

## **Intercultural Communication for Development:**

An exploratory study of Intercultural Sensitivity of the United Nations Volunteer Programme using the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity as framework

By

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of the study is to (1) analyze the level of intercultural sensitivity of United Nations Volunteer (UNV) volunteers in terms of interpersonal communication in a multicultural working environment; (2) explore how UNV volunteers interact and communicate in a multicultural environment at community level by developing a cognitive structure to understand differences in culture and; (3) identify the level of intercultural sensitivity of the UNV volunteers.

This study is intended to make a contribution to the research on Communication for Development from the perspective of Intercultural Communication, particularly by using the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) as a framework to analyze the Intercultural experiences of a number of UNV volunteers.

The qualitative survey was conducted with selected UNV volunteers including national, international and former UNV volunteers from February 15, 2008 for 4 weeks. A total of 48 UNV volunteers from 26 countries, serving in 24 countries, participated in the survey. The methodology of content analysis was applied to analyze their intercultural sensitivity and communication skills.

The results show that UNV volunteers experience a wide range of intercultural situations, including: language and relativity of experience, non-verbal behaviour, communication styles, monochronic and polychronic time, values and assumptions. Whereas some UNV volunteers seem to be at the ethnocentric stage, the majority of respondents are at the ethnorelative stages, which include the acceptance and adaptation stages of DMIS.

In order to improve cultural sensitivity, intercultural trainings are provided to selected UNV volunteers at headquarters in Bonn. This study points to the need for the UNV programme to design and implement structured training in intercultural sensitivity for all UNV volunteers. These trainings should not be given only at Headquarters, but in every Country Office or Support Unit as part of a mainstreamed procedure for both national and international UNV volunteers.

Building the capacity of intercultural communication and intercultural sensitivity of UNV volunteers will lead to optimal outcomes in their work through improved

communication with colleagues, counterparts and local partners. Intercultural sensitivity is a critical aspect of communication for development. Intercultural sensitivity creates the two-way communication systems that allow communities to speak out, and by finding their voice, communities begin to realize ownership of the development agenda enshrined in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

## **Acknowledgements**

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For further inquiry on this project, please feel free to contact me at [keisuke\\_taketani@yahoo.com](mailto:keisuke_taketani@yahoo.com)

## List of Abbreviations

CINFO	Center for Information, Counseling and Training
DMIS	Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
HC	Hi Context
IUNV	International United Nations Volunteer
IDI	Intercultural Development Inventory
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
JOCV	Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers
LC	Low Context
PO	Programme Officer
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
NGO	Non-governmental organization
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNV	United Nations Volunteers

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

As the final part of my studies in the Master Programme “Communication for Development” at the University of Malmö, Sweden, I prepared this thesis on Intercultural Communication for United Nations Volunteers (UNV)<sup>1</sup>, focusing on the intercultural sensitivity of field volunteers of programme administered by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In this paper, I use the following definition of intercultural sensitivity: a “cognitive structure to an evolution in attitudes and behaviour toward cultural differences in general” (Bennett 1998:26).

In the introductory book *Basic Concept of Intercultural Communication*, Interculturalist Milton J. Bennett provides insight into the question of “How do people understand one another when they do not share a common cultural experience?” (1998:1). This question is particularly important for volunteers and staff in a global organization such as the United Nations (UN) who constantly interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. In general, there has been a lack of research in the interface between the two fields, Intercultural Communication and Development, and my aim is to make a contribution to research in this area.

To refer to the study of human interaction across cultural differences, I will use the term *intercultural communication*, located in the discipline of human communication studies (Bennett and Castiglioni 2004:263). I use the term *development* in reference to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)<sup>2</sup> which is the core work of the UNV programme as well as other UN agencies. The MDGs are part of the Millennium Declaration, which was adopted by 189 nations and signed by 147 heads of state and governments in September 2000 to meet the needs of the world’s poorest. Another key concept of development in UN development work is the promotion of Human Development, which is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests (UNDP 2007).

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<sup>1</sup> In this study, I shall differentiate UNV as people from UNV as programme by specifying UNV volunteers and UNV programme. In the case of citation of survey responses, I may use UNV to refer to the volunteer.

<sup>2</sup> Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger  
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education  
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women  
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality  
Goal 5: Improve maternal health  
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases  
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability  
Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

Intercultural communication studies traditionally focus on higher education, study abroad programs, and multinational enterprises. Development studies have recently addressed the cultural aspect of development work in the area of health communication, but development studies have hardly examined the intercultural communication skills of development workers, especially for field staff who operate on the frontlines of a multicultural environment every day.

In the context of communication for development, ethno-relativism and interpersonal communication play a critical role. , In the background paper of the 10th UN Inter-Agency round table on communication for development, media and communication researcher Jan Servaes states that:

“in contrast with the more economical and politically oriented approaches in traditional perspectives on development (modernization and dependency), the central idea in alternative more culturally oriented versions (multiplicity) is that there is no universal development mode which leads to sustainability at all levels of society and the world, that development is an integral, multidimensional, and dialectic process that can differ from society to society, community to community, context to context  
“(2007:3)

He also states that “personal communication is far more likely to be influential than mass media for adapting development initiatives.” (2007:7)

In this study, I shall try to make a contribution to the research on communication for development from the perspective of intercultural communication, particularly by using the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) as a framework to analyze the intercultural experiences of a number of UNV volunteers. In doing so, I integrated a literature review, a field survey and interviews as well as insights of my own intercultural experience as a UNV volunteer, which I will present later in this section. DMIS theory is defined and reviewed in chapter 3.

## **1.1 Purpose and Research questions**

This study has three interrelated purposes. The first purpose of this study is to analyze the level of intercultural sensitivity amongst UNV volunteers in terms of interpersonal communications in a multicultural work environment. The second purpose is to develop a cognitive structure to understand differences in culture and to use it to explore how UNV volunteers interact and communicate in a multicultural environment at the community level.

The third purpose is to identify the level of intercultural sensitivity amongst the surveyed UNV volunteers.

The following research questions guided this study:

- What is the predominant orientation to cultural differences of the UNV volunteers who have faced challenging situations involving cultural differences, according to the DMIS framework?
- What institutional support has been provided to UNV volunteers to improve intercultural sensitivity and communication skills?
- How have UNV volunteers acquired their intercultural mind- and skill-sets? Is it generally a precondition of UNV employment, or the result of being a UNV volunteer?
- What role does intercultural sensitivity play in relation to communication for development for UNV volunteers and what general conclusions be drawn concerning volunteers working at the community level?

## **1.2 Discussion on Research Problem**

I have worked as a UNV Volunteer in Central America and the Eastern Caribbean supporting community Telecenters in rural villages for almost 4 years. As a UNV volunteer, my work requires regular interaction with local partners – government officials, community members, and UNDP staff.

Since I have a particular interest in intercultural communication, working in a multicultural environment gave me the opportunity to transform theories into practice. Fortunately, I enjoy most of the intercultural relationships in my work, and try to practice theories when critical moments caused by cultural differences arise. However, I may be the exception rather than the rule. In my work, I have observed that a number of UNV volunteers have had serious relationship problems, or a cross-cultural communication disabilities. The result is that the UNV volunteer is unable to obtain optimal outcomes in his or her work due to a lack of cultural sensitivity. The UNV volunteers I observed generally had high-level language skills (and some were even native speakers of the local language), and thus there were few cases where a language barrier was the main cause of the problem. Furthermore, most of these

volunteers had worked or studied overseas for years, and had made it through the UNV programme's competitive selection process. Despite this experience and competitive selection, UNV volunteers still face a significant number of communication problems. This is not to say that communication problems are the fault of the UNV volunteer. In my four years of work, I noticed that these communication problems seem especially acute when UNV volunteers work in a community where its member are not used to working with foreigners and have limited experiences with intercultural sensitivity. In these challenging environments, overcoming communication problems is critical for the success of UNV programme goals.

Some volunteering organizations, such as the US Peace Corp Program and Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) program, hold intercultural communication seminars for outgoing volunteers mainly because it is first time for these volunteers to work outside of their own country and the main objective of the program is to give a learning opportunity and build international experience for their nationals. In the US Peace Corps, volunteer training typically occurs in the host country, where volunteers spend their first three months living with homestay families and intensively studying local languages, life skills, history, and culture. This undoubtedly helps them to develop intercultural communication skills. Though it seems that UNV volunteers seem to have more experience than new Peace Corps volunteers, I could not help but I ask myself, "What about the UNV programme? Do UNV volunteers already have a high level of intercultural communication skills?" That was the beginning of this study.

### **1.3 Background**

The UNV programme is a global development partner for the UN system. According to a 2006 statistical overview of the UNV programme, it carried out operations in 144 countries and drew volunteers from 163 countries. A total of 7,623 individuals carried out 7,856 assignments. Some 63% of these assignments were international, while 37% were undertaken within the volunteers' own countries. Notably, 76% of all UNV volunteers came from developing countries, demonstrating significant South-South solidarity and support. The total financial equivalent of all activities reached \$175 million in 2006, up from \$169 million in 2005 (UNV 2007).

Like other UN organizations, UNV programme actively promote diversity. The newly appointed UNV programme executive coordinator Flavia Pansieri noted at her introductory message<sup>3</sup> to currently serving UNV volunteers world wide that:

“... [The] visible strength of UNV is its diversity...Diversity, in recognizing that volunteerism in its many different forms is a global concept, a concept intrinsic to all cultures, with a value to all societies. UNV can support countries, through governments and civil society organizations, by building national capacities for volunteerism, by providing recognition of volunteerism through development of adequate legislation, and by facilitation and management of volunteer schemes and volunteer involving organizations. UNV provides an opportunity for people to become involved in the development of their own communities.”

Her comment is consistent with the UNV programme mission, which is: “serves the causes of peace and development through enhancing opportunities for participatory by all peoples. It is universal, inclusive and embraces volunteer action in all its diversity” (UNV 2006). And if diversity is its strength, as Pansieri points out, how do the volunteers deal with this diversity? This, as described in the purpose, is one of the focuses of this study.

The UNV programme contributes to three areas of development: 1) Access to services and service delivery, 2) Inclusion and participation, and 3) Community mobilization through voluntary action (UNV 2007). The work of UNV programme generally takes place at the community level, and involves activities which empower local partners through capacity building. Because of the local focus of UNV work, it can not conduct successful actions without intercultural sensitivity among its volunteers.

This study is one of the first to focus on the ntercultural communication levels within the UNV programme, using the DMIS framework. When I approached UNV programme officials to seek their assistance, the proposal was well received and full support was given by the UNV Research and Development / Volunteerism Specialist Paolo Bernasconi, who has an academic and professional background in the field of Intercultural Communication and is familiar with the DMIS theory.

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<sup>3</sup> Message sent to UNV volunteers by e-mail on Fri, 8 Feb 2008

## **Chapter 2: Research design and methodology**

This chapter gives an overview of the research design and methodology of this study. This chapter focuses on the following four areas: 1) the research approach; 2) data collection procedures – online survey and interviews; 3) data analysis procedures; and 4) subjectivity and ethical concerns.

### **2.1 Research Approach**

This study utilizes the interpretive form of social science research. The aim of interpretive research is to describe behavior and identify patterns and types of relationships. Intercultural researchers Martin et al. noted that interpretive research tends to see “the relationship between culture and communication as a reciprocal one. Culture and communication are intertwined and dynamic. Culture is shaped through communication; communication is shaped and influenced by culture (1998:11 quoted in Viehboeck 2003:42 ).

The unit of analysis of Intercultural Communication is mid-level, being both a normative generalization and a pattern of behavior. A mid-level analysis is positioned between low-level analysis, which focuses on the individual, and high-level analysis, which focuses on institutions, society and international affairs (Bennett 1998:8).

Intercultural Communication focuses on a purely human phenomenon, and tends to avoid purely religious or ideological analysis. When communication behavior is influenced by ideological difference such as race, gender, or political and religious beliefs, the professional research of intercultural communication yields little because the human aspects of behavior are overshadowed by the reification of principle. Discussion of gender, for example, become polarization and communication difference is drowned out by the political commotion (Tannaen 1994 cited in Bennett 1998:10). This is not to say that Intercultural communication researchers cannot address issues of abuse of power and social change. Rather, communication has a great role to play in improving communication and human interaction. Oppression and disrespect need to be changed through explication and facilitation. (Bennett 1998:10)

### **2.2 Data Collection Procedure**

The study was supported by two sets of data collected from UNV volunteers: an online survey and one-on-one interviews.

### Online Survey

The Online survey was conducted over the course of four weeks, starting February 15<sup>th</sup> 2008. In order to achieve the goal of 50 individuals responses, an invitation to participate was sent to 20 pre-selected UNV Programme Officers (POs) and Project Managers covering three geographic regions (Asia, Latin America and Caribbean and Africa), responsible for the supervision and coordination of UN volunteers at country level. In that invitation was a request to forward the information about the online survey to UN Volunteers at each office. After this first invitation, a second invitation was sent to selected nationalities (Japanese and Swiss) through their country offices and focal point persons. The invitation to participate was distributed to 22 Swiss and 30 Japanese volunteers. Finally, the invitation was sent to 50 former UNV volunteers through a UNV focal point. The selection procedure was made in close cooperation with Research and Development / Volunteerism Specialist, Paolo Bernasconi at UNV Headquarters (HQ).

It is difficult to determine how many UN volunteers received the invitation to take the survey. but I estimate that 250 to 300 current and former UNV volunteers received the invitation. I received 48 responses to the survey, which is a response frequency of between 16 and 19 percent.

### Survey Style and Content

When deciding whether the survey questions should be open or close-ended, I personally consulted Milton Bennett, the founder of the DMIS, who recommended the use of open-ended questions.<sup>4</sup> He said that open-ended responses are necessary to utilize the DMIS in an interpretive form. He went on to say that close ended questions already exist in the form of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), which is a psychometric test and a tool to measure intercultural sensitivity.

Because the IDI is a technical tool which requires an administrator's licence, I chose to follow Bennet's recommendation to develop an open-ended survey.

The survey consisted of 19 questions and was designed to take 20 to 30 minutes to complete. As soon as the survey questions were finalized, the survey was uploaded by UNV HQ to an

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<sup>4</sup> The e-mail was exchanged throughout the period of project work, initiated in August 2006 until May 2008.

online survey website where the respondents took the survey, and the results were organized in an easy to interpret manner. See Annex I for survey questions.

