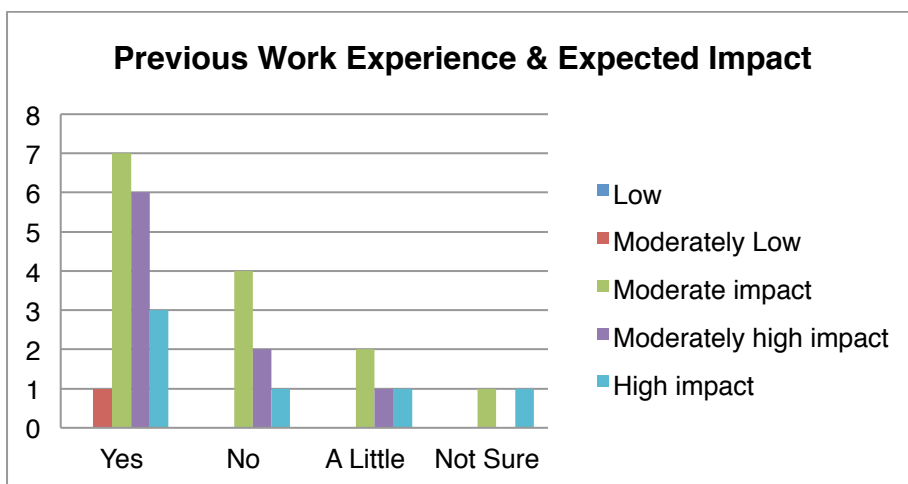
*“I think STMs mainly benefit the volunteers and not the beneficiaries.” (Female, 18-24, Christian)*

**Box 1. Volunteer Perceptions of STMs**

The irony of these perspectives against short-term missions is many scholars, as seen in the literature review above, would probably deem all, if not most, short-term volunteerism, or voluntourism, as on the same plane as short-term missions in terms impact and experience. Not to mention, a majority of responses from survey participants pointed to self-centered reasons for volunteering abroad.<sup>3</sup>

A number of findings provided interesting comparisons on experience and expected impact. As seen in the following charts, correlation was found in some instances between experience and expected impact, and was not found in others. The graph below outlines the responses to the following two survey questions:

- Does your volunteer position with the Organisation reflect or relate your previous work experience? (horizontal axis);
- What level of impact do you hope to have on the program in which you are volunteering? (responses by number in vertical axis).



**Chart 9. Comparison Between Expected Impact and Previous Work Experience (n=30)**

In each category on the horizontal axis, “moderate impact” was the most chosen response, followed by “moderately high impact,” then “high impact.” In other words, no matter how much “work experience” the

<sup>3</sup> See Definitions section for discussion of term “self-centered” in this context.

volunteer brought to the position they would hold with the Host Organisation, most everyone expected to have at least a moderate impact on the programs in which they were volunteering. Only one respondent expected to have “moderately low impact,” and no respondents expected to have “low impact.” A similar result came of the comparison between respondents who indicated this was their first volunteer trip abroad and those who indicated it was not; across both categories, respondents were proportionally distributed over “moderate,” “moderately high,” and “high” expected impact.

The comparative responses differed, however, when it came to overlaying expected impact with respondents’ level of education. The responses are outlined below. The two questions used in the comparison were:

- Highest level of education achieved (horizontal axis);
- What level of impact do you hope to have on the program in which you are volunteering? (responses by number in vertical axis).

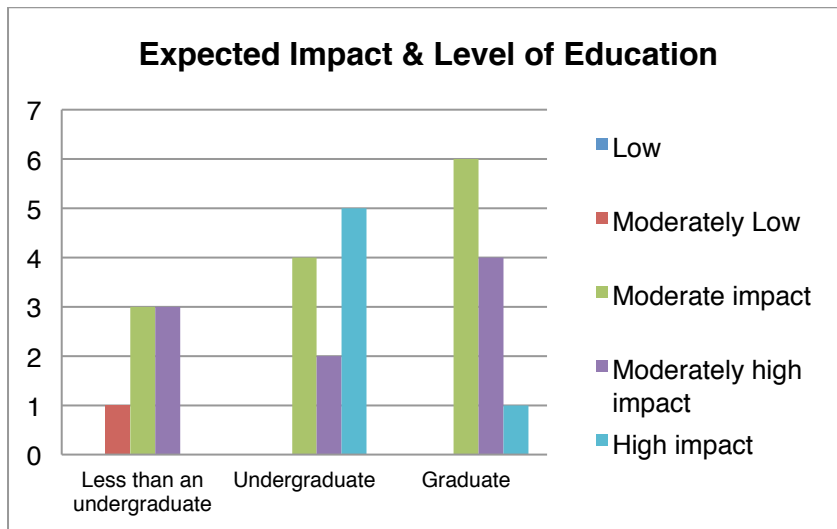


Chart 10. Comparison Between Expected Impact and Level of Education (n=29)

Whereas impact was proportionally expected to be “moderate” no matter the participants’ previous experience, when compared to participants’ level of education, respondents with an undergraduate degree were more likely to expect a high level of impact than respondents with either a graduate degree or higher, or anything less than an undergraduate degree. This may indicate an unrealistic view of participants’ own capacity and understanding of what exactly they would be doing. Another interesting note is a higher percentage of graduate students indicated they were fulfilling a requirement for their studies through this volunteer experience than undergraduates; in other words, even though graduate students were volunteering in an “official” (academically required) capacity, their expected impact was overall lower than that of undergraduate students’, who were volunteering more for personal reasons.

Finally, the greatest correlation was seen in comparing expected impact with a clear understanding of one’s objectives as a volunteer for the Host Organisation. As seen in the table below, a large number of respondents indicated the organisation communicated a clear expectation of the volunteer’s role for their time, either through a written and clear job description (36%), or, in lieu of a written job description, a very clear understanding of the volunteer’s tasks (25%).

Table 1. Communicated Job Expectations for Volunteers

|  | What has been agreed/communicated between you and the Organisation on your volunteer commitment |
|--|---|
| I have a written and clear job description   | 10  |
| I do not have a written job description, but there is a very clear understanding of what I am going to do during my volunteer time | 7   |

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| I do not have a written job description, but there is a somewhat clear understanding of what I am going to do during my volunteer time | 8           |
| I have a written job description, but it is not clear to me  | 1           |
| I know which project I will be volunteering with, but I am not sure what I am going to be doing day to day                             | 1           |
| I do not know what my volunteer time will consist of   | 1           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>n=28</b> |

An interesting analysis is the comparison between participants' expected impact and what their Host Organisation communicated to them about their job description for their volunteer position. The chart below outlines the answers to the following questions:

- What has been agreed/communicated between you and the Organisation on your volunteer commitment? (horizontal axis);

Response choices (categorized in analysis under "clear," "somewhat clear," and "unclear"):

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| CLEAR          | I have a written and clear job description   |
| SOMEWHAT CLEAR | I have a written job description, but it is not clear to me  |
| CLEAR          | I do not have a written job description, but there is a very clear understanding of what I am going to do during my volunteer time     |
| SOMEWHAT CLEAR | I do not have a written job description, but there is a somewhat clear understanding of what I am going to do during my volunteer time |
| UNCLEAR        | I know which project I will be volunteering with, but I am not sure what I am going to be doing day to day                             |
| UNCLEAR        | I do not know what my volunteer time will consist of   |

- What level of impact do you hope to have on the program in which you are volunteering? (responses by number in vertical axis).

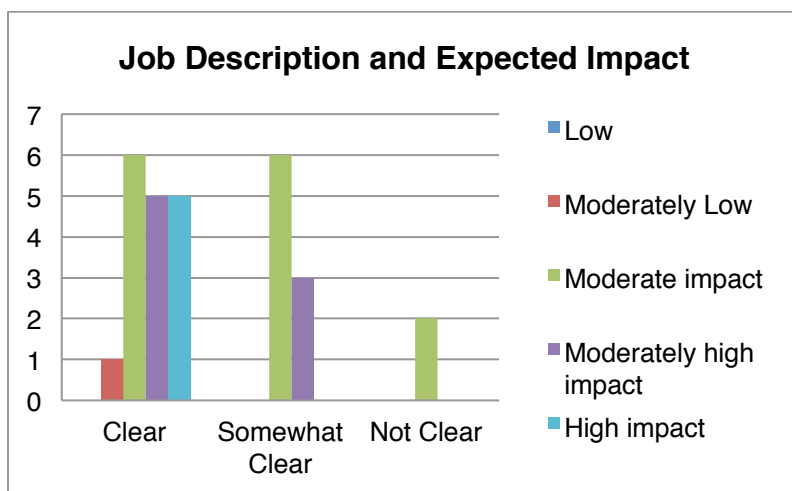


Chart 11. Comparison Between Communicated Job Description & Expected Impact (n=28)

Although some (or all) respondents' in all three categories stated they expected to have moderate impact, only respondents who had a clear understanding of what they would do during their volunteer time indicated they expected to have a high impact. This comparison shows the clearest correlation when comparing expected impact with other factors.

Volunteers were asked how they might achieve their desired/expected impact. There were a variety of responses, most of which could fit into four broad categories: responding to needs, abilities and hard work, sustainability, and setting clear objectives. The box below offers an example of each category (and the total

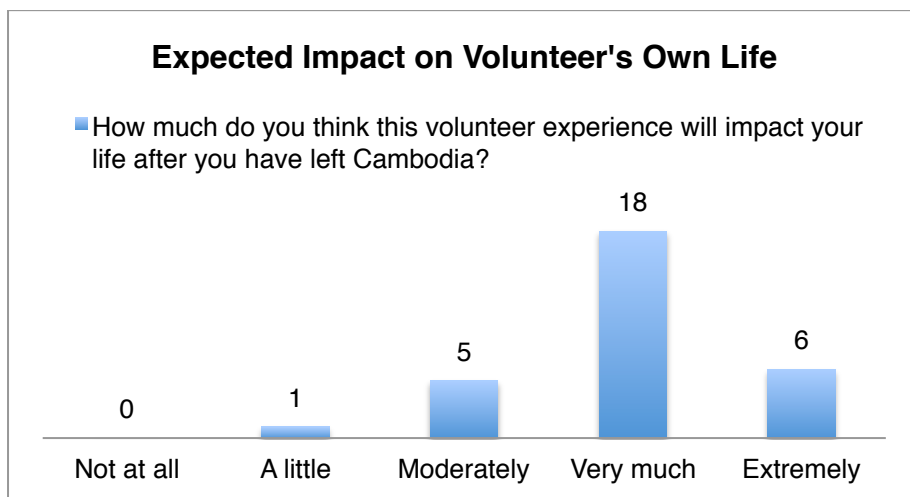


number of participant comments each category). Sometimes respondents' comments fit more than one category.

| Question: How do you think you might achieve this impact? |  |
|---|--|
| Category  | Participant Comments   |
| Responding to Needs (8)                                   | <i>"I think most people would like to have a high impact, however from my role (which is more background work) I think that I can only have a moderate impact as I'm not an expert in any field, and I am definitely not a lawyer which would be extremely beneficial at the organization I am volunteering with. I say a moderate impact because I hope that I am able to really help my department with anything they need me to and hopefully we can learn something from each other."</i> (Female, 18-24, expects to have moderate impact) |
| Abilities & Hard Work (6)                                 | <i>"I do hope to have some impact by using my skills however they can be used, working diligently and doing good work."</i> (Female, 18-24, expects to have moderate impact)   |
| Sustainability (4)  | <i>"Working closely with the local Khmer employed in this organisation. They must be the ones to lead the change and implement it. Any changes/improvements I make must be sustainable and that can only happen if the locals understand and buy into the change. I can help facilitate the change, but if they don't understand or believe in it, it will not be sustainable after I leave."</i> (Female 31-35, expects to have high impact)  |
| Setting Clear Objectives (3)                              | <i>"I might achieve this impact by completing my program of work, making connections with my coworkers, thoroughly completing my tasks and ensuring they are relevant and applicable after I leave."</i> (Female, 18-24, expects to have moderately high impact)   |

**Box 2. Volunteers' Comments on How They Will Achieve Impact**

The survey also asked how respondents expected their experience to impact their own lives. The chart below shows most participants (80% or 24/30) expected their experience to "very much" or "extremely" impact their own lives.



**Chart 12. Expected Impact on Volunteer's Own Life (n=30)**

Responses to the follow-up, open-ended question, "If you think it will [impact your own life], how?" can be divided into four categories: learning, planning, changing, and gratitude/perspective. Participants thought the experience would impact them in one or more of these ways. "Learning" included greater understanding of the issues with which they were working, the Cambodian context and history, and/or the work being done by their Host Organisations. "Planning" involved decision-making around future career and aspirations and preparing for these through the volunteer experience. "Changing" revolved around becoming or evolving into a different person as a result of the experience. "Gratitude/perspective" included having a change of worldview or being reminded of how "lucky" or "blessed" one is compared to poor people in a developing country. Responses

were evenly distributed over the four categories (six, five, five, and six, respectively). The box below contains some of the follow-up comments on the question of impact on one's own life.

| Question: If you think your volunteer experience will impact your life after you have left Cambodia, how? |   |
|---|---|
| Category  | Participant Comments  |
| Learning (6)  | <p><i>"I am already learning so much about history, about how much the nations impact each other and from the Khmer culture. I am learning more about God's heart and also about faith." (Female, 18-24, expects experience to impact her life very much)</i></p> <p><i>"I will benefit from an improved understanding of the operations and challenges of social service agencies in developing countries." (Male, 25-30, expects experience to impact his life very much)</i></p> |
| Planning (5)  | <i>"I will have a lot more of an idea of what I am able to do in this field, and will have so much more knowledge on the issue of trafficking, and anti-trafficking methods, this will hugely impact my future." (Female, 18-24, expects experience to impact her life very much)</i>   |
| Changing (5)  | <i>"Every time I visit a new country or meet some one different from me, I find that my understanding and view of the world expands. Any time you live in a new culture, that experience becomes a part of who you are." (Female, 18-24, expects experience to impact her life very much)</i>   |
| Gratitude/Perspective (6)   | <i>"I am always impacted after learning about a new culture, seeing what is "real" to them and how daily life works. It makes me analyze the things in life that I thought were set in stone but may not really be. Also, working within the topic of human trafficking has opened my eyes to the many discrepancies that exist between the real issue and the information we are fed in the West." (Female, 18-24, expects experience to impact her life very much)</i>            |

**Box 3. Volunteers' Comments on How Their Experience Will Impact Their Own Lives**

### Volunteer Host Organisations

Volunteer participants were asked a number of questions about the host organisations with which they were volunteering. It is important to note the information below is based on volunteer respondents' perceptions, not on host organizations' own documentation.

