Southern Host Organizations: At the Forefront of Discussions on
International Volunteerism

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ABSTRACT

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Volunteers, governments, agencies and organizations from the North have too often defined the benefits and limitations of international volunteer programs without incorporating the perspectives of the organizations they seek to help. In fact, scholars and practitioners have relied on Northern experiences to develop a critical analysis of this development practice. As the experiences of the South are often absent from the conversations about international volunteerism, the goal of this thesis is to leverage the voices and the stories of Southern hosts to further understand the impact of international volunteerism. The research draws on the experiences of host organizations in Uganda. The interviewed participants are Ugandans who have worked with international volunteers to address various development issues. A review of the existing literature on international volunteerism, combined with the field research, support the analysis of the benefits and limitations of international volunteerism from the perspectives of host organizations. It also enables an exploration of the agency of volunteerism and determines key principles to empower host organizations and their employees. Thus, the analysis establishes the following conclusions: international volunteers are valuable actors for Southern hosts; volunteer programs must consider the impact, the challenges and the recommendations identified by host organizations and their communities; international volunteers enable alternative voices to be heard; and volunteerism fosters cooperation and partnerships within the Global South.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Contextualizing International Volunteerism

International volunteerism has gained great attention and importance in recent years (Lough, 2015). In fact, youth, students, practitioners, governments, development programs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) often turn to international volunteerism to implement poverty reduction strategies, “facilitate social integration and social inclusion”, encourage “cross-cultural exchange and knowledge-sharing” as well as to advance the United-Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Lough, 2015, pp. 3; Tiessen, 2018, pp. 1). International volunteerism has also been utilized “for educational purposes, adventure, travel, personal growth, and skills/career-building” (Tiessen, 2018, pp. 1). As international volunteers, individuals are found to “develop partnerships and are able to contribute to development assistance” (Tiessen, 2018, pp. 1).

Volunteering opportunities are limitless, diverse and facilitated through “nonprofit, corporate, and governmental organizations” (Lough & Tiessen, 2017, pp. 2). In fact, international volunteering has grown from a predominantly not-for-profit sector to include nonprofit and for-profit volunteer sending organizations. The focus of this study is international volunteering for development (V4D) – a sector that is distinct from other forms of volunteering abroad such as “voluntourism” (Smith, 2014). As defined by Peter Smith, “voluntourism” is described as “tourists who undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the
restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment” (Smith, 2014, pp. 2). By contrast, international volunteering for development is described “as contributing to host communities by transferring skills and aid at the local level, utilising ideals such as capacity building, mutual learning, and cross-cultural understanding” (Binns & McLachlan, 2018, pp. 67). While different from “voluntourism”, the benefits and ethics of international volunteerism for development remain controversial and largely focused on charitable outcomes and the rewarding experiences of the sojourners from developed countries (Smith, 2014).

As the literature on this subject continues to expand, scholars have examined international volunteerism through various lenses. In fact, researchers have largely focused on the description of international volunteering (Sherraden, Lough & Moore McBride, 2008; Lough, Moore McBride & Sherraden, 2001; Lee & Won, 2018; Lough, 2015; Binns & McLachlan, 2018; Stukas, Gil Clary & Snyder, 2015; Dolnicar & Randle, 2007; Lien, 2010; Bussell & Forbes, 2002); the inclusion, motivations and experiences of international volunteers (Helms & McKenzie, 2014; Lough & Moore McBride, 2010; Lough & Moore McBride, 2010; Lee & Won, 2018; Lough & Xiang, 2016; Johnson, 2015; Barraza, Malsch & Omoto, 2009; Bulloch & al., 2018; Chen & Chen, 2011; Manafi & al., 2018); as well as on the assessment of the objectives, effectiveness and impact of international volunteering (Smith, 2014; Palacios, 2010; Trau, 2015; Darren & al., 2016; Campbell Lehn, 2015; Lough & Tiessen, 2017; Lough, Tiessen & Lasker, 2018). While researchers have explored other dimensions of international volunteerism, very few have focused on the agency, the stories and the experiences of host organizations and the communities they seek to help. Therefore, international
volunteerism, while often seen as a “civic service” that generates great opportunities for volunteers, should be characterized as a development strategy that focuses on Southern hosts and their communities (Lough, Moore McBride & Sherraden, 2001; Tiessen, Lough & Cheung, 2018).

1.2 Significance of the Research

Most of the scholarship on international volunteering has focused on the benefits experienced by the sojourners rather than on the impact and outcomes in host communities or volunteer receiving countries (Chen & Chen, 2011; Lough, Moore McBride & Sherraden, 2001; Manafi & al., 2018; Rothwell & Charleston, 2013; Lough & al., 2014). This research provides insights into the effectiveness, the value and the objectives being pursued by participants (Trau, 2015; Smith, 2014; Palacios, 2010; Lough, Moore McBride & Sherraden, 2001). Several studies have also examined the challenges and the negative impact that international volunteering can cause (Lough, 2014; Binns & McLachlan, 2018; Tiessen & Heron, 2012). However, a growing body of scholars is focusing on the host organizations’ perspectives of international volunteering and the perceived benefits to development and capacity building (Lough & Tiessen, 2017; Lough, Tiessen & Lasker, 2018; Devereux, 2008; Tiessen, Lough & Cheung, 2018). The purpose of this research is therefore motivated by the growing, while still limited, scholarship and analysis of host country perspectives about the benefits and limitations of international volunteerism. The goal of this study is to document the development impact and distinctive contributions of international volunteerism from the perspectives of Southern hosts in Kampala, Uganda.
This study fills important gaps in knowledge in the field of international volunteerism by bringing to the forefront the perspectives of partner organizations in host countries such as Uganda. This research advances new knowledge on a critical question that demands exploration: What is the nature of the benefits and the perceived value of hosting international volunteers from the perspective of the volunteer receiving organizations? To address this central question, I will examine the impact of international volunteerism in developing countries; establish linkages between international volunteering, host organizations and development; and expand on the role of international volunteering programs in the Global South. This information is beneficial to diverse audiences including: out-going volunteers, volunteer sending organizations; and scholars interested in this field of study. The findings also have the potential to improve training and preparation of international volunteers.

Although international volunteering has captured the interest of citizens around the world, its relationship with development remains largely undocumented and under-studied. Several themes are prominent in the literature, including: definitions and modalities of international volunteering, ethical implications, colonial continuities, the experiences of the volunteers, critical assessments of impact, and the utility and objectives of such activities. These themes tell us little, however, about the true impact and value of international volunteering, not only for volunteers, but also for development, host organizations and the agency of community partners in the Global South. This study begins to fill the gap in the literature by sharing findings from our research with partner organizations in the Global South, including 15 interviews with volunteer receiving organizations in Uganda.
1.3 Research Questions

This research sets out to examine international volunteerism from the perspectives of Southern host organizations. By focusing on the stories and the experiences of host organizations and communities, several key themes emerged. These themes were further examined to establish linkages with existing research on international volunteerism.

The questions guiding this study include:

1. What are the benefits and limitations of international volunteerism in development programming from the perspective of host organizations?

2. How can the agency of volunteer receiving organizations be more effectively captured through new research approaches, which privilege the perspectives of host organizations?

1.4 Overview of the Study

To verify our research questions, numerous studies and articles on international volunteerism were reviewed and juxtaposed to the findings established through our fieldwork. More specifically, theoretical and empirical insights from international development scholars, including Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum, Rebecca Tiessen, Benjamin Lough and Samual Cheung were reviewed to establish the parameters upon which international volunteerism is understood. The benefits and limitations of international volunteering, documented through field interviews with host organizations in Uganda, contribute to our analysis of the studied questions.

Field research was conducted in Kampala, Uganda, during the months of July and
August of 2018. This field research was comprised of 15 interviews with seven different local organizations and NGOs that host international volunteers. The findings, which resulted from these interviews, were examined using the general ideas and considerations of the human capability approach, critical analysis as well as theories of subaltern voices with particular attention being place on agency, critical development studies and subaltern perspectives (Sen, 1993; Nussbaum, 2003; Tiessen, Lough & Cheung, 2018).

The literature review and the findings from our field research serve to validate the benefits of volunteerism, and will permit an effective exploration of the central questions being reviewed. In fact, by focusing on the agency of host organizations and communities, Southern organizations identify capacity building as a significant benefit of hosting international volunteers as well as determine practices for effective volunteerism. Finally, by continuing to rely on the theoretical and empirical insights mentioned above, Southern hosts in Uganda were able to demonstrate and conclude that international volunteerism gives prominence to the voices and the experiences of the Global South while fostering cooperation and partnerships within development programming.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Several dimensions of international volunteerism are examined in the literature; namely: the inclusion, motivations and experiences of international volunteers; the objectives, effectiveness and impact of international volunteering; and the relation between international volunteering, neocolonialism, power domination, inequalities and neoliberalism. Other dimensions that are less commonly explored in the literature despite providing rich insights include: South-South volunteering and development; and the relation between international volunteering and capacity building in developing countries. Of significance to this study is the small, but growing, scholarship on international volunteering for development (V4D) and the perspectives of partner organizations in the Global South, including the value placed on agency, subaltern voices and partnerships. The literature review establishes the current state of international volunteerism and presents a body of knowledge on this topic, including who volunteers, why they volunteer and the types of lived-experience; the majors critics to volunteerism; the perceived effectiveness of volunteerism from the perspectives of host communities, sending organizations and the volunteers themselves; the parallels between volunteer practices, neocolonialism and neoliberalism; the various forms of volunteerism; the contribution to skill building, and development initiatives; and the fundamentals of relationship building.

2.1 Description of International Volunteering

Several articles help us understand the characteristics and diverse modalities of volunteerism. Sherraden, Lough and Moore McBride (2008) define international
volunteerism as “an organized period of engagement and contribution to society by volunteers who work across an international border, in another country, or countries. IVS [International Voluntary Service] may be sponsored by public or private organizations, it is recognized and valued by society, and volunteers received little or no monetary compensation” (Sherraden, Lough & Moore McBride, 2008, pp. 397-398). Similarly, Lough, Moore McBride and Sherraden (2007) describe international volunteering as “a form of civic service. We define civic service as ‘an organized period of engagement and contribution to society sponsored by public or private organizations, and recognized and valued by society, with no or minimal monetary compensation to the participant’. Civic service aims for impacts on host-communities and their residents as well as for the volunteers themselves” (Lough, Moore McBride & Sherraden, 2001, pp. 1).

Benjamin Lough argues that international volunteering has evolved over time. More specifically, international volunteering has progressed in terms of volunteer cooperation practices, policy objectives and activities, scale, funding, duration of placements as well as age, skill level, gender, training, reimbursements, protections, evaluation and management of volunteers (Lee & Won, 2018; Lough, 2015). At first, “[d]uring the era of development following decolonisation, states and transnational social organizations sent volunteers to help the former colonial territories to develop economically” (Lough, 2015, pp. 1). Now, volunteering has been placed “in the spotlight as an operative strategy to reduce poverty, to prevent and rebuild after disasters, and to facilitate social integration and social inclusion” (Lough, 2015, pp. 3). International Volunteer Cooperation Organizations (IVCO) have also been closely linked with the United-Nations SDGs in the 21st century (Lough, 2015). Binns and McLachlan’s (2018)
concur with Lough, describing volunteering “as contributing to host communities by transferring skills and aid at the local level, utilising ideals such as capacity building, mutual learning, and cross-cultural understanding” (Binns & McLachlan, 2018, pp. 67). International volunteering can therefore be considered “a greater ‘humanising’ of the development process” (Binns & McLachlan, 2018, pp. 67).

Understanding the volunteer market has been an area of interest for certain authors. Dolnicar and Randle’s (2007) present “[f]our groups or segments of volunteers” (Dolnicar & Randle, 2007, pp. 28). These include: the “altruist volunteer”, the “leisure volunteer”, the “political volunteer” as well as the “church volunteer”; each possessing their own motives and objectives for volunteering (Stukas, Gil Clary & Snyder, 2015; Dolnicar & Randle, 2007, pp. 28-29). This analysis not only helps scholars and practitioners understand who volunteers, but it also “provide[s] managers with insight as to the messages that might be effective in reaching particular segments, but also the style and tone of promotional material including the type of imagery that might be motivating for each group” (Dolnicar & Randle, 2007, pp. 28-29; Lien, 2010).

Bussell and Forbes (2002) identify the various spheres in which volunteerism occurs. Volunteering can take place in “specific organizations”, in “human service, arts and culture, religion, youth development, education and health”, in the “production, service and sales industries”, in various continents around the world as well as in the development sector (Bussell & Forbes, 2002, pp. 7).

Several articles describe volunteerism by providing definitions, tracing the history of volunteerism, demonstrating its evolution, discussing volunteer types as well as identifying in which area it occurs. While this literature can be useful to establish the
basic concept of international volunteerism, it falls short when seeking to assess its impact. Although Lough, Binns and McLachlan reference “capacity building, mutual learning, and cross-cultural understanding”, their work fails to discuss the prominent links that exist between international volunteerism, development, agency and partnerships with the Global South (Binns & McLachlan, 2018, pp. 67; Lough, 2015). The impact of volunteerism along with the experiences and voices of Southern partners have been overlooked in these articles.

2.2. The Inclusion, Motivations and Experiences of International Volunteers

The inclusion, motivations and the experiences of international volunteers are generally well documented. Amanda Moore McBride and Benjamin Lough (2010) discuss the importance of understanding international volunteerism through an inclusive approach. As demonstrated by the authors, “[there is a] relationship between volunteering internationally and volunteers’ gender, age, race and ethnicity, location of birth, employment status and income, marital status, and whether they have dependent children in the home” (Helms & McKenzie, 2014; Lough & Moore McBride, 2010, pp. 196). The individuals that are the most likely to volunteer internationally are generally young white males who are highly educated, not employed full-time and without dependent children (Lough, Moore McBride & Sherraden, 2001; Lough & Moore McBride, 2010). International volunteering opportunities seem to be poorly accessed by underrepresented individuals. While the desire and the demand to volunteer exist, systematic barriers, institutional forces as well as recruitment expenses have made “inclusion difficult” (Lough & Moore McBride, 2010, pp. 203). As argued by McBride and Lough, if “underrepresented groups have the desire to serve, then more can and should be done to
leverage their inclusion and impact” (Lough & Moore McBride, 2010, pp. 202). Young-
Joo Lee and Doyeon Won’s (2018) also examine the factors that influence one’s 
 participation in this type of activity. For these authors, additional factors can include: 
intensity and stress, time commitment, qualifications, financial resources, household 
income, professional occupation, self-employment, as well as marital status (Lee & Won, 
2018). Importantly, the participation of older adults in volunteerism is also considered. 
As emphasized by Lough and Xiang (2016), “[t]he greater use of professional skills by 
older adults in combination with their comparatively long duration of service speaks to 
the potential value of older volunteers to hosting communities compared with other age 
groups” (Lough & Xiang, 2016, pp. 1094). “[E]ngaging older adults” in international 
volunteer programs requires “incentives including ‘the need for more training, more 
flexible and diverse options, and more opportunities for intergenerational volunteering’ ”, 
and IVCOs and host communities would benefit greatly by adapting their methods in 
order to capture this valuable population segment (Johnson, 2015; Lough & Xiang, 2016, 
pp. 1096).

Li-Ju Chen and Joseph S. Chen’s (2011) have documented the international 
volunteers’ motivations for participating in this type of service. According to their 
findings, international volunteers engage in this activity for the following reasons: 
contribute to social action, authentic experience, interest in travel, challenge/stimulation, 
desire to help, interaction with locals/cultures, are encouraged by others, enhancing 
relationships, unique style of the trip, time/money, and organization’s goals (Barraza, 
Malsch & Omoto, 2009; Bulloch & al., 2018; Chen & Chen, 2011; Manafi & al., 2018). 
Walter Rehberg (2005) as well as Helms & McKenzie (2014) add to this list: “achieving
something positive for others”, “quest for new”, “quest for oneself”, “advancing oneself”, “getting away”, “professional orientation, clarification, and development”, “to reflect on their future educational choices”, “experiment living independently”, develop “openness” and “learn to manage anger and stress” (Helms & McKenzie, 2014, pp. 55-58; Rehberg, 2005, pp. 113). International volunteering has also been used as “an orientation phase”, to “explore the world and open new horizons”, to take “action for [one’s] own benefit”, and to “improve language skills” (Mangold, 2012, pp. 1494-1496). Moreover, organizational factors mustn’t be forgotten as they can also influence ones’ participation in international volunteerism (Ellemers & Boezeman, 2013). While most authors describe international volunteer motives as being altruistic and self-beneficial, Baillie Smith & al. (2012) present the relationship between international volunteerism, faith and subjectivity as the motives for certain individuals (Baillie Smith & al., 2012).

Andrew Rothwell and Brandon Charleston (2013) posit that volunteers develop leadership skills, teamwork, empathy, values, personal skills as well as emotional development (Lough, Moore McBride & Sherraden, 2001; Manafi & al., 2018; Rothwell & Charleston, 2013). Volunteers are also found to have developed “personal self-realisation at individual, social and creative levels” (Balashov, Kalamazh & Pasichnyk, 2016, pp. 126). Intercultural communicative competence, which can be defined as “the ability to allow individuals their self-realisation in conditions of intercultural communication”, was identified as another valuable skilled learned from volunteering abroad (Balashov, Kalamazh & Pasichnyk, 2016, pp. 133). Lastly, for Anthony Fee and Sidney J. Gray (2011) as well as Manafi & al. (2018), the most common learning for volunteers is “decision-making and problem-solving”, “cultural skills and
understanding”, “high-level communication skills”, development of a global perspective, confidence, “exposure to ‘difficult’ work situation” as well as “[breaking] down young volunteers’ prejudices about [their] placement country” (Fee & Gray, 2011, pp. 536; Manafi & al., 2018, pp. 8-13). The literature also focuses on service outcomes and the challenges faced by volunteers. Lough & al. (2014) argue that international volunteering “had a positive statistically significant impact on international volunteers’ perceived international concern, intercultural relations, and international social capital – even two to three years after they return home” (Lough & al., 2014, pp. 54). Volunteerism has therefore promoted global citizenship, encouraged individuals to pursue “work with underserved and multicultural populations”, enhanced “volunteers’ interest in issues related to global poverty and development”, has brought awareness to “other countries, minority issues, development challenges, immigration and inequality” as well as enticed volunteers to “coordinate humanitarian aid projects, students or professional exchanges, research trips, internships, or additional return trips to [their] host country” (Lough & al., 2014, pp. 49-50). It is evident that international volunteerism can have an immense impact on ones’ knowledge, especially in the field of development (Darnell, 2011; Tiessen & Huish, 2014; McHenry & Wallis, 2014; Joanne Brown, 2018). In terms of encountered challenges, international volunteers have been faced with language barriers, “coping with new situations” and living in a new country (Mangold, 2012, pp. 1496). International volunteers, when living abroad, must also “choose a form of behaviour […] to deal with new status positions”, deal with contrasts of rich versus poor, confront “their own skin colour” as well as recognize their position of privilege (Mangold, 2012, pp. 1496-1501). Finally, as demonstrated in Kristina Diprose (2011) international
volunteering can present itself as an educational opportunity. International volunteerism requires a critical analysis of development, encourages a reflection on the “interconnected causes of poverty” and commands a consideration of the role of northern agencies’ in the Global South (Diprose, 2011, pp. 189).

