

# Evaluation of DFID's International Citizens' Service (ICS) Pilot Programme

## Final Project Completion Review

**Client: UK Department for International Development**

**Submitted By: ITAD**

**November 2012**



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## Acknowledgements

Where possible the evaluation team acknowledges lessons that have been incorporated into the full programme and have amended these findings in response to feedback. Some learning may not have come to the attention of the team *since* the evaluation team are focused on the evaluation of the pilot rather than the ICS full programme. Where lessons and recommendations have already been incorporated into the ICS full programme, we applaud the consortium and feel that our assessment is validated.

## Acronyms

BME	Black and minority ethnic
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
ICS	International Citizen Service
IV	International volunteer
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude and Practice
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MTR	Mid-term review
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NV	National Volunteer
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PCB	Programme Coordinating Body
PCR	Project Completion Report
RV	Return volunteer
THET	Tropical Health and Education Trust
VFM	Value for money
VSO	Volunteer Services Overseas

## Executive Summary

The 18-month pilot programme, International Citizen Service (ICS) supported young British citizens to contribute to development through international volunteering and generated knowledge to inform future youth volunteering programmes. The ICS pilot programme was both innovative and highly ambitious in seeking to demonstrate and understand how **diverse cohorts of young volunteers** can achieve **development impacts**. The programme's design was experimental, incorporating different models of volunteer placements delivered through the involvement of six different development agencies in the ICS consortium.

The ICS scheme took volunteers on a journey through recruitment and selection, to placement matching and pre-departure training. On arriving in-country they went through orientation training before starting their development projects. On returning to the UK around three months later, they had a further training day that is part debrief and part support for the next, crucial stage of the ICS journey – their active citizenship in the UK. Every stage of this journey was designed to give the opportunity for volunteers to learn new life and leadership skills. ICS also enabled resources to go to supporting national volunteers through similar journeys in their own countries. The work that volunteers did overseas was also expected to contribute towards accelerating delivery of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Programme Coordinating Body (PCB) managed the programme and ensured that each stage of the volunteer's journey was quality assured through the creation of Core Standards (to become Minimum Standards in the full programme). The volunteer journey included a placement of 10 - 12 weeks in a developing country and was expected to generate impacts in three key areas: on the volunteers themselves, on development outcomes in the placement community<sup>1</sup> and through increased active citizenship in the UK.

The Project Completion Review (PCR) was undertaken during the last phase of the pilot programme which will close on 30 November 2012.<sup>2</sup> The objectives of this final evaluation of the ICS pilot are to:

- ◆ assess the extent to which the outputs and purpose of the pilot have been achieved (effectiveness and impacts);
- ◆ generate knowledge to further inform the scale up of ICS, including identifying best practice in the design and implementation of international youth volunteering schemes; and
- ◆ analyse the value for money (VFM) of each stage of the ICS volunteer journey.

**Overall our assessment has found that the delivery of this ambitious pilot programme has been successful.** Targets have been met and the ICS pilot programme has made progress towards its overall purpose of generating knowledge about youth volunteering and demonstrating the contribution that young British volunteers from a variety of backgrounds can make to international development and poverty reduction. Learning has been generated in many areas, and best practice is gradually emerging although because it is the final stage, this is less evident in the later stages of the volunteer journey (Return Volunteer Action).

Three key areas of impact were anticipated to result from the ICS pilot. Of the three, the personal development of the ICS volunteers has been the most visible, immediate and easy to assess. Increased skills, knowledge and confidence of ICS volunteers feed directly into the second and third areas of impact: development outcomes (through placements) and local/ international development (through longer-term active citizenship). Following the pilot an overall theory of change is emerging and will be made more explicit during the full programme, which includes the

<sup>1</sup> Contributing to poverty reduction and achieving the Millennium Development Goals

<sup>2</sup> The Pilot ran from 1 March 2011 to 31 August 2012. The recently approved no-cost time extension to the Pilot will run from 1 September to 30 November 2012.

contribution of young volunteers from the placement countries in which ICS works (National Volunteers). This should strengthen the impacts that can be achieved in developing countries and also frames the subsequent engagement of young volunteers in terms of active citizenship, where their activism might relate to local community development (in the UK or developing countries), national policy development or international development. It also increases the scope for sustainable impacts by including the legacy on development that sustainable changes in civic engagement (knowledge and skills) of National Volunteers may have. Further work is needed (and envisaged in the framework of the evaluation of the full ICS programme) to test the assumptions underpinning the pathway of change for the programme and indeed to fully understand and measure the extent and types of development impact that can accrue from or are attributable to a programme like ICS.