Of the 30 volunteer participants who answered questions about their Host Organisation, 43% (13/30) had never heard of the Host Organisation prior to beginning the process of finding a volunteer opportunity, 43% (13/30) had previously heard of the Host Organisation, and 13% (4/30) had heard of the Host Organisation, but in name only. Also, 83% (25/30) of respondents had not worked or volunteered with the Host Organisation in another country or their country of residence, and 17% (5/30) had. Of the latter group, these experiences ranged from working as an employee for the NGO's head office to one-off awareness or fundraising campaigns. The box below outlines how volunteer participants first came into contact with their Host Organisation. As shown in the box, the most common referral methods were personal (see Lines 1 and 2), followed by "cold call" methods (see Lines 3 and 4).

| How did you first hear about the Organisation you are currently volunteering with? |  |             |
|--|--|-------------|
| 1.   | Through your church  | 7           |
| 2.   | You personally know someone who has worked/volunteered for this NGO                    | 7           |
| 3.   | Through a Google/Internet search   | 5           |
| 4.   | Volunteer trip recruitment/facilitation company or organisation (Sending Organisation) | 5           |
| 5.   | Through the personal recommendation of someone else                                    | 2           |
| 6.   | Through your school  | 2           |
| 7.   | By going on a Short-Term Mission   | 1           |
| 8.   | Other (unspecified)  | 1           |
| 9.   | Did not answer   | 2           |
|  | TOTAL  | <b>n=32</b> |

#### Box 4. How Volunteers Learned About Host Organisation (n=32)

The chart below outlines, from the perspective of the volunteers, the main foci of host organisations, within the human rights sector.

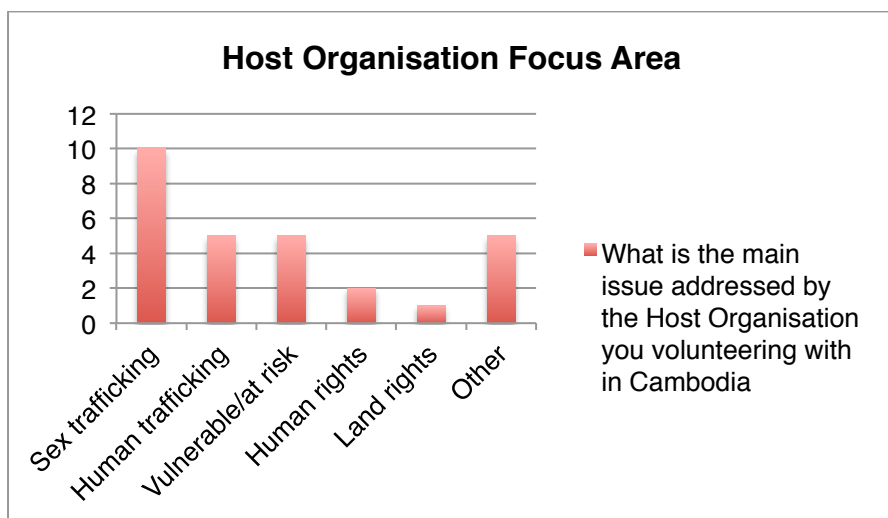


Chart 13. Host Organisation Focus Area Within Human Rights (n=28)

Over half of respondents (54%) stated their host organisation mainly addressed trafficking, with two-thirds stating they addressed sex trafficking and a third stating they addressed general human trafficking. Other options chosen were “vulnerable/at risk groups,” “human rights (general),” and “land rights.” Other survey options were labour trafficking, gender-based violence (e.g. domestic violence, rape, forced marriage), and legal issues, as well as “other,” which was chosen by 18% of respondents, and was not specified.

#### Volunteer Management

Volunteers were asked a number of questions about how they felt their host organisation managed them, including how the organisation communicated expectations and objectives, and what type of supervision was provided. Overall, volunteers saw their host organisations as moderately- to well-organized, with 37% of respondents describing their host organisation as “very organized,” and 41% describing their host organisation as “moderately organized” (the remaining 7%, 11%, and 1% described their host organisation as “extremely,” “a little,” and “not at all” organized, respectively). When asked to expand on the question, one respondent stated, “There seems to be discrepancies between the organisation based in the US and the organisation based in Cambodia.”

One respondent stated, “I don't think they necessarily do what they say they are doing. So when you arrive with the vision they told you, you see it's not really necessarily in pursuit solely of that vision you believed you were going to work in. It's slightly disorganized and unfocused.” This relates to both the organisation of the host NGO and to the communicated expectations of the volunteer's position.

## Leader Interviews



### Participant Profiles

The research team performed 14 interviews with organisation leaders. The interview participants represented a variety of types of organisations working in human rights in Cambodia. The majority worked for organisations doing direct counter-trafficking work, but others represented organisations working in child protection, women’s rights, land dispute issues, domestic violence, LGBTQ issues, and general human rights. This was reflected also in the volunteer surveys, the majority of short-term volunteer respondents indicating they were working with organisations dealing with issues of sex trafficking.

The table below lists the organisations that were represented in NGO Leader Interviews, and whether these organisations are international or Cambodia NGOs. A total of 14 interviews were conducted, with 16 participants.

**Table 2. Interview Participants**

| Inter-view No. | Organisation Origin (“International” or “Local”) | Gender of Participant(s) | Origin of Participant(s) (“Khmer” or “Foreigner”) | Position of Participants               |
|----------------|--|--------------------------|---|--|
| 1              | International                                    | Female                   | Khmer   | Country manager                        |
| 2              | Local (2 participants)                           | Female                   | Khmer & Foreigner                                 | Country director & volunteer assistant |
| 3              | Local (2 participants)                           | Female                   | Khmer & Foreigner                                 | HR manager & Volunteer Coordinator     |
| 4              | International                                    | Male                     | Foreigner   | Country director                       |
| 5              | International                                    | Male                     | Foreigner   | Volunteer coordinator                  |
| 6              | International                                    | Female                   | Khmer (raised abroad)                             | Country manager                        |
| 7              | International                                    | Male                     | Khmer   | HR manager                             |
| 8              | International                                    | Female                   | Foreigner   | Country director                       |
| 9              | International                                    | Female                   | Khmer   | Program director                       |
| 10             | Local  | Female                   | Foreigner   | Country director                       |
| 11             | International                                    | Male                     | Foreigner   | Country director                       |
| 12             | International                                    | Female                   | Foreigner   | Volunteer coordinator                  |
| 13             | International                                    | Female                   | Foreigner   | Volunteer coordinator                  |

|    |               |        |           |                  |
|----|---------------|--------|-----------|------------------|
| 14 | International | Female | Foreigner | Country director |
|----|---------------|--------|-----------|------------------|

As seen above, there were a total of three local NGOs and 11 international NGOs represented. Four interviewees were male and 12 were female; six were Khmer and 10 were foreigners. The interviewees occupied a number of different positions in their NGOs: there were two Country Managers, six Country Directors, one Program Director, four Volunteer Coordinators, and two HR Managers represented (one participant was a volunteer assistant to the Country Director).

### Word Analysis

The 14 interviews resulted in over 42,500 words of transcript; a selective word analysis was done in order to draw out patterns and themes in issues brought up by interviewees. The table below shows the results of the selective word count from all 14 interviews. Words were grouped together based on root words; for example, the word “work” would also include instances of “worked,” “working,” “worker,” and “works.”

**Table 3. Word Repetition in Leader Interviews**

| Word:         | Reps: | Word:        | Reps: | Word:       | Reps: | Word:           | Reps: |
|---------------|-------|--------------|-------|-------------|-------|-----------------|-------|
| Work          | 290   | Partners     | 42    | Encourage   | 21    | Attachment      | 8     |
| Come          | 257   | Development  | 41    | Benefit     | 19    | Contribute      | 8     |
| Need          | 176   | Expectations | 38    | Difficult   | 19    | Heart           | 8     |
| More          | 140   | Teach        | 36    | Young       | 19    | Risk            | 8     |
| Help          | 100   | Report       | 34    | Local       | 15    | Adapt           | 7     |
| Doing         | 71    | Bring        | 33    | Resource    | 15    | Alongside       | 7     |
| Team          | 71    | Share        | 33    | Feedback    | 14    | Confidentiality | 7     |
| Different     | 66    | Skills       | 32    | Informal    | 13    | Goals           | 7     |
| Research      | 65    | Relationship | 31    | Input       | 13    | Attitude        | 6     |
| Understanding | 64    | Cultural     | 30    | Structure   | 13    | Behaviour       | 6     |
| Experience    | 60    | Together     | 30    | Evaluation  | 12    | Boundaries      | 6     |
| Take          | 58    | Communicate  | 29    | Interact    | 12    | Conflict        | 6     |
| Give          | 57    | Social       | 29    | Purpose     | 11    | Mature          | 6     |
| Support       | 56    | Role         | 28    | Care        | 10    | Qualified       | 6     |
| Learn         | 53    | Tasks        | 27    | Effective   | 10    | Commitment      | 5     |
| Able          | 52    | Challenging  | 25    | Value       | 10    | Debrief         | 5     |
| Management    | 50    | Communities  | 24    | Adjust      | 9     | Honest          | 5     |
| Supervision   | 49    | Build        | 22    | Emotionally | 9     | Independent     | 5     |
| Training      | 49    | Process      | 22    | Flexible    | 9     | Perspective     | 5     |
| Impact        | 47    | Change       | 21    | Focus       | 9     | Practical       | 5     |

Interestingly, the third most used word by interviewees was “need” (repeated 176 times) pointing to the importance of having volunteers respond to a stated or understood need by the Host Organisation. Even words that themselves did not get repeated a large number of times point to larger themes discussed by more than one participant. For example, themes around the word “emotionally” (repeated 9 times), often paired with the word “stable,” and the word “mature” (repeated 6 times) were discussed by six different interviewees, mainly around the question of what they look for in an ideal volunteer.

Another word used multiple times by interviewees was “team” (repeated 71 times), around themes of volunteers fitting into and mixing well with an NGO’s already existing staff frameworks and contributing to project objectives rather than acting in a separate or lone actor capacity. Similarly, the word “partners” (repeated 42 times) often related to keeping good relationships with the NGO’s partners, preparing volunteers to interact appropriately with the NGO’s partners, or not allowing short-term volunteers to contact partners without a staff representative alongside them.

## Volunteer Recruitment & Management

“Just because someone wants to come doesn't mean they're the right fit. And just because somebody's free doesn't mean that they're going to make your program better.”  
(Female Leader, Expat, International NGO)

The volunteer recruitment and management practices of organisations differed greatly and ranged from formal and well managed to informal and ad hoc. Some organisations recruited volunteers as they would a staff member, sometimes even head hunting a particular volunteer consultant, while others relied solely on choosing volunteers from potential applicants who contacted them on their own. Most organisations expected volunteers to adhere to the same policies as their own staff, particularly when it came to Child Protection Policies and Codes of Conduct. Supervision practices ranged from informal and irregular to very regular check-ins and formal evaluations.

### Recruitment

The most important recruitment issue that came up in leader interviews was the identification of an NGO's needs and the appropriate matching of volunteer applicants to these identified needs. Leaders who spoke of having very clear guidelines, TORs, or written job descriptions for their volunteers tended to also speak less often of negative volunteer experiences in their organisation.

“I think wording the TORs [is] really important in two ways: the scope of work: What is the scope of work? What does the individual bring? What does the individual hope to achieve? [This] takes quite a bit of work”  
(Female Leader, Expat, International NGO).

“First of all, I think you have to must have a reliable source to send volunteer out for one thing. Two, you have to be able to identify the need for yourself, so you can find the person who can match with your need and you have to have internal guidelines and rules to let volunteer abide with, so you know what is expectation for them and what is expectation for organization, and you must have a clear supervisions and expectations” (Female Leader, Khmer, International NGO).

Having a clear job description was part of a larger issue discussed of setting clear expectations for a volunteer's time and impact, clear supervision and lines of communication, and a clear framework within which the volunteer fit into the organisation.

Another issue around recruitment that came up in multiple leader interviews had to do with the level of control the Host Organisation had vis-à-vis the Sending Organisation, or headquarters in, most often, a Western country. Volunteer selection and screening, in international NGOs, was often led by the head office, with varying levels of input by field office leadership. In some cases, field office leadership in Cambodia had a high level of control over who volunteered, with their headquarters acting as a conduit for screening and communication between the volunteer and the Host Organisation. In other cases, leaders had no say in who was sent to volunteer in their programs, and were sometimes even disregarded by their head office when asking them to send or not to send a certain type of volunteer. Generally, leaders who had a higher level of input or control over which volunteers were chosen to work with their programs had more positive experiences and less negative feedback about the quality or relevance of the volunteer's contribution.

