

## **EYV 2011 - VOLUNTEERING MATTERS**

### **Impact of Youth Volunteering in Kenya**

**April - October 2011**

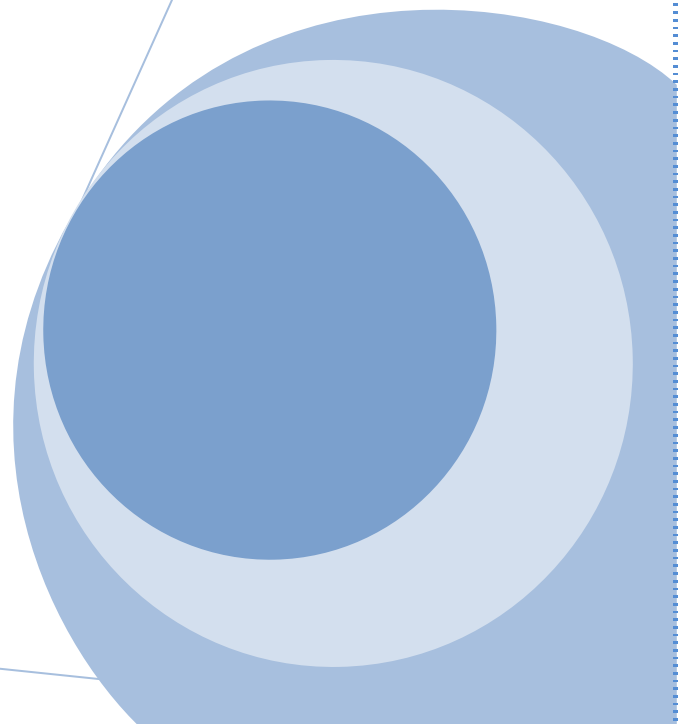
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# 1 Introduction

Voluntary effort or volunteering has played a key role in the issues of development worldwide for centuries. 2011 is the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteering (IYV+10) as mandated by the United Nations. It is also being recognised as the European Year of Volunteering. These celebrations are being marked by many volunteer involving organisations around the world in different ways.

ICYE Kenya, together with the ICYE international office and the European Voluntary Service (EVS) have come together with other ICYE national committees to conduct a piece of research looking at the impact their international volunteers have on the projects and communities they live/work in. The research data has been collected from international volunteers, host families, host projects, local volunteers and returned volunteers known or connected to ICYE Kenya.

The aims of this research are to discover and promote the following:

1. The value of volunteers in Kenya
  - Their contribution to the development of the projects/communities and of Kenya as a nation.
  - An exploration into why people volunteer.
2. The impact of volunteering on the parties involved
  - International volunteers
  - Host projects/families
  - Wider communities

The questions that this research hopes to address:

1. Why do people volunteer?
2. What impact does volunteering have?
3. What could be changed to improve future volunteering practices/experiences?

This research has taken place over a 6 months period from 15<sup>th</sup> April – 15<sup>th</sup> October 2011 in Nairobi, Kenya.

I begin with an overview of volunteering in Kenya in order to set the research in the context it has been conducted. This profile looks at specific topics such as population, development issues and the extent of international volunteering in Kenya.

It is hoped that the final recommendations will give a well rounded picture of the work of ICYE in Kenya and the impact their international volunteers are making in their projects but also on the development of Kenya as a nation.

## 2 Overview of Volunteering in Kenya

Volunteering in Kenya has a long history as a part of the mutual aid (self help) category. The culture of '*harambee*' ideologically means that a person should place the well being of the community above his/her own. It works on the basis that individuals will contribute willingly to the cause and support the community. The first president Jomo Kenyatta appealed soon after independence, for the country to contribute to the national development. They began with building schools, hospitals and other local facilities. The whole country 'pulled together' to improve their conditions with little direct support from the government. More recently volunteer effort in Kenya has developed within educational institutions. Several universities are members of AIESEC, an international youth run organisation present in 110 countries. It facilitates volunteering exchanges for students and graduates and has over 60 years experience in carrying out voluntary activities. Other initiatives doing voluntary work within institutions include scouting, environmental clubs and many others. ICYE Kenya is another organisation that provides voluntary services. It is run on a voluntary basis by a board of eight people. The office itself is based in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. ICYE Kenya also works with local volunteers who act as co-

workers. They assist with the orientation of new volunteers, visiting projects and other events. The projects ICYE Kenya offers volunteers fall under the following categories: teaching, working with disabled children or street children, in health working in hospitals, clinics and health centres, homes for orphaned or abandoned children, as well as community, youth and gender related projects, environmental conservation, agricultural projects and many more.

International volunteering within Kenya has also increased over the last few years. There are now a number of providers and 'not for profit' organisations sending volunteers to Kenya. ICYE Kenya is one of these organisations.

## 3 Action Research

### 3.1 Method and Sample

#### **Method**

The data needed for this research is a combination of quantitative and qualitative. Several options were explored to decide the best method for gathering the necessary information.

A focus group/discussion forum would have enabled us to collect the results needed. However, it would be very difficult to get all of the relevant parties to come together; especially as the ICYE Kenya projects are scattered all over the country.

The second option was to use questionnaires to gather the data. These could be posted online and emailed to the respective volunteers or projects. This would have been an easy, paperless way of finding out the impact of volunteers in Kenya. The problem arises when projects/families do not have easy access to the Internet or even the basic computer skills to fill in an online questionnaire. This method would have required a lot of follow up to ensure that the respondents remember to complete the forms. Another option would have been to post the forms to those with no Internet access. But once again this could cause difficulties in getting the questionnaires returned and in the high cost of posting the number of required questionnaires.

Finally, the best option was to travel to the individual projects and fill in the forms together. This would minimise the failure rate and give the opportunity to explain the questions more thoroughly in the cases where misunderstandings could arise. Questions were developed to collect qualitative data that could also be converted to quantitative and be used to both describe and explore average opinions too.

The lead researcher on this project was a volunteer from the UK and not fluent in Swahili, so a local staff member from ICYE Kenya was available to accompany her during the visits to projects. This supported the research by translating in situations where communication difficulties arose.