The ICS logframe envisaged the following four key outputs:

**Output 1:** Increased demand for youth and older person development volunteering from all sections of the UK society

**Output 2:** 1,250 UK citizens, from groups representative of the UK public successfully complete International Volunteer Placements

**Output 3:** Returned UK volunteers engage in active citizenship actions in the UK

**Output 4:** Generation of knowledge on good practice to inform future UK volunteering programmes

The success of the pilot in terms of achievement of these output areas is explored below.

Evidence supporting the achievement of **Output 1** (increased demand for development volunteering from all sections of society) and **Output 3** (Return Volunteer engagement in global citizenship actions) is limited and will require further exploration during the full programme. In terms of **Output 1** it is worth noting that the programme was over-subscribed during the pilot stage with the ratio of applications to selected volunteers 2.5: 1. This suggests that there is potential to further refine selection criteria without losing the existing diversity of applications, to ensure that the most committed and appropriate within a particular target group are offered places. At the same time, uptake of the volunteering opportunity provided by ICS among some groups remains a challenge that the consortium is addressing.

In terms of **Output 2**, there was a slight shortfall in the number of UK citizens departing from the UK on placements (1, 216 against a target of 1, 250) and while some diversity targets were not fully achieved, other groups of young people were "over represented" (including young people from low income backgrounds, some BME backgrounds and young people in the South East of England). While the effectiveness of the placements has been variable (**Output 2**) learning from the pilot should increase the effectiveness of future placements. Several key areas of development where young volunteers can add value and make a distinctive input have been identified. These include:

- ◆ increasing access to basic services;
- ◆ breaking down taboos and promoting equality;
- ◆ increasing civic participation of young people; and
- ◆ enhancing the capacity of partners to carry out effective participatory approaches.

These have been incorporated into the full programme through the development of Core Standard Guidance and a Project Planning Tool. Appropriate approaches and methods which build on the capabilities of young volunteers include: resource development; training; awareness raising and campaigns; and research. Key roles for volunteers include: community mobilisers; peer educators, researchers and provision of English language inputs.

Three main models of delivery were tested during the pilot programme: youth to youth (ICS



International Volunteers work directly with peer groups of National Volunteers, often on a 1:1 basis); youth to partner (ICS International Volunteers work with local partners and programmes); and reciprocal international exchanges (this model was explored in the Mid Term Review through a field visit in the UK and included in the VFM Analysis, but was not considered by DFID as an option for the full programme). Findings of the evaluation demonstrate that the most cost effective way of working is youth to youth and this has been adopted for the full programme.

**Output 4** is knowledge generation to inform future UK volunteering programmes. The pilot successfully tested different approaches at each stage of the volunteer journey through ICS, generating learning that will allow overall improvements to be achieved in the effectiveness of the programme. A no-cost extension to the pilot is providing an opportunity to consolidate learning around volunteer return actions and the accessibility of the programme. Within the consortium, International Service (and Skillshare International to a lesser extent) has driven forward and tested approaches to inclusion of disabled volunteers; similarly VSO and Skillshare International in particular have taken more of a lead on approaches to working with young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). Changes in the overall economic climate mean that risk analysis and management will have to be rigorous to ensure ambitions around recruitment and diversity are achieved.

**Overall risk management of media, security and health issues has been effective.** Vigilance will be needed as the scale increases to ensure that Core Standards and effective communication are maintained in the full programme.

**There are still aspects of the programme where data needs to be gathered and analysed in order to articulate a theory of change.** Despite the progress already made and learning that has been incorporated into the full programme, we feel that the consortium is still in the “learning by doing” phase.

**The tension remains between overall programme branding and identity.** “Brand loyalty” developed by ICS volunteers as they are placed by individual agencies and are offered support through these agencies on their return to the UK is mainly aligned with Agencies in the consortium. The recognition of ICS is much lower, which could impact on marketing of the programme to organisations likely to support return actions as well as the options Returned Volunteers consider when choosing their return actions. This needs to be carefully analysed in order to understand better the impact this has on UK Return Action.

