

Appendix H
ON-SITE VISIT SUMMARIES

Site #1

This state was randomly selected to be visited as part of the on-site review component of the study. This state had several county and campus based participants who served six months or longer in Poland. Within the state, twelve interviews were conducted. The interviews included two randomly selected participants of the Polish-American Extension Project (PAEP), one administrator, two co-workers, three support staff, two community representatives, and two family members. The two PAEP served only a six-month assignment in Poland.

Organizational Context

This state has a very large extension system. The university has a strong history of international programming including the extension system. The administration was very proud of the extensive involvement in international extension activities. There are general policies and infrastructure that includes extension in the leadership and organization of extension international programming. It is inclusive. There is general support for extension education programming as part of the total organization of international programs for research, teaching and extension.

This university was very supportive of faculty and staff participation in the Polish American Extension Project. It was reported that the organizational leadership understood and promoted involvement. The university had general policies, guidelines and procedures to assist faculty and staff during their participation. Overall, the organization had a history of extensive involvement in international programming; therefore, an experience factor that was helpful to initiate any new projects and to prepare individuals to participate in the international programs.

There was excellent support for the participants in their home units. The faculty members received strong support from the department chair and the county agent had total support from county director and co-workers. There was a very high respect for both individuals in the county. The community had a good knowledge of the extension agent's participation during and after the Polish experience. The extension agent provided materials for the county newsletter during the six-month assignment in Poland and presented several programs for clientele groups after returning. Both the county and regional offices reported little difficulty accommodating the extension agent's absence. It was mentioned that a back fill was not provided and that other county and area agents had to provide additional extension program support. This did create some extra work for co-workers but they did not have a problem doing so. There was no skepticism towards international assignments. Everyone placed a high value on an international experience as an excellent professional development opportunity. The other co-workers expressed an interest in international assignments and they looked forward to a similar opportunity. The Polish American Extension Project was viewed favorably and with many positive comments.

Organizational Impact

The participant experiences had some impact on the organization. The participants were self-motivated and creative. When they returned, they provided their co-workers and clientele knowledge of Poland. This effort was supported by the organization. They provided an international experience for others who could not travel abroad. Some plans were underway to develop 4-H youth exchanges and volunteer exchanges with Poland. Many of the county volunteers had previous experience hosting international exchange persons.

Overall, the organization had encouraged participants to share their experience with others. The participants reported that the knowledge learned during their participation was very useful for their extension education programs. They reported using the Polish agricultural situation to enhance their workshops and programs. Both participants said the international experience was rewarding and beneficial.

Personal, Family and Community Impact

The participants were very complimentary about their participation in the Polish American Exchange Project. Their family members also spoke very highly of the experience. Both spouses indicated that it was a rich experience for their families. However, it was difficult being separated for six months. Both participants and their spouses considered this a major opportunity: total life changes, opened new doors of opportunity, changed feeling towards the United States, broadened horizons and vision of the world.

Throughout the interviews with co-workers, support staff and community representatives, it was reported that they could see a difference in the participants after they returned. They viewed things better and had a very positive attitude about others and extension programs. One community representative who was a superintendent of a public school reported that the participant, who was an elected school board member, shared his experience during official board meetings which helped to focus the board on the issues. The superintendent indicated that the school and community learned plenty from the participant; it already had an impact on the participant and the school.

Future Projects

It was clear that the extension system gained from the participation in the Polish American Extension Project. The participants were pleased and professionally supportive of their international experiences. They were appreciative of the USDA orientations in Washington and Warsaw. They did recommend that a better re-entry program needs to be developed. It was somewhat difficult to return to the United States after six months abroad. It was recommended that a re-entry orientation would be helpful to maximize the value of the international experience.

The participants also recommended that the state should use the back fill funding to provide support as intended. When a back fill is not provided, especially at the county level, it places stress on the system. It is unfair to expect others who have full-time responsibilities to also cover for their co-worker who is representing the university on an international assignment.

Site #2

This state was randomly selected to be a part of the site-visit component of the *Overseas Technical Cooperation Impact Study*. Within the state, three staff members had served in Poland; however, only one still remained on-staff. Therefore the region and county from which the one participating agent was located served as the host sites for the interviews. The participating agent was a female generalist. She served as home economists in her state, but while in Poland she contributed to all program areas, especially community development. She spent two six-month assignments in Poland during the early 1990's. Within the state, a total of seven interviews were conducted to serve as the data source for this summary. Individuals in the following roles were interviewed: Director of Extension, Regional Director, Associate Director for the Program Area, Co-worker, Support Staff Member, Community Representative and the Participating Agent.

Organizational Context

This state can perhaps be considered typical of other state extension systems. Although the University has a strong history of international involvements, the extension system is not particularly involved. There are neither policies nor infrastructure within extension to support an international dimension. As one respondent noted, "there is no commitment within the organization toward an international component, but there are people within the system who care and can make things happen." The Extension System could be characterized as supportive, but not aggressive. Each opportunity for an international assignment is handled on an individual basis. Senior administrator's report trying to accommodate to individual requests and in recognizing benefits, at least for the participant, of international assignments.

The extension system in this state was in massive reorganization and downsizing at the time of the Polish-American Project. In fact this reorganization was one of the factors that influenced the placement of the target agent. Her position was being reconfigured and she would be moving from a county to an area responsibility. Because of the upheaval that would take place, anyway, it was considered an ideal time to be away on an international assignment! But these same forces also created an opportunity for the leverage of resources. A proposal was developed by the Regional Director and Associate Director to use some of the salary savings from this assignment to help other staff travel to Poland. Thus in the first six months two additional administrators conducted site visits in Poland and in the second six months an exchange program was established to send and receive six home economists in Poland and the U.S. This creative use of resources provided an opportunity for many more people from the state to benefit from the project.

Organizational Support

There seemed to be universal support, both within the organization and in the community for this agent to participate in this international project. However such unlimited support was reported as being granted because of the respect and admiration accorded the person. She was a senior agent with strong community involvement and excellent performance. Respondents noted that some people assume that international assignments are "perks" associated with long service or even "junkets" with no expectation of benefits for the organization or clientele. These attitudes were not expressed in relation to this agent, whose history of international programming support and open involvement with clientele served to set her assignment off as being different from other experiences. People anticipated that the community would learn from her experience and thus rightly anticipated correspondence during her absence and a wide variety of presentations upon her return. However, that such a difference in expectations existed, signals that skepticism toward international assignments is rather the norm, and that little value is associated with such assignments to the system or the community.

Generally both the county and area office reported little difficulty in accommodating to the agent's absence. In both cases, transitions were occurring anyway and expectations were in flex. A back-fill person was hired part-time to handle some of the programming responsibilities of

the new role and also was available to support the county to some extent. The person hired in this back-fill role was a graduate student who gained a great deal from the experience. She not only learned about extension and grew to admire this career possibility; she also gained useful skills that served to support her graduate program and encouraged her to continue toward her Ph.D.!