### Survey Limitations

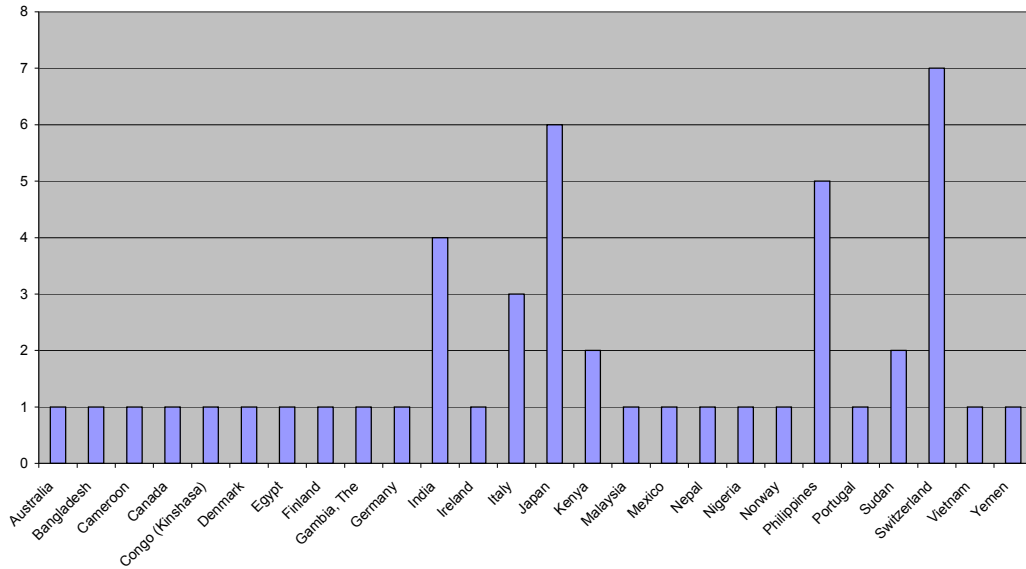
There are several strengths of this online method. It allowed me to collect a wide number sample across several regions of the world. From my standpoint, it was cost and time effective. I was able to reach UNV volunteers without incurring the costs of travelling. On the other hand, the method has important weaknesses. First of all, as it is not mandatory for the UNV to respond the online survey. This meant that participation was limited, and it is impossible to control who participated and who did not. Secondly, the sample was probably biased. For example, there may have been a bias toward UNV volunteers who are interested in the topic of intercultural communication and cultural sensitivity. Thirdly, because the survey was only available in English, it may have made it relatively difficult for non-English speaking UNV volunteers to respond—lowering their response rates. Fourthly, some developing countries have slow, unreliable Internet connections, and accessing the internet can be quite expensive for UNV volunteers. In sum, this is not a representative sample of UNV volunteers, and so in my analysis I treated the data with caution.

### Survey takers profile

A total of 48 people from 26 countries took the survey. The number of Japanese and Swiss nationals is higher than rest because the country specific invitation was sent (see table 1), because they were more approachable due to my nationality, Japanese, and Bernasconi at UNV HQ, Swiss. 48 UNV volunteers are currently serving or recently served in 24 countries (see table 2). Out of 48 respondents, three of the respondents were national UNV volunteers (they serve in their home country), 33 were international UNV volunteers (they serve in a country that is not their home country), and 12 were former UNV volunteers. The job titles and professions of the respondents varied, however, the largest single category was medical doctors and medical specialists (ten respondents). The second largest category was POs (seven respondents). The reason medical doctors made up such a large group is because one of the selected country offices was Trinidad and Tobago where over 70 UNV volunteers serve—the majority of which are medical doctors. Other professional areas represented in the sample included: community development, communication and public information, fisheries, monitoring and evaluation, enterprise development, programme analysis, and human rights. (see table 3. The respondents represent volunteers working in the following agencies: the UNV programme, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UN peace

mission, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS UNAIDS, Non-governmental organization (NGO), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UN Resident Coordinator office.

**Table 1. Country of origin of UNV survey takers**



**Table2. Duty stations of UNV survey takers**

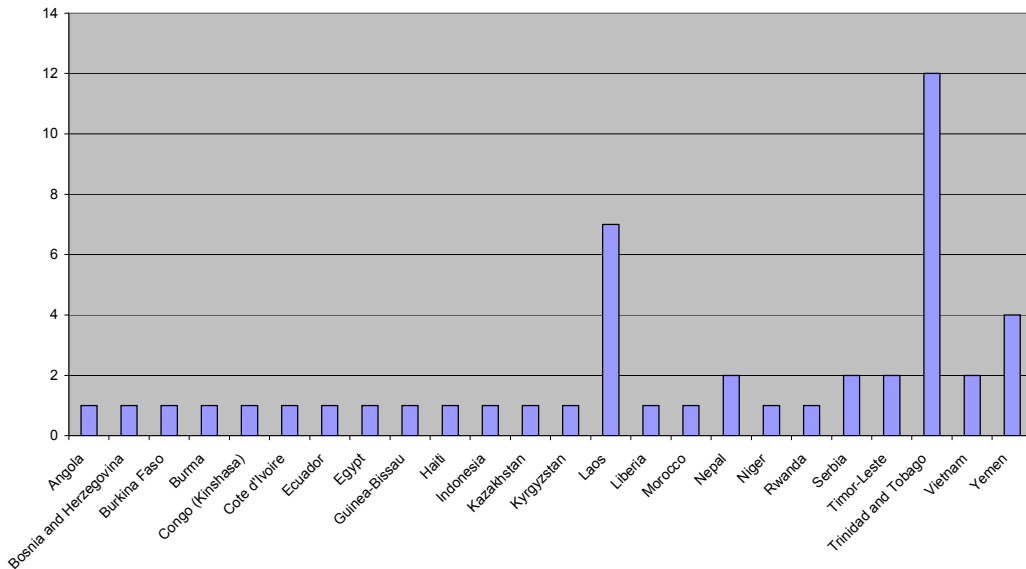
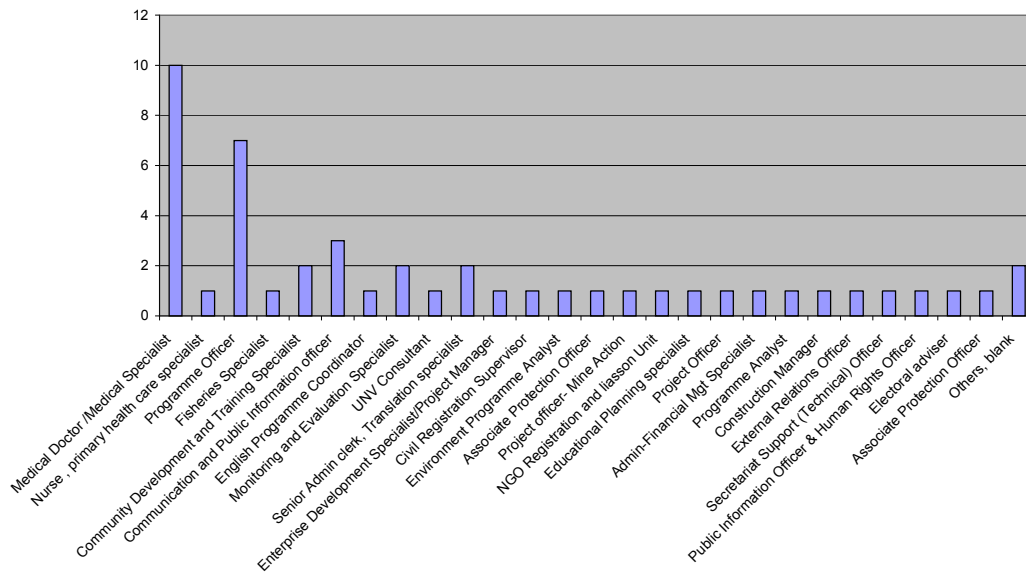


Table 3. Job title of UNV survey takers



## Interviews

In addition to the online survey, two follow-up one-on-one interviews were conducted. One with a former UNV volunteer in Dominica and another with the former director of the UNDP Human Development Report 2004. The interviews are structured based on Kvale's *InterViews. An introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* (2006). The interview guides were developed to reflect the use of DMIS as a framework to identify levels of Intercultural sensitivity.

## 2.3 Data Analysis Procedure

Upon completion of collecting data, the responses were categorized and interpreted using content analysis methodology. This analysis procedure was built on the methods found in *Qualitative Media Analysis* by Sociologist David L. Altheide (1996). Altheide identifies 12 steps of the process of qualitative document analysis in general, where step 9 to 12 specifically concern the data analysis as follow:

Step 9. Perform data analysis, including conceptual refinement and data coding. Read notes and data repeatedly and thoroughly,

Step 10. compare and contrast “extreme” and “key differences” within each category or item. Make textual notes. Write brief summaries of overview of data for each category (variable),

Step 11. Combine the brief summaries with an example of the typical case as well as the extremes. Illustrate with materials from the protocol(s),

Step 12. Integrate the findings with your interpretation and key concepts in another draft.

(Altheide1996:41-42)

## **2.4 Subjectivity and Ethical Concerns**

One of the ethical concerns of this project was the protection of UNV volunteers’ privacy and their anonymity. This study only reveals country level information and general job title as specific data to avoid revealing the identity of the individual respondent.

As for subjectivity, I am a UNV volunteer working in the field, which gives me a biased position. However, to the extent possible, I have done my best to approach the research questions objectively. The point of view in this study is that of an insider, who was able to utilize his position within the organization to gather data from UNV volunteers around the world and I do consider my own intercultural experience gained as a UNV volunteer as an advantage during this research.

### Chapter 3: Theory

The aim of this chapter is to provide a framework for the subsequent analysis of intercultural experience of UNV volunteers. The review of existing literature will focus in the following three areas. First, a discussion on the study and practice of communication for development and the outcome of the U.N. round table on communication for development is presented. Secondly follows a discussion with respect to culture and development that include how culture has been understood in the context of development. Finally, I will review key concepts of intercultural communication, including DMIS as one of the frameworks for analyzing intercultural sensitivity. Figure 1 shows the interdisciplinary approach of existing literature review

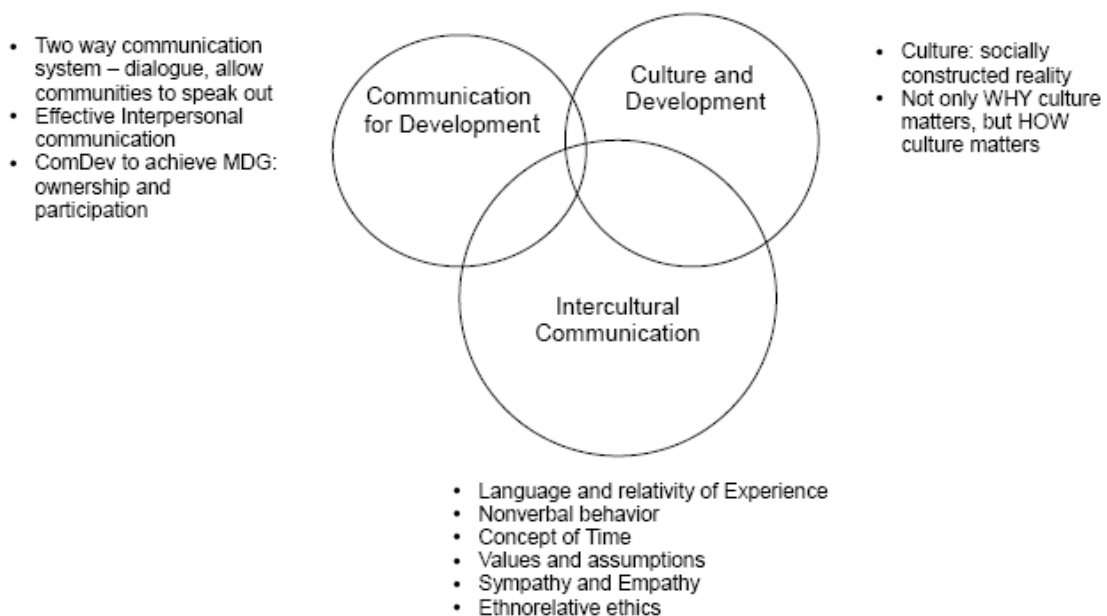


Figure 1. Interdisciplinary approach of literature review

#### 3.1 Communication for Development

In recent years, as sociologist Silvio Waisbord (2005) points out, the field of communication for development has become an umbrella term for a wide range of communication programs and research (2005:77). Indeed there is a list of terms that fall under communication for development, including social marketing, development communication, communication for social change, participatory communication, behaviour change communication, social mobilization, entertainment education, among others. And these diversified theories, methods,

practices and case studies shall be integrated to create a stronger theoretical and practical foundation of the field. Oscar Hemer and Thomas Tufte, co-editors of *Media and Glocal Change* (2005) express their views and motivations to their publication that “there is a tremendous need for more systematic reflection upon where the field is heading” (2005:20).

While there are different definitions of Communication for Development, the formal UN definition of Communication for Development, which I will use in this study, was adopted in the General Assembly resolution A/RES/51/172 of December 1996. Particularly Article 6 says:

“Communication for Development stresses the needs to support two-way communication systems that enable dialogue and that allow communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns, and participate in the decision that relate to their development”

The General Assembly “recognized the relevance for concerned actors, ... policy-makers and decision makers to attribute increased importance to communication for development and encouraged them to include it ... as integral component in the development of projects and programmes”. (UN 1996)

And more recently, the World Congress on Communication for Development, held in October 2006, defined the term in a statement entitled “The Rome Consensus: Communication for Development – A major pillar for Development and Change” as:

“Communication for Development is a social process based on dialogue using a broad range of tools and methods. It is also about seeking change at different levels including listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change. It is not public relations or corporate communication.” (cited in UNDP 2007:38)

These two definitions are consistent as both define communication as form of dialogue and empowering the community, especially for vulnerable groups and the poorest. These perspectives were affirmed at the 9<sup>th</sup> UN round table on communication for development, held in 2004, hosted by FAO in Rome. It argues that:

“Communication for development is about people, who are the drivers of their own development; It contributes to sustainable change for the benefits of the poorest; It is a two way process [and] is about people coming together to identify problems, create solutions and empower the poorest; It is an approach of equal importance to all stakeholders; It is about the co-creation and sharing of knowledge; It respects indigenous knowledge and culture and that local context is key; It is critical to the success of the Millennium Development Goals” (cited in UNDP 2007:38)

All these definitions focus on disadvantaged and marginalized people who do not have the opportunity to raise their voices, and encourages the establishment of a mechanism that makes those voices heard by the national and international community. And this definition and characteristics seem to be widely agreed upon by many stakeholders and actors, at least within the communication for development community (ibid 38). In sharp contrast to the linear, hierarchical approach espoused by modernization and dependency theories, communication for development thus became understood as a two-way process, in which communities participate as key agents in setting normative development goals and standards. Furthermore, as participation plays a critical role in definitions of contrast, interpersonal approaches are now recognized alongside mass media communication as the key to achieving impact (UNESCO 2007:17). Waisbord (2005), as one of key ideas of development communications, also emphasize the need to combine interpersonal communication and multimedia activities. He points out that multimedia formats have a powerful indirect effect, and interpersonal communication is fundamental in persuading people about specific beliefs and practices.