As illustrated by these articles, the inclusion, motivations and experiences of volunteers at the international level are well documented. While these articles are insightful on the issue of who volunteers, why they engage in this type of service and how these experiences affect individuals from developed countries, the analysis of the study question remains superficial. In fact, these articles make no attempt to explore the ethical and moral dilemmas associated with international volunteering practices, the experiences of host organizations, the general impact of international volunteerism, the effects of volunteering on development and how international volunteer programs allow alternative voices to be heard. These articles exemplify the narrow focus of the literature, which presents the perspectives of international volunteers, while failing to highlight the experience of host communities.

2.3 Assessment of the Objectives, Effectiveness and Impacts of International Volunteering

Peter Smith (2014) is critical of international volunteering, questioning the benefits of such activities for host communities and organizations. Smith argues that international volunteer programs do not give host communities or organizations “the right to shape and define their development agenda” (Smith, 2014, pp. 15-16). International volunteering is therefore utilized by volunteers for self-improvement, mindfulness of global inequalities and participation in global citizenship. For Smith, the term international volunteering should be replaced by “providers of moral encounters for
paying tourists from the North” (Smith, 2014, pp. 16). As for Palacios (2010), international volunteering and “the goal of development aid seems to not only be unrealistic in this context, but also undesirable, as it can potentially produce negative outcomes such as role ambiguity and public skepticism” (Palacios, 2010, pp. 25). Furthermore, Adam M. Trau (2015) critically assesses the challenges and dilemmas associated with international volunteering based on a case study from Vanuatu, which highlights how volunteers don’t have the knowledge, the resources or the alliances to meet the needs of the village (Trau, 2015). Trau suggests several strategies that would enable volunteers to be more efficient. These strategies include the promotion of ethical approaches and improving volunteer training and debriefings (Trau, 2015). Trau doesn’t reject or encourage international volunteering, suggesting that volunteer activities must be more pragmatic by “developing flexible alliances and networks of communication with input from international, national, and local levels in order to adequately support volunteers” (Trau, 2015, pp. 39).

Building on Trau’s arguments, Lough, Moore McBride and Sherraden (2001) believe that effective international volunteer programs should “integrate host organizations and communities into the design and delivery process”, ensure “demand driven placement” as well as determine “the role of the volunteer and the length of placement that will best serve the needs of the community” (Lough, Moore McBride & Sherraden, 2001, pp. 7). Furthermore, Darren & al. (2016) argue that volunteer programs should focus on “ethical guidelines”, “prior planning”, “cultural sensitivity” and “local leadership” (Darren & al., 2016, pp. 6). For Benjamin Lough and Rebecca Tiessen (2017), “well-facilitated programs with comprehensive volunteer preparation, a careful
eye on structural inequalities, and sound post-placement support can likely meet a diverse set of programmatic priorities, whether focused on strengthening capacity in partner organizations, developing international relationships, or performing manual labor” (Campbell Lehn, 2015; Lough & Tiessen, 2017, pp. 21). In addition, international volunteer sending organizations must also consider that they “are central to the international volunteering movement, and the challenges they face can directly impact the experiences of volunteers, professional development practitioners, and beneficiaries alike” (Child & Nelson, 2016, pp. 527). It is recognized that the length of time spent abroad, as well as the volunteers’ education and skill levels, are important factors that can influence the effectiveness and the successfulness of the individuals’ contributions (Child & Nelson, 2016). Lough, Tiessen and Lasker (2018) also argue that volunteers working in health programs must be “highly educated and skilled”, “have the capacity to speak the local language”, have “basic training in community development principles and practices” as well have the competencies that fit the needs of the communities in order to be helpful to host organizations (Lough, Tiessen & Lasker, 2018, pp. 21-22). In other words, volunteers should be enthusiastic and energetic as well as have the knowledge, training and expertise to be effective. Volunteer impact could also be influenced by “prior volunteering and international experience” and by the amount of time one can dedicate to a project (Sherraden, Lough & Moore McBride, 2008, pp. 399). The “opportunity to volunteer abroad and the structure of the volunteer experience” can influence the effectiveness of volunteerism as well. Therefore, factors such as the “type of organization”, “program mission and goals”, “program sponsorship, funding and size”, “recruitment policies”, “resources”, “access”, “internationality”, “incentives”, “training,
support and supervision”, “accountability” as well as “organizational networks” cannot be forgotten when determining the capacity of international volunteerism (Benedict & al., 2016; Sherraden, Lough & Moore McBride, 2008, pp. 400-404). Finally, service action “is shaped by the type of service activity, length and continuity of service, group or individual setting, direction of service and reciprocity, and the level of cross-cultural contact and immersion” (Sherraden, Lough & Moore McBride, 2008, pp. 404).

Sherraden, Lough and Moore McBride (2008) examined international volunteerism and its impact with the perspective of both host communities and sending organizations. For host communities, international volunteers are contributing to “social, economic, environmental, and political development; host organization capacity; intercultural relations; international understanding; and civic and global engagement in host communities” (Sherraden, Lough & Moore McBride, 2008, pp. 407). Sending organizations recognize that international volunteers can “contribute to aggregate increases in human capital, and lower levels of risk behaviour and social exclusion, in sending countries, possibly leading to economic and social development” (Sherraden, Lough & Moore McBride, 2008, pp. 411). They can also “improve cross-cultural relations”, “resolve social conflicts at home”, “encourage support for development aid” and “enhance capacity to solve local, domestic, and international conflicts” (Tiessen & Heron, 2012; Sherraden, Lough & Moore McBride, 2008, pp. 411). For Lough (2014), host communities in the Global South saw international volunteers as being able to contribute to the “higher organizational status in the community, improved credibility with international donors, greater international social capital and innovative ways of enhancing organizational capacity” (Lough, 2014, pp. 1344). International volunteers
also generate ideas, “intercultural exchange”, resources and “fresh perspectives” (Lough, 2014, pp. 1344). However, it should be noted that host organizations do encounter certain challenges, including “a lack of conscious recognition by volunteers of the structural inequities and power imbalances between Southern and Northern countries; host communities’ perception of international service as a colonial legacy; racialized relationships between black host-community members and white volunteers (particularly in the African and South American contexts); and clear dependency mindsets and disempowered identities among intended beneficiaries” (Lough, 2014, pp. 1344-1345).

The length of the assignments, the lack of communication between the volunteers and the host communities and “adjusting to local environments” also negatively impact volunteer contributions (Binns & McLachlan, 2018, pp. 74-75). Finally, international volunteers identified what they perceive to be the benefits and limitations of their contribution to host communities. *WorldTeach* volunteers “listed their most effective activities as helping community members learn to read, speak, write, or understand the English language; providing universal primary education; and promoting gender equality or empowering women and families” (Manafi & al., 2018, pp. 17). Tiessen and Heron (2012) report that volunteers see themselves as having a positive impact on host communities as they contributed “some of their time, resources and skills”, “solve[d] ‘small computer problems’”, encouraged “cross-cultural learning”, “help[ed]...coworkers explore new ideas and different ways of doing things” as well as brought “‘a little bit more consideration, a little bit more humanity to the project’” (Tiessen & Heron, 2012, pp. 50). In terms of negative outcomes, international volunteers believe that their internships abroad can create “false hope in the community”, perpetuate “stereotypes of
foreigners”, have “negative implications for staff”, create “this sense of dependency on the foreigners” and have “cultural or behavioural impacts” (Tiessen & Heron, 2012, pp. 51).

Despite this body of literature, which is critical of international volunteering, several of the articles also advance recommendations to improve the effectiveness of volunteer programs. For example, Adam M. Trau presents a critical analysis of international volunteering while also presenting suggestions to improve these practices around the world. Effective volunteer practices are the subject of several articles mentioned above. Finally, several articles reviewed the impact of international volunteerism from the perspectives of host communities, sending organizations and volunteers themselves. Nevertheless, the links between international volunteerism, capacity building, agency, subaltern voices and partnerships are not explicitly established. While authors highlight the perspectives of host communities, their voices and experiences are not as present as one would expect.

2.4 The Relation between International Volunteering, Neocolonialism, Power Domination, Inequalities and Neoliberalism

The literature points to the relationship between international volunteerism and both neocolonialism and neoliberalism, recognizing that the structures embedded in this type of activity can lead to power domination and inequalities between the North and the South: “[g]lobal structural inequalities are widely understood to permeate relations between volunteers and hosts where even the intimacies of empathy and care are ascribed values drawn out of North–South divides” (Griffiths, 2016, pp. 115). Mai Ngo (2014) and
Carlos M. Palacios’s (2010) posit that international volunteerism is a form of colonialism and power domination (Ngo, 2014; Palacios, 2010). For Ngo, “the partnership between North and South organizations can reproduce systems of dependence through funding and structural expertise, and this can trickle down to the work of the volunteers” (Ngo, 2014, pp. 56). Volunteerism therefore maintains “cross-cultural encounters […] between poor and rich countries and between marginal and empowered subjects” (Griffiths, Luh Sin & Yea, 2018, pp. 110). As international volunteers benefit much more from this activity than host communities, it appears evident to Jacob Henry (2018) that volunteerism is “an oppressive and colonizing practice” (Henry, 2018, pp. 5). Benjamin Lough and Janet Carter-Black’s (2015) agree and point to “the use of volunteering – and therefore a helping-language in a global context of inequality and postcolonialism directly related to a history of Western domination” (Carter-Black & Lough, 2015, pp. 209). In fact, “[b]ecause development projects are largely administered by expatriates, aid recipients often view development projects as belonging to ‘white people’, and as a result do not view themselves as active participants in development projects but as recipients of aid from white Westerners endowed with abundant resources and kindness” (Carter-Black & Lough, 2015, pp. 210). As a result, white volunteers are perceived to contribute more resources and connections to support communities than local staff or local volunteers; white volunteers are taken more seriously due to their perceived superior knowledge and expertise; and expatriates are considered “less corrupt and use resources more efficiently” which enables the involvement of funders (Carter-Black & Lough, 2015, pp. 213-215). For Tiessen, Lough and Cheung (2018), “the notion of ‘othering’ is also prevalent in the examination of problematic images and representations of IVS
programs, which tend to portray a profound distinction between the so-called developed and developing worlds” (Tiessen, Lough & Cheung, 2018, pp. 6). “Othering” among international volunteers can lead to the assumptions that the North is superior to the South, perpetuating notions of neocolonialism and dependency (Tiessen, Lough & Cheung, 2018, pp. 6). This can perpetuate the notion that “Northern knowledge is taken as ‘truth’ while other alternative ways of being and knowing are seen through the lens of differentiation where difference is understood as inferior, backward, and primitive” (Tiessen, Lough & Cheung, 2018, pp. 7). Haas and Repenning (2018) also discuss the concept of Northern knowledge as their “findings show that unequal power relations and opportunities for participation result in the structural underrepresentation of knowledge of stakeholders from the global South, even despite the goodwill and scattered best-practice examples of Northern stakeholders. On a structural level, the systematic exclusion of partner organizations continues in the South–North relationship. The program’s design, national legal frameworks and Northern stakeholders’ powerful position lead to a discrimination of Southern knowledge and stakeholders at the steering level” (Haas & Repenning, 2018, pp. 46). Finally, the literature confirms that “international volunteering […] connects with broader debates around neoliberalism and neoliberal governance” (Baillie Smith & Laurie, 2011, pp. 548). As a result, international volunteering “encompasses processes of commodification” while “ideas rooted in taken-for-granted global geographies of inequality mean that when a neoliberal emphasis on formalisation intersects with international volunteering, colonial and postcolonial imaginaries of development are simultaneously reinforced, their interrelationships and contradictions playing out through new constructions of what it means to volunteer overseas” (Baillie
Smith & Laurie, 2011, pp. 546).

To avoid the “North-to-South model of international volunteer service” and “further perpetuating […] neocolonial relationships, […] practitioners can adopt incremental strategies” (Carter-Black & Lough, 2015, pp. 209-216). Some of these can include: the implementation of “strength-based dialogue and critical consciousness” in order to shift power balances; “decentralize decision-making” as partners in the South should participate in their own development initiatives; increasing the “mutuality of volunteer service” by “emphasizing the mutuality of exchange”; and finally, ensuring “culturally immersive relationships” (Carter-Black & Lough, 2015, pp. 216-218).

It is important to consider the body of literature, which highlights how volunteerism can reproduce notions of colonialism, power dominance and inequalities. This allows practitioners to reflect on international volunteer program designs as well as practices. While these discussions are key, it is unfortunate that only one article presented recommendations to achieve best practices. As demonstrated by Carter-Black and Lough (2015), certain strategies can be implemented to ensure that volunteerism does not reinforce power domination and inequalities between the North and the South (Carter-Black & Lough, 2015). The articles also make no mention of the positive impact that stem from international volunteerism. Finally, concepts of agency, subaltern voices and partnerships do not figure in these articles, despite their importance in fully understanding the benefits and limitations of international volunteerism.

2.5 South-South Volunteering and Development

South-South volunteering has been largely absent from the literature, with a
limited number of authors exploring this important dimension of the issue. As argued by Baillie Smith, Griffiths and Laurie (2017), South-South volunteerism is growing rapidly as “non-Western volunteers might be better equipped – culturally, linguistically as well as technically – to undertake development work” while contributing different and “important benefits compared with North-South volunteering” (Baillie Smith, Griffiths & Laurie, 2017, pp. 159). “Shared experience” as well as “shared identity have become important constructions of non-Western development cooperation” (Baillie Smith, Griffiths & Laurie, 2017, pp. 159). This form of cooperation allows individuals to have a “shared understanding, and similar systems, processes, living conditions, and cultures [which are] considered advantageous conditions for South-South forms of volunteering for development” (Baillie Smith, Griffiths & Laurie, 2017, pp. 159). While South-South volunteerism isn’t free of challenges, further connections and commonalities between communities and volunteers from the South enable “solidarity” and “mutual benefit” within development initiatives (Baillie Smith, Griffiths & Laurie, 2017, pp. 166). Lopez Franco and Shahrokh (2015) contribute to this discussion by highlighting that “volunteers were perceived as being well qualified and having valuable experience, particularly of working in local communities in a developing country setting” (Lopez Franco & Shahrokh, 2015, pp. 22). Return volunteers were also found to be much more engaging in the development of communities as they discovered “a practical role for themselves” during their volunteer placement (Lopez Franco & Shahrokh, 2015, pp. 23). Finally, for IVCOs, South-South volunteer programs and the development of partnerships with local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) represents “an attempt to be more connected to local realities and reflect[s] a shift in the global development sector” (Lopez Franco &
Recognizing the limited body of literature on South-South volunteerism, it is clear that this type of volunteerism is under-researched and remains undocumented. The lack of recognition for South-South volunteerism is unfortunate as this type of civic service is beneficial for host communities and volunteers. In fact, South-South volunteerism offers different, and notably effective benefits when compared to North to South volunteerism. As studies seem to be lacking in this regard, establishing linkages between South-South volunteerism, agency, subaltern voices, impact and effectiveness proved difficult. The literature primarily focuses on volunteers and their experiences abroad. However, as alternative volunteer programs are on the rise, it will be important for scholars to further explore these volunteer platforms to determine the benefits and limitations of South-South volunteerism, sustainable development initiatives and community impact.

2.6 The Relation between International Volunteering and Capacity Building in Developing Countries

Very few articles explore the correlation between international volunteering and capacity building in developing countries. In fact, as argued by only a relatively small number of authors, international volunteering can contribute to capacity building in host countries: “voluntary action has values, ownership and an institutional basis that reinforce capacity development processes” (Devereux, 2008, pp. 366). For Rebecca Tiessen, Benjamin Lough and Samuel Cheung (2018), capacity building in the Global South can take several forms such as “knowledge, administrative support, and communications or fund development” (Tiessen, Lough & Cheung, 2018, pp. 25-26). “Volunteer labour and expertise” are also considered capacity building by these authors.
Additionally, Benjamin Lough, Amanda Moore McBride, Margaret S. Sherraden and Kathleen O’Hara (2011) argue that international volunteers have the capabilities to “contribute to organizational capacity building” (Lough, McBride, Sherraden & O’Hara, 2011, pp. 135). For these authors, “organizational capacity building” includes providing extra hands as well as technical and professional skills to host organizations and communities (Lough, McBride, Sherraden & O’Hara, 2011). This article explores the facilities and the resources required to host, train and support international volunteers, albeit briefly (Lough, McBride, Sherraden & O’Hara, 2011). However, a more complex explanation of these factors and their relations with “organization capacity building” is largely absent from the current literature. Binns and McLachlan’s (2018) identify two key areas in which international volunteers build capacity in host organizations: “staff training and upskilling” as well as “reciprocal skills exchange” (Binns & McLachlan, 2018, pp. 71-72). Staff training and upskilling allow host communities to gain direct training from volunteers and to identify “more current and technologically-driven ways of operating and communicating […] to have key skills for assisting staff in understanding the basic functions of email, word processing, reporting, and tabulation software” (Binns & McLachlan, 2018, pp. 71). On the other hand, reciprocal skills exchange was defined as: “[r]ecognising and building on local community knowledge and skills, and their relationship with capacity development is very much a part of the volunteering dynamic” (Binns & McLachlan, 2018, pp. 72).

In the same body of literature, authors explored the factors that enable capacity buildings along with the barriers, which preclude impact. For Tiessen and Lough (2018), “duration of volunteer service”, “skill and education-level of volunteers” as well as
“directionality” are some of the factors that impact capacity building (Tiessen & Lough, 2018, pp. 7-9). More specifically, skill transfer can be “more effectively accomplished when [international] volunteers work in partnership with a team of local volunteers”, when “local voluntary action” is strengthened as well as when international volunteers are highly-skilled, “receive technical training before or during their service with the organization”, and “fit the organization’s needs” (Tiessen & Lough, 2018, pp. 14). Finally, “this study suggests that short-term, highly skilled professional volunteers are also deemed very valuable by VPOs [volunteer-host partner organizations] for skills transfer and capacity development” (Tiessen & Lough, 2018, pp. 16). “The relationship-based engagement inherent in international volunteering [is] one of the most important factors contributing to […] successful capacity development initiatives” according to Hawkes (Hawkes, 2014, pp. 66). However, certain factors such as language barriers, cultural ineptitude, unclear expectations as well as poor communication can hinder the ability of volunteers to effectively contribute to capacity building (Hawkes, 2014).

Despite the literature on volunteering and capacity building in developing countries being small, it suggests that capacity building is one of the benefits that international volunteers bring to host organizations and communities. Authors also considered the Global South’s perspectives and outlined strategies and recommendations to improve the impact of international volunteering and capacity building. In fact, all articles contributed to the knowledge gaps associated with international volunteering. Ownership, partnership and exchange of skills were acknowledged in the literature, promoting linkages with the theories of reciprocity and capabilities. Regrettably, the perspectives of host communities or the agency of the South were not explored, keeping
the focus on the characteristics of international volunteers.

2.7 International Volunteering for Development (V4D)

As emphasized in the literature, international volunteering for development has been acknowledged for its important contribution to sustainable development (Devereux & al., 2017). In fact, for Schech (2017), “volunteering for development places the development impacts at the centre of the endeavour, where ‘making a contribution to a process of social change that is of value to the local community/host-organization’ is the main concern” (Schech, 2017, pp. 3). Within the context of the SDGs, volunteerism has been “recognised for the first time for its key cross-cutting role in encouraging dynamic interactions, ownership and actions across the state, civil society and market sectors” (Devereux & al., 2017, pp. 210). International volunteers are seen as “the ‘public face of development’, and international volunteer programs are now firmly entrenched as part of official development assistance not only in many Western countries but also Japan, South Korea and Singapore” (Schech, 2017, pp. 4). For Devereux & al. (2017), “[v]olunteers, and their organizations and communities, can assist in setting the agenda to tackle climate change, reduce inequality, enhance health and wellbeing, improve public policy and political engagement, and build stronger partnerships between people and institutions at global, national and local levels” (Devereux & al., 2017, pp. 214). International volunteering for development can also “promote international understanding and solidarity” (Lewis, 2006, pp. 3). Moreover, development initiatives can rely on international volunteerism as an effective tool that “builds relationships, trust, skills, [and] resilience” (Devereux & al., 2017, pp. 213).

