



Cross-Cultural Solutions

# Impact Assessment

*The Impact and Effectiveness of CCS Volunteer Programs Worldwide*



---

## **Contents**

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>MEASURING IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>IN-COUNTRY IMPACT</b>	<b>7</b>
2009 Partner Program Survey	10
Long-term Volunteer Impact and Capacity Building	16
Quantifying the Economic Impact of International Volunteers	18
<b>IMPACT ON THE VOLUNTEER</b>	<b>21</b>
Perceived Effects of International Volunteering	22
<b>Impacts of International Volunteer Service on Volunteers</b>	<b>24</b>
International Awareness	25
International Social Capital	26
International Career Intentions	27
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>WORKS CITED</b>	<b>31</b>



# Executive Summary

---

Over the past decade, Cross-Cultural Solutions (CCS) has become a leader in the field of international volunteering by building a reputation of high quality, safe, and sustainable volunteer experiences to participants from over 99 countries. In 2010, we celebrated a number of milestones: our 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary, our 25,000<sup>th</sup> volunteer, and reaching over 2 million volunteer hours provided to the communities that we serve around the world. 2010 also brought unprecedented public interest in international volunteering, an academic focus on its benefits, and a deeper interest in the issues of sustainability, reciprocity, and cultural sensitivity.

Though CCS has always closely monitored programs for quality, recently our partnerships within the field have enabled us to collaborate with academic institutions to analyze and measure the impacts of international volunteering in previously unavailable ways. When combined with the other methods we have developed over the years to measure our impact, CCS has a clearer and more complete picture of our impact and efficacy in international volunteering than ever before. This organizational assessment represents the result of that research.

The objective of this report is to explore all areas of impact that CCS has had over the past 15 years. This deeper understanding will enable us to assess how our programs are most effective and will inform our future programmatic decisions. We will discuss the tools we use to monitor and measure impact, and what that impact means on the in-country communities where we work, the volunteer, and their home communities. Understanding the positive impact of our programs, viewed in the context of fulfilling our vision, mission, and values, can help ensure an effective, sustainable continuation of our work:

***Our Vision*** is of a world where people value cultures different from their own, are aware of global issues, and are empowered to effect positive change.

***Our Mission*** is to operate volunteer programs around the world in partnership with sustainable community initiatives, bringing people together to work side-by-side while sharing perspectives and fostering cultural understanding. We are an international not-for-profit organization with no political or religious affiliations.

***Our Values*** are:

***Shared Humanity***

When people of different cultures have an opportunity to connect, there comes an understanding of our shared humanity.

***Respect***

We accept, appreciate and respect that people know and understand what is appropriate for their own communities.

***Integrity***

We commit to ensuring the safety, flexibility, professionalism, transparency and excellence of our programs.

# Measuring CCS' Impact and Efficacy

---

As stated in our mission, Cross-Cultural Solutions has no political or religious affiliations. We receive no outside funding, and so any efforts and resources that otherwise may have been put toward legitimizing the work of CCS is put back into the programs themselves. Volunteers and their sponsors contribute to a program fee that supports their experience and the expenses involved, so, volunteers are the group of people who can accurately assess the value of the volunteer experience. CCS consistently has an overall satisfaction rate of over 99 percent<sup>1</sup>, which speaks to this value.

Though value to the volunteer is of the utmost importance to CCS, it does not necessarily equate to effectiveness as an organization; in other words, we cannot solely rely on the satisfaction of our volunteers as an accurate measure of our impact. It is therefore important to define the basis for evaluating effectiveness, and establish the ways in which this can be applied. At CCS, our program model aims to work toward our shared vision.

Our effectiveness as an organization can be measured in how successfully we are working toward this vision through our mission. As such, we can further divide this objective into three separate goals for our programs:

1. Promote cultural-competency and valuing different cultures
2. Increase awareness of global issues
3. Empower others to effect positive change

These goals are applicable to each party in the volunteering abroad process — organizations and communities served abroad, as well as volunteers who are serving. An important aspect of the CCS volunteer experience is the reciprocity felt by volunteers and community members, and this in itself serves the first goal. It also speaks to the fact that CCS volunteers are both agents and recipients of change.

Therefore, when discussing the efficacy of CCS, we must look both at the impact on the in-country community and on the volunteer. We will tie this impact in both areas back to the three goals listed above to evaluate the efficacy of CCS. To this effect, CCS has developed several ways to measure the efficacy, impact, and quality of our programs.

In this report, we will discuss the formal and informal methods CCS uses for tracking satisfaction, impact, and efficacy. This document serves as a report on the state of our volunteer programs worldwide.

---

<sup>1</sup> Overall program satisfaction has been rated over 99 percent in volunteer program evaluations every year since 2008 when the most recent, in-depth tracking systems were established.

# In-Country Impact

---

Cross-Cultural Solutions would not exist if not for the positive impact we have in the communities where volunteers work. For volunteers, this impact is one of the motivating factors in their participation. Our staff of Country and Program Directors, who are from the local community and have impressive backgrounds in education, social work, and community development, have devoted their lives to the CCS mission, which also represents the positive presence volunteers have within their communities.

CCS has always operated under the assumption that volunteers are most effective when working side-by-side with community members on sustainable local initiatives. Volunteers do not need to assess the areas where they could support the community (often impossible for an outsider to do anyway) because they can join an established organization that is a locally derived response to the issues facing the residents.

To this end, we rely on the feedback of about 200 local CCS staff members in 12 different countries, working in conjunction with our Partner Programs in order to determine volunteer efficacy. CCS works in partnership with hundreds of community organizations — including schools, daycare and community centers, orphanages, etc. — which we call Partner Programs, and our volunteers work with each organization to support its goals. Relationships with Partner Programs are constantly monitored by CCS to ensure that our volunteer impact is positive and sustainable — CCS staff visit Partner Programs frequently, often on a weekly basis, and maintain contact through phone calls, letters, and volunteer feedback.

CCS uses feedback from Partner Programs to determine how we can best support our volunteers who are working to address the issues facing their communities. They play an important role as the experts on the ground who can suggest methods or resources that would make volunteers better equipped at serving the population they serve, whether it is children at a primary school, a woman's group, abandoned elderly citizens, or adults with disabilities.

For example, historically, one common piece of feedback from Partner Programs was that volunteers arrived on their first day unprepared, and were hesitant about being proactive. It often takes a few days for a volunteer to settle in, but if they wait until they are completely comfortable before they start contributing, they are losing valuable time. It is important that volunteers are aware of the expectations of them from the start, and have appropriate support to meet these expectations. If CCS does not provide this support, the Partner Program staff may need to expend unnecessary energy and time assisting the volunteers.

To address this concern, CCS placed an emphasis on improving the resources and support provided to volunteers before they arrive at their placement. In 2008, CCS began the implementation of a Placement Guide for volunteers. This is a comprehensive manual containing information about the role of volunteers, a summary of what is expected at each type of placement, and ideas of activities and methods that could be most effective at their placement. Also in 2009, CCS launched a formalized “Volunteer Handoff” project, which helps connect volunteers with their predecessors at the Partner Program so that there is a collective “memory” of what projects have occurred, and a transference of knowledge in order to help volunteers serve more effectively as a continuous chain.

