The Misuse of Altruism: An Ethical Analysis of Volunteer Tourism

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I. Introduction

Through the rise in global tourism, wealthy, affluent westerners have come into closer and closer contact with the developing world and the intense poverty that these countries experience. Americans, who remain numerically the largest group of international tourists, have begun to venture farther away from the ancient ruins of the Coliseum or the grassy fields of the Trocadéro. In search of both cultural and geographical wonders, American tourists have undertaken large expeditions into the mountains of the Khumbu in Nepal or the vast plains of the Serengeti in Tanzania. In the inherent quest to see a part of the world that is so very different from our own, these tourists have often come into direct contact with a form of poverty that is more intense and more deadly than the economic impoverishment of western societies. In many cases, there is an immediate desire to help. This empathetic response has resulted in the creation of several Non Governmental Organizations that are focused upon contributing to the alleviation of poverty; however, a new and rapidly expanding industry aimed at combining both volunteer work and global tourism is becoming prominent in the impoverished areas of developing countries.

The companies that embody this industry, informally known as “voluntourism”, have created a business based upon serving westerner’s altruistic tendencies. By offering a short-term volunteer experience in exchange for payment, this industry possesses more appealing characteristics for some tourists than traditional philanthropies. Consequently, these businesses are gaining a much larger presence in domestic and international spheres due to the large amount of wealth that they have begun to accumulate. They are beginning to take up a more noticeable position in both the tourist and philanthropic
based industries. With little regulation and the ever-increasing inflow of dollars for altruistic experiences, the volunteer tourism industry is beginning to thrive. With 1.6 million volunteer tourists spending two billion dollars each year, tourist giants like Carnival Cruises are beginning to open up new volunteering branches.\(^1\) It is becoming such a substantial part of the tourist industry that it needs to be studied and understood from both an ethical and a practical standpoint.

In the following paper, I have limited my study to a theoretical and ethical analysis of the volunteer tourist business model. The aim of the paper is to study the effectiveness of the volunteer tourist industry against the values and ideals preached by both the organizations themselves and the volunteers who employ their services. The standard placed forth is the belief that volunteer tourism “makes a difference” or it is more beneficial to developing countries in its existence than not. In fact, these organizations argue that their cooperation in funneling philanthropic westerners to teach and aid developing countries provides significant benefits for the impoverished. This paper does not discuss the effectiveness of international non-profit organizations or other short term volunteering based philanthropies. Instead, the focus is upon for-profit organizations that use volunteering in developing countries for financial gains.

This paper is divided into two correlating sections, which focus upon the practical efficiency of these organizations and their corresponding ethics in relation to international standards for proper economic development. Initially, this paper begins by explaining the literary works of several contemporary social scientists and philosophers

regarding both the ethics and statistical impact of volunteer tourism. It then extends into
the methodology and analysis sections that further investigate the extent of
voluntourism’s effects of poverty alleviation in the developing world.

II. Literary Review

In order to organize my literary selection into the most convenient and useful divisions, I
have separated the readings into two separate categories: voluntourism’s interaction with
short-term volunteering and voluntourism’s approach to business ethics. Through these
two divisions, I am most able to separate and clarify the sources that will be used to
advance my overall thesis. It is important to note that there are no large or definitive
studies on this subjecting; instead, I am required to use a variety of localized and varying
papers in order to extract the main themes of my paper. Though some articles often focus
on issues that are not directed at voluntourism such as missionary work, the business
structure, conflicts, issues, and shortcomings of these organizations are often analogous
enough to the business model of voluntourism for them to be used in direct criticism on
certain practices.

A. Voluntourism and Short-Term Volunteering

The primary focus in this part of my research is to focus upon identifying whether
short-term volunteer work is sustainable and helpful in international development. In
addition, I have highlighted several research papers that discuss the benefits and failures
of voluntourism and missionary work, which can be understood as having an analogous
business model. Through these papers, I have been able to reach a general conclusion on voluntourism main’s appeal, to help those who are deemed unable to help themselves.