Building on the notion of relationships, international development volunteerism
focuses on “effective and ethical relationships” which enable “volunteers and their local partners to work together towards locally defined development outcomes” (Kothari & al., 2015, pp. 361). It is argued that people centered development as well as “capability-based relationships” lead to “more sustainable outcomes” (Kothari & al., 2015, pp. 366-367; Schech, 2017). As Schech demonstrates, “Australian volunteers in Mongolia and Kenya found that volunteers invested time in building relationships and immersed themselves in the everyday activities of the host-organization in order to be able to offer ‘a meaningful contribution towards capacity development’” (Schech, 2017, pp. 6). Lough, B. & Oppenheim, W. (2017) advance the concept of reciprocity in relationship building. For these authors, international development volunteerism integrates reciprocity to bring into “focus a ‘community-driven development’ approach, which prioritizes the needs of host organizations” (Lough & Oppenheim, 2017, pp. 204). In other words, “[d]evelopment impact that requires reciprocal relationships essentially necessitates the agency and contribution of both volunteers and hosts” (Chen, 2017, pp. 145). Not only does reciprocity “disrupt the helping narrative by recognizing the mutual sharing and giving of experiences, expertise and culture-specific knowledge and capabilities”, it enables international volunteers to contribute skills knowledge and experience to “community-driven development” (Lough & Oppenheim, 2017, pp. 202-204). Finally, the notion of relationship building that can lead to “social capital impact” is also explored (Chen, 2017, pp. 140). “Social capital refers to social networks and relationships that structure access to resources among people, and/or to norms of trust and reciprocity between people that emerge from civic association participation and create benefit” (Chen, 2017, pp. 140). When social capital is heightened in host communities, due to international volunteers
and the establishment of relationships, “access to greater development benefits” occurs for Southern partners (Chen, 2017, pp. 140).

Articles that examine the characteristics of “effective volunteering for development” must also be considered (Burns & Howard, 2015, pp. 2). Burns, D. and Howard, J. (2015) believe that several conditions must be in place to ensure the success of international development volunteerism, including: “the insider–outsider relationship; participatory processes; long-term programming; and a sustained focus on the poorest and most marginalised” (Burns & Howard, 2015, pp. 2). They also call for a reframing of volunteering that focuses on the perspectives and experiences of host organizations, of community volunteers and national volunteers. By listening and learning from the epistemologies of the South, Burns and Howard posit that “it will be possible to develop a better understanding of indigenous informal volunteering and how ‘outsider’ volunteers can support it” (Burns & Howard, 2015, pp. 2). Burns and Howard advance that international volunteers must be well supported, “linked into programming”, motivated, independent, skilful and innovative in order to entertain “development as a collective action problem requiring human-centred and collaborative design of solutions” (Burns & Howard, 2015, pp. 3). The importance of mutual learning is also considered a critical condition of success: “for any volunteering initiative to be successful (short or long term, international or national) it needs to be underpinned by principles and methodologies of mutual learning” (Burns & Howard, 2015, pp. 9). Furthermore, “[h]ost organisations need to recognise their own power and agency, and have to be more demanding of what they want from the relationship” (Burns & Howard, 2015, pp. 10). Some of the challenges surrounding international volunteerism for development were also identified,
including: “keeping momentum of an action research process when working with volunteers who receive little or no financial compensation; working with local volunteers and partners with limited literacy in change processes and participatory ways of working; and navigating between these emergent and experimental ways of working and the sometimes rigid monitoring and evaluation systems, project budgets and time frames of IVCOs” (Burns & Howard, 2015, pp. 3).

Lastly, Burns, D. and Howard, J. (2015) capture the essence of what international volunteerism for development truly entails. For these authors, volunteers are “better able to interact with those groups which are less easy to reach – the poorest and most marginalized” and they “tend to have more time which can be put into relationship building” (Burns & Howard, 2015, pp. 12-13). In fact, international volunteers “are often more autonomous than formally employed NGO staff who operate within tight hierarchies. This may give them more leeway to mobilise networks to challenge injustices” (Burns & Howard, 2015, pp. 13). As such, “building longterm relationships and responding to bottom-up needs over time is the only way in which solutions will be appropriate, will become embedded and will avoid dependency” (Burns & Howard, 2015, pp. 13).

What is interesting in this body of literature is the correlation between sustainable development and relationship building, as enablers of beneficial volunteering. Within this context, international volunteerism for development practices give way to the agency of host communities, subaltern voices and the realization of fundamental partnerships. In fact, this approach argues that sustainable development isn’t possible without host communities, local knowledge or mutual benefit. Showcasing the valuable stories and
experiences of host organizations would have added another key dimension to tenets of relationship building and sustainability presented therein the analysed articles.

2.8 International Volunteering, Agency, Subaltern Voices and Partnerships

International volunteerism as an agent of partnerships, agency and subaltern voices requires consideration. In this context, the work of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum should be considered. These authors advance the human capabilities framework with a focus on people and their capabilities (Bulloch & al., 2018; Nussbaum, 2000; Nussbaum, 2003; Sen, 1993). As demonstrated by Pressman and Summerfield (2002), “the capability approach has been instrumental in shifting the development paradigm from focusing on growth as the main goal of development to focusing on expanding capabilities and thus increasing well being and agency” (Pressman & Summerfield, 2002, pp. 430). This theoretical framework is relevant when reviewing the experiences of the Global South and the partnerships, agency and subaltern voices being fostered through international volunteering. Tiessen, Lough and Cheung (2018) establish this correlation, pointing to the following: “[t]he themes emerging from discursive normative theories on IVS, including commitments to reciprocity, mutuality, global and intercultural competencies, ethics and social justice point to human capabilities and human development theories characterized by the people-centered, participatory, and partnership-oriented strategies of international volunteering for development. Employing the normative frame of justice through a capabilities approach underscores the potential for improved quality of life across the globe and allows for the consideration of other human capabilities and improvements stemming from good health or meaningful or loving relationships that have been linked to international volunteering” (Tiessen, Lough
In terms of agency and subaltern voices, Tiessen, Lough and Cheung stress the fact that international volunteers “enable the voices of the poor to be heard in the corridors of power” (Tiessen, Lough & Cheung, 2018, pp. 11). Similarly, Turner (2015) argues that “volunteering is most effective at strengthening local agency and social capital when functioning as part of a multidisciplinary team where volunteer interventions are interconnected but also linked into other local networks and organisations” (Turner, 2015, pp. 93). When “the agency and the capacity of individuals and organizations” are prioritized, the South can begin to “document their own experiences” in terms of development and international volunteerism (Tiessen, Lough & Cheung, 2018, pp. 14). Therefore, “[t]hrough the presentation of Southern partner voices, we can begin to reduce the ‘othering’ that often occurs when making sweeping summaries of the Southern-based experiences, and thereby challenge ‘the assumption of host communities as an already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location or contradictions, […] which can be applied universally and cross-culturally” (Tiessen, Lough & Cheung, 2018, pp. 15). While focusing on a social work approach to this matter, Lough (2014) affirms that participatory action research can be beneficial for international volunteer programs as well as host communities. “Participatory action research can heighten host communities’ awareness and can help them articulate minimum requirements for hosting volunteers. It can also empower them to assert these demands from international volunteer sending organisations – or, at least, to push for reciprocal and mutually beneficial arrangements” (Lough, 2014, pp. 1348). Social work practice should not be overlooked as it can also
strengthen the voices of the South, generate “greater awareness of community perspectives among donor organisations and governments”, emphasize “the dual benefit” of international volunteerism, showcase “the strengths of the host community” as well as develop, among volunteers, “self-awareness about how power and privilege affect practice with vulnerable populations” (Lough, 2014, pp. 1348-1350).

Building relationships and partnerships with host communities is also key to ensure mutual benefits, agency and the presence of subaltern voices in international volunteerism: “in relation to partnerships, the capabilities approach recognizes asymmetries of power but it seeks to challenge these in a discursive way by challenging assumptions that the poorer or weaker partners are simply in need, incapable and without ideas and assets” (Impey & Overton, 2013, pp. 115; Tiessen, 2018). In fact, “[t]he priority is not on the volunteers’ learning, but on their experience with marginalized others – ‘to be with rather that to do for those with whom they work and live abroad’, thus cultivating relationships across difference” (Tiessen, Lough & Cheung, 2018, pp. 8). Lopez Franco and Shahrokh (2015) support this narrative and advance that it is “evident that formal and informal volunteerism has contributed to development at all levels, and shifts in the balance of power have been made possible where strategies and approaches have promoted principles of ownership, relevance and action for social change. At this point, IVCOs, through meaningful participatory practice, have challenged the assumptions of the outsider and ‘expert’ in development assistance, and are reconstructing and reframing the discourse of development as grounded in people’s everyday realities rather than on headcounts in programmes” (Lopez Franco & Shahrokh, 2015, pp. 25; Turner, 2015). “People-centred paradigm of development” as well as
participatory approaches must therefore be essential aspects of any international volunteer program in order to ensure meaningful contributions to the development of host communities (Lopez Franco & Shahrokh, 2015, pp. 25). Still focusing on the importance of building partnerships for effective volunteerism, Mundkur, Schech and Skelton (2016) dispute that “[t]he discourses of partnership, globalisation and culture intersect in volunteerism, which posits an ideal partnership between southern and northern development practitioners as characterized by mutuality as a core principle, with a shared intention to create a better world, and willingness to leverage difference – in knowledge, perspectives and roles – to work towards this goal” (Mundkur, Schech & Skelton, 2016, pp. 149).

It is refreshing to see authors recognize the perspectives of host communities and organizations. By highlighting the experiences of the developing countries, international volunteer programs have given agency to the Global South by enabling alternative voices to be heard. In other words, through international volunteerism, host communities can outline their own needs, desires, and expectations. With volunteerism creating important partnerships between the North and the South, shared knowledge, skills and expertise further expand to the benefit of all participants.

2.9 Summary

Our review of the literature points to several key themes associated with international volunteerism. The literature captures the origins of international volunteerism while also providing a thorough analysis of the demographics, skills and the level of experience of volunteers. A critical lens to volunteerism is also presented, along
with various perspectives on its effectiveness and impact. Importantly, neocolonialism and neoliberalism are acknowledged and discussed. Finally, the importance of South-South volunteerism, the concepts of skill building, development initiatives, subaltern voices and partnerships are also reviewed and documented.

However, there are gaps in the literature. While several authors explore the benefits of volunteering, very few consider the stories of host communities to assess the benefits and perceived value for Southern partners. Nevertheless, building primarily on the work of Tiessen, Grantham & Lough (2018); Lough & Tiessen (2017); Tiessen & Lough (2018); and Lough & Oppenheim (2017), it is reassuring to know that host country perspectives are being considered. In fact, some quantitative and qualitative researches incorporate the voices of the Global South. Yet, this modest foray is short-changing the full potential of research and insights to be gained from the stories and voices of host-communities. For this reason, the following thesis will not only contribute to the existing literature but will also bring to the forefront the valuable insights of Uganda host-organizations. It is important to consider that, by interviewing host organizations in Kampala, Uganda, new country perspectives on international volunteerism is presented. By showcasing the voices of the interview participants, this study gives host organizations the opportunity to shape the practice of international volunteerism. Finally, by encouraging the agency of volunteer receiving organizations, development programming can be influenced and driven by mutuality, partnerships, respect and equality between development actors.
Theoretical Framework

This thesis draws on theoretical insights from international development scholars, including Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum, Rebecca Tiessen, Benjamin Lough and Samuel Cheung. These authors explored the agency of Global South communities, presenting both experiences and perspectives on the impact of volunteerism. More precisely, theories such as the human capability approach, critical analysis and theories as well as subaltern perspectives will orient this thesis (Sen, 1993; Nussbaum, 2003; Tiessen, Lough & Cheung, 2018).

These theoretical frameworks seek to capture the participation of the Global South in the research and the analysis of international volunteering. The perspectives and the experiences of host communities in Uganda will provide a unique and much needed understanding of the questions being explored. While Northern knowledge and analysis on international volunteering remains relevant, Southern voices must also be heard in order to adequately study, understand and advance an informed perspective. These theoretical frameworks will contribute to the scholarship on international volunteering by ensuring that host organizations are heard and that their needs, desires, expectations and diversities are considered. As discussed by Tiessen, Lough and Cheung (2018), “it is imperative that development theorists acknowledge and accept Southern partners as fully capable of accurately interpreting their complex reality, rather than attempting to represent their perspectives on their behalf” (Tiessen, Lough & Cheung, 2018, pp. 4-5).

By utilizing such an approach, the Global South’s agency and capabilities are not ignored as the human capability approach focuses on who people are and what they can do (Sen, 1993; Nussbaum, 2003). Therefore, the work of Sen (1993) and Nussbaum (2003), when
narrowly interpreted to consider agency and voice, will ensure that our research acknowledges that individuals in the South are capable and able to represent their ideas to a University of Ottawa researcher (Sen, 1993; Nussbaum, 2003). The capabilities approach will also influence and support my research by providing an analytical lens that considers how capabilities can be built through international volunteering (Sen, 1993; Nussbaum, 2003). It is important to highlight that a critical approach must not be “disconnected from the practical realities and the complexity of lived experiences of those who host international volunteers” in order to properly conduct the suggested research (Tiessen, Lough & Cheung, 2018, pp. 4).

Finally, these theoretical frameworks will elucidate whether or not volunteers play a significant role in capacity building for development; if international volunteers must be aware of their impact as well as the host organizations/community challenges and recommendations; if international volunteer programs allow alternative voices from the Global South to be heard; and if international volunteers foster Southern agency through partnerships and cooperation.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

3.1.1 Case Study

The primary research for this thesis was conducted in Kampala, Uganda, during the months of July and August of 2018. This region was selected due to its high volume of international volunteers and for the significant presence of host organizations that focus on various development initiatives. More specifically, the field research entailed 15 interviews with seven different local organizations/NGOs. The host organizations were selected based on the number of international volunteers they’ve hosted over the years, the mandate of the organizations, their availability to participate in the interview process as well as based on the recommendations made by Insight Global Education. Insight Global Education is a volunteer sending organization that provides students the opportunity to engage, learn and question while being locally inclusive in various countries. As Insight Global Education has worked with numerous organizations in Uganda over the years, they were able to provide me with key contacts and information on organizations/NGOs in the area. Furthermore, in order to ensure variation in their experiences with international volunteers, it was important to select organizations that had different goals and types of projects for their volunteers. For instance, Organization 1 primarily focuses on empowering children while Organization 3 aims to build active citizenship and enhance access to justice. An extensive list of all the organizations interviewed, as well as a coding system was implemented for the purpose of analysis (Appendix A).
3.1.2 The Interview Participants

The individuals that completed the interviews were also selected through careful consideration. For every participating organization, the interviewees usually included an individual occupying a senior position as well as staff members or local volunteers who worked with international volunteers on a day-to-day basis. The interview participants included both male and female members of the organization. However, as mentioned by the interviewees themselves, women made up the majority of the employees and the volunteers in the organizations. The staff interviewed in these organizations work on a variety of issues such as protecting the rights of vulnerable children, human rights and access to justice, education and training for community members, women’s empowerment, health as well as domestic violence prevention. More specifically, 4 of the 7 interviewed organizations can be classified as NGOs that primarily focus on issues affecting women and girls. The other 3 organizations focus on issues that effect Ugandan communities in general. Several commonalities also exist between the interviewed organizations. In fact, all organizations involved in this study conduct development programming, which focus on youth, women and girls. They are also often obligated to mitigate the same political, societal and economic challenges. Additionally, all interviewed organizations have hosted volunteers from Insight Global Education as well as volunteers from other sending organizations. Finally, participants seemed positive and receptive towards the proposed questionnaire. In fact, several interviewees were very eager and pleased to share their stories about hosting and working with international volunteers.
3.1.3 Interview Format

The format of the interview was based on a pre-established questionnaire, which included a core set of open-ended and semi-structured questions (Appendix B). The questionnaire ensured consistency between interviews while also allowing participants to openly share their stories, opinions and experiences. It is important to mention that the questions posed to the interviewees are meant to better understand their perceptions of international volunteerism. The utilized questionnaire does not address the broader structural issues and constraints of international volunteerism. The semi-structured interview process also allows the researcher to ask the interviewees to elaborate on key points or to elaborate when needed. More specifically, while there are other ways of evaluating international volunteerism, utilizing an open-ended and semi-structured questionnaire enabled me to better capture the voices of specific individuals in Kampala, Uganda. Oral consent was obtained from all participants at the beginning of each interview. Interviews were primarily conducted at the organization’s local office in Kampala. In total, two interviewees chose to meet at a local coffee shop. This research was part of a larger study for which ethics approval was obtained by Dr. Tiessen. The research conducted by Dr. Tiessen focuses on international volunteers and their contribution to gender equality and women’s empowerment. Distinctively, as this research sets out to examine international volunteerism from the perspectives of Southern host organizations, only questions concerning the contributions, impacts and effects of the volunteers as well as ones discussing the experiences and stories of host organizations were utilized to conduct my analysis. The findings of this thesis are also shaping future
research on international volunteerism, which is currently underway in 7 different countries.

3.1.4 Research Tools

An audio recorder was utilized to record the interviews. The audio recorder facilitated the gathering and the analysis of the information. As for communication, since one of Uganda’s principal languages is English, interpretation was not required. However, it should be noted that, even though all participants spoke English, some questions were misunderstood even with further explanation. Furthermore, initial communication between the participants and myself was conducted via email. Their contact information was obtained through the organization’s website or through other international volunteers and volunteer program coordinators who have partnered with these host organizations.

3.1.5 General Observations

In general, the research process for the field interviews was successful and achieved the intended objectives. My extensive research on international volunteering, as well as my participation in an international volunteer program, proved very beneficial. It allowed me to understand various perspectives on this matter. This also set the ground work to establish a relationship of trust with local organizations in Kampala, and encouraged the interviewed organizations to provide insightful and honest answers.

Moreover, participants were comfortable providing their perspectives, share their experiences and provide several examples illustrating their viewpoints. In fact, several interviewees seemed to believe that the conducted research was of great value, for both
volunteer programs and host organizations. They also appreciated the purpose of the research and the benefits of highlighting the voices of staff members on a program that greatly impacts them. The interview questions also gave participants the opportunity to share stories and information about international volunteers. In fact, participants contributed to this research by providing information that could not otherwise have been captured with survey data. Therefore, through the use of semi-structured interview discussions and story telling, participants were able to provide meaningful and informative insights on the study questions.

Nevertheless, it is important to avoid generalization of the collected data as the region or the area of work may influence how organizations perceive the contribution of international volunteers.