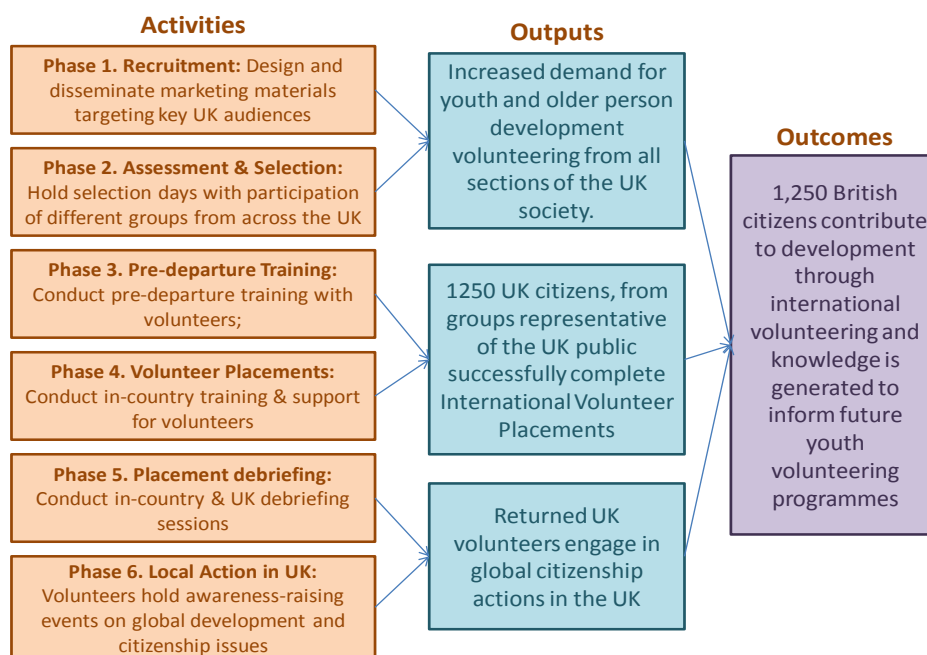
**The analysis of VFM found that in terms of effectiveness the pilot provided VFM.** It should be noted that the supporting data is largely taken from KAP (Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices) surveys and interviews with agency staff and volunteers. There remain issues to address with respect to some aspects of the volunteer journey and there is also still substantial variance in terms of efficiencies between the agencies. Some aspects of the programme that increase VFM are becoming standard practice across all agencies (for example, use of host homes, working with national volunteers and ensuring a consistent approach to pre- departure procurement). Widely varying unit costs across agencies also require attention. The use of team leaders has been developed during the pilot and appears to be both cost effective and in line with the empowerment approach of the programme. Increasing placement lengths (to six months) are recommended for Team Leaders or Project Supervisors. Overall, the consortium has learned considerably from the pilot in relation to fine tuning financial and monitoring systems to meet the data requirements of the VFM indicator framework. The improvements to data management capacity currently being introduced are welcomed and should support this. Going forward, further improvements are needed, although the pilot did succeed in laying the foundation for a more systematic approach to VFM assessment.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background to ICS Pilot

The Department for International Development’s (DFID) International Citizen Service (ICS) pilot programme ran between March 2011 and November 2012. The ICS pilot programme afforded the opportunity to explore the contribution that young British Citizens could make to international development both directly and through raising awareness and influencing as active citizens in the UK. The project purpose was for **“1,250 British citizens to contribute to development through international volunteering and to generate knowledge to inform future youth volunteering programmes”**. It was structured as a journey with 6 phases (see Figure 1) to achieve three interdependent areas of impact: The first of these was the personal development of young volunteers that engagement in a programme of this kind would generate; the second was to be their direct contribution to sustainable reduction in poverty and progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); the third was more open to interpretation, but broadly anticipated that after returning to the UK ICS volunteers would continue to influence UK audiences about key issues in development and become more “active citizens”. Annex 2 contains the full project logframe.

**Figure 1: Simplified Overview of ICS (activities, outputs, outcomes)**



**Source:** Developed based on information in Business Case for ICS pilot, March 2011.

DFID believed that 'promoting global prosperity is both a moral duty and in our national interest'.<sup>3</sup> In launching the ICS scheme the UK government aimed to give young adults the opportunity to directly join the fight against poverty through international volunteering opportunities. As described by the Prime Minister, the scheme gave 'young people, who couldn't otherwise afford it, the chance to see the world and serve others.'<sup>4</sup> From its very conception, therefore, ICS sought to combine the power of youth volunteering with the idea of youth for development.<sup>5</sup> ICS also aimed to develop the capacity of local development organisations and governments (at both local and national level) to involve young people in the development process, and to benefit national volunteers (NVs) in the countries of operation, as well as the UK volunteers themselves.

During the pilot, a total of 1,216 young volunteers between 18-22 years of age, including 70 team leaders spent 10 – 12 weeks worked in 27 developing countries, engaging in resource development; training; awareness raising and campaigns; and research. Key roles for the volunteers have included community mobilisers, peer educators, researchers, and also providers of English language inputs. Examples of the work they undertook are shown in Box 1.

#### Box 1: Different Placement Activities

Learning from the pilot programme has shown that the contribution ICS volunteers can make to development is particularly effective in the areas of:

**Increasing access to basic services** – In Bangladesh ICS volunteers worked with local communities to improve sanitation (latrines) and hygiene and access to primary health care; in Swaziland they have contributed to monitoring gender based violence cases in magistrates courts and one volunteer drafted a paper based on their research which is being used in advocacy work.