Communications and interactions between the agent and the local and area office were not planned. However newsy letters were circulated among the staff regularly and reports were placed in the internal communication tool for the organization so that many within the system were aware of the agent's work in Poland. Local clientele often inquired about her work and learned much from her letters. The Homemakers groups were the most knowledgeable about her work and anticipated studying Poland as part of their international program activities. Because the Polish colleagues were considering developing a youth program, the local office sent a great deal of literature about 4-H to the agent in Poland. Local volunteers knew of this request and were excited to learn more about youth programming in Poland. Thus in spite of overarching organizational changes, a great deal of communication and interaction between the agent in Poland and the local extension office emerged. The interest and enthusiasm created from this correspondence served the community well when the Home Economics Exchange occurred upon the agent's return. A large number of local volunteers, clientele and extension supporter eagerly came forward to host the Polish guests.

Organizational Impact

This one agent's experiences did not really impact the organization to any great extent. However the importance of her international involvement to the organization cannot be underestimated. Not only did she usher-in the concept that Home Economists could serve internationally (and an additional agent thus became involved), but her involvement opened a window of opportunity for a number of people to visit her in Poland and to become involved with Poland through the Home Economics Exchange. There were strong and consistent reports about the value of the exchange as a mechanism to expose many people—agents, organizational leaders, community members, youth—to Poland and the lifestyles, values and changes occurring there during this unprecedented moment in history. The Exchange generated interest throughout the organization and the community. Participation as one of the travelers was a very sought-after opportunity for home economists. And hosting the Polish guests was very well received in the community. The agent's reports and the visits of other localities prepared the community with ideas and questions so that the hosting experience was rich and fulfilling. Interactions with Polish agents and families continue to this day! Memories and stories continue to circulate in the community.

Personal, Family and Community Impact

As was noted earlier, the organization was undergoing massive organizational changes just prior to and during the agent's Polish assignment. It was a time of stress and upheaval. Being gone during the height of the upheaval was a mental health break—a chance to channel energies to other pursuits. The participating agent welcomed the change in routine and felt that it helped her to put things in perspective—to reassess priorities and reconnect to the fundamental values of extension. It was a rejuvenating experience that helped her to return to the U.S. with a positive and enthusiastic attitude.

Although the participating agent was a single person, both a sister and a number of friends visited her while in Poland. These people would not have visited Poland but for her presence there. Thus a number of people became aware of Poland and the challenges of her history and current circumstances because of this agent. Likewise, due to her presentations to a variety of community groups and the hosting of Polish guests in the small towns of this state, a larger sphere of people have been exposed to Poland and have gained respect and interest in her people.

Future Projects

Two recurring themes for recommended changes emerged from the interviews at site #2. One theme involves the lack of organizational infrastructure to serve international interests. Greater visibility of opportunities, better planning for how assignments can reinforce programming, and better lines of communication between USDA and states were recommended. The second theme involves the choice of participants in international assignments. Generally there was agreement that the old attitudes of “perks” and “junkets” needs to change. The organization needs to be careful in who one chooses for international assignments. With little in the way of organizational structure or precedent to guide and support participants, it is left to the individual to seek ways to leverage the experience so that a broader set of people or programming is involved or impacted. Thus, strong, respected staff should be involved who are innovative and unwavering in their valuing of international programming.

Site #3

Site #3 was one of eight states randomly selected for on-site interviews as a component of the *Overseas Technical Impact Study*. The participant was a married, male Agricultural Economics Specialist who was based at a regional research and extension center. At the time of the assignment, he was in a regional center outside of a large city, and upon his return he transferred to a regional center in a rural area. The follow-up interviews were all conducted on a face-to-face basis.

Among the nine people interviewed there were: the University Executive Associate Director, the Associate Director for Agricultural Sciences, the Department Head for Agricultural Economics, the Extension Program Leader for Agricultural Economics, the District Extension Director (immediate supervisor), two Coworkers (regional 4-H specialist and the Extension communication specialist), one family member (wife), and the participant himself.

Organizational Context

Site #3, on the Extension level, has had minimal experience with international programs in the past and has a cautious approach to these programs. Most international projects done previously have been self-initiated and the agent involved must be "a good performer in good standing." Some members of the county staff have been involved with joint livestock programs along the border of another country. There was an ongoing project with Russia and the college that had involved some state specialists. Most programs are started on the request of the recipient country.

The state appeared to have a very cautious approach to international extension programming. It was heard many times, particularly from administrators, that the primary clientele were the state taxpayers. Therefore, there was not a heavy emphasis placed on international involvement. There are some international projects occurring, but most of these are self-initiated, and there appeared to be little done proactively to get more people involved.

International work at this site was viewed as staff development and there are little, if any, rewards except for small awards in some cases for the staff involved. Sometimes, because of the time away from work, it seems to some to be almost a negative experience to be involved. The interest level is very high though, despite possible negative consequences.

Organizational Support

The organizational approach that emerged was if someone finds and develops an international project proposal, it would be considered. The individual must be in good standing and be able to handle this "extra" workload on top of their current responsibilities. They do not want to see a backing-off of domestic program expectations, as these things still need to get done. They are careful in regards to who participates in international projects. The person must be a good performer in good standing. These international efforts are primarily viewed as personal and professional development.

There has been very little international activity on the part of county staff as most have only dealt with state or regional faculty and specialists. The primary reason for this was the point of the state taxpayer expecting county staff to provide educational help and resources in their county. This does not seem likely to change for some time even-though this was deemed necessary by the participant and a fellow coworker at the regional center.

The participant received a positive welcome home from his coworkers. They were supportive and as a whole felt a sense of pride for his participation. Overall, the other workers felt it was very important for the Extension office to be involved in an international program because of the increasing global access and worldwide communication. Another plus of programs like this

is the idea of constructive and preventative education to alleviate major problems or issues in the future. Lastly, it can be used to develop allies, open borders, and develop markets.

One member of the support staff was so interested in the participant's work with the Polish American Extension Project that she applied for an international assignment in St. Petersburg, but, unfortunately, she was not selected.

There was communication that occurred during the assignment between the participant and fellow coworkers and friends at Site #6, and this was mostly e-mail and phone calls that took place. The participant did bring a scrapbook and slides back from Poland, both of which he showed to others. It was expressed by the participant and coworkers that there were no clear guidelines for communication and this is an area that could be improved upon in future projects. This would have served to improve the possibilities for communication and secondary involvement among others.

When the participant left for Poland many were informed, mostly through Extension newsletters and upon his return there were news articles also. The participant leaving did cause some problems for the other Extension workers such as having to cover his program responsibilities or a lessening of the program occurring. Both cause an additional strain and sometimes an imposition on others. Overall, it was felt that "the difficulty is in breaking the normal chain of how things are done." There did appear to be a slight amount of resentment among county agents. It was felt that this may have stemmed from less support that they would have received in the field and that they have few chances for such international project participation.