3.2 Methodology

The methodology guiding this study is qualitative in nature, drawing on the theoretical framework outlined above. The methodology relies on content analysis and research data findings (interviews). These methods have led to a better understanding of the value of international volunteers, from the perspective of Ugandan host organizations, and advances insights on how international volunteer programs give agency to the Global South.
3.2.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research methodology that requires the classification or the establishment of a coding system in order to properly analyze the selected documents. This method ensures that key information can be properly captured, analyzed and understood (Dépelteau, 2011). A significant component of our content analysis was established through a review of scientific resources, which explored the benefits and limitation of international volunteerism. As demonstrated in the literature review, there is a diversity of viewpoints as to whether or not international volunteers contribute in a meaningful way to development, and how this is being measured and interpreted. Content analysis was also utilized to better understand how the existing literature, on international volunteerism, frames to topic at hand while considering the environment in which they were written. Therefore, this content analysis leads to the development of a new perspective and anchors future-oriented recommendations. In fact, international volunteerism shouldn’t merely focus on the experiences of the volunteers. Rather, the stories and the voices of the host organizations must also be given prominence in the literature as they provide essential insights. Finally, an analysis of the available literature confirms that gaps exist on the perspectives of host-countries and that their voices remain largely absent from the over-arching narrative about the benefits of international volunteerism. The content analysis confirms the need to expand research, and our contribution as presented in this thesis is both timely and necessary.

1. Content analysis:
   a. Collected, prepared, classified and evaluated the material that was
analyzed:

i. Identified and collected the relevant documents that have been analyzed.

ii. The documents chosen were available with a minimum of efficiency. In this regard, I have taken into account the available resources.

iii. The databases and books available at the University of Ottawa, in English and in French, have been consulted.

iv. The documents selected are scientific articles only and include the time periods in which international volunteering has been most practiced in the field of development.

v. To efficiently review and analyze documents, they have been classified and inventoried.

vi. The authenticity of the documents analyzed has been ensured.

b. Preliminary readings:

i. The documents selected have been read several times.

ii. Notes of the content of the material have been taken.

iii. Relevant passages in the selected documents have been identified.

c. Choice and definition of codes/categories:

i. An exhaustive list of categories has been established.

ii. The categories established meet the following criteria: completeness, clarity, objectivity, relevance, homogeneity, and numbering.
d. Coding process:
   i. The analyzed documents have been categorized.
   ii. These categories have allowed me to quickly find the documents analyzed.

e. Analysis and interpretation of results:
   i. Analyzed and interpreted the results according to my research questions.
   ii. The analysis of my results is qualitative. I have attached importance to the facts that seem revealing and relevant to corroborate or refute my research questions.
   iii. Objectives: corroborate or refute the research questions.

In terms of content analysis, several advantages can be identified and justify the choice of this method. In fact, content analysis is an exhaustive analysis that allows the researcher to conduct comparisons and analyze phenomena in depth while allowing a certain interpretative margin of manoeuvre. Content analysis also obligates the researcher to expand on the existing arguments and perspectives present in the literature. In other words, the researcher can only interpret the information that is collected (Dépelteau, 2011).

3.2.2 Research Data Findings (Interviews)

The use of research data findings (interviews) has ensured the participation of local community members, ones that have hosted international volunteers, in the
discussions surrounding volunteer programs and their contributions. This methodology has not only de-centralized the existing perspectives on international volunteering, but it has also attempted to accurately represent the voices and the experiences of 15 individuals who work for Ugandan host organizations. This methodology has therefore ensured the representation of local community members through the use of the theoretical frameworks identified previously. More precisely, the capabilities approach has allowed this research to focus on the host organizations’ agency, voice, needs, objectives, expectations and diversities (Sen, 1993; Nussbaum, 2003). For this research, it is important to also consider positionality. In fact, while interviewees seemed honest in their answers, they were also aware of my positionality – one of a white privileged Canadian living in Uganda as an international volunteer. Therefore, the gathered responses from host organizations were affected by my own interpretation of the provided information. As this challenge and limitation cannot be overcome, it has been important to reflect on the gathered findings in a more nuanced and critical way. Furthermore, the voices highlighted in this thesis remain mediated by me, and are therefore amplified by a Western perspective. While this remains imperfect, the findings of this thesis ensure that Western volunteers, organizations and scholars do not assume what Southern hosts and communities think in regards to international volunteerism. Finally, as I took part in Insight Global Education’s internship program in Uganda while also conducting my field research, I was able to establish connections as well as credibility with the interviewed organizations. While my volunteer placement allowed me to gain valuable knowledge on international volunteerism, my role as a volunteer may have also contributed to the polite bias among the Ugandan participants.
2. Interviews:

   a. Developed an interview guide centered on the concepts, dimensions and indicators of the research questions:

      i. The interviews were semi-structured and based on open-ended questions. However, a questionnaire ensured some consistency in the questions.

   b. Conducted interviews:

      i. 15 interviews were conducted with organizations that hosted international volunteers in the region of Kampala, Uganda.

      ii. The conducted interviews were semi-structured and based on open-ended questions in order to collect research that will resemble stories.

   c. Responses have been transcribed and indexed for analysis.

   d. Analysis of the participants’ answers has been complete.

   Several advantages have been identified in terms of the use of semi-structured (or informal) interviews. As demonstrated in the George H. Moeller et al.’s article (1980), informal interviews “can provide a cross-check on the validity of data gathered by other methods. Another advantage is that informal interviews avoid some of the sources of bias associated with formal interviews and questionnaires. In addition, the relaxed atmosphere of the informal interview elicited responses that more closely approximate people’s private feelings, as opposed to ‘public’ sentiments that they might report in a questionnaire. Finally, by avoiding a fixed format, the interviewer may gain a greater
appreciation of the complexities of the research problem and the range of variables that affect it” (Moeller et al., 1980, pp. 180).
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The field interviews completed in Kampala, Uganda, revealed four significant themes when juxtaposed to the literature and within the context of the theoretical framework. The principal ones are that volunteerism can be associated with capacity building; and volunteerism can be effective in amplifying subaltern voices as well as with the establishment of cooperation and partnerships. Within this context, the interviews reveal that considerable value should be attributed to the perspectives of host organizations when studying international volunteerism.

When analyzing the findings, a large percentage of the interviewees identified capacity building as a major effect of international volunteering. In fact, interviewees were able to identify numerous instances when international volunteers play a significant role in regards to knowledge and skill transfer.

Challenges and recommendations, identified by host organizations, also prevailed in the conducted field research. These findings offer a significant opportunity for international volunteer programs to receive feedback from key actors, reflect and evaluate the effectiveness of their platforms and help revise programs to better align with identified needs.

Testimonials about international volunteerism were largely positive and acknowledged the benefits to host communities. These benefits include: showcasing and promoting the stories of the Global South as well as enabling subaltern voices.
Finally, host organizations in Kampala believe that international volunteering advances empowerment and cooperation within their organizations and communities. Several interviewees provided tangible examples to support their assertion.

4.1 Capacity Building through International Volunteering

The international volunteers wide-ranging skill sets and experience are well received by host organizations. In fact, many volunteers are known for their IT, writing, documentation, research and analytical skills (9/15 references), while others bring leadership experience, video production, fact-finding and interview expertise (3/15 references). International volunteers assist organizations with report writing, social media platforms by creating websites and updating Instagram and Twitter accounts, publishing documents as well as creating advocacy strategies and campaigns.

Interview 7.1: “Well they are usually students and what I’ve noticed with them is that they are good at writing so they are basically updating our social media, writing reports, documenting success stories which is something I feel they are good at.”

Interview 5.3: “Majorly lots of communication. We actually don’t have much. As I am an advocacy teacher, they usually support our communications department in terms of developing articles and especially updating our websites and updating our social media platforms. They really come with a wealth of experience in terms of using other tools, the online apps. So we really learn a lot from that and they also beef up some of our online communication.”

Interview 2.2: “They keep our social media platforms very active and we usually get more views and more people will comment on how our people are more active. Actually, they’ve even opened us to Twitter and Instagram so now we have followers already.”

Volunteers are also valued for their commitment to development, their passion to work and learn, their monetary support, their expertise on local and international issues as
well as for their professionalism and work ethics (11/15 references).

Interview 4.2: “Their drive. They love to work and they want to learn. At first, I thought it was only to gain experience within the organization but then they showed me so much more because they want to do good work and they want to help people which is a positive impact.”

Interview 6.1: “[Our organization] is not funded, we don’t receive any funding anywhere. We entirely rely on individuals and well-wishers so international volunteers play a big role in the way we operate and actually the growth of the organization. For example, we normally charge most international volunteers who come to us have to pay a fee. Like we have one who is already with us, she’s from Ireland, and if they stay one month here they normally pay about 100US$. So with that participation fee we have, it normally goes to the organization, for the daily running of the organization. So I would say there is a financial benefit of hosting international volunteers.”

At a more operational level, interview participants also emphasize how volunteers contribute to a range of assignments, including grant proposal writing, communication, and teaching at the local level. Volunteers are seen to contribute to the actual work of the hosting organization, alleviating or at least reducing workload issues (11/15 references).

Interview 7.1: “[…] what I like with them is that they have good work ethics, they are very professional when they do their work, they always keep time, they communicate when they have a problem, they do their work, they enquire when they have a problem so they really communicate well.”

Interview 5.2: “We move out with them in the communities and they contribute to speaking out against violence against women and gender differences in different spaces. Like in training, we are there with them to interpret in the local language so we translate for them and they are really able to connect with the issues and share their feelings about those issues.”

Organizations also shared examples where international volunteers used their skills and knowledge to teach Ugandans. More specifically, international volunteers participate in knowledge sharing with men, women, boys and girls. In keeping with the objectives of the host organizations, volunteers often provide information and familiarity
on matters of gender, equality and women’s empowerment. Similarly, the involvement of
volunteers often encouraged greater promotion of gender equality and women’s
empowerment within host organizations and at the community level (15/15 references).

Interview 5.3: “[…] we’ve had some who have supported our work working with the
universities. Some have been in the programs working on sexual harassment in public
universities and they have similar programs. So they’ve really shared their experiences
from their own universities, their own countries to our own programming and we are
adopting so many of those and we are putting them in our concepts on working with
universities and many are really working. So we are excited on how our work is
developing and evolving with their sharing’s and learning’s and of course their support
to have incorporated them into our programming.”

Interview 5.1: “Since this is an organization that focuses on gender equality and an
organization that prevents abuse towards women, girls and children, they usually come
in that angle of gender equality. They come with that extra expertise on promoting
gender equality and also on prevention of violence of women and girls. We’ve also had
some who brought in an angle of HIV/AIDS and violence prevention and how to
respond.”

Interview 6.2: “For the women’s empowerment, they help these ladies, every Wednesday.
They are coming and they teach them different skills so that they are able to do something
on their own. They’ve gotten enough skills here, like hair and tailoring, so after they have
something to do. So at least they have an idea of what they are able to do and make some
money and have a business of their own. So they teach them and make sure that each of
them can do something on their own.”

Interview 4.1: “So we work with a school program, school outreach so we go to schools
and then we train the local boys and girls on their situation and reproductive health for
primary school and then secondary school we deliver our STD [sexually transmitted
diseases] prevention training and usually the international volunteers they have more
ground breaking ideas and they are braver to speak up and say something that is not well
regarded here and they are more able and braver to speak to the teacher or even to the
director on why we need to say the things the way we say them instead of just being shy
and conforming with the cultural norms. Every time we go to school outlets, they
deliver their training and they, just by seeing them, the words they use, just like using the
proper names and saying vagina or saying things like that or promote healthy
relationships, which is a concept that is very weird to women here, so even by saying the
real names we are promoting gender equality.”
Volunteers are also seen to contribute indirectly to women’s economic empowerment at the community level (5/15 references). Women are taught how to participate in commercial activities at the local level and how to sustain themselves. A social entrepreneurship program that helps women develop skills in jewellery making, sewing and hairdressing was highlighted by one of the interviewees. It was noted that once women acquired these skills, they succeed at securing employment, earn a modest wage, pay for their education and contribute to their household income. Another example focused on international volunteers promoting financial literacy for young women and girls. These sessions teach women and girls how to earn money and contribute to society.

Interview 2.1: “Well economic wise, they basically help us with training some of them and bring those skills training, training the youth within the slums especially with girls and children. Like girls and young women train them with different skills like business skills, record keeping […].”

Interview 6.1: “With social entrepreneurship, we are helping them with a skill and in the future be able to earn. And we normally organize a sale here with all the beautiful dresses they have made and the bags and the jewellery and then we sell it as a group. They always come and tell me you know ‘thank you so much manager, I didn’t have skill and now I’ve been employed somewhere and doing this and so and they are paying me this much’. Others have told me that their husbands have bought them a machine to make something small to contribute on the home income. So there’s a big progress.”

Interview 2.1: “A big percentage of the programs and women then are successful. When the people in the community, or the young people, when they see somebody international or they see someone from a different country of course they are going to learn something from what he or she is going to tell them. So they always give them their attention and they check up what they said cause they know that things are different in those developed countries and it has made a difference in some of their lives.”

Interview 2.2: “They have also gone ahead to conduct financial sessions with the young people and the women on how can they earn money and, at the same time, take part in society.”
Several host organizations recall instances when international volunteers contributed to capacity building. In fact, international volunteers are recognized for their ability to support the development of knowledge and skills of local employees and as such, increase the capacity of their host organizations’ programs and projects. In fact, the contribution of international volunteers to capacity building is a prevalent theme. Some interviewees point to the expertise brought forward on the issue of gender equality and women’s empowerment, while others acknowledge the transfer of knowledge on social media platforms, report writing, research, teaching and facilitating community outreach. This leads to capacity building that is sustainable while also driving key outcomes, including: greater promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment within organizations and communities; women acquiring skills and securing employment; and women actively participating in commerce at the local level. With capacity building recognized as key direct contribution to local efforts, it is not surprising to see several organizations in Kampala embrace international volunteerism. International volunteers are seen as valuable actors for Southern hosts, playing a significant role in teaching, transferring skills and building capacity for development.

4.2 Practices for Effective Volunteerism

Interviewed organizations did not identify any adverse outcomes associated with international volunteers nor did they point to a negative impact on their community programs (15/15 references).
Interview 2.2: “Well, at [our organization], we haven’t had any instances where we’ve had […] negatives challenges and negative occurrences. Basically were going all is smooth, we all understand each other, understand what to do and how to do it.”

Interview 5.1: “We haven’t had any big big challenges where volunteers don’t get along with the communities. They always show up to work and even when they don’t show up for a reason, they communicate. The communication is always so superb. And they always come to work and you always feel energized when you’re with an international volunteer and you know your staff will be productive.”

Interview 1.1: “No, not really. We haven’t recorded any. This is the second year that we are hosting international volunteers so we’ve been honoured to have people fitting very well. So we haven’t had any issues.”

While not identified as a negative impact, the majority of the organizations hosting international volunteers acknowledged that international women volunteers are treated differently than local women volunteers (11/15 references). Examples include local men paying considerable attention to international women volunteers, seeing foreign women as beautiful and financially successful. It was noted that local men are very helpful to foreign women, oftentimes seeking relationships with international women. There is also a perception that international women are more intelligent than local women.

Interview 2.2: “Local men treating international volunteers, they think everyone is beautiful, every international volunteer looks good and they think that every international volunteer is a donor and rich and they want to date everyone. Some of them are making passes and some of them actually, one thing that is really really hard is that they make a lot of comments as they are moving around so it’s good that they don’t understand their languages because sometimes it’s really not good but it’s probably because they are excited to see a female that is not like the ones they always see. But it’s also not right. And I think, when it comes to asking for help, I think everyone is willing to help the female international volunteers than the local women. If she’s walking around, people on Boda Bodos will come around and ask her ‘where are you going?, do you need help?’ and for me, as a local woman, people will look at me and be like ‘ah, she will find her way, she’ll be ok, she’ll be alright’. So it’s very easy for them to get help but I think they
also need to be careful because someone may look like they want to help but they actually want to abuse.”

Interview 5.1: “Yes. Male colleagues take them as people that know a lot so just that makes them act differently. Some of them trust them. There is a lot of respect from male colleagues. There’s a lot of equal treatment from male staff. However, in some instances, some male staff have taken the fact that they don’t know much about this culture for granted.”

Interview 5.2: “Of course there is a difference. In office we are all the same. Maybe people will want to help the person because they know they don’t know their way about and they’re being nice. And in the community, people shift because of her colour. Some of them call them Mzungu and all that but luckily enough, people here are welcoming towards the volunteers. And in the communities where we are working, because it’s an advanced setting, they see more that side. But here it’s about her hair and they want to touch her and they want to say hi and maybe she’ll speak the local language and that will make everyone happy.”

Some challenges have been identified by host organizations, which require attention and mitigation measures to ensure efficient practices and to create effective change. These challenges include managing the community’s expectations with respect to volunteers, ensuring the security and safety of volunteers, and mitigating language barriers to promote collaboration and effective knowledge sharing.

Managing community expectations is a challenge for some host organizations (2/15 references). When local communities see a Mzungu (White individual) working/volunteering at a local organization, they automatically assume that these individuals are Western donors. Consequently, local communities believe that the organizations are receiving large sums of money. If organizations don’t communicate the true purpose of international volunteer programs, monetary donations are expected by members of the community.
Interview 6.1: “Sometimes, in the communities we normally go to, if they see you with so many Mzungus, they think the organization is receiving millions and millions from them when it’s actually not the case. So in return, if you don’t give the community what they really want in terms of money, in terms of foreseeing the projects that they want, there is a way they discard the organization.”

Interview 5.3: “[…] for community members, there is a lot of expectations from seeing an international student, there is a lot of monetary expectations. They assume these are donors, […] they work with big sums of money and if you go into the community and you don’t address that expectation, they will be asking for money and one of our policy is to ensure that they never have that interaction because we don’t want that kind of perception.”

As most community members speak in their local dialect, host organizations note that international volunteers frequently face language barriers, especially when working directly with community based agencies (6/15 references). Hosting organizations generally don’t provide interpreters and are most often unavailable to assist with interpretation or integration within a community setting. Unfortunately, these situations can discourage volunteers from participating in community events and outreach, and preclude their integration within the fabric of the community or the country in which they work. The language barriers can also cause information to be distorted between community members and international volunteers causing confusion on all types of matters.

Interview 5.1: “Some of the challenges that we face are, some are in the communities. The communities speak the local language, which the international volunteers do not know. Sometimes we are limited. For example: if I go to a training and the people I’m training are speaking in Luganda and we’re only one person or two staff, we feel like the volunteer really wants to know what we are doing but then we don’t have the capacity to translate for them. It’s a challenge on them and on us because they want to learn but sometimes during trainings we cannot fully translate for them so that’s really been a challenge that could hold some volunteers back in participating in activities cause they’ll feel like they won’t benefit from it because they don’t understand so a few, not all, but a few have pulled away from some activities.”
Interview 4.2: “I don’t think I have a problem with them here. I think the challenges that we face together is maybe the language barrier.”

Interview 1.2: “Nothing much other than the accent, especially in the communities cause the accent is hard for them when giving sessions. So it’s a challenge but we overcome it by working alongside the international volunteers in the communities to help them communicate. Not everyone knows English.”

Finally, organizations are often concerned with the international volunteers’ safety (4/15 references). As foreigners, volunteers attract a lot of attention from the locals and can be taken advantage off. Host organizations always extend extra efforts to ensure volunteers are residing in safe neighbourhoods, are using proper transportation and are made aware of safety concerns and precautions.

Interview 5.3: “There was an incident. She was not working with us [but] she was a German student and a Boda Boda cyclist reportedly raped her and once it was in court, his excuse was that he has always wanted to sleep with a white women so instead of taking her to her destination, he took her off [his bike] and raped her. So usually, we do a lot of security briefs with the staff and we advise them to use transportation means that have apps so that we can trace some of these perpetrators and make sure that they are really safe.”

