

Annex 2:

Impact of International Voluntary Service on Volunteers in Finland

ICYE Sample Assessment Report, 2013

By Tim Küver, Maailmanvaihto – ICYE Finland

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1. Abstract

In this study we interviewed young adults who had completed their long-term international voluntary service in Finland. The participants were between 18 and 30 years old. At the time of launching the study, the participants had already finished their volunteer work. A web-based questionnaire was used for data collection. The objective of this survey was to get information about the possible impacts on the volunteer at different levels. Core themes were therefore: *Independence & Self-confidence, Interpersonal skills, Identity building & Self-empowerment, Intercultural- & Social awareness, Practical Skills, Health & General well-being.*

2. Data collection and development of questionnaire

The method of choice was a web-based questionnaire, which was launched through the online survey company "SurveyMonkey". Reasons for a web-based survey were anonymity, a higher possibility of accessing participants and a high internet affinity within the age group targeted. The focus group lives abroad, so the use of the internet was necessary. In addition, the provided online tools can facilitate the analysis. The participants were furthermore able to start the survey on one day and continue it on another day.

The invitation for participating in the survey was sent out by email to former volunteers of Maailmanvaihto – ICYE Finland. Initially the email was sent to 59 people. 10 email addresses were inactive; therefore 49 persons received the message. From them, 21 started the study (43%) and 13 (61%, quit rate 39 %) finished it. In the main part (Part B), 16 started the questionnaire. The study was open from 27.6 until 9.8.2013 (6 weeks).

The questionnaire was divided into two parts (Part A and Part B - D). Part A mainly consisted of demographic questions about age, country of origin and gender. We also asked about motivation for the voluntary work and general contentment with the time abroad. Part B – D, the main part, comprises questions that are linked to the above-mentioned core themes. The questions were mainly open-ended and closed-ended with the request for explanation. One question was a quantitative question about frequency of encounters with people from different cultural backgrounds. The purpose of the questionnaire was to get answers to the degree to which the volunteer has experiences linked to the above-mentioned core themes. For example, does his/her intercultural sensibility increase? How is the self-confidence of the volunteer affected?

3. Process of Analysis

The process of analysing was divided into different steps. Part A was analysed separately from Part B - D. The open-ended as well as the closed-ended questions with explanations from Part A and B-D were analysed as follows:

While reading the questions and answers, we first of all named main categories based on the questions and given answers. In general each question together with its answers formed one main category. After that the answers were divided into subcategories. For example, the category for the question "*After your return: Did you start or continue to participate in any activities which try to make changes or improvements in your community? [...]*" was '**Active Citizenship after VS**'. Based on the answers, in an inductive process, subcategories like '**Interested/Positive Attitude towards AC**' were formed. Due to the fact that some questions were quite similar to others, some answers were in a later step shifted into the subcategories of another category. By doing so, the categorization became more flexible. After finishing all

categories/subcategories, the number of statements was counted to compare the categories/subcategories and to make a conclusion about in the fields in which the main impacts were visible. In a last step, the categories/subcategories were assigned to the cores theme.

4. Timeframe

The whole process of this survey comprised four different parts:

- 1) *Preparation*: This included creating and uploading the questionnaire, defining the target group and writing the invitation letter. This was done in approximately three weeks with an average of about 20-30 working hours.
- 2) *Data collection*: The survey was open for 6 weeks. Once a week a reminder email was sent to the target group, in which we asked again to participate in the survey.
- 3) *Analysis*: The analysis took approximately 3 weeks with an average of 30-40 working hours.
- 4) *Report writing*: One week was used to write the report with approximately 25 to 30 working hours.

The analysis and the report writing was the most time consuming part. The analysis could have been done far quicker if less open ended question had been used and more quantitative data had been collected.

5. Results

Demographic Data (Part A)

The average time spent in Finland was 10,57 months and the average age was 23 years. 23.81% were male and 76.19% female. The participants came from almost all over the world: *Asia (4), Africa (2), Europe (8), Eurasia (5) and Americas (2)*.

Motivation: The main motivations for attending the voluntary service were¹:

New experience and adventure (7), Gap/Break (2), Intercultural experience (10), Helping (2), Wish for self-growth (2), Finland's educational and social system (4), General work experience (3), Other (1).

Satisfaction: Overall satisfaction with the voluntary service in Finland turned out as follows:

Very Satisfied (14), Satisfied (2), Neutral (1), Dissatisfied (1)

Experiences and Impact (Part B – D)

a) Personal Life change

The biggest category was about personal life changes through the voluntary service. The answers found were divided into the following subcategories: *Positive Impact on personal growth (23), No Impact on life (1), Negative Impact on Personality (2)*

Examples for the biggest subcategory (positive impact) are: "More tolerant and open person." / "I feel much more strength in the life. Then I feel like I can go everywhere around the world." / "In contrast to the time before my stay in Finland, I've become more independent and courageous. I've learned to seize the initiative, as well as I've become conscious about personal limits."

b) Personal Change in the eye of others

Sometimes personal changes can be also seen from the outside, e.g. in behaviour and or in changed worldviews. The following subcategories show how the volunteers estimated their change being noticed: *Positive Change noticed (7), Neutral (2), Not clear/Uncertain (3), No Change (1), Negative Change (2)*

¹ in brackets number of statements; throughout the complete report. See 'table of categories' with a list of all given statements

c) Problems during the Voluntary Service

Different kinds of problems were experienced during the voluntary service. The volunteers had problems with the following aspects:

Feeling alone (7), Homesick (2), Language barrier (5), Cultural differences (6), Problems at the workplace (4), Physical sickness (1), Climate (1)

Together with the question for problems we asked for explanations about how the volunteers handled the problems.

7 out of 16 volunteers followed that request. The answers imply an active approach (trying to make a change themselves on specific things) and a social network which gave support when problems occurred.

d) Life goals

A long-term stay in a foreign country and experiences in a different surrounding than at home can sometimes lead to a change of life goals or general outlook in life. The biggest group experienced a positive change in their goals and values, some stayed the same as before or got reassured and the smallest group did not mention a change or reassurance at all concerning outlook on their future.

Positive change on goals and values (5), Positive reassurance of one's own goals (3), Same goals as before (3), Short-term goals fulfilled in EVS (2), No mentioned change or reassurance (2)

e) Biggest personal success during voluntary service

All of the participants described a personal success, which they had during their time volunteering. Nobody mentioned that he could not name a thing that went well.