Published in the Harvard Law Review in 2001, Matua deconstructs the western approach to the human rights movement into three themes of savages, victims, and saviors. It is through this attitude that Mutua notes that western activists have adapted the white man’s burden into a modern ideological construction that dehumanizes those who they are trying to aid. The insinuation that a developing country’s government or culture is barbaric due to its inability to submit to human rights norms causes western activists to depict the impoverished as passive victims. Consequently and most importantly, these victims need westerners to “save” them from themselves. This article applies to an understanding of the rise of voluntourism as it illuminates a way to relieve this burden by directly providing aid. In order to become volunteers, these activist go through an intermediary, a business whose purpose is to employee such persons in the developing world. This business is frequently the voluntourism industry. These Western tourists pay businesses in order to help aid the impoverished. By encouraging a modern ideological construction of the westerner and the poor, the voluntourism businesses are further attacking the human dignity of the impoverished in the foreign world, thus entrenching racist and preconceived beliefs.
2. Capacity Building Contributions of Short-Term International Volunteers –
Benjamin J. Lough, Amanda Moore McBride, Margaret S. Sherraden, and
Kathleen O’Hara

In this study, research from several different universities, including the University of
Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Washington University in St. Louis, University of
Missouri-St. Louis, and Columbia University, interviewed staff of International
Volunteer organizations to discover the benefits and hindrances of short-term volunteers.
By interviewing organizations that hosted and did not host short-term international
volunteers, the researchers realized that international volunteers regardless of their skill
level could fill basic gaps within an organizations bureaucracy. Consequently, the main
benefit that short-term volunteers provided was an “extra pair of hands” for menial and
unskilled labor. In addition, the ability of volunteers to speak the host language of the
country most frequently affected their perceived effectiveness. Though great strain was
placed on several organizations resources with an influx of volunteers, most of these
organizations expressed positive views towards international volunteers.

3. Did We Do Good? NGOs, Conflicts of Interest and the Evaluation of Short-
Term medical Missions in Sololá, Guatemala – Nicole S. Barry

Barry’s article discusses the inherent conflict of interest between the goals of
international philanthropies and the effects of volunteers in Guatemala. Though most
volunteers were motivated by inherent altruism, she notes that volunteers placed a greater priority upon their own needs rather than on those of the community. This had a massive effect upon the non-profits. Because the volunteers funded these ephemeral medical missions, the missions often began to focus upon the wants of their volunteers rather than the needs of the indigenous community. She concludes by stating that these short-term, non-profits are so tied to the finances and labor of the short-term volunteers that they are limiting their perceptions of what the mission should do.

4. The Role of Short-Term Volunteers in a Global Health Capacity Building Effort: The Project HOPE-GEMC experience – Sara D. Rominski, Jamila Yakuba, Rockefeller A Oteng, Matt Peterson, Nadia Tagoe, and Sue Anne Belle

An analysis on the effects of short-term volunteers in Ghana, this article highlights a non-profit’s practices that the authors deem to be admirable and worthy of imitation, highlighting the effective use of skilled medical professionals in a developing country. Though this delves away from my general thesis, this article highlights the discrepancy between using unskilled and high-skilled volunteers. It further reveals the importance of effective organization and training for these short-term medical volunteers.

B. Business Ethics

The accumulation of research upon business ethics and statistical data upon voluntourism is a necessity in my overall analysis of the voluntourism business model.
The guiding idea or motivation for voluntourism is to improve the quality of life for an un-resourced population. However, much of the literature focuses on the shortcomings of these organizations. Of the greatest concern is the possibility of negative overall impact due in part to a lack of regulation and the general unsustainability of voluntourism. These works primarily criticize the business strategies that hamper the growth of developing economies and limiting the advancement of human capital through the industries general business practices. Furthermore, an evaluation of these issues results in an acute judgment of particular policies enacted by them voluntourism industry.

1. *Tourism and Sustainable Development* - United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Commission on Sustainable Development

Produced by the United Nations in April of 1999, the UNCSD NGO Steering Committee outlines several primary problems with the modern tourism industry such as the decreased access to natural resources for the local community, cultural erosion, and the usage of unqualified personnel. It further notes that the multiplier effect of tourism is not as powerful as assumed due to the fact the most tourist organizations purchase material from their country of origin rather than the host country. In order to fix these blatant discrepancies, the United Nations provides several guidelines that encourage the international tourism to act more sustainably. The United Nations implores tourist organizations to establish local training programs in order to hire qualified locals, buy materials locally, and respect indigenous cultures. Through this promotion of sustainable
growth, the organizations can aid the local countries as well as promote sustainable
tourism that encourages responsibility and tolerance.