#### **Sample**

The sample has been taken from participants in the ICYE Kenya programmes and those connected to projects within those programmes. It does not cover all volunteers, projects and families involved but those who were available for the researchers to visit them or those who completed the online version of the questionnaire (in the case of returned volunteers). ICYE Kenya also has approximately 30 co-workers supporting their work locally within the country.

As of 01 September 2011, ICYE Kenya is hosting 35 long-term volunteers and 4 short-term volunteers. These volunteers are working in different projects and accommodated in host families (or living within the project). The following sample responses were gathered between 15<sup>th</sup> April – 31<sup>st</sup> August 2011 and it is felt that the numbers of completed questionnaires are able to provide a representative sample that can reflect the average opinions of ICYE Kenya projects and volunteers.

The results for returned volunteers were not gathered exclusively from ICYE Kenya participants but from those involved in the ICYE federation worldwide. The questionnaire was hosted online and requests sent out via Facebook to any volunteer who has completed an ICYE exchange programme to consider responding. The numbers of responses gathered are very limited compared with the number of returned volunteers in the ICYE federation. However, they will be used to give some comparison against the current volunteer experiences to see whether time can affect how someone feels about their impact as a volunteer.

### **3.2 Information on interviewed participants**

**The number of people participating in this survey:**

International Volunteers = 29

- Sex: 23 Female, 6 Male
- Nationality: German 15, Danish 3, Icelandic 3, Polish 1, French 1, Italian 1, Costa Rican 1, Greek 1, Estonian 1, Finnish 1, Swedish 1

Host Projects = 15

Host Families = 13

Local Volunteers = 14

Returned Volunteers = 9

ICYE Co Workers = 2

**Total = 84**

N.B.

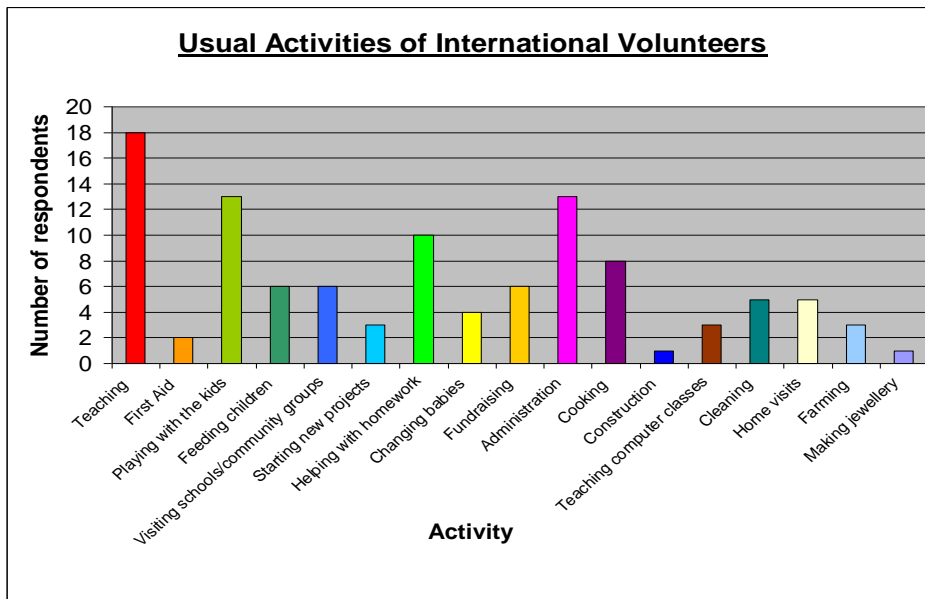
Unfortunately the ICYE co-worker question group did not provide enough responses to gain representative results and so these questionnaires will be discounted.

Leaving a total number of respondents of **82**.

### **3.3 Action Results**

The results will be explored in direct relation to the research questions posed in the introduction. The responses from all of the question groups that provided an adequate number of completed questionnaires will be analysed. They will then be compared and contrasted in order to develop a representative answer to each individual research question; as well as additional information that has been discovered through the questionnaires.

## Project Work Area



### 3.3.1 Motivation

#### What were your reasons for volunteering?

Responses:

International Volunteers = 29

Returned Volunteers = 9

Local Volunteers = 14

#### International Volunteers

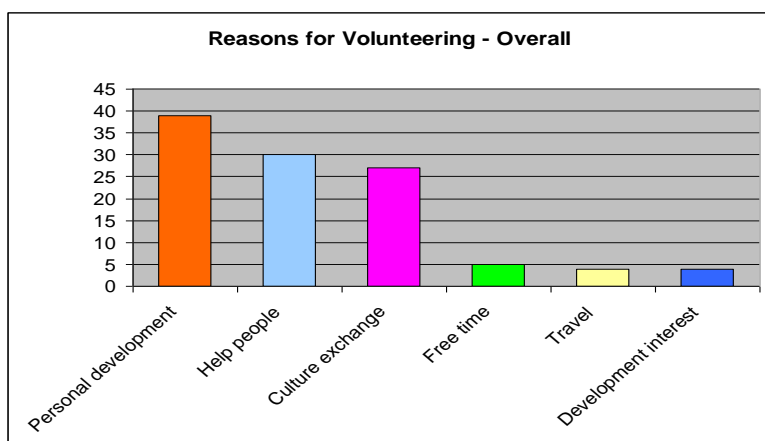
Culture exchange	21
Work with children	4
Travel	1
Time to decide what next?	2
Understand poverty better	2
To go to Africa	2
To help others	14
Learn language	3
Personal development	11
Gain new experiences	9
Work experience	3
Long held dream	1

#### Returned Volunteers

Interest in development issues	2
New experiences	2
Help people	6
Culture exchange	6

#### Local Volunteers

Improve society	10
Had free time	3
Gain new skills	3
Work experience	2



The results of these questions show that one of the reasons for being involved in international volunteering is for the experience of exchanging culture experiences between the hosts and exchanges. This is a particular reason linked to international volunteering such as the programmes hosted by ICYE. Aside from the cultural exchange the second reason for volunteering is to help people, to provide hospitality. All of the categories questioned stated this as a very important factor in their decision to volunteer. Volunteers themselves

have stated that the most important reason for their work is personal development. Whether this be gaining new skills, learning a new language or work experience for a future career.