Achieving the MDGs is the main concern for the work of Communication for Development (UNDP 2007, UNESCO 2007). Participation and ownership are critically important to realize the goals. The Bellagio statement on communication and the MDGs, which resulted from a meeting of representatives from bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental organization in November 2004 in Ballego Italy, says that,

To a large degree, success in achieving them rests on participation and ownership. Communication is fundamental to helping people change the societies in which they live, particularly communication strategies which both inform and amplify the voices of those with most at stake and which address the structural impediments to achieving these goals. However, such strategies remain a low priority on development agendas, undermining achievement of the MDGs. (Communication for social change consortium 2004)

### **3.2 Culture and Development**

#### Concept of culture

Culture is a big word. There are a wide variety of ways to define culture and nearly fifty years ago Kluckhohn and Kroeber (1963 [1952]) counted 164 definitions of culture and civilization in the anthropological literature, a figure that will have increased substantially since then. (Alkire, Rao and Woolack 2002:41). I hesitate to spend much space to discuss “what is

culture”, but it seems important to make a distinction between the two broad definitions of culture.

The first definition of culture is some form of fine art – music, movie, painting, wood carving and so on, and the institutional aspects of culture, such as political and economic systems. Sometime it is regarded as the narrow sense of “civilization” and its products (Hofstede 1998: 5) or “artistic expression” (Alkire, Rao and Woolack 2002:41).

The second definition of culture was established by sociologist Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their seminal work, *The social construction of reality* (1967 cited in Bennett & Bennett 2001:7). It refers to the broad patterns of thinking, feeling and acting of people that is more than fine art. Dutch Interculturalist, Geert Hofstede who review culture as a value system define culture as a “collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” (Hofstede 1980:260). His five dimension of cultural value is discussed in detail in the next section. Bennett proposes a working definition of subjective culture as “the learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviours and values of groups of interacting people” (Bennett 1998:3).

Some definitions of culture include both aspects. For example, the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity regards culture as “the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs” (2002:12).

In this study, I will use the second and more subjective definition of culture, unless it is otherwise noted.

### Culture and Development

In the 1990’s, culture became a key word in development discourse (Hemer & Tufte 2005:17), and intercultural sensitivity continues to be a vital part of development work. It seems important here to address question of why culture was brought into the development discourse when it was. As Dutch sociologist, Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2001) points out, culture was introduced into Western ethnocentrism because “the *implicit* culture of developmentalism is no longer adequate in the age of ‘polycentrism in a context of high interaction’, or globalization” (2001:60) .

In the last decade, there have been major UN publications considering the role of culture in development, including the World Commission on Culture and Development, *Our Creative*

*Diversity* (1995), *Action Plan on Cultural Policies for Development* (1998), UNESCO *World Culture Report* (2000), UNESCO Declaration on *Cultural Diversity* (2001), UNDP Human Development Report *Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World* (2004).

Whereas theories, reports and research began to include cultural elements in development and discuss why culture is important for development, Nobel Laureate and founder of the Human Development theory, Amartya Sen (2004), points out that the real question is not why culture matters, but how culture matters. Whereas he extend his work on capabilities, freedom and agency by changing the discussion from why to how, other research and analysis tries to answer the same question; how culture matter and what we do with it, in different cultural contexts. Several UNFPA publications (2004a, 2004b. 2004c. 2005) showcase practices and lesson learned from country programmes that work with religious or community based organizations. They emphasize the importance of taking cultural context into consideration and not to making value judgments on culture. They indicate that the best route to success is to have a strong position on specific traditional practices. The UNFPA document “Culture Matters” (UNFPA 2004c) concludes that culturally sensitive approaches can provide an effective mix of tools for building bridges between universal rights and local cultural and ethical values.

### **3.3 Intercultural Communication**

#### Language and the Relativity of Experience

In the field of intercultural communication, where the formulation of linguistic and cultural relativity are central elements, language is considered not only as a tool for communication but also a “system of representation” for perception and thinking. Understanding of language comes from a theory commonly known as the Whorf/Sapir hypothesis:

“We dissect nature along line laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds – and this means largely by the linguistic system in our minds” (cited in Bennett 1998:13)

American linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf advances the “strong form” of the hypothesis: language largely determines the way in which we understand our reality, but Interculturalists

tend to use the weak form of the hypothesis; language, thought, and perception are interrelated (ibid 1998:13).

Intercultural communication scholars continue to make the direct connection between Language and culture as introduced by Socio-linguists. Condon and Yousef (1975) in their seminal text, *Introduction to Intercultural Communication*, presented the debate about the connection between language and culture and described at length the Whorf/Sapir hypothesis, that language includes culture, as well as several alternative views (Ibrahim DeVries, Kappler Mikk and Hofner Saphinere 2003:3).

Understanding the local language is critically important for UNV volunteers not only because they can communicate and exchange opinions and ideas with colleagues, community members and counterparts, but it also helps to understand how local people construct their reality based on their use of language, thoughts and perception. What we think exists – what is real- depend on whether we have distinguished phenomenon as figure, and since culture through language guides us in making these distinctions, culture is actually operating directly on perception (Bennett1998:15).

#### Nonverbal Behavior – High context and low context

Understanding nonverbal behaviour is a critical element for foreigners, especially in countries where verbal communication is more important, and even so for someone who come from a verbal-oriented society. Hence understanding the nonverbal behaviour seems to be as important as understanding verbal behaviour, if not more.

Anthropologist Edward T. Hall (1983) created a theory that helps us understand both verbal and nonverbal communication, referring to communication as high-context (HC) or low-context (LC). According to Hall, the message is divided into verbal information and context information. HC communication refers to situations where “most of the information is already in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message” (Hall 1998:61). Japanese are known for being HC communicators and it is more important to understand the context – the message was sent by whom, when, and how? For example, people rarely say “no”, instead they use expressions as “maybe”, “I will try”, “we will see” etc. But for a foreigner, if someone says “maybe” in a certain circumstance, by looking at how they say it, it is not easy to understand that the person is really saying “no”. On the contrary, in LC communication “the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code.”

Another term that has to be taken into account is paralanguage, which includes the pitch, stress, volume, and speed with which language is spoken, factors that lends itself readily to misinterpretation cross-culturally. Particularly in a group discussion, the practical consequences of nonverbal ethnocentrism occurs around turn taking in conversation (Bennett 1998:18).

### Communication Style

According to Interculturalists Ibrahim DeVries, Kappler Mikk and Hofner Saphinere (2003), the heritage of communication style comes from a variety of academic fields; sociolinguistics & linguistics, interpersonal communication, anthropology and ethnography of communication as well as intercultural communication. As different academics build up the analysis and theories toward communication style, Ibrahim DeVries, Kappler Mikk and Hofner Saphinere states that “the way in which the different academic disciplines and practitioners define communication style can remind us of the blind men defining the elephant: it all depends on your frame of reference.” (2003:1)

One of the most striking differences is in how a point is discussed, whether in writing or verbally.

European Americans, particularly males, tend to use a linear style that marches through point a, point b, and point c, establishes links from point to point, and finally states an explicit conclusion. The only natural cultural base for the linear style is Northern European (Bennett 1998:21).

Another area where differences in communication style are particularly obvious is around confrontation. European and African Americans tend to be rather direct in their style of confrontation, compared with the indirectness of many Asians and Hispanics (ibid 1998:21).

Adherents of the direct style favour face-to-face discussion of problems, relatively open expression of feeling, and a willingness to say yes or no in answer to questions.

People socialized in the more indirect style tend to seek third-person intermediates to conducting difficult discussions, suggest rather than state feelings, and protect their own and others’ “face” by providing the appearance of ambiguity in response to questions (ibid 1998:22).

### Monochronic and Polychronic Time

According to Hall (1983), there are two types of time systems: monochronic and polychronic. In cultures where a monochronic view of time predominates, people tend to run their lives by schedules in a linear fashion. They focus on one thing at a time – hence the term *monochronic*. In a monochronic culture, time is perceived as tangible: People talk about it as though it was money, as something that can be spent, saved, wasted, and lost. On the other hand, in a society where a polychronic view of time predominates, people tend to be involved in many things at once, and what is important is not schedules and efficiency, but events and people. The meeting, function or workshop starts late, and people see more importance in completing the event rather than following a rigid schedule (Hall 1983 cited in Miller 2006). For Hall (1983 cited in Ting-Toomey 2006), Latin American, Middle Eastern, African, Asian, French, and Greek cultures are representatives of polychronic time patterns, whereas Northern Europe, North American, and German cultures are representatives of monochronic time patterns.

### Values and assumptions

According to Bennett, cultural values are the patterns of goodness and badness people assign to ways of being in the world (Bennett 1998:23). There are two theories commonly used for analyzing the cultural value in the field of Intercultural Communication: one developed by Florence R. Kluckhohn and Fred L. Strodtbeck (1961) and another developed by Geert Hofstede (1997).

The first model by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck defines five dimensions of cultural assumptions, based on research with several cultures. The dimensions are people's relationships to the environment, to each other, to activity, to time, and to the basic nature of human beings. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck state that all positions on the continuum are represented to some degree in all cultures, but that one position is *preferred*.

The second model by Hofstede is based on a more inductive technique as opposed to the deductive approach of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck. By surveying a large number of people from various national cultures about their values and preferences in life, he identified five dimensions of national culture. The dimensions are power distance, collective versus individualism, femininity versus masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term versus short-term orientation. Hofstede defined power distance as “the extent to which the less

powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede 1997:28). Difference in the power dimensions of culture occurs within countries in terms of social class, education level, and occupation. Hofstede defined the second dimension, collectivism versus individualism as follows: “individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (ibid 1997:51). The definition emphasizes the difference between the “I” identity versus the “we” identity of national cultures. Hofstede’s third dimension, femininity versus masculinity refers to gender roles and reflects notions of social culture. Examples of masculine values are: assertiveness, ambition, toughness, focus on material success and performance. Examples of feminine values are: nurturing, relationship orientation, caring and a concern with quality of life. According to the rank-order by data from each culture in terms of each dimension, Japan is ranked 1<sup>st</sup> and the most masculine society out of 53 countries whereas Sweden is the most feminine. The fourth dimension is uncertainty avoidance, defined as “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations” (ibid 1997:113). People from a culture of strong uncertainty avoidance favor clear procedures and guidelines while people from a culture of weak uncertainty avoidance favor higher levels of risk taking. The last dimension of value analysis is long-term orientation versus short-term orientation, which refers to life orientation and focus on future rewards.

#### Sympathy and Empathy: from the Golden rule to the Platinum rule

The Bible’s Golden Rule is to “treat others as you want to be treated”<sup>5</sup>, an assumption based on the idea that other people want to be treated as you do. So if you are not sure how to treat others, a situation common for strangers, you should simply treat the people you interact with as you want to be treated.

Bennett argues that “the Golden Rule in this form does not work, because people are actually different from one another. Not only are they individually different, but they are systematically different in terms of national culture, ethnic group, socioeconomic status, age,

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<sup>5</sup> The Bible says “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them...” Mathew 7:12

gender, sexual orientation, political allegiance, educational background and profession, to name but a few possibilities.” (Bennett 1998:192) This statement seems obvious but in general, many actions are taken based on the Golden Rule. Bennett further points out the connection between the Golden Rule and philosophical assumptions, some concepts of social organization and some communication techniques or stages: The Golden Rule is based on *assumption of similarity* and a *single reality*, meaning that all human beings are basically the same, that there is only one way that things really are and that the reality is discovered through either philosophical/religious (idealist) insights or through objective observations. Hence, a consequence of the Golden Rule is a “melting pot” and “ethnocentrism”. The communication strategy which is most closely allied with the Golden Rule and its attendant assumption is sympathy, or “the imaginative placing of ourselves in another person’s position” (ibid 1998:197).

If the Golden Rule is not the best approach in a multicultural environment, what else would work? Bennett has developed another “rule” that he calls the “platinum rule”, meaning “do unto others as they themselves would have done unto them.” This new rule is based on the assumption of differences and multiple realities. Further, the rule assumes that human beings are essentially unique and reality is not a given, discoverable quantity but a variable, created quality. The communication strategy for the Platinum Rule is empathy, which is “the imaginative intellectual and emotional participation in another person’s experience” (ibid 207).

Bennett argues that empathy can be developed through six steps.

1. Assuming Difference
2. Knowing Self
3. Suspending Self
4. Allowing Guided Imagination
5. Allowing Empathic Experience
6. Reestablishing Self

#### The stages of Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)

DMIS is a tool for measuring intercultural sensitivity, developed by Milton J. Bennett, based on “meaning-making” models of cognitive psychology and radical constructivism. It links changes in cognitive structure to an evolution in attitude and behaviour toward cultural

differences in general. This study used DMIS as a tool to measure intercultural experiences, following the six stages of the DMIS. The first three stages of DMIS are considered as ethnocentric stages. The last three stages are called the ethnorelative stages. These stages are summarized in the table below:

Ethnocentric is defined as using one's own set of standards and customs to judge all people, often unconsciously. Ethnorelative means the opposite: it refers to being comfortable with many standards and customs and to have an ability to adapt behaviour and judgment to a variety of interpersonal settings (Bennett 1998:26)

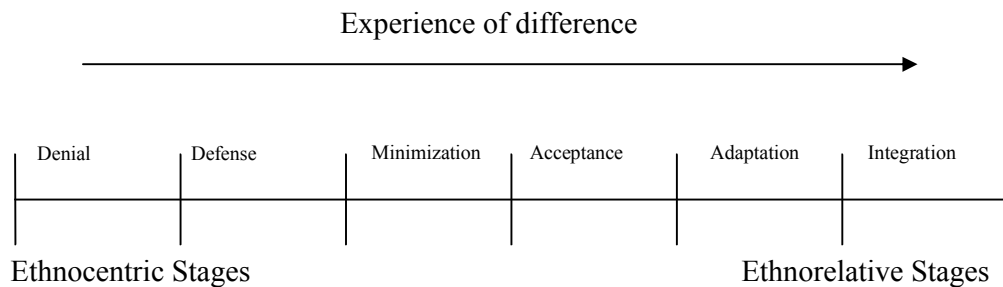


Figure 2. Development of Intercultural Sensitivity

Source: Bennett 1998

### Denial

People at Denial stage do not recognize differences in culture. They may use stereotypes to describe the other culture or people. They may not be open to experience, by chance or by choice, interactions with people from the other culture.