**Breaking down taboos and promoting equality** – notable in this regard is the work of ICS volunteers raising issues of disability, removing barriers and raising awareness in Bolivia, Mali and Burkina Faso.

**Increasing civic participation of young people** – ICS volunteers in South Africa and Zambia have created Community Resource Centres in which young people can access resources and training e.g. financial literacy, sexual and reproductive health.

**Increasing the reach of local partners through participatory approaches** – Palestine ICS volunteers supported Sharek Youth Forum with the development of a Youth Councils Framework to increase the participation and voice of young people in West Bank Palestine.

Whilst ICS and the work that volunteers did overseas was expected to contribute towards accelerating delivery of the MDGs, the actual impact of the pilot on MDGs and its contribution towards global poverty reduction was not ear-marked for measurement during the pilot phase.<sup>6</sup> The programme budget was £9,371,793 (£1,000,000 expected from volunteer contributions). In addition there was some indirect subsidisation from consortium members. The forecast unit cost per volunteer was £7,497.

The ICS scheme took volunteers on a journey through recruitment and selection, to placement matching and pre-departure training. On arriving in-country they went through orientation training before starting their development projects. On returning to the UK around three months later, they had a further training day that is part debrief and part support for the next, crucial stage of the ICS journey – their active citizenship activity in the UK. Every stage of this journey was designed to give

<sup>3</sup> DFID Business Plan 2011-2015 (November 2010) p. 1

<sup>4</sup> David Cameron speaking on October 6<sup>th</sup> 2010, as quoted on /www.Dfid.gov.uk/Media-Room/News-Stories/2010/Life-changing-opportunities-for-young-people-to-volunteer-overseas/

<sup>5</sup> Business Case for ICS

<sup>6</sup> An impact evaluation is planned for the evaluation of the full programme.

the opportunity for volunteers to learn new life and leadership skills. ICS also enabled resources to go to supporting NVs through similar journeys in their own countries. The work that volunteers did overseas was also expected to contribute towards accelerating delivery of the MDGs.

One of the aims of the pilot phase was to examine different placement models. Three broad types of placement were offered to volunteers and listed in Box 2 below.

#### **Box 2: Different Placement Models**

Some volunteers worked alongside groups of young volunteers from the country in which they were based in international teams, working together to develop their own social action projects that engage directly with communities (ICS called this the 'youth to youth' model). Others worked directly with local programmes or partner organisations in work placements based in local organisations (the 'youth to partner' model). Some experienced a reciprocal international exchange which combined elements of both of these models (a 'reciprocal international exchange').

All these models were designed to build from, and extend, existing partnerships with community based organisations and national youth networks overseas enabling the ICS consortium to pilot a variety of models in a relatively short timeframe. Box 3 provides a summary of some design differences in the programmes managed by different ICS pilot agencies. Annex 6 contains brief summaries of the different placement models and further details are discussed in the Field Visit Reports summarised in Annex 8.

#### **Box 3: Differences in programme designs across ICS agencies**

All ICS pilot agencies designed their programmes based on the six stages of the volunteer journey. The details of this varied from agency to agency in order to provide lessons on what models worked best in what circumstances. Below are examples of some of the different programme designs:

**Recruitment:** skills-based volunteer recruitment (THET - Health, PROGRESSIO – community/youth development skills, Skillshare International – legal skills); group recruitment models; processes of NV recruitment; and recruitment of NEET young people and young people with disabilities who were carefully matched to appropriate placements.

**Placement design:** placements designed specifically for persons with disabilities (IS, Skillshare International); placements designed to utilise a wide range of volunteer interests and skills, including those making them accessible to NEET young people (VSO – worked with Changemakers, Restless Development –working with The Prince's Trust, Skillshare International– working with Beyond Blue / Tigers Trust); counterpart models, including NVs; and volunteer placement sizes. Volunteer support: team leader models, staffing and various team sizes to respond to volunteer needs.

**In-country partnership models:** how agencies approached partnerships in-country, and linked ICS activities to their overall development work in these locations.

**UK partnerships for return action:** partnerships with National Citizen Service agencies, particularly Catch 22 (VSO / Restless Development ) and The Challenge (Skillshare International) where returned volunteers were offered opportunities to engage other younger people; partnerships with UK organisations from whom volunteers had been recruited to enable meaningful return action; and offered opportunities for returned volunteers to work through agency alumni, advocacy and campaign teams (all agencies).