“[Interns] are sent over from Headquarters, but anyway we will get involved. So Headquarters intern department interview the [applicants] there... and if they think [they are good] they match the intern applicants to the field office. So if [interns are] interested to come to Cambodia, to Southeast Asia, they will have us meet through phone call and conference call and we will interview her, and get to know each other. So the process is very structured” (Female Leader, Khmer, International NGO).

“I wish [I had the final say on volunteer applicants], I like to think that I do, but I don't. Sometimes, obviously, volunteers provide financial things as well, they become good advocates, they help pay the rent on the accommodation house we have, they provide support and stuff like that, and so usually, whether we say yes or no, we express concerns, if we are at capacity we feel or if it's a short-term, like we minimally take a month is the shortest, but if we've had a couple of those and there's been a bit of transition we try and say “no.” Sometimes [head office] listens, it gets heard, and other times it's like “No, they're coming” (Male Leader, Expat, International NGO).

Also, some leaders talked about how they often felt they could not turn away a short-term volunteer, mainly because of a combination of the volunteer raising their own funds and especially if the volunteer had been previously financially involved with the organisation. Host Organisation leaders may tend to accept these volunteers in hopes of continued financial assistance or out of obligation because the individual had donated to their programs. Related to this is the issue of volunteer intake: organisations often feel obligated to take volunteers solely on the volunteer's schedule when, in fact, this creates much more work for the organisation.

“The other big one is just the scattered timetable in which, at the moment, our volunteers arrive. They just come, they make their own dates ... It's just incredibly time consuming, having to orientate people all the time, so that's something that we are looking at, just having 2 intakes a year” (Male Leader, Expat, International NGO).

An important aspect of volunteer recruitment for organisation leaders was the communication with prospective volunteers before the latter arrived in country, especially face-to-face communication, enabled long-distance through the use of Skype and other video call applications. This allowed organisation leaders and volunteers to get to know each other, ask questions, and, most importantly, set expectations and work tasks to enable the volunteer to prepare for their placement. Leaders emphasized needing to put a lot of time and thought into recruiting and screening applicants to ensure a good fit.

“I would say really spend the time on the recruitment process that it requires, sometimes I would see a good CV, a good cover letter, and I would say ‘ok, its fine’ and then it was not that fine” (Female Leader, Expat, Local NGO).

### **Management**

In terms of volunteer supervision, findings were varied. Most leaders reported having a combination of formal and informal supervision practices. Overall, end-of-term evaluations were a mechanism for the volunteer to give feedback to the organisation on their experience and very little in terms of evaluating the volunteer's contribution, even among interns volunteering for academic credit. Host Organisations perhaps do not feel it is their place to evaluate a volunteer's work, as the latter is providing a free service.

Organisations with well-established volunteer programs had better processes for supervision, doing weekly or bi-weekly check-ins, as well as mid-term and final evaluations with their volunteers. Organisations with more ad hoc volunteer recruitment and management had little to no formal supervision, but reported having informal conversations about “how the volunteer was doing.”

In conclusion, the quote below sums up the risks of not having a proper volunteer recruitment and management framework.

“Because my position as volunteer coordinator is very new, I arrived actually at the same time that our current team arrived, so at the moment we do no orientation, we do no debriefing, anybody who applies we welcome and it's gone pretty well up until now, up until the last team where I think a lot of things, because none of that is done, went really, really wrong” (Female Leader, Expat, International NGO).

Having in place a well-structured system of recruitment, orientation, management, and job description development decreases the risk of having ineffective volunteers, negative impacts, and bad experiences for short-term volunteers.

### Length of Time in Country

“It was just too bad she wasn't able to stay longer.”  
(Female Leader, Expat, International NGO)

Overall, the consensus was the longer a volunteer stays, the higher the potential impact they will have on the program with which they are volunteering. Additionally, many interviewees stated volunteers have very little impact if they stay for the less than six months, and some were even opposed to hosting a volunteer for under six months. Some leaders reported getting feedback from short-term volunteers who realised themselves that their time was too short and regretted not committing to a longer period.

“If it's shorter [than 3 months], it's too much work, [it's] at the bottom of the list of priorities, and my priorities are Cambodian colleagues, second is international consultants, third is Cambodian interns and fourth is international interns. So they're at the bottom, so anything less than three months is too much work, is too intrusive” (Female Leader, Expat, Local NGO).

“We tried just a few times to have a short term volunteer and the reason that: it took time for the short-term volunteer to learn about the nature of our work, to learn about our work environment, and also to learn how to work in the multi-cultural team work. It takes time for them, at least 3 months for them to understand everything ... Interns feel that they wish that they had more time to do the work. Even the one-year interns, sometimes they extend it another 6 months, another year” (Female Leader, Khmer, International NGO).

“It takes six months to realize [where you are] and by then you're only starting to get traction and by the time you're starting to get traction you're already preparing to exit and leave the country and all the things that come with that. So it's taken a lot of productivity in the meantime by everyone else to hold their hand, language, get your best people having to work beside these people and ... your best national workers, usually. So no one is running on all four cylinders ... If I had my way, I wouldn't have them” (Male Leader, Expat, International NGO).

“I really want to, if possible, recommend that I want volunteers to think a bit longer. Some volunteers coming like three months ... they regret to make a three month commitment, so I think any form of awareness about this kind of thing, especially for students or interns, someone who wants to volunteer to know that and prepare for that and help them to understand what is the benefit for it to be a bit longer” (Female Leader, Khmer, International NGO).

“[They] can't even learn the road rules in that amount of time; the first six months is creating an autonomous volunteer who has enough understanding within the scope of what they've been given to actually do that, in my opinion the next 18 months is about being able to implement or develop that further” (Male Leader, Expat, International NGO).

Even though a longer volunteer period was always preferable, leaders gave insight into how a short-term volunteer (i.e. under three or six months) can have a positive impact of the organisation. By focusing the volunteer's time on concrete, clearly defined tasks, the organisation's staff and leaders could then focus on the larger mission of the NGO.



“Volunteers are not coming just because, ‘I want to do good in Cambodia and I really have a heart for it.’ That’s important, but there’s going to be a process of transfer of skills, hopefully, and very short-term volunteers cannot do that; but they can focus on one particular task” (Female Leader, Expat, International NGO).

“[W]e learn that it’s helpful for when we have an intern for just a short time, just research, not involved in our program support, like supporting our program” (Female Leader, Khmer, International NGO).

Leaders reported it was unhelpful to have short-term volunteers come in to start a new initiative or project because they often leave before the initiative has really gotten off the ground. The volunteers have often not had enough time to transfer ownership and management of the project to someone else and often short-term volunteers’ time does not overlap with one another, creating a gap in project knowledge and ownership between one volunteer and the next. There was an interesting contrast in opinions from two NGO leaders on this issue. Using the example of teacher trainers, one leader stated it was a great benefit to have a rolling supply of volunteer trainers coming in to work with the NGO’s teachers, while another said it was actually confusing for their teachers to have many different trainers coming and going.

“[I]f [volunteers] hadn’t been here, I would definitely say staff capacity, Khmer staff capacity, would not have advanced as quickly or as efficiently without the volunteers. Just being fed into on a pretty constant basis, in particular our teacher and our social workers ... The last year we facilitated about 150,000 dollars worth of volunteer hours ... it’s all the little things that get done that wouldn’t have been done” (Male Leader, Expat, International NGO).

“[F]or our staff, if they have 13 different people come in a year’s time and teach them 13 different ways to teach, then they’re discombobulated, there’s no way that they can actually effectively teach something because they’re not sure which person did it right. So for us, unless it’s a continual person that comes and maybe teaches a different way of teaching, and it’s the same person that is educating them so that they learn the same way each time, then it’s not sustainable. So volunteers that way, for us, are not beneficial” (Female Leader, Expat, International NGO).

### **Maturity Level of Volunteer**

A frequent theme on what leaders look for in potential volunteers is a certain level of maturity and emotional stability. As mentioned above, six interviewees talked about volunteers’ maturity and emotional stability in relation to what their organisation looks for in potential volunteers. Some stated this in terms of “Christian maturity,” but overall the sentiment was to have an individual who had a level of resilience, self-awareness, and life experience to be able to deal well with a new culture, a temporary environment, and, especially, be able to deal well with a trauma environment.

“I say please make sure person is emotionally healthy... because we work with the girls who are very emotional. If you heard the story you would cry, you would feel sorry, you would have compassion towards the girl, so if you're not healthy it might be a trigger. Because we work with the girls who were sexually abused, raped or trafficking, in addition to their family's issues, so make sure a person is very healthy because it can be trigger” (Female Leader, Khmer, International NGO).

“I've noticed Cambodia has a way of bringing stuff up in people's life, where they think they had it safely buried and it doesn't bother them, and then they come here and it really comes up. Or people come here... also kind of running away from something. So running away from a bad situation, or just wanting to get out... but all that stuff you leave, you don't leave it behind, you end up taking it with you ...[I]t's very difficult, here, to pick up the pieces, because you do have less (sic) counsellors or therapists than you would have in the U.S. or in Europe or whatever, and then they're far away from their family ... that can end up making something that would not be such a huge deal at home be very big deal.” (Female Leader, Expat, International NGO).

Some leaders talked about maturity in terms of the age factor, preferring to take on older short-term volunteers and not take younger ones, especially “gap year” volunteers. Others made the point that age was not as important a factor as personality. Most agreed that having relevant experience and skills were useful in short-term volunteers, which are often related to more years experience in a certain field or sector.

“If we're going to have a development impact at all, we need people with experience, with knowledge: what are they bringing? Otherwise it can be an unguided missile” (Female Leader, Expat, International NGO).

“[T]he criteria that we want in intern [is] mature Christian and also very flexible, have experience working with multicultural teamwork, has experience working abroad” (Female Leader, Khmer, International NGO).

“[S]omebody who's mature, and that actually isn't age related, that's really personality related. Somebody who's really independent, an independent thinker, and independent doer who doesn't require a lot of micro-management. Somebody who comes up with actually feasible and creative idea” (Female Leader, Expat, International NGO).

According to some leaders, volunteers could show their maturity in how they approached their expected impact, expressing an understanding that such a short timeframe would decrease their impact. Leaders seemed to like volunteers who were realistic about how much they would be able to do and contribute, and who were not too much of a burden on the organisation's staff and leaders. This relates to the “saviour complex” some volunteers exhibit, contrasting with others who submit to doing “grunt work” that still contributes to the NGO's mission.

Host Organisations can set expectations for a volunteer's attitude and behaviour, but can also include certain attributes and criteria in the volunteer selection process itself.

“Our recruitment process is not ideal. That was something that I've been realizing this year and been wanting to overhaul, because we were getting people who were emotionally very unstable, or people who were just not ready for the experience. They were ready for a more sheltered, lower-key version of what we were having them do or expecting of them, but who weren't ready for the whole thing” (Female Leader, Expat, International NGO).

### **Impact on Direct Care Program Beneficiaries**

For organisations working directly with survivors of human rights abuses, many leaders were especially aware of the potential attachment issues that risk developing with the coming and going of short-term volunteers. The words “attachment” (repeated 8 times), “confidentiality” (7 times), “behaviour (6 times), and “boundaries” (6 times) were used by six NGO leader interviewees, discussing protecting program beneficiaries and volunteers from forming unhealthy relationships and attachments that could harm beneficiaries in any way.

“Because we service to young women who are having trauma experience, and attachment issues are big issues for them, so having new person changing all the time and they get connected with them, a lot of emotions; so I am very reluctant to have short-term volunteers when they are less than two month or three months” (Female Leader, Khmer, International NGO).

Some interviewees spoke of the positive impact short-term volunteers had on program beneficiaries in a shelter setting, with most also adding that these positive impacts need to happen under supervision and with clear guidelines set out to the volunteer.

The general consensus was that if short-term volunteers are coming and going from these programs, especially aftercare programs, they should not be working directly with beneficiaries and, if they are, it is the responsibility of the Host Organisation to ensure they are very well prepared and trained to work with vulnerable people. Volunteers should also be willing to come for long enough and to adhere to a regular cycle in the beneficiary's life (e.g. a full school year, a summer camp). Part of preparing volunteers to work with vulnerable people is ensuring they know the responsibility for the type of relationship they will have with a beneficiary is theirs, not the beneficiary's.

“One big thing that we are focusing on at the moment in particular with the short-term [volunteers] is attachment. It's really, really hard to take the responsibility away from the girls in the volunteer's mind, in terms of: the girls are becoming attached to the volunteers, but the volunteers are... not drawing that connection that it's actually things that they are doing that are enhancing that. So yeah, that's something that we are really focusing in on at the moment, in how we can change the whole structure of our volunteer program. Because at the end of the day, if it's affecting the ones that we are here to help, it's not worth having volunteers at all.” (Male Leader, Expat, International NGO).

“[W]ith all of our teams that come as well as individual people that come, we try to explain to them that their role is not to be the counsellor or the house mother for the girls in our safe houses because it's easy to come and want to be the saviour or know the story and it's not theirs to know, because then it doesn't teach our girls what real, sustainable relationships look like” (Female Leader, Expat, International NGO).

Overall, organisations had strict policies and practices in place to limit the interaction between short-term volunteers and vulnerable clients; however, a smaller number showed little awareness or concern for these risks. For example, one NGO leader spoke of a short-term volunteer spending one month in the organisation's safe shelter for underage girls; when asked if she had undergone any training or had to sign a protection policy on behavioural protocols, the leader looked at a loss and plainly said, “No.” Another leader knew the disadvantages of unhealthy attachment, but believed the “relationships” between volunteers and beneficiaries were worth the risk.