The following subcategories show what was successful for each volunteer:

New social contacts, friendships (5)/ Personal Growth, Insights, Life values (6)/ Work related success (2)/ Integration (1)/ Language skills (1)/ Individual success (1)

f) Personal role in the project

The general satisfaction with the voluntary work itself depends to a big degree on the fact that your help is needed and appreciated in the project. The biggest group describes exactly those experiences: *Feeling of being needed (10)/ Feeling of not being really needed (3)/ Not sure (2)*

g) Skills learned during the project

Different skills were learned during the time spent in the volunteer project. Depending on the workplace or what was important for the individual, following subcategories occurred:

Personal growth (2)/ Communication skills (3)/ Language skills (3)/ Skills in social and educational work (8)/ Computer literacy (1)/ Technical skills (3)/ Personally relevant skills (2)

h) New activities after finishing the voluntary service

The voluntary experience activates the wish to start new hobbies or to be more active in daily life? Do these experiences generate new interests?

Started something new (6) / No new activities (3) / Other (3)

i) Social network

Does the social network of the volunteer increase during and after the Voluntary Service?

The following subcategories give an answer to this question:

Expanded social network through and after VS (13) / No increase (1)

j) Active Citizenship

The international voluntary Service contributes to local communities and might bring about understanding between cultures and therefore peace. The volunteer plays the active role in the process. The volunteer seems to be active or interested in community-related or NGO work also after finishing his international voluntary work as following categories show:

Active after VS (5)/ Interested, Positive Attitude (3)/ Not active (3)

k) Awareness of cultural influence

To what extent does voluntary service provide a better understanding of how we are influenced by our culture or the knowledge in general that we are influenced by our upbringing in a specific culture. Some volunteers showed a profound knowledge and understanding of the influences of their own culture while others seemed not to be familiar with it.

Being aware (6) / No obvious awareness or question misunderstood (7)

l) Interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds

To what extent does the volunteer have contact with people from other cultural backgrounds after the voluntary service? How close is the contact?

A) Frequency of contact

less than once in a month	once or twice in a month	every week	every day	Total
14.29%	28.57%	14.29%	42.86%	100.00%
2	4	2	6	14

B) Relation

Most of the volunteers have close and regular contact with people from other cultural backgrounds after the service abroad.

Close personal contacts (12)/ Work related contacts (7)/ Sporadic contacts (3)

m) Change in interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds

Does the time abroad change or improve the way of interacting with foreigners? Half of the participants noticed an improvement while the other half did not notice a positive or negative change.

Better interaction (7)/ No visible change in interaction (7)

n) General tolerance

The majority of the participants did not sense an increase in their tolerance towards people in general. Almost everybody saw themselves as quite tolerant even beforehand.

More tolerance (4)/ No increase in tolerance (9)

o) Most important about VS on a personal level

On the question, what was personally the most important thing about your voluntary service, the following categories could be generated. The biggest group is "Personal growth"

Experience as a whole (2)/ Personal Growth, Strength, Insights, Values (8)/Social Contacts, Friendships (2)/ Work related (1)/ Other (1)

6. Conclusions and discussion

A)

In general it can be said that the international voluntary service had a positive impact on almost all the participants. The majority was “very satisfied” and “satisfied” with the experience altogether. Some did not mention a specific positive change in the questionnaire, but “stayed as they were before”, and just one mentioned a negative change together with the statement that his voluntary service wasn’t a success.

It was interesting to find out in which field the most positive impact can be seen. To get a picture of this, we compared the categories and subcategories and tried to relate them to bigger groups. The following table shows where the biggest impact can be seen:

We can see that the biggest impact seems to be on the personal level with experiences leading to

Personal growth/Personality strengthening	Personal life change ->	Positive Impact on personal growth	23
	Life goals ->	- Positive change on goals and/or life values	5
		- Positive reassurment of one’s own goals	3
		- Short-term goals fulfilled in EVS	2
	Biggest personal success during VS ->	Personal Growth/Insights/Life values	6
	Skills learned during the project ->	Personal growth	2
Most important about VS on a personal level ->	Personal Growth/Insights/Values	8	
		together	49
Social Contacts and Communication skills	Biggest personal success during VS ->	New social contacts/friendships	5
	Skills learned during the project ->	Communication skills	3
	Social network ->	Expanded social network through and after VS	13
	Most important about VS on a personal level ->	Social Contacts/Friendships	2
		together	23
Intercultural learning	Biggest personal success during VS ->	Integration (in Finnish society)	1
	Awareness of cultural influence ->	Being aware	6
	Change in interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds ->	Better interaction	7
		together	14
Active Citizenship	Active Citizenship ->	- Active after VS	5
		- Interested/Positive Attitude	3
		together	8

personal growth and development/strengthening of identity. This theme (in terms participant responses) emerged throughout the questionnaire and were not just mentioned as and when asked for directly. For example, to the last question “What was personally the most important thing about the VS”, the majority named personal growth. It seemed to be an important aspect for the participants. The voluntary service, as a space for self-discovery and “trying out new things” on many different levels (e.g. work, social contacts, new culture) seems to lead to growth on a personal level.

The personal growth theme includes knowledge about one’s life values, a discovery of life goals and a feeling that one achieved something, of “I made it” and “I can do more”.

Examples are:

“As I was one of the youngest volunteers in the program, it was very important for me to experience that I was responsible for my life by myself and that I’m able to deal with very new situations that I sometimes couldn’t foresee.”

“It was a year when all my life changed completely and I had been waiting for that for many years”

“What’s of most value for me are all the achievements, experiences and new interests that I gained.”

Other experiences, which are not directly included in the personal growth category, can still be seen as sufficient for personality development. The fact for example that the majority felt needed in the project and that they could contribute something to the project (Category: Own role in the project) provides a positive emotional basis for the volunteer and therefore a possible impact on this dimension.

The second biggest group is *social contacts and communication*. The social network of the volunteers expanded during and after the voluntary service. The time abroad gave everyday possibilities to learn to communicate and to make friends with new people in a totally new environment. Hindrances like different languages and different cultural backgrounds had to be overcome. The volunteers learned skills in communication and they got an international social network. They sensed a bigger feeling of being connected and being part of a wider group. This can also be seen as identity stabilising factors which promotes well-being and strength.

“It is more easier to understand and to contact to people after this project. Because I start to make empathy. My empathy skills improved well. Now, I use these skills in my private and working life. I learnt channel of communication.”

“[...] communicating with people with whom I didn’t share a common language.”

“Managing to meet, deal and make friendships with such a different array of people, sometimes even while lacking a common language.”

“I have a family in the whole wide world!”

“Having found lots of new friends both from Finland and from all over the world is one of the treasures I hold most dear as a result of my EVS stay. [...]”

Impact is also seen on “intercultural learning” and “active citizenship”, but compared to the former groups the relevance is far smaller. Considering that many international volunteering organisations promote those topics as key elements in their programmes and goals, it is surprising that it does not seem to have such a high relevance for the volunteer itself. Personal growth and

the sphere of social contacts seem to be of much more import for the volunteers. While for example 'intercultural experience' was the biggest group of statements in the question for motivation for going abroad, nobody mentioned this in the last question about the most important experience made in the VS.