2. *The Role of the Tourism Sector in Expanding Economic Opportunity* – Caroline
Ashley, Peter De Brine, Amy Lehr, and Hannah Wilde

Produced by the Harvard press, the study focuses upon using tourism in order to
expanding developing countries economies. Noting that tourism lags behind many
industries in its focus upon sustainable long-term growth of a local country, it offers
several methods in which the business model can be altered to develop institutional and
human capital within a country. The most useful section centers upon the training and
usage of indigenous peoples in order to advance the human capital of particular areas.
The article notes that the goals of these organizations should be to create self-sustaining
economies that can eventually run themselves.

Living Ethically* – Peter Singer

In his groundbreaking work, Peter Singer establishes the notion of effective altruism and
its importance in alleviating extreme poverty. It is through this book that Singer argues
that individuals should use their money and time in order to provide the maximum
amount of good for the world. Throughout the majority of the book, Singer uses several
different examples of effective altruists; however, he becomes most effective when
discussing charities. In short, there needs to be greater transparency and efficiency. Individuals should know how their money or time is used in the most effective manner possible. Though not specifically a charity, the voluntourism business model is based on the same use of altruism in order improve the general human condition. Thus, for people’s altruistic energy and money to be used effectively, the organizations need to provide act in the most cost efficient and sustainable manner possible. Not to do so would be unethical.

III. Methodology

In the literary review, I have briefly mentioned the division of my paper into two general themes: the effectiveness of short-term volunteer work in the developing world and the general requirements for sustainable tourism. Because voluntourism acts like a charity organization and accumulates wealth through tourism, I will be using these themes in my two-pronged analysis of the industry’s business model.

A. Short Term Educational Work

The first portion of my paper will be focused upon the challenges of using short-term volunteer labor in order to achieve effective alleviation of poverty. The primary focus will be upon the various forms of labor that short-term volunteers provide for the indigenous community of a developing country, primarily teaching. Because many westerners approach the subject of teaching with over confidence due to their belief in the superiority of western schools, many untrained volunteers work as teachers, often without
any language background. Consequently, they replace or substitute themselves for domestic teachers. In the production function below, I highlight the relationship between the output of education between the determinants and inputs required for meaningful education.

Education Production Function:

Output:

\[ E = \text{Education} \]

Inputs:

\[ T^D = \text{Local teachers} \]
\[ T^V = \text{Volunteer teachers} \]
\[ K = \text{Capital = School Infrastructure (chalkboard, desks, etc.)} \]
\[ B = \text{Educational Materials (Books, pencils, etc.)} \]
\[ P = \text{Peers or Other Students} \]

Traditional Model:

\[ E = f(T^D, K, B, P) \]

The problem with the traditional model of educational attainment in developing countries is the nonprofits and voluntourism organizations believe that the students in developing countries are not reaching the desired educational level. This can be graphed as such:
E* = Desired Educational Attainment

E < E*

Consequently, these organizations believe that they can increase educational attainment by altering the educational production function. It is in this manner that there are several attempts to increase the capital, educational material, and the quality of domestic teachers. All of these methods would theoretically increase the quality of education; however, the introduction of new volunteer teachers does not possess the intended effect. Ideally, the introduction of a volunteer teacher would increase the educational attainment due to the perceived volunteers higher access to education.

![Ideal Educational Attainment With Volunteer as a Substitute](image)
By substituting, domestic teachers with volunteer teachers, these voluntourism organizations are introducing individuals, who do not have fluent language experience, lack teaching experience, and are general unqualified. This causes several different issues resulting from the ineffectiveness of the new, western substitute teacher due to a general lack of effectiveness. These unskilled substitute teachers may possess higher educational attainment with B.A.’s and higher degrees; however, their inability to convey this education attainment to students hinders their effectiveness. Consequently, the domestic teacher is proven to be more effective. Thus, educational attainment decreases if you substitute TV for TD.

\[ E^1 = f(T^D, K, B, P) \]

\[ E^2 = f(T^V, K, B, P) \]

\[ E^1 > E^2 \]

The substitution of foreign volunteer teachers causes distraction and confusion due to a lack of language and educational experience. If graphed as a linear function, the educational attainment function will appear as such:

\[ E = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 * T^D + \alpha_2 K + \alpha_3 B + \alpha_4 P \]
Returning to the issue of volunteer teachers, if a volunteer teacher were inserted into the linear formula state above there would be a net loss. Because we assume that the domestic teacher is more effective due to their language skill and experience, it possesses a higher coefficient than the volunteer teacher.

\[ E = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 T^D + \alpha_2 K + \alpha_3 B + \alpha_4 P + \alpha_5 T^V \]

\( \alpha_1 > \alpha_5 \)

By removing the domestic teacher from the education production function, there is a net loss.