“The disadvantages: they build the relationships that they start [and] at the end of the week they're gone forever. So for the girls, they mention that, ‘Oh, now they're gone,’ so they just start a relationship and then they gone... Sometime I notice the staff are, in terms of meeting with the girls one-on-one, is break up because the short-term [group] comes. The consistency of meeting with the girls is not there because we are busy with the short-terms. We love the short-terms, we want them to be here, but at the same time sometimes the staff could not see the girls because they come for that week” (Female Leader, Khmer, International NGO).

This leader even admitted that the care and counseling for beneficiaries was regularly interrupted due to the scheduling and hosting of short-term visitors to the project. On the other hand, the same organisation had clear policies in place for short-term visitors, including strict “no photography” rules.

Finally, one interviewee spoke about appropriate spiritual boundaries between volunteers and program clients.

“That's actually part of our volunteer orientation, that these are vulnerable children, and while your faith is very important and personal to you, it's also very important and personal to the kids, so they need to be in a place where they don't feel pressured to be one thing or another. But that's hard because, honestly, most of the people who can afford to come are faith-based, and not just Christian but various faith-based, and the reason they're coming here is with a mission, and the conversion, and we're not okay with that. And that's actually been a big thing, so it's not that we wouldn't want a faithful person, we would just want one that knows the appropriate boundaries of faith in these populations” (Female Leader, Expat, International NGO).

Host Organisations and volunteers in the human rights sector should both be mindful of the dynamics at play in the lives of vulnerable populations, and how short-term volunteers can affect program beneficiaries.

### Power Dynamics

There were interesting findings on the power dynamics between foreign volunteers and local staff. Power Dynamics was the most touched upon subject in focus group discussions with Khmer staff. In general, Khmer leaders, managers, and staff brought these issues up more than expat leaders and volunteers, who in many cases seemed completely unaware of these dynamics, leading to the supposition that expat workers may not think them as important as they may actually be. Khmer leaders and staff spoke of these dynamics in terms of expat volunteers having a higher education than local staff, and attitudes of superiority on the part of volunteers.

“Another case is, try to have their be alongside, but [volunteers] don't think so, they think that because they have higher education, they get well trained, get credit for universities, and they not really respect the local people. They feel like the local people do nothing, know nothing. And that attitude can cause a lot of conflicts, the conflict within the team, the conflict within managements” (Female Leader, Khmer, International NGO).

“I think having volunteers that come saying ‘I have something that you need,’ I think that just continues to divide... [and] add to these power imbalances that are so destructive” (Female Leader, Expat, International NGO).

Most interestingly, Khmer staff in focus group discussions spoke of the way foreign volunteers interacted with and treated Khmer staff, seen by the latter as superior and abrasive. This may be accounted for at least in part by a difference in cultural working practices.

“To me, sometimes [volunteers] act like they are very busy, like they are very important like just come in and not talk with me, don't say anything, not speaking to the staff ... Yeah, without greeting the staff and they act like they are very important ... Yeah, they act important, like they know that they have more education, and more knowledge and more exper-- not more experience, but, in terms of academic knowledge ... [S]ome of them are very cold, you know, in terms of their interaction with the staff and sometimes the staff can feel looked down upon.” (Male Staff, Khmer, International NGO).

One interviewee blatantly stated if volunteers were unable to respect their Cambodian colleagues and be able to work under the supervision of a Cambodian manager, they would be asked to leave their position early.

### Cultural Orientation

On the whole, many organisations do not orient their short-term volunteers adequately, especially with regards to cultural difference and working with Cambodians. When asked about cultural orientation, most leaders spoke of teaching volunteers how to get around, a few Khmer words and phrases, and a few cultural practices to be aware of. Leaders also talked about cultural misunderstandings and how they try to mitigate that by preparing volunteers.

“Our cultural orientation and touch boundaries - and that's not just with the kids, it's with the staff too - rapport boundaries, and sort of you think that they're being so nice to you because you're so awesome, and actually they don't know you and that's the polite face for outsiders. So that's like, don't think you're in and like, punch on the arm friends, nor with the kids. So we do that, and also just basic sort of like Khmer appropriateness stuff. Food stuff, sharing of food, discussions of what things are ok to discuss, what things aren't” (Female Leader, Expat, International NGO).

“[We talk] about Cambodian cultures, the city of Phnom Penh, like that. Just for them to know the people and the places where they should go, and what they should be careful about” (Male Leader, Khmer, International NGO).

“Unofficially, the other international consultants have orientation in the office, and then unofficially it's done in practice, but it's not written anywhere. The other consultants - international consultants - then take out the intern and talk to them about the city, our organization and so on” (Female Leader, Expat, Local NGO).

Volunteers and leaders spoke of getting an orientation before arriving in the country, with little orientation upon arrival; often the orientation beforehand has nothing to do with the specific country to which volunteers are travelling, but more about the culture and programs of the organisation. Interestingly, even though leaders spoke of conflict, misunderstandings, or confusion between expat volunteers and Khmer staff, no one mentioned doing any orientation or training on how to work effectively in a cross-cultural context.

“I think I have quite an issue with them, especially the young interns. They don't know much about the culture and you know, in terms of their behaviour, and how they dress and things like that. It's just like they were not briefed about the culture or something like that, and they also in terms of how they work, you know they work - it's kind of different from how we do things here... They don't understand people's feelings. If the other people - the Cambodian people - work with them they don't understand how they, they try to explain to them. Because I think of different perspectives on work and stuff. Sometimes they can be very direct. And that kind of hurts people's feelings too, you know.” (Male Staff, Khmer, International NGO).

### The “Ideal” Volunteer

In each interview, NGO leaders were asked to describe their ideal short-term volunteer, based on their experiences and recruitment processes. Apart from what has already been described in the sections above, the following were some additional thoughts from leaders on what they look for in a volunteer for their organisation.

Almost all NGO leader interviewees talked about needing volunteers with relevant experience and/or education to be able to offer a concrete skill and task to the organisation. One interviewee explained her preference for graduate students in that “it makes a difference in terms of the quality of writing research.” One interviewee stated it was preferable to have a volunteer who had been previously travelled outside their home country.

Leaders also sought volunteers with experience in their work sector or with experience that matched the job description. Leaders were more likely to accept volunteers with some level of expertise or experience. Leaders talked about having a professional come in and train program staff or develop a vocational training workshop for clients. One leader said he liked when someone had a level of experience beyond academic knowledge of the issue. It was more difficult to assign and manage a volunteer when either their experience and education were lacking or irrelevant to the work the organisation was doing.

Some of the specific areas of experience and education noted by interviewees included: creative communications, journalism, report writing and editing, research, computer and Internet skills, and social media skills. The traits listed below were also deemed important in volunteers.

### Independence

Leaders were looking for short-term volunteers with a specific set of skills and experience, but were also looking for volunteers who were proactive in their approach to their candidacy as well as their work ethic.

Words used to describe an ideal volunteer included “proactive,” “independent thinker,” “independent worker,” “self-starter,” and “sense of initiative.”

“[We look for] somebody who's really independent, an independent thinker, and independent doer who doesn't require a lot of micro-management; somebody who comes up with actually feasible and creative idea” (Female Leader, Expat, International NGO).

“First and foremost [we look at] the background experience, the education. Second is the ability and then showing us interest in gaps, the way we do that, at least in my mind, is they... look at our website and other publications, so they're not just randomly trying to apply, but they've really have looked into what [our organisation] does and suggested what they can contribute or outline what they like to do, what they're good at, which is actually my favourite, I've always accepted interns or volunteers who are confident about what they're good at and what they like to do” (Female Leader, Expat, Local NGO).

Related to this, a common response from leaders in terms of advantages of having short-term volunteers was that they often bring a fresh perspective to an organisation or a program, inspiring a renewed passion for the work in regular staff, or even providing a new way of doing things.

“[Short-term volunteers] are a great resource for uplifting long-term expats. And providing new energy, new ideas, new enthusiasm. Yeah, so that's definitely a bonus, having people come in and give that bit of a boost, providing new resources, new forms of education and that sort of stuff. We've certainly, though we have our way and we kind of run with that, we are also very open to hearing from our volunteers if it could, if they feel it could be done better in any different way, and we try to take that on board as much as possible” (Male Leader, Expat, International NGO).

Some surveyed volunteers also agreed that this was something they could bring to the organisation with which they were volunteering. One volunteer stated, “I am just an intern here for a few months but I think I offer a new perspective.” Another volunteer elaborated, “Since I am not involved in direct services, I can work on long-term projects that are difficult to prioritize versus day-to-day activities and crises. By virtue of my volunteer status and recent arrival, I can also offer objective fresh viewpoints without concern for institutional politics or precedent.”

#### ***Open-Mindedness & Humility***

Leaders appreciated volunteers who approached their experience with a sense of humility, openness to learning, and flexibility to adapt to a new environment. Being able to adapt to a new culture is especially important when a volunteer is in country for a short period of time, and an inability to manage their culture shock could impede their work and impact both their experience and the Host Organisation negatively.

“I think the best ones are the ones who adjust fairly quickly to the culture, they're not exasperated by things that get irritating to a lot of people” (Male Leader, Expat, International NGO).

Humility was another characteristic leaders looked for. Both leaders and Khmer staff touched on issues around pride and arrogance of volunteers. Some Khmer participants in focus group discussions complained about volunteers who came into their organisation “knowing it all,” and had little time for consultation with local staff. Volunteers who are willing to learn through their experience were highly regarded. Flexibility was deemed important as circumstances and environment could quickly change.

“One of the biggest [criteria] is that they understand, I guess, what it is to be a good volunteer, and they have a servant’s heart, in the sense that-- this notion that they are actually coming to serve us and particularly the girls in our care” (Male Leader, Expat, International NGO).

“I think one, they have, they want to be service to other people and they humble to learn and open mind for new culture and flexibility. And another thing is they willing to contribute. It is very important because some volunteers are when we value their skills they start to be proud of themselves and start to challenge with our staff, why we are qualified, you don't pay us. That will be a big headache for me to be you know, we appreciate what they contributing but at the same time, we are not in position that we can pay them.” (Female Leader, Khmer, International NGO).

[Describing a particular volunteer] “She has approached it very much like, ‘I have so much to learn from this community, and I'm studying ... it feels so strange to just be reading about people in books, and it's such a privilege and opportunity to living amongst people’” (Female Leader, Expat, International NGO).

“I think somebody who is really a learner, that that would be primarily the thing, that they come here open to learning, they haven't got fixed ideas as to way things work, even if they've done research before, they need to know, that this is not where they did it before” (Male Leader, Expat, International NGO).

### *Working Alongside Cambodians*

Related to humility, openness, and flexibility was the issue of being able to work effectively and respectfully with Cambodian colleagues. Leaders liked when expat volunteers and Khmer staff could work collaboratively on projects and saw their staff and volunteers learning from one another, rather than it being a one-way exchange.

“When I say alongside which means that they both go to field together and they interview the case and volunteer get a chance to observe and get insight of what are they learning from that. And normally when they go to field, they put up some sort of small report and volunteer will give input and put that report into English and our staff will incorporate it into Khmer as well. So I think work alongside is more like this right now” (Female Leader, Khmer, International NGO).

One leader stated a short-term volunteer’s contribution was irrelevant unless there was an element of sustainability in the form of a transfer of skills from the volunteer to the staff.

“[There must be] a very clear understanding of what knowledge they're bringing to this program, what is it that will be transferred to national staff at the end of this process? So while we may need someone to work on a brochure, and get someone from marketing, and it's important to work on that brochure, what are they going to do to ensure that I don't have to bring another volunteer in. You know, they build the capacity of whoever is being supported. If it's going to be work on a brochure, why not do it in Australia or the UK, unless there is a transfer of knowledge... But being very definite about what it is that they're going to transfer to their national counterpart... Always make sure they have a national counterpart.” (Female Leader, Expat, International NGO).

Assigning a volunteer to a national counterpart implies a very clear job description, a structure into which the volunteer is fitting, and much preparation before the volunteer even arrives in country or is even recruited.

An obvious barrier to working effectively with Khmer colleagues is the English-Khmer language barrier. Many research participants spoke about the challenges around language, including how much culture influences communication styles and how much is lost when speaking in one’s second or third language. This may prove an additional barrier for volunteers for whom English is also their second language, resulting in volunteers and staff communicating in neither person’s mother tongue.

One leader talked about this language barrier being largely the responsibility of the volunteer to address; because the working language is often English, native English speakers must take extra care to make their communication as clear as possible.

“[A quality] that would be [good]: good communication. That's just one that's really practical, we've had some people that don't understand the way they come off, or they speak really fast or they're not respectful of the fact that they're speaking with people who are speaking a second language, and that actually makes it really uncomfortable, we've heard, from the other side, the Cambodian side” (Female Leader, Expat, International NGO).

Related to the language barrier is the challenge with the length of time short-term volunteers spend in country; if a volunteer only comes for three or six months, they will not have the time to take one or two months for intensive language study, as is more possible with longer-term volunteers and expat staff.



# DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

This section will include a discussion of the findings and themes found in the volunteer surveys, leader interviews, and staff focus group discussions.

## Expectations & Communication Between Volunteers & Organisations

### Short-Term Volunteer Case Study

The short-term volunteer experience is aptly depicted by the case of Alice.<sup>4</sup> Alice is a 21-year-old American, evangelical Christian volunteering with a Christian relief and development organisation that works in human trafficking prevention, safe migration education, and with vulnerable women and children, among other programs. Her primary reasons for volunteering abroad were, first and foremost, she felt called by God to overseas work, she wanted to enhance her education, and she felt volunteering was a good way to gain experience as there were few work opportunities back in the U.S. She chose to volunteer with this organisation because she felt they were doing reputable work and because they were seeking someone with her skills.