Some quotations from the questionnaires are below:

*"I wanted to volunteer to experience a new culture, to become more independent and to help people."*  
– International Volunteer

*"To experience something totally new to me, to help people, to learn new thing, to experience a new culture."* – Returned Volunteer

### 3.3.2 Training / Institutional Support

	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree	6 Not relevant
%						
A1: I have access to training that is relevant to my role in the project.	6.9	17.2	27.6	27.6	10.3	10.3
A2: The training I am given enables me to do my job well.	6.9	13.8	27.6	6.9	0.0	44.8
A3: I get the opportunity to socialise with other volunteers.	44.8	34.5	10.3	6.9	3.4	0.0
A6: I am aware of what is expected of me as a volunteer.	20.7	41.4	27.6	6.9	3.4	0.0
A7: I feel supported as an ICYE volunteer within my project.	10.3	27.6	34.5	20.7	6.9	0.0
A8: The project staff value my contribution.	27.6	37.9	27.6	3.4	3.4	0.0
A9: The beneficiaries of my project value my contribution.	27.6	44.8	27.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
A10: My skills are well utilised.	3.4	48.3	41.4	6.9	0.0	0.0
A11: I know who to contact if I have any problems or issues.	31.0	48.3	10.3	10.3	0.0	0.0

Statements A1 and A2 relate to the training volunteers may or may not have received once arriving in their host projects. The results show that volunteers either do not receive any training or they are dissatisfied with it. This is not entirely positive and shows that there is an area for improvement. ICYE Kenya could recommend an induction programme for volunteers when they first arrive in their projects. Those who are teaching in schools may not have previous experience in this area and even if they do, the education system in Kenya is very different to that of their home countries. These volunteers could perhaps benefit from a handbook or induction explaining to them how to plan lessons, create exams and curriculum for the subjects they will be teaching in.

Statements A3, 4 and 5 tell us more about the benefits volunteers receive from their experience in Kenya. They feel fulfilled or that volunteering is helping them to achieve their potential. They enjoy their experience and get the chance to meet and socialise with volunteers from many other different countries who are hosted in Kenya at the same time.

Statements A6 – 11 give some insight into volunteers experience with ICYE Kenya and their projects. It shows that they are aware of what the project expects them to do and feel that their work is appreciated by both the staff and the project beneficiaries (children, students etc.). However, volunteers feel less supported by ICYE while they are working in their projects. While they agree that they know, who to contact if a problem arises 27.6% feel that they are not supported and 34.5% neither agree nor disagree. This shows the possibility that more than half of volunteers are not entirely satisfied with the support they are receiving from ICYE Kenya. The statement response does not give us the reasons behind this answer and so in order to make recommendations more research would be needed.

### 3.3.3 Impact of Volunteering

#### Inputs from Volunteers

%	Strongly Disagree 1	2	3	Neither 4	5	6	Strongly Agree 7
B1: I have a specific skill needed by the host organization.	6.9	3.4	13.8	27.6	24.1	10.3	13.8
B2: I transfer useful skills to the host organisation.	0.0	0.0	10.3	24.1	20.7	34.5	10.3
B3: I am making lasting contribution to the organization or community members.	0.0	3.4	6.9	13.8	41.4	24.1	10.3
B4: I provide money or other physical resources to the host organization or community members.	10.3	13.8	3.4	17.2	24.1	10.3	20.7
B5: My service could be more effectively provided by a full-time staff member.	13.8	31.0	6.9	13.8	13.8	20.7	0.0
B6: If I had not volunteered, a local staff member would have provided these services.	37.9	20.7	3.4	10.3	6.9	3.4	24.1
B7: My presence in the community may have caused some problems.	31.0	24.1	3.4	13.8	20.7	6.9	0.0

The statements in section B reveal more about how the international volunteers feel about their experience in the projects they are working in. 38% feel that had they not been working in those projects then there would have been no local staff member working to replace them. This could show that the volunteers are filling a specific gap in the projects that cannot be filled by a local staff member. However, this could also mean that the volunteers feel their projects would have continued on as normal even without their assistance. This could be seen in the responses to statement B5 that relates to the services being more effectively provided by a staff member. Volunteer responses are fairly balanced across the categories. This could show that the volunteers feel that they are doing valuable



work that may or may not be replaced by a full time local staff member. 21% of volunteers feel that a local staff member would be more effective in providing the services than they themselves and 31% feel that they would not.

**a) What personal benefits do you expect from your volunteering experience?**

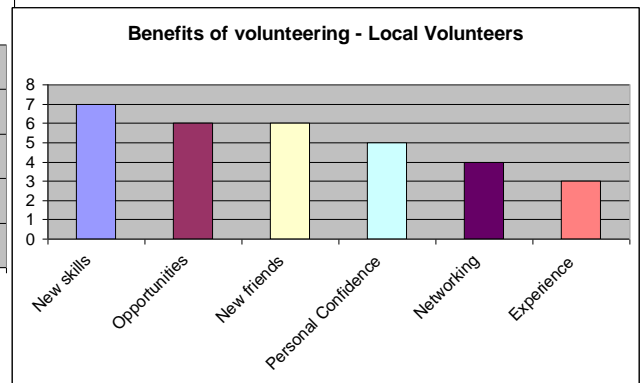
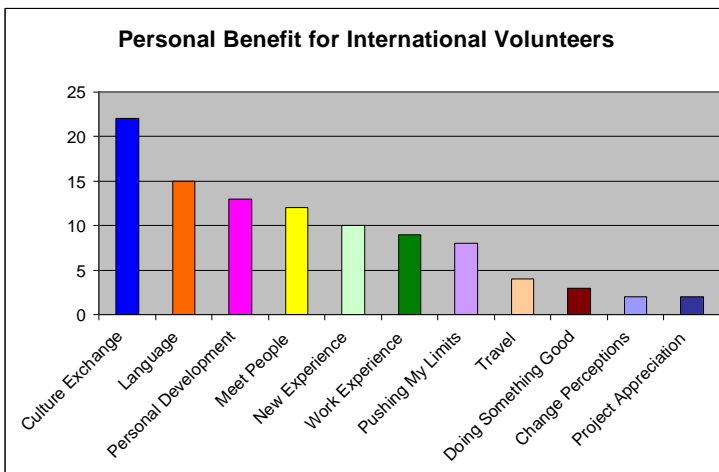
Respondents  
 International Volunteers = 29  
 Local Volunteers = 14