### Defence

People at the defence stage recognize that the culture is different, but they defend their own values and practices by attaching negative images to others in the outside culture. Sometimes they see the other culture as “underdeveloped” in comparison to their own.

### Minimization

People at the minimization stage bury cultural differences. Their world view is that all cultural values and morals are similar and people are same. If people at this stage recognize differences, the differences tend to be cosmetic, surface variations.

## Acceptance

Acceptance is the first of the ethnorelative stages. People at this stage accept differences and view others as complex, with values as valid as their own. People at this stage refrain from qualitative judgements and are fairly tolerant of ambiguity. People at this stage understand that there are different cultures, though they may not necessarily be able to behave and communicate successfully with others according to different cultural context because they have not improved their behaviour repertoire yet.

## Adaptation

Adaptation is of the next step after acceptance. At the adaption stage, people shift cognition and behaviour according to the different cultural context. That is, they can empathize or take another person's perspective (in the new culture) to understand and be understood across cultural boundaries, and based on their cognitive shift; they behave in ways that are more appropriate to the other culture. Bennett calls this shift of perspective "Adaptation/ Cognitive Frame-Shifting" and the shift in behaviour "Adaptation Behavioural Code-Shifting."<sup>6</sup>

## Integration

People develop a concept of self that expands and includes the worldview of the other culture. In addition to the cultural or ethnical background of origin, people at this stage establish an identity which allows them to see themselves as "interculturalists" or "multiculturalists". Peter S. Adler (1977), a mediation and conflict resolution scholar, points out that the multicultural person at integration stage has three distinguished characteristics. First, the multicultural person is phycoculturally adaptive. Second, the multicultural person undergoes continual personal transition. Third, the multicultural person maintains indefinite boundaries of the self.

DMIS and its instrument Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), are not insulated from criticism. In his constructive critique of IDI and DMIS, Intercultural education scholar Greenholtz (2005) examines the validity of IDI and DMIS across culture:

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<sup>6</sup> Adaptation is not the same as assimilation. Assimilation is to lose oneself and become someone else, or "substitutive" (ibid 23). Adaptation is "the process whereby one's worldview is expanded is expanded to include behaviour and values appropriate to the host culture. It is additive (ibid 23).

A lot of room remains for further research in non-US American cultures, using subject utterances in languages other than English. There are also obvious implications, by extension, for exploring whether the DMIS actually taps a universal ‘deep cognitive structure’ of the development of intercultural sensitivity or whether it, too, is culture bound.

### Ethnorelative ethics and the Perry Scheme of Cognitive and Ethical Development

The Perry Scheme of Cognitive and Ethical Development outlines a process where people develop ethical thinking and behaviour as they learn more about the world. The model describes a movement from “dualism” (one simple either/or way of thinking) to “multiplicity” (many ambiguous and equally good ways of thinking), and then continues on to a “contextual relativism” (different actions are judged according to the appropriate context) and “commitment in relativism” (people choose the context in which they will act, even though other actions are viable in different context) (Bennett 1998:30).

UNV volunteers face ethical dilemmas in their work. They may face situations where cultural norms allow things that they have strong moral aversions to, such as domestic violence, public punishment, or genital circumcision. If the UNV volunteers are at the dualism stage of Perry’s model, it means they think of ethics and morality as absolute, universal rules.

For the UNV volunteers, who need to be culturally sensitive and who work in an organization which promotes such things as universal human rights and gender equity/equality, it would help if they could reject the dualistic views and adopt the last two stages of Perry’s model where ethnorelativism and strong ethical principles coexist and reconcile (ibid 1998:30).

In contextual relativism, actions must be judged within the context, and the ethical action is understood by cultural context. In the case of hitting children, one may see and look at how the custom of hitting a child persists in the society, how adults grew up in their childhood and why the rights of children are violated. In this situation, there is no universal ethical behaviour, because the action is judged within the context. Thus, the logic may be: it is socially accepted to hit children, so why shouldn’t I?

Finally, Perry’s last stage suggests that we commit to acting within the context we wish to maintain (ibid 1998:31). This stage holds the same view of contextual relativism, but in it a person chooses – in a deliberate, conscious way, based on a close view of the situation – to adhere to a particular point of view or stand up for a particular value. If we want a reality in which treating children with respect as human beings is normative, then it is ethical to act in

ways that support the viability of that behaviour. Thus, it is important to work towards the values we, or normally our organization, support, but at the same time being sensitive to the ethical values of the cultural context in which we are working, maybe even trying to influence upon.

Kurfiss (1981), Director of Instructional Development at Weber State College, summaries the difference between Perry's last two stages: commitment in relativism and dualism:

Committed Relativist has given thought to the issue, and recognizes that the other perspectives have validity, too; thus this person is marked by a high degree of tolerance of the (differing) views of other people, so long as they are willing to aciculate the basis of their point of view and support it with evidence, sound reasoning, etc.

## **Chapter 4: Results, interpretation and analysis**

This section presents the results of the online survey, interviews, and survey follow-up. The results are analyzed using the theories presented in chapter 3. DMIS is used as the framework to measure Intercultural sensitivity.

### **4.1 UNV volunteers working at the community level**

The UNV volunteers who responded to this survey generally work at the community level or on a project site. 40 of the 48 volunteers replied that they work at a project site or in the community at least monthly. 23 of the 48 work at project site or in the community everyday. This is consistent with the UNV programme's participatory methods and its mission statement that "serves the causes of peace and development through enhancing opportunities for participation by all people" (UNV 2006:1). Nine of the volunteers responded that they visit their beneficiary community "very seldom" or "never really" because they work as administration staff, researchers, accountants, or project managers. The majority of the survey takers who work at the community level responded that they are received well and friendly, if not neutral, by the locals. In cases where the community does not have a lot of experience working with outsiders, UNV volunteers are seen as "interesting foreigner" (Swiss UNV volunteer in Kyrgyzstan), "stranger" (Japanese UNV volunteer in Timore-Leste), "with curiosity" (Japanese UNV volunteer in Burma) and sometime they have been "skeptical about my capacity as an IUNV or being female" (Japanese UNV volunteer in Nepal). However, once a relationship has been built, the relation seems to change. For example, a UNV volunteer may become "facilitator between local and international" (Japanese UNV volunteer in Serbia) or "a resource/lead person" (Indian UNV volunteer in Yemen).

Sometime community members perceive the UNV volunteer as a representative of UN agencies and the donor community, or a developed country. For example, they are seen as "more trustworthy than local staff because I am foreigner from a 'trustable' country" (Swiss UNV volunteer in Kyrgyzstan), "someone who has access to power and an influential network" (Swiss UNV volunteer in Congo) or "a partner in development" (Philippine UNV volunteer in Trinidad in Tobago)

While there are very few comments that UNV volunteers are negatively perceived at the community level, some feel they are seen as "an annoying foreigner that is checking if they do

their work properly by government counterpart” (Swiss UNV volunteer in Kyrgyzstan) or “depending on my attitude and behavior, I can be perceived by the local community and namely the more vulnerable groups like a savior due to my contribution or like a useless person” (Cameroonian UNV volunteer in Niger). Although communication is not included in the typical UNV volunteers job descriptions, their regular interaction and interpersonal communication is the critical step to put participatory communication for development into action. In order to “support two-way communication systems that enable dialogue and that allow communities to speak out” (UN 1996), building a personal and institutional relationship at the community level is vital. According to the Bellagio Statement on Communication and the MDGs in 2004, participation and ownership are central concerns for Communication for Development and achieving the MDGs (Communication for Social Change Consortium 2004). For UNV volunteers building good interpersonal relationships through effective interpersonal communication and intercultural sensitivity is not only about making friends and acquaintances, but it is about ensuring the participation of community members, creating local ownership of the initiative, building a mechanism that enable the public to openly discuss and debate issues, and amplifying local voices to reach policy makers and the international community.

The comment made by a Canadian UNV volunteer in Laos is an example of how to bring Communication for Development, particularly participatory communication and Intercultural sensitivity, forward at the community level:

I try not to talk a lot, but ask questions and remain interested .... I speak local language, so often use this to start dialogues or build relationships...I also try to dress in a manner that is appropriate to the situation

The importance of listening skills, for the success of participatory communication processes is emphasized by Servae & Malikhao (2005).

In terms of capacity building and empowerment this is also critical and the UNV volunteers play an important role through building good work relationship with counterparts. A Japanese UNV volunteer in Angola stresses that “since capacity building of the counterpart both at individual and institutional level require the institutional transformation, I tried to communicate with them patiently”. A Swiss UNV volunteer in Timor-Leste emphasizes the importance of intercultural sensitivity to work in the community and communicate with community members:

I feel there is a mix between not to trust foreigners and the feeling of inferiority. During my work as electoral adviser in the district (previous assignment), with time, this mistrust turned to a trustful cooperative work between nationals and internationals, but it depends very much on the personality and cultural sensitivity of a person. If a UNV doesn't develop cultural sensibility and respect, local community will not respect the person either.

### Volunteerism

When asked if being a UNV volunteer has made a difference in how they are perceived in the community, 33 out of 48 responded yes, and the UNV volunteer comments discussed the positive and negative affects of being a volunteer.

The positive aspects of being volunteers include promotion of volunteerism, accessibility, professionalism and high qualifications, and institutional backbone. Their responses suggest that volunteerism has a positive impact on their work. Through their work, they can influence “local people to do more voluntary work” (Philippines UNV volunteer in Trinidad), it may change locals’ “understanding of work and development”, and “there would be more corruption if there weren’t volunteers” (Japanese UNV volunteer in Kazakhstan). Sometimes the concept of volunteerism is new and unfamiliar in the community or even the country. For example, one Yemeni national UNV volunteer says that her work “adds more to female works in voluntary idea in Yemen”. Being a UNV volunteer also gives more accessibility to the community. Being a volunteer is perceived as being “friendly, accessible” (Norwegian UNV volunteer in Vietnam) and it is “an easy access to approach the community”. A UNV volunteer in Trinidad expressed his satisfaction as a volunteer as:

I work as a physician with other local doctors; they are getting more salary than ours. but we work more than them. and it makes real good feelings.

On the other hand, volunteers have been negatively perceived at their workplace. For example, “young volunteers have often the reputation of being rich and inexperienced” (Swiss UNV volunteer in Ecuador), “armature or intern” (Japanese UNV volunteer in Angola) and “someone who can not hold regular jobs” (Japanese UNV volunteer in Kazakhstan). There are some critical perspectives on the status of UNV volunteer as well. One UNV volunteer from Italy comments on volunteerism as an ethical and moral issue and states that

... an IUNV does not mean doing volunteer work. ...not IUNVs work with the local community - usually they are restricted within the four walls of their offices. And...

IUNVs' living allowance is way larger than the local staff's salary. Moreover, more often than not, IUNVs are seen as cheap labour within UNDP, which doesn't certainly help one feel proud of being a volunteer.

From this limited sample, it is not possible to generalize about the conditions of all UNV volunteers. This sample does suggest that, to some extent, that the positive and negative parts of a UNV volunteer are experience depends on the duty station and project. This survey also points to the need for further research into the the impact of volunteerism (being a volunteer) on one's cultural experience in general, and for the UNV programme in particular.

#### **4.2 UNV and intercultural environment**

The surveyed UNV volunteers work in multicultural environment and almost 90% of them in situations where more than three cultures are present at their workplaces. This means that regardless of their location: a UN agency office or assigned project site, they constantly work with colleagues and counterparts who have different cultural backgrounds. 23 out of 48 says that three to five cultures are represented in their workplace, while ten said that six to eight cultures are represented. Three volunteers said nine to eleven, and eight volunteers said that more than 12 cultures are represented in their office.

The most difficult survey the question to create was:

Approximately how many cultures are represented in your office including yourself?

The challenge was in choice of vocabulary, and it generated questions such as: should I identify the meaning of culture? and is it better to use the term nationality, or ethnic background? Finally, the term culture was used, without any definition, giving room for the survey takers to make their own interpretations. One volunteer specifically contacted me to ask me to clarify what I mean by culture.

Throughout the survey, cultural differences were generally interpreted as a synonym of nationality; yet, it is possible that some of the respondents put their boundaries based on tribe and ethnicity, sexuality or religion, among others. While the focus of this research is not about defining culture, nor how the survey takers understand culture, the diffuseness of the term must be taken into consideration. The focus, however, is rather on “differences” and the ‘in-between’ cultures and in this sense, it is clear that the UNV programme require a high capacity of its volunteers, to deal with different cultures and an intercultural environment, both personally and professionally.

### **4.3 Intercultural communication training and support**

Interviews with key officials showed that there is no standard requirement for UNV volunteers to participate in intercultural communication training, even though some training is conducted at different occasions. At the headquarters level, according to Bernasconi, the UNV programme systematically conducts briefings for POs and for selected program managers. Cultural awareness sessions, such as culture specific briefings, are a part of some UNV programme training courses, but key aspects of intercultural communication are not necessarily mainstreamed to the briefing programme. This new briefing system was initiated in 2007. There are other briefings for different types of volunteers, such as interns and university volunteers. Culture awareness training is also a part of the programme, however, aspects of intercultural communication are not fully covered. . The UNV programme is in the process of developing briefing documents that will be sent to UNV volunteers departing for the field, which shall include an intercultural chapter: country-specific information as well as general intercultural and intercultural communication information. A PO workshop is held once a year for POs as an opportunity for capacity building. This one-week workshop has a presentation on intercultural matters including culture shock, which is intended to empower POs to support UNV volunteers experiencing transition to a new culture.

The information gathered in this survey suggests that, at the field level, the majority of UNV volunteers do not have chance to participate in the type of headquarters briefings described above. Instead, they arrive directly at the duty station. Cultural induction is part of on-arrival briefings that are carried out by the Country Offices. However, this training is not systemized and disparities and inconsistencies exist from country to country. UNV HQ is now working on a different cultural induction schemes for new UNV volunteers to be replicated in the Country Offices.