**Real Educational Attainment With Volunteer as a Poor Substitute**

There has been implementation of volunteer teachers working as teacher’s assistants instead of substituting for the domestic teacher. It is in this manner that the volunteer acts
as a compliment rather than a substitute. It is in this manner that the linear function would appear as such:

$$E = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 T^D + \alpha_2 K + \alpha_3 B + \alpha_4 P + \alpha_5 T^V + \alpha_6 T^D T^V$$

From this function, it is easy to note that as long as $T^V$ is not negative or 0 then it will improve the educational attainment in some degree. The main issue is to what degree. With the minor educational and language background assumed in the previous formulas, it can be understood that this complimentary effect would not alter the educational attainment to any great degree. Nevertheless, with some skilled background, the educational attainment of the school could increase a significant proportion. However, with unskilled labor used as a compliment, a teacher could dedicate crucial time and resources to managing the volunteer teacher. This could happen too such a degree that it could have a negative impact on educational attainment.

$$\frac{\alpha E}{\alpha T^V} = \alpha_{50} - \alpha_6 T^D$$

If $T^V$ distracts then:

$$A_6 < 0$$
The main problem with voluntourism and short-term volunteer work is that the majority of individuals who are volunteering are inexperienced and lack general language skills. Consequently, it can be theoretically understood that these individuals would have a net negative impact upon educational attainment if they became a substitute for a domestic teacher and would not have a great positive influence if they worked as a compliment.

**B. Business Ethics**

As stated in the literary review, a large portion of this essay will be focused upon the business ethics of this industry. While voluntourism has emerged very quickly in the past fifteen years, it has begun to take up a significant share in the tourist market. With next to no regulation, this industry has begun to be dominated by travel companies such as Carnival Cruises, who have created a volunteer cruise line, not companies focused upon sustainable development. Consequently, because this business model states that it is trying to aid in the development of the poor, these organizations ought to be held
accountable to particular set of ethical standards. These organizations need to be 
sustainable, actively increasing the human and industrial capital of a developing country, 
and they need to be using the volunteer’s money effectively.

As I analyze the ethical state of these organizations, I will use the standards placed forth 
by the United Nations and the Harvard Law Review to theoretically gauge the 
effectiveness of voluntourism’s ability to foster human capital and promote sustainable 
development.

I will use the ethical models placed forth by Peter Singer to accurately assess whether 
these organizations are capable of effectively using the money provided by volunteers.

IV. Normative Section

Several philosophers touch on issues that are directly involved in the volunteer tourism 
industry; however, works by Makua Matua and Peter Singer are the most pertinent in 
regard to the image of aid that the this industry places forth. Importantly, Matua and 
Singer view humanitarian aid with a critical eye, questing the idealism of these 
organizations in correlation with the real progress made in advancing the quality of 
human life.

As stated in the literature section, Makua Matua focuses upon the complex relationship 
between humanitarian organizations, including volunteer tourism, and those individuals 
who humanitarians want to aid. In this paper, she attempts to define whether this is a
healthy, sustainable relationship that fosters both mutual respect and long term, positive
growth. She concludes that for most organizations it is not. In fact, it turns into an
objectification of the poor. Through what Matua describes as the savage, victim, and
savior complex, humanitarian organizations depict developing countries and their
populace as helpless victims. The savage nature of the government, the people
themselves, or some external threat creates victims who possess no agency and are unable
to protect themselves. Thus, there is a need for saviors, specifically ones who are white,
western, and Christian. These saviors bring western medicine, philosophy, and a
“superior” way of living. Though these volunteer based organizations attempt to be
neutral, they are characterized by their “Eurocentric universalism and Christian
missionary zeal”.2 Thus, in most instances, these organizations are importing western
values into the developing world. While these organizations maintain all the financial and
aid resources, they create an unequal power dynamic between the developing world and
western aid workers. The main issue is that there is not cross-cultural interaction between
two cultures. Consequently, the “civilizing missing” of the saviors creates unfair and unethical relationships between the aiders and those aided.

Peter Singer’s The Most Good You Can Do illustrates the theory of effective altruism.
This theory is based upon the utilitarian premise of providing the maximum amount of
good to the people who are suffering the most. Singer focuses upon the ways in which the
everyday citizen can provide aid through monetary donations. He specifically hones in
upon practices of charities that individuals should donate to. These organizations use

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their financial resources in the most efficient and ethical manner possible with little to no money being wasted on external or useless expenses.