“I feel as though God has equipped me with the skill and heart/compassion set necessary to help those less fortunate than myself. I wanted to learn more about international development and get hands-on experience to see whether or not this is how God would want to use me. It's hard to learn about international development in America.”

Her previous experience included doing Short-Term Missions in the United States, but she questioned the benefits of STMs since having engaged in them, stating, “I think STMs mainly benefit the volunteers and not the beneficiaries.” She had recently completed a degree in Journalism and International Development and had been working in mass communications during her studies as well. She saw her volunteer position as being extremely related to her studies and work experience. She stated her expected impact to be “moderately high,” expanding, “I want to achieve this impact by leaving behind substantial plans and guides to help the organisation's communication capacity flourish in my absence. I'm doing this through writing policies, manuals and tracking best practices.” She also stated she had a written and clear job description, and had set objectives with the Host Organisation for her time as a volunteer.

She had previously been involved with the organisation by volunteering in a one-time fundraising campaign, and had a connection to the organisation through friends who had worked and volunteered with them. In answer to the question, “What are you hoping to get out of this volunteering experience?” her top three answers were:

1. As a stepping stone in my career in human rights/abolition;
2. New cultural experiences; and,
3. Work experience/resume boosting.

She exhibited discomfort with these answers, as shown in her follow-up comment: “I really don't want to expand. When I look at the way I answered above, I feel like it says I'm being really selfish in taking this opportunity. I guess if that's what it is, I can't change it. Those are my answers. I'd hope my motives weren't really all that selfish. I do care about these people in Cambodia and want to see them have better lives. I guess I've just always felt like I'm called to the Middle East so I never gave SE Asia another thought.”

Something changed over the course of Alice's volunteer placement. By the time she submitted her follow-up survey, shortly after her departure from Cambodia, her statements were more cynical and she betrayed resentment towards the Host Organisation for which she originally had much respect and admiration.<sup>5</sup> Despite having originally reported she had received clear instructions on her job description, in her Exit Survey, she stated, “I wasn't given any description of or even a job description of what my work would look like in advance, so I was prepared for anything. Therefore, I really wasn't ever surprised.” She also thought, in retrospect, she had a high impact on the organisation's programs, though made it clear she did not feel valued. She stated

<sup>4</sup> The name of the volunteer has been changed to protect her anonymity.

<sup>5</sup> Alice completed the first survey 3 months into a 6-month placement; she completed the follow-up survey a few weeks after returning to the United States.

she would not continue working with, volunteering for, or supporting the Host Organisation after her volunteer period ended, expanding, “They really didn’t seem to care what happened to me after my contract was up — of course my supervisor cared, and we still talk, but the organization as a whole saw me as disposable and didn’t value my skillset.”

As for how much her own life would be impacted by her volunteer experience in Cambodia, Alice made an interesting assessment, and thought at first her life would be very much impacted: “This is my first overseas experience. That changes you. I have more “street cred” in my field now.” After the experience, however, she stated her life would be moderately impacted, following up with, “I think that now, I am honestly more jaded to the world and feel more hopeless about Cambodia than ever before.”

Finally, in response to a request for any recommendations on how organisations could make volunteer experiences in Cambodia better, Alice made this concluding statement:

“I wish my organization had encouraged direct contact with the field office and had given me a more complete orientation guide (which I later created). I also wish they had prepped the staff with how to interact with us. I had a few coworkers who were very clearly resentful toward me for being an intern and getting paid [expenses and a stipend] and working on a personal computer. They thought I was rich and acted like I didn’t deserve their presence. I just wanted to get my job done. No one taught me how to work with Cambodians and my boss was even less direct than some of my Cambodian coworkers. My personal research on the culture was even discouraged by expat coworkers.”

Alice’s story can provide us with a valuable example on the short-term volunteer experience in Cambodia as we discuss the findings of this research.

### **Self-Centred vs. Selfless Motivations**

The case study above showed Alice demonstrating a certain discomfort with the self-centred nature of her motivations to volunteer. Alice’s comments showed a level of self-awareness, coupled with perhaps an unrealistic pressure to “help” for only purely selfless reasons. Categorizing motivations as “self-centred” and “selfless” can be somewhat misleading and sometimes unhelpful, as they are not black and white. The “selfless” act can often have a basis in self-centred motivations, just as seemingly self-centred motivations can have a selfless end in mind.

The chart below shows some of the motivations of short-term volunteers. The survey question was, “What are you hoping to get out of this volunteering experience?” followed by a number of options, and participants were asked to rank their top three choices in order of importance. In the following chart, the top line (red) shows the total number of votes for each choice, while the bottom line (blue) shows the total number of votes cast as respondents’ first choice.

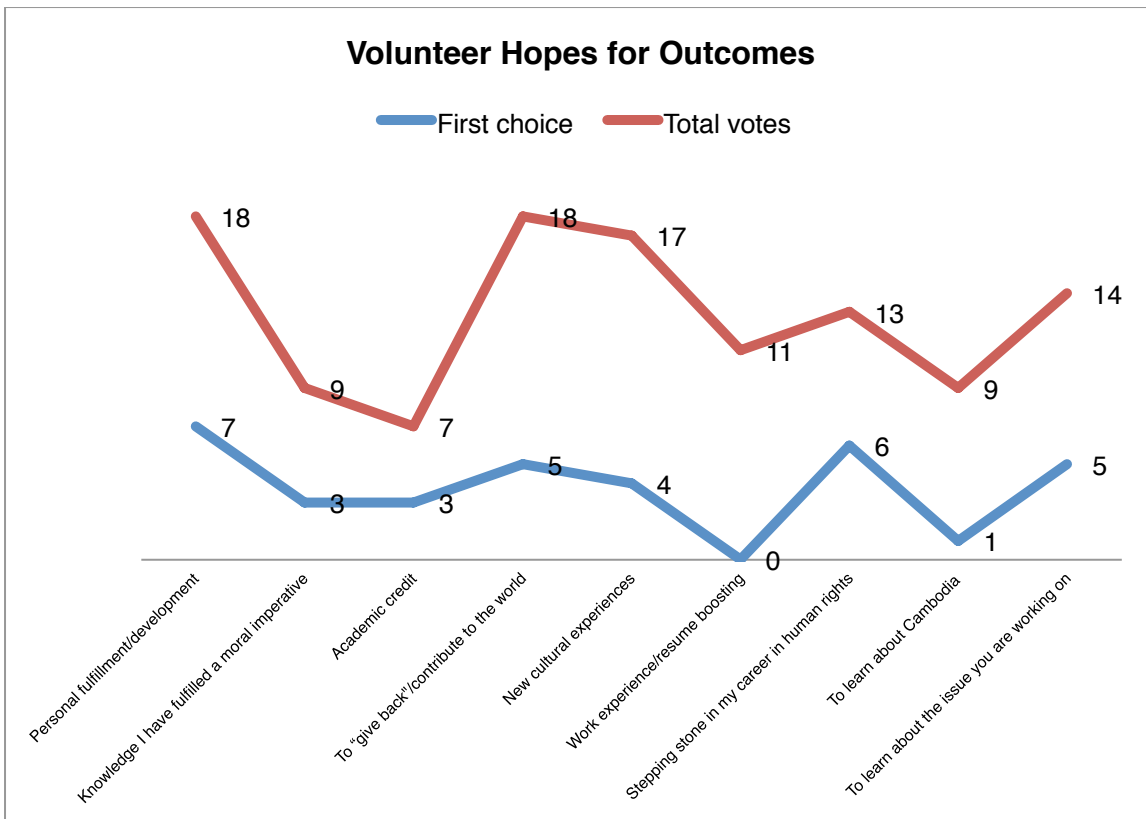


Chart 14. What Survey Participants Hoped to Get Out of Their Volunteer Experience (n=30)

The top two statements for total number of votes were “Personal fulfillment/development” (self-centred) and “To ‘give back’/contribute to the world” (selfless), followed by “New cultural experiences” and “To learn about the issue you are working on.” The top two statements chosen as respondents’ first choice were “Personal fulfillment/development” (self-centred) and “As a stepping stone in my career in human rights/abolition” (self-centred) followed by “To ‘give back’/contribute to the world” and “To learn about the issue you are working on.” As stated above, the categorizations of “self-centred” and “selfless” need to be held loosely; for example, participants choosing their primary motivation as a stepping stone in their career may be opting for this choice in order to later devote their career to “giving back” or contributing to the world. And, of course, these concepts (self-centred, selfless, “giving back,” etc.) need to be understood in the context of the Western, neoliberal framework from which most volunteers are coming, as discussed in the literature review above.

An interesting comparison from this chart is the difference in chosen options between two similar statements. “Work experience/resume boosting” and “a stepping stone in my career in human rights/abolition” both received a similar number of total votes; however, “work experience” was not the first choice of any respondents, whereas “a stepping stone” was the first choice of almost half (46%) of all respondents who chose that option. Even though the two statements have a very similar theme (career aspirations) the latter had a less self-centred phrasing than the former, and respondents were obviously more comfortable choosing that option. There were 18 respondents (60%) who choose at least one of these two options; of those, six respondents (33%) selected both options in their top three choices.

### Unrealistic Expectations Among Volunteers

The tension between self-centred versus selfless motivations relates to expectations of short-term volunteers, both realistic and unrealistic, of their own capacity and contribution, as well as of the organisation’s ability to utilise their skills and manage their work.

Comparisons between volunteer surveys and leader interviews show a disparity between what each group expects from short-term volunteers. Short-term volunteers demonstrated some unrealistic expectations about some aspect of their volunteer experience in Cambodia, either in the relationships they wished to form and maintain, in the impact they thought they would have on the Host Organisation, or in how sustainable their work and impact would be.

## Relationships

Some volunteers put a high expectation on how their volunteer experience would impact their own lives and the lives of those with whom they would interact. In answer to the question, “If you think this experience will impact you, how?,” one participant responded, “The people I meet will change how I view myself. Hopefully I can become more selfless and have a more expanded worldview. I hope to build lifelong friendships that will change the course of my life” (Female Volunteer, 18-24, Current undergraduate student).

This expectation contrasted with statements by NGO leaders on their views of volunteers’ relationships with staff and program beneficiaries. On the positive side, leaders talked of relationship building as a way volunteers could increase their capacity, or create a positive atmosphere with staff and beneficiaries. These were always spoken of in the context of short-term relationships, and only one leader made reference to relationships between volunteers and staff continuing beyond the volunteer’s time in the country.

“[T]o be comfortable to work with the Cambodian staff [is] fundamental because otherwise, you know, why are you in Cambodia? So the best interns are often the ones who managed to create the best relationships with their project coordinators” (Female Leader, Expat, Local NGO).

Leaders also talked about the difficulties of relationship building for short-term volunteers, stating that relationships cannot be built in such a short amount of time. In some cases this was discussed explicitly in the context of organisations’ reticence to use short-term volunteers.

“Some [short-term] interns ... it’s hard for them to feel a connection, build relationships, and get to know the staff easily; it’s difficult ... because they work on the specific project, they work hard on it, and some interns, some of them also difficulty to get to know each staff (sic). ... I think another disadvantage is that because they did not have time enough to getting to know each person, so it’s hard for the Cambodian staff to feel that ‘Okay, we’re all on the same page’” (Female Leader, Khmer, International NGO).

“We think that if it was any less than 11 months ... there wouldn’t be enough time to feel like you’re fully here, or feel like it’s enough time to invest in your community and your host family and your work. If you’re coming for 3 months or 6 months or 2 weeks, you would always be thinking about when you’re going home. Or the emphasis would be on the little contribution that you’re going to make, rather than what you’re gaining from this and how you are being impacted by Cambodia. So less time than that and it’s not a full commitment to being where you are” (Female Leader, Expat, International NGO).

Khmer leaders and staff talked of how it should be the responsibility of volunteers to reach out to their Khmer coworkers, as Khmer staff often feel intimidated by expat volunteers.

Finally, some leaders also dispelled the perhaps romanticized view of building relationships between volunteers and program beneficiaries. One interviewee cautioned against promoting too much of his type of relationship building.

“[S]eeing that our girls aren’t really allowed to be on technology just for the exploitation part of that, different things that way, then it’s not even reasonable that they could stay in contact with any of these [volunteers]. So then again, that takes away from them and teaching them what actual relationships look like, because so many of them have been used for so long, that again it’s almost as though they’re being used because these people get to come and see them and then they get to feel good about having come and done a two week trip and they get to go back home and granted, they get to share about it, and that’s beneficial to the organization and to stopping human trafficking, but it makes a huge impact on disrupting the lives of the girls, of the organization, of the staff, different things that way” (Female Leader, Expat, International NGO).

## Impact

Another comparison between some volunteer survey participants’ expectations and NGO leaders’ perceptions was on the issue of expected impact. Overall, leaders agreed that the shorter the time commitment, the less impact a volunteer could have. Even if a short-term volunteer had a good impact, in some leaders’ view, it was

short-lived the less time a volunteer spent in a project. This is contrasted by a sometimes-inflated sense of volunteers' own capacity and expected impact, particularly among recent undergraduate students. For example, one volunteer who stated she expected to have a high impact on the Host Organisation's programs, when asked to expand on how she would achieve that impact, answered:

"Being here even for a short time I am in the lives of all the girls I teach and staff I work with. Even though three months is not very long, I hope that my time here leaves a mark on everyone I encounter. Whether it is through the English classes I'm teaching, or the communications work I'm doing, I only hope that everyone appreciates my work and effort, enjoys my company, and remembers whatever mark I leave on the company (sic)" (Female Volunteer, 18-24, Undergraduate degree).