Survey results from this study indicate that introduction to local culture is sometimes—though not regularly—provided as part of a general orientation or security briefing. It generally focuses on cultural norms and customs, and spells out specific activities which should or should not be done. In very rare instances, the new volunteer receives comprehensive training that includes cultural values, behavior and communication styles. A former Swiss UNV volunteer in Haiti received “one basic general introduction training (including intercultural issues) by Minustah in the first week after arrival, one intercultural training organized by the UNV Support Unit as well as helpful case-by-case discussions with my supervisor”. S/he is

probably fortunate to have had this type of support as, for the time being, this is not an obligation of UNV Support Units or Country Offices.

For those respondents who had never received any form of support on intercultural aspects from UNV directly, there were informal and indirect training and support on this issue. For example, in some countries the cultural trainings were provided by through agencies which cooperate with UNV, such as the JOCV in Japan, and Center for Information, Counseling and Training (CINFO) in Switzerland. Those agencies provide training on intercultural communication to applicants who have less intercultural experience. UNV volunteers who join UNV programme through these agencies receive intercultural training before they depart for their assignments.

Ten of the 48 respondents said that they did not received any type of training or support from UNV programme or any other organizations. Training on intercultural sensitivity and communication should be part of the introduction programme for every new volunteer and not be left ad-hoc to the individual Country Office Teams, Support Units or supervisors at the different duty stations.

#### **4.4 Intercultural challenging situations**

Given that most UNV volunteers work and interact with people from different cultural backgrounds on a daily basis, it is understandable that they face challenges, misunderstandings or puzzling situations as a result of cultural differences. The responses from the survey include a wide range of situations caused by cultural differences, and I will use the key aspects of intercultural communication that Bennett systematized in his article in “Basic concept of intercultural communication”, namely language, non-verbal behavior, communication style, and values and assumption, as presented in the previous chapter.

##### Language

Among the UNV volunteers, there are two different types of challenges related to language: the first concerns people who can not speak the local language, and the second concerns people who are native or fluent in the local language but where the direct accent and usage of words are different. In both cases, there is a language barrier. Interestingly enough, the latter problem seem to be equally challenging, if not even bigger, than the first.

For those who don't speak the local language, the challenges are rather obvious and have direct effects on their work. One example described by a Japanese UNV volunteer whose assignment is 3 months in Vietnam and 3 months in Kazakhstan that :

My challenge has been always my inability to learn the local languages. My lack of the local languages made my interaction with the locals over-dependent on those who speak English and the local language. My solution? In lieu of studying the language, actively expand the circle of bilingual friends. I am close to 60. It is getting tougher and tougher to acquire a new language.

Indeed, it is very difficult for UNV volunteers to learn the language of each duty station, especially when the duration of the assignment is limited and the language is not a widely spoken one.

What is the correlation between the inability to speak the local language and intercultural sensitivity? Based on the Whorf/Sapir hypothesis, language is not only a tool of communication but also a system of representation for perception and thinking. If the volunteers do not have time to command or become fluent in the local language, it is recommended to at least make an effort to learn key phrases and try to get a feeling of the language in order to understand local thoughts and perceptions and how they create the reality based on the usage of words. For example, a native English speaker learning Japanese would properly refer to their teacher with the title, "sensei", as in "Suzuki Sensei". However, in English there is no direct translation for the title "sensei," meaning that much is lost in attempts at translation. The existence (or non existence) of the word in one language or another may indicate deeper differences between hierarchy, morals, and values.

During the interview with a UNV volunteer in Dominica, the issue of limited language ability was identified as the cause of challenges at the office. However, even though this Japanese volunteer had some level of fluency in English after volunteering in other countries for over 3 years, she still had a certain language barrier. One day she called her colleague "buster" but it sounded to the recipient like "bastard". This small incident escalated, and their supervisors finally had to involve the UNV country office to settle the matter. The problem was partly solved when she got a chance to explain and refer to the dictionary definition. However, this is not only a language problem but about building a relationship and trust during daily work.

In the second case, for those who do speak same language but differently, the challenge is no less. One Arabic speaker who went to another Arab country made the following reflection:

For example, in my country we use the word Mashi for meaning agree or OK, in my country of assignment it means NO, can you imagine my first week! (Egyptian UNV volunteer in Yemen)

An English speaking person who went to an English speaking country says that:

...it's English but the grammar/structure is unique and somewhat distinct from internationally accepted English... and they use a lot of slang as well as pronounce the words differently. In a similar note, the locals could not understand how I pronounce some words (Philippines UNV volunteer in Trinidad)

There is also a similar case reported from a Portuguese UNV volunteer in Guinea-Bissau where the Portuguese language is slightly different from the Portuguese in Portugal.

It may not be well understood that fluency in a language does not translate into intercultural communication skills. Sometimes the same language has many variations across countries, and communication styles are even more complex. To adapt oneself to another culture, a native speaker may need to expand their ability to use a language that they are a native with, and also to expand their communication skills. In another words, the Whorf/Sapir hypothesis and the theory of language as a system of representation needs to be looked into carefully. By learning the local usage of words, the UNV volunteers expand their understanding of how local people construct their reality based on their use of language, thoughts, perceptions, and the social context of the language. To use the words of Bennett, “such contexting is less obvious than language itself but knowing it may perhaps be even more important” (2001:5).

This language issue, and a clash of differing realities, tells us that cultural adaptation demands the comprehension of essentially alien experience.

### Non-verbal behavior

Differences with non-verbal behaviors are also challenging for UNV volunteers, especially when, according to Hall's model, a Low Context (LC) oriented person goes to work in a High Context (HC) society. UNV volunteer comments from Lao, where the culture seems to be more HC than LC, illustrate this point. A Kenyan UNV volunteer in Lao points out a difference found around emotions:

In Africa we are normally very open with our feelings and often express them. The Lao people are usually very reserved and difficult to read.

Like the most other Asian cultures, Lao people are HC and use an indirect way of communication, which requires the foreigner to learn the process, which may be challenging especially for people who come from LC cultures. Like the Kenyan volunteer, UNV volunteers originating from cultures where verbal communication is more important, it may be puzzled working in Asia or other regions where non-verbal communication is more important. Hence they need to pay more attention to non-verbal behavior in order to receive the correct message from local partners, as the direct and indirect communication is tightly connected to non-verbal behavior and understanding. Another UNV volunteer in Lao describes the importance of understanding the non-verbal behavior:

I have also started to read body language and facial expressions, as I think that these are key in this society. I also exercise patience. Funnily, my Lao colleagues seem to do the same with us as foreigners.

An Italian UNV volunteer in Morocco found the difficulty in eye-contact:

The fact of looking into another person eyes while talking is perceived in a very different way in different cultures

There is also an example with regard to classical misunderstanding of body language.

According to an Italian UNV volunteer in Egypt:

The only cultural misunderstanding I may remember happened in a taxi when joking with some friends I started snoring. In fact, the "snoring" sound is commonly used to start the Egyptian equivalent of "f\*\*\* you". As you may imagine, the taxi-driver was almost shocked and my Egyptian friends had to explain him I was a foreigner.

In general, culture specific intercultural communication training will help to improve human interaction. Local etiquette and taboos are important elements to include in any training, but more important is culture specific information which focuses on the communication style, cognitive style and values and assumptions of the host country<sup>7</sup>.

### Communication style

UNV volunteers surveyed in this study who were familiar with a linear style of communication, which is point a to b, then c, had a difficult time adjusting to work in non-

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<sup>7</sup> One of the reference for culture specific information is series of work done by Dianne Hofner Saphiere namely the culture detective model. [www.nipporica.com](http://www.nipporica.com)

direct communication cultures. A Canadian UNV volunteer in Lao discussed the differences between Western linear culture and interactions with the contextual discussion style:

...in Laos the more difficult challenges arise from differences in logic patterns and differences in cultural approach. For example, when I ask a yes/no question, I would expect a yes/no answer, but often here people respond with an explanation. Subsequently this explanation changes if you ask the same question again. At first I felt that people were lying to me (Western framework), but now I realize that they are rationalizing/processing thoughts in a different way than I do.

Bennett points out that “the only natural cultural base for linear style is northern European (1998:21)” and the contextual discussion style is favored by many Africans, Latin, Arab and Asian cultures. In other words, most of the duty stations where UNV volunteers work.

### Values and assumptions

The survey result shows that values and assumption is the central concern of the UNV volunteers. The volunteers commented on these questions more frequently than the other aspects of intercultural communication in the survey. The 25 comments and examples collected via survey covers wide range of values and assumption in different cultures. While I presented two theories in the existing research review in earlier in this paper, namely the Kluckhohn/Strodbeck and Hofstede, I categorized the results of the survey based on Hofstede’s five dimensions of cultural assumptions: power distance, collective versus individualism, femininity versus masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term versus short-term orientation. .

For the first dimension, power distance, two UNV volunteers found the hierarchy in the society challenging:

in my eyes, there was a very rigid hierarchy. It was said, this was because of the superior nurse and it's changing with the mission.(German UNV volunteer in Bosnia and Herzgovina)

in my project, dominant people are old local male staffs. Most of them have experiences in working for the government. So they are conservative and they are likely to make group and do pecking order. Those people like to control other staff and do not like initiatives from younger staffs including international staff (Japanese UNV volunteer in Burma)

They both indicate that their work is to change the culture of hierarchy through their mission, and they said they try to have dialogue with locals. According to country profiles from

Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Germany scores relatively low and Japanese is in the middle of power distance; in the home cultures of both of the volunteers, equality among people is valued and respected. Hence the problem occurs when people from low power distance culture work with high power distance because of unequal treatment of people and different use of power. Their approach to these problems is discussed in detail in the next section. Another comment categorized in this dimension is from a UNV volunteer in Trinidad. The volunteer stated that people hold foreigners to a different standard from locals; for example, saying 'accountability applies to foreigners only'.

Interestingly enough, the second dimension of collectivism versus individualism, there are no comments and the terms individualism and collectivism were not used at all through out the survey. This does not mean, however, that UNV volunteers do not have challenging situations related to this dimension. More likely is that this dimension is hidden and the volunteers are not aware of this. The comment of a Swiss UNV volunteer in Timore-Leste illustrates this when referring to different challenges encountered there. The challenge discussed below concerns the concept of team building, which is connected to collectivism and individualism:

As electoral adviser: There were the cultural differences within the working Team in the first place and then the cultural differences with the national counterpart. The challenges were multiple: working language in the office, differences in problem solving approaches, understanding of time concept and fulfillment of schedules, approach to and respect for national counterpart, gender relation and so on.

The various problems he identifies above in relation to working in a group, the difference between "I" identity and "we" identity must be considered.

Seven UNV volunteers had comments that fall into the third dimension, femininity versus masculinity. These UNV volunteers commented that gender differences create challenging situations. Most of the comments are regarding unequal treatment of women at work or in society in general.<sup>8</sup> A comment from Finnish UNV volunteer in Liberia:

For me personally the most difficult is to face male counterparts who don't understand anything about gender equality, who somehow - at least unconsciously - keep women as a second category; or not human beings at all. This has led me sometimes in unpleasant situations. I have used to very equal relations between both gender in working societies as well as in private life, too.

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<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that femininity/masculinity dimension of culture is not the same as *feminism*. Feminism is an ideology taking different forms in masculine and feminine culture; there is masculine and feminine feminism. Femininity versus masculinity is about tender versus tough. As stated in the research approach, this study does not intend to analyse ideology and conduct a critical social analysis.

Scandinavian countries score strong feminine index, and Finland ranks 47 out of 53, whereas West Africa, which includes Liberia, is considered a mid level feminine index, ranking 30. The important element to look at is how this conflict is solved. According to Hofstede's key difference between feminine and masculine society, feminine society at work tries to resolve of conflicts by compromise and negotiation, while masculine society is resolution of conflicts by letting the "best man win". Other key differences are related to the the values of work. The Feminine society stresses equality, solidarity, and quality of work, while masculine the society stresses equity, mutual competition, and performance. So in this case, if this problem is solved by compromise and negotiation, the Finnish UNV volunteer and her Liberian colleagues may find that they share common feminine values, despite the fact that the role of women at work and in society differ. On other note, a National UNV volunteer in Yemen points out that gender issue is an obstacle:

I think Gender issue one of the most important as my community still have problem in accepting women travel for work or to field visit.

There were many more comments from survey respondents that identified gender is an issue, though they are rather general comments and from them it was not possible to identify what kind of cross cultural communication issues were at stake.

The fourth dimension, uncertainty avoidance, also had seven responses. In general, the work ethic in developing countries is more relaxed and flexible than those in developed countries. For UNV volunteers who have strong uncertainty avoidance, they may be frustrated when they have to accept much uncertainty. The following comments illustrate this sort of frustration:

different working methods: as a Swiss, I am used to working in an effective and professional manner on my projects and finishing them as quickly as possible. Other cultures may have a more relaxed, flexible way of going about completing tasks (Swiss UNV volunteer in Congo)

frustrations over work colleagues or government not responding (Australian UNV volunteer in Laos)

I also planned more than my local colleagues. I structures my work whereas most of my colleagues had no work plan at all (Swiss UNV volunteer in Ecuador)

When UNV volunteers come from strong uncertainty avoidance cultures that involve clear procedure and guidelines, they have a difficult time adapting to weak uncertainty avoidance cultures, and to be success in this new culutre requires patience and contextual understanding.

While their approaches and responses to their problem caused by difference in uncertainty avoidance, they also have a clash of common values.

The fifth dimension, long-term orientation versus short-term orientation, the use of time is at stake. The preceding comments concerning the fourth dimension, to some degree, overlap with comments regarding the use of time. Two comments are found in this dimension:

Usually the elective list for operations for the day doesn't start on time. It is either the patients did not come early or not yet prepared since they just arrived, there are no nurses/ attendants to carry the patients to theater or no drugs /lab results are available. This problem boils down to the point that one cannot rush a Trinidadian. He wants always a stress-free atmosphere, thinking only that he is paid only for the number of hours and not on the output for the day. They have this "jus now " attitude which can mean hours of waiting (Philippines UNV volunteer in Trinidad)

My working moral and speed was different from that of my local colleagues at the municipality. Sometimes I was the only person working in the office. The others preferred chatting outside the building. I was generally faster than the local population. Several people asked me in the street where I was running to. In my opinion I was not running but walking in a normal pace (Swiss UNV volunteer in Ecuador)

The issue of time management, which can be a part of dimensions four and five, is frustrating for UNV volunteers, and can impact their work. This is a very important point as most UNV volunteers work in monochronic time with monochronic values, while the local society and work ethic is based on polychronic time.