V. Analysis Section

Voluntourism presents itself as a business that provides access to volunteer opportunities for the average short-term tourist. It is under this premise that the organizations operate under the notion that they provide more good for a local society than bad. By providing western educators and money, they present this business model as ethically sound. In order to affirm such a statement, these organizations must prove that this business practice is sustainable and beneficial for the developing country in which the organization is based. Additionally, the organizations must prove that their use of volunteer’s money is used in the most effectively altruistic manner possible. In studying these organizations and the basic premise upon which the voluntourism business structure is built upon, one can gauge the ethical nature of these organizations through their interaction with the developing nations in which they are based and with the volunteers who provide money and physical manpower.

In order to judge the sustainability of an organization, one must first acquire a set of standards centered upon international tourist practices. In 1999, a commission on sustainable development established by the United Nations released several guidelines for sustainable tourism from a nongovernmental perspective. Within this published commission, the United Nations released several qualifications and guidelines for the tourism business to follow in order to establish sustainable development within developing countries. The initial problems mentioned by the United Nations regarding
the tourist industry are centered upon the increasing cultural erosion and disrespect for human rights, unqualified jobs, and the absence of a multiplier effect. These issues are primarily focused upon tourism organizations failure to sustainably develop the economies of foreign countries. The sustainable goal for these organizations is to expand their business in correlation with the expansion of the economy of the developing country and the human capital of the developing country. Because many tourist organizations fail in this regard, there is not only a direct attack upon an indigenous culture but also a colonial stripping of resources. In order to combat these issues, the United Nations offers several guidelines that are aimed at keeping domestic resources within a country, encouraging domestic job training amongst indigenous peoples, cultural respect, and the explicit hiring of indigenous peoples. These direct policy recommendations further encourage the tourist business industry to invest in local economies rather than strip them of their resources.

In a more developed thesis, Harvard University released a more in depth study and proposal for the Role of the Tourism Sector in Expanding Economic Opportunity in 2007. Through a very intensive study of information provided by the World Bank, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, and the United Nations, this proposal highlights that the tourism industry lags behind other industries in is corporate responsibility and ought to focus upon sustainable development. Though it highlights tourisms initial effects on wages, growth in inter-sectorial areas, and the improvement of infrastructure, it also notes

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impacts similar to those of gentrification with higher local prices, exchange rates, and cost of utilities. This can leave indigenous individuals not involved in the tourist sector worse off. Similar to the United Nations proposal, this study presents two primary focuses when discussing the sustainability of tourism: increasing the multiplier effect, and increasing indigenous human capital. As noted in the United Nations proposal, many tourists industries harm developing countries through the importation of goods and services from western civilizations.\(^6\) This includes goods and services as well as employees. Consequently, the money earned through tourism is recycled through Western economies, not invested in the economies of the developing countries. In addition, the employment of western employees to fill managerial staff and other positions further limits the growth of human capital within the developing countries.\(^7\) In summation, the practices that many tourist organizations pursue are often flawed in their inability to successfully expand particular aspects of a developing countries economy.

The Harvard University does not end at the flaws of the tourism industry but rather offers several business strategies that can expand economic opportunity in the “visited” countries. These proposals focus upon acquiring resources locally and developing human capital.\(^8\) Specifically mentioned is the directive for tourist companies to source “products and services from local suppliers” and create “effective on the job technical and management training programs not only to improve… service, but also enable employees to develop transferable skills”.\(^9\) By focusing on employment and

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\(^7\) Caroline Ashley et al., 16-20.
\(^8\) Ibid, 16-22.
\(^9\) Ibid, 17,19.
training, these organizations would enhance the skill of the local indigenous populace rather than outsource the work elsewhere.

The issue with the volunteer tourism business structure is that its business model is established in direct opposition to these standards. Because these organizations are marketed to individuals who want hands on experience and want to “make a difference”, these organizations employ western volunteers throughout the developing world. With most volunteers working no more than four weeks, these individuals typical work as unskilled substitutes for indigenous labor. Thus, the voluntourism industry imports workers and supplies from western countries for jobs such as teaching, construction, and health care. In doing so, they are placing inexperienced workers in the place of indigenous specialists. This affects the domestic economy in two ways: first, the usage of an unskilled volunteer such as a teacher in a developing country occupies jobs that had previously been available to the indigenous peoples; secondly, by using volunteers in areas of skilled labor, the organization creates disincentives for individuals wanting to specialize in a particular field. The culmination of this limits economic growth and employment opportunities in developing countries.