Following critical thoughts, why the distribution of statements was in favour of the personal growth dimension:

- The questionnaire might consist of more questions which generate answers towards personal growth. This needs to be checked in order to get reliable answers in order to compare the dimensions.
- Intercultural learning and active citizenship were strengthened through the voluntary service but not that important for the volunteer himself in comparison to other dimensions. For example, intercultural learning is a strong component of a voluntary service, but more as a "side-effect", and not so imprinted in the mind of the volunteer. Deeper and more specific studies could show that the learning impact on these dimensions is indeed very strong, but just not visible in this study.

A more precise look at the category 'active citizenship' shows also that most of the former volunteers are active in this sense or very interested in becoming more active. A positive attitude is generally visible. An interesting question would be if the voluntary service induced interest in becoming active or if the volunteer was active beforehand and just kept on being active.

A close look at the 'intercultural learning' dimension shows the following: 50 percent of the participants answered that their ability to 'interact with people from different cultural background' improved while the other 50 percent did not notice a change. The most frequent explanation was that they were tolerant even before and have been seeing a lot of foreigners before. The results of the question on 'awareness of cultural influence' shows a similar picture with almost 50 percent describing being aware of them being influenced by cultural habits, while the other half did not show an awareness in their answers or did not understand the question (this might also be due to the fact that none of the participants was a native English speaker and the question may therefore have been too complex).

50 percent is still a visible impact but it could be bigger.

The questions arising from this analysis are:

- Is the impact on the 'intercultural learning' and 'active citizenship' dimension smaller when compared to the other aspects? What is the outcome of big, academic studies about volunteering abroad?
- Should 'intercultural learning' and 'active citizenship' become a bigger part of for example seminars during the volunteering period? Should there be more education on these topics?

B)

In a last step, we assigned categories to the core themes, on the basis of which the questionnaire was initially developed. The core themes are: *Independence & Self-confidence, Interpersonal skills, Identity building & Self-empowerment, Intercultural- & Social awareness, Practical Skills, Health & General well-being.*

Three of the six themes (*Independence & Self-confidence, Identity building & Self-empowerment, Health & General well-being*) could not be differentiated properly. That's why they appear in the following table as one.

The following table tries to build and show a connection between the core themes and the categories made during the analysis.

Assignment of categories to core themes:

Core themes	Categories	Subcategories
Independence & Self-confidence ----- Identity building & Self-empowerment ----- Health & General well-being	Personal life change	Positive Impact on personal growth (23) No Impact on life (1) Negative Impact on Personality (2)
	Personal Change in the eye of others	Positive Change (7) Neutral (2) Not clear/Uncertain (3) Negative Change (2) No Change (1)
	Problems during the Voluntary Service	7 out of 16 mentioned a problem solving strategy
	Biggest personal success during voluntary service	Personal Growth/Insights/Life values (6) Individual success (1)
	Personal role in the project	Feeling of being needed (9) Feeling of not being really needed (3) Not sure (2)
	Skills learned during the project	Personal growth (2)
	New activities after finishing the voluntary service	Started sth. New (6) No new activities (3)
Interpersonal skills	Most important about VS on a personal level	Personal Growth/Strength/Insights/Values (8)
	Life goals	Positive change on goals and values (5) Positive reassurment of one's own goals (3) Same goals as before (3) Short-term goals fulfilled in EVS (2) No mentioned change or reassurment (2)
	Biggest personal success during voluntary service	New social contacts/friendships (5)
	Skills learned during the project	Communication skills (3)
Intercultural- & Social awareness	Social network	Expanded social network through and after VS (13) No increase (1)
	Most important about VS on a personal level	Social Contacts/Friendships (2)
	Biggest personal success during voluntary service	Integration (1)
	Active Citizenship	Active after VS (5) Interested/Positive Attitude (3) Not active (3)
Practical Skills	Awareness of cultural influence	Being aware (6) No obvious awareness or question misunderstood (7)
	Change in interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds	Better interaction (7) No visible change in interaction (7)
	General tolerance	More tolerance (4) No increase in tolerance (9)
Practical Skills	Biggest personal success during voluntary service	Work related success (2) Language skills (1)
	Skills learned during the project	Language skills (3) Skills in social/educational work (8) Computer literacy (1) Technical skills (3) Personally relevant skills (2)

7. Problems and Questions

The method of an internet-based survey promised to be successful in terms of reachability of participants. Email addresses for almost all volunteers of the last few years were available. The decision for the online-based method was also made based on the assumption that permanent access to the internet (best at home), which is required for completing the survey, was available to everybody. This has to be reconsidered, for many of the participants came from non-European countries and their social backgrounds were not always known. *Re-think: Internet access in the world.* Another option would have been to send the questionnaire also as a document to all the participants, so that they could fill it in offline and send it back on another day when he/she online again. Completing the survey online, which required about 30-60 minutes, might be even a high expense factor if paid by minute or in an internet shop. The quit rate of 39% might be influenced by this fact. Both options, online based possibility together with filling in a document offline could be combined. The only problem is anonymity. People might not want to send back a document from their own email address.

Other reasons for the (high) quit rate might be the length of the study (number of questions) and questions that aim at self-reflection and consideration and are therefore time-consuming. (After Part A, which consists mainly of “easy-to-answer” demographic questions, 24% dropped off). The questions were mainly open-ended and it therefore took time and patience to type in the answer. The decision for a more qualitative orientated research (and less quantitative questions with scales) was based on the desire to get more detailed information about personal experiences. The answers were however often very short. This might be due to the fact that none of the participants was an English native speaker and therefore had possibly problems providing detailed answers in a foreign language. *Rethink: More quantitative questions and simply phrased questions in terms of language.*

A motivation for completing the survey would have been a prize or tombola for filling in the survey. However, due to financial reasons, we were unable to offer this.

The core themes (e.g. self-confidence, identity building, etc.) were not properly defined. To measure the themes and to compare the results with studies from other ICYE countries, proper definitions and a questionnaire based on those definitions is needed. This is particularly important if results to questions like “What is general well-being?” and “How to measure general well-being?” will be published. The results of this pre-study are more likely to be used internally for example for improving the program and to have a general overview of experiences during the voluntary service.

The time for planning, executing and analyzing the survey was quite short and resources in terms of staff and money were limited (One person conducted the survey alone – no money was available for a tombola). In order to get more reliable results, a co-worker for the duration of the study (availability online) and/or more time to develop the questionnaire and analyze the data would have been needed.

The number of participants is very small; therefore it is not possible to generalize the results. It should be also discussed whether the participants who actually participated in the survey can be said to represent the whole group of volunteers. Maybe mainly the ones who were very satisfied or especially unsatisfied took the time to write down their experiences while those who were more neutral about their volunteer time did not have the motivation to participate.

The creation of categories/subcategories was done by just one person. It is necessary that a second person goes through them and if need be defines them more clearly.