Volunteer satisfaction regarding volunteer placement saw a significant jump from 2008 onward, as shown by the volunteer evaluation satisfaction scores in Figure 1:



*Figure 1*

Our Partner Programs noted that our volunteers needed greater support to feel comfortable at their volunteer placement, which would increase volunteer impact and effectiveness. Receiving this feedback, both formally and informally, allowed CCS to address the problem with various solutions, effectively helping volunteers to feel more comfortable at their placements, and improving the impact they are able to have on the community.

Open and transparent feedback from our Partner Programs is crucial to improving the impact that volunteers have on the community, as in the example above. Often this feedback will come informally through the relationships that our in-country staff has built with Partner Program staff. However, CCS also solicits the feedback

more formally in group and individual settings. Each Partner Program is involved in an annual workshop where they can meet other local organizations in their field who host volunteers and discuss best practices, strategies to help volunteers be more effective, plans for the upcoming year, and their objectives for volunteers.

The second formal method of gathering feedback from Partner Programs is the annual Partner Program Survey, in which we survey all of the Partner Programs individually to gauge the impact of CCS volunteers on the organizations they serve, the beneficiaries of the organization, and how volunteers interact with the larger community. Since we trust local people to be the best judge of what is appropriate for their own communities, it is critical to have this view of volunteer work through the lens of local community organizations. It also gives us an organization-wide look at how our Partners feel that volunteers are most effective and useful, as well as a chance to review our relationship with every organization with which we work. While we use the feedback from Partner Programs Workshops to monitor our relationships, the Partner Program Survey is unique in that it provides qualitative and quantitative data in which to *measure* our impact.

In this section on In-Country Impact, we will focus on the results of the 2009 Partner Program survey<sup>2</sup>, and discuss how they pertain to volunteer efficacy and impact, both in a quantifiable and qualitative manner. We will also cite a recent academic study on CCS in our Lima, Peru program and the capacity building capabilities of volunteers. Additionally, we will discuss the correlation between international volunteers and sustainable development, and the economic impact that a community and region experiences when having international volunteers. While there are countless testimonials from volunteers about how the experience has affected them, this section aims to pin-point the effects that CCS has in the communities we serve through our volunteers' work.

---

<sup>2</sup> 2010 marks the 8<sup>th</sup> year that we have conducted an annual Partner Program Survey. This survey is distributed to all Partner Programs in each CCS program site, and it aims to get formal feedback from the organizations on a variety of topics pertaining to the service received from our volunteers. .

## 2009 Partner Program Survey

As previously stated, the Partner Program Survey aims to measure the impact and efficacy of CCS volunteers on the Partner Program, the people served by the Partner Program, and the community at large through qualitative and quantitative questions. It also asks Partner Program staff to define the overall impact of CCS volunteers.

*In 2009, the impact of CCS volunteers was rated as **98.9%** “positive” or “highly positive” by our Partner Programs.*

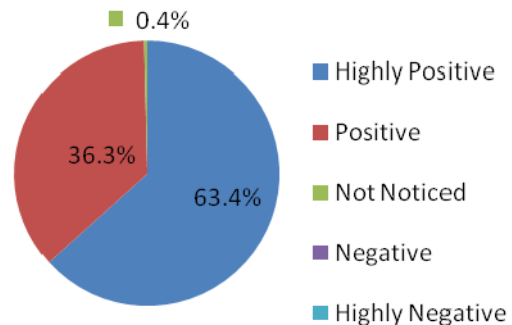
In 2009, the impact of CCS volunteers was rated as 98.9 percent “positive” or “highly positive” by our Partner Programs. It marks the seventh consecutive year that our Partner Programs have scored the overall impact of CCS volunteers as at least 98 percent “Positive” or “Highly Positive,” and it is the fifth consecutive

year that over 50 percent of our Partner Programs have defined the overall impact of CCS volunteers as “Highly Positive,” the highest possible rating.

The responses to the questions regarding the work of CCS staff in supporting volunteers are another positive result in 2009. As shown in Figure 2, 63.4% of the Partner Programs gave the highest, “Highly Positive,” response in regards to the CCS staff’s role in supporting volunteers. As one Partner Program, a daycare center in Brazil, said of their relationship with the staff:

*It has been very positive for our organization. They make possible the interaction between our staff (teachers) and children and people from a different language and culture. That is amazing for the self-esteem of the children to whom we provide educational support.<sup>3</sup>*

Please rate the work of CCS staff in facilitating and supporting the volunteers at your organization.



<sup>3</sup> (Cross-Cultural Solutions 2009)

The CCS Program Design has always relied on the extensive expertise of the in-country staff to facilitate and support the volunteer work within their own communities. The data from our Partner Programs support our belief that local staff members are experts, and speaks to the effectiveness of staff members around the world. The evidence supports that the programmatic decision to have a full-time, permanent staff from the local community has a very real and positive effect on both the community and Partner Programs.

In 2009 CCS was able to compare responses from Partner Programs that shared similar missions/goals in order to better understand the effects and impact that our volunteers have. By doing so, we are able to set realistic expectations for both the Partner Programs, and the volunteers, in terms of how impact is observed, and the most effective use of international volunteers.

Figure 3 shows the average response score<sup>4</sup> to each question. The trend lines represent the Partner Programs' responses to the question, "What is the overall objective of having CCS volunteers at your organization?"<sup>5</sup>

Those Partner Programs that have expressed that their objective for having volunteers is more related to fostering cultural understanding,<sup>6</sup> on average scored better than those that noted the primary objective was to exchange skills and assist with daily workload.

The results shown in Figure 3 are important to CCS, as they speak to the effectiveness of international volunteers in different aspects of their experience. Exchanging skills and expertise, and helping staff with daily workload will always be important parts of a CCS volunteer's experience; however the aspects that focus on "fostering cultural understanding," as defined in the CCS Mission, are also critical to volunteer efficacy. Promoting cross-cultural exchange has proven to be an important element in considering an international volunteer's impact.

*"[CCS staff] makes possible the interaction between our staff (teachers), children, and people from different languages and cultures. That is amazing for the self-esteem of the children to whom we provide educational support."*

*-Daycare in Brazil*

<sup>4</sup>Quantitative responses on the Partner Program Survey are on a scale of 1-5. 1-"Highly Negative Impact," 2-"Negative Impact," 3-"No Impact," 4-"Positive Impact," and 5-"Highly Positive Impact."

<sup>5</sup>Partner Programs may select multiple responses to this question. In these cases, they are included under each response that they check.