### **Management Arrangements**

The pilot was implemented by a consortium of volunteering agencies (referred to hereafter as the consortium). Within agreed Core Standards and guidelines, each consortium member used a slightly different approach to the design and management of placements, allowing for comparative analysis over the course of the pilot. Consortium partners were: Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) as the lead agency which sub-grant agreements were made with a further five consortium members; Restless Development, Skillshare International, International Service, Progressio and THET. The Programme

Coordinating Body (PCB) established to manage the ICS pilot had dedicated staff who were employed through VSO and Restless Development, with certain aspects of the pilot programme managed by agencies (marketing and branding) and other elements (co-ordination of media, training, data management, monitoring and evaluation) managed centrally through the PCB.

In April 2012 after the contract for the full ICS programme was signed, the PCB was gradually transformed into “the Hub” for the new ICS programme. The role of the Hub was to support the on-going pilot programme, development of the full programme and integrate new consortium members<sup>7</sup> within this management structure. The full ICS Programme started during the third cycle of placements of the pilot programme.

## 1.2. The evaluation objectives and methodology

The methodology for this evaluation was firmly rooted in the key evaluation questions specified in the ToR (see Annex 1) for the evaluation of the pilot which are listed below:

- ◆ assess the extent to which the outputs and purpose of the pilot were achieved (effectiveness and impacts);
- ◆ to generate knowledge to further inform the scale up of ICS, including identifying best practice in the design and implementation of international youth volunteering schemes;
- ◆ to analyse the value for money (VFM) of each stage of the ICS volunteer journey.

This evaluation used Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) evaluation criteria to provide the overarching framework. The methodology applied at the final evaluation stage was broadly the same as that used during the Mid-Term Review (MTR) stage and is described below. At the MTR stage, there was a focus on the lower levels of the logframe and on assessment of programme design, process issues (procedures, systems), efficiency and initial indications of the effectiveness and impact. The MTR also examined VFM considerations and provided advice to the consortium on the basket of indicators to measure VFM using the 3Es approach (efficiency, economy, effectiveness). The focus of the PCR was on effects higher up the results chain with particular consideration given to effectiveness and impact, as well as the assessment of VFM.

The evaluation team devised a comprehensive approach to data collection to generate the **evidence base** to underpin this final evaluation's findings and conclusions:

- ◆ a desk based review (programme documents and monitoring data);
- ◆ review and analysis of survey data collected by the consortium – self reported data from volunteers through the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice (KAP) survey;
- ◆ detailed analysis of data provided by the consortium sourced from ICS financial monitoring and reporting systems (in the framework of the assessment of VFM);
- ◆ analysis of data on the revenue generated by the means testing system;
- ◆ semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (telephone, email and a limited number of face-to-face interviews);
- ◆ observation (attendance and interviews at Returned Volunteer action days) and additional telephone interviews with a purposive sample<sup>7</sup> of returned volunteers; and
- ◆ field visits to placements managed by each agency. The selection criteria for the field missions are outlined below:

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<sup>7</sup> The winning consortium (which we will refer to as the ICS consortium) for the full programme of ICS was also led by VSO and included Restless Development, International Service and Progressio, together with new programme members Raleigh International and Tear Fund, and non-programme members the International Federation of the Red Cross, Catch 22 and Islamic Relief. Skillshare International and THET were only involved in the pilot programme.

**Box 4: Selection Criteria for Field Missions**

- ◆ visits to Africa and Asia (July 2012) and Latin America (February 2012) in the framework of the PCR;
- ◆ coverage of all agencies during MTR and PCR stages of the evaluation. This meant there was at least one visit to each agency, with repeat visits to different VSO and Skillshare placements as these were the largest sending agencies;
- ◆ coverage of all placement models for example, youth to youth, youth to partner, etc.;
- ◆ coverage of different groups of volunteers e.g. those with disabilities, etc.;
- ◆ coverage of a range of types of activities conducted by volunteers during placements;
- ◆ timing of the placements and field visit. Since placements in Latin America finished earlier than those in other regions, the field missions to Latin America were conducted in February 2012

**Field missions** (in the framework of the PCR) were conducted in Bolivia, El Salvador, India and Nepal in order to ensure coverage of each geographical region in the evaluation's evidence base (MTR visits were conducted to Africa – Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda). Where possible, field visits included placements which received more than one cycle of volunteers in order to assess cumulative impacts and learning. Two of the main practical challenges within the field visits that may have potentially influenced findings were:

- ◆ language barriers which inevitably privileged those who speak English, although translators were also used;
- ◆ the reliance on organisational gatekeepers which raised issues of selection bias. Where possible the evaluation team interviewed *all* the volunteers on a specific placement, and requested for full access to placement documentation.

In all, 63<sup>8</sup> volunteers were interviewed in the field during the final evaluation; staff from ten host organisations were interviewed; eight placements were visited.