8. Table of Categories

Part A:

Category: Motivation

Subcategories	
New Experience in general/adventure	New experience/ The experience as a whole./ new experience/ I was a student, but I want to do something more and get different experiences than just study./ Experience/ Have a new experience/ Had to do the civil service in Germany and decided that it would be a bigger adventure to do it abroad/ [...] and curiosity, and facilitation. (7)
Gap/Break	It was like a welcome break from my education time for me. / enjoying my free time between school and study. (2)
Intercultural experience	And I wanted to get to know another culture and meet different people./ And I really much liked to learn about different people, their culture, language and way of living./ I wanted to get to know a different culture, while obtaining a foreign language that cannot be learned in my own country./ learn more about different culture/ getting to know another culture/ wanted to stay like local people/ My motivation when I decided to participate in the exchange programme was to have a wider vision of the world and live in a place so different from my home country/ To know another cultures/ to be able to experience different culture/ I wanted to live abroad (10)
Helping	I wanted to do something purposeful, with a meaning/ helping people (2)
Self-growth	[...] learn more a new way of life./ finding out my abilities in something new (2)
Finland's educational and social system	I was interested in compulsory education in Finland./ Learn how disabled people are managed in Finland, and what does the country do in their behalf./ Furthermore I wanted to gain experience in working with children in one of the world's best known education environments/ I wanted to know about Finnish child care. (4)
General Work Experience	[...] work with disabled people./ Getting experience working with children/ My motivation was to get to know a different kind of work than the one you do at school and university. (3)
Other	Contribute to the European awareness and cooperation. (1)
	altogether: 28

Category: Overall satisfaction with voluntary service in Finland

Subcategories	
Very Satisfied	Difficult for the beginning, but later it was just wonderful/ i enjoyed it and the experience was really good./ An excellent experience./ I loved it/ excellent! wanna go again./ it was the best time of my life/ amazing/ I totally loved every second of my stay and I know that I've gained countless, priceless experiences and skills./ It was excellent./ i loved it/ I liked it very much. I was very happy with my working place and also I was very lucky with the families I could stay with. All together a very positive and valuable experience! / Superfine:) / That was a perfect experience and stay for me./ All in all, it was a wonderful experience. (14)
Satisfied	Good/ Yes, I did. (2)
Ok	Not bad (1)
Not Satisfied	Honestly, I wouldn't do it again. Finland is a great country, but my volunteering service was not at all a success. (1)
	altogether: 18

Part B:

Category: Personal life change

Subcategories	
<p>Positive Impact on personal growth</p>	<p>More tolerant and open person./I feel much more strength in the life. Then I feel like ' I can go everywhere around the world ./It reassured in me things I knew. I feel that the experience let me know how big and diverse the world and the people in it are./ I'm sure living in Finland helped me be less shy and especially so much more open to the differences (of culture, language, customs) / By living with so many differences I have learned that we all (regardless of nationality) have many things in common and that is what we have to respect and look for. I think Finland deals with emotions and affection in a way very different from Brazil, so I have also learned how the culture where I grew up has always had many impacts on me. /My volunteering year taught me a lot. After it I have been continuing working at the same field for 4 years./In contrast to the time before my stay in Finland, I've become more independent and courageous. I've learned to seize the initiative, as well as I've become conscious about personal limits./After my volunteering year, I became stronger- hearted, kinder and more easy-going person than I was./I have definitely grown as a human being. Nothing in particular. The volunteering experience changed my life./I see more clear my profession by the great help of EVS. I am more motivated in starting new things. My strengths haven't changed anyhow i guess-I am still optimist and positive, and the weaknesses are still same- getting melancholic easily./It depends. I've always been strong. I'm more patient now, maybe. And I take my strength from my close friends and my family and I am strong because I'm sure of my "talents". It helped me a lot when I was abroad./Yes, I found that no matter where you are, everywhere can meet people with beautiful soul. Emotionally had to face depression, happiness./I felt like very ethereal after the EVS. Because I helped people and I had a lot of friends. But I can't say the same things about during my EVS. I was in culture shock. I was feeling lonely and I couldn't get used to culture and weather conditions, to work with having obstacles etc. It was normal but I felt it. I found out something about myself that I didn't expect, I was very patient ./I know I'm not the same person that left, the experience sure makes you mature a lot, but still, it may be too hard to verbally pinpoint exactly./I became more tolerant of mistakes/Yes, I found out that I have more patience and compassion that I even expected/I feel psychologically awesome and I'm very proud of all of my achievements, so yes, I could say that my well-being have been improved ever since. My vision became more clear about what's important to me and one of the things that I probably did not expect is that I became more aware of my own cultural identities and values./No. It was not the first time for me to stay abroad for a long time and I've been already changed a lot when I went abroad before. /Yes, I have. I thought I was too conservative to try new things but I noticed I like to challenge new things, meet people and visit new places. /I think that it helped me to open up. I was quite surprised that it seemed to be ok for me to stay with a lot of people in a camp what has been a problem sometimes before. /I got certain qualities that I never thought I have. They surfaced during my voluntary stay.</p> <p>I found out that I can adapt to basically every situation./I found out in myself a very strong person, never giving up and breaking down, emotionally stable, how to react quickly and focus in a very emergency situations. These are quite new things i found out in myself (23)</p>
<p>No Impact on life</p>	<p>Nothing's changed before and after volunteer. (1)</p>

Negative Impact on Personality	Yes, after my EVS I felt somehow in a hole. I had to wait for my college place, all my friends moved away from my hometown. I hadn't really a perspective for my future. / Yes, I was a little bit depressed at that time and I also noticed that I was very self-conscious about myself. I didn't think it was possible, but I couldn't trust myself and my abilities anymore. That was something I didn't expect. But also, I did notice that I was able to make social contacts very well if I made an effort. (2)
	altogether: 26

Category: Personal Change in the eye of others

Subcategories	
Positive Change	Yes, definitely. They found me more grown up and experienced/ Also my family confirmed that I gained more courage and independence./ Yes. They said I became more easy-going. / I am not easy to lose my temper so often :)/ Yes, but nothing really big. Maybe that I grew up. / They said that I appear more self-confident after I returned from my stay abroad./ They say that I'm more and more patient. And at the same time they think I am more tough and sure. (7)
Negative Change	I was very quiet when I came back my home. I spent most of my time with myself when I was in Finland. I had used Finnish culture and when I came back to in my own culture I was in culture shock. Because all my life changed again and my own culture was like a new culture for me! Places changed, foods changed, people changed, air changed, etc. That's why I was very quiet. My friends were asking many things and they were trying to make me talking. / Yes, they also noticed the changes I described above - that I was more drawn back and didn't believe in myself anymore. (2)
Neutral	Yes. Started to react differently on things as Religion, human relationships, view on society. / They have noticed changes, but it's through Skype, because I stayed in Finland after the project. (2)
Not clear/Uncertain	I remember them saying I was more quiet and less delicate, but that was during the first months of re-adaptation. Then I think I have changed as much as the people who stayed. / I'm not sure. Guess I haven't asked them. In a certain way, life kind of resumed once I got back here./ I don't know (3)
No Change	No (1)
	altogether: 15