<sup>6</sup>"Teaching English," "Support the mission of your organization," "Promote cross-cultural exchange"

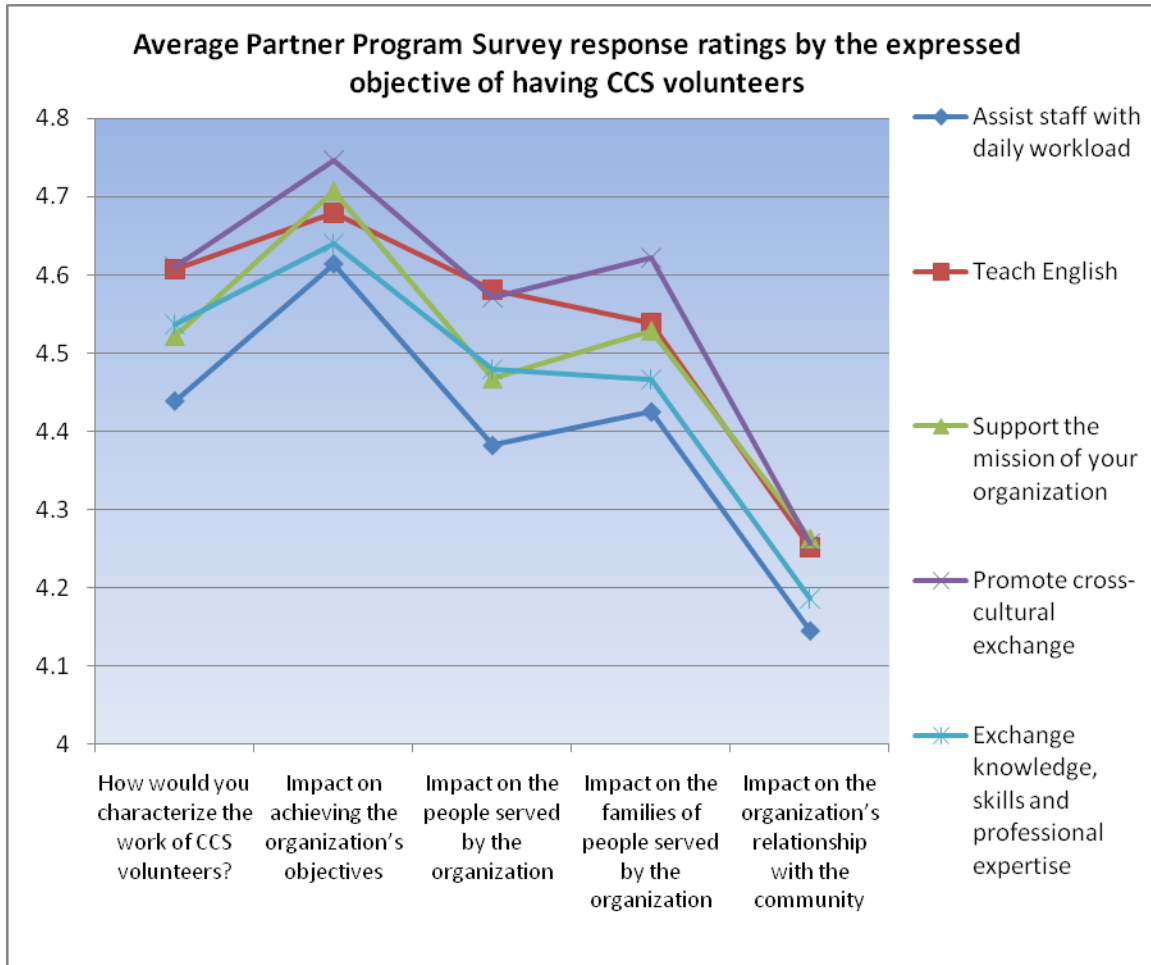


Figure 3

While the quantitative feedback from the Partner Program Surveys shows how well volunteers are doing their work in-country, it is the qualitative feedback that highlights the intangibles that volunteers provide to these organizations. CCS staff members read each survey individually for this feedback, and carefully note trends across Program Sites. Any piece of feedback received three or more times across program sites is considered a “trend.” These trends are noted independently and were not specifically addressed in the Partner Program Survey, so we cannot quantify the number of sites or Partner Programs that experience these benefits. Nonetheless, as these trends continue to occur across cultures and program sites, we can accurately report that they are the observed effects of working with international volunteers.

The feedback is organized by the type of placement so that we can summarize CCS' impact on each placement category. In addition, we collected general examples of how CCS volunteers embody the CCS vision, mission, and values.

Each Partner Program offers placements in at least one of four placement categories — *Caregiving, Teaching, Healthcare, and Community Development*. It is interesting to note that there is specific and unique feedback from each category.

*Promoting cross-cultural exchange has proven to be an important element in considering when determining an international volunteer's impact.*

### *Caregiving*

Partner Programs with placements in the *Caregiving* category noted that first and foremost, volunteers provide love, care, and affection for the beneficiaries. The placements within this category are “Caring for Infants and Children”, “Caring for the Elderly”, and “Caring for People with Disabilities.” Most Partner Programs reported that the biggest source of

impact can be contributed simply to volunteer presence. Since these populations (often in Elderly homes, orphanages, care homes, etc.) are often underserved or understaffed, simply having volunteers around provides an emotional uplift. Another noted trend was that volunteers assist with child development, both physically and socially.

A quote from one of our Partner Programs in Costa Rica gives a great example of the work that volunteers do in these placements. They said of the volunteers at the Senior Center:

*Volunteers impact the seniors in a very positive way. The seniors feel very cared for and stimulated which is contrary to the past because most of them have been abandoned by their families and friends. With the volunteers offering needed companionship, in many occasions their moods change.<sup>7</sup>*

As the name implies, volunteers should be ready to provide affection and care to the people at *Caregiving* placements, and the community will greatly appreciate their presence.

### *Teaching*

At Partner Programs with *Teaching* placements, volunteers could be “Teaching Children,” “Teaching Conversational English,” or “Assisting Teachers of Special Education.” These Partner Programs have shown that volunteers increase future opportunities among the population by teaching English, stimulate learning and increased literacy by fostering a positive and fun learning environment, and have a real and important impact on attendance, enrollment, and participation. As one school in Thailand said, “Having CCS volunteers at our school has increased the

---

<sup>7</sup> (Cross-Cultural Solutions 2009)

number of students in the classroom. Students have fun and are willing to participate.”<sup>8</sup>

### *Healthcare*

Partner Programs with the *Healthcare* placement category include the following placement types: “Observing and Assisting Local Healthcare Professionals” and “Working with People affected by HIV/AIDS.” These Partner Programs noted that volunteers promote good health and hygiene to clients, improve the attitudes of the patients with whom they work, and positively affect the health of the community by providing education and outreach on important health issues. A hospital in Ghana responded:

*A pleasant environment is essential for our hospital and patients- Volunteers really foster that environment by providing a pleasant physical and social environment to be treated in.*<sup>9</sup>

### *Community Development*

Finally, Partner Programs under the *Community Development* category offer placements “Working toward Women’s Empowerment” or “Sharing Professional Skills & Experience.” At these placements, our Partner Programs have observed that volunteers improve and influence life skills which build future professionals. In addition, they often act as positive role models for staff, beneficiaries, and the community at large. As an example, our female volunteers often serve as an inspiration to women in the community — just by arriving in-country they show that women can be independent and strong. One such Partner Program in Tanzania described the impact of having volunteers at their organization:

*The impact the volunteers have is increasing the number of children attending our clubs and increasing the number of women seeking advice and consultation on various issues such as legal aid, stigma issues, and gender violence. All of these consultations are happening through women’s group meetings that are conducted by the volunteers.*<sup>10</sup>

This impact is one that is widely discussed as positive. The United Nations has stated the need for gender equality in its Millennium Development Goals, and experts such as Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Nicholas Kristof and others acknowledge that the best way to fight poverty and extremism in the current global climate is to educate and empower women and girls.<sup>11</sup> CCS volunteers are working with local community organizations to do just that.