Organizational Impact

Based upon the participant's subsequent presentations and interactions with others, the organization as a whole (particularly within the two regional research and extension centers) was made aware that people in Poland are much more globally aware than United States' citizens, and they tend to know much more of their own history. A large number of the participant's coworkers learned of the Polish customs, etc. through the participant and the information he brought back. At least one coworker became interested in and pursued an international project. His wife was also involved on a lesser level with informing others of their experiences.

On the county level, there was some resentment towards the international program because it was not open to county agents. These international projects should be open to county agents. This would help to educate more people and would enrich the county Extension's educational work. It would provide international awareness and understanding along with a tremendous professional development opportunity. It would also allow for a much larger pool of people to pick from to go on international assignments. Some citizenry think that to have county agents involved in the international programs would be detrimental because of the extended period of time they would be gone from their job.

Personal, Family and Community Impact

The participant felt that he had benefited immensely, both personally and professionally, from his experience in Poland. His coworkers felt he has taken on new challenges since his return. He also has a different perspective on how he approaches his job. His working environment in Poland was very similar to Site #6 but the technology was less advanced. This difference was not major and was simply worked around.

In the past, the participant has had other international experiences. He lived and worked in Africa for six years. He also was involved with a farmer-to-farmer exchange program in both Kurdistan and Nigeria. These different opportunities have led him to have a deep respect for other countries and their ways of life. He feels these international programs will lead to improved trade, and he was "extremely happy" he participated in the Poland Project. Since his return from the PAEP, he has taken on more leadership roles on a statewide and national basis with programs such

as Federal Crop Insurance, the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers, and a Risk Management Program in eight states.

The participant's wife stayed in Poland through all but two weeks of the program. She felt that she benefited from this experience and learned a lot about Poland. She enjoyed the small village and the freedom it gave her. The people were very hospitable and she made friends easily.

Overall, in the community there was an increased awareness of international issues and some involvement by farmers and ranchers. The extent of community impact was not as great as some other sites because of the urban location. In many cities it is more commonplace to have people on international assignments as compared to more rural areas. This may be a factor in the extent of subsequent secondary involvement.

Future Projects

From the comments among everyone involved with the Polish-American Extension Project, it was clear that the international program was a success. There are some points, though, that could be improved upon for future international extension projects.

First, there needs to be incentives for faculty to become involved with these types of Extension programs. From an increase in salary, to a career elevation, to statewide recognition and support, something should be given for faculty participation. This also addresses the problem with inadequate inclusion of staff. With the implementation of incentives, other staff may be more supportive and keep communication lines open for better learning opportunities all the way around.

These types of international projects should be open and advertised to county agents. This would help to educate more people, and it would enrich the county Extension's educational work. It would provide international awareness and understanding for dealing with clientele along with a tremendous professional development opportunity. For the organization, this results in reinvigorated and motivated staff who develop a strong commitment toward Cooperative Extension.

There needs to be more time to plan for these types of trips for the office and coworkers as well as the participating agent. With adequate planning it is easier to foresee any concerns or problems that may arise. Also, during this lead-time the participant and their family members need to become familiar with the language. A basic understanding would help to expedite interaction and learning with the other country, in this case Poland.

Lastly, some felt that six months is not long enough to make an impact on the country. Either longer programs need to be looked into or with increased lead-time more work could be done ahead of time so the on-site work could be more intense and focused.

Site #4

This state was randomly selected as one of the eight state sites where interviews would be conducted as part of the Overseas Technical Cooperation Impact Study. There were six participants from this state in the Polish/American Extension Project, three females and three males. Five were county based Extension professionals and one was university based. Program areas represented were family and consumer sciences, community development, agriculture, and agricultural economics. Since the time of their participation in the project, three of the persons have retired. Two sites were chosen for interviews, the county where the female home economist works and the university, where one agricultural economist, who now also works at the regional level, is located. The agricultural economist had served two six month assignments in Poland early in the project and the home economist served one six month assignment toward the end of the project. A total of 12 interviews were conducted in this state. Interviewees were the two American participants, the Dean and Director of Cooperative Extension, the Associate Dean and Director of International Programs, a regional supervisor, a county Extension director, two co-workers, one support staff, two family members and one community representative.

Organizational Context

The university in this state has a long history of international involvement in technical programs, training and workshops, institutional building, and undergraduate and graduate training for internationals. It is located in an international community and is close to many agencies and private sector organizations involved in international activities and the administration views this as an advantage for them. There is an international office within the College of Agriculture and a Dean for International Programs, as well as other international offices on campus. International is part of the mission statement, and the college and the university have internationalized the curriculum and activities and are introducing new international courses. International is woven into the strategic plan as part of research, teaching and service. Until recently, participation in international programs previously was predominately faculty, but the administration says they have tried to increase the amount of involvement of field staff within Extension and want to continue to encourage them to participate. However, given the large number of Extension field staff, few have had the opportunity to do international to the same extent as campus based faculty have. Administration believe it is sometimes more difficult to recruit Extension field staff because they don't have the linkages with overseas counterparts. Lack of funding was one reason given for not encouraging more international involvement of Extension field staff. One administrator noted that, like other Extension organizations, this Extension organization has also undergone downsizing and budget cuts in recent years and administration must consider how to cover on-going activities and initiatives for these kinds of leaves.

Organizational Support

Support for international involvement of Extension field staff is described as supportive but not encouraging. Little has been done in the past to encourage field faculty, but administration feels they need to do more. International opportunities are now announced using the electronic mail system which goes to all counties. Participation is self-initiated, but the regional director doesn't know of anyone being turned down who has requested an assignment. The home economist received the announcement about the Polish/American Extension Project from her regional director who knew of her interest in international and supported her participation. Support for faculty is viewed as more encouraging. Initially the supervisor of the agricultural economist, who had just assumed the role as department head, was very negative, but became supportive after communicating with the participant while he was on assignment. No back-fill was hired to fill the faculty vacancy, even though the participant served two assignments. The supervisor noted he was not aware that there had been a salary savings and didn't know enough to ask at the time. A person was hired as a back-fill for the county position. This was a local person, familiar with the county 4-H program, and both staff and clientele seemed very satisfied with her work.

Participation in the project was viewed as professional development and as a benefit more to the individual than to the organization, although benefits were noted to the university from faculty participation. Neither participant believed it was considered as part of annual performance reviews.

Communication was informal. Supervisors and regional directors had no expectation of regular communication from the participants. The county Extension professional usually initiated communication to the local office and clientele through FAX and letters and occasional e-mail. The county agent sent regular reports to the regional director, who shared information about the assignment with other home economists in the state. She had communicated to her clientele about her assignment before leaving and clientele were supportive of and kept informed about her assignment through letters. The agent's spouse, who had stayed behind, also served as a communication link between the participant and the local office and community. The agricultural economist's participation was less noticeable in the university community where international involvement was more common.