Category: Problems during the Voluntary Service

Subcategories	
Feeling alone	Loneliness, depression/ I cannot say it was easy during this period. I had some problems as everyone. I was feeling alone. I do not know how to explain it very clearly but it is not about the organisation. I had many friends but I had not very closer friends in Finland. / I felt very alone after the first months of end-summer and autumn when it was getting colder and colder into the winter./feeling alone/Sometimes feeling lonely because there have no people to hang out during my free time./[...] and feeling alone in the beginning/ I felt alone a lot, because there was nobody around my project at weekends or in the afternoon. (7)
Homesick	That's when I felt most homesick too. / Homesickness only occurred to me when my family in Austria faced some kind of problems or illnesses. It's hard to stay away when people you hold dear are in trouble or sick. (2)

Language barrier	Second problem was about languages; my English was not so well as other volunteers in the camps. I had headache when I tried to learn English and Finnish. My energy was going too fast in those times .I was frequently feeling sleepy. Maybe I needed some vitamins. But I was lucky that, my host mother was languages teacher (English, German and Finnish) She helped me so much, and I am thankful to her. I learnt elementary level Finnish in my working place. Because my work-mates couldn't speak English. I and my mentor organized Finnish lessons with a learning disability lady. Also I had Finnish lessons in the course. Sometimes, I was using my body languages. It was not very hard but it was hard in the some point. I tried all my bests about it. / Language barrier only I gave up learning Finnish and used English because a lot of people could speak in English./Language/ My main problem was the language barrier. And instead of fighting to learn finish, I gave up. And so I was never a complete member in the community. / The biggest cultural shock of course is the language barrier. (5)
Cultural differences	[...] and cultural barrier/ I didn't feel the language to be as much a barrier as the culture itself, which has many easy and hard differences to get used to./I had to deal with nationalism and racism but I showed the best what I could, so that the people would change their mind about me/different custom/Mostly some cultural clashes which led to misunderstanding in my host family. But everything was settled in due time./[...] And then comes I guess adapting to a new lifestyle (6)
Problems at the workplace	One other problem was about I had many responsibilities. I think it might be more less working hours. I haven't worked with disabilities. I had no idea how to talk with them what to do etc. I couldn't aware it in Finland but now I can see that, it was too much working for me. / At the very beginning you don't know what to do and how to do it. You really want to help but you are useless. / I had problems with the hosting project, though. The "bosses" were totally disrespecting me and my co-volunteer. / My work was non-existent in the beginning; I didn't have anything to do. That's why after some time I started complaining, that was something new to me, that I had to ask for things to be changed so that I felt better. It did change a little bit in the end, but it wasn't good anyways. (4)
Physical sickness	I haven't got much to say. I only remember being sick once, and I might have wished there was someone with me at that time, but that's pretty much it. (1)
Climate	Cold temperatures and long winter sure were hard, but I knew it since before I left. (1)
	altogether: 26

Dealing with the problems: 7 out of 16 wrote about personal ways how to deal with their problems



Loneliness, depression and cultural barrier. **Was speaking with everyone whom I could :)**

Second problem was about languages; my English was not so well as other volunteers in the camps. I had headache when I tried to learn English and Finnish. My energy was going too fast in those times .I was frequently feeling sleepy. Maybe I needed some vitamins. **But I was lucky that, my host mother was languages teacher(English, German and Finnish) She helped me so much, and I am thankful to her**

I had to deal with nationalism and racism **but I showed the best what I could, so that the people would change their mind about me**

Language, different custom, feeling alone **I switched my daily language from English to Finnish.**

The biggest cultural shock of course is the language barrier. And then comes I guess adapting to a new lifestyle and feeling alone in the beginning. **After 2 weeks I started going to places with a lot of people to be socialized, which helps to find friends and activities together, started going to Finnish language courses to deal with the problem and asking locals which is more correct to do things by their lifestyle.**

I felt alone a lot, because there was nobody around my project at weekends or in the afternoon. **I tried to get out as much as possible as a result and tried to meet other volunteers in other cities on the weekends, of course that wasn't always possible. So I began planning my time well as not to feel bored and alone.** The language barrier I only experienced in the beginning, because **later I noticed that I just had to talk as much as possible, and people would understand me better and better.** My work was non-existent in the beginning; I didn't have anything to do. **That's why after some time I started complaining, that was something new to me, that I had to ask for things to be changed so that I felt better. It did change a little bit in the end, but it wasn't good anyways.**

I actually experienced very few problems during my stay. **I had great support at work and in the family I was living with so I never felt like having any serious problems.**

Category: Life goals

Subcategories	
<p>Positive change on goals and values</p>	<p>Well, I guess it broadened my desires to go out into the world and explore it more at some point in my life./Living in Finland made me more active in sports and physical activities and maybe the biggest change on my life goals was that I had time and space (so much nature accessible) to rethink many concepts and decide that I don't have to be in a hurry to graduate or work or anything. Knowing people and other cultures is just another way to know yourself. / They have changed, definitely! I was never thinking of working with children years of 5-7, but now, I am full time teacher for that age./ Mh, not really.....but maybe yes, after a while and now: To see the importance to have a family-in general to have a good social background./ I don't think my goals changed a lot during my experience abroad. Maybe, I learnt to listen more to myself and my own needs and not to what other people make me believe is good for me. (5)</p>
<p>Positive reassurment of one's own goals</p>	<p>I achieved what was on my mind initially. But it was an eye - opener and a wake-up call. Now I am towards implementing disabled people in every aspect of life. /I'd rather say that my previous goals have been confirmed to be what I really want to do. / No, they haven't changed. They just "grew", but they are</p>

	still the same. (3)
Same goals as before	To be happy and this goal has not been changed. / No, they didn't change in any way. I already knew how my life is going on before I left for Finland. I was planning to start my studies at the university and my stay as a volunteer was only thought as an intermezzo and so it was./My goal of life doesn't changed, to do something that make the world better, care about the ecology issue, care about the people who need help. And if possible, promote Taiwanese's aesthetic. (3)
Short-term goals fulfilled in EVS	I always have my goals during my life. Nothing changed. This EVS project also was a one of my goals./ I had goals before I started my experience year and they all were fulfilled (2)
No mentioned change or reassurment	No :)/ I don't think so/ (2)
	altogether: 15