**International Volunteers**

Culture Exchange	22
Change Perceptions	2
New Experience	10
Language	15
Personal Development	13
Meet People	12
Doing Something Good	3
Travel	4
Pushing My Limits	8
Project Appreciation	2
Work Experience	9

**Local Volunteers**

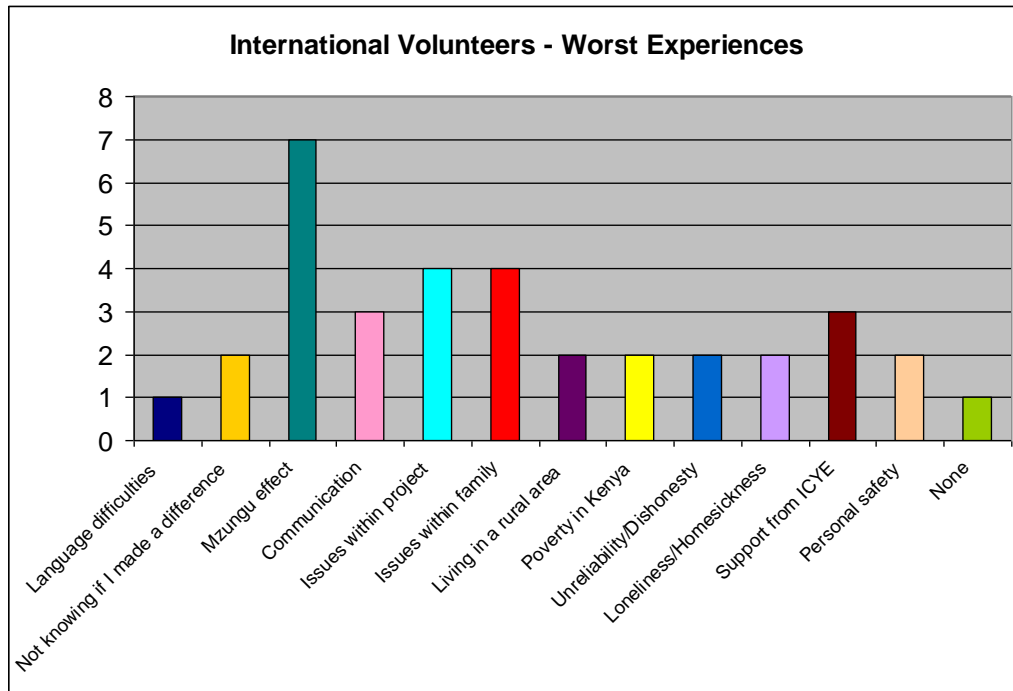
New skills	7
Networking	4
Experience	3
Opportunities	6
Personal Confidence	5
New friends	6



This data shows that international volunteers benefit the most from the culture exchange gained from working in a project in another country. They also feel that they gain substantial personal development benefits from volunteering abroad. This is also felt by the local volunteers who gain new skills, personal confidence and experience through volunteering.

Volunteering is often perceived as a 'giving' activity. Those who work in projects are contributing to the work there and offering their time. However, this information shows that volunteers are also gaining their own 'personal benefits' from helping others. Volunteers also feel that they change as people as a result of their volunteering experience.

## Challenges for volunteers



### b) In what other ways do you feel that your volunteering experience has changed your life?

Respondents:

International Volunteers = 29

Returned Volunteers = 9

Total = 38

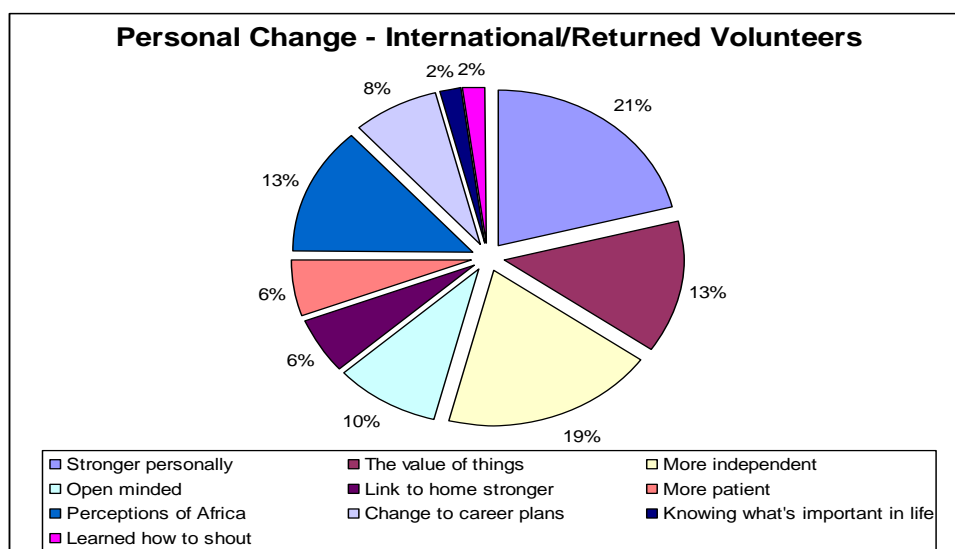
#### International Volunteers

Stronger personally	11
The value of things	7
More independent	6
Open minded	5
Link to home stronger	3
More patient	3
Perceptions of Africa	2
Change to career plans	2
Knowing what's important in life	1
Learned how to shout	1

#### Returned Volunteers

Understanding	3
Have Grown Up	3
New Perspective	2
Career	2
Link to home stronger	1
Confidence	1

## Overall Chart



This data shows us that those who volunteer internationally become stronger personally and more independent. This in turn will also benefit their sending communities. They return home surer of their strengths and weaknesses and also what career they want to pursue in future.