Overall leaders agreed short-term volunteers' impact would be generally lower than the volunteers expected. Some leaders talked about mitigating those expectations by discussing a realistic approach with their volunteers.

"Because volunteers are often right out of university, and though they've studied and they have strong English skills, they're not coming to rescue an organization ... And normally the contributions the volunteers give is much smaller than they expect it's going to be. [W]e try to talk them through that" (Female Leader, Expat, International NGO).

Managing expectations of impact often relates to the maturity level of volunteers, and their ability to be realistic about their abilities as well as about how much they can actually accomplish in a short period of time.

"[Impact] depends on [the] understanding of [volunteers], of their social context, and other country context. I mean, for some volunteers that come in, they are not really open minded, open to new things. And they are expecting that they understand everything and come with a bit of ignorance and proud themselves to know everything and the local people know nothing" (Female Leader, Khmer, International NGO).

### **Sustainability**

Related to a volunteer's expected impact is how sustainable a volunteer's work is. Volunteers made statements about staying engaged and involved with the Host Organisation, and with the people they met and with whom they made friends while in Cambodia. As shown in Chart 12, 80% of short-term volunteers expected their experience to "very much" or "extremely" impact their own lives.

An interesting contrast to this was the extremely low response rate to the follow-up surveys for the present study. At the end of 2014, all the short-term volunteers who completed the research survey were also asked to complete an "Exit Survey," which asked follow-up questions after they had finished their volunteer placement in Cambodia. Of the 17 participants who indicated in the first survey they were willing to complete a follow-up survey and who were sent the Exit Survey, only one volunteer returned the completed survey. Although other factors, such as personal circumstances of volunteers or the time of year the follow-up survey was sent (during the Christmas/New Year holiday season), are not accounted for, this may also indicate a loss of interest in the experience after leaving the country.

Leaders had some interesting things to say about the sustainability of volunteers' work, bringing together perspectives on the challenges of a short length of time in the country, unrealistic expectations of both volunteers and organisations, and disorganised volunteer management structures and preparation.

“[The main disadvantage of short-term volunteers is] they always bringing a new sort of program, a new initiative or program but by the time we need to implement it, they have to leave. It is very challenging because then we have to find someone else to come and replace which means that sometimes they not really understand, like that person who develop the programs, so by the time we pass that on to the next person, it is nearly their time to finish again. So we end up train, train, and input, input” (Female Leader, Khmer, International NGO).

“Just knowing how long, the goal is in those cases to partner with the Khmer staff and actually develop the Khmer staff to be able to take on whatever role that person is facilitating, fully. And we have tried it with 3-month volunteers, and they'll establish something, but it just dies away when they leave because there isn't a long enough time, a long enough hand-over time and training for the Khmer staff to get into the routine” (Male Leader, Expat, International NGO).

The challenges of being and having a short-term volunteer in a Host Organisation is summed up with the statement of a leader who was previously a short-term volunteer and who, therefore had a general view of the challenges from both perspectives.

“I came as a volunteer for one month and now I'm here for some long-term work. So the month I came, I came with all these great American ideas, and then I was going to do all these great things for the staff, and then the Americans who were in charge decided what they wanted the staff to learn. And that was phenomenal, and the staff had no input. And so, what I did for that whole month was wonderful but it wasn't effective, it did absolutely no good and I know that. I'm not stupid, I know. I know that I had a great month, a vacation in a place that I loved, with people that I fell in love with. And for that one month it brought me back here for a longer term, so it did that part. But when I came back, and now that I've been here for six months, I have learned that I cannot be effective, no volunteer will ever be effective, until you know the people. And you cannot come in with American ideas or ideas from another place and assume that you are going to pass those on until they know that you love them, until that they know that you care about them, until they know that you're going to be here for the long-haul, to help them work through the problems that will arise because of your new great and gravy ideas. So I think that's the thing that I have learned with all volunteers. I think it's amazing that people want to come and help, I respect them, I admire them for the time they want to give, but there's no benefit from short-term unless they have one specific project that they are focusing on that has a beginning, a middle, and an end. And if it doesn't have that, then you're not helping anybody but you're having a great vacation. So that's just my thought” (Female Volunteer/Leader, Expat, Local NGO).

### Gaps Between Volunteers & Organisations

Comparisons between volunteer surveys and leader interviews demonstrated a gap in understanding, and therefore communication, between short-term volunteers and Host Organisations.

“I'm sure all these [short-term volunteers], they want to do good, they want to be supportive, but there's just a gap understanding what it does mean to do good or be supportive” (Male Leader, Expat, International NGO).

The challenges in relationship building and communication between volunteers and Khmer staff seem to be the result of both an attitude of superiority on the part of volunteers and a lack of adequate preparation and briefing on the part of the organisation. There can also be a certain amount of pressure on the volunteer to take the necessary steps to reach out to Khmer coworkers; leaders agreed that this was the former's responsibility as visitors and short-term personnel in an organisation.

“I had a few interns that I had to tell them to dress like they were in the office in a respectable manner. And sometimes I think it’s more because people are shy and first struggle with the accent or that type of things and don’t make the effort to overcome their shyness or and so it doesn’t go bad it just doesn’t necessarily communicate more so then the project coordinator just stopped giving them work, because they don’t, you know, they sit in the office, I think it’s more about people being a bit shy” (Female Leader, Expat, Local NGO).

Furthermore, volunteer and leaders alike often use the term “relationship-building” without, perhaps, thinking about differences in the definition of the term and its implications. What does “relationship-building” mean to Cambodians versus Westerners? Cultural orientation for short-term volunteers does not address this issue.

Finally, many of the negative experiences of both volunteers and leaders and staff of Host Organisations may be understood as gaps in understanding and communication between the two parties. The next section will outline what volunteers and both Sending and Host Organisations can do to bridge these gaps and promote better utilization and management of volunteers and better experiences for volunteers and NGOs.

## Developing a Framework for Effective Volunteers

During leader interviews, leaders from organisations with stricter recruitment practices, clear volunteer guidelines, and a structured volunteer management framework tended to speak less often of negative experiences with their short-term volunteers. At the same time, surveyed volunteers had very positive feedback about having clear guidelines and negative reactions to unclear guidelines. In order to best utilize volunteers and ensure they have a good experience and a realistically positive impact, the keys are preparation, orientation, and structure.

Raymond and Hall’s (2008) recommendations for increasing cultural understanding among volunteer tourists include the following:

- Organisations should carefully assess their own needs as well as the skills of potential volunteers, and remain wary of the risks of using host/foreign countries as “training grounds.” Volunteers need the appropriate qualifications and attributes for both travel and work abroad.
- Volunteer programs should be designed so as to not undermine local staff and should not replace their work.

Interestingly, these recommendations are appropriate not only for establishing good conditions for increasing cultural competency, but also for creating realistic expectations for, and promoting positive impact by, short-term volunteers.

The following are the recommendations of the author; they are based on the suggestions of interviewees, focus group participants, and volunteers themselves, as well as the cumulative analysis of the report’s findings.

### Recommendations for Host Organisations

First of all, organisations need to put in the work up front, developing a framework and thinking clearly what they need accomplished, before bringing volunteers into the organisation. Organisational leaders, project managers, and the HR department should work together to determine what the needs of the organisation and of each project are and what type of skills and resources are needed from external volunteers. Allowing for flexibility, the HR department should develop job descriptions so they will know whether or not a prospective volunteer will fit the needs of the organisation and to present a clear list of tasks to incoming volunteers. Organisations should prioritize hosting volunteers for longer periods of time; especially for organisations that have limited volunteer management capacity, having volunteers come and stay for longer will enable a higher impact and less work for the organisation. For volunteers that do come for less than three months, Host Organisations should not assign these volunteers projects that require continuity; they should be doing something very specific that does not need to be taken over by someone else.

Secondly, organisations need to be prepared to host a short-term volunteer. If the organisation does not have the capacity to manage an expat volunteer, the organisation could seek collaboration with other NGOs and Sending Organisations that can. For instance, if an NGO does not have a Volunteer Coordinator and their HR staff do not have the time or the capacity to organize the logistics of hosting a volunteer, the NGO could

partner with an agency that manages volunteer recruitment, placement, housing, and transportation. Hosting short-term volunteers entails managing a lot of details, and Host Organisation must have a plan in place to do so.

Volunteer Coordinators, HR staff, and organisational leadership should work together to determine how short-term volunteers will fit into the existing staff structure of the organisation. This includes ensuring short-term volunteers will have a national counterpart, who the volunteer's direct supervisor(s) will be, which staff policies will and will not apply to the volunteer, and which, if any, of the volunteer's costs the organisation will cover.

Host Organisations need to develop or adapt an orientation plan for short-term volunteers. Decisions should also be made around enabling positive volunteer-staff relations and guidelines for how volunteers will interact with the organisation's clients and partners. If the Host Organisation does direct client care for vulnerable populations, volunteers should sign and adhere to protection policies and receive training on appropriate behaviour when interacting with clients. These can be covered during the volunteer's orientation session when they first arrive in country, which should also be a requirement to work with the Host Organisation. Orientations should cover the organisation's work and training on protection policies, as well as an introduction to Cambodian culture and working in a cross-cultural setting. More important than knowing how to get around, what to wear, and a few key phrases (although these are all helpful), volunteers should be trained on Cambodian management and working styles and how to behave and communicate appropriately with Khmer colleagues. It is also recommended Host Organisations think very critically about allowing those volunteers who are in country for very short periods of time to be in contact with the organisations' beneficiaries, to minimize potential negative effects on the beneficiaries' well-being, stability, and rehabilitation/reintegration process.

For a summary of how Chab Dai Coalition will implement the recommendations of this study, see Appendix 8.

### **Recommendations for Sending Organisations**

The Sending Organisations should work in support of the Host Organisation. Whether it is a volunteer recruitment and placement agency or a NGO's headquarters office, the Sending Organisation should support the Host Organisation's volunteer management structure and work with the Host Organisation to implement volunteer programs and training. Sending Organisations should provide as much screening support from their end as is possible, such as police records checks and reference checks for volunteer applicants.

Secondly, the orientation and training provided by the Sending Organisation should match the realities in the Host Organisation and in Cambodia. Cultural orientation, if provided by the Sending Organisation, should be up-to-date and relevant, and Sending Organisations should seek input from Host Organisations in developing orientation and training materials.

Finally, Sending Organisations should give a high level of control over volunteer selection to Host Organisations or field offices. Volunteer impact can be much higher and more positive if the Host Organisation is able to select the candidates they feel most fit the needs of their programs.

### **Recommendations for Potential Volunteers**

Individuals who wish to volunteer in Cambodia should approach their application process thoughtfully. They should research an organisation's vision, mission, values, and programs to ensure they would fit well into the organisation's ethos. They should also reflect on whether their skills fit well with the organisation's needs and be prepared to work within the organisation's strategy instead of bringing their own agenda to the position.

Short-term volunteers should prepare before arriving in country and be willing to learn while they are there. They should read all the materials sent them by the Host Organisation and make the effort to research and read other resources, especially resources relating to working and interacting in a cross-cultural setting. Volunteers need to come into their volunteer experience with an attitude of flexibility and humility, accepting they are serving the needs of the organisation and that the local staff know best what those needs are.

Short-term volunteer applicants should ask a lot of questions during the selection process, at the beginning of, and throughout their placement, with the objective of setting and managing their expectations for their experience. Having trusted people in place, both at home and in Cambodia, with whom the volunteer can



regularly debrief is also an important aspect of managing expectations, self-care, and maintaining a healthy perspective.

Host and Sending Organisations and short-term volunteers can work together to establish healthy expectations, positive impact on programs, and good experiences for both volunteers and organisations.

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# APPENDICES

## 1. List of Participating NGOs in Leader Interviews

1. AusCam Freedom Project
2. Cambodian Women's Development Agency
3. Cambodian Center for Human Rights
4. Care Cambodia
5. Citipointe SHE Rescue Home
6. Destiny Rescue
7. Garden of Hope
8. Hagar Cambodia
9. Hope for Justice (formerly Transitions)
10. International Justice Mission
11. LICADHO
12. Love 146
13. Mennonite Central Committee

## 2. List of Resources Used by Short-Term Volunteers

In the survey among short-term volunteers, the participants were asked, “Among other things, have you learned about this issue from articles (academic, research or newspaper), books and/or documentaries? If yes, please list (in point form) up to 10 of the most influential/informative/important resources for you have read/studied/seen.”