#### **4.5 Approach to solve the challenging intercultural situations**

In order to solve the above mentioned challenging experience involving differences in culture, I asked survey takers to share the approaches and methods they used to overcome the differences. I utilized the DMIS framework to categorize their responses and measure the predominant orientation to differences.

##### **Denial**

There are almost no comments that fall into this stage. This is because, as mentioned in section 4.2, the majority of UNV volunteers are able to construe cultural differences in more or less complex way. There are three responses that did not comment or where left blank, and as such, could not be analyzed.

##### **Defense**

There are four comments in this stage. The respondents attached negative values to the cultural differences that they observed. In another words, when the respondents were frustrated, as is the case of the volunteer who made the following comment, they are looking at negative aspects of the new culture, and view the world from their own cultural frame:

I always end up frustrated. I was trained to be output oriented worker and even sacrificing time just to attain my goal for the day. On certain situations, I impose on them the importance of such work attitude and the answer would be that THIS IS TRINIDAD!! (Philippines UNV volunteer in Trinidad)

In response to other questions, this UNV volunteer demonstrated that he/she is at the acceptance and adaptation stage, but as the above quotation shows, s/he reached the limit. One of the benefits of developing cultural sensitivity is to control oneself and become more productive. With self control, one is less frustrated, and by extension, has optimal outcomes at work.

The phrase “sacrificing time” is connected to the cultural frame of monochronic time mentioned earlier. While local culture is polychronic, the UNV volunteer attached a negative image to colleagues based on the values of his/her home country. The negative evaluation of the local attitude quickly leads to a world view in which the output-oriented work style is more “developed” and the other culture is “underdeveloped”. Although it is difficult, what s/he needs to do is, in stead of “impose” her/his cultural values of work and time, recognize that there are certain cultural differences. With this recognition, the volunt, and then see the volunteer should be able to see that the other’s concept of time is as valids as one’s own. From this point, the volunteer can then develop a means to deal with the issue.<sup>9</sup>

Some respondents had comments which touched on the subjects of race and gender, and the respondents displayed an “us and them”, polarized attitude. Although interesting, intercultural communication analysis and DMIS is not the relevant instrument to analyze these behaviors.

Minimization.

There were few survey responses regarding the resolution of challenging situations which fall into the category of minimization. Some UNV volunteers appear minimization oriented, though none mentioned it in their methods to solve or overcome tangible intercultural problems. I will address this subject in a later section of this research paper.

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<sup>9</sup> Personal Leadership developed by Ramsey, Schaetti and Watanabe, will be helpful to guide how to discern right action in multicultural environment. More detail, see <http://www.plseminars.com>

## Acceptance

Unlike the ethnocentric Denial and Defense stages, where people are frustrated and attach negative images to cultural differences, people at the acceptance stage become more open and flexible. An Egyptian UNV volunteer in Yemen, who identified intercultural problems related to behavior that are considered rude in other country but accepted in another, comments that:

...actually I never felt offended as long as I understand that they mean no harm, or being rude. I fully understand that this is the way they deal with each other, so I accept it.

It is important to note that he does not necessary accept the offensive, rude behavior, but rather he accept the viability of cultural ways of thinking and behaving, even though he may not like them (Bennett 1998:28).

Another behavior at acceptance stage is to seek knowledge about and experience of different culture. (Bennett 2006a) For instance, in the comment of a former German UNV volunteer in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

If there was a misunderstanding in communication, I tried to talk about it, to clear the situations. I talked to the patients and colleagues, asked a lot, to learn from their culture and to find out their point of view.

This person, who worked as a nurse, consciously recognizes the importance of understanding the local cultural context in order to have efficient intercultural communication.

Another example comes from a Japanese UNV volunteer in Serbia, who identified work ethic as a challenging cultural situation:

...take as it is not to accuse others but just give my point of view.

The term “not accuse others” can be rephrased as “not applying one’s ethical principle”. This volunteer experiences cultural differences in context, and understands that there is a distinctive reality and another worldview. Comparing this response to the ones in the defense stage, it is clear that there is a difference in the exercise of power between the various ethnocentric stages and ethnorelative stages. The following comments of a Cameroonian UNV volunteer in Niger, who identified religious beliefs and practices (sexual mutilation; marriage of very young girl etc.) as intercultural problems, also refrained from judgment and looked into the context of culture:

Most of (these) crucial issues are not issues you can solve or overcome during your mission. I brought my input in friendly discussions with my colleagues, emphasizing not on the moral but design and supporting the sensitization and awareness.

While UNV volunteers work with religious and faith-based organizations, the sensitization and awareness is critically important for communication that leads to behavior change. The understanding the context of society are one of key elements of culturally sensitive program approach (UNFPA 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2005)

Although analyzing local customs, social norms such as eating habits, clothing, and etiquette are not the focus of this thesis, it is necessary to follow local customs and etiquette in order to develop sensitivity toward different cultures. Several responses pointed out the importance of following the local norms:

...do not wear culturally unaccepted cloth, in case some international are doing it, advise or remind them (Swiss UNV volunteer in Timor-Leste)

When you live in a remote area in Laos you need to follow the local traditions, wear a skirt, and live as a local. (Mexican UNV volunteer in Laos)

I very easily go along with the locals, while I have seen some other internationals staff its very difficult to adopt & follow the local customs, my suggestion is 'In Rome be like a Roman'. (Indian UNV volunteer in Laos)

The final quote, 'In Rome be like a Roman' may be applicable in the context of working with local people, and yet, in the context of global organization, Bennett argues that this common saying still misses the point because, *everywhere is Rome* (Bennett 2006b:2). That is, if the cultural diversity is truly used as resource, global organizations (like the UNV program) generate "virtual third culture", which becomes the dominant culture for the working life of that particular group.

The following comment from a Japanese UNV volunteerin in Nepal who is at acceptance stage displays the distinction between acceptance and adaptation. While people at acceptance stage acknowledge the local cultural context, they don't know how to modify their behavior to flow naturally in the different cultural context. He says:

There could be a few people talking at the same time and sometimes you need also to be able to talk in that kind of situation to be heard, which is different from what I was taught in my own culture. Still finding it difficult to adapt.

According to Japanese culture, it is strictly prohibited to interrupt someone's conversation and is considered rude. I also had a similar problem when I start working overseas. These

anecdotes suggest that this type of challenge is common for people from HC, indirect cultures, like Japan, serving in a duty station where the LC, direct communication culture is dominant. In such a situation, how can one improve interaction to communicate effectively? One answer comes from Bennett's six steps of empathy:

1. Assuming Difference
2. Knowing Self
3. Suspending Self
4. Allowing Guided Imagination
5. Allowing Empathic Experience
6. Reestablishing Self

These six steps serve as a practical guide us out of our shells of the familiar, and to become more comfortable in new, culturally challenging situation.

#### Adaptation

In the adaptation stage, in addition to accepting another culture's organization of reality, people build their intercultural skills to work and behave properly. So how do people find out how to behave properly in a different cultural context? The following two comments provide insight:

For me I have had to learn more from my colleagues as we go along what is considered inappropriate and have tried to apply it. I have also shared with them how we act in certain situations and they often try to accommodate me.(Kenyan UNV volunteer in Laos)

I often ask trusted national colleagues how to communicate with partners, and ask for feedback on my performance (Norwegian UNV volunteer in Vietnam)

Both of the volunteers are practicing "Adaptation/Cognitive Frame-shifting: Cognitive empathy" to shift perspective into an alternative cultural world view, thus creating access to a facsimile of the alternative cultural experience.

Once they learn what is culturally appropriate and acceptable, they may behave in accordance with the new cognitive framework. This is called "Adaptation/ Behavioral Code-shifting: intuitive empathy". The volunteers who gave the two examples above are in the process of mastering behavioral code-shifting.

Once people achieve cognitive frame-shifting, it can be less stress to work, even when there is a greater work load. Consider the following example of from a former Swiss UNV volunteer who served in Congo:

I tried as much as possible to adapt to my colleagues, so as to create a cooperative working environment and solve problems together. Sometimes I ended up doing more work than the others because I wanted to achieve good results (especially if I was project leader). I did not complain to them, as I knew that this is just their culture and not a matter of laziness.

With cultural empathy, this person organized his/her experiences through a set of constructs that are more characteristics of the host culture than of his/her own. And as soon as one feels the appropriate work method, knowledge moves toward behavior (Bennett & Bennett 2001:21).

In terms of adaptation to differences in language use, asking questions and practice helps to improve communication, as shown in the following example:

All i did was ask them to speak more slowly and clearly. Sometimes i would ask them to rephrase their statement. Eventually i got accustomed to their way of speaking and i also learned to 'speak their tongue', pronouncing words the way they do and use some of their slang. And communication is a lot better now. (Philippines UNV volunteer in Trinidad)

#### Integration

There is no response of Integration found for this section. This can be explained as the integration is around multicultural identity and it is clearer on the later section of identity.

#### **4.6 Cultural Diversity**

Cultural diversity is sometimes a controversial term for development organizations. Former UNDP director of the Human Development Report (HDR) 2004, Sayoko Fukuda Parr said that the HDR is not promoting cultural diversity, and the HDR does not defend cultural diversity because sometime cultural diversity is achieved at the cost of cultural liberty. She points out that cultural diversity is not acceptable if it means that all culture is good despite of fact that some customs or traditions, i.e. torture, female circumcision, cultural conservatism that deny people's choice for their life, are actually violating human rights. This understanding of cultural diversity can be explained by Perry's model of dualism and

multiplicity. In order to understand cultural diversity in relation to cultural sensitivity, it is necessary to have an understanding of contextual relativism and committed relativism.

UNV volunteers experience diversity in their everyday work, and interact with people who are ethnocentric or ethnorelative. One way to identify ethnocentric people and the ethnorelative people is to measure how much they appreciate the diversity in the workplace; whether they approach diversity with an attitude of suffering, enduring and treating the differences negatively, or enjoying, learning and benefiting from it. The term “patience<sup>10</sup>”, mentioned by seven respondents is an indicator of entry ethnorelative behavior because they recognize the cultural differences and accept them for what they are..

#### Denial/Defense

Two respondents commented that there is no diversity in their office. They are at the denial stage because they are unable to experience differences in complex ways. Also there were a few UNV volunteers who appear to be in the defense stage, saying that his/her approach in dealing with diversity is:

discipline. Educate them and enforced the rule and regulation strictly (Malaysian UNV volunteer in Indonesia)

It’s not really diversity. It relate to their attribute to their work/job. They frequently come to work late or don't work at all. I neglect them and focus on my job only (Vietnamese National UNV volunteer)

#### Minimization

In the minimization stage, people recognize superficial differences and try to work together to achieve a common goal, and yet, they still rely on their own cultural judgment. For example, a Kenyan UNV volunteer in Trinidad says:

I see all humans are same and there is no diversity as such

Bennett calls such predominant orientation “Minimization/Physical Similarity” that contains emphasis on commonality of human beings in terms of physiological similarity as a way of approaching different cultures (Bennett 2006a). Some other volunteers recognize superficial cultural differences such as:

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<sup>10</sup> Patience can be defined as “the ability to continue waiting or doing something for a long time without becoming angry or anxious, the ability to accept trouble and other people's annoying behaviour without complaining or becoming angry (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online 2008)”

The only diversities I could observe were in the ways of eating (anything at any time) and speaking (even more loudly than Italians). Not a big deal, and I got immediately used to it. (Italian UNV volunteer in Egypt)

the way of talking and wearing clothes (Sudanese UNV volunteer in Trinidad)

Another “We are the world” type of approach to the diversity can be found:

love the different foods, have interest in the others' culture, and love the people as friends no matter what they are. My comment may sound corny but you cannot really bridge the gap without internalizing and loving the different other side. (Japanese UNV volunteer in Kazakhstan)

There are also people who try to minimize the differences and seek common interests. Bennett calls it “Minimization/Transcendent Universalism”, with emphasis on similarities of some basic values, typically those of one’s own world view e.g. we are all children of God, whether we know it or not. (2006a). However, while I was categorizing comments using DMIS as a framework, there were a few comments that seek commonality in the multicultural team, and could not be easily fit into the category of Minimization. There are two such responses:

I am not sure I understand the question, but we essentially all agree to work towards a set objective, and this enables us to put aside differences that may otherwise inhibit us. I don't think we all feel that we have to be on the exact same page culturally, as long as we can get the work done. As mentioned above, it is as though we have all merged to a common ground (for example, perhaps Lao people are more outspoken than they normally would be, foreigners have to hold their tempers more, etc) (Canadian UNV volunteer in Laos)

my approach was to focus on the immediate goal and strategize my action and always seek common sense. (Japanese UNV volunteer in Timor-Leste)

I find there is one concrete difference between the first and the second responses. The first one does not try to be on exactly the same cultural page. In other words, the respondent respects the differences, and assumptions about the other culture are difference-based. The second respondent exhibits a belief in common sense, or similarity. Therefore the second respondent is probably in the minimization stage, while the first respondent is more likely in the acceptance/adaptation stage.

### Acceptance

In the ethnorelative stages, people start to recognize cultural differences and in the words of a Japanese UNV volunteer in Nepal “embrace the differences”. Also people seem to become more patient and relaxed by attaching positive, if not neutral, images to the differences. The

Philippino UNV volunteer in Trinidad shows a clear contrast with comment of the Vietnamese national UNV that was in Defense stage:

The habitual tardiness/ Trinidadian time that is being practice from the boss down to the lowest position. For me not to be frustrated, I just show them how I work and most often not to comment somehow.

Patience, being open minded, and curiosity were the most commonly used phrases in the acceptance stage. These key words are the entry points to ethnorelative action because they facilitate a non-evaluative attitude toward differences.

### Adaptation

At the adaptation stage, people appreciate diversity even more, and cultural differences are used as a resource in multicultural teams. Three respondents mentioned cultural diversity as a strength of the organization:

I mainly find diversity very stimulating and enriching, and I try to make the best of it instead of looking for problems. Different cultural habits can be complementary - for example, Africans could be helpful in negotiating with local actors (e.g. authorities). Seeing their ways of doing and comparing with my own also taught me a lot about myself and sometimes made me adapt better to the local situation (e.g. by becoming more relaxed). (Swiss UNV volunteer in Congo)

I (am) working with more than 105 UNV from different culture. I found out during my monitoring exercises that cultural diversity is capital. Most of the UNV will successfully organize income generating activities among the poors according to the cultural economy scheme prevailing in their home community. (Cameroonian UNV volunteer in Niger)

It is very good for a project to have diversity and different ideas. Listening and analyzing others point of view is important for an advisor prior taking any decisions. Feedback from other colleagues from other countries is crucial for the implementation of activities (Mexican UNV volunteer in Laos)

Also observing and changing behavior based on who they are working with (and for) is important. An Australian UNV in Laos stated that

I learnt to adjust attitude and behavior in consideration of who i was speaking with.