Interview 2.2: “They were with some of the beneficiaries and they were moving around at night and sadly, they got in contact with thugs and they hit them badly. Some had broken their bones here and fingers broken and they had to fly back. But since then, when volunteers come to the communities, we always advise them to use safe travels like Uber and Safe Bodas. We also talk to them about walking around at night. So when they come, we talk to them, about a day or two, about the situation in Uganda and [how] they can keep safe, how best to travel and what is safe.”

Similarly, sexual harassment seems to be the primary safety concern discussed by the interviewed host organizations in Uganda (5/15 references). As explained by the local staff members of several organizations, Ugandan men tend to be very attracted to international women and can take advantage of their vulnerability as they find themselves
in a foreign country. Sexual harassment was also a concern expressed by local staff as they often seemed to develop a protective and parental type relationship with their volunteers. In fact, the close connections and friendships that emerge between host organizations, communities and volunteers differ from other relationships and should be further explored.

Interview 3.2: “I think international volunteers are more vulnerable to harassment, and perhaps we are very hospitable people [...] but yes, I’ve seen things happen to international volunteers that wouldn't happen to local people. Issues of equality and unfair treatment can arise from this different treatment. I also think that this makes international volunteers question the way people view them.”

Interview 6.1: “[...] locally here, people don’t really understand the concept of sexual harassment I would say. For example, holding someone, my work mates, just holding them, here it might be normal but to you guys it may be 'why is he holding me?'. Even just staring. Normally Africans will just stare at you and it may be normal to us but to you guys it may be sexual harassment. So those kinds of, so they might bring someone to wrongly perceive you.”

Interview 5.1: “Of course we’ve had issues of sexual harassment not only on the local volunteers but also on international volunteers because they don’t know the place, they don’t know Uganda, they don’t know the cultures of this place. So some of them have gone ahead and you know taken them for granted and they become victims of sexual harassment. But in [our organization], the volunteers are prepared and they know and same for the male staff with the codes of conduct. So when people have acted contrarily, management has a lot acted.”

In terms of cited recommendations, several organizations were able to offer useful advice in regards to international volunteering and more specifically, in regards to gender equality and women’s empowerment activities. For one, organizations would like international volunteers to extend their stay in order to ensure meaningful impact. Organizations who host volunteers for a period of less than one month found the impact to be quite modest (4/15 references). In fact, while some organizations believe that significant impact can only be achieved when volunteers work for more than one month,
others identify 1 year as the appropriate time frame. Regrettably, several volunteers believe that they can create change within a two-week timeframe or leave before the completion of their assignment.

Interview 7.1: “I think the only challenge is that they usually stay here for a very short time. So we said that maybe the shortest time was 3 weeks, so I think most people didn’t really feel his presence. When he came, the first week was in office, then he went out in the field for like one and half weeks then before you know it, he was leaving. So sometimes we don’t really feel their impact […]”

Interview 3.3: “The only challenge is the period that they stay is quite short. Sometimes they stay so long that they seep into deeper issues. Sometimes they leave at a time when we are conducting a study or the report is just out or they need to do advocacy for the report but they are leaving. So that, to me, is the adverse challenge with international volunteers. But to me, they all have made great contributions to human rights and democracy here in Uganda.”

Interview 5.3: “The only challenge that I have is that the time is really short. By the time we feel like this person is skilled and we need her, she’s actually saying bye. So that’s a hard time and we really want them to stay a little longer probably. I don’t know if that’s possible [because] I know they also have school programs that they work with. Because it’s really beneficial for them to start something and see it through. So I wish it could be longer or that they could actually return and see over the course of a year, see how their projects are growing and then go back and work at the college or something.”

Resiliency and tenacity were recurring themes in the interviews. Host organizations call for international volunteers to be patient, flexible, resilient and passionate when it comes to working on gender equality (8/15 references).

Interview 5.1: “Tell them not to tire on, tell them not to get tired of supporting gender equality and development because these are issues that you move a step ahead and then you move a step behind. So not to be discouraged by the issues that keep coming up that may make us feel like we’ve not done much about gender equality, but for them to look at what have we done. Also, for them to know that the things that challenge gender equality are there because we are challenging the gender inequality. So for them not to get discouraged by such issues, but move forward.”

Interview 4.1: “Not to be afraid of breaking some rules or, of course we don’t want to make anyone uncomfortable and be disrespectful, but there’s always some room for you
to speak up for what you believe is right and also, this applies to every international volunteer, be patient.”

Interview 5.3: “This is a long journey. Sometimes you feel like you’ve worked miles for one step, like you’re not going anywhere. But the only thing that keeps us going is celebrating the little that we do achieve and with a small team like this, we do celebrate that because it goes a long way impacting and feel like you’re achieving. But we still need more voices, more hands and as much help as we can in Uganda. It’s really a journey that feels long but we see where we are going.”

Further suggestions included: ensuring that international volunteers travel with purpose (1/15 references); not expecting immediate change within communities when it comes to sensitive subjects (1/15 references); expecting community members to reject your values and ideas at first (3/15 references); always remaining respectful of the local communities (2/15 references); international volunteers must integrate within the culture (1/15 references); and always addressing gender issues by promoting awareness and keeping the issue at the forefront (1/15 references).

Interview 6.1: “When travelling to countries like [those in] Africa, let’s have a purpose because sometimes the cultural diversities, within the countries we are travelling from, will derail us from the truth. So let’s have a purpose and let’s be focused cause, if you have a purpose, we can work and change things and if we have a purpose, we can be a role model. So let’s work with purpose.”

Interview 1.1: “[…] we respect each other so we respect their attitudes and their culture, so we respect their attitudes and they respect our attitudes. Though we share in terms of stories, recently one of them was telling us about the way things are done in her country. We also told her how we do things. So basically, I was saying that we respect each other. Though we can share and they know that they can share.”

Interview 3.2: “I think that for most international volunteers who come to work with us, I can see in their faces when people say certain things and I recognize that and where people are coming from. So my advice would be that, first of all that, you’ll find practices of inequality not only in institutions, but also on the road in Kampala or in Uganda wherever you go. And so yes, it is progress, but it may be a long process for us to recognize that women are equal to men. So when you come to Uganda, you shouldn’t lower your expectations but you should expect certain things.”

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Host organizations were also asked if international volunteers were well prepared and able to accomplish their assignments when arriving at host organizations. While all believed that their volunteers were well prepared (15/15 references), recommendations about cultural integration, advance knowledge and openness are key.

Interview 3.3: “I think it's important to be ready for the assignments. It's important to have basic knowledge, to have an open mind and to be able to fit in the context which is sometimes very difficult as an international volunteer to know the exact environment in which you're going to work in. So you need to be open and be able to adapt easily.”

Interview 4.1: “Every internship should be giving some training, or maybe in country training or maybe in their universities or their own country on what to expect when you arrive in the country, especially in Africa.”

Interview 5.2: “Of course it’s good to come well versed on the culture norms and whatever, but I think many of them educate themselves on how to live here. If they are informed beforehand that you dress a certain way in the communities for community engagements, for staff they don’t mind, but they’ve just entered into communities and they need to understand the process of change because if they dress like that, they won’t be taken seriously.”

In order to contribute meaningfully, international volunteer programs must consider the perspectives and recommendations identified by host organizations/communities. In fact, when the experiences of the host organizations/communities are prioritized, practices for effective volunteerism can be properly developed. While the interviewees did not identify significant issues, they did point to opportunities to deepen the experience and consequently, the impact. Managing community expectations, dealing with the communication barriers as well as ensuring volunteers’ safety were common areas of focus for host organizations. For their part, international volunteers who are patient, flexible, resilient and passionate, and engage in volunteerism with a purpose, are well positioned to drive impact. Interviewees also
emphasized the importance of respecting host communities, and urged volunteers to consider longer assignments to deepen their impact.

### 4.3 Giving Prominence to their Voices and Experiences

Host organizations have demonstrated that international volunteers promote gender equality and women’s empowerment by documenting women’s and girl’s stories and by promoting awareness of women’s rights (7/15 references). When international volunteers give prominence to subaltern voices as well as document host organizations’ stories, agency is generated; organizations are more widely recognized; effective change is achieved; and new research perspectives are showcased.

**Interview 1.1:** “[…] they've come up with several documents and brochures that speak for different things. Like last year, we had sanitation and hygiene that was a program that was designed by international volunteers. They came up with around two areas which involves empowerment though it was focusing on the youth who are the main focus this time.”

**Interview 5.2:** “[…] several interns have helped us document stories and this has helped us add a layer to the work that we are doing because then people see that this is what is coming out of the work that we are doing and this is how people’s lives have really really changed. The other one was one who helped us think about our biography, like: where we are coming from?; what work we are doing?; and what are we supporting in our work?. So it was an interview that she came up with, a write up that we used on our website to talk about all the staff and what they are good at, what makes them happy, something that we had never thought about. It was like self finding, it really helps us find out who we are and why we are here.”

**Interview 2.2:** “One thing that is outstanding is the technology. They have a very unique software, they have a unique knowledge on how to use the internet, they have supported us to create websites, doing different types of social media and handles and publishing ourselves and everything online. Most of them at [our organization] have done social media and they are sharing us to different people.”
Alongside their host organizations, volunteers promote and highlight women’s leadership, and create training modules to educate and empower girls in the communities. Volunteers also produced reports that compared Uganda’s laws and practices with other countries, and drafted and reviewed policies that directly affect women and girls. Some host organizations have noted how empowerment is generated through healthy debating of issues between international volunteers and host organizations’ staff (5/15 references). Sharing and comparing experiences leads to a healthy exploration of issues, which leads to progress, solutions, and empowerment. Uganda’s sexual harassment bill is a good example of this approach.

Interview 2.2: “One time, we were sharing relationships with international volunteers from the Netherlands and she was saying that it’s ok to go on a date and each person pays their bill and pay for what they are getting. So during this conversation it brings up a lot of questions but it’s because of culture and they are learning something new. So the girls were saying that here, if you make me pay for my own meal, I will never see you again and that’s because they have never seen it happen [otherwise]. They have always thought that we are women and we are not supposed to pay the bill. But it has never resulted into conflict at home, it’s just information on what is correct and no.”

Interview 6.1: “There are always arguments but they are healthy. We argue to fix situations. They normally happen like with the youth camps […]. So there are always those types of arguments but otherwise they are healthy.”

Interview 3.2: “Yes. Normally there are cultural issues within our society in terms of gender equality. I’ve seen international volunteers come up to speak about issues that people don’t seem to consider of such importance. Often, this isn’t taken very well and I don’t think it’s caused any issues within the organization. For me, I value their opinions.”

Interview 5.3: “We’ve had one who, when we were reviewing the sexual harassment bill, we had reviewed all kinds like stalking and in one meeting she was actually able to present that and talk about her experience in the United States which I found really useful at that time in terms of policy views. And since then, one of her recommendations has been adopted as part of that bill before parliament. So it’s still a work in progress. Those who were looking at the law were able to read more about it and see actually that [there are] talks about sexual harassment in Uganda, but we need to include new crimes like stalking and cyber crimes.”
Several organizations were able to provide examples illustrating how the presence of international volunteers advanced women’s status and led to healthier gender dynamics, either in their organizations or in the community (15/15 references). These examples included giving Ugandan women and girls a voice locally and internationally; discussing gender-based violence and gender equality; breaking gender norms (men taking part in the cooking of meals); and raising awareness about the issue of sexual aggression towards women in the agricultural sector of Uganda.

Interview 5.1: “So in the communities where we work with, we work with groups of men and women in the local settings and we’ve had a volunteer who went as far as Eastern Uganda and in this region violence against women and girls is really an epic problem because sugar fields are growing and girls are forced to grow sugar cane and the men just sit back and wait for the money to come from the sugar canes. So there’s a lot of rape, there’s a lot of defilement and so we started programming there on prevention of violence against women and girls. The program is done with the Minister of Gender. So this volunteer was touched, she felt she had to go back and think of what else could be done apart from working with community activists, so what else can be done to create justice for the girls who are really harassed in those areas. So she went back and she decided to write a paper and after three years she came back with a paper and research and she’s been able to create a program […] We see that program grow and it’s because of her presence, being able to give an extra eye and see ok, if we are to prevent violence against women and girls, how can we move and reach these girls and people think these are very hard places to reach. Because the sugar cane plantations are owned by Indians who have grown in the industry and who the government feels they bring in a lot of income in the country, a lot of investment and some of it has been untouchable. But with her skills on gender and labour, she was able to see that there is such a problem in that area especially in the areas of plantation.”

Interview 2.2: “[…] here, in our communities, women are supposed to cook, women are supposed to do this and that and when we had male volunteers here and they were staying together with the girls and it was so interesting to see them cook while the ladies are relaxing and for us, here, it’s supposed to be like even if you’re tired, if you’re a women, you are supposed to be in the kitchen to cook while the men relaxes. [This] even goes back to the roles that they do while growing up. Here, it goes back to who contributes financially to the family cause usually here, is about men. You go to work and bring the money home as a women, your money is your money, but for the man, it’s your money both of you and they see the volunteers come here and share their stories on how no, it’s not the men who are supposed to provide everything, women can also work and take care of the children and a home. So it’s kinda different but it also opens the eyes to
the young people and the women in the communities about the roles they have based on their gender. So this has a very positive impact.”

Interview 4.1: “So besides all the trainings that we do, we also give out reusable pads to girls in need in more rural areas and they also deliver training on how to use the reusable pads, how to take care of it, how to maintain your health when you’re on your period and using the reusable pads and usually, every quarter, we go back to the same community and ask the girls ‘did it work out well for you?; how did you feel about it?; did you manage to stay in school longer using this pad?’ and while the answer is yes, when we look at our evaluations and the answer is definitely yes. Using this pad that the international volunteer thought them to use helped them to stay in school for the whole month or maybe they only missed one day which is a good improvement considering that they usually miss school every month because they don’t have the resources.”

Interview 5.3: “[...] one of our values is creativity so apart from the work assignments we usually assign, like the role the international volunteer will be doing, we really love it when then come with their own ideas and share and see where we can improve in our own programming because it’s really helpful.”

Interview 5.3: “This year, we had an intern do a lot of research on abortion and the policies around abortion and we had never really done an analysis on it. She came with it as a research for her university so once she came here, apart from the roles we gave her, she let us know that she would be doing this study and that would have required us to hire a consultant to do the [same] study. So she has yet to share her report with the interviews and the research that she has done, but we hope that her report will really help us in terms of a policy and programming on issues of abortion in Uganda. You know, we have a lot of people working on liberalizing the sector because Uganda didn’t ratify with abortion and we want to make it safe for women and girls so that they can access safe abortion care. So I’m excited to see her report, to see what that area looks like from someone outside looking in. She has looked at the documentation. She will come from experience, in her country where probably it’s more liberalized, I hope. With her experience, she will be able to recommend usable recommendations that we can use to advocate for us in this country. So we are already seeing the impact in smaller bits and pieces as much as she didn’t stay long. Yes, we are learning. We call ourselves a learning organization so any idea is very welcomed.”

Interviewees also noted that women and girls are empowered when they engage in conversations with international volunteers about cultural differences, gender roles in volunteers’ home country and the treatment of women in general (9/15 references). These
first-person insights fuel curiosity, which can trigger more conversations and personal reflections.

Interview 2.2: “Most of the volunteers, [...] before they go, we ask them to share their cultural backgrounds like: what happens in your culture?; how are women treated?; what are some of the gender roles that women are supposed to respect in their country? And then we have people here share what is happening in their communities. So when they share about ideas, they both learn from each other. The volunteers learn from the young girls here and they learn a lot from the volunteers.”

Interview 5.3: “Empowering in terms of knowledge because they freely interact with everyone and share their personal stories of their own experiences in life. And the daily interactions with the staff and other women, they can share that power of influence. So when they share their experiences, women are able to share back and based on those sharings interpersonally, they get advice or share their kind of experiences and share and learn from each other and probably impacted one’s life. So by the time they leave, people are like ‘hey, I’ve learned something’. So it’s kind of a mutual benefit arrangement. So a lot of knowledge sharing, which empowers women.”

Interview 5.2: “[...] many community members think that violence happens to the poor, that it only happens to a certain group of people. But seeing international volunteers help them understand that violence is everywhere and that regardless of your social status, education, colour, violence can happen to you. So they know it’s not just about us, but that it’s a global problem that we need to address. So they’ve empowered them.”

When examining the participants’ responses, we see how the agency of host organizations/communities can be captured through new research approaches that privilege the perspectives of the partner country staff. International volunteers enable alternative voices to be heard when prominence is given to the stories of the Global South. Through conversations, local women and girls are empowered to explore new gender roles and to challenge the treatment of women. Interviewees acknowledge that conversations often lead to a healthy exploration of issues, which can trigger progress.
Lastly, international volunteers can promote gender equality and women’s empowerment by documenting women’s and girls’ experiences and stories. As international volunteers are involved in programming, community outreach and advocacy, the voices and the experiences of local actors are promoted along with gender equality and women’s empowerment.

4.4 Fostering Cooperation and Partnerships

Organizations point to several examples of positive impact derived from the involvement of international volunteers. This includes promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment within their respective organizations or at the community level. Sharing knowledge and expertise, between international volunteers and local staff, was also observed (15/15 references). For example, international volunteers are seen as strong agents who encourage girls to participate in sports and team activities. This builds confidence, and showcases the contribution of women and girls in all facets of community life.

Interview 6.1: “Uganda has strong religious beliefs especially when it comes to Muslims and Catholics. I remember it was 2014 and one of the girls she was an Olympic torch holder and she came to Uganda and she requested we do sports camps in schools and lucky enough we were able to start a camp in one of the Muslim schools around. But in the school you have to dress below the knee and she comes she’s putting on shorts in the Muslim school and we go at the gate and they refused because they said she was dressed inappropriately. But after discussing with the school management and talking about cultural diversity and the differences in religious beliefs, they understood where she was coming from and we did the camp. There we so many examples of what the girls learned from this international volunteer. They learned that you should be able to dress how you want no matter what the religion says. We can’t be bound by concepts that were designed a million years back. They also learned that you can learn freely and play football as a
woman without even men disrespecting you. So there are always strong beliefs here but if you break that barrier, we can go miles.”

Interview 5.1: “Some people think that when international volunteers come to an organization, they are trying to bring their own issues from their countries, they are trying to separate the cultures from the countries they come from but I don’t think I’ve seen that. I feel that the communities where we work, especially the community activists that we work with are empowered when they see a community volunteer especially when they work with them and talk with them to make a change. I’ll give you an example. We do mentor community activists, groups of men and women that work in the community to influence change and reduce violence against women and girls, but along the way as we go to mentor them with some of the international volunteers, some of them have been really flexible to interact with them because some of these community activists can speak English. They develop a personal relationship. We’ve seen international volunteers mentor them on how they can maybe conduct activities in the communities. They feel that if the international support and background is there, we can create change and impact in the communities.”

Interview 2.2: “Just having contact with an international volunteer is very inspiring in the eyes of women cause they do not see whites very often and someone was like ‘when I work with an international volunteer it gives me esteem and hope because if I was back there and now I’m working with someone international or someone from Canada or wherever, then I’m probably on the right track and I can move forward’. And one thing I see is that the young people used to think that everyone outside of Uganda is a rich person so when these people come and say ‘I don’t have a lot of money but this is what I do’ and lots of them have been waitresses before and share their stories. So it makes the young people feel like yes they can be a waitress and earn a living. It makes them stop looking at some jobs as failures and they know that a young person like them outside of Uganda has done it before and earned money. There are many of them who get excited from just touching their hair and say that if they can do this persons hair, they can do anybody’s hair. So it’s very important. Even a handshake or a hug means a lot to these young people so any interaction is valued.”