---

<sup>8</sup> (Cross-Cultural Solutions 2009)

<sup>9</sup> (Cross-Cultural Solutions 2009)

<sup>10</sup> (Cross-Cultural Solutions 2009)

<sup>11</sup> (Kristof and WuDunn 2009)

All of these examples point to very real and specific effects that volunteers have on their placements, which is unique to the kind of work that they are doing. As noted in the quantitative data section however, one of the biggest impacts that our volunteers can have on the community is promoting cross-cultural exchange, regardless of their placement type.

The final section of volunteer feedback consists of general examples of how CCS volunteers embodying the vision, mission, and values of CCS through their volunteer work and cultural exchange.

For example, one Partner Program in South Africa described the experience of working alongside volunteers, and the effects of volunteers sharing their skills and experiences with the clients at their center for refugees:

*It is a give and take, and in the end the most rewarding aspect is the learning experience. All of us get to spend a lot of time with people from other cultures — be it the staff, volunteers, or clients. It is wonderful to experience how all of these people from different backgrounds come to work together effectively and, at the same time, grow personally from their experience.<sup>12</sup>*

This, in essence, is the CCS model, and a summary of our vision — volunteers sharing their language, culture, and experiences while learning from the staff and clients who do the same, all while working together towards a common, community-defined goal.

This quote from Cape Town is not the only example that highlights volunteers embodying the CCS vision, mission, and values. Below, are noted trends from the 2009 Partner Program Survey reflecting this embodiment:

- *Increasing interest and awareness in global issues and foreign cultures and promoting cross-cultural exchange*
- *Assisting in breaking down stereotypes, stigmas, and eliminating social barriers by exchanging ideas, experiences, cultures, and skills*
- *Promoting team work and solidarity and providing physical and moral support to staff and beneficiaries*
- *Increasing the reputation and credibility of the organization within the community*
- *Raising awareness and trust and increasing community involvement in organization's focus and the local issues facing the community*
- *Making better services available to the population by alleviating some of the duties of the staff*
- *Motivating, inspiring, reaffirming and energizing staff & population*

---

<sup>12</sup> (Cross-Cultural Solutions 2009)

- *Showing solidarity and empathy for issues facing the community while providing hope and encouragement*

*In December 2010, CCS volunteers surpassed over 2 million hours of volunteer service so far, just in time for CCS' 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary.*

This is just a small sample of the responses from our Partner Programs, but demonstrates the positive effect that our volunteers have on the organizations, beneficiaries, and the community as a whole. Our volunteers clearly have a very tangible and measureable impact on the Partner Programs, and the lives of the staff, beneficiaries, and community involved.

On a worldwide scale, CCS volunteers have provided over 250,000 hours<sup>13</sup> of service to our Partner Programs in 2009 alone, and 98.9 percent of those organizations rated that volunteer work as having a positive or highly positive impact. In December 2010, CCS volunteers surpassed over 2 million hours of volunteer service, just in time for CCS' 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This speaks to the collective effort of our volunteers to effect real and positive change.

## **Long-term Volunteer Impact and Capacity Building**

The Partner Program Survey is a yearly snapshot that helps us to qualify and quantify volunteer impact in-country. However, the nature of our volunteer programs is one of long-term sustainability and slow progress, sometimes imperceptible by the volunteers themselves.

Our Directors and in-country staff are the best people to bear witness the long-term effects of having volunteers in the community and at the Partner Programs. They have witnessed group after group of participants picking up where the previous volunteer left off. Nadia Savelieva, the founding Country Director of our program in Russia, uses the imagery of a chain to describe that effect:

*What really makes a difference is a combined effort, people coming and volunteering in succession. You are part of that chain: there were volunteers before you and there will be volunteers coming after you — but the better you do your work and the more you put in it, the stronger the chain is.*

Over the years, our Directors have noted these long-term trends and how each volunteer's small contribution builds upon the last. When viewed as isolated incidents, a volunteer's impact might be best simplified as "assisting staff with their

---

<sup>13</sup> A conservative estimate based on the average length of stay (3.8 weeks) multiplied by the average number of working hours a week (20), multiplied by the 3368 volunteers in 2009.

daily workload,” as noted in the Partner Program Survey. Over years however, the combined effort is truly awe-inspiring.

### *Academic Study on International Volunteering*

A recent study by the Center for Social Development at Washington University in St. Louis analyzed the potential role of international volunteers in building local organizational capacity. Researchers surveyed the CCS Partner Programs in Lima, Peru, and compared their responses to similarly structured organizations in the area that did not utilize volunteers. They were able to assess the long-term contributions and challenges of international volunteers, from the perspective of the NGOs that host them, in terms of being able “to achieve their mission and goals, and to meet the needs of clients.”<sup>14</sup>

*By sharing new methods of doing things and introducing new ideas, volunteers contribute to the organization and community, and enhance the cultural competence of the host staff and its clients alike.*

Overall, the study found that staff at volunteer hosting organizations had positive perceptions of working alongside international volunteers. Researchers note four different areas in which volunteers may enhance the practices of the organization. International volunteers:

1. Act as “an extra pair of hands”
2. Provide tangible resources, philanthropy, and social capital that help sustain the organization<sup>15</sup>
3. Introduce new ideas, and increase intercultural competence of staff and clients
4. Apply or transfer technical or professional skills<sup>16</sup>

This study provides evidence that supports the positive role that volunteers can play at these organizations. All respondents from organizations that host CCS volunteers highlighted their appreciation and satisfaction with them. Not surprisingly, while respondents noted that volunteers with language skills could have a greater impact over a short period, it is significant to note that less than half said it was very important. This is in contrast with their counterparts who do not host volunteers, and perceived that it was an important or essential skill. This result suggests that those who have worked with CCS volunteers have the experience to know that volunteers, even those who do not speak the language, can have an impact on the community.

---

<sup>14</sup> (B. J. Lough, A. M. McBride, et al. 2010, 6)

<sup>15</sup> CCS has a strict Donations & Gift Giving Policy that prohibits volunteers from contributing any money or valuable resources to our Partner Programs, in order to protect our relationship with the community.

<sup>16</sup> (B. J. Lough, A. M. McBride, et al. 2010, 6-11)

The study concluded, “Although short-term placements may significantly benefit volunteers, staff members perceive that volunteers also contribute meaningfully to their organizations.” The recognition from our Partner Program staff of the importance of the intercultural understanding that volunteers bring, is especially important to CCS. All respondents emphasized that by sharing new methods of doing things, and introducing new ideas, volunteers contribute to the organization and community, as well as enhancing the cultural competence of staff and clients alike.<sup>17</sup>

This latest study from the Center for Social Development concluded what CCS already knew; CCS volunteers are empowered to effect positive change through their contributions at their placements, and increase cultural competency and awareness of global issues affecting us all. The areas of impact show that CCS is effective in achieving desired outcomes in-country.