The focus on the assessment of **Return Volunteer (RV) Action** was on the following key evaluation questions relating to this component of the programme:

- 1) What have been the impacts of ICS Return Actions?
- 2) What was it about ICS that caused/ facilitated Return actions?
- 3) How could the Return Action element of ICS be strengthened in the future?

This part of the evaluation gathered evidence from a purposive sample<sup>9</sup> of volunteers who were interviewed by telephone as well as observations at an RV day and additional face to face interviews with participants (Annex 3). The low level of response to requests for telephone interviews (13 respondents in total) led the team to triangulate findings through interviews with staff at each agency. Limitations to the methodology included uneven coverage across the agencies and small sample size.

Quantitative data was provided by the consortium and mainly drew on the KAP survey figures. These provided a baseline which allowed the measurement of longitudinal changes through the repetition of the survey process at various intervals: before the placement, immediately on return to the UK and six months later. Survey completion rates were variable and initially very low despite efforts to increase the completion rate. In terms of the data presented, of particular concern was the response

<sup>8</sup> 5% of all volunteers who travelled during the pilot. In total the MTR and Final Evaluation have interviewed 112 volunteers, just over 9% of the total travelling to placements

<sup>9</sup> A purposive sample is a non-representative subset of some larger population – this approach was chosen because we felt that early cohorts were less likely to respond positively due to the very limited focus on Return Action in the first cohorts going on placement, latest cohorts would not have “processed” their experiences to the same extent, so on balance the second and third cohorts would give a more balanced overview of emerging trends.



rate to the KAP2 survey which only represented 50% (self-selected) of all the volunteers, although the response rate to KAP1 was 100%.

The methodological issues emerging during the evaluation of the pilot are presented in summary below:

- ◆ **measurement of impact.** The logframe for the pilot explicitly stated that “This project phase will not measure indicators at goal level” with the goal defined as “groups of British people, representative of the UK population contribute to global poverty reduction as active citizens”. In addition, the project documentation had no clear framework for impact evaluation at lower levels (Outcomes) as the logframe indicators do not clearly reflect the three areas of impact outlined in Section 1.1. The evaluation team did seek to explore outcomes (emergent for the later stages of the volunteer journey since not all volunteers had begun their Return Actions at the time of the evaluation) and the indications of likely impact on volunteers and host organisations as well as active citizenship and development impact. This analysis drew extensively on evidence gathered during the field missions and interviews with volunteers, host organisations, agency staff and wider community beneficiaries.
- ◆ **theoretical perspectives** on “development impact” that underpin the ICS programme design are not explicit. To address this, the evaluation team used structured topic guides which accommodated a broad view of development impact in order to capture comprehensively as many different types of impacts (expected and unintended) generated by the programme.
- ◆ **RV Action** is the final stage of the ICS volunteer path and had not been previously assessed in the MTR which took place before any volunteers had returned to the UK. Therefore the methodology for the final evaluation devoted particular attention to coverage of this component of the programme.
- ◆ the final evaluation was undertaken at an appropriate time in relation to the conclusion of the pilot ICS programme, but starting the full programme before the pilot had been finalised and evaluated resulted in **high staff turnover** (in transition from PCB to Hub centrally). Given the significant changes in both scale and approach, these changes were to be expected, but in some cases have resulted in institutional memory loss and have made learning from the pilot more challenging. This impacted somewhat on the consultation process conducted for this final evaluation (see Annex 3 for a list of those interviewed).

## 2. Relevance and Design

### 2.1. Relevance

**The ICS programme was both innovative and highly ambitious in seeking to demonstrate and understand how diverse cohorts of young volunteers can achieve development impacts.**

A set of Core Standards guided the development of placements and each agency was then able to experiment with the approaches they felt most appropriate to their programmes. As a pilot programme which explicitly wanted to learn from these approaches and identify best practices, a degree of freedom to experiment and trial innovative approaches was incorporated into the design.

Initial negotiations between DFID and the consortium around budgets for supporting Return Action reflected the fact that no clear theory of change underpinned the ICS pilot programme. This contributed to some differences in understanding about the nature of the actions that would be expected and this lack of clarity is reflected in our findings in Section 3.4. For some consortium members, working with young volunteers was a new experience and this pilot was an important opportunity to develop greater understanding on how to engage young volunteers in carefully designed tasks within wider development programmes. In addition they learned how these experiences led to personal development which enabled them to engage more effectively as active citizens on their return to the UK. The pilot helped clarify the appropriate balance between these outputs. The development objectives of the placements needed to be both relevant to the communities involved and appropriate to the level of skills and knowledge of the volunteers, making use of the added value that young international volunteers (IVs) offer. In turn, the learning and personal development of the volunteers needed to enable them to gain the skills, confidence and understanding – and importantly the motivation – to relate their placement experience to the UK context and their own role as UK and active citizens.