Category: Biggest personal success during voluntary service

Subcategories	
New social contacts/friendships	Good friends/Managing to meet, deal and make friendships with such a different array of people, sometimes even while lacking a common language./Got a lot of friends and relaxed./I have a family in the whole wide world!/That I was able to make some good friends with which I still have contacts now. (5)
Personal Growth/Insights/Life values	Growing my personality, unlike in a conservative country where I come from. /It was a very intense year and I had to deal with every aspect of daily life again in a different way. So the biggest success is definitely that I grew up a lot in just one year. /I've got confidence which I could manage problems by myself./I've been doing exactly what I wanted to do, I've realized almost all of my goals and I've managed to enjoy this year like never before./To be more understand, to treasure those what I already have. And being more active to get along with old and new friends. /To learn that all people are more or less the same. (6)
Work related success	A few lessons I provided for children and adults/ I think as my biggest success I'd name the fact that I was able to be a good teacher's helper at the kindergarten I worked. I'm happy that I could feel how much my work was appreciated by both, the other teachers and also by the kids. (2)
Integration	Integration into Finnish society. For most of people it is challenging but I found it easy and nice (1)
Language skills	My biggest success was improved my language skills (1)
Individual success	[...] and to hold a place in local newspaper and magazines about my project and my works. (1)
	altogether: 16

Category: Personal role in the project

Subcategories	
Feeling of being needed	Was helping where I was asked to. And at some point my project place became as a second home, participating at it's important activities./ I guess that my position as not either a resident nor a refugee helped me unite the breach that might have been present between the teacher and her students./ Each volunteer brings a unique experience with himself or herself. My help was very

	needed because I shared responsibilities almost as one of the co-workers. I gave all the best in me to the people I was working with/ I hope so and my co-worker sometimes said to me you are very helpful. I worked at kindergarten and I think I could help teachers. But the most contribution thing what I did is to make kids become interested in abroad. / As a volunteer, it's important to actually see the meaning in their stay and the worth of it. I know that my help was necessary in many fields. / Yes I think so. I help my co-worker have more time to pay more attention and find those disable people's needed./ Not necessary needed, but I think the every person account with his/her personality and cultural background./ I'm sure that my work was needed in the project. They would even let me take some responsibilities at my working place like carrying out the morning opening etc. / I believe that my help was needed in my project, and I was gladly helping. I helped with music advises, with organizing stuffs. / In terms of support of cultural adaptation and networking, yes. [...] (10)
Feeling of not being really needed	I think they do not need a real assistant in the workshop. Because Finland laws are very advanced about disabled people. They have everything what they need for living in very high quality. They eat so well, they live in very good designed buildings, there are very good assistants, there are doctors for them, etc. I think, this project's aim is to make a difference in their life. They can know different cultures in this way. It adds general knowledge to them. I think, some African countries need more helping than Finland. / My project could survive without my help/ No, my help was not at all needed in the project. (3)
Not sure	I'm not sure. Hopefully children at my volunteering place got interest about foreigner and foreign cultures. / [...] I felt volunteers were a bit left out and not informed of the whereabouts of their projects. (2)
	altogether: 15

Category: Skills learned during the project

Subcategories	
Personal growth	Learned to take the challenge and to go through it :)/ being open-minded (2)
Communication skills	It is more easier to understand and to contact to people after this project. Because I start to make empathy. My empathy skills improved well. Now, I use these skills in my private and working life. I learnt channel of communication. /[...] communicating with people with whom I didn't share a common language./ I had an opportunity to communicate with people who don't speak Russian and English. It was an interesting experience as far as my Finnish was very poor. (3)
Language skills	I learnt some Finnish language/ [...] and Finnish/ I learnt Finnish (3)
Skills in social/educational work	[...] as well as teaching drills [...]/ I learned how to work with children with special needs, I learned about Anthroposophy and Social Therapy and Pedagogy./ endurance looked after kids/ I gained more experience in working with children and I learned to also communicate with them over language barriers and even in non-verbal ways./ Knowledge about Finnish schools/ I learned a lot about the work with small kids, a skill that I've never used in that extent before./ I improved my working skills with children./ I learnt how to get along with slightly disabled people and how to treat small children. (8)
Computer literacy	I also acquired skills in terms of digital competence and usage of various computer programmes, as I was responsible for creating the annual yearbook. (1)
Technical skills	Sewing/ Cooking/ some cooking skills/ I incorporated botanic and gardening

	skills, organization, standards, ecologic awareness, kitchen assisting, personal assistance and much more (3)
Personally relevant skills	Doing things at the same time/ observing people's behaviour. (2)
	Altogether: 22

Category: New activities after finishing the voluntary service

Subcategories	
Started something new	Yes. I interest world kitchen after this project, I search new recipes and try to cook them. My art exhibition visits increased. I like modern art after this project. We visited many art exhibitions with my work-mates in Helsinki. / Yes. After living in a culturally very active city and a year of doing my best to try out everything that came across my way, I became a lot more active in life and I gained numerous new hobbies and interests ./ Yes. New hobbies (sports)/ Yes, I starting cooking, baking, following social issues. / I really started new activities. I joined the "Europeers" to make the EVS more famous for other young people. / I stayed in Finland for 3 more years. I continued working as a co-worker at the same place and then 2 more years at a similar place. I studied more about Social Therapy and Pedagogy. At the same time I was voluntarily working at Multicultural centre in Lahti city with young adults who were new in Finland to help them to integrate into Finnish society (6)
No new activities	Very soon after I came back from Finland I started my studies at University what didn't even leave me enough room to continue most of my hobbies that I was doing before my volunteering, so no, I didn't start any new activities in my free-time./ No, not really, because I started studying and that took all the time and energy I had./ just started working (backed to normal life) (3)
Other	My year abroad divided my life between high school and higher education, so things obviously changed before and after the trip. / I moved to another city. Basically I didn't return home :) / Came back to Finland/ I am still here. (3)
	altogether: 12

Category: Social network

Subcategories	
Expanded social network through and after VS	Yes, my social network expanded. When I came back my home, my sending organisation called me to some short-term projects. About help to other persons which are want to go abroad by EVS. I made friends after these projects. And still I am in contact with my EVS friends from all over the world. Some of my EVS friends visited me in Turkey. / Yes it did. Sadly, four years since, I find it quite hard to keep it up, even with my strongest acquaintances over there. It is still a proposed project to start writing to each of them. / I still interact with my friends from my project and other volunteers from Finland. / yes, definitely. I am still in contact with many volunteers from different countries. I have made really close friends among them./ Yes, I started working so I met new people./ Having found lots of new friends both from Finland and from all over the world is one of the treasures I hold most dear as a result of my EVS stay. Through meetings and trainings, as well as the fact that I was living in one of Finland's most beautiful and well-known cities, I got into contact with various other volunteers that shared the same feelings and desires as me. Going to a lot of cultural happenings, I got to know some Finnish people as well and of course my host family, mentors and workmates are also considered friends./ I still keep in touch with Finnish friends and also other volunteers./