## **Quantifying the Economic Impact of International Volunteers**

An often undefined, but very tangible, effect of international volunteers is the economic impact on the local community. CCS volunteers travel to work side-by-side with the local community members, and by doing so, are stimulating that community’s economically simply with their presence.

Through their program fee, CCS volunteers help to provide reliable, fair-market wages and benefits to over 200 in-country staff members, all from the local community. Additionally, since all accommodations, transportation, food and water, and volunteering resources are procured locally, they are also supporting all of these industries in a sustainable manner. Last, volunteers support educational and local responsible tourism initiatives during their Cultural & Learning Activities.

Consider that this means the program fee paid by CCS volunteers and their sponsors have provided roughly \$5 million USD annually to our program sites over the past few years. *Table 1* shows a break-down of exactly where these funds go. Keep in mind that these amounts do not include additional meals, side-trips, internet and phone communications, souvenirs and handicrafts, and all other personal expenses of the volunteers that further support the economies and small industries of the local communities, not to mention the international flights, airport taxes, and additional trips that support the national economies.

---

<sup>17</sup> (B. J. Lough, A. M. McBride, et al. 2010, 8,15)

2008 In-Country Operating Expenses	Amount in USD
In-Country Staff Salaries	\$2,303,507.46
Accommodations	\$819,024.88
Food and Water	\$716,646.76
Transportation	\$511,890.54
Cultural & Learning Activities	\$204,756.22
Other (volunteering materials, insurance, etc.)	\$563,079.60
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,118,905.50</b>

Table 1

It is for these reasons that the United Nations identifies travel and tourism as a “major driving force for economic development in many developing countries because of its large potential multiplier and spillover effects on the rest of the economy,” that it “tends to generate a large number of jobs, particularly for the unskilled or semi-skilled,” and provides “enhanced employment opportunities, particularly for women.”<sup>18</sup>

Though CCS does not fit under the traditional definition of the ‘tourism’ industry, our programs do fit the definition put forth by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), a specialized agency of the United Nations that promotes the development of sustainable and responsible tourism, particularly in developing countries. Tourism as defined by UNWTO is “comprising the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited.”<sup>19</sup>

*CCS volunteers can be confident that the approximate \$5 million USD that they annually provide directly to communities around the world is responsible and sustainably utilized.*

In 2008, the UNWTO and a coalition with 26 other UN agencies, NGO’s, and organizations in the private and public sectors, created the first ever Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria.<sup>20</sup> These 37 criteria, organized under four themes, were developed to help consumers determine which products and services that have positive effects on the community and environment, as part of the tourism industry’s response to the UN Millennium Development Goals.

<sup>18</sup> E/CN.17/1999/5 Report of the Secretary-General on Tourism and Sustainable Development, [http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/resources/res\\_docucsd\\_07.shtml](http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/resources/res_docucsd_07.shtml)

<sup>19</sup> (UNWTO 2010)

<sup>20</sup> (UNWTO 2008)

The criteria promote:

- Effective sustainability planning
- Maximizing social and economic benefits to the local community
- Enhancing cultural heritage
- Reducing negative impacts to the environment

Though not all criteria are relevant to a public service based volunteer organization, CCS meets all of the applicable Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria, meaning CCS volunteers can be confident that the approximate \$5 million USD that they annually provide to communities around the world is responsibly and sustainably utilized. Because we place volunteers directly in the communities where their program fees go, they can see their money at work. This is subsidized by the work provided by volunteers to the community. In our South Africa program alone, Country Director Luann Hatane has estimated during their four years in operation, volunteers have provided the equivalent of over ZAR 2.4 million in value.<sup>21</sup>

CCS takes great pride in making decisions on an operational level that reflect our core values of shared humanity, respect, and integrity. While we believe that cultural exchange through volunteer service is the best way to effect positive change, CCS acknowledges that by sending over 25,000 volunteers around the world, we have a responsibility to ensure that all effects felt in-country, including economic impact, are positive. As our volunteers serve as the driving force of the organization, we want them to be aware and proud of the fact that their program fee is going toward sustainable community development.

---

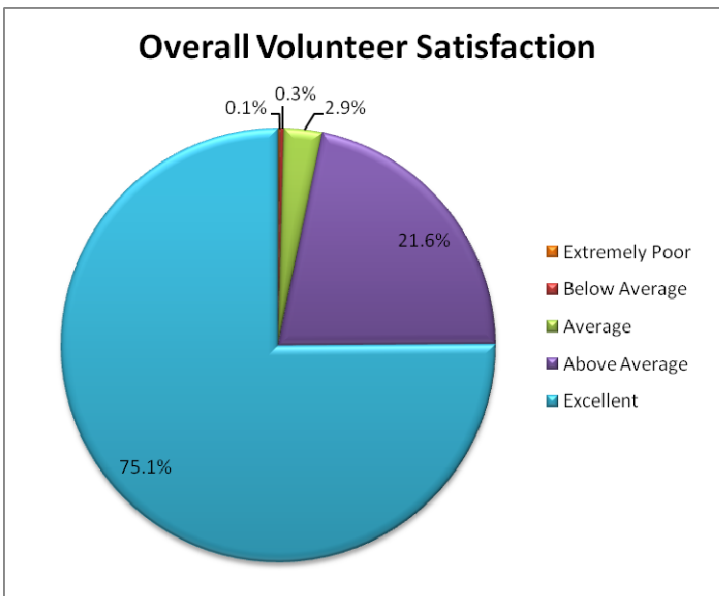
<sup>21</sup> Approximately \$345,000 USD. This figure was found by taking the total number of volunteers hours worked in each Partner Program, taking an average between causal and low-skilled labor rates, and multiplying to find the total amount of volunteer value. It should be noted that volunteers never replace local staff members at Partner Programs.

# Impact on the Volunteer

Cross-Cultural Solutions structures our volunteer programs so that the volunteers themselves feel a great impact from their participation. As an organization with the mission of sharing perspectives and fostering cultural understanding, CCS strives to broaden each volunteer's cultural understanding of the country where they are volunteering and their own worldview.

Volunteers receive a great amount of support from CCS staff both during the pre-departure process and while they are in-country, so that they can focus their energy on their experience. Programmatic decisions, such as having volunteers stay at a Home-Base<sup>22</sup> where staff provide transportation, cultural orientation, safe drinking water, and healthy meals takes care of the logistical details and allows volunteers to be comfortable while immersing themselves in the culture. This has a great benefit on their volunteer work, but it also makes for a powerful experience for the volunteer.

CCS provides every volunteer a Program Evaluation form during their final week in-country to assess any challenges they might have had. By drawing upon the



experiences of current volunteers, we can address any areas that are taking away from volunteer satisfaction and inhibiting them from having the most positive and impactful program possible. We ask questions in the areas of their pre-departure preparation and expectations, orientation, volunteer placement, cultural activities, living conditions and support in the Home-Base and from in-country staff, and their overall experience and what

**Figure 4:** Volunteer Responses to the question, "Please rate your experience overall," using 2010 data.

they gained from it. The in-country and headquarters offices use this qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate and improve the programming.