### ***c) Please rate whether certain attributes had increased or decreased as a result of their volunteering experience.***

Respondents

International Volunteers = 29

Local Volunteers = 14

Returned Volunteers = 9

**Total = 52**

%	Increased Greatly	Increased	Stayed the same	Decreased	Decreased greatly	Not Relevant
<b>Confidence in my own abilities</b>	31	58	12	0	0	0
<b>Sense of self esteem</b>	23	56	17	2	0	2
<b>Feeling that I am making a useful contribution</b>	29	54	12	6	0	0
<b>Social and communication skills</b>	31	58	12	0	0	0
<b>Ability to work as part of a team</b>	23	44	33	0	0	0
<b>Ability to work by my own initiative</b>	25	46	25	4	0	0
<b>Willingness to try out new experiences</b>	46	40	13	0	0	0
<b>Understanding of volunteerism</b>	33	44	17	6	0	0

The above data shows that the majority of volunteers feel that many attributes of their personal lives have increased. This will also benefit the home communities as well as during their work with the projects as volunteers. The highest percentage in each statement shows that the attribute either

increased or increased greatly. Their experience changes them as people; they learn many new things and build their confidence for the future.

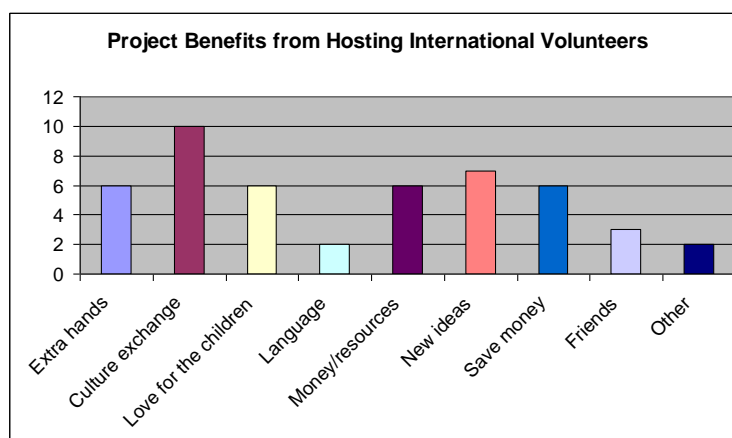
*“Another personal attribute that changed is that I am certain now that there is a solution to every problem. Most of the time things weren't working out the way I planned them to. Obviously this was very frustrating in the beginning but it changed to something like: ‘Whatever might happen I can find a solution to make it work out.’ Mainly I learnt to be really flexible concerning things I planned or even not to plan at all and just to wait and see what happens.” – International Volunteer*

### **Inputs from Host Projects**

#### **a) What benefits do you expect to receive as a project from hosting an ICYE international volunteer?**

Respondents  
Host Projects = 15

Extra hands	6
Culture exchange	10
Love for the children	6
Language	2
Money/resources	6
New ideas	7
Save money	6
Friends	3
Other	2



Projects similarly to international volunteers feel that they gain the most from the cultural exchange. They are able to learn new things about another country and how projects may be run in another culture. However, they also feel that they gain a lot from the ideas and extra hands volunteers provide.

We also asked projects to rate how much they agreed with several statements relating to hosting volunteers. The results are shown below as percentages.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not relevant
%						
Volunteers provide services we would not otherwise be able to offer	27	47	13	7	7	0
We enjoy hosting international volunteers	67	20	13	0	0	0
We value the contribution made by volunteers	73	20	0	0	7	0
We are aware of what is expected of us as a hosting project	60	33	7	0	0	0
We feel supported by ICYE as a hosting project	60	33	7	0	0	0
Training given by ICYE prepared us for the hosting of a volunteer	20	47	0	0	0	33
We learn more about other cultures by hosting an international volunteer	67	27	7	0	0	0

This data shows that projects strongly agreed with all of the statements. This demonstrates that the projects really appreciate the work that volunteers do and these volunteers provide services that would not usually be available.

60% of projects feel that they are well supported by ICYE in hosting volunteers however 33% (5 out of 15 projects) did not attend the project-training seminar hosted in August 2010. These projects expressed a desire to attend the training in 2011 and have all been invited. Subsequent research could be done to show whether this training can help projects to be more prepared to host international volunteers.

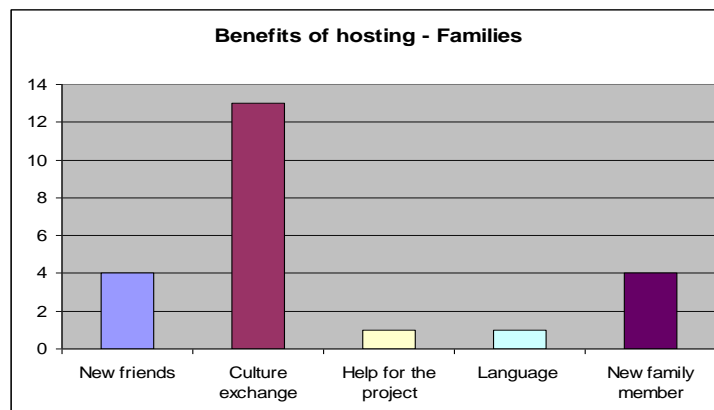
### **Inputs from Host Families**

Host families also gain experience from hosting international volunteers.

#### **a) What do you feel are the benefits of hosting an ICYE volunteer?**

Respondents:  
Host Families = 13

New friends	4
Culture exchange	13
Help for the project	1
Language	1
New family member	4



The host families feel that they benefit the most from the cultural exchange between them and the volunteers. The volunteers are able to teach them many things about their home countries, for example, a new language, new food, practices of bringing up children. However, the family also exchange their own culture with the volunteers. They are able to show them how to pick tea, plant maize and to wash clothes by hand. The data shows that the family also feel that they gain a new family member or a new friend for life. The volunteers are able to return after several years and count these people as their family.

#### **b) How much do you agree with several statements relating to hosting volunteers?**

The above data shows that the majority of host families enjoy and feel they benefit from hosting international volunteers. However it also shows that host families may benefit from more training from ICYE about what it means to be a host family. 23% had never attended any training before becoming a host family and 15% feel that they are not supported by ICYE as a host family. This shows that it is important to ensure that all host families are invited to the training held in August so that they can learn more about their rights and responsibilities as a host family. This can also improve the relationship between ICYE and the families. A closer relationship could make families feel more willing to ask for support when they need it and to be more involved in ICYE Kenya activities.