	Through this activity I also gained new friends./ Yes, my social network definitely expanded because I started a new period of my life at the university and so I met a lot of new people there that I can call my friends nowadays./ Every time I am getting to know more and more people around and abroad wherever I travel. I am very well with socializing with people./ Yes, because I moved to a different city and started studying, so naturally I got to know lots of new and different people./ My social network didn't get more than I expected, friends are far from different countries, those who are still keep in touch are in Vihti, my living place during the project./ Always getting to know new people and good friends. (13)
No increase	I might be a big fuzzi when I go back home. I don't necessarily think my social network would expand. (1)
	altogether: 14

Category: Active Citizenship

Subcategories	
Active after VS	Yes I participated in some activities and organisations. My sending organisation works about social topics. I stayed in Finland 1 year and it is long time. That is why I know many things about Finland and about EVS. I was in these organisations and activities because I explained about EVS projects./ Well, I'm still a member of ICYE Honduras, and as part of its Board, I always look forward to help./ I have been working as a volunteer at Multicultural centre in Lahti city with young adults who were new and needed help to integrate into Finnish society. I also actively work in social networks in Internet for doing all I can to change the world for the best/ I didn't start with any new activities but I continued to help some school children of my community with their homework for school and I practised with them the subjects they needed to repeat to be able to follow the lessons./ As I haven't return back, I was bonded with Maailmanvaihto org. for quite long time, I volunteered as support person until recently, cause sometimes the activities organized by the organization are not good timing for my occupation. But in the future I would like to take part any short projects organized by EU commission. (5)
Interested/Positive Attitude	Not so much, because I had to be more time with my family. But planning to continue soon to be back in non-government area/ No, because I really didn't have the time. Next year, when my studies become more relaxed, I am very set on becoming active in a social organization here!/ No. I'd like to but I don't have time. (3)
Not active	No. Busy for working and hobby. / I've just returned home, so there has been little time to do all of this. First of all I need to settle down and get used to all the differences again. / No. I don't have much extra time. (3)
	altogether: 11

Category: Awareness of cultural influence

Subcategories	
Being aware	Influenced a lot and keeping my home traditions because it's part of my being/ I respect family relations in my country, because in a family at my home country everyone keeps tight connection with family members and try to help in difficult times. This I will always carry on in my life/ Naturally a person's mind is in some way formed by the beliefs and customs of its surroundings. There's a certain amount of pride that I actually became aware of only after I left my home country to experience another culture. In the process I believe that I've

	<p>broadened my horizons and gained different ways of viewing life but there are habits and thoughts that I hold on to, as they are a part of my own identity./ In my way of thinking. Being canny and modest and thankful. / I am more influenced by customs, traditions and habits. I think it's nice and very unique keeping your country's traditions while living abroad together with living the lifestyle of the place where you are at the moment, without rejecting anything. / I think I am influenced in that way that I am very strict on myself and on my plans (very German, if you want to look at it that way). I plan things, and then I want them to happen the way I intend them to. I did become more relaxed in that way in Finland though. (6)</p>
No obvious awareness or question misunderstood	<p>I eat yoghurt and muesli every morning like Finnish people. I try to eat healthy and I like more dairy products. I go to sauna and I give some info about sauna to my friends. I have many memories from Finland and at every turn; I describe my knowledge. I like snowflakes pattern and reindeer pattern on the clothes. Still, I listen to Finnish music. / I'm proud to say I received a pretty good education, especially at home, since my father always encouraged me reading and learning. That's why I believe I already had a very open mind before going abroad./ It's really difficult to live in Russia after being in an European country!/ Japanese culture, food or the like are quite different from Finnish. So people were very interested in my countries culture even kids. (They knew Pokémon, hello kitty etc. are from Japan!) I introduced my culture to people or kids with power point or workshop (like origami or cooking Japanese food). / I don't know, sorry./ I'm at home in a safe country what makes me feel unsecure sometimes while travelling abroad. I'm very used to the fact that in the public life things are working fine and that plans you've made are carried out exactly as you planed it. I had to learn that there are different rules when you're not in your own country and that you have to react with more flexibility and be more spontaneous./ I came from a conservative place. Both in culture and language. I was brought up in a village; coming to Finland was a whole new experience. I had trouble with things that pose no problem to everyday Finns, like putting on the shower, or scanning my bus card. Sad but true. :D (7)</p>
	altogether: 13

Category: Interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds

A) Frequency of contact

less than once in a month	once or twice in a month	every week	every day	Total
14.29%	28.57%	14.29%	42.86%	100.00%
2	4	2	6	14

B) Relation

Subcategories	
Close personal contacts	<p>Family/ Friends/ Acquaintances/ family, friends, acquaintances/ family, friends It differs from the person, but I generally consider most of them my friends. / Friends/ friends/ I've got a lot of friends with different nationalities. My mother is not Swiss but German so we've got some relatives in Germany still. / Friends/ My boyfriend, friends. / I have a good friend who is from Asia. However, she's studying far away, so I don't see her that often anymore. (12)</p>
Work related contacts	<p>Colleagues/ colleagues/ clients!/ colleagues/ colleagues, kids in the kindergarten/ colleagues/ [...] and as well as colleagues [...] (7)</p>

Sporadic contacts	Anyone I meet on the street/ neighbours/ In our neighbourhood live also people from different countries. (3)
	altogether: 22

Category: Change in interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds

Subcategories	
Better interaction	Getting more easy in contacts/ Yes I noticed. I can communicate with them easier than before. I am much more relaxed with different culture people. Sometimes tourist asks something on the way, and I explain easily. Also I can make different cultural friend easily./ Yes, I think I became more open-minded and the fact that I've been experiencing first-hand what it means to be a foreigner has contributed to this a lot./ Yes. Before volunteering, I was afraid to meet different people (included foreigner and others). But now it's interesting experience. / Yes, totally. I noticed more interest how they see the world and life their daily life and also how they celebrate holidays./ I think in some way I got a new kind of understanding for their situation because I experienced myself how it is to live in a country without knowing the language and without knowing anybody at first./ Not much. I guess I can now better understand how they might feel, especially when comparing European and Latin societies. (7)
No visible change in interaction	No/ Not really because I always have been very tolerant with all people around me./ No, not really./ Usually I maintain the same way of interact with people, but I cannot speak my mother language (Chinese) with foreigners, so I will use very simple sentence, under this situation it will be difficult for me to have conversation about some topic or say some jokes(because too many words I don't know how to say in English!)/ Not necessarily. I was always open minded to people/ I haven't notice a change, cause I used to know a lot of foreigners in Armenia at the time when I was still living there./ No, not really, because I already had a lot of intercultural experience before I came to Finland. (7)
	altogether: 14