Organizational Impact

The university based Extension professional's participation had significant impact on the organization. He returned to his position and motivated several of his colleagues to become interested in and participate in international assignments. He has done several additional international assignments, bringing recognition to the university and the Extension organization. This was the first time a family and consumer science agent was involved in an international assignment. Her regional director made sure her assignment was announced in the organization's newsletter. Staff and clientele were interested in learning about her assignment during her assignment and when she returned she was asked to do many presentations. She noted she was told by the organization she could do presentations if they were requested, but not to announce that she would like to do them. Yet the community representative interviewed said she thought it was important for Extension to pass the information onto the clientele, that they need to get something out of Extension's involvement. The family and consumer science agent created a short term opportunity to return to Poland and take another family and consumer science agent with her. Although several Extension agents initially expressed interest in an international assignment, when the opportunity was created, no one chose to participate. This was a disappointment for her.

Personal, Family and Community Impact

Both participants described their participation as having great significance in their life. Their interest in international activities has increased and both have had additional international experiences since their assignment in the project. The first agent said the experience boosted his career. He noted, "I now "do more workshops, ... do them better..., and more people want them". He has used several of the programs he developed in Poland in his work at home. The other agent described her self concept as being raised and being more self confident. She noted people at home regard her as a resource for international issues and she feels freer to speak up for herself.

Both of the participants were married, but neither spouse accompanied them on their assignment. The spouse of one agent did visit for six days. Both spouses described it as a lonely time in their life. It was also a very stressful time for the spouse with young children. Family members of the second agent joined him in Poland when he stayed on for a second assignment. Participation in the project brought this family closer together. Since their participation they have become more flexible in family routines. The spouse noted she has developed empathy for both single parents raising children and immigrants living in America.

Both families learned about Poland, its people and the Extension program there. One of the children attended Polish school and learned to speak Polish. Both participants and one of the spouses still communicate with Polish friends. The agricultural economist has been very influential

in motivating colleagues to pursue international activities. Clientele learned about Poland and the project through over 30 presentations given by the family and consumer science agent.

Future Projects

Both participants and family members described the overall experience as very positive. However, the spouse with young children talked about the amount of preparation that had to be done for the family to travel to Poland and having to pull all the money from savings to be able to bring family members together for the second assignment. Because she chose to stay in the community with the children, she felt more isolated from project activities than other spouses who often became involved. These issues which effect the outcomes of participation should be addressed in future projects. When families remained at home this was a source of stress to the participant and family members. Spouses who traveled to Poland often made important contributions to the project. Spouses and children were also a valuable link to becoming involved in community life.

One supervisor, who believed that there were many benefits to Extension involvement in international activities, would like to see more opportunities identified for agents, including the areas of family living and 4-H. She feels these persons have much to contribute, but believes they often cannot commit to a six-month assignment. Another supervisor, who had personal experience in a short term assignment, also believed more persons would be willing to become involved internationally if there were more short term opportunities. However, for the amount of money that is invested in overseas projects, to accomplish the results, he feels it is necessary for participants to be able to commit to a long term assignment. He contributes part of the success of the Polish/American Extension Project to the fact that agents were there for six months.

A backfill was hired to fill the county based participant's position. This was a person from a 4-H family in the county already familiar with Extension. Everyone seemed satisfied with her ability to maintain the current program and clientele were pleased that the county program continued. No one was hired to fill the position of the university based participant. This participant initially received negative reactions toward his participation from his supervisor, concerned about who would do his work, and from farmers worried about loss of program support. His supervisor noted he was new at that time and he did not realize there were salary savings to hire a backfill. Continuing financial support for hiring of backfills, providing more lead time to hire qualified persons and allowing time for them to transition into the assignment could eliminate negative attitudes toward Extension participation in these developmental assistance programs and maintain the program at home.

Site #5

This state was randomly selected as one of the eight state sites where interviews would be conducted as part of the Overseas Technical Cooperation Impact Study. There was one participant from this state who served one six month assignment as an advisor for the Polish/American Extension Project, although other Extension staff from this state held administrative or specialist roles in the project. The participant was a county based agricultural economist. He was married, but his family did not accompany him for the entire assignment. They joined him in Poland for the last three weeks of his assignment. Nine interviews were conducted at this state site. These included the American participant, the Dean and Director of Cooperative Extension, the Associate Dean and Director of International Programs, a regional supervisor, one co-worker, two support staff, one community member and the participant's spouse.

Organizational Context

This university's history of involvement in international activities had been mainly in technical assistance and more recently some training programs. Participants were usually administrators and sometimes specialists and Extension personnel, but not usually performing in an Extension function. Shortly before the Polish/American Extension Project began, administration in the college changed. One administrator noted a decision was made around that time that the university would adopt the concept of mutual benefit and become involved in programs where the college learns as well as gives, in an effort to reduce resentment held by some students and faculty members, clientele, alumni and stakeholders toward the former aid approach, who perceived only the developing country benefited. The Polish/American Extension Project was the first project that was specifically an Extension project.

Support for international education was perceived as mostly verbal and the participant was not aware that it was part of the mission statement. One administrator stated globalization is used in the mission statement and strategic plan for the college, while a second administrator noted he was unsure about Extension. Although Extension was not thought of as a separate unit and perceived to be fairly well integrated, it appeared to be treated separately in conversation about international participation. The reason given was that it was so large.

Organizational Support

Participation in the Polish/American Extension project was viewed positively by administration as an educational experience that was beneficial to the individuals as well as to the university. No policies exist for involvement in international activities. One administrator noted participants are usually the better performing staff and faculty, but there is lots of discussion that takes place. A second administrator described the attitude within Extension as not negative but not really encouraging by going out and trying to talk people into doing international activities. How participation in international is treated varies with individuals. Opinions differed as to how this county agent's participation was treated, but there was no interruption of benefits.

The participant found out about the Polish/American Extension Project through an announcement sent from the international office over e-mail. He responded to the message and was given permission to go. No one was hired as a back-fill. The workload was picked up by a second agent in that county. One administrator believed salary savings stayed within the unit that generated the savings, in this case the agricultural field Extension unit.

Although persons are to be evaluated on the basis of their assignment, this agent's participation in the project was not included in his annual performance review. An administrator commented that this has not always consistent when international activity is involved. He contributed this to lack of understanding among peers of really knowing what is involved in international activity more than to lack of appreciation from administration for international work.

No one person was designated to be the contact person for the project at the university level or within Extension. Communication to the local and state Extension unit during the assignment was initiated by the participant and limited to monthly reports to the regional supervisor and FAX messages and news articles to the local unit. The local office occasionally sent requested program materials.