Irish UNV in Laos says that “Diversity for me means adjusting and being respectful of those around as well as being yourself”.

### Integration

There are no comments that fall into integration stage.

#### **4.7 Intercultural Ethics**

For ethical and moral issues, there are both ethnocentric and ethnorelative stages exhibited in the survey responses. Eight volunteers had comments that fell in the ethnocentric view on ethical issues, or did not identify any ethical issue such as “no comments” “N/A”, “do not understand the questions”. One of the ethnocentric views toward ethics, in the form of minimization, is presented by a Philippines UNV volunteer in Trinidad:

Nothing. Ethical and moral issues are the same everywhere. The need to take responsibility for ourselves and our children and lead by example. To insist on basic values and also on community values and duties.

This person is in Perry’s model of dualism, insisting that one’s own values are universal. Three other respondents had comments that are at minimization stage.

Though it is not surprising, the results of the survey showed that national UNV volunteers had fewer problems in ethical or moral issues than their foreign counterparts. None of three national UNV volunteers who participated in survey identified particular ethical issues. Two of them responded that they do not have moral issues yet, and one simply said “I try to do my job well”.

So what kind of ethical and moral issues, if any, are at stake? There are different levels. The deepest ethics are those regarding universal values, and particularly perceptions of death. Other ethical issues that UNV volunteers identified, in order of frequency of comments (high to low): work ethics, racism, religion, gender/sexuality, verbal abuse and development/dependency, volunteerism, and customs.

As for life and health care related issues, there were five comments that mentioned a survival and life. The comments were from both health care specialists and non-health care workers. Most of them identified life and health issues as differences in moral guideline and ethics, but very few responded with examples of how they dealt with those differences. The following comments from a Cameroonian UNV volunteer in Niger points to how difficult—and rather problematic—it can be to raise issues of moral difference::

My interest all over my mission as a UNV is in the promotion of universal values (freedom, sacrality of life and human dignity). My experience has proved that getting involved in moral issue may create more problems

As far as work ethics, there were six comments. There are two ethnorelative approaches to ethical difference and they take a relativistic view on their own culture as well as the local culture. Both of them do not see their work ethic as universal and acknowledge the different values, and they are able to shift their behavior and cognitive structure between the different cultures:

work ethics is at stake, at stake because we have different work ethics and we tend to stick to the work ethics that we are used to. When I leave this assignment and go back to my country, I have to adjust to "our" work ethics back home. This has nothing to do with what is the right or wrong work ethics, but with what kind of ethics that work in this area (Philippines UNV volunteer in Trinidad).

For Swiss people efficient and well structured work as well as punctuality are important values. For Ecuadorians they are less important. learned that ones values are never universal but dependent on ones cultural and social background (Former Swiss UNV volunteer in Ecuador).

Since they understand different ethics from a contextual standpoint, both of them are likely in the last two stage of Perry's model: contextual relativism and committed relativism.

Other respondents identified work ethics as an issue at stake, such as the misuse of power and structure, accountability and transparency, but did not have a clear approach to solve the issue, or demonstrate that they are learning from the challenge. A Mexican UNV volunteer in Laos recommended that "Project staff should get a training on this issues (of transparency) and address the importance of 'ethics'", but in order to analyze the intercultural sensitivity demonstrated in this response, more qualitative research and data collection beyond the scope of this study would be required.

Gender issue was a common ethical issue amongst respondents: there were four comments in addition to the four comments presented at section 4.4. Two of them showed ethnorelative views and others were not specific enough to analyze the stage of the respondent. The following comment is from a former Swiss UNV volunteer in Congo. S/he has clear ethical standards against prostitution, and at the same time, s/he tries to understand the context:

Many of my (mainly African) colleagues had local girlfriends/girls who prostituted themselves for them. These practices were very hard for me to accept, but at the same time, I realized there was nothing I could do to change them. Other misfunctionings, I could talk about and try to change, but I learned that there are some things which are very unjust but which one must let be; one must try to understand all sides and the motives of all persons involved.

The following comment is from a Irish UNV volunteer in Laos, who emphasizes the importance of self-relocation, which is a step toward more ethnorelative views on moral issues:

Political differences and moral issues around gender I have experienced, being open minded and sensitive is the best way to deal with differences. Learning often involves reevaluating your own views and beliefs and being respectful that there will always be differences.

On the other hand, there is one ethnocentric view on moral issue, especially for sexuality. The difference between above two examples of ethnorelative view and following example is whether respondents recognize that the other perspectives have validity, too.

as an indian, it was a little awkward to accept the relatively more upfront sexuality, freer sexual mores, speech and jokes in even official settings. Also the prevalence of sex in schools, Violence in daily life. The need to take responsibility for ourselves and our children and lead by example. To insist on basic values and also on community values and duties. (Indian UNV volunteer in Trinidad)

Other comments touched on the subjects of prostitution and inequity in gender issues, yet solutions and what the volunteers learned from the issues are not clearly stated. A former UNV volunteer in Rwanda says, as a part of his learning, that sexual harassment or abuse cannot be solved at the UNV volunteer level and “need to be much higher up in order to change things”.

There were two comments regarding racism, but these comments could not be analyzed because the contents were too broad. One respondent said that racism is an issue and “formal equality is not sufficient to eliminate racial thoughts”. In my view, the cultural sensitivity is one of important aspect to eliminate racial thoughts, but this person did not mention what is necessary to stop racism, if formal equality is not sufficient.

There were also two comments that regard to religious issue in addition to two comments at section 4.4, and one of them face a challenging situation where s/he had to accept moral differences:

Working on HIV/AIDS and sexual health in a very conservative and religious country, I had to learn, from the very beginning, I could not always stick to my set of moral and ethical values when performing my duties (Italian UNV volunteer in Egypt).

It is unclear, however, if s/he is at Perry’s multiplicity or contextual relativism. Supposedly her responsibility as a UNV volunteer at UNAIDS is to promote the committed position on

HIV/AIDS and sexual health issues, and its multiplicity does not help to perform her duty because multiplicity recognizes different ethical values as equally good. Rather s/he needs to be committed to her personal values as well as the organization's ethical positions while s/he understands the context of local ethical values.

Another example of religious issues is presented below. It is more ethnocentric because the respondent, who identified her/himself as strong believer of his/her faith, Islam, does not attempt to understand the local context and his/her culture has more pride and the local custom does not have such superiority:

the ethical/moral issues I faced here is the fact that religion and the institution of marriage is not serious thought as a result you see many single parents out of wedlock, in my tribe the Mandingo, it is a taboo for a girl to be pregnant out of marriage, she will surely be disowned by the parents for bringing dishonor to the family name. Unlike here it is a pride to have a child it doesn't matter how

#### **4.8 Multicultural identity**

The last question of the survey is related to the multicultural identity that UNV volunteers formed through the work in culturally diverse environments. It is clear from the survey results that the majority of UNV volunteers experienced shifts in identity and perspectives, and that they changed their behavior according to the new cultural context. Some of the UNV volunteers expressed ethnocentric views of cultural diversity, and did not see any changes in their identities.

Three doctors serving in Trinidad (from India, Philippine, and Bangladesh) exhibited perceptions common to the Minimization stage, and an ethnocentric view. They stated that: "People are the same," "people are people, and this multiculturalism is but superficial. Bottom line is, good is good and bad is bad wherever you are", "this is a country of harmony of different cultures is".

Most of the respondents in the minimization stage expressed that they somehow have learned how to behave and act when they work with people from different cultural backgrounds, probably in terms of customs, local accents and social norms, but deep down they seem to believe that all humans are the same.

When UNV volunteers move to the acceptance stage, they start to, in a words of a Swiss UNV in Kyrgyzstan, "make more efforts to accept other cultures" and they become "ready to make

compromise on certain aspects concerning in particular the equal treatment of men and women”. They also learn how to get away from prejudice and stereotyping, and in the process of this learning, they become more patient and tolerant to the difference of culture. Notable among 17 UNV volunteers in the acceptance stage, four said they became more patient and three said they become more tolerant.

Accepting the cultural differences does not mean that they lose their original cultural identity/ Rather, they try to keep them, as an Egyptian UNV volunteer in Yemen says:

I'm not looking forward to change as I'm happy of what I'm and what I have got in my country of origin. But on behavior level, I'm totally changed.

If this person has increased the repertoire of behavior and “have maintained the skills of operating in their own cultures while adding the ability to operate effectively in one or more other cultures (Bennett 1998:28)” the person is at the adaptation stage and behavior code shifting.

Some volunteers recognized their own cultural boundaries. For example, a Norwegian UNV volunteer in Vietnam said that “I strive for a culture relativistic attitude around many things, while also clarifying to myself and my environment what I cannot accept (my own boundaries)”

In the adaptation stage, people seem to enjoy the experience more, and gain additional value from their relations with the new culture. As advanced form of adaptation is “bicultural” or “multicultural”, wherein people have internalized one or more cultural frames in addition to that in which they were originally socialized (Bennett 1998:28), they start to learn the different framework of cultural reference. The difference between adaptation and integration is if people “achieve an identity which allows them to see themselves as “interculturalsits” or “multiculturalist” (ibid 29). However, some UNV volunteers try to move up from the adaptation to the integration stage by building such an identity. A Japanese UNV in Kazakhstan stated that:

I may still operate in the bicultural mentality of the U.S./Japan, but my desire to identify myself as international has become stronger

The following comment from a Canadian UNV volunteer in Laos seems to be in adaptation/integration stage:

Yes! I can feel my whole personality shift when I change contexts, from home to office to project office, to home country. These are slight, such as the way I carry myself, eye contact, volume of voice, level of expression in my voice, etc to more obvious such as types of language I would be comfortable using (polite vs colloquial). A very concrete example is that my personal style since being in Laos is very passive and relatively quiet, whereas my normal 'nature' (based on my Canadian self) is much louder and more outgoing.

As Bennett & Bennett (2001) points out, people dealing with integration issues are generally already bicultural or multicultural in their world view. At some point, their sense of cultural identity may have been loosed from any particular cultural mooring, and they need to re-establish identity in a way that encompasses their broaden experience. In so doing, their identities become "marginal" to any one culture (J. Bennett 1993 cited in Bennett & Bennett 2001:24)

Multicultural identity is an important aspect of developing intercultural sensitivity, but it is also discussed as an important aspect of cultural liberty and human development. HDR 2004 (UNDP 2004) argues that developing multicultural identities and the shift and blur of cultural boundaries that separate "us" and "not us" is important, especially in the era of globalization and increased flow of people. One example in the report and mentioned t during the interview with a former chief editor, is a story of a Malaysian Immigrant to Norway. After spending 20 years in Norway, people often say "Oh, you are almost Norwegian!". This story indicates the general assumption that people living in a different culture must lose their identity and become less Malaysian and more Norwegian. In other words, people assimilate to the other culture. Yet multiculturalism means that you do not lose your own identity. Instead, you build on top of what you have, becoming a bi-cultural or multi-cultural person.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

The final chapter, conclusion consists of two parts. Part one presents the overall connection to the purpose of this study and the research questions, and how findings and results of this study put into perspective. Part two presents the way forward, and includes implications for further research.

### **5.1 Connection to purpose and research questions**

The purpose of this research paper was to explore the intercultural sensitivity of UNV volunteers from different perspectives: language, communication style, time concept, non-verbal behaviours, values and assumptions, moral and ethical issue, cultural diversity and multicultural identity. Through the survey and interviews, qualitative data was collected from over 50 UNV volunteers. The findings and results of the data analysis can be summarized as follows:

*Research question 1: What is the predominant orientation to differences of UNV volunteers who may have faced challenging situations involving cultural differences, according to the DMIS as framework?*

Most UNV survey takers were able to recognize and understand that there are cultural differences and there were very few responses in the denial stage. For those in the defence stage, they constructed a polarization – “me” and “them”. Those at minimization stage, coped with local society and respected the cultural differences, yet their predominant orientation to difference, especially with regard to diversity and identity, was s to seek commonality rather than differences. One of the findings of distribution of DMIS stage is that, with few exceptions, people at the ethnocentric stage were either national volunteers or medical specialists. In some cases, one individual exhibited different levels of intercultural sensitivity. These levels depended on their capacity to work in multicultural organization, and were always in the ethnocentric stage..

The majority of UNV volunteers who responded to the survey were in the ethnorelative stage, acceptance and adaptation in particular. Over 30 of the volunteers showed that they accept and recognize cultural differences, shift their behavioural patterns or perspective based on cultural context. At the acceptance stage, UNV respect the differences and consciously practice patience and tolerance to different cultures. There are also cases where cultural

diversity is considered as a capital to implement a project successfully, such as the cases in Niger and Laos. A few UNV volunteers who are in integrations stage developed a multicultural identity.

As far as challenging situations caused by differences in culture, among the wide range of intercultural communication aspects include language, non-verbal behaviour, communication style, the differences in values and assumption was most commented upon, and seems to be the biggest challenge faced by UNV volunteers..

<b>Aspects of Intercultural communication</b>	<b>Major challenges</b>	<b>Examples of UNV: Duty stations</b>
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not able to speak the language</li> <li>• Fluent in language, but different dialect and language use</li> </ul>	Kyrgyzstan, Cote d'Ivoire, Trinidad and Tobago, Laos, Guinea-Bissau, Timor-Leste, Yemen, Kazakhstan, Dominica
Non-verbal behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to receive contextual messages</li> <li>• Understand body language</li> </ul>	Egypt, Morocco, Laos, Yemen
Communication style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different logical patterns</li> </ul>	Kyrgyzstan, Cote d'Ivoire, Laos, Vietnam, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Values and assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different hierarchy at work and society</li> <li>• Gender equality/equity</li> <li>• Work style and ethics</li> <li>• Different concept in time</li> </ul>	Kyrgyzstan, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Laos, Niger, Trinidad and Tobago, Yemen, Serbia, Congo, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burma, Ecuador, timor-Leste, Haiti, Dominica

Table 4. Types of Intercultural Challenges

*Research question 2 What institutional support has been provided to UNV volunteers to improve intercultural sensitivity and communication skills?*

At best, the training can be described as ad hoc. Some UNV volunteers receive intercultural communication training at UNV Headquarter in Bonn, some received training or briefing in their Country Office or Support Unit, and other received none from UNV but from the UNV cooperating agencies that work in partnership with UNV in their home country. Also, there are a number of UNV volunteers who never received training from UNV programme or just a short briefing on security or customs in the country. The UNV programme at the headquarters level is in the process of mainstreaming intercultural competence into its

briefing, induction, orientation and debriefing tools and instruments. The initiative is relatively new to the UNV programme and it will take a while to finalize, implement and obtain the results in modified behaviour and attitudes.