On a more personal level, host organizations have noted that volunteers support and teach women and girls (15/15 references) about career possibilities, sexual reproductive health, personal hygiene and the use of reusable pads. This empowers women and girls with added knowledge and skills, which fosters autonomy, independence and agency.
Interview 5.1: “Within the organization, there’s been a lot of empowerment. For example, I’m way older than [most international volunteers], but there’s a lot I’ve learned from [them] in terms of treating people equally, how to treat people and ensuring us to do our work better, learn from them different skills like documentation, skills in developing documents, analytical skills, they really have great skills in analyzing documents and that’s one skill that I think most Africans struggle with cause the culture of reading is really poor and for international volunteers the reading culture is so great. So that’s what we’ve learned, how do you bring onboard equality when most people can’t read and understand? So we’ve really learned from them and we don’t take it for granted to have them around.”

Interview 2.2: “We had a volunteer from Germany and she had very very good skills in hairdressing and makeup and she took it upon herself to train young people on how to do makeup. And now we have some of them who are makeup artists in the community and that’s how they find their income. So because someone came from Germany and was inspiring them and how to do work with the material that you have so you keep moving your bag and your makeup and then she was telling them you can charge 1000USh$ so that you can get more materials so I think that was a very good thing.”

Interview 4.1: “We did this training once to this community of local women here in Kampala. And the training was about reproductive and sexual health but the different thing about this session, we usually do full outreaches, but this time we targeted a group of women between 16 and 30 and it was great. We were able to give out condoms free for them, and it was great to see how after the training, the women were asking questions and approaching the international volunteers and asking specifically how the condom works and it was great.”

For some interviewees, the volunteers’ attitudes and values did affect how they saw gender roles in their communities (5/15 references). However, interviewees did not express concern with these cultural differences, and in fact, believed it provided an opportunity to present other family models to be considered. Based on these cultural differences, conversations were initiated on gender norms in Uganda, which opened up new opportunities and models for women and families to consider.

Interview 3.2: “You’re often reminded about things that you would normally ignore. For example, when designing a program, we address and look at issues of gender equality, ensuring equal representation.”
Interview 4.1: “Yes, obviously they have very strong values and they are usually very passionate about their opinions and their values and you can see that based on how they teach and deliver the training in the community. To me, I find this positive as long as we are not being very intrusive with the culture. So if some teachers or adults in the community that really really disagree with what we are saying, we’re going to try to alter our speech but I think it’s positive overall.”

Interview 2.2: “They train the boys and the girls so that cooking and cleaning is supposed to be done by women and men are not supposed to be seen doing that. But when they [international volunteers] come here they are so free and the boys cook and they don’t want it to be like only the women cooks and the man just relaxes no, it’s supposed to be a supportive role and actually, when they are having sessions, the volunteers share their stories on who can do what.”

Lastly, all organizations noted the commitment of international volunteers to work side-by-side with female workers and their communities in a joint effort to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment (15/15 references).

Interview 4.1: “[...] they usually get along really really well and it’s really lovely to see how they all work together and develop the programs together and see how it becomes a success at the end.”

Interview 6.2: “They have worked with them on the hair dressing project and the tailoring project. And there’s a good relationship between local women staff/volunteers and international volunteers.”

Interview 5.2: “To me, volunteers coming out in the communities they are already working with the community and the volunteers work with community activists, the people that spearhead the violence prevention programs in their communities, so we train them, empower them and give them teaching skills for the communities. So volunteers are usually in the presence of those volunteers, they are interacting and developing new skills and sometimes we go out with them to community activities where the volunteers in the community are engaging with the community. They work with the local women and men within the organization and in the community to give support.”

The agency of host organizations can be emphasized through international volunteerism as international volunteer programs foster cooperation and partnership
within the Global South. In fact, all interviewed organizations provided examples of women in their organizations and in the local communities being empowered by the presence of international volunteers. Furthermore, all organizations noted the commitment of international volunteers to work side-by-side with female workers in their communities, in a joint effort to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment. While the international volunteers develop strong relationships with local staff and local communities members in Kampala, the agency of host organizations are strengthened.
CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS

The following section utilizes the human capability approach, critical analysis, subaltern perspectives as well as the literature review to analyze the findings outlined in chapter 4 (Sen, 1993; Nussbaum, 2003; Tiessen, Lough & Cheung, 2018). More specifically, data collected through the interview process, and the identification of the benefits and limitation of international volunteerism from the perspectives of host organizations is established. Interview findings also reveal new research approaches that privilege the agency and the perspectives of the host organizations.

Host organizations believe that volunteers play a significant role in transferring skills, mutual learning and cross-cultural understanding, resulting in improved capacity building. Practices for effective volunteering emphasize that host organizations are more than capable of identifying the impact of international volunteerism, and to make recommendations. The subaltern lens disputes that international volunteers give prominence to the voices and experiences of Southern hosts. Finally, the capability approach illustrates how volunteers foster cooperation and partnerships with others, while encouraging the agency and the capabilities of Southern hosts.

While international volunteers are seen as promoting the voices and the experiences of Southern hosts, the following chapter showcases the agency of the communities in Uganda in articulating their own stories from their own perspectives. In fact, the stories shared by host organizations and communities have proven to be indispensable to the field of international volunteerism. Volunteer receiving organizations/communities can shape the practice of volunteerism as they encourage
equitable and beneficial relationships as well as focus on community driven capacity and impact.

5.1 Capacity Building through International Volunteering

Capacity building, also known as capacity development, is described as “a way of providing technical co-operation while encouraging local ownership. [It also] enables learning from, and building on, local knowledge and strengths by means of external knowledge and support, thus contributing to better reciprocal change and development” (Devereux, 2008, pp. 357). In contrast to technical assistance, it has been argued that international volunteerism has “[s]ome of the key characteristics [that] reinforce and complement capacity development” (Devereux, 2008, pp. 366). These characteristics can include: mutual learning, people-centered development as well as a focus on relationships, the needs of the communities and equality (Devereux, 2008). It is worth noting that international volunteers have been known to “[…] highlight the importance of local accountability, [and] respect […] local values and knowledge, [while recognizing] the appropriate pace and character of interventions, and the need to remain engaged despite difficult conditions – all fundamentals of capacity development” (Devereux, 2008, pp. 368). Therefore, when asked to identify the positive impacts of international volunteerism in development programming, host organizations identify capacity building and all that it entails. In other words, international volunteers are seen as valuable actors for Southern hosts as they play a significant role when it comes to capacity development.
Field research conducted in Uganda corroborates this, with host organizations stating that international volunteers significantly contribute to capacity development within their respective organizations. More specifically, international volunteerism is found to positively contribute to the transfer of knowledge and skills between international volunteers, local staff and community members; it fulfills resource gaps; and encourages intercultural understandings as well as facilitated community development.

Interview participants called out the benefits of the transfer of knowledge and skills which occurs when international volunteers share their IT, writing, documentation, research and analytical expertise with local staff members. As a result, international volunteers support local employees with report writing, creating and/or updating the organizations’ social media platforms as well as with publishing documents. Host organizations in Kampala also valued the international volunteers’ work ethics, passion to work and learn, and their knowledge of local and international issues. Consequently, as stated by the interviewed host organizations, local employees can be motivated, more apt to learning and receiving valuable support in creating advocacy strategies, campaigns and development programs. Findings from host organizations interviews align with the perspectives of several authors who have reviewed the issue. While focusing on the perspectives of host organizations, Denis Nyirenda’s (2017) argues that international volunteers in Malawi were able to develop “business plans, strategic plans, monitoring and evaluation tools, and online resources” (Nyirenda, 2017, pp. 88). They also provided organizations with key learnings and training sessions on “management […], leadership development, proposal and grant writing, skills for home-based care giving, teaching, and
organizing local awareness campaigns for HIV/AIDS among other issues” (Nyirenda, 2017, pp. 90). For certain Guatemalan organizations, international volunteers contribute to capacity building in “the form of technical knowledge, administrative support, [and] communication or fund development” (Ortiz Loaiza, 2017, pp. 26). Thus, when considering the rich experiences of host organizations, it is evident that international volunteers impact capacity development. In Southern countries, international volunteers have “made direct contributions to the level of human capital in the organizations”; they have increased the effectiveness and sustainability of community programs; and they have helped organizations achieved their objectives “that otherwise could not be accomplished by these local organizations alone” (Ortiz Loaiza, 2017, pp. 25; Baxter, 2017; Lough & al., 2011).

Interview participants opined that by providing additional resources to their organizations, international volunteers contributed directly to capacity building. When international volunteers take on a range of assignments, they alleviate and reduce workload issues, from which several organizations suffer. As noted in the interview findings and in the literature, international volunteers also provide “physical resources to the organization[s], such as money or supplies” (Lough & al., 2011, pp. 127). As a result, international volunteers contribute to the overall resources of their host organizations, and contribute to the development of its capacity. In a similar context, Jamaican organizations have stated how reliant they are on international volunteers as they are often “under-resourced” (Baxter, 2017, pp. 64). “This sentiment is [also] echoed by individuals working in Jamaica’s education sector, where a limited supply of teachers poses a significant burden” (Baxter, 2017, pp. 65). International volunteers’ “extra hands” and
material supplies “are needed to help build organizational and institutional capacity and improve service delivery”, (Baxter, 2017, pp. 65). Not only do organizations benefit when international volunteers “bridge the resource gap”, and thus build capacity, but so do local communities (Ortiz Loaiza, 2017, pp. 23).

Host organizations also point to an important correlation between international volunteerism, capacity building and intercultural understanding. As noted by interview participants, international volunteers often share, with local employees, their experiences, ideas and opinions. International volunteers share their perspectives when it comes to gender issue, equality and women’s empowerment. They also contribute to advancing broadened thinking on sensitive issues, including Uganda’s sexual harassment bill, violence against women and children as well as reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and STDs [sexually transmitted diseases]. In promoting “complex exchanges about ideas and cultural practices”, international volunteers “can contribute to organizational capacity, as well as enhance cultural competence of staff members” (Lough & al., 2011, pp. 127). Beyond addressing issues that can be sensitive and complex, “the benefits of intercultural exchange[s] could also increase the level of creativity and openness of organizational culture and professional practices” (Lough & al., 2011, pp. 128). By sharing their perspectives, international volunteers are therefore contributing to the capacity development of their respective host organizations.

Finally, while international volunteers play a significant role in capacity development, they also provide meaningful support to community development. In fact, some Ugandan organizations identified several examples of international volunteers contributing to women’s economic empowerment in their communities. International
volunteers taught women and girls how to participate in local commerce in order to achieve economic independence or support their families. They also worked with them to identify how to use their jewellery as a commercial activity, as well as their sewing and hairdressing skills to generate income. Volunteers also promoted financial literacy among women and girls. As result, interviewees witnessed women and girls acquiring new skills and knowledge, securing employment, participating in their community and earning modest wages to pay for their education and contribute financially to their household income. Similar outcomes were documented by Malawian organizations. For these host organizations, international volunteers contributed to several “income generating activities” and projects such as “farm cooperatives and credits schemes” (Nyirenda, 2017, pp. 88). We can conclude that international volunteers support and facilitate community “programs and income generating activities”, which “are significant for improving household incomes and economically empowering the local community” (Nyirenda, 2017, pp. 91). Thus, in turn, “international volunteers support capacity building by upholding community development” (Nyirenda, 2017, pp. 91).

While absent from the findings generated from interviews in Uganda, it is important to acknowledge the experiences of other host organizations that identified factors that can prevent international volunteers from effectively contributing to capacity building. Language barriers between international volunteers, local staff and particularly community members, are consistently identified as a significant barrier that impedes rich exchanges and community development. As explained by host organizations in Kenya, volunteers would have “deeper access to communities if the volunteers were able to communicate in local languages as well as in English” (Hawkes, 2014, pp. 69). Host
organizations added that volunteers could “engage more deeply with the recipients of [their] work” if they spoke Swahili (Hawkes, 2014, pp. 69). Since communication is an essential tool for sharing knowledge and ideas, teaching and contributing to discussions, it is understandable that language barriers can preclude volunteers from effectively contributing to capacity development within their host organization and community (Hawkes, 2014). The international volunteers’ level of preparation and cultural competence were also identified as factors that can limit their contribution to capacity building (Hawkes, 2014). The effectiveness of international volunteers can be diminished if they haven’t researched their “assignment location, its culture and laws, and also the host organization for which the volunteer will be working whilst on assignment” (Hawkes, 2014, pp. 70). Hawkes opines that cultural competence of international volunteers is an important success factor when “staff and community members asserted that volunteers who are not culturally competent are more difficult to manage and are perceived as less effective in the community” (Hawkes, 2014, pp. 70). Volunteers’ level of preparation and cultural competence can, therefore, directly impact capacity building. International volunteers’ characteristics as well as mismatched understandings and expectations were also identified as barriers to effective capacity development. Host organizations in Kenya and Mongolia opined that “the chances of positive capacity development outcomes” are reduced if international volunteers are not motivated or understanding, nor enthusiastic or resilient (Hawkes, 2014, pp. 71). The importance of all parties establishing common objectives, along with a clear understanding of the projects and desired outcomes, cannot be over-stated in order to achieve effective capacity building (Hawkes, 2014). Finally, inequitable partnerships between host organizations,
international volunteers and sending organization can greatly affect capacity
development. When international volunteerism is supply-driven rather then demand-
driven “volunteers can deplete the organization, diverting resources away from service
delivery, and disrupt services” (Hawkes, 2014, pp. 74).

Importantly, host organizations can provide insightful recommendations to the
international volunteerism community in order to address barriers and to improve
meaningful capacity building. A partnership approach and a deeper connection to
individuals are highlighted as key factors to improve impact. “Transferring skills is more
effectively accomplished when volunteers work in partnership with a team of local
volunteers” (Tiessen & Lough, 2018, pp. 14). When international volunteers learn “about
indigenous practices” from local volunteers, “local voluntary action” is enhanced as well
as “the effectiveness of skills-transfer” (Tiessen & Lough, 2018, pp. 14). The transfer of
skills, knowledge and capacity development is further enhanced when “hosting highly-
skilled international volunteers and those with specific competencies that fit the
organization’s needs” (Tiessen & Lough, 2018, pp. 14). Lastly, “when volunteers receive
technical training before or during their service with the organization, they are also
perceived as being more effective at transferring skills and developing organizational
capacity” (Tiessen & Lough, 2018, pp. 14).

In summary, host organizations in Kampala, Uganda, as well as in other recipient
countries, had positive and valuable experiences with international volunteers
contributing to capacity building. International volunteers are “contributing to host
[organizations] communities by transferring skills and aid at the local level, utilising
ideals such as capacity building, mutual learning, and cross-cultural understanding” (Binns & McLachlan, 2018, pp. 66-67). While “host-centered discussions” remain limited, their stories have proven to be indispensable to the field of international volunteerism (Binns & McLachlan, 2018, pp. 65). Their voices and experiences demonstrate why Southern hosts need to be equal partners in the practice of international volunteerism (Binns & McLachlan, 2018).

5.2 Practices for Effective Volunteerism

Assessing the impact and limitations of international volunteerism remains a critical focus with a growing body of research needed. Scholars and practitioners alike have generated studies documenting the perceived benefits of international volunteerism. Generally, these studies are based on the experiences of the volunteer participants as well as sending organizations. While this research should not be disregarded, it is important to recognize that the stories and the experiences of host organizations/communities remain largely underrepresented or absent when assessing the impact of these endeavours (Lough & Tiessen, 2017). Host organizations/communities are capable agents whose views need to be carefully considered in international volunteerism (Lough, Tiessen & Lasker, 2018). In order to contribute meaningfully, volunteer programs and international volunteers must consider the benefits and limitations, while also advancing recommendations for improved practices.

Host organizations acknowledge that international volunteers are “capable of providing a form and depth of local capacity development – otherwise referred to as the
people centred development approach, or the humanising of what is conventionally viewed as discrete technical, structural, or managerial processes – that can only be achieved by working hand-in-hand with local counterparts […]” (Trau, 2014, pp. 35). In addition to their contribution to capacity building, international volunteers were also found to be “an important source of social capital” for host organizations/communities (Palacios, 2010, pp. 23). As volunteers stay in touch with local colleagues after completing their internships, “transnational collaboration[s]” are built, as well as international networks (Palacios, 2010, pp. 23). International volunteers, and their social media platforms, also impact Southern hosts as they “amplify the awareness that volunteers generate among family and friends back home” (Ortiz Loaiza, 2017, pp. 27). As a result, host organizations advance that volunteers generate social capital, which in turn facilitates funding opportunities, and promotes organizational exposure and “intercultural exchanges” even after “completing their placement” (Ortiz Loaiza, 2017, pp. 27; Lough, Moore McBride & Sherraden, 2009).

Field research conducted in Kampala supports this perspective, as none of the host organizations interviewed could identify instances where international volunteers negatively impacted their organizations or community programs. In fact, interview participants spoke of positive experiences with their volunteers. However, interviewees did highlight that international women volunteers were often treated differently than local employees and community members. Notwithstanding this, organizations did not feel that this led to any negative consequences or impact. Carlos Palacios, Rebecca Tiessen and Barbara Heron opine differently, advancing that international volunteers generally receive preferential treatment due to their skin colour and foreign status (Tiessen &
Heron, 2012; Palacios, 2010). They posit that local populations perceive international volunteers to be gifted with higher knowledge and solutions as well as with the appropriate training “to give [organizations/communities] valuable recommendations to improve their local project[s]” (Palacios, 2010, pp. 16; Tiessen & Heron, 2012). As a result of this perception, communities can be given “false hope”; “dependence and overreliance on volunteers”; and “this stereotype of the west rescuing everyone” is further enshrined (Tiessen & Heron, 2012, pp. 51; Darren & al., 2016). Of grave concern is that international volunteerism “might be portraying a new form of colonialism” (Palacios, 2010, pp. 4). As it “tends to reproduce the same global patterns of inequality and poverty, […] the dominant position of the North” could be reinforced (Palacios, 2010, pp. 6). Host organizations in Kampala and in Dominican Republic are sensitive to the issue and mindful of the potential negative repercussion engendered by international volunteerism.

While the interviewed host organizations have largely emphasized the positive impact of international volunteerism, they also acknowledge the challenges associated with hosting volunteers. Kampala organizations point to the importance of managing community expectations, mitigating language barriers as well as ensuring volunteers’ safety. Other Southern organizations identified concerns with international volunteers’ adjustment and inexperience as well as with the lack of communication between all parties (Binns & McLachlan, 2018). Scholars have also documented important challenges, including cultural understanding and volunteer characteristics, as well as the volunteers’ sending organization/program (Lough & Tiessen, 2017; Lough, Tiessen & Lasker, 2018).
Community awareness about international volunteers will help mitigate some of the challenges identified by interviewees in Uganda. Interviewees point to Mzungus, or international volunteers, who are often mistaken for Western-donors or rich individuals prepared to dispose of large sums of money. When volunteers are seen working with local organizations, the population generally expects monetary donations as well as the start of new projects in their community. If the role of international volunteers isn’t clarified with communities, host organizations can lose their credibility among Ugandans. Furthermore, the misrepresentation of international volunteers can lead to “community discord” and has “the potential for creating an unsustainable overreliance and uncoordinated effort or even harm to the local community” (Darren & al., 2016, pp. 3-11). Similarly, language barriers can also lead to unsatisfactory experiences and diminished results. Often, local employees and community members will rely on their local dialect to communicate, leaving volunteers outside of the exchange and unable to participate meaningfully. As organizations in Kampala do not provide interpreters and are not always available to interpret, the international volunteers’ contribution, community integration as well as their involvement in outreach activities are generally more limited. It can be further noted that language barriers, experienced by volunteers, can lead to a “general lack of understanding about local […] practices and challenges”, as well “insufficient cultural sensitivity and awareness” (Lough, Tiessen & Lasker, 2018, pp. 5). Finally, Ugandan interviewees reported time and again the concern they have for the safety of international volunteers. As foreigners, volunteers attract a lot of attention and can often find themselves in vulnerable situations. In fact, international volunteers can be victims of harassment or sexual violence (Darren & al., 2016). In order to mitigate this,
host organizations try to ensure that volunteers reside in safe neighbourhoods, use safe transportation methods and are familiar with safety precautions.