Organizational Impact

Overall, participation in the project was viewed as positive and persons within the organization commented that the participant made many presentations to community groups and organizations upon his return. This served to increase the visibility of Extension in the community as well as increase awareness and acceptance of Extension's role in international developmental assistance programs. Administrators also contributed some faculty exchanges, trade with Poland, and the accumulation of a grant for a sustainable agriculture program to participation of other faculty in the project. However, comments made by administration, supervisor, and coworkers show that participation in international is still viewed more as a benefit to the individual than to the organization. It is considered as a perk for better performing individuals. The participant believes it is important for others in Extension to become more knowledgeable about international activities and to learn about the benefits of international involvement. He noted that he wanted to share his experiences with others in the organization, and had hinted several times to his supervisor about his interest and willingness to do this, but had never been asked. His supervisor described participation as positively benefiting the individual and saw less benefit to the organization. Yet, when asked about the importance of university involvement in international, this same supervisor commented that these experiences would be good if agents could apply what they learned back in the county or region.

Personal, Family and Community Impact

The participant described his experience as educational and one of the greatest challenges of his career. He feels he is a much better agent because of his experience. His confidence in speaking about international marketing has improved and his communication skills have been sharpened. His interest in international has increased and he and his spouse would like to participate in another international assignment in the future.

Although his family was unable to accompany him for the assignment, they visited him for four weeks. They described the time apart as difficult, but felt the experience strengthened them and made them closer than they were before. Family members grew in appreciation of the Polish people and for the American lifestyle. They became more positive in their attitude toward United States involvement in international assistance programs.

Coworkers and people in the community were generally positive about the agent's participation. There was a tremendous demand from the community for the participant to share his experiences upon his return. Persons who attended these presentations learned about Poland, the goals of the project and Extension's role in international activities. The participant was even successful in linking Rotary Clubs in both countries, but this linkage eventually broke down because of not knowing how to communicate successfully with each other.

Future Projects

Administration was pleased with the handling of the Polish/American Extension Project by USDA and described it as excellent. However they believed there would have been more impact on campus if the university had done more than just supply persons to participate. A suggestion was made to explore ways universities could be more partners in the project. An administrator noted that maybe having a person at the university level designated to assume leadership for the project would have helped.

No one was hired as a back-fill to assume the agent's responsibilities while he was gone. The supervisor and coworker commented they didn't know it was a possibility. It was noted that

the participant made many preparations in anticipation of his absence and people willingly pitched in to maintain the program in the county. However, the coworker who assumed the agent's responsibilities while he was gone described it as a major strain for him. This individual expressed some negativity toward United States involvement in developmental assistance programs and the effectiveness of county agent participation. A community member also noted there were times when it wasn't easy for the people who had to fill in and do the extra work, because meetings would stack up and have to be rescheduled. Still, this person believed this was a good experience for the participant, Extension and the community. He suggested more agents be made aware of the opportunity and that moneys be provided to hire back-fills for the length of the assignment plus some extra time for training and wrap up. Providing moneys to hire back-fills and using those moneys to fill positions vacated by Extension staff will help prevent the formation of negative attitudes among coworkers and keep the Extension program going at the local level.

Site #6

Site #6 was one of eight states randomly selected to participate in the Polish American Extension Project (PAEP) follow-up study. There was one PAEP participating agent, and he was a single male County Extension employee. He spent six months in Poland as an Agricultural Generalist.

Among those interviewed were twelve individuals in the following positions: the State Director of Extension, a state 4-H Youth Specialist, the Director for University International Programs, the Immediate Supervisor, one Coworker (neighboring County Extension Director), two Support Staff (one current and one former), five Community Representatives (three farmers, an Extension Advisory Committee member, and a county commissioner), one Family Member, and the Participant himself. Most of the interviews were held face-to-face but four were conducted by phone.

Organizational Context

In the past, Site #6 has had little involvement with international extension programs and there has been virtually no leadership in this area until the recent development of an international committee. International involvement had occurred to some extent among state faculty, but very little involvement had ever occurred within Extension.

The current Director of Extension had set up an International Committee to provide overall direction and focus to international involvement (including extension), and some positive leadership was beginning to emerge. But, at the time of the interview she had just accepted another position and would be moving to another university. As a result, it was not known what would come of this international committee and its further development. Currently, the committee is concerned with what it is that the people need locally and what steps can be taken to internationalize Extension programs.

There appeared to be some negative issues and difficulties between the participant and some Extension administrators at the time of the participant's departure to Poland. Because of this, some people wondered if the trip was used by administration to "temporarily remove someone by administration." The participant felt this negativity, and this tension in their professional life appeared to have affected their overall experience with the PAEP in a negative fashion – especially in regards to organizational support before, during and after the assignment.

Organizational Support

The participant perceived little support for his assignment from his immediate supervisors and director because of the negative administrative situation. The community, however, seemed to be supportive for the most part and many were indifferent to the whole process at the time of participation. The community representatives who were interviewed stated that they supported the agent's involvement and felt that it was worthwhile to the participant with some resultant effect to extension and the local community.

There was a limited level of internal jealousy about the participant's assignment among some coworkers. Also, redistributing the workload within the office became an issue. The County Extension Director from a neighboring county helped out on a regular basis with questions, etc. that arose while the participant was gone. This CED was paid a small stipend during this time, and this served to improve his willingness to help. He also stated that he truly appreciated that he was asked to provide this help. It provided an opportunity for him to grow personally and professionally. The feeling from many interviewees is that there could be problems and difficulties with temporarily filling a position like this from salary savings money due to the extreme ruralness of Site #6.

Communication did occur between the participant with Site #6 during the assignment. There were articles in the Extension newsletters as well as many messages through an informal grapevine. The participant did make telephone calls and send facsimile messages to coworkers, friends, and relatives. The office sent numerous fax messages on clientele questions and administrative issues and the participant responded to these.

Upon his return home there was no formal recognition from the state level which the participant would have appreciated. Locally, there were slide shows and discussions at meetings of his experiences, and these served to provide some personal satisfaction.

When the participant returned to Site #6 his reentry to the work place was somewhat difficult. As compared to the temporary office management during the PAEP, the participant brought with him a sense of less stringent organization and a more relaxed manner in dealing with deadlines and newly established policies that were established during his absence. This served to cause some internal conflict. Some coworkers felt that the office ran smoothly with the temporary office management, and to them it was somewhat calmer because of the lessened tension.

An office assistant felt that she was able to gain greater responsibility and self-confidence while the PAEP participant was gone since she was responsible for day-to-day decisions. The participant's return as a CED brought back some previous ways of doing business and running the office that some people had worked to change. The Program Assistant left Extension within a short time of the participant's return.

Organizational Impact

The overall impact on the Extension staff was a better understanding and awareness of Polish agriculture and customs. The program helped to increase Extension's global education and many feel that the global communication needs to continue. There were no significant changes in the programs; rather there was a sense of commitment to international outreach but not much action. Further programs would have to be self initiated and approved among those in extension. County staff had had few international opportunities outside of those that they went after on their own.