## Inputs from Local Communities

We were unable to question any members of the local communities who live around where the volunteers work. However, we were able to ask those who filled in questionnaires what they perceive the benefits to the surrounding community to be.

Responding to the questions:

**\* What benefits do you expect for the wider community as a result of your volunteering**

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not relevant	
%	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not relevant
Training given by ICYE prepared us for hosting a volunteer	31	38	8	0	0	23
We enjoy hosting international volunteers	69	31	0	0	0	0
Hosting an international volunteer has helped us learn about other cultures/traditions	77	23	0	0	0	0
We feel supported by ICYE as a host family	23	38	23	15	0	0
We know who to contact within ICYE when we have a problem	77	23	0	0	0	0
The work that the volunteers do is important for the development of Kenya as a nation	85	15	0	0	0	0
We would recommend becoming a host family to others	77	23	0	0	0	0
We understand how ICYE works as an intercultural exchange organisation	23	54	15	8	0	0
We are aware of what is expected of us as a host family	69	31	0	0	0	0
We value the contribution the volunteers make to the community	77	23	0	0	0	0
We value the contribution the volunteers make to the projects they work in	85	15	0	0	0	0

**\* What benefit does the local community receive from hosting?**

**\* What benefits do the local community expect to receive from having a volunteer living among them?**

Respondents

International Volunteers = 29

Host Families = 13

Host Projects = 14

Total = 56

### International Volunteers

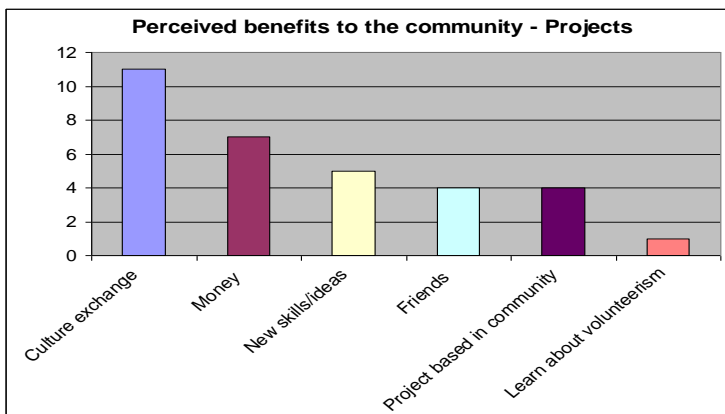
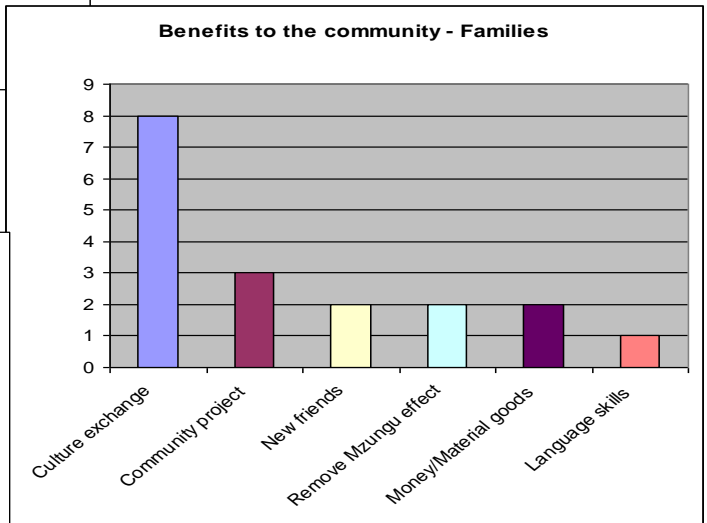
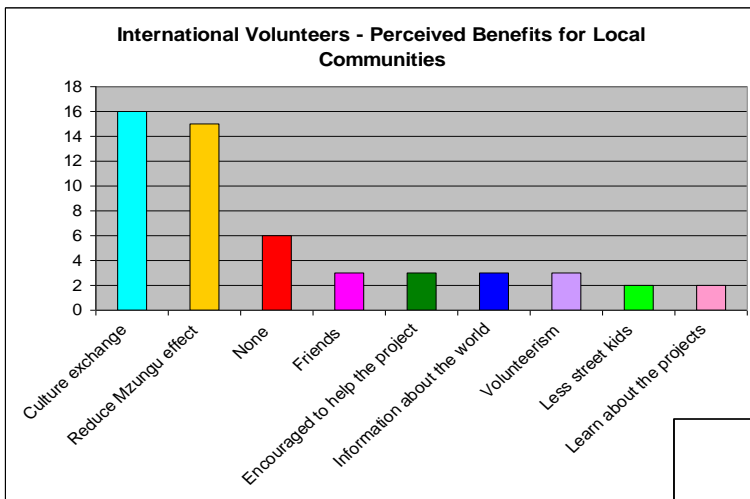
Culture exchange	16
Reduce Mzungu effect	15
None	6
Friends	3
Encouraged to help the project	3
Information about the world	3
Volunteerism	3
Less street kids	2
Learn about the projects	2

### Host Families

Culture exchange	8
Community project	3
New friends	2
Remove Mzungu effect	2
Money/Material goods	2
Language skills	1

### Host Projects

Culture exchange	11
Money	7
New skills/ideas	5
Friends	4
Project based in community	4
Learn about volunteerism	1



Once again it can be seen that culture exchange is the greatest benefit to those interacting with international volunteers. The

second most common response is that of 'reducing the Mzungu effect'. Mzungu is the Kiswahili word for a European or white person. There is a perceived opinion that Europeans have a lot of money, are

rude people or are not able to do the same tasks Kenyans. This opinion has led to some prejudice in communities that host volunteers. Comments have been made such as 'buy me something', 'can you sponsor me for school?' or 'can you take me to your country?' The perception causes volunteers to feel a little uncomfortable in the communities when they first arrive. After a while it becomes *normal* for a stranger to ask them for money. However, also after the volunteers have stayed in a community for a length of time people begin to realise that volunteers are human beings just like them. Especially when people learn that they are working for free and contributing to a local project they begin to reassess the perceptions they had previously held about white, European people. For the purpose of the research this removal of prejudices and changing of perceptions has been termed reducing the 'Mzungu effect'. This is a positive effect on the communities and combined with the culture exchange contributes to the development of global perspectives in communities that may never have even heard of the country that the volunteer originally came from.