The following is a compiled list (in alphabetical order) of all the resources and resource types listed by survey respondents.

| Books  | Reports/Research  | Video                                      | Other                                   |
|--|---|--|---|
| Autobiographies  | Examining life experiences and HIV risks of Young entertainment workers in four Cambodian cities (UNICEF)                                     | Documentaries                              | Advertising from other NGO's in Denmark |
| Books  | I Want To Be Brave (Love146)  | Half the Sky (documentary)                 | CIA World Fact Book                     |
| Books, particularly true accounts (Marina Nemat, Loung Ung, ect)                         | IJM reports   | It Was Rape (documentary)                  | CNN                                     |
| Cambodia's Curse (Brinkley)  | Journal articles  | Nefarious: Merchant of Souls (documentary) | News, newspapers                        |
| First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers: (Loung Ung)               | Journal of Policy Analysis; Social Experimentation, Policy Analysis, and Public Policy  | Short films                                | Knowledge shared                        |
| Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self (Hall & Bucholtz)         | Journey of Change: A Chab Dai Study on the Trends & Influencing Factors on Counter-Trafficking in Cambodia, 2003-2012 (Brammer & Smith-Brake) | Television                                 | Organization websites                   |
| Girls Like Us: Fighting for a World Where Girls Are Not for Sale: A Memoir (Lloyd)       | KTV study (Love146)   | Whore's Glory (documentary)                | Passion Conferences                     |
| Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide (Kristof & WuDunn) | Lingha Boys of Siem Reap (Love146)  | Youtube Video Clips                        | Personal testimonies                    |
| The Master of Confessions: The Making of a Khmer Rouge Torturer (Cruvellier)             | Professional Girlfriends: An ethnography of sexuality, solidarity and subculture in Cambodia (Hoefinger)                                      |  | Phnom Penh Post                         |
| Sexualized Violence Against Women and Children (Cling)                                   | Research Papers   |  | Plenoma Home for Girls website          |
| The Bible  | The Economics of Sex Slavery  |  | Twitter                                 |
| The Craft of Research (Booth and Colomb)   | The Ties that Bind: Migration and Trafficking of Women and Girls for Sexual Exploitation in Cambodia (Brown)                                  |  |   |
| The Handbook of Multicultural Counseling (Ponterotto et al)                              | Training Manual to Fight Trafficking in Children for Labor, Sexual and Other Forms of Exploitation (UNICEF)                                   |  |   |
| Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development (Myers)  | Why do some men use violence against some women and how can we prevent it (UN)  |  |   |
| When the War was Over (Becker)   | What about Boys (Miles)   |  |   |
|  | When the Stars are Up: Life and Work of Sex Workers in Koh Kong (Greenwood)   |  |   |

### 3. Volunteer Entry Survey

#### Impact & Perceptions of Short-Term Volunteers in the Human Rights Sector in Cambodia

##### Volunteer Entry Survey

You have been asked to participate in this survey by Chab Dai Coalition. The purpose of the survey is to try and understand short-term volunteers' motivations, expectations, and perceptions of their experience volunteering in the human rights sector in Cambodia. You must fit the following criteria in order to be considered as a participant in this survey:

- You plan to volunteer in Cambodia for 1-6 months in 2014;
- You are volunteering in the human rights sector (this includes a broad range of issues, including anti-trafficking, legal issues, vulnerable women and children projects, etc.);
- You have been volunteering in the country for less than 3 weeks at the time of completing the survey.

The information learned in this survey will be used in a larger research project on the impact and perceptions of short-term volunteers in the human rights sector in Cambodia.

You can choose whether or not to answer any question in the survey and you may stop at any time. Your responses will remain anonymous and no names will be mentioned in the report. We hope you can be honest in your responses; as this is an Action Research, the results of this study will feed directly into developing better Volunteer Programs.

At the end of the survey, we will be requesting your permission to contact you again shortly before you leave Cambodia to complete an Exit Survey. If you request it, we will provide you with the data from your own entry and exit survey. No one outside the direct research team will ever see your contact information.

The "Host Organisation" refers to the organisation with which you are primarily volunteering in Cambodia during the survey period. If you are volunteering for multiple organisations during your time in Cambodia, please respond to the questions based only on your experience with the Organisation with which you are spending the most time; if your time is split equally, choose one Organisation on which to base your answers.

If applicable, the "Sending Organisation" refers to the company or organisation that recruited you and/or organized your volunteer trip.

N.B. All open-ended questions will be limited to 100 words.

##### **Participant Profile**

**Name** (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** – so we can contact you with the Exit Survey before your departure from Cambodia (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

##### **Age:**

|  |          |
|--|----------|
|  | Under 18 |
|  | 18-24    |
|  | 25-30    |
|  | 31-35    |
|  | 36-45    |
|  | 46-55    |
|  | Over 55  |

##### **Sex:**

|  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
|  | Male                       |
|  | Female                     |
|  | Transgender                |
|  | Would prefer not to answer |

##### **Relationship Status:**

|  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
|  | Single                         |
|  | Married                        |
|  | Civil union/common law partner |
|  | In a long-term relationship    |
|  | Separated                      |
|  | Divorced                       |
|  | Widowed                        |
|  | Would prefer not to answer     |

***If you chose Married, Civil union/common law, or In a long-term relationship, is your partner with you during your time in Cambodia?***

|  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
|  | Yes, for the whole time   |
|  | Yes, for part of the time |
|  | No                        |

##### ***Why or why not?***

*[Maximum 100 words]*

If you chose Separated, Divorced, or Widowed, how many months/years have you been separated/divorced/widowed?

Would you say this event influenced your decision to come volunteer in Cambodia?

|     |
|-----|
| Yes |
| No  |

Would you like to expand on the question above?

[Maximum 100 words]

Highest level of education achieved:

|                                    |
|------------------------------------|
| Primary school                     |
| Some secondary school              |
| Secondary school diploma           |
| Vocational/technical diploma       |
| Some undergraduate studies         |
| Currently an undergrad student     |
| Undergraduate degree               |
| Some graduate studies              |
| Currently a graduate student       |
| Graduate (Masters) degree          |
| Ph.D./Doctorate partially complete |
| Ph.D./Doctorate degree             |
| Other (please specify):            |

If you have post-secondary education, please specify the type of degree(s) you have/are working towards (including majors & minors or concentrations etc.):

Passport country(ies):

Current country of residence (before coming to Cambodia):

Are either your passport country or your current country of residence different from the country you feel most represents "home" to you? If so, please explain:

[Maximum 100 words]

How long have you been in Cambodia?

How long will you be volunteering in Cambodia (in total)?

Prior to this visit, had you previously visited Cambodia?

|     |
|-----|
| Yes |
| No  |

If yes, for how long and for what purpose?

[Maximum 100 words]

With which of the following do you most closely identify?

|                         |
|-------------------------|
| Christian               |
| Buddhist                |
| Muslim                  |
| Jewish                  |
| Agnostic                |
| No faith                |
| Atheist                 |
| Other (please specify): |

Would you like to more specifically describe your religious/faith beliefs (e.g. denomination, how you self-identify)?

[Maximum 100 words]

**Motivations & Expectations**

Is this your first volunteer trip abroad?

|     |
|-----|
| Yes |
| No  |

If not, please list the locations and amount of time spent volunteering in each place:

|           |             |
|-----------|-------------|
| Location: | Time Spent: |
| Location: | Time Spent: |
| Location: | Time Spent: |
| Location: | Time Spent: |



**Would you say previous overseas volunteer experiences directly influenced your decision to volunteer abroad this year?**

|              |
|--------------|
| Yes          |
| No           |
| Maybe        |
| I don't know |

**If yes, in what way?**  
[Maximum 100 words]

**Have you previously gone on a Short-Term Mission (STM)\*?**

\* Short-Term Mission here is defined as a religious (e.g. church, faith-based) group trip lasting 1-4 weeks.

|     |
|-----|
| Yes |
| No  |

**If yes, would you say going on the STM directly influenced your decision to volunteer abroad?**

|              |
|--------------|
| Yes          |
| No           |
| Maybe        |
| I don't know |

**Whether or not you have been on a STM, would you like to expand on your views or experiences of STM?**

[Maximum 100 words]

**How did you first hear about the Organisation you are currently volunteering with?**

|  |
|--|
| Through your church  |
| Through your school  |
| By going on a Short-Term Mission   |
| By attending a conference  |
| Through a Google/Internet search   |
| You personally know someone who has worked/volunteered for this NGO                    |
| Through a documentary, news article, or other media venue                              |
| Volunteer trip recruitment/facilitation company or organisation (Sending Organisation) |
| Through the personal recommendation of someone else                                    |
| Other (please specify):  |

**Whether it was a Host Organisation or a Sending Organisation, how did you choose the Organisation to come overseas with?**

Choose up to 3 factors in choosing the Organisation and rank them in order of importance (1, 2 & 3).

|  |
|--|
| You chose the Organisation because you wanted to come to Cambodia (or this region)             |
| You chose the Organisation because the position they were offering was interesting to you      |
| You chose the Organisation because they were seeking someone with your skills                  |
| You chose the Organisation because it is reputable in its field                                |
| You chose the Organisation because they were the first Organisation to accept your application |
| You chose the Organisation because they are affiliated with your home church                   |
| You chose the Organisation because they are affiliated with your school                        |
| Other (please specify):  |

**Did you have any knowledge of this Organisation before beginning the process of finding a volunteer opportunity?**

|   |
|---|
| Yes                                     |
| Yes, but had only heard of them in name |
| No                                      |

**If yes, in what way?**  
[Maximum 100 words]

**Have you worked or volunteered with this Organisation in another country or your country of residence?**

|   |
|---|
| Yes   |
| No  |
| No, but I have attended an event they hosted in my country of residence |

**If yes, please briefly describe what type of work you did with this Organisation in another country or your country of residence:**

[Maximum 100 words]

**Which statement below \*best\* describes your primary reason for deciding to volunteer abroad?**

Choose up to 3 statements and rank them in order of importance (1, 2 & 3).

|  |
|--|
| I was travelling in the region and decided to stay for a while to volunteer  |
| I feel called by God or a higher power   |
| I am following my dream to provide for those less fortunate than myself  |
| I desired a new experience in my life and volunteering overseas provided a good opportunity to do so                                     |
| I am volunteering to enhance my education or to satisfy an academic requirement (e.g. internship, practicum for credit)                  |
| I am volunteering short-term to explore whether I want to work overseas longer-term  |
| There are limited employment opportunities in my current country of residence and volunteering is a good way to get some work experience |

**Would you like to expand on the statements chosen above?**  
 [Maximum 100 words]

**What type of impact do you think you could have on the Organisation/program with which you are volunteering?**

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | Encouragement/relationship building with the staff/team/beneficiaries  |
|  | Acting as a pro bono consultant/expert (i.e. you have expertise in this field and you would usually do this work as a paid consultant) |
|  | General administrative or program support  |
|  | Providing a specific service/training/research product   |
|  | Increasing the Organisation's efforts to secure funding  |
|  | Other (please specify):  |

**Would you like to expand on the above statement chosen?**  
 [Maximum 100 words]

**What level of impact do you hope to have on the program in which you are volunteering?**

|  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
|  | High impact            |
|  | Moderately high impact |
|  | Moderate impact        |
|  | Moderately low impact  |
|  | Low impact             |

**How do you think you might achieve this impact?**  
 [Maximum 100 words]

**Does your volunteer position with the Organisation reflect or relate to your post-secondary education?**

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
|  | Yes            |
|  | No             |
|  | A little       |
|  | I'm not sure   |
|  | Not Applicable |

**Would you like to expand on that?**  
 [Maximum 100 words]

**Does your volunteer position with the Organisation reflect or relate your previous work experience?**

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
|  | Yes            |
|  | No             |
|  | A little       |
|  | I'm not sure   |
|  | Not Applicable |

**Would you like to expand on that?**  
 [Maximum 100 words]

**How involved would you say you are \*with the issues\* (addressed by the Host Organisation) in your current country of residence?**

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | Very involved – I work in this sector  |
|  | Very involved – I study in this sector   |
|  | Moderately to very involved – I volunteer regularly in this sector                                   |
|  | Moderately involved – I volunteer sometimes and attend events on this issue                          |
|  | A little involved – I have volunteered once or twice and/or attended one or two events on this issue |
|  | Not at all involved, but have been interested in the issue and have read up on it                    |
|  | Not at all involved, learning about it during this experience  |

**Would you like to expand on the question above?**  
 [Maximum 100 words]

**Among other things, have you learned about this issue from articles (academic, research or newspaper), books and/or documentaries?**

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
|  | Yes          |
|  | No           |
|  | A little     |
|  | I don't know |

**If yes, please list (in point form) up to 10 of the most influential/informative/important resources for you have read/studied/seen. Rank them in order of importance.**

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1. |  |
| 2. |  |
| 3. |  |
| 4. |  |
| 5. |  |
| 6. |  |
| 7. |  |
| 8. |  |

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 9.  |  |
| 10. |  |

**Is the volunteer position you are holding directly related to your skills or experience?**

|                          |                    |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Extremely related  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Very much related  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Moderately related |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A little related   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Not at all related |

**If it is related, how?**

[Maximum 100 words]

**What are you hoping to get out of this volunteering experience?**

Rank your top three choices in order of importance (1, 2 & 3).