**The pilot demonstrated that these objectives were broadly valid and appropriate for the target beneficiaries (young volunteers and community members on placements).** The approaches of each agency generated a lot of learning which was fed back in to the subsequent round of placements so that each cohort of volunteers benefited from improved understanding and better organised support very clearly focused on the overall goals and intended impacts. Whilst the pilot advanced thinking and understanding of the causal linkages and assumptions underpinning its outcomes, further research is needed to test these assumptions rigorously and measure the strength of the causal linkages in its pathway of change. These issues will be progressed in the framework of the planned impact evaluation of the full ICS Programme.

**Overall, the programme approach was relevant and generated debate and learning about how these different elements should be combined and resourced in order to achieve the intended impacts.**

### 2.2. Programme Design and coherence

The MTR included detailed consideration of the existing literature and evidence around youth participation in development and an examination of the design of the programme in comparison with other international volunteering programmes. In addition, some weaknesses in the design of the pilot were noted in the MTR and these are outlined in Box 5.



**Box 5: Logframe and programme design weaknesses**

- ◆ whilst the results indicators (P1, P2, P3) focused on diversity targets, satisfaction of partner organisations hosting placements, and the generation of criteria for effective international youth volunteering programmes, there was a gap in the specification of results around the Local Action in the UK part of the ICS journey (although output 3 focused on this area). It is recommended that this gap is addressed in the design of the full programme;
- ◆ the levels of impact specified in the Programme Document (Proposal for DFID (Final)- Delivery of International Citizen Service (ICS) pilot phase, March 2011, pg. 27) were not aligned with the indicators at results level specified in the logframe;
- ◆ the programme documentation provided little detail on the types of projects which would engage the recruited volunteers. Setting some broad criteria around the projects including their links to the MDGs (although these should not be seen as exclusive) is recommended;
- ◆ whilst the logframe specified the purpose was to contribute to “development” and the programme documentation (pg. 3) specified that volunteers would contribute towards “accelerating delivery of the Millennium Development Goals” there was a lack of clarity concerning the development impact of the programme. The pathway of change from activities through to outcomes and impacts needed to be detailed and the development impacts of the programme defined. If the intention of ICS was to contribute to the MDGs, then this should be clear at the purpose level and P2 should have related to satisfaction of the hosting organisations in relation to these;
- ◆ the specification of Output 2 for the pilot failed to address drop out by volunteers whilst on placements, although it did assume a 10% drop out rate tied to recruitment. Therefore, the most recent Progress Report suggested that the indicator be revised to reflect participation on the programme rather than successful completion due to this oversight. This deficiency will mean that the numbers achieved by the pilot overall fall short of the 1,250 volunteers successfully completed the programme. There were 37 early returns in the first round of 313 volunteers<sup>10</sup>;
- ◆ age of volunteers. Young volunteers were in the 18-22 year age group and older volunteers were 23 years upwards. 18 to 25 years would align ICS better with norms of the UK Youth Services and would offer scope to recruit Team Leaders from the 22 – 25 year age range.

**Source:** MTR, ICS pilot, ITAD, October 2011.

**The pilot phase of ICS succeeded in advancing thinking on what works in terms of enabling young people to contribute to international development projects.** As a result the programme constantly developed over the course of the pilot and the redesigned full ICS Programme owes several of its new design elements to this learning.

A key change in the design of the full ICS programme which has strengthened its relevance and to some extent reframed the conceptual framework, is the inclusion of NVs as counterparts for the IVs. By the time of tendering for the full programme, the relevance and added value of the Youth- to- Youth model of placements was recognised by DFID and the consortium. Those members of the consortium that did not include NVs initially were able to explore how they could be included in the pilot's final cohorts of volunteers. Working with NVs meant that the concept of citizenship was clearly focused on community engagement and active citizenship which would increase the sustainability of impacts both in the UK and in ICS programme countries.

Other notable design improvements include the formulation of a carefully-developed set of baseline standards (known as Core Standards) which underpinned the different phases of the volunteer journey. Weaknesses in using centralised / agency based approaches to the delivery at

<sup>10</sup> Overall figures for the Pilot showed a 7.9% early return rate (97 volunteers) of which half were unpreventable.

each stage were analysed in the MTR and some changes were made (see Section 7 “Lessons Learned”).