**3.3.4 Challenges / recommendations**

**a) Challenges faced when hosting international volunteers**

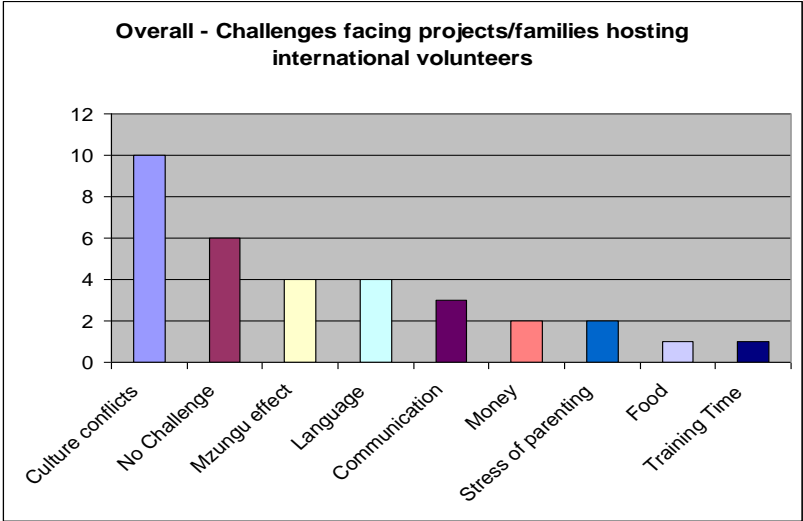
Respondents  
 Host Families = 13  
 Host Projects = 15  
 Total = 28

**Host Projects**

Mzungu effect	3
Cultural differences	4
Communication	3
Money	1
Training Time	1
Language	2
None	3

**Host Families**

Money	2
Stress of parenting	2
Culture conflicts	6
Food	1
Mzungu effect	1
Language	1
No Challenge	3



The challenge of a conflict between the cultures of hosts and volunteers could be improved encouraging communication. Both projects and host families are invited to attend a day of training and long-term international volunteers take part in an on-arrival training programme lasting from 7 – 14 days. This training aims to ensure that all parties feel they are able to adapt and learn about each other's cultures. They are encouraged to communicate in all situations to minimise conflict occurring because of misunderstandings relating to culture conflicts.



**b) What do you feel is the biggest issue to be addressed regarding volunteering in Kenya?**

Respondents  
 Host Projects = 15  
 Local Volunteers = 14  
 Total = 29

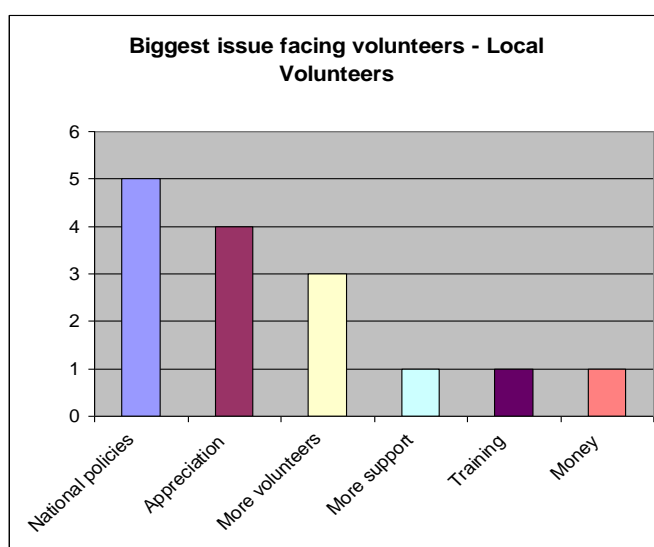
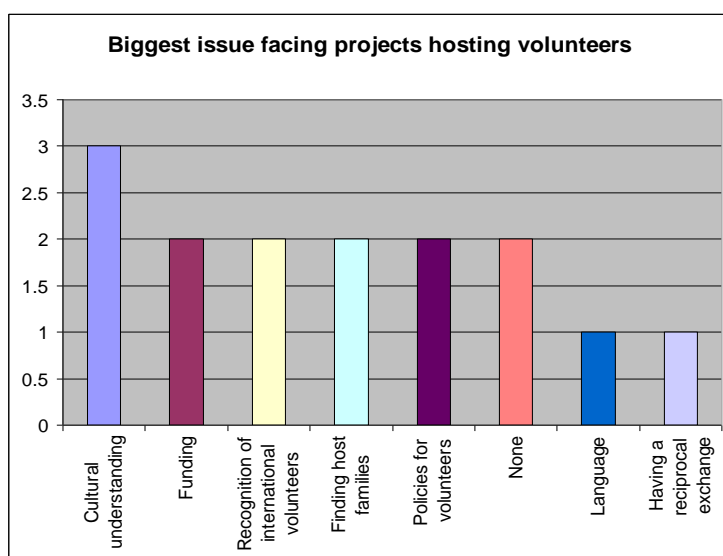
**Host Projects**

Cultural understanding	3
Funding	2
Recognition of international volunteers	2
Finding host families	2
Policies for volunteers	2
None	2
Language	1
Having a reciprocal exchange	1

**Local Volunteers**

National policies	5
Appreciation	4
More volunteers	3
More support	1
Training	1
Money	1