We are very proud of our high volunteer satisfaction record at CCS, as shown in Figure 4. As mentioned previously, over 99 percent of volunteers return satisfied

<sup>22</sup> The Home-Base structure is safe, comfortable lodging located in the local community for CCS volunteers and staff.

with their overall experience, and three out of four volunteers give the highest possible score when evaluating their program. This means that CCS offers quality programming to volunteers, and that they feel they received a positive experience. However, compiling feedback in these areas also has another purpose: measuring satisfaction. This also illuminates volunteer expectations versus the reality that they experience.

Setting correct expectations is important not only to mitigate any issues and dissatisfaction for volunteers while they are serving, but it also linked to how successful our international volunteer programs are. We have found there to be a strong correlation between expectations setting and volunteer responses to the question, “How well did this program contribute to your cultural understanding of this country?” Furthermore, the necessity of setting correct and realistic expectations is not just limited to effects on volunteers. The Center for Social Development found in their *Capacity Building Contributions of Short-Term International Volunteers* study that to have a sustainable impact, volunteer expectations must be consistent with placement objectives.<sup>23</sup>

CCS uses the volunteer program evaluations to constantly monitor the feedback of volunteers to gauge which can be improved, and where we can improve the expectations-setting process; in effect, we monitor the impact we have on volunteers. In order to measure the impact that a CCS program has on the volunteer, we must rely on outside sources since many of the effects will become apparent only after the volunteer has completed the program.

CCS is fortunate that the Center for Social Development has invited CCS volunteers to participate in two studies on the effects of international volunteering on the volunteers themselves as a part of their ongoing efforts to assess the impact of international volunteer programs. These studies allow us to compare their findings with the anecdotal evidence of impact that we have collected over the past 15 years of operations. In this section titled “Impact on the Volunteer,” we will analyze the results of these studies. They will inform us of our effectiveness in meeting the three goals of the program in terms of our impact on the volunteers.

## **Perceived Effects of International Volunteering**

In the In-Country Impact section, we discussed the most recent study from the Center for Social Development on the effects of volunteers on the host organizations. However, the study’s first report, issued in May 2009, focuses on the perceived effects of international volunteering on returned CCS volunteers. Initial findings cover 10 areas related to volunteer outcomes including motivations for volunteering, perceived effectiveness of volunteer activities, intercultural

---

<sup>23</sup> (B. J. Lough, A. M. McBride, et al. 2010, 13)

understanding, employment prospects and performance, and potential challenges of volunteering.<sup>24</sup>

On average, 95 percent of the respondents were satisfied with their volunteer experience. Many respondents concluded that volunteering internationally changed the course of their lives. The report cited the same areas of impact that the volunteers frequently mention to CCS during their re-entry process as how their experience changed them. Listed below are some of the main areas of growth reported by the study, followed by a quotes from re-entry interviews:

- **Changes in their educational or career trajectories**

*When I came back from my CCS experience in Cape Town in 2008, I kept thinking about the kids at Blossom Street School who learn in English, which is a second or third language for nearly all of them. Already a teacher, I began to explore what it would take to get certification to teach English as a Second Language. I am happy to report that within one year I had added that certification, and I am now teaching ESL. Yes, volunteering changes the volunteers long-term, and often in ways they couldn't have anticipated.*

— Glenda Blaisdell-Buck, South Africa volunteer

- **Intercultural knowledge and understanding**

*It has definitely changed all of us. My kids are going to study Spanish (hopefully I will too) and we are trying to arrange to have an exchange student from a Latin American country come and stay with us next year.*

— Dina Morrissey, Costa Rica volunteer

- **Lifelong friendships**

*My three months in Brazil in 2006 have sculpted much of my life since then. I feel attached to the culture, the language, and the friends I made while I taught English with CCS. I still speak online with my students from Salvador, and it gives me great pride to know that I gave them the opportunity to speak English so that they too could have the opportunity to connect with people from other countries.*

— Jack McAndrews, Brazil volunteer

---

<sup>24</sup> (Lough, McBride and Sherraden, Perceived Effects of International Volunteering: Reports from Alumni 2009)

- **An increased appreciation for life**

*I think it's important to go overseas because ultimately it can lead to a better sense of happiness and a better understanding of the world around you and how we really need to become more integrated in a global capacity. International volunteering is great because it forced me to go out of my comfort zone. You can develop a lot of self-knowledge through the experience.*

— Al Kwak, Tanzania volunteer

- **A stronger commitment to service**

*It changed my life and the way that I look at the world and how I want to contribute to it. It created this burning itch inside of me, and it's not going to stop, it's been there for four years now. I have to help in any way I can, I have to embrace that humanitarian aspect of life. I think in a lot of people that feeling exists, it's just a matter of waking it up, and that's what CCS was for me, it just kind of woke me up.*

— Erin Hallagan, Peru volunteer

It is reaffirming for the report to conclude that international volunteer service has these effects. Additionally, respondents also frequently claim that they experienced a period of reevaluation during their volunteer experience, which gave them a greater appreciation for what they have, in both material and relational terms. This expression of gratitude was often connected with a commitment to share their resources with others. Overall, volunteers reported learning a great deal not only about themselves but also about global issues and affairs.<sup>25</sup>

## **Impacts of International Volunteer Service on Volunteers**

The preliminary findings of the 2009 study focused on the impacts of volunteering as perceived by the volunteers themselves. As a follow-up to this study, Washington University's Center for Social Development conducted further research. The result is "among the first known impact analyses on international volunteer service."<sup>26</sup>

It is a great honor for CCS and our volunteers to participate in this study as one of the organizations that have been identified as "respected leaders in the field of international service" and "for applying the best available evidence to guide programming."<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> (Lough, McBride and Sherraden, Perceived Effects of International Volunteering: Reports from Alumni 2009)

<sup>26</sup> (McBride, Lough and Sherraden 2010, 3)

<sup>27</sup> (McBride, Lough and Sherraden 2010, 12)

The report compares differences in the perspectives of international volunteers, compared to their peers who inquire about, or enroll in, similar programs but do not complete any part of their trip. Using this methodology, the researchers are able to sample individuals with similar motivations and interests in volunteering. By having participants complete identical surveys before and after the scheduled program, they can determine what impacts, if any, the international volunteer experience has had on the volunteer's original perceptions and intentions.

*“International volunteer service has a positive impact on international volunteers’ perceived international awareness, international social capital, and international career intentions.”*

For the field of international volunteering as a whole,<sup>28</sup> the results from this quasi-experimental study are very encouraging. The study determined that:

“International volunteer service has a positive impact on international volunteers’ perceived international awareness, international social capital, and international career intentions.” Volunteers also showed a significantly higher score in intercultural relations.