Category: General tolerance

Subcategories	
More tolerance	Not wondering anymore when I see something strange from the point of view of my culture, but just accepting people the way they are/ Now I am more patient after this project. Because I was working with disabled people. They can't understand everything in first time; I had to explain same things many times. Also, My English was not so good, I was trying to explain something to people many times by many ways. My life view is larger now. Now I am very tolerant about people. I live in crowded country and very crowded mega city(in İstanbul), I have to be patient and tolerant ./ I consider myself to have been tolerant since before going abroad, but the experience certainly helped me solidify those values./ Definitely, I realized I had the patience and trustworthiness. (4)
No increase in tolerance	No/ I have always been very tolerant to towards all the people around me. Since childhood I have had many international friends/ No/ I've always been thinking of myself as a tolerant person and this opinion hasn't changed. / No. Japanese are tolerant in general and they don't say how they feel straight out. After my volunteer, I changed to express my feeling more./ I think that my grade of tolerant and accepting hasn't changed that much, but I am more interested in other./ I think I'm quite tolerant towards people whose home

	country isn't the one they're living in now. But I also had to realize that some of the people living in our country are not even trying to get adapted and I feel that I'm not anymore ready to accept this behaviour because I made the experience that it is possible to adapt to a certain level to a new surrounding and that the living together gets much easier if you try to learn the language for example or to understand something about the history and the culture of your host country./ I was always tolerant toward others and a good listener./ No, not really. (9)
	altogether: 13

Category: Most important about VS on a personal level

Subcategories	
Experience as a whole	Experience, challenge and that people got to know that there is a small country in Europe with beautiful and rich traditions, honest people and wonderful views/ refreshed (2)
Personal Growth/Strength/Insights/Values	The important thing was, We can never change people and we never know what will happen in the future. World doesn't turn around us. There are many lives in somewhere free from us ./ As I was one of the youngest volunteers in the program it was very important for me to experience that I was responsible for my life by myself and that I'm able to deal with very new situations that I sometimes couldn't foresee./ That I noticed that "sticking with what you had planned" is not always the best option. Quitting something can be better something./ [...] but also getting to know myself, and the peacefulness of a long winter, with long night times, and that sometimes I just had to manage been alone./ An ability to live in a completely different circumstances/ It was a year when all my life changed completely and I had been waiting for that for many years/ What's of most value for me are all the achievements, experiences and new interests that I gained./ That it helped me to see things differently what surrounding, and the personal achievement is getting a job based on an EVS experience. (8)
Social Contacts/Friendships	To become friends with people you wouldn't choose in your home country./ I guess the friendships I developed over there (2)
Work related	Disabled people, my disabled people! (1)
Other	I can't choose. (1)
	altogether: 14

Annex 1 - Email invitation text

Dear volunteers,

Finally we have launched our web-based study on **“Impact of international long-term volunteering”**.

For this purpose, we would like to know about your **experiences in Finland!**

The survey is mainly about changes of personality and how you deal with your surrounding world. By answering the questions you would give us a great opportunity to learn from your experience. The evaluation will lead e.g. to enhanced supervision during the volunteer process or to better workshops before and after staying abroad.

It takes about 30 minutes to answer the whole survey. We would be very thankful if you could take your time and tell us what you experienced.

If you decide to do the survey, you just have to click on the following link:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/impact_of_volunteering

You can also continue the study on another day from the same computer. Everything else you have to know is explained on the first page.

Thanks a lot for your help! If you have further questions concerning this, please ask.

Kindly,

MaaIlmanvaihto

MaaIlmanvaihto ry – ICYE Finland
Oikokatu 3, 00170 Helsinki, Finland

TEL.: +358 9 774 11 01

sivari@maailmanvaihto.fi

evs@maailmanvaihto.fi

www.maailmanvaihto.fi

www.icye.org

ICYE – United Nations Peace Messenger



MaaIlmanvaihto ry

Annex 2 – Impact Survey Questionnaire

Dear volunteer,

Your experience is needed!

For the purpose of evaluating the impact of international voluntary services, we would like to know more about your experiences in Finland. We have created a questionnaire which is mainly directed to changes of personality and focuses on how you perceive yourself after the voluntary service in comparison to how you were before.

By answering the questions you would give us a great opportunity to learn from your experience. The evaluation will lead e.g. to enhanced supervision during the volunteer process or to better workshops before and after staying abroad. All the collected data will be used in a confidential way. By using an online based survey no connection between interviewed person and questionnaire is possible. The findings of our study will be published on our website (www.maaivanvaihto.fi) in October 2013.

The survey is divided into 4 parts (AD) and consists of 23 questions. You can switch between those parts and questions (go back and forth) and even after beginning you can continue the survey another day from the same computer with the same ip address (just click on the link again).

You can write as much as you like and every answer is welcome!

If you don't find an answer to some of the questions, please nevertheless click the DONE button on the last page after finishing the survey. Otherwise we won't be able to read your answers.

It takes about 30 minutes to answer the whole survey.

Thank you very much!

Maaivanvaihto staff,
Finland

The online survey questionnaire:

Part A

1. How many months were you working at the project in Finland?
2. How old were you when you were staying in Finland?
3. Are you:
Male Female
4. What is your country of origin?
5. What was your main motivation for working as a volunteer?
6. How did you like your stay altogether?

Part B

7. How would you describe your identity now? What are your strengths and weaknesses?
8. Have you experienced a change in your emotional & psychological wellbeing during and after the international volunteer service? Is there something you found out about yourself that you did not expect?
9. Did your friends or family notice any changes after you came back? Please describe.
10. What kind of problems did you experience during your stay in Finland (e.g. feeling alone, homesick, problems at work, language barrier) and how did you deal with them? Please explain.
11. Thinking about your goals in life. Have your life goals changed during your experience abroad? If yes, how?
12. What would you consider as your biggest success during your stay in Finland?
13. Do you feel that your help was needed in your project abroad? What could you contribute to the project?
14. Which practical skills did you gain at the project? What did you learn?

Part C

15. After you came back to your home country: Did you start new activities or did you get more active in your daily life (e.g. new hobbies or interests)?
16. Did your social network expand after you came home (e.g. did you get new friends)? If yes, please describe how!
17. After your return: Did you start or continue to participate in any activities which try to make changes or improvements in your community (e.g. political organizations, voluntary service, church activities, environmental organizations)? If yes, how? If not, why?

Part D

18. Reflecting on yourself: In what way do you think you are influenced by your own cultural background (your views of life, customs, etc.)? Please explain.
19. How often do you interact with people from different cultural backgrounds in average?

Less than once a month	<input type="checkbox"/>
Once or twice a month	<input type="checkbox"/>
Every week	<input type="checkbox"/>
Everyday	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. How close are they? E.g. family, friends, colleagues, acquaintances.
21. Did you notice a change in the way you interact with people from different cultural backgrounds after you returned? If yes, please explain.
22. Did you experience a change in how tolerant and accepting you are towards others in general after your volunteer experience? If yes, please explain.

Personal evaluation of your voluntary service

23. What was personally for you the most important thing about your whole volunteer experience?

End

You are great!

Thank you very much for answering the questions!

Just finish the survey by clicking the DONE button below (you can't log in again then).