The theoretical application of the volunteer tourist business model results in the further degradation of the developing economies of industrializing countries. The theoretical construction of the volunteer tourism business ignores the business strategies placed forth by the United Nations and Harvard. Because the structure of the business is fed from the employment of foreigners, it is unable to coincide with sustainable economic

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development as defined by the United Nations and Harvard. Instead, the organizations create a form of dependence on the industry as well as encourage the potential exploitation of host communities.¹¹ Due to the direct control of money and manpower, these organizations reduce the ability for foreign institutions to control their own destiny. In order to receive either donations or manpower, they are subject to the whims and employment preferences of the volunteer tourism organizations. Volunteer tourism does not create sustainable economic and human capital growth; instead it creates an imbalance of power between local organizations and voluntourism businesses.

These organizations also absorb a large quantity of money for their for-profit business practice. Though the price can range from $1,000 to $4,000 for a two-week stay in a foreign country (not including travel costs), many of these organizations use this money on self-promotion and advertisement rather than provide direct donations to host societies.¹² Furthermore, it is important to note that many of these advertisements and mission statements can often be misleading to potential volunteers.

This business model inherently uses customer money in order to support itself first, then the host community, and finally various undefined ventures. This usage of money provided through altruistic motivations allows one to judge the ethical nature of the volunteer business model from an alternative point of view. Because the donated money is not fully invested in the community aided, the ethical nature of for-profit volunteer organizations must be debated. In this paper, Peter Singer’s theory upon effective altruism offers a particular set of ideals, which allow one to judge the for-profit

volunteer organizations upon. In his ethical work, Singer states that effective altruism is “a social movement which applies evidence and reason to working out the most effective ways to improve the world”.13 Within this definition, Peter Singer urges altruists to live modestly in order to maximize the amount that they can give to charity and provide money to the most effective charity. This is done in order to provide the most good for the world.

Peter Singer spends several chapters discussing the most effective charity to support, yet in his analysis of donations he focuses primarily on nonprofit organizations. He denotes the importance of cost-effectiveness of charities, noting that many charities cannot provide “sufficient evidence demonstrating that the charities are doing good in cost-effective ways”.14 Importantly, the heart of this section is the acute use of money for effective altruistic means. Disregarding the fact that we have proven the ineffectiveness of voluntourism most popular position, teaching, it is important to concentrate on the ineffectiveness of using a for-profit business model for the purposes of attaining altruistic gains. If under Peter Singer’s assumption that philanthropic organizations should use money in the most effective manner, it is best to observe the general waste of money expended upon voluntourism operations. The greatest waste of money can be directly seen in the travel cost. This expense in this area can range from $1,000 to $10,000 depending on the location and the cost of living expenses. This money could be most effectively used if it was directly donated as it would both encourage domestic employment in developing countries and eliminate the waste of money that would return to western travel organizations.

14 Ibid, 152.
In addition, the administrative costs of these for profit organizations insinuate the misallocation of resources. Though many organizations argue that the for-profit aspect of their organization is focused upon expansion, by providing these for-profit organizations with a greater amount of capital they are further distorting the balance between the community and the incorporated volunteer tourist organization. By donating directly through a non-profit organization, the ineffective waste of money dedicated to administrative and advertising costs is eliminated. For-profit volunteer organizations ineffectively use financial resources in these areas. If one is to be the most effective altruist, it is necessary that the money be provided to non-profit organizations that minimize the waste of financial resources in such areas. By limiting the profits of such companies and expanding the resources of nonprofits, the most effective usage of altruistic resources is committed.

VI. Conclusion

After a thorough ethical analysis, this paper argues that the gains of volunteer tourism regarding its benefits to developing countries are minimal if not outright harmful. Its negative impact on the cultural and economic stability of these countries does not “make a difference”. While these organizations seem to excel at providing tourist based services for their client, they fail in aiding the developing world. The hypocritical nature of volunteer tourism must be highlighted so the reforms can be made. The inability for this form of tourism to effectively alleviate poverty through its usage of unskilled labor is representative of the failure of the industry as a whole. These organizations need to be recognized for what they are, tourist based organizations. They are not providing
significant aid to the developing world through their practices and need to halt this form of false advertising.

This paper is not intended to be a condemnation on international volunteering. It is aimed at enlightening individuals to pay attention to what organizations they are working for and how best they can aid the developing world. Volunteers cannot become separate from the community that they wish to aid; instead, they must work within the community in order to have the greatest impact.