### *International Awareness*

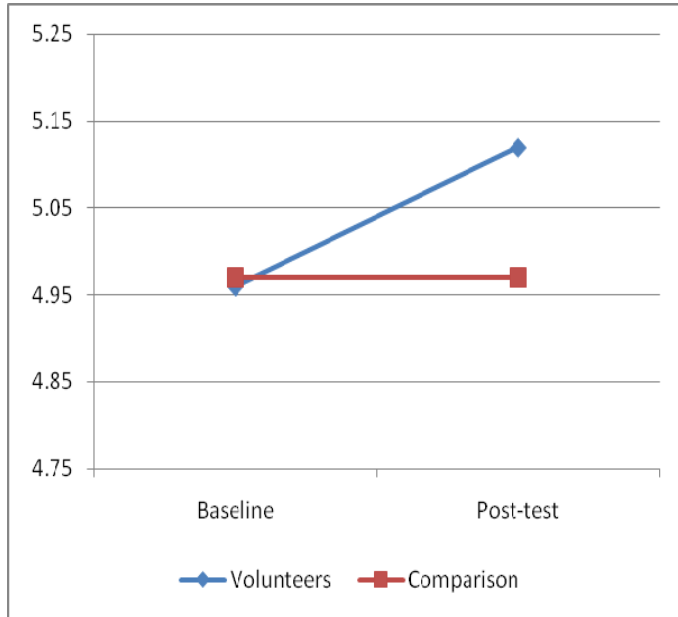
One particularly striking finding is the result under the “international awareness” outcome. This measures how people think about problems and potential solutions of nations outside of their own, including social, economic, and political issues. As shown in *Figure 5*, the results from the survey taken before the program (baseline) for both volunteers and non-volunteers are essentially identical. However, when surveyed after the program (post-test), the volunteers on average saw a significant increase in their level of international awareness, while non-volunteers reported no change. Furthermore, those with longer previous international experiences have reported a more significant increase in international awareness, despite their prior exposure to other cultures.

---

<sup>28</sup> The authors note that they surveyed two recognized leaders in the field employing industry best practices, including CCS. Future research will examine institutional features of the programs on the outcomes observed.

CCS has always believed that fostering cultural understanding through volunteer work serves our Vision of a world where people are aware of global issues. These results support what 15 years of operations have led CCS to believe: the CCS Program Design increases the participant’s global awareness, whether it is their first time traveling or not, and whether they stay for one week or twelve weeks.

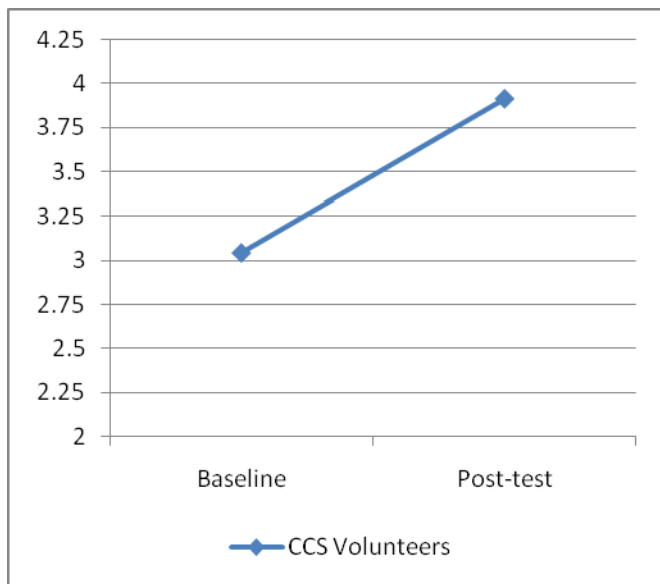
In fact, CCS volunteers reported a larger increase in international awareness than average; more so than another volunteer program surveyed that specializes in longer duration programs.<sup>29</sup>



**Figure 5: International Awareness Treatment Effects (N=145 per group) (McBride, Lough and Sherraden 2010)**

### International Social Capital

The international social capital category assesses the level of contact the respondents have with people who live in other countries. It also measures how well they use these contacts as resources and how they might be involved in advocating issues. The results in the international social capital category are perhaps the least surprising of the study: volunteers report significantly higher international social capital after they participate on an international volunteer program. CCS volunteers reported a 29 percent increase (see Figure 6).



**Figure 6: International Social Capital Treatment Effects (N=145 per group) (McBride, Lough and Sherraden 2010)**

A previous study from Washington University reported that volunteers utilize these contacts in various ways,

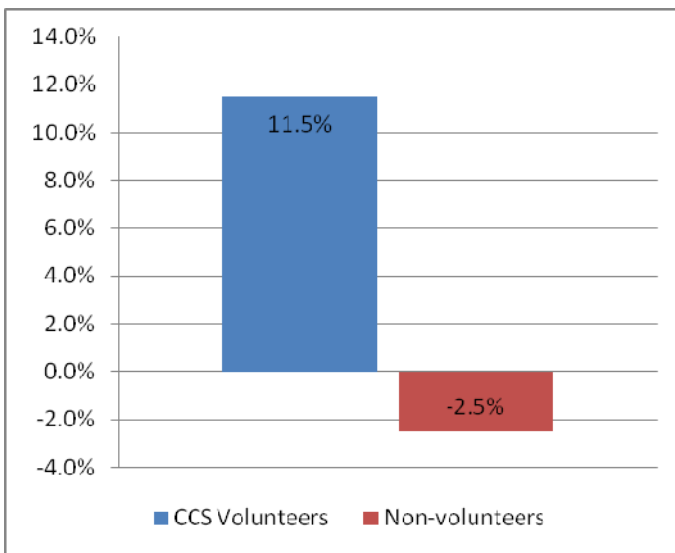
<sup>29</sup> The average increase in mean score from baseline to post-test for CCS volunteers was 0.17, which on average was 0.21 higher than the CCS control group at post-test. The other volunteer organization surveyed reported a positive 0.10 difference from their control group post-test.

including coordinating projects, research, exchanges, internships, or future travel to the host country, and they may facilitate employment opportunities or other resources to the host community.<sup>30</sup>

CCS' core values state that when people of different cultures have an opportunity to connect, there comes an understanding of our shared humanity. Clearly, CCS volunteers receive the opportunity to connect with host community members, both during their work side-by-side with the local initiatives and afterwards, and are using the opportunity to its full advantage.

### *International Career Intentions*

Another positive outcome for CCS volunteers in particular was the category referring to international career intentions. International service often provides opportunities to explore career directions that are focused on international or development issues. CCS volunteers' international career intentions are significantly higher than the non-volunteers (see *Figure 7*) who participated in the study, over time equating to a 14 percent uptick.<sup>31</sup> This outcome speaks to the successful final objective of the CCS Vision: with the international awareness and contacts acquired during their experience abroad, our alumni are empowered to effect positive change, evidenced by their increased desire to work in a career based on social development, economic development, and other internationally related fields.



**Figure 7:** Change in International Career Intentions outcome by percent (N=145 per group) (McBride, Lough and Sherraden 2010)

The international volunteer experience helps to define educational and career-related objectives for CCS participants. Volunteer service may provide “on-the ground training for individuals aspiring to work in international development, nonprofit management, or intercultural studies.”<sup>32</sup> More importantly, the report demonstrates that participants gain both a deeper understanding of cultures different from their own and newfound relationships, whether with host country

<sup>30</sup> (Lough, McBride and Sherraden, Perceived Effects of International Volunteering: Reports from Alumni 2009)

<sup>31</sup> The difference over time was 0.57 for CCS volunteers, on a scale of 1-7.

<sup>32</sup> (McBride, Lough and Sherraden 2010, 12)

members or other volunteers. These qualities, gained on an international volunteer program, are increasingly important in a global economy, and employers in the modern workplace value candidates with this cultural competency.

