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Giving a Voice to those often Unheard:  
An Impact Assessment of International Service-Learning Courses on St. Lucian  
Communities

Although it is believed that service-learning is mutually beneficial for both the student participants and community members involved, determining the impact on the local community is often difficult and under researched. The University of Vermont (UVM) has been bringing students to the small island of St. Lucia for the past 8 years developing and implementing different projects and programs designed to address the problems of sustainable development on small island states. This paper examines the impacts that the international service-learning (ISL) classes from UVM have had on the local communities throughout the island. Interviews were conducted over a two-week period with the various community partners that have worked directly with UVM over the years. All the data collected was qualitative in nature using open-ended questions allowing for respondents to reflect on a more personal level of their experiences. Throughout the interviews a beneficial impact was apparent with some of the benefits perceived being in education, community empowerment, and the sustained commitment to the St. Lucian communities by UVM over the years. Some recommendations for the future were also raised by the different community partners with the hope of increasing the impact of the ISL projects and programs to more communities throughout the island. Further interviews with a more comprehensive sample are needed in order to determine how extensive the “ripple effect” is beyond the direct beneficiaries. Future research will also include quality of life factors in an effort to quantitatively measure the impact on community growth. By giving a voice to the community members impacted by the ISL projects and programs it is possible to better understand the direct and indirect benefits provided and design future projects and programs that have a greater impact for the community at-large.

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