

International Issues in Community Development

School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences
Auburn University
FOWS 3025

Instructors of Record

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International Student Volunteers (ISV)

Course Format/credit hours

3 credit hours will be given for successful completion of FOWS 3025. The class will include six, 1½ - 2 hour discussions/lectures on site *and* ten 8-hour days of service/educational contact with community development organizations. All discussions/lectures and service/educational contact will occur in the host country.

Course Description

For the purposes of this course, a community is defined as a group of people within a physical location (e.g., a village) linked by bonds of shared interests, common goals, and mutual trust. Community development occurs when people come together to choose and then implement projects that they believe will benefit the majority of the members of the community.

Community development projects may be designed for economic and/or social benefits. Examples of projects designed to produce economic benefits to be shared by the community include constructing a community business like a communally-owned eco-lodge or fish farm, constructing tourist trails through a nearby forest, working for a new or better bus service, or repairing the community school house. Projects for social benefits may include installing floodlights or a drainage system at a community soccer field, constructing a community center, and operating a day care center for the children of women who work outside the home.

There is another important aspect of community development. As members of a community begin to work together on projects for mutual benefit, they become closer. Trust between community members increases and the bonds between people strengthen. The quality of 'community' increases among the people living in the village. To summarize and to paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, community development is development *of* the community, *by* the community, *for* the community.

'Sustainable development', in which economic and social development goals are balanced with environmental conservation, is generally thought to be more effectively pursued at the community level. So-called 'top-down' initiatives from national governments are rarely effective, especially compared to smaller, local 'grassroots' programs that are community-driven. However, communities may choose development projects that are not considered sustainable, or that are implemented without concern for their environmental consequences. This may occur if there is a lack of understanding regarding the implications to the surrounding environment or perhaps because the community has more immediate concerns with respect to their economic or social situations and therefore give less consideration to the conservation of local ecosystems and the needs of future generations.

Communities that are substantially able to choose their destiny are considered “empowered.” Empowerment reflects direct participation by community members in the decisions that directly affect them. This can only happen if national and provincial governments allow the community a degree of autonomy and provide some resources to help implement the community’s choices. Richer and more educated communities usually are better able to win autonomy and resources from governments and to use them well. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can also help communities to increase their autonomy, make wise decisions, and design and administer successful projects. The assistance they provide may include technical knowledge (e.g., from conservation biologists), physical labor, organizational skills, or fund-raising.

This two-week course allows students to look at all aspects of community development in rural areas through international program placements, on-site volunteer tasks with selected communities, and exploration of the host country. Students volunteer on community development projects and learn about the host country, its people, culture, and ecosystems. Students can meet with diverse groups within their host community, including local leaders, women’s organizations, environmental NGOs, humanitarian aid groups, community associations, school children, and families. In addition, they will participate in group discussions, and visit and study local heritage sites, protected areas and wildlife reserves. As a result, students are able to see which people and groups are involved and how they interact, and to understand the needs of the host community and the development choices it makes.

Course Requirements/Evaluation

Students are expected to actively participate in all volunteer tasks activities undertaken by their host organization during the volunteer component of the program. Students will be evaluated based on satisfactory completion of all of the following criteria:

- A. Daily journal entries in a field notebook describing the student’s activities, observations of environmental conditions and environmental management practices, and contacts with local resource persons (25% of grade).
- B. Participation in all regular group discussion/lecture classes during the two-week project, and leadership of one group discussion as directed by the ISV Instructor (25% of grade). Participation involves actively participating in discussions by providing input and asking and answering questions in discussion class and during volunteer field activities.
- C. Documentation and evaluation by the ISV on-site Instructor of project results and student performance during the natural resource conservation volunteer project (10% of grade).
- D. A quality term paper describing the student’s specific project and overall cultural and environmental lessons that also draws relevant information from assigned readings and additional published sources (40% of grade).

<u>Assignments</u>	<u>% of grade</u>
Daily Journal	25%
Group discussion/lectures	25%
On-Site student performance	10%
<u>Term paper</u>	<u>40%</u>
Total	100%

The standard grading scale will be used (i.e., 90-100% = A; 80-90% = B; 70-80% = C; 60-70% = D; <60% = F).