Those who question the cost of international volunteer programs should take note: participants in volunteer programs like CCS receive great value for their experience, and the lifelong return on their investment is tremendous. An increasing number of colleges and universities have recognized the importance of this experience and are offering students graduate and postgraduate credit for participation, in addition to establishing faculty-led volunteer programs with CCS. Notable examples include the University of Michigan School Of Social Work offering Masters in Social Work candidates the opportunity to complete their practicum on the CCS South Africa program, and an annual faculty-led New York University Art Therapy group. In addition, hundreds more students apply and receive credit on an individual basis at various institutions who consider their CCS program an internship, service-learning, or an independent project.

The 2010 Washington University study clearly shows that participants on international volunteer programs experience significantly higher scores in the areas of international awareness, international social capital, and internationally related career plans than their peers who do not participate do not experience. The benefits of exposure to a different culture beforehand help participants to achieve these outcomes, but it is significant that the researchers note that these outcomes increase with each week they spend in-country, which suggests that there is no “ceiling” when it comes to what can be gained through international volunteering.<sup>33</sup>

It is not enough simply to travel to another country — it is what is experienced on an international volunteer program that makes these outcomes possible. CCS provides local community initiatives with volunteer service, while providing volunteers the chance to share perspectives and experiences in situations not otherwise possible.

---

<sup>33</sup> (McBride, Lough and Sherraden 2010, 14)

# Conclusions

---

Cross-Cultural Solutions is constantly striving to improve the quality and effectiveness of our programs. Over the past several years, we have successfully monitored the impact of the programs on the community and the volunteers through a number of tools, including meetings and Partner Program Workshops with the community organizations where volunteers work, and program evaluation forms and re-entry surveys, completed by the volunteers. This allows us to identify trends and best practices, prioritize areas of focus for quality, and implement programmatic changes to address weaknesses.

Only in the past few years, thanks in a large part to the timely reports from the Center for Social Development, have we been able to ramp up our efforts to measure impact. This is a two-pronged effort, since we can recognize impact both on the communities in which we work, and on the volunteers. Fortunately, we are also able to draw upon years of collected historical data. This puts CCS at the vanguard for this type of focus: many in the field of international volunteering are starting to put more focus on the impact of their programs, including the U.S. Peace Corps.<sup>34</sup>

To do so effectively, CCS has focused on three vision-driven objectives that summarize the work of the organization as a whole. They are to 1) promote cultural-competency and valuing different cultures; 2) increase awareness of global issues; 3) empower others to effect positive change. We do not have different goals for our in-country impact and the impact on the volunteers, which coincides with our core value of shared humanity.

The measurement and analysis tools used have shown impressive results with regard to impact both on the in-country community and on the volunteers. When it comes to promoting cultural-competency and valuing different cultures, our Partner Programs repeatedly state, both statistically and anecdotally through the Partner Program Surveys, the great value of CCS volunteers for the cultural exchange they provide. An independent study through the Center for Social Development also cites increasing cultural-competency to the community as one of the greatest contributions of international volunteers. At the same time, 99 percent of CCS volunteers respond satisfactorily when asked how well the program contributed to their own cultural understanding. There is an incredible amount of reciprocity in this area, and CCS has proven to be very effective at meeting this first goal.

Volunteers also make local communities aware of global issues, as shown in the Partner Program Survey, many Partner Programs noticed how volunteers destigmatized certain issues by explaining to community members how they also

---

<sup>34</sup> The Peace Corps published a Comprehensive Agency Assessment in June 2010, which included several recommendations regarding improving and expanding the implementation and utilization of impact studies. (The Peace Corps 2010, 101-102)

occur in their own countries. They also noted how volunteers increase awareness in a larger world outside of their own borders. Similarly, researchers found the increase in volunteers' "International Awareness" most statistically significant when compared with the test-group. Considering this, it is safe to say that CCS achieves its second goal.

Lastly, the ways in which CCS effects positive change in communities around the world as well as with volunteers are too diverse to count. Nearly 99 percent of Partner Programs report that volunteers have a positive or highly positive impact, and researchers have found that volunteers can have a real and sustainable impact on community social service organizations. Upon returning home, volunteers report personal growth, which is linked to a higher commitment to service, and increased international career intentions. When combined with an increase in cultural-competency and an awareness of global issues, this is exactly the change CCS sets out to create.

CCS is happy to report that we have shown positive and sustainable impact in all areas, and that research, both internal and independently conducted, has proven the organization effective at achieving our goals. In 2010, our program quality was at an all-time high, and CCS will continue to strive to improve the quality and efficacy of our programs for the years to come.

## Works Cited

1. Cross-Cultural Solutions. "2009 Partner Program Survey: Bagamoyo, Tanzania." 2009.
2. Cross-Cultural Solutions. "2009 Partner Program Survey: Cape Town, South Africa." 2009.
3. Cross-Cultural Solutions. "2009 Partner Program Survey: Hohoe, Ghana." 2009.
4. Cross-Cultural Solutions. "2009 Partner Program Survey: Salvador, Brazil." 2009.
5. Cross-Cultural Solutions. "2009 Partner Program Survey: San Carlos, Costa Rica." 2009.
6. Cross-Cultural Solutions. "2009 Partner Program Survey: Trang, Thailand." 2009.
7. Kristof, Nicholas D, and Sheryl WuDunn. *Half the Sky*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.
8. Lough, Benjamin J., Amanda M. McBride, and Margaret S. Sherraden. *Perceived Effects of International Volunteering: Reports from Alumni*. St Louis, MO: Center for Social Development, Washington University, 2009.
9. Lough, Benjamin J., Amanda Moore McBride, Margaret S. Sherraden, and Kathleen O'Hara. *Capacity Building Contributions of Short-Term International Volunteers*. St. Louis, MO: Center for Social Development - Washington University, 2010.
10. McBride, Amanda Moore, Benjamin J. Lough, and Margaret S. Sherraden. *Perceived Impacts of International Service on Volunteers: Interim Results from a Quasi-Experimental Study*. St Louis, MO: Center for Social Development, Washington University, 2010.
11. The Peace Corps. *A Comprehensive Agency Report*. Washington, D.C.: Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters, 2010.
12. UNWTO. *First ever Global Tourism Criteria*. October 6, 2008. [http://www.unwto.org/media/news/en/press\\_det.php?id=2851](http://www.unwto.org/media/news/en/press_det.php?id=2851) (accessed 2010).
13. *World Tourism Organisation (UNTWO)*. February 2010. [www.unwto.org](http://www.unwto.org).
14. World Travel and Tourism Organization and International Hotel and Restaurant Association. "UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Division of Sustainable Development." *The United Nations*. 1999. <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/wttc.pdf> (accessed February 2010).



## Cross-Cultural Solutions

2 Clinton Place ■ New Rochelle, NY 10801 ■ USA  
Tel: 1-800-380-4777 ■ 1-914-632-0022 ■ Fax: 1-914-632-8494  
Email: [info@crossculturalsolutions.org](mailto:info@crossculturalsolutions.org)

[www.crossculturalsolutions.org](http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org)