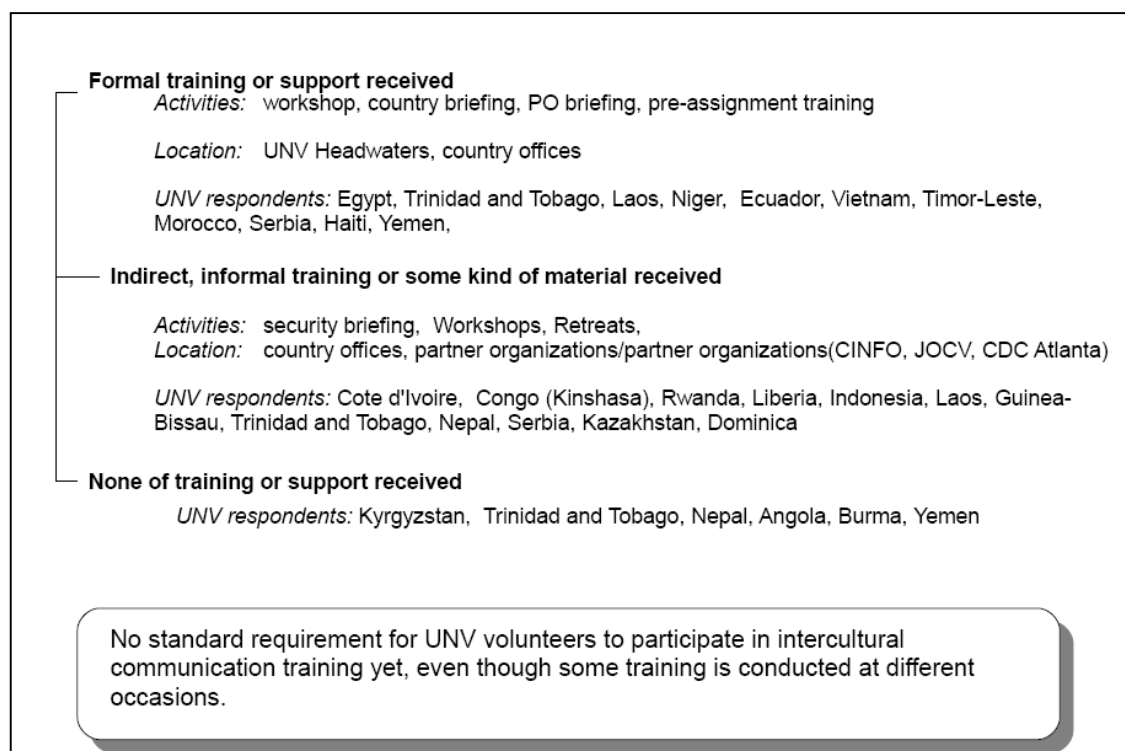


Figure 3. UNV Programme support to improve intercultural communication skill among its volunteers

*Research question 3: How UNV volunteer acquired the Intercultural mind-set and skill-set, is it precondition of a UNV volunteer, or result of being UNV volunteer?*

The majority of survey respondents had intercultural experience prior to the assignment and they seem to some level of intercultural sensitivity. However, most respondents commented that they have learnt or gained intercultural sensitivity during the UNV assignment.

One remarkable finding with regard to this question is the difference between serving UNV volunteers and former UNV volunteers. All of 12 former volunteers were at the ethnorelative stage, either acceptance or adaptation, whereas approximately one third of serving volunteers showed some how ethnocentric view on differences. One of conjectures is that former volunteers, as time pass after their UNV assignment, have come to appreciate their experience

over time—through selective memory. They may forget all of the bad experience and remember good memories.

*Research question 4: What role does intercultural sensitivity play in relation to communication for development for UNV volunteers and can any conclusions be drawn to field workers at community level in general?*

Intercultural sensitivity is an important element for gaining the optimal results of UNV assignments, and completing projects successfully. Intercultural sensitivity is critical not only to improving face-to-face communications in multicultural environments, but also in different aspects of project management: from designing, planning, implementation through monitoring and evaluation. For those UNV volunteers and other field workers who work at community level on a regular basis, it is critical for them to have intercultural empathy with local partners and beneficiaries to understand the development goals and agendas from their cultural context and perspectives.

## **5.2 The way forward**

The academic literature on intercultural communication focuses on higher education, exchange programs and multicultural cooperation. Absent from the discourse is a discussion of the developing countries where UNV volunteers often work (Martin and Nakayama 1997). For example, in the list of countries in Hofstede's model, there are no African countries aside from South Africa—the rest are grouped as West Africa and East Africa, and no countries are listed which can be considered the Least Development Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) or Small Island Development States (SIDSs). In order to apply theories of intercultural communication as a part of communication for development, with a focus on human interaction analysis, there is demand to conduct research not only culture general analysis but also culture-specific research in development countries.

The data collected for this study cannot be used to make inferences about intercultural sensitivity with the entire UNV program. However, it does indicate that there are issues which deserve attention. One area is research: a wider, statistically valid sample of UNV volunteers could shed light onto this important issue, and a tool to guide such research is the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), which measures intercultural sensitivity based on DMIS theory.

Another gap identified in this study is the lack of systematic, comprehensive training in intercultural communications. The UNV program should design and implement structured trainings in intercultural sensitivity for UNV volunteers, not only for selected UNV volunteers and given at Headquarters, but in every Country Office or Support Unit as part of a mainstreamed procedure for both national and international UNV volunteers. By strengthening intercultural sensitivity among UNV volunteers, the communication with local partners would be more efficient and constructive. Stronger intercultural communication would also enhance the results of UNV programmes and projects. In this manner, UNV's intercultural strength would become an organisational asset.

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## Intercultural Sensitivity Survey on UNV

Thank you for taking time to participate in this survey. My name is Keisuke Taketani, a UNV volunteer in Dominica, West Indies. This research on Intercultural Sensitivity for UNV is part of a master programme "Communication for Development" at Malmö University, Sweden. The objective is to explore how UNV volunteers develop Intercultural sensitivity through their work and find a way forward to improve Intercultural communication skill-set and mind-set. This survey should take no more than 15 minutes. The result will become available through UNV HQ after its completion. Please write freely without worrying about writing styles or structure. Kindly note that in the "comments" boxes you have a limit of 3,500 characters (50 characters in the "other" boxes). Thanks.

1 What is your country of origin?
2 Where is your duty station?
3. Are you a <input type="checkbox"/> national UNV volunteer <input type="checkbox"/> international UNV volunteer <input type="checkbox"/> former UNV volunteer
4. What is your job title?
5 Which organization do you work for as UNV? <input type="checkbox"/> UNV <input type="checkbox"/> UNDP <input type="checkbox"/> Peace missions ) <input type="checkbox"/> UNHCR <input type="checkbox"/> WFP <input type="checkbox"/> UNICEF <input type="checkbox"/> UNAIDS <input type="checkbox"/> NGO <input type="checkbox"/> local/national government <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify ( )
6. How often do you visit community or project site to work with local partners? <input type="checkbox"/> every day <input type="checkbox"/> once a week <input type="checkbox"/> every two weeks <input type="checkbox"/> once a month <input type="checkbox"/> very seldom <input type="checkbox"/> never really <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify ( )
7. If you work at community or project site, how do you think you are perceived by the local community?
8. In the response you stated above, has the fact of being a UNV volunteer made a difference?
9. If yes, to what extent?

<p>10. Approximately how many cultures are represented in your office including yourself?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> less than 2</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 to 5</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 6 to 8</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 9 to 11</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> more than 12</p>
<p>11. How many countries have you lived in for more than 6 months?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> less than 2</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 to 5</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 6 to 8</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 9 to 11</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> more than 12</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify ( )</p>
<p>12. What kind of Intercultural training or support have you received from UNV?</p>
<p>13. If you took part in pre-assignment training, was intercultural communication part of the training?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Additional Comments ( )</p>
<p>14. What challenges, misunderstandings or puzzling situations involving differences in culture have you experienced? Please describe your experience.</p>
<p>15. In some of the experiences above, what kind of problems did you identify, why were they problems from your cultural point of view, how did you go about solving/overcoming them?</p>
<p>16. What concrete diversity prevails in your workplace, and what is your approach in dealing with such diversity?</p>
<p>17. In some of the intercultural experiences as UNV volunteer, what kind of ethical or moral issues were at stake and what learning did you take out of it?</p>
<p>18. Since you are working in a multicultural environment, have there been any changes in your behavior or shifts in your identity?</p>

19. Are you available to conduct further Telephone interview on this topic? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
20. If yes, please indicate your name, e-mail and skype id/Telephone number
If you have any questions or comments on this survey, please contact Keisuke Taketani, e-mail: keisuke.taketani@undp.org, skype: keisuketaketani

Annex II  
 Online survey content analysis framework

Q 7 If you work at community or project site, how do you think you are perceived by the local community?

	Quote	Comments/Analysis
Positively received		
Neutral		
Negatively received		
Other/Unclassifiable		

Q8. In the response you stated above, has the fact of being a UNV volunteer made a difference? Yes – No  
 Q9. If yes, to what extent?

	Quote	Comments/Analysis
Grass Roots friendliness		
Professionalism		
Volunteerism		
Representing UN, from western/developed country		
Others		

Q12 What kind of Intercultural training or support have you received from UNV?

	Quote	Comment/Analysis
Formal Training or support received		
Indirect, informal Training or some kind of material received		
None of Training or support received		
Others		

13 If you took part in pre-assignment training, was intercultural communication part of the training?

	Quote	Comment/Analysis
Training or support received		
Training or support NOT received		
Others		

Q14- What challenges, misunderstandings or puzzling situations involving differences in culture have you experienced? Please describe your experience.

	Quote	Comments/Analysis
Language		
Nonverbal Behavior		
Communication Style		
Values and Assumptions		
Others		

Q15 In some of the experiences above, what kind of problems did you identify, why were they problems from your cultural point of view, how did you go about solving/overcoming them?

	Quote	Comment/Analysis
Denial		
Defense		
Minimization		
Acceptance		
Adaptation		
Integration		
Unclassifiable		

Q16 What concrete diversity prevails in your workplace, and what is your approach in dealing with such diversity?

	Quote	Comment/Analysis
Denial		
Defense		
Minimization		
Acceptance		
Adaptation		
Integration		
Unclassifiable		

Q17 In some of the intercultural experiences as UNV volunteer, what kind of ethical or moral issues were at stake and what learning did you take out of it?

	Quote	Comments/analysis
universal values		
Verbal abuse		
Work ethic		
Racism, ethnicity		
Religion		
Gender/Sexuality		

Health care		
Other		

	Quote	Comment/Analysis
Denial		
Defense		
Minimization		
Acceptance		
Adaptation		
Integration		
Unclassifiable		

Q18 Since you are working in a multicultural environment, have there been any changes in your behavior or shifts in your identity?

	Quote	Comment/Analysis
Denial		
Defense		
Minimization		
Acceptance		
Adaptation		
Integration		
Unclassifiable		

Annex III Online survey research theme

	<b>Research Theme</b>	<b>Area of Focus</b>	<b>Survey Question</b>
1	Introduction	Explain the context of survey and remind them to write freely to express their honest opinion.	<p>Thank you for taking time to participate in this survey. My name is Keisuke Taketani, a UNV volunteer in Dominica, West Indies.</p> <p>This research on Intercultural Sensitivity for UNV is part of a master programme "Communication for Development" at Malmö University, Sweden. The objective is to explore how UNV develop Intercultural sensitivity through their work and find a way forward to improve Intercultural communication skill-set and mind-set.</p> <p>This survey should take no more than 15 minutes. The result will become available through UNV HQ after its completion.</p> <p><b>Please write freely without worrying about writing styles or structure.</b></p> <p>Thanks.</p>
2	Validity of geographic context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verify the geographic background of surveyee – where they from and where they are now.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your country of origin?</li> <li>• Where is your duty station?</li> </ul>
3	Validity of professional context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verify the professional background of surveyee – what they do at which organization.</li> <li>• Verify if surveyee works is based on community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your job title?</li> <li>• Which organization do you work for as UNV (UNDP, UNHCR, UNAIDS etc)?</li> <li>• How often do you visit the community or project site to work with local partners?</li> </ul>

4	Validity of Intercultural environment of volunteer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Verify surveyees' multicultural environment at present and past</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approximately how many cultures are represented in your office including yourself?</li> <li>How many countries have you lived in for more than 6 months?</li> </ul>
5	Institutional support for Intercultural sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Verify what kind of institutional support UNV provide to surveyee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What kind of Intercultural training or support have you ever received from UNV? If you took part in pre-assignment training, was intercultural communication part of the training?</li> </ul>
6	Intercultural experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify any experience on intercultural difference</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What challenges, misunderstandings or puzzling situations involving differences in culture have you experienced? Please tell me your experiences as stories.</li> </ul>
7	Intercultural problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask surveyee to identify the problem and how they solve the it. Their method of problem solving and conflict resolution may connected to intercultural sensitivity and will be analyzed by framework of DMIS that describe "denial", "defense", "minimization", acceptance", "adaptation" and "integration"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In some of the challenging experiences above, what concrete problems did you identify, why were they problems from your cultural point of view, how did you go about solving the problems?</li> </ul>
8	Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask surveyee what kind of diversity s/he find at workplace and how they cope with it. The response on impact of diversity can be positive or negative based on their predominant orientation to differences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What concrete diversity prevails in your workplace, and what is your approach in dealing with such diversity?</li> </ul>

9	Intercultural Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This question is to verify if one is moving different cultural frame of reference, and have established “interculturalists” or “Multiculturalists” at Integration stage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Since you are working in multicultural environment, have there been any changes in your identity</li> </ul>
10	Ethnorelative Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This question is to explore if surveyee has ethnorelative or ethnocentric view on ethics. The response will be analyzed based on Pierres Scheme of Cognitive and Ethical Development that describes movement from “dualism” “multiplicity” “contextual relativism” and “commitment in relativism”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is your view on ethical principle or moral guideline in different culture?</li> </ul>