People working with the participant upon his return felt his experiences in Poland made him more active in international projects, helped him to talk to more people than before, and overall helped his work. People felt that had the participant had a better relationship with his superiors there may have been a more direct impact on the Extension office and its employees.

Personal, Family, And Community Impact

The trip had significance to the participant and he was "thankful for the opportunity for the experience." He had a better appreciation for global complexities, and it improved his listening skills. While in Poland he dealt with limited resources, the language difference and the technological limits. He had good contact with his Polish colleagues and he felt that many of the problems in the Extension office stemmed from low wages and a lack of resources.

Subsequent to the PAEP, the participant had a Hungarian student come and spend a summer through an exchange program with the university. Another woman and her son also came from Poland from connections made during the PAEP to visit the participant and experience life in the United States.

The son of the participant did visit him in Poland while on assignment for three weeks. He felt his father's transition to Poland and then back to Site #6 went fairly smooth. He also feels that his father now has an interest in international work. The son has a much great appreciation for international issues and involvement. This had also sparked an interest in him to pursue international work.

The attitude of the community was good, but there was no big reaction when the participant returned from Poland, and this was a partial let-down to the participant. The participant's immediate supervisor reacted with indifference and gave negative feedback on his employer's experience in Poland. The experience was not considered in the participant's subsequent performance appraisal, and this, too, was negative for the participant .

Future Projects:

There were three main concerns with the PAEP experience, and these may help to develop and conduct future projects. The first concern dealt with the participation of the individuals. The selection was given with very short notice, and it was for highly specialized people that most Extension offices in this state could not provide.

A couple of interviewees voiced a second concern. They felt that the projects should be longer than six months to have an impact on the home site as well as on the place being visited. For new international programs to be developed more time is needed in order to achieve lasting impact. This would then make it imperative to have someone take over the position of the participant until his or her return.

The last concern was that the participants should have more opportunities to learn the new culture and language prior to leaving on an international assignment. This would serve to improve collegiality among the participant and those in the other country, and it would help the participant become adjusted to another country in a quicker fashion.

This state had done little to include extension professionals in international projects. The state director of extension knew of this need and was trying to implement steps to correct this through the international committee that she developed. She had hoped that this would still continue after she left her position.

Site #7

Three counties were chosen within Site #7 to serve as hosts for the site visits. In these settings, the participating agents varied in age, experience and areas of expertise but all three were males. In two settings, the participating agents spent one six-month assignment in Poland, and in one setting the agent spent two six-month assignments in Poland. In all cases, spouses accompanied the agent and in two cases, children also accompanied their parents. In these three counties, associates, office support staff, spouses and even clientele were interviewed. The Dean, Director of Extension, Associate Director of Extension and two Regional Directors were interviewed at the state level. In total, 22 interviews were conducted in Site #7 to serve as the data source for this summary.

Organizational Context

From all reports, Site #7 has had a long and serious commitment to international programming. This commitment is perhaps strongest in the faculty and research ranks but has always included extension personnel. One faculty member mentioned that an international dimension is *expected* among research faculty. In fact, there is evidence that current leaders expect parity across the land grant university mission, and anticipate that because of the nature of international issues, that extension will play an even larger role in international programming in the future. This commitment is evident in the very large number of staff from Site #7 who participated in the Polish-American Extension Project. Site #7 sent 16 staff to the project, the largest number of any one state! The next largest number sent from any one state was eight persons.

Site #7's role in international programming is visible and well known. The importance of international programming is articulated by the President, University-wide, and is mirrored within the College and Extension with statements in strategic plans. Both the importance of being an actor in international development and in serving the global education needs of students and residents are articulated. Although no formal written policies govern the conditions under which international programming should be pursued in Extension, there seems to be general agreement across all ranks of personnel that international opportunities are taken seriously and supported proactively. Top administrators noted the balance that must be achieved in serving local and state needs versus international needs. They felt that local stakeholders support international programming when the process of managing assignments is handled well (meaning that coverage is secure and articulated and the rationale for participation is clearly communicated). Although an international dimension is recognized as clearly within the mission of Extension, other elements needed to operationalize this vision are lacking. Administrators noted that domestic programming is weak in this area and that the organizational structure and leadership to provide impetus to this area is not yet in place.

At both the state and local levels, staffs were aware of previous Extension personnel who had traveled abroad and worked with international projects.

Organizational Support

There appears to be a proud history of international involvement's in Extension and a supportive climate for international programs. All staff, even office support personnel articulated the belief that if a person were offered the opportunity to work internationally, that everyone in the office/organization would pitch-in to support their absence. Offices were proud that they were involved. Agents took the opportunity to work abroad as a natural part of their professional work. One agent noted, "There seems to be a 'I can do attitude'—we can contribute, we can leave and things will continue. It's all part of the job." Repeatedly, interviewees reported the proactive nature in which people were approached to consider an assignment. Administrators, peers and past participants all encouraged others to participate. Although all participants noted the strong support that they received from the Extension administration, there was some sensitivity to the possibility

that the process was not as open as it could have been. Some felt that individuals were “hand-picked” to consider these Polish assignments.

Generally offices felt that it was easy, although not painless, to manage in the absence of an agent and to accommodate to their reentry. Coverage while agents participated in the Polish Project was considered essential. All positions were covered. The methods of coverage varied and often included more than one arrangement. Methods included staff from adjacent counties handling calls, new personnel being hired on a temporary basis or existing staff taking on new roles. When these arrangements worked well, generally attitudes about international assignments were very positive. But even in the one or two situations where the back-fill arrangement was less than ideal, the attitudes toward the international opportunity were still positive. Staff felt that the participating agent had the right to leave. It was a privilege to be asked and an organizational obligation to try to make it happen! On the other hand, change in staff roles and coverage arrangements are an on-going process in Extension, not just associated with international assignments. Thus offices were accustomed to disruptions and took these changes in-stride.

Communication between the agent in Poland and the local office and organization was not planned nor managed. Most administrators admitted that there could have been a more systematic way to communicate and encourage communications. However, patterns of communication emerged on their own and seemed to have been satisfying. Most frequently the agent in Poland would request information or resources which the local office and staff were very willing to provide. In a few instances, the local office initiated a request to the person on assignment in Poland, but these occasions were rare. The most regular form of communication came from the state-level, where announcements and internal communications tools were collected and shared with all participating agents. Periodic communications initiated by the participating agent in the form of letters, newsletter material or even taped radio-interviews were very well received and provided a way for local staff and clientele to participate vicariously with their participating agent in the international experience. These descriptive communications were often printed in the local papers or in Extension newsletters and created wide-spread visibility for the international dimension in Extension. Local residents often called the office to inquire about more recent updates, and people new to extension were attracted to interact with Extension because of these “windows into Polish life.” Upon return, these agents were inundated with well wishes and invitations to speak to groups, as the whole community was involved and aware of their work.