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Personal fulfillment/development   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | The knowledge that I have fulfilled a moral/ethical/spiritual imperative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Academic credit  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | To "give back" or contribute to the world                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | New cultural experiences   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Work experience/resume boosting  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | As a stepping stone in my career in human rights/abolition               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | To learn about Cambodia (e.g. language, culture, history)                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | To learn about the issue you are working on                              |

**Would you like to expand on the question above?**

[Maximum 100 words]

**How much do you think this volunteer experience will impact your life after you have left Cambodia?**

|                          |                                     |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | My life will be extremely impacted  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | My life will be very much impacted  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | My life will be moderately impacted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | My life will be a little impacted   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | My life will be not at all impacted |

**If you think it will, how?**

[Maximum 100 words]

### **Host and Sending Organisations**

**Are you volunteering for the Host Organisation full-time or part-time?**

|                          |                                 |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Full-time (30-40+ hours/week)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Part-time (20-29 hours/week)    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Part-time (10-19 hours/week)    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Part-time (Under 10 hours/week) |

**Are you volunteering or working for another Organisation besides the Host Organisation during your time in Cambodia?**

|                          |                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | No                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes, paid work      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes, volunteer work |

**What is the \* main \* issue addressed by the Host Organisation you volunteering with in Cambodia:**

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Sex trafficking   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Labour trafficking  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Gender-based violence (e.g. domestic violence, rape, forced marriage) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Legal issues  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Land rights   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Vulnerable/at risk groups   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Human trafficking (general)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Human rights (general)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please specify):   |

**What is the main focus of how the Organisation addresses the stated issue (check all that apply, as long as the Organisation has a program on that specific focus)?**

|                          |                                       |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Prevention                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Rescue/Intervention/Outreach          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Aftercare/Rehabilitation/Repatriation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Transition/Reintegration              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Demand                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Business/Vocational training          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Research                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Support organisation/Coalition        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please specify):               |

**What is the religious affiliation (if any) of the Organisation with which you are volunteering (how they self-identify)?**

|                         |
|-------------------------|
| Christian               |
| Buddhist                |
| Muslim                  |
| Secular                 |
| Other (please specify): |

**What has been agreed/communicated between you and the Organisation on your volunteer commitment?**

|  |
|--|
| I have a written and clear job description   |
| I have a written job description, but it is not clear to me  |
| I do not have a written job description, but there is a very clear understanding of what I am going to do during my volunteer time     |
| I do not have a written job description, but there is a somewhat clear understanding of what I am going to do during my volunteer time |
| I know which project I will be volunteering with, but I am not sure what I am going to be doing day to day                             |
| I do not know what my volunteer time will consist of   |

**Did you and/or your Host Organisation set any objectives for your time as a volunteer?**

|   |
|---|
| Yes, my Host Organisation gave me objectives for my time as a volunteer               |
| Yes, my Host Organisation and I set objectives together for my time as a volunteer    |
| Yes, I set my own objective for my time as a volunteer                                |
| No, neither my Host Organisation nor I have set objectives for my time as a volunteer |
| Not yet, I and/or the Host Organisation have been too busy                            |

**Were you required or encouraged to prepare for your volunteer position before coming to Cambodia in any of the following ways?**

Check all that apply.

|  |
|--|
| No   |
| Yes, I was encouraged to read the Organisation's website                 |
| Yes, I was encouraged to read items on a recommended reading list        |
| Yes, I was required to read certain items sent to me by the Organisation |

**If the Organisation did send resources for you to read, what did they consist of?**

Check all that apply.

|                               |
|-------------------------------|
| Resources on the Organisation |
| Resources on the issue        |
| Resources on Cambodia         |
| Resources on volunteering     |

**Did you have contact with the Host Organisation prior to arriving in Cambodia?**

Check all that apply.

|   |
|---|
| Yes, by email                             |
| Yes, by phone/Skype                       |
| Yes, in person in my country of residence |
| No  |
| Other (please specify):                   |

**Have you attended a Cambodian cultural orientation prior to or upon arriving in Cambodia?**

|  |
|--|
| Yes, prior to arriving                       |
| Yes, upon arrival                            |
| Yes, both prior to and upon arrival          |
| No   |
| No, but I am scheduled to in the near future |

**How are you funding your volunteer work in Cambodia (e.g. living costs, travel costs)?**

Check all that apply.

|  |
|--|
| I am self-funded   |
| I fundraised among my friends, family, and community network |
| The Sending Organisation covers some/all basic costs         |
| The Host Organisation covers some/all basic costs            |
| Other (please specify):                                      |

**If your costs are covered by either the Sending or the Host Organisation, which costs are covered?**

Check all that apply.

|                                  |
|----------------------------------|
| Airfare                          |
| Lodging                          |
| Food                             |
| Insurance                        |
| Transportation while in Cambodia |
| Stipend                          |

**Would you like to expand on the question above?**

[Maximum 100 words]

**Did the Host or Sending Organisation organize your lodging while you are volunteering?**

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | Yes, the Sending Organisation organized my lodging   |
|  | Yes, the Host Organisation organized my lodging  |
|  | No, I had to organize my own lodging   |
|  | My first few days/weeks were organized by the Host/Sending Organisation, and then I organized my own, with the help of the Organisation    |
|  | My first few days/weeks were organized by the Host/Sending Organisation, and then I organized my own, without the help of the Organisation |

**Are you living with a Cambodian host family during your time in Cambodia?**

|  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
|  | Yes                       |
|  | Yes, for part of the time |
|  | No                        |

**Did a leader or staff member of the Host or Sending Organisation meet you at the airport upon your arrival to Cambodia?**

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | Yes  |
|  | No   |
|  | No, but someone I know met me                  |
|  | No, but they sent a pick-up service to meet me |

**Are you part of a volunteer team in Cambodia or have you come alone?**

|  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
|  | I came alone                 |
|  | I came with my partner       |
|  | I came with a volunteer team |
|  | I came with a friend         |

**Does the Host Organisation rely on volunteers to make up its core staff?**

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
|  | Yes          |
|  | No           |
|  | I don't know |

**From your experience thus far with the Host Organisation (both prior to and upon arriving in Cambodia), how organized is the Host Organisation?**

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
|  | Extremely organized  |
|  | Very organized       |
|  | Moderately organized |
|  | A little organized   |
|  | Not at all organized |

**If you came with a Sending Organisation, from your experience thus far with the Sending Organisation (both prior to and upon arriving in Cambodia), how organized is the Sending Organisation?**

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
|  | Extremely organized  |
|  | Very organized       |
|  | Moderately organized |
|  | A little organized   |
|  | Not at all organized |

**Would you like to expand on either/both of the questions above?**

[Maximum 100 words]

**From your experience thus far with the Host Organisation, how included do you feel in the Host Organisation?**

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | Extremely included (e.g. I have been welcomed as a full member of the team) |
|  | Very included   |
|  | Moderately included   |
|  | A little included   |
|  | Not at all included (e.g. I have been ignored and treated as an outsider)   |

**Would you like to expand on the question above?**

[Maximum 100 words]

**What do you expect in terms of support and supervision from the Sending and/or Host Organisation during your time as a volunteer?**

Please list in point form.

**Sending Organisation (if applicable):**

[Maximum 100 words]

**Host Organisation:**

[Maximum 100 words]

**What do you see as the main advantages of volunteering, for yourself?**

Please list in point form.

[Maximum 100 words]

**What do you see as the main advantages of volunteering, for the organisation you are serving?**

Please list in point form.

[Maximum 100 words]

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We encourage you to take part in the Exit Survey before departing from Cambodia; if you do, you can also request to obtain a copy of your own survey data.

Please indicate by checking the box below if you are willing to be contacted before you leave Cambodia to complete an Exit Survey.

Please indicate by checking the box if you are willing to be contacted during your time in Cambodia to participate in a follow-up in-depth interview about your volunteer experience.

If you checked either box, ***please provide your email address*** so we can contact you. This information is confidential and will be destroyed after the completion of the research project. No one outside the research team will have access to your contact information.

Email:

---

**THANK YOU!**

## 4. Leader Interview Consent Form

Chab Dai Coalition  
Volunteer Research Project

### Consent to Participate in Interview

You have been asked to participate in an in-depth interview by Chab Dai Coalition. The purpose of the interview is to try and understand NGO leaders' perceptions of short-term volunteers in their organisations, as well as how short-term volunteers are managed within their organisations.

The information learned in the interview will be used in a larger research project on the impact and perceptions of short-term volunteers in the human rights sector in Cambodia.

You can choose whether or not to participate in the interview and may stop at any time. Although the interview will be tape recorded, your responses will remain anonymous and no names will be mentioned in the report.

I understand this information and agree to participate fully under the conditions stated above:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*For the interviewer – Interview #:* \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. Leader Interview Questions

### Volunteer Research Project Leader Interview Questionnaire

As you complete this initial questionnaire, please keep in mind we are seeking information about volunteers who work in your programs from 1 to 6 months.

#### Your Organisation

##### What type of impact would you prefer short-term volunteers had on your organisation/programs?

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | Encouragement/relationship building with the staff/team/beneficiaries  |
|  | Acting as a pro bono consultant/expert (i.e. they have expertise in this field and they would usually do this work as a paid consultant) |
|  | General administrative or program support  |
|  | Providing a specific service/training/research product   |
|  | Increasing the Organisation's efforts to secure funding  |
|  | Other (please specify):  |

**Follow-up: Does this end up being the case in reality?**

##### What level of positive impact do you think short-term volunteers have on the programs with which they volunteer in your organisation?

|  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
|  | High impact            |
|  | Moderately high impact |
|  | Moderate impact        |
|  | Moderately low impact  |
|  | Low impact             |

##### What amount of work do you prefer to get from your volunteers?

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
|  | Full-time (30-40+ hours/week)   |
|  | Part-time (20-29 hours/week)    |
|  | Part-time (10-19 hours/week)    |
|  | Part-time (Under 10 hours/week) |

##### What is usually agreed upon/communicated between you and the volunteer on their volunteer commitment?

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | You provide a written and clear job description   |
|  | You do not provide a written job description, but there is a very clear understanding of what the volunteer will do during their volunteer time |
|  | The volunteer is assigned a project and it is up to the project and the volunteer to agree upon the volunteer's tasks                           |
|  | There is no clear task for the volunteer, but the organisation finds work for them once they arrive   |

**Follow-up: How are objectives reviewed at the end of the volunteer's placement?**

##### Do you require or encourage volunteers to prepare for their volunteer position before coming to Cambodia in any of the following ways?

Check all that apply.

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | No  |
|  | Yes, they are encouraged to read the Organisation's website                   |
|  | Yes, they are encouraged to read items on a recommended reading list          |
|  | Yes, they are required to read certain items sent to them by the Organisation |

##### If your Organisation does send resources for volunteers to read, what do they consist of?

Check all that apply.

|  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
|  | Resources on the Organisation |
|  | Resources on the issue        |
|  | Resources on Cambodia         |
|  | Resources on volunteering     |

**Follow-up: Does your organisation provide cultural orientation to volunteers? What does it consist of?**

##### Do you establish contact with volunteers prior to their arriving in Cambodia?

Check all that apply.

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | Yes, by email   |
|  | Yes, by phone/Skype   |
|  | Yes, in person (through an organisation representative) in their country of residence |
|  | No  |
|  | Other (please specify):   |



**Which, if any, volunteer expenses does your organisation cover for volunteers?**

*Check all that apply.*

|  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
|  | Airfare                          |
|  | Lodging                          |
|  | Food                             |
|  | Insurance                        |
|  | Transportation while in Cambodia |
|  | Stipend                          |

**Does your organisation generally prefer individual volunteers or volunteer teams?**

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
|  | Individuals |
|  | Teams       |

**Leader Interview Questions**

What does your ideal volunteer look like (standards, criteria, expertise)? How do you ensure you get the right volunteers?

What is the structure, if any, of your volunteer program? Do you have any volunteer-specific policies in place?

What kind of formal/informal supervision is provided to volunteers?

What type of work do volunteers do in your organisation?

What level of deliverables/outcomes do you expect from your short-term volunteers?

How have short-term volunteers impacted your NGO's programs and organizational mission?

What are the main advantages of having short-term volunteers in your organisations?

What are the main disadvantages?

## 6. FGD Consent Form

Chab Dai Coalition  
Volunteer Research Project

### Consent to Participate in Focus Group

You have been asked to participate in a focus group led by Chab Dai Coalition. The purpose of the group is to try and understand NGO leaders' and national program staff's interactions with and perceptions of short-term volunteers in their organisations.

The information learned in the focus groups will be used in a larger research project on the impact and perceptions of short-term volunteers in the human rights sector in Cambodia.

You can choose whether or not to participate in the focus group and stop at any time. Although the focus group will be tape recorded, your responses will remain anonymous and no names will be mentioned in the report.

There are no right or wrong answers to the focus group questions. We want to hear many different viewpoints and would like to hear from everyone. We hope you can be honest even when your responses may not be in agreement with the rest of the group. In respect for each other, we ask that only one individual speak at a time in the group and that responses made by all participants be kept confidential.

I understand this information and agree to participate fully under the conditions stated above:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. FGD Questions

### Volunteer Research Project Khmer Staff Focus Group Discussion

Recording FGD on Clear Record

Transcribe whole session later

Take attendance, information remains confidential, research team may contact

#### **Intro:**

- Methodology
  - Research questions
  - Volunteer definition
1. How often do you interact with expat short-term volunteers? (Daily, weekly, monthly, rarely)
  2. How would you describe a typical volunteer in your NGO?
    - a. Experience
    - b. Age
    - c. Gender
    - d. Geographic provenance
  3. What type of work do volunteers do in your organisation?
  4. How are volunteers usually introduced to project staff? (Email, group, individually)
  5. How do short-term volunteers interact with project staff in your NGO? Do they work within the team or more independently? Do you spend time with these volunteers outside work hours?
  6. How do you feel about the “coming and going” of short-term volunteers?
  7. What do you think is their main contribution to your organisation?

## 8. Chab Dai's Implementation Summary

The following items have been developed as part of Chab Dai's new Volunteer Coordinator position:

1. Create a formal process for recruiting short-term volunteers, including job descriptions and calls for applications. Work with Chab Dai teams to create concrete volunteer positions.
2. Implement a volunteer management system within Chab Dai that includes project supervision by team managers and volunteer supervision by Volunteer Coordinator. Develop feedback mechanisms that include regular check-ins on volunteer's work progress and personal well-being, a mid-term review, and a final evaluation.
3. Create a volunteer "Welcome Pack," which would include important information on Chab Dai, required reading on human trafficking, information about Cambodia, and "Working with Cambodians," a booklet on cultural differences and working practices between Cambodians and foreigners.
4. Continue to cultivate collaboration with reputable volunteer recruitment/sending agencies to attract highly competent and motivated volunteers. Working through sending agencies diminishes the logistical work on the part of the host organisation, as the sending agency is responsible for the volunteer's travel, lodging, and basic needs.
5. Once Chab Dai has developed its own volunteer practices and policies, the Volunteer Coordinator should also develop a replication pack to be shared with Chab Dai members, make himself available as a consultant to help members develop/improve their own volunteer programs, and provide support and supervision, especially among smaller local members, to short-term volunteers in member organisations.