Managing inexperienced volunteers as well as those who have difficulty adjusting to the local environment are significant challenges to overcome. Host organizations noted that volunteers with minimal to no experience, were “ill prepared to work in low-income countries” and had “limited skill sets and training to work in these new environments” (Lough, Tiessen & Lasker, 2018, pp. 5). Furthermore, the volunteers “homesickness, [and] lack of time spent away from home before coming on assignment, […] negatively impacted” their contributions (Binns & McLachlan, 2018, pp. 75). In these circumstances, volunteers were found to be a burden on host organizations. Lastly, some host organizations identified communication leading up to the assignment as also challenging, pointing to the lack of correspondence between sending and receiving organizations, as well as volunteers, “assignment objectives” and delivery outcomes varying between all three parties (Binns & McLachlan, 2018, pp. 74). This led to the capabilities of international volunteers not being effectively utilized by Southern hosts (Binns & McLachlan, 2018).

While not specifically identified by interviewees, scholars argue that the international volunteers’ lack of cultural understanding poses a challenge for host organizations. In fact, this can lead to “displaying attitudes of superiority, disrespecting local customs and practices, and imposing [the volunteers’] methods and opinions in ways that are inappropriate to the practice environment” (Lough, Tiessen & Lasker, 2018, pp. 4). As international volunteers struggle with their behaviours, host organizations are forced to deal with challenging situations (Mangold, 2012). Volunteer
characteristics such as age, education and skill level can also prove challenging for host organizations (Lough & Tiessen, 2017). Similarly, volunteer program models can provoke added challenges to host organizations. For example, “Group-based [...] volunteer placements [...] often present[] challenges with developing deep cross-cultural engagement” (Lough & Tiessen, 2017, pp. 8). “Programs that ensure regular interactions between volunteers and host communities likely make the difference” (Lough & Tiessen, 2017, pp. 8).

Several host organizations, including those in Kampala, Uganda, provided valuable recommendations to address some of the challenges faced by international volunteers. These recommendations are insightful for both volunteers and sending organizations, as they can generate best practices that ensure mutual respect and benefits.

Interestingly, interviewees and other host organizations argue that the duration of international volunteer assignments is generally too short to achieve the highest impact. They believe that “increased benefit[s] may come from assignments if additional time, perhaps an extra six months to a year, was available to build upon the capacity that has been established in the assignment. Twelve hosts argued that their experiences of hosting UniVols [University Volunteer] were just beginning to make progress in projects as their assignments were coming to an end” (Binns & McLachlan, 2018, pp. 75). Benjamin Lough and Rebecca Tiessen (2017) posit that longer assignments will permit international volunteers to build stronger relationships within host organizations/communities as well as ensure “meaningful cross-cultural encounters” (Lough & Tiessen, 2017, pp. 7). They also argue that “[v]olunteering partner organizations invest a great deal of time in the preparation and acclimatization of
volunteers in placements, and rapid rotation and turn-over of these volunteers can significantly affect the productivity and satisfaction of local staff” (Lough & Tiessen, 2017, pp. 7).

Interviewees point to the importance of patience, flexibility, resilience and passion if international volunteers are seeking to make a difference on the issue of gender equality. Some host organizations also believe that, in order to be an effective and successful volunteer, one needs to travel with purpose; respect local communities, local ideologies and the process of change; integrate in the country’s culture; as well as tackle sensitive issues with awareness. There is consensus that these key recommendations or principles need to be at the forefront of any international volunteer assignment. Kyle Nelson and Curtis Child (2015) remind us that sending organizations can largely influence “international development efforts” as well as the outcomes of volunteer placements (Child & Nelson, 2016, pp. 525). As sending organizations “constitute the backbone of the international volunteering experience”, integrating the suggested recommendations in future volunteer programs should be carefully considered (Child & Nelson, 2016, pp. 545).

Finally, Ugandan interviewees emphasized the need to integrate documentation about the host country’s culture and norms in the volunteers’ pre-departure preparation. Amanda Moore McBride, Margaret Sherraden and Benjamin Lough (2007) take this recommendation even further by suggesting that “international service programs [should] integrate host organizations and communities into the design and delivery process” (Lough, Moore McBride & Sherraden, 2007, pp. 7). When sending organizations, host organizations and volunteers work closely together, local residents are empowered,
project ownership is created and “local skills”, “local circumstances” as well as “community needs” are considered (Lough, Moore McBride & Sherraden, 2007, pp. 7).

Although their voices and experiences are not often seen as pivotal, host organizations are more than capable of identifying the impact and limitations of international volunteerism. Southern hosts are also well positioned to identify the challenges and to make recommendations to mitigate difficulties. Host organizations’ perspectives need to be carefully considered by international volunteers and sending organizations. This will lead to improved practices for international volunteerism as well as encourage equitable and beneficial relationships in the future.

5.3 Giving Prominence to their Voices and Experiences

Often, international volunteerism and the experiences of host organizations are critically analyzed by “Northern scholarship” (Tiessen & Lough, 2018, pp. 7). Consequently, the voices of Southern hosts can be “inaccurately characterize[d]” as local employees are frequently victimized or portrayed as vulnerable (Tiessen & Lough, 2018, pp. 2; Grantham, Tiessen & Lough, 2018). However, as knowledge gaps about international volunteerism remain an important issue, “alternative voices” are being acknowledged, “evaluated and legitimized” (Tiessen & Lough, 2018, pp. 8). In other words, “alternative understandings about Southern partner perspectives and experiences in international volunteering” are being given “the discursive space to construct themselves in a way that is not automatically recognized as ontologically and epistemologically inferior or lacking” (Grantham, Tiessen & Lough, 2018, pp. 135;
To this end, efforts should be made to more effectively capture host organizations’ perspectives and experiences, leveraging new research approaches, which prioritize the insights generated by officials from within partner countries. Through new research models, international volunteerism will be viewed through a balanced lens that gives more prominence to the stories and the experiences of the Global South. International volunteers are more than capable to contribute to a decentralized research approach by championing cross-cultural exchanges, empowering local colleagues and community members, fostering greater visibility for host organizations, as well as effectively documenting host experiences. This will promote subaltern voices in the international sphere.

Findings from field work in Uganda point to rich cross-cultural exchanges between international volunteers and host organizations/communities, which is an important form of acknowledgement of subaltern voices while also honouring the perspectives of Southern hosts. As noted by interviewees, international volunteers share their ideas, opinions and lived experience on a range of topics, including cultural norms, gender roles, violence and the treatment of women. As a result of these exchanges, Ugandans gain knowledge and new perspectives, which may trigger some curiosity as well as self-reflections. Conversely, international volunteers can also learn from Southern hosts and their communities. Interviewees noted with great interest the benefits generated by these rich exchanges, bringing together international and local viewpoints and experiences. Mutual learning cannot be underestimated as a direct benefit to these formal and informal exchanges. Similar findings were observed by host organizations in Costa Rica (Viquez, 2018). Organizations and community members noted that “[t]his type of
exposure to new knowledge and information is especially advantageous for local families who host volunteers […] as they likely do not possess the financial means to travel abroad themselves” (Viquez, 2018, pp. 52). Nevertheless, Southern hosts in Costa Rica agreed that the experiences and the stories shared by Costa Ricans are of great importance for international volunteers as they allow local voices to be properly understood (Viquez, 2018). As host organizations in Kampala and in Coats Rica take part in “[t]he personal exchange of information, customs, perspectives, and experiences” with international volunteers, subaltern voices are recognized and the perspectives of receiving organizations/communities are privileged (Viquez, 2018, pp. 52).

Host organizations in Kampala argue that international volunteerism can positively impact the current “discourse of development, where those in the South come to believe that they have lower capacity for development” (Lough & Carter-Black, 2015, pp. 209). International volunteers can contribute to changing the narrative and approaches, which undermine the value of host organizations and communities. Too often “development projects are largely administered by expatriates [causing] aid recipients to view development projects as belonging to ‘white people’, and as a result not view themselves as active participants in development projects” (Lough & Carter-Black, 2015, pp. 210). Through empowerment, international volunteers “can influence aid recipients’ internalized sense of power and agency” (Lough & Carter-Black, 2015, pp. 209). As noted by interview participants in Kampala, international volunteers can empower host organizations and community members by comparing experiences as well as by fostering healthy and constructive exchanges. With the support of international volunteers, host organizations are able to address key issues such as women’s leadership
opportunities and contribute to the development of training modules to educate and empower girls. They can also contribute to the exploration of issues, solutions and progress in the Ugandan context. International volunteerism also “help[s] communities to better identify and capitalize on the beneficial aspects of their own culture,” capabilities and experiences (Lough & Carter-Black, 2015, pp. 216). An example of mutual learning and joint advocacy took place in Kampala and led to the advancement of Uganda’s Sexual Harassment Bill. As both the host organization and the American volunteer shared their experiences and perspectives of sexual harassment, the international volunteer was able to offer recommendations while the host organization leveraged its agency to modify the bill before parliament. With a focus on empowerment, international volunteers encouraged host organizations/communities to be “agents of [their own] change” (Diprose, 2011, pp. 190). Importantly, by focusing on the experiences of the South, international volunteers empowered host organizations/communities in Kampala – fostering their agency in the development sector.

Beyond strengthening their ability to effect change, host organizations in both Uganda and India argue that international volunteers also increase their overall exposure and visibility (Rajashree, 2018). They highlight how international volunteers promote greater recognition of their organizations, either by publishing or reporting on their activities, or by showcasing the organizations’ programs. Not only did published documentation highlight the host organization’s work, but they also provided useful information on hygiene and empowerment, which proved most helpful for Ugandans. The practice of documenting success stories and employee profiles were identified as increasing the exposure of host organizations. With broad distribution, it is
understandable how this practice is considered beneficial in bringing attention and deepening awareness of host organizations, including their purpose, programs and impact. Creating profiles of employees and their commitment to the development sector was also identified as beneficial. Finally, Southern hosts valued the international volunteers’ ability to share and connect their organizations with the rest of the world through the use of social media, granting them access to a much larger audience (Rajashree, 2018). Interestingly, more regional exposure was observed by host organizations in India, which saw international volunteers contribute “by raising the profile of an organization back in their home country” (Rajashree, 2018, pp. 126). The organizations “international exposure created by volunteers help[ed] to generate funding, while in other cases it put[] pressure on the Indian government to take action and bring about policy change” (Rajashree, 2018, pp. 126-127). Whether at the domestic or international level, there is agreement that international volunteers can generate exposure and visibility of host organizations by highlighting their capabilities, their stories and their experiences, and building up their overall agency (Rajashree, 2018).

Finally, international volunteerism can give prominence to alternative voices from the South, as they document and share broadly stories and experiences of host organizations/communities. As volunteers recognize that host organizations/communities are “citizens who matter and whose voices count”, a new environment emerges for greater dialogue, engagement and partnerships between development actors (Kothari & al., 2015, pp. 360). Interviewees in Kampala identified several occasions when international volunteers discussed, as well as documented, stories and experiences of Southern hosts/community members (Griffiths, 2016). In fact, interviewees found that the
presence of international volunteers advanced the status of women and led to healthier gender dynamics, both within organizations and communities, as gender-based violence, equality and norms were debated. It further encouraged the voices of local women and girls to be heard and empowered. For example, an international volunteer was able to document the violence, abuse and rape of women and girls working in sugar cane fields in Uganda. By acknowledging their voices and documenting their experiences through a research paper, the mistreatment of women and girls in sugar cane plantations was identified publicly and a program was developed to address the prevalence of this issue in Eastern Uganda. In other cases, international volunteers documented subaltern voices and experiences as they addressed the issue of abortion. Volunteers conducted various types of research, including documenting local viewpoints and local experiences. Southern hosts are very hopeful that the research will lead to program and policy recommendations, as they would like to provide safe care for women and girls. As noted by Benjamin Lough (2014), “international service is considered a ‘people-centred development approach’ that may be able to promote international understanding and solidarity within a ‘relational framework of development’ that is often undervalued and under-operationalised by technical development programmes” (Lough, 2014, pp. 1347).

As international volunteers document the stories and the experiences of the South, they “amplify these voices […] and create[] greater awareness of community perspectives” (Lough, 2014, pp. 1348).

Research on international volunteerism points to the importance of exposure and connections, noting “that people without power are not well connected to the larger global community of scholars, advocates, and decision makers – and are therefore often
misrepresented in global discussions” (Tiessen & Lough, 2018, pp. 10). As international volunteers contribute to cross-cultural exchanges, empower local colleagues and community members, promote host organizations’ visibility and document experiences of hosts and local individuals, the agency of host organizations, and their communities, are further strengthened. Importantly, international volunteerism “crea[es] space for the agency, voices and situated experiences of Southern partners” by giving prominence to alternative voices and experiences (Grantham, Tiessen & Lough, 2018, pp. 137).

5.4 Fostering Cooperation and Partnerships

Amartya Sen’s capability theory, which is described as a “rich source of fertile ideas”, provides a valuable lens upon which we can better understand international volunteerism, development and agency (Pressman & Summerfield, 2002, pp. 430). Steven Pressman and Gale Summerfield opine that (2002), “the capability approach consists of several interrelated concepts – mainly entitlements, capabilities, and functioning. Each is important for individual welfare; and changes in these areas influence individual well-being and agency” (Pressman & Summerfield, 2002, pp. 429). With international volunteerism increasingly focused on fostering cooperation and partnerships between volunteers and Southern hosts, we posit that international volunteers have applied the general ideas and considerations of Sen’s capability approach. By encouraging the agency and capabilities of host organizations/communities, international volunteerism is a catalyst for partnerships, reciprocity, and emotional attachment between development actors, all the while contributing to the participatory approach. “The capability approach has [also] been instrumental in shifting the
development paradigm from focusing on growth as the main goal of development to focusing on expanding capabilities and increasing well being and agency” (Pressman & Summerfield, 2002, pp. 430). In fact, international volunteerism is subscribing to this new research paradigm, placing more emphasis on cooperation and partnerships with Southern hosts, which by extension, leads to the strengthened agency and well being of host organizations.

Findings from interviews conducted in Kampala, Uganda, confirm that “the language of partnerships pervades international volunteering” (Impey & Overton, 2013, pp. 112). Interview participants noted how host organizations appreciated working alongside international volunteers, pointing to the positive impact derived from such a cooperative model. While “[r]ecognizing that individuals and communities have the capabilities and assets of their own to contribute”, international volunteers and host organizations were able to share knowledge and expertise while promoting greater gender equality and women’s empowerment in Kampala (Impey & Overton, 2013, pp. 115). Interviewees also observed that international volunteers became strong agents who encouraged the participation of women and girls in sports or team activities. “[E]mpowering individuals and institutions whilst partnerships” leads to confidence building in women and girls, demonstrating their value and contributions in all facets of community life (Impey & Overton, 2013, pp. 115). Host organizations recognized the importance of building relationships and fostering cooperation between international volunteers and local community activists. More specifically, volunteers were observed as empowering community activists, working together on community activities, and fostering safe spaces for discussions and debate. Therefore, as acknowledged by the
capability approach, when volunteers develop partnerships with Southern hosts, “local knowledge and experience” are “attributed greater value”, “allowing for the recognition and inclusion of local knowledge which elevates the status of local partners and communities” (Impey & Overton, 2013, pp. 115). Host organizations in South Africa also emphasized the significance of “partnership building” (Dulissear, 2018, pp. 115). Southern hosts welcome the development of strong relationships with volunteers, noting how organizations gain access to “new networks” as well as become “part of the ‘global village’” (Dulissear, 2018, pp. 115). The development of partnerships enabled South African organizations and international volunteers to “learn from each other and develop new ways of thinking” to effectively address global challenges (Dulissear, 2018, pp. 115). This creates winning conditions upon which international volunteers develop partnerships with host organizations, propelling volunteerism “towards collaboration and development partnerships founded on recognition of recipients not as passive parties, receiving resources, technology and direction from outside, but as active agents and communities, helping to define their own problems, resources, and solutions” (Dulissear, 2018, pp. 115).

Host organizations in Kampala confirm that international volunteers foster reciprocity, and noted that agency and capabilities of Southern hosts/communities were strengthened as a result. Importantly, “the ideal of reciprocity embedded in volunteers’ relationship with communities is a defining feature that makes international volunteering different from other forms of international aid” (Lough & Oppenheim, 2017, pp. 199). Interviewees saw first-hand how volunteers would teach community members and organizational staff about sexual and reproductive health, personal hygiene and the use of
reusable pads. Within a context of support, “repeat interaction[s]” and shared communication, both “precondition[s] for effective relational reciprocity”, progressed as a result of international volunteerism. “Discussions of reciprocity [also] often focus on a ‘community-driven development’ approach, which prioritizes the needs of host organizations” (Lough & Oppenheim, 2017, pp. 204). As argued by interview participants, international volunteerism is in fact able to champion “community-driven development” in various ways (Lough & Oppenheim, 2017, pp. 204). While host organizations in Kampala acknowledged Ugandan’s struggles with reading and writing, international volunteers’ pursuit of improved literacy was welcomed. Other examples were highlighted, including how international volunteers shared their esthetic talents with local women and girls, who leveraged these skills to generate income. Reciprocity can be characterized by mutual learning and by “joint decision-making” (Lough & Oppenheim, 2017, pp. 205-206). As Southern hosts conducted community outreaches about sexual and reproductive health, host organizations are seen as active leaders of development, while volunteers are given the opportunity to “learn and apply new skills” as well as share their “knowledge, skills or resources” on the matter (Lough & Oppenheim, 2017, pp. 205). Finally, as exemplified in Cambodia, international volunteerism fosters reciprocity by “encouraging active participation in the workshops or training sessions” of local individuals; by ensuring the “embeddedness [of volunteers] within” communities; by generating “trust and commitment”; as well as by supporting “host ownership of […] projects” (Chen, 2017, pp. 141-143). As a result, “[u]nderstanding development impact through relationships […] reveals the centrality of hosts/locals in international volunteerism. Development impact that requires reciprocal relationships essentially
necessitates the agency and contribution of both volunteers and hosts” (Chen, 2017, pp. 145). In summary, by fostering cooperation and partnerships, international volunteerism supports the agency and the capabilities of host organizations.