At the time of departure, most often the participating agent, himself informed local leaders and Extension clientele of his plans to be absent. Generally the entire Extension structure was open with local clientele about plans and procedures. But there did not seem to be any systematic policy or procedure involved concerning visibility. In hindsight, it appears that Extension took a low-key approach, informing those whom needed to know in advance and letting others know in the course of the routine business of programming and working with the community. In those cases where the participating agent took a more active role in making announcements or sharing communications, a broader cross-section of the public became aware of the international assignment and thus had the opportunity to learn from that experience. Within Extension, likewise communications were unplanned and ad hoc. Most staff mentioned hearing about who had taken international assignments from their professional association, not the organization. Regional Directors seemed to be key persons in disseminating information and creating excitement about international involvements.

Organizational Impact

Unanimously, from participants to administrators to co-workers, participating in the Polish-American Project was viewed as positive and beneficial. Everyone felt that participation had a positive effect on those involved and on the organization as a whole. On a personal level, the experience was viewed as professionally rewarding and growth enhancing. On the organizational level, participation offered an element of pride that the organization could send so many qualified individuals and that their work could contribute positively to developments in another country. There was also a feeling that individuals were valued for their skills and expertise—both those that left and those who remained were reinforced for their ability to be flexible and to contribute.

Although it was difficult to ascertain whether or not attitudes had changed as a result of this experience, there definitely seemed to be a broad sense of acceptance of Extension's ability to contribute internationally. This may be due to the large numbers of staff involved that contribution was not linked with a unique person, but rather with the broad training and expertise of extension personnel in general.

One of the most evident benefits to extension was the increased awareness at the community level of Extension's mission and work. Until these interviews were conducted, even state administrators were not aware of the unique public relations aspects of this project. It may be because of Poland's historic significance as a reluctant member and early resister within the Soviet fold, or the broad-based Eastern European ethnicity of the population base in Site #7. But for whatever reason, local residents resonated with the fact that American Extension Agents were working to improve social and economic conditions in Poland. In addition to the slides and stories related by returned agents, a number of Polish groups and guests visited local communities or vice versa. Local staffs relate that learning about Poland and hosting Polish guests has increased local receptivity to international issues and involvements. Greater numbers of families are coming forward to host international youth. Local groups and professionals are more willing to become involved with international guests. Local professionals whose work involves international travel or communications are now looking to Extension for networking support and information about international issues. Entire communities are becoming more globally informed and competent because of these involvements!

One of the benefits identified with the Polish-American Extension Project across the U.S. has been the vast number of linkages and secondary involvements among American and Polish people that were established or assisted by Extension agents while in Poland. In these three instances in Site #7, a few concrete linkages could be identified that were associated with the staff member targeted for the interviews. A larger number of exchanges and visits have transpired since the end of the project, but many of these contacts occurred because of neighboring Extension staff contacts.

In one county an economic transaction was anticipated between a local manufacturer and a Polish group, but the deal collapsed after one or two visits. A more lasting linkage occurred between a school district and a Polish youth that came to live with an agent's family for a school year. This contact created a great deal of interest among families and teachers at the school. A third linkage involved a national youth exchange program. The Site #7 agent put the American administrator of the program in contact with interested Polish partners. In this same county, the Home Economists became involved in hosting Polish Home Economists and later traveled to Poland with a group of peers to provide support to Home Economics programs in Poland. All of these linkages brought a larger group of Americans into contact with international peoples and interests.

Personal, Family and Community Impacts

As noted earlier, all participating agents felt that the experience of living and working in Poland was useful, impactful and beneficial. Some of the benefits reported include changed perspectives about the importance of Extension in social and economic development, realizations of the vast differences between the Soviet and U.S. economic model, increased knowledge of and appreciation of the history of Poland, greater respect for the people of Poland, validation of basic extension methods as being useful regardless of the cultural setting, and enhanced sensitivities to people and listening to peoples' perspectives. Many agents reported a change in how they approached their Extension role upon return. Some changed their emphases, dropped some programs and gave priority to other programs, or even recognized the 'big picture' as being the goal rather than the many details that take one's attention.

One agent remarked on how he now questions his assumptions. Previously, because of his long-standing experience in the County, he felt he knew instinctively what people needed and wanted from Extension. But after working in a foreign setting where one needed to listen and search out opinions, he realized that he needed to give people a chance to speak for themselves, even here in Site #7! One Regional Director noted that an international assignment is the best sensitivity training that Extension could offer!

Spouses, too, shared very positive reflections on their stay in Poland. However families had difficulties with language barriers and becoming socially integrated into the community that placed greater stress on spouses and children than on the agents. Children, however, seemed to be

catalysts in drawing families into the community. Both school and church contacts provided an expanded entry into the community and Polish lifestyles. The chores of daily living—grocery shopping, laundry, securing health services, etc. was much more time consuming and unpredictable than spouses anticipated. Most enjoyed these challenges, but they also noted that with some additional support, they could have had even richer experiences. Both financial stress and isolation due to language differences created undue burdens on families. One family spent considerable energy in learning the language. All the children and adults became relatively fluent which was very rewarding to them and aided immensely in helping them learn from their surroundings. All three families were very glad that the entire family participated; separating the family for that length of time would have been very stressful and the growing and learning that resulted brought families closer together.

The stories of how families were favored by the Polish people and how interested American audiences were about the exploits of children, wives and families may mean that families can play an important role in overseas projects. Spouses and children not only support the agent's work in country but also provide different perspectives and possibilities for linkages for the people back home.

Future Projects

From all accounts, the Polish-American Project was viewed as very successful. It had a number of important structural elements that proved to be very useful in garnering local (U.S.) community participation, a secondary, but important impact of the project. For instance, spouse and family participation drew attention to issues of lifestyles and cultural adjustments, critical global competencies. Interaction between agents and their home communities during the assignment attracted widespread attention to Extension and to International Programming.

From an organizational perspective, the broad nature of the work in Poland, often self directed, capitalized on the broad skills and interests of agents. Finding that they had skills, often outside their areas of assignment, and competencies even though they were being applied in another culture was reinforcing and useful to agents. The multi-faceted nature of Extension and its work creates opportunities for generalist, an often under-represented role in international development. The short term assignments were reasonable lengths of time, allowing countries to make adjustment without long term negative consequences, allowing agents and families the chance to try-out new lifestyles without sacrificing too much of their family plans and dreams, and providing a sufficient opportunity to contribute to the programming in Poland.

The Polish-American Extension Project drew personnel from across the U.S. This model was noted as being very useful to the participants and the host country. Extension was viewed as having common elements and staff with common skills across the U.S. The interaction among the Americans was very rewarding—helping to create a sense of community within Extension. It also was a very good role model for Poland, illustrating that collaboration across units can be useful. USDA serving as the facilitator was viewed as appropriate so long as they involved the CES system throughout the planning, execution and follow-up stages.