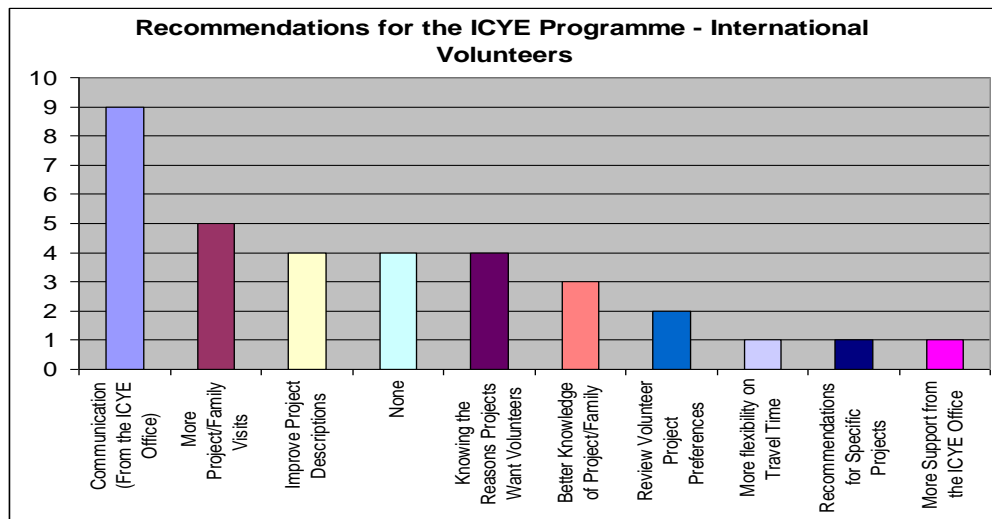
The data shows that projects feel that the biggest issue facing them is the clash of cultures that is a result of hosting international volunteers. The other issues are fairly equally felt by projects. Two host projects felt that they do not face any challenges when hosting volunteers. Local volunteers feel that the greatest issue concerns national policies referring to volunteering. They commented that they would like there to be clearer 'rights and responsibilities' set out for projects and volunteers. The national policies on volunteering will be explored in the following question.



**c) Do you have any recommendations for ICYE for the purpose of improving the quality of the volunteering projects?**

Respondents  
 International Volunteers = 29

Communication (From the ICYE Office)	9
More Project/Family Visits	5
Improve Project Descriptions	4
None	4
Knowing the Reasons Projects Want Volunteers	4
Better Knowledge of Project/Family	3
Review Volunteer Project Preferences	2
More flexibility on Travel Time	1
Recommendations for Specific Projects	1
More Support from the ICYE Office	1



We can see from the above data that international volunteers taking part in the ICYE exchange programme feel that the biggest area for improvement is the communication between the ICYE office and the volunteers/projects. This is followed by more frequent visits to the projects and families. From this information it is possible to make some recommendations for ICYE Kenya when working with their volunteers. Recommendations can be found in the section titled conclusions.

## 4 Conclusion

### ***Why do people volunteer?***

The reasons people volunteer are naturally as individual as each person. However, after collating the similar results from the questionnaires we are able to see that the most common reason people volunteer is for their personal development. People who volunteer internationally gain the cultural exchange experience alongside their own personal development. Voluntary work is also done to help others, people feel that they have received a lot in life and want to give back to a community that is less well off than themselves. On the other hand, people may wish to volunteer in an organisation that has previously helped them.

### ***What impact does volunteering have?***

After reviewing the data from each category of respondents and comparing the perceived benefits with those actually felt we are able to draw some conclusions:

- That the greatest benefit international volunteers from ICYE Kenya bring is the cultural exchange and change in local perceptions of European people.
- The personal development achieved by volunteers is one of the greatest impacts felt by those involved. The young people feel that they gain confidence, learn their limits and change their perceptions of the world. When international volunteers return home they have learned how to appreciate the things that they had previously taken for granted and often feel a greater attachment to their home country than they had before leaving to volunteer.
- Volunteers both local and international assist projects by bring extra skills, hands and ideas to the projects.
- Volunteers contribute material resources and fundraising to the projects they work in.
- Some volunteers also 'work' in projects external to their ICYE project.

### **What could be changed to improve future volunteering practices/experiences?**

The biggest areas for improvement stated by international volunteers, in relation to their experience with ICYE Kenya are communication and knowledge of host families/projects. Some recommendations for improving these areas can be found below.

#### **1. Improve the communication between the office and volunteers/projects:**

-This could be done by creating a schedule of contact for the volunteers. The office should be getting in touch with the volunteers at least once a fortnight. This could be through sms/text message, email, phone call or meeting up in person. If a system ensuring that all volunteers were contacted and this contact logged into a database then perhaps this could improve the communication and would ensure that volunteers would not be missed.

-ICYE Kenya could also ensure that they are fully involved in the social media networks. A large number of volunteers use Facebook or Twitter as their main way of communicating with friends and relatives in their home countries. ICYE could ensure that their Facebook page is updated very regularly to let people know about upcoming events and to keep in touch with the volunteers. They could also open a Twitter account and send daily 'Tweets' about activities, outgoing volunteers, international development news, etc. These updates can be sent from a mobile or computer and so would not take a lot of office time.

-The improved communication networks could also benefit ICYE Kenya. It can be used to advertise and encourage young Kenyans to volunteer not only overseas but also within Kenya through the co-worker scheme.

#### **2. Visits to families and projects/Project information:**

-ICYE Kenya currently visits individual volunteers approximately once every 6 months. This means that the volunteer is visited both at work and hopefully at home. Those who work in projects further away from Nairobi usually host the visitor from the office overnight. This also helps ICYE see the home life of the volunteer and observe them in their new 'habitats'. Visits are undertaken on a rolling schedule and the number of visits are unlikely to be increased due to time and budget constraints. However, the underlying issue could be that the volunteers feel that they are not being communicated with enough to raise issues to do with their projects/families or that they feel ICYE is not fully aware of the specific details to do with the project/family. The recommendations to improve communication could also help in this case. ICYE Kenya should also ensure that each project has a clear information sheet that shows the job description, duties and responsibilities of a volunteer as well as location and organisation structure information. This could be used to update the current information held on the [www.icye.org](http://www.icye.org) website.

The above recommendations could help in solving some of the problems faced by volunteers during their exchanges and also provide new marketing strategies for ICYE Kenya, such as using the social networks for communication.

#### **Other conclusions**

63% of volunteers work in projects based in rural areas. These volunteers live in very different conditions to those living in Nairobi or other towns. Most live without access to running water or electricity but this has never stopped them enjoying/gaining a lot from their experience. Further research could be done to discover whether the different experiences cause the volunteers to gain different skills or whether communities feel that volunteers in rural locations make an impact in a way that would not be seen in an urban community (or visa versa).