Beyond fostering reciprocity with international volunteers, host organizations in both Uganda and Peru argue that cooperation and partnerships cultivate “emotional attachment” between giving and receiving parties (Davis, 2018, pp. 38). In Uganda, volunteers built emotional relationships with their host peers as they work side-by-side on joint projects. Whether at the organizational or community level, international volunteers are often committed to working in partnership to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment. The development of strong bonds between volunteers and local actors was often raised as a proof point of “emotional attachment” by Uganda interviewees (Davis, 2018, pp. 38). In fact, one interview participant noted the heart-felt collaboration that was underway to develop successful community programs. Similarly, volunteer hosts in Peru believe that “[e]motional attachments are frequently forged between volunteers, host-organization staff, and community members” as “volunteers deal with vulnerable populations such as disabled individuals, the elderly, and children” (Davis, 2018, pp. 38). As volunteers devote a lot of “personal attention and emotional support” in their interactions, “familiarity, fondness, and trust” characterize their relationships with host organizations/communities (Davis, 2018, pp. 38). When beneficiaries work and relate with international volunteers in Peru, “[t]hese personal experiences and connections [become] deeply meaningful” (Davis, 2018, pp. 38). Not only do host organizations/community members “bond with foreigners, whom they would otherwise be unlikely to ever encounter”, but they also enable volunteers to take part in “the
greatest expression of their integration [in the community]” (Davis, 2018, pp. 38). Interestingly, while Southern hosts in Uganda and Peru confirm that “emotional attachment” is often established between volunteers and organizations/communities, its significance remains unexplained (Davis, 2018, pp. 38). Susanne Schech, Tracey Skelton and Anuradha Mundkur (2016) posit that “[u]nderstanding difference is played out through care, mutual respect and openness towards the other” when close personal relationships develop between development actors (Mundkur, Schech & Skelton, 2016, pp. 155). As international volunteers learn “about local cultural norms and expectations” and “cultural practices”, volunteerism and development can be seen “as exchanges of ideas, building cross-cultural understanding and relationships” (Mundkur, Schech & Skelton, 2016, pp. 155). Importantly, as practices of international volunteerism focus on cooperation and partnerships, the agency and the capabilities of host organizations/communities are reinforced.

We advance that international volunteerism promotes agency, while also enhancing capabilities of Southern hosts, as volunteers assume the role of “participatory practitioners” (Turner, 2015, pp. 89). As “participatory practitioners”, international volunteers can “act as powerful mechanism for building and strengthening the ownership, participation, empowerment and inclusion” of host organizations/communities in developing programming (Turner, 2015, pp. 84). Host organizations in Kampala reported that international volunteers’ attitudes and values did influence their perception of gender roles; however, these cultural differences generated healthy debates on gender norms in Uganda. Additionally, these exchanges provided insights on how to promote new opportunities for women and girls, including different family models. As embraced by
the participatory approach, “ongoing collaboration and co-production comes from a demonstrated commitment to empowerment, not just service delivery, and a willingness to devote the time and energy needed to work in collaboration” (Turner, 2015, pp. 85-86). Interviewees reported on the benefits of differing values and perspectives, noting that international volunteers didn’t impose their cultural norms, but rather cooperated and empowered host organizations/communities with different perspectives and knowledge. International volunteers subscribed to the participatory approach as they embraced “values such as dignity, respect, trust and reciprocity” (Turner, 2015, pp. 85-86). Importantly, as international volunteers conduct community outreach on sensitive matters, they must refrain from cultural intrusion as this would infringe on local teachings and values. Within this context, international volunteerism is seen as “people-centered, community-driven and bottom-up” development as volunteers strengthen “local agency” (Turner, 2015, pp. 93). Perhaps the strongest form of teaching is one of action, which was the case when male international volunteers assumed domestic duties such as cooking and cleaning with local staff and community members. While a natural experience for international volunteers, this out-of-the-norm activity gave further credence and agency to gender equality for host communities. International volunteerism embodies the participatory approach, as it promotes the development of cooperation and partnerships between volunteers and Southern hosts.

In summary, Amartya Sen’s capability approach - and his contributions to scholarship on agency and voice – resonate in the context of international volunteerism as volunteers themselves foster cooperation and partnerships with others, including their host organizations. By developing partnerships, reciprocity, and emotional attachment
while strengthening the participatory approach, international volunteers encourage the agency and capabilities of host organizations/communities. Using cooperation and partnerships, international volunteerism provides host organizations/communities with “real opportunities to do, and to be, in the context of” development (Pressman & Summerfield, 2002, pp. 430).
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 General Summary of the Thesis

The objective of this research is to bring the perspectives of Southern host organizations to the forefront when exploring the benefits and limitations of international volunteerism. A review of the literature confirms that very few studies explore the experiences and viewpoints of Southern hosts. In fact, scholars primarily describe international volunteerism by exploring the motivations and experiences of volunteers. As well, authors discuss the objectives being pursued, and the effectiveness and impact from the perspective of international volunteers or sending organizations (Sherraden, Lough & Moore McBride, 2008; Helms & McKenzie, 2014; Smith, 2014). This narrow scope of research can limit our understandings of international volunteerism and preclude a more fulsome discussion.

Influenced by the methodology applied by Tiessen, Grantham & Lough (2018); Lough & Tiessen (2017); Tiessen & Lough (2018); and Lough & Oppenheim (2017), this thesis discusses the benefits and limitations of international volunteerism in development programming from the perspective of host organizations in Kampala, Uganda. Our research also explores how the agency of host organizations can be better captured through new research approaches, promoting the perspectives of local actors.

Our research demonstrates that host organizations welcome international volunteerism and believe that international volunteers are valuable actors for Southern hosts. They point to several examples of capacity building for development. A more limited, but important body of literature also supports these observations. Host
organizations in Kampala and other recipient countries confirm that international volunteers contribute to the “transfer of skills and aid at the local level, utilizing ideals such as capacity building, mutual learning, and cross-cultural understanding” (Binns & McLachlan, 2018, pp. 66-67). The impact of international volunteerism is valuable and seen as contributing significantly to capacity building.

To contribute meaningfully, international volunteer programs must also mitigate the challenges or limitations identified by host organizations and their communities. In considering these perspectives, the international volunteer practices can be even more equitable and beneficial for all development actors. Preparedness of volunteers, length of assignment, language barriers and management of community expectations were identified as factors which can either enhance the impact or limit the benefits of international volunteer programs.

Importantly, international volunteers contribute to cross-cultural exchanges, empower local colleagues and community members, promote the host organizations’ visibility and document the experiences of hosts and local individuals. In doing so, international volunteers empower alternative voices to be heard as they give prominence to the experiences of the Global South such as host organizations and communities in Uganda.

Finally, international volunteer programs can foster cooperation and partnerships within the Global South. By developing reciprocity, and emotional attachment while strengthening the participatory approach, international volunteers encourage the agency and capabilities of host organizations and their communities.
6.2 Limitations

While the conducted research for this thesis can be characterized as ethical, impartial, methodological and founded on academic studies as well field research, limitations remains. More specifically, three particular limitations should be considered when assessing the thesis findings. These include personal bias, the scope of the study as well as the interviewed organizations. These same limitations should also be taken under consideration in future research on international volunteerism.

6.2.1 Personal Bias

A researcher’s positionality must be considered as an important element in the “research process” (Bourke, 2014, pp. 7). As stated by Bourke (2014), ones’ intentions, transparency and personal biases can impact research outcomes (Bourke, 2014). While prioritizing the impartiality of my analysis and collected findings, a personal bias must be considered. As I participated in an international volunteer placement in Kampala, Uganda, during the summer of 2018, believing in the impact and effectiveness of volunteerism could be seen as a preconceived notion of mine. Therefore, my personal bias towards the benefits of development practices could have influenced the conclusions presented in this thesis. However, it can also be argued that my passion for the study questions as well as my experience as an international volunteer fostered a stronger partnership with local staff and contributed to a more fulsome exploration by placing host organizations at the forefront of the discussions. Finally, it’s important to acknowledge that my position can be interpreted as one of privilege. While the objective of this thesis is to highlight and rely on the experiences and stories of Southern hosts to fully
understand the impact of international volunteerism, I recognize my positionality and its impacts on the conducted research. As previously mentioned, issues surrounding interpretation, representation and polite bias are to be considered when analysing the gathered findings.

6.2.2 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study has some limitations. As previously outlined, 15 interviews were conducted with seven different host organizations and NGOs. All interviews took place in Kampala, Uganda and interview participants included local staff members who occupied various positions within their respective organizations. When examining the methodology utilized to conduct this field research, it can be argued that the analysis of international volunteerism remains too narrow. In other words, as the study only focuses on the experiences of host organizations and NGOs in the region of Kampala, our conclusions remain somewhat unique and region specific. Considering the large number of host organizations and NGOs working in the development sector in Uganda, the chosen sample size for this research can be seen as limited. Increasing the number of participants as well as the number of interviewed host organizations/NGOs may have led to broader understanding and exploration of the study questions. Nevertheless, the perspectives and stories captured as part of the field research bring an essential and insightful understanding of international volunteerism from the perspective of host organizations in Kampala. In fact, this thesis is able to advance knowledge on international volunteerism, which remains specific to the questions asked and to the voices that were amplified. By leveraging the work of Tiessen, Grantham & Lough
(2018); Lough & Tiessen (2017); Tiessen & Lough (2018); and Lough & Oppenheim (2017) as part of the analysis, we did validate the findings of the field research.

6.2.3 The Interviewed Organizations

The selection of organizations and NGOs for these interviews was influenced by the partnerships I developed with local organizations and NGOs. As I primarily interacted with international volunteers who were participating in a placement led by Insight Global Education, the interview participants often hosted volunteers who were aligned with Insight. Therefore, the experiences of the interviewees frequently referred to international volunteers who were selected and trained by Insight Global Education. However, while these findings speak to strengths of Insight Global Education international volunteer program, they can be applied to the broader context of volunteer development practices for Southern host countries.

6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1 Recommendations for Future Research

As previously mentioned, the body of literature on international volunteerism from the perspective of the Global South is modest. As demonstrated by Tiessen, Grantham & Lough (2018); Lough & Tiessen (2017); Tiessen & Lough (2018); Lough & Oppenheim (2017); and now this thesis, host organizations and local NGOs have valuable insights that must be brought to the forefront to build even more capacity and to yield the highest impact. Studies that address international volunteerism with a focus on the voices of the Global South must be pursued. The voices and perspectives of all host
organizations, including other regions of the world, would benefit from a similar approach. This will lead to a better understanding of the impact of volunteerism, while also improving the agency of all host organizations and their communities. Furthermore, as this thesis explores the general ideas and considerations of Sen and Nussbaum’s work, future research is needed to deepen our understanding of the important links that exist between international volunteerism and the capabilities approach.

6.3.2 Recommendations for International Volunteer Programs

The host organizations that were interviewed presented important recommendations that should be considered for future development programming. It was recognized that mitigating issues such as language barriers between volunteers and local staff/communities as well as the volunteers’ lack of preparation and cultural competence would go a long way to improve impact and the effectiveness of capacity building. Ugandan interviewees emphasized the importance of pre-departure training as well as the need for volunteers to review documentation about the host country’s culture and norms.

Host organizations also found that volunteer assignments were generally too short. Local staff, from various organizations and NGOs, believe that the most impactful volunteers are those who support their host organizations for an extended period of time. While no specific time frame was identified, the duration of the volunteers’ assignment remains an important factor to consider when establishing the objectives of volunteer programs.

International volunteer programs must also focus on the characteristics, experience and the skills of their volunteers. By doing so, volunteer programs could
ensure that international volunteers are contributing meaningfully to the goals of host organizations and their communities. Ideally, international volunteers should be motivated, understanding, enthusiastic, resilient, patient, flexible and passionate. Successful international volunteers should also participate in the program with purpose; respect local communities, local ideologies and the process of change; integrate in the country’s culture; as well as tackle sensitive issues with awareness. Volunteers should also be knowledgeable, and have the necessary experience and skills, which align with the assignments.

Finally, and most importantly, the Global South should be considered an equal partner in all activities and assignments that are undertaken. Southern hosts should be included in the design process as well as in the execution of volunteer programs. By developing a partnership between sending and host organizations, common objectives, expectations and outcomes can be better established. International volunteerism could also become supply-driven rather then demand-driven (Hawkes, 2014).

Host organizations and communities need to be recognized as capable development agents that play a significant role in international volunteerism. For this reason, international volunteerism needs to be driven by mutuality, respect and equality.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Buchmayer, K. (2017). Voluntourism Discourse: A Case Study of ME to WE. Published by the School of International Development and Global Studies, Faculty of Social


## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Interviewee List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding System</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Position:</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Organization 1</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>Human resources and administration manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Organization 1</td>
<td>Interview 2</td>
<td>Program manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Organization 2</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>Program manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Organization 2</td>
<td>Interview 2</td>
<td>Program officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Organization 3</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>Deputy Executive Director (programs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Organization 3</td>
<td>Interview 2</td>
<td>Director, Research and Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Organization 3</td>
<td>Interview 3</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
</tr>
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<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Organization 5</td>
<td>Interview 2</td>
<td>Program Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Organization 5</td>
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<td>6.2</td>
<td>Organization 6</td>
<td>Interview 2</td>
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</tr>
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<td>7.1</td>
<td>Organization 7</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>Program Officer, Networking and Capacity Building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Number of interviews:** 15 interviews  
**Number of organizations/NGOs:** 7 organizations/NGOs
Appendix B: Interview Questionnaire

International Volunteers and their Contributions to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Interview Questions:

*Thank you for participating in this study and for your consent to be interviewed and to have the interview recorded. The interview should take no more than one hour. Now that the recording has started, can you confirm that you understand that you will remain anonymous in all reports prepared and that you agree to be interviewed (Yes or No) and you agree to have the interview recorded (Yes or No).*

1. Can you tell me a bit about your experience hosting international volunteers?
   1.1 How many volunteers to date have you hosted?
   1.2 How long have they stayed?
   1.3 What area of expertise do they bring?
   1.4 What do you value most about international volunteers? Can you share a story of how an international volunteer has had a significant positive impact on your organization and the work that it does?
   1.5 What are the distinctive contributions they make to sharing new skills or knowledge with you or your organization?
   1.6 What are the biggest challenges or problems you have with international volunteers? Can you think of an example of how an international volunteer has had a significant negative impact on your organization or community programs?

2. The role of international volunteers in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment:
   2.1 Can you think of examples of the positive ways that international volunteers promote gender equality and women's empowerment (such as working to change discriminatory laws, work with local women's rights organizations, provide programs for women's empowerment, engaging in solidarity work, etc).
      a. Please provide some examples or stories of how international volunteers have promoted gender equality within your organization and/or within the communities where you work.
   2.2 Have international volunteers contributed to women's economic empowerment activities within the communities where you work (such as income generating activities, micro-lending programs, etc)?
      a. If so, please provide examples and tell us a bit about the success or failure of these economic empowerment programs.
   2.3 Have international volunteers worked with other local women staff and/or local women volunteers to promote gender equality or women's empowerment?
      a. Have you seen examples of women in your organization/communities being empowered by the presence of international volunteers? Please share stories or examples.
2.4 Where are the international volunteers from?
   a. Do the attitudes and values from the volunteers’ country or culture affect how you see gender roles in your communities?

2.5 Can you think of any examples where the presence of international volunteers has improved the situation for women or improved gender relations in your organization/communities?

3. Challenges in the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment:
   3.1 Do you have any concerns with the impact that international volunteers are having on gender equality and women’s empowerment?
      a. (For example, can you think of any examples or stories where international volunteers had questionable, problematic or poor behaviour that did not promote women’s empowerment and where they may have acted as poor role models?)
   3.2 Have the values or ideas promoted by international volunteers ever resulted in arguments or conflicts within the organization, households or the families of people that you know?
      a. Tell me a bit about them?
      b. Why do you think this happened?
      c. What was the result?
   3.3 Do you see differences between the way women international volunteers are treated by male colleagues or by local community members compared to local women staff/local women volunteers? If so, what are those differences? What issues or challenges arise from the different treatment?
      a. Provide examples (for example: women international volunteers go out for drinks with male colleagues and it is not a problem but if local women were to do that they would get a bad reputation, etc..). How does this difference in treatment make local women feel? What concerns are raised by local women about the different privileges that international volunteers enjoy?

4. Some countries (like Sweden and Canada) have feminist international assistance policies and have committed to feminist principles of international development. Have you heard about these international policies?
   4.1 Do you have any concerns with the language of feminist foreign policy or feminist international assistance?
      If not, why not?
      If so, what are those concerns?
   4.2 Do you think that receiving funding from a donor that adopts a feminist international aid policy will change the way that your organization does work?
      If so, how?
   4.3 Can you tell me a bit about the discussions people have about the word “feminism” and what people in your organizations/communities think this will mean for the future of development work?
What challenges are imagined? What opportunities are possible?

4. Do you have any final comments, stories, or experiences of hosting international volunteers that can help us understand their contributions or challenges to gender equality? For example, can you tell us a story about a particularly positive or negative experience you had with an international volunteer who was trying to change gender norms and practices in your organization or communities?

5. If you have one piece of advice you would like to share with future international volunteers who are working on gender equality and women’s empowerment activities, what advice would you offer?

6. Are international volunteers ready to accomplish their tasks when they arrive at your organization? Should they have different skills or knowledge before starting their internship?

*Thank you for participating in this interview. If you have any questions, you are welcome to contact the Research PI (Rebecca Tiessen at rtiessen@uottawa.ca).*
Appendix C: Consent Form

Consent Form
Title of the study: The Impact of International Volunteers in the Promotion of Women's Economic Empowerment

Research Contact: Dr. Rebecca Tiessen, Associate Professor, University of Ottawa, School of International Development and Global Studies, Tel.: 613-562-5680 x7408, rtiessen@uottawa.ca

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Dr. Rebecca Tiessen. This study is funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to obtain a better understanding of the contributions international volunteers make to the promotion of women's economic empowerment.

Participation: My participation will consist of a semi-structured interview of approximately 60 minutes to be held in a location of your preference.

Risks: My participation in this study will entail sharing information based on my professional experience working with international volunteers. This participation involves setting aside approximately 60 minutes of my time for the interview. I acknowledge that the researcher will make every effort to minimize any challenges or concerns associated with the inconvenience caused by taking time to participate in this interview.

Benefits: My participation in this study will contribute to academic knowledge and information about the role and impact of international volunteers, specifically the distinctive contributions international volunteers have made to the promotion of women's economic empowerment in my country and will therefore advance the knowledge on this subject.

Confidentiality and anonymity: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for the study conducted by Dr. Tiessen for her broader research study on effective practices of international volunteers. My confidentiality will be protected through measures to ensure the recorded information, notes taken and transcribed audio will be stored in secure locations on a secure, password protected laptop.
Anonymity will be protected for this study. My name and identifying information will only be used if I explicitly request it to be included in written summaries of the research. Otherwise, pseudonyms will be used to document the findings from this study. Anonymity is protected by removing any reference to identifying information from materials collected (including names and other identification such as position and organization). If anonymity is requested, no identifying information will appear in any publication or distribution of information.

Conservation of data: The data collected through audio recordings. Materials will be transcribed and all audio and written documents will be kept secure in a password protected computer. Data will only be accessible to the researcher (Dr. Rebecca Tiessen) and the research assistant (Liana Fraser). Materials will be stored on a laptop computer and transferred to Dr. Tiessen’s computer and saved in a secure file on a password protected computer.

Compensation: There is no compensation for participation in this interview. Any costs associated with meeting will be incurred by the research assistant (such as travel to a location at my convenience).

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be deleted from audio files and written notes.

Acceptance: I, (Name of participant), agree to participate in the above research study conducted by research assistant (Research Assistant’s name) for Dr. Rebecca Tiessen of the School of International Development and Global Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ottawa.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact Dr. Rebecca Tiessen at the contact information noted above.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
Tel.: (613) 562-5387 Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

I understand the nature of my contribution to this study and agree to participate in the interviews and data collection: Yes or No

I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded and agree to the recording of this interview: Yes or No

I understand that anonymity and use of pseudonyms is an option and I wish to remain anonymous: Yes or No.
(If No to anonymity): I understand that providing my real name and the name of the organization will mean this information is included in written reports and papers from the research collected for this study and I understand the implications of attaching my real name and name of organization to this study: **Yes or No.**