The experiences of these three families suggest that the role and support given to spouses within the project should be reviewed. Increased financial support, occasional access to translators and greater assistance in integrating into the community are all services that would enrich the experience for families and ultimately the benefits to the U.S.

The benefits to the organization and community of paying greater attention to issues of visibility and communications emerged during these site visits. Only in hindsight did agents and peers realize the potential public relations value of these experiences. Systematizing or providing greater attention to these issues during orientation may increase the value of these interactions across cultures. Likewise, staff who remained at the home office requested some time during orientation to help them predict what might occur and become more attuned to the importance of communications.

SITE #8

This state was randomly selected as one of the eight state sites where interviews were conducted as part of the Overseas Technical Cooperation Impact Study. There were three male participants from this state in the Polish/American Extension Project, two county based and one university based. All the participants had family members. At the time of the project two were married. Since that time the third participant has married. All the participants served one assignment, two early in the project and one in the middle of the project. One site chosen for interviews was at the county level and the second site was at the university level. A total of 15 persons were interviewed. Interviewees were two American participants, the present Associate Director for Cooperative Extension, a retired Associate Director for Cooperative Extension, who had been in this position when Extension was involved in the project, the Associate Dean and Director of International Agriculture Programs, the department chair of the College of Agriculture, three coworkers, two support staff, two family members, and two community representatives. During the interview process, it was learned that the two participants and administration interviewed did not know the third participant and were not aware of his involvement. It was concluded that this person must have represented another university in this state.

Organizational Context

Although the college has a long history of major activity in international program activities and has about 99% of all the funded international projects at this university, activity of Cooperative Extension was described as very limited since the seventies until recently. International involvement which included collaborative research projects and development activities had some Extension components and specialist participation, but generally no agent participation. County based Extension staff often hosted international visitors, but the county agent's participation in the Polish/American Extension Project was something new in this state. Two factors described as limiting previous Extension involvement in this state were the concern that the jobs of agents and specialists was at home and not somewhere else and the concern of commodities about helping others compete with farmers in the state. It is believed that this has changed in recent years as people become more educated about the global economy.

Organizational Support

The general attitude toward participation was positive and focused on the individuals selected and the timing of the assignment. However, the attitude toward staying for more than one six month assignment was negative. The university based Extension professional was identified by administration and given the opportunity to participate. This individual was influential in identifying the county based Extension professional who participated. Participation was viewed as a positive benefit professionally as well as positive to the organization as a whole, but more so for the university based Extension professional than the county based Extension professional. The university facilitated the paperwork involved and there was no interruption in benefits.

Neither position was back-filled and work was pro-rated among staff and specialists. The general attitude was that it would be nearly impossible to hire someone who could fit into the position for six months to a year. Salary savings did not go to the departments but were kept centrally in the Cooperative Extension System.

Since the time of the Polish/American Extension Project, there has been increased receptivity to participation in international activities. Much of this activity is taking place at the university level. It was noted that announcements of international opportunities are now sent to Extension staff by way of e-mail. Participation is self-initiated and usually supported, but not outwardly encouraged, especially in the case of county based Extension professionals. Generally it was perceived that first allegiance is to the work to be done at home and that participation in international interferes with accomplishing that.

While administration noted that commitment to international is in the university mission statement, they did not believe the actual wording was in the Extension mission statement. However, administration identified practices within Extension, including hosting of international groups, providing opportunities for interested people to participate, funding of the position Coordinator of International Programs for Extension, and a leadership development training program that includes an international component, that contribute to integrating an international dimension to the program. A negative factor that has influenced Extension's interest in international was the significant downsizing and financial constraints experienced in recent years.

Organizational Impact

Overall impact on the organization was described as positive. Colleagues and coworkers attending seminars and presentations given by the participants became familiar with the situation in the former Soviet Bloc countries, international Extension work, and Poland and its culture. It was noted that several other faculty and staff have been motivated to develop interests and activities internationally. There have also been exchanges between students, professionals, and clientele groups between this state and Poland.

Other changes were described as being related to one of the individual's participation in the project. The position of Director of International Programs for Extension has been created and funded by Extension. A yearly international exchange program, involving a cross section of administrators, faculty, community leaders, and farming organizations, has resulted in greater acceptance for Extension involvement in international activities.

Personal, Family and Community Impact

Both participants described their experience as life changing. For the county based Extension professional there was significant personal change, especially in his family life. He noted he and his wife are more conscious of their need to be together. Coworkers and family members described him as more flexible and more patient with himself and others. It took some time for this participant to adjust to his return home, saying he felt a lack of appreciation for his participation. However, both coworkers and community members viewed his participation positively, noting it broadened his perspective on international. The university based Extension professional returned home rejuvenated and highly motivated. He talked about the significant professional impact, and attributed his experience in the project as an important consideration in his promotion to professor and receiving new job responsibilities. His interest in international has increased and he has been described as a catalyst for change toward increased international involvement within his Extension organization.

Although family members did not live in Poland for the entire assignment, each of the participants had one of their children visit them for six weeks. These children developed respect for others and grew in independence. A second child from one family who remained at home during the assignment has since traveled to Poland twice, and lived there independently for three months on her second visit.

Family members who remained at home during the assignment described it as a lonely difficult time. Communication was usually limited to letters as attempts to communicate by phone were not always successful. Even though this time was stressful, family members noted they became more independent, they learned about Poland and its culture, and they became more knowledgeable about world affairs.

Both participants have shared their experiences several times with community groups and organizations. This was an opportunity for community members to learn more about Extension and Extension internationally. One community member described it as a benefit to the community to be able to learn about Poland and its culture and to become more understanding and compassionate for others needs

The participants made attempts to develop linkages between Chambers of Commerce in the two countries which were not successful, but other linkages resulted in an invitation from this state to Poland offering to host a Polish team during the Olympics, information about business opportunities in the state distributed to companies in Poland and a million dollar contract for an American firm doing business with a company in Poland.

Future Projects

Back-fills were not hired to cover the program areas left vacant during the assignments. It was indicated that normal procedures are for other staff to assume the responsibilities. Coworkers and colleagues picking up these responsibilities described the situation as sometimes challenging and noted that some work just didn't get done. At the county level, staff covering some program responsibilities talked about having many extra hours of work per week trying to maintain their own program and assume the additional responsibilities. A supervisor suggested salary savings be used to hire graduate students to pick up some of the work or purchase resources that could be used to supplement the person's absence. Hiring qualified backfills at the county level would help to ensure that county programs would continue, reduce the risk of clientele and coworker dissatisfaction. Increasing participation of county staff in international activities would also be a way for Extension to bring US involvement in developmental assistance programs to the American public, increasing their understanding and acceptance of US participation.