The desire of consortium members to have a strong agency identity influenced whether the programme design used a central or agency specific approach at different stages of the volunteer journey. VFM considerations have led to some changes being proposed for this approach during the initial stages of the volunteer journey in the full programme e.g. there will be central procurement of some items. The final stage of the programme, Return Action, is still managed through Agencies and by the end of the programme some volunteers remain almost unaware of ICS and the role that DFID (and thus UKaid) has. Given the clustering of consortium members in London, retaining an agency specific approach requires each agency to attempt to offer support across the UK and RVs are far less likely to be aware of possible Return Action opportunities being offered by consortium members other than “their” agency.

Other design weaknesses evident during the pilot stage included some evidence of tensions between budget allocations negotiated with DFID and the emphasis afforded to development impact, the impact on the volunteers themselves, and the design of the RV action component in the UK. These issues were given greater consideration in the design of the next phase of ICS.

### 2.3. Risk Management

**Thorough risk assessment at the start of the pilot, from the initial emergence of the consortium partnership onwards, was supported by effective and thorough risk management.** Clear procedures and guidelines were produced for risk management, both in the UK and on placements. The partners with limited experience of working with young volunteers (both consortium partners and the in-country local partners) found the development of Core Standards, risk assessment and security procedures useful overall.

There is some evidence however that the reporting procedures were not followed as rigorously as they needed to be to ensure effective management; during field visits one country programme manager admitted that the verbal warning system for volunteer behaviour was not used consistently. The use of group leaders by Progressio worked well, but their sense of responsibility had to be stressed to encourage them to follow reporting guidelines rather than hiding behind the group on some occasions. Staff in country appeared to use their discretion pragmatically at times and see the reporting procedures as adding yet more paperwork to an already overloaded programme. Whilst this may have been understandable in relation to minor health issues, vigilance was needed to ensure that rules, procedures and sanctions were upheld and clear to everyone where security was concerned.

Programmes varied in the level of supervision and control depending on the security situation of the countries involved – it was probably tightest in Palestine and El Salvador, leading to some tensions between the duty of care and recognising that the volunteers were young adults, but over the course of the pilot the limited number of serious incidents reflects how well this balance was managed.

The response to the military coup in Mali showed that emergency procedures were rigorous and effective. International Service felt that the support provided by both DFID and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was helpful. Media incidents such as a negative article in the Sunday Telegraph were also dealt with quickly and effectively at all levels.

It is important that periodic spot checks and reassessments are undertaken during the next phase, together with regular programme-wide simulations of emergency procedures to ensure that the risk management procedures remain valid and clear to everyone involved in the programme.

### 3. Effectiveness

We explore effectiveness and the factors affecting the effectiveness of each phase of the ICS journey below. Conclusions concerning the effectiveness of the pilot are presented in Section 8.

#### 3.1 Phase one and two: Recruitment and selection

**Overall recruitment targets for the pilot were largely and successfully met.** In total, 1,216 volunteers were placed in the pilot representing a 97% achievement of the target of 1,250 volunteers. **Moreover, 85% of volunteer respondents felt the recruitment and selection process met their expectations (KAP).** It is also commendable to note that the pilot generated 2.5 times the number of applicants to volunteers who were selected. The target for early returns (less than 10%) was also achieved. In all, 97 volunteers (7.9%) returned early and reasons explaining these early returns are provided in Box 6 below:

##### Box 6: Reasons for the Early Return of Some Volunteers

- ◆ 49 volunteers returned for unpreventable reasons such as “volunteer illness” or “family/compassionate reason” and;
- ◆ 48 for preventable reasons such as “discipline/behaviour” or because the volunteer was “unhappy with placement/ placement breakdown”.

Overall concerning recruitment and selection processes, there were a number of specific areas of learning **from the pilot** that emerged from the evaluation and are summarised below.

***The effectiveness or limitations of the online recruitment system was not analysed in any depth.***

Recruitment was agency specific as volunteers applied online through the web page of consortium members (for the full programme central processing is being used). There were a number of cases where individual applicants were offered support where needed: Group applications that were received through partnerships, for example, VSO and Changemakers, International Service and Deafway, and Skillshare International and Beyond Blue (young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)). Support has also been offered to individual potential applicants who were struggling to fill in the form. It is not, however, clear that lessons learned during the final phase of Platform2<sup>11</sup>, about the analytics of how the websites were used by volunteers, were learned. In particular we noted that the following issues in Box 7 warrant further exploration.

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<sup>11</sup> As reference is made to the Platform2 programme at several points, we set out the purpose and objectives here: Through a programme of volunteering on overseas development projects Platform2 was intended to increase awareness in the UK of global development issues among young adults and their communities. The main outputs were:

1. To involve 1950 young adults, aged between 18 and 25, particularly those from minority backgrounds, and those who would not otherwise have the opportunity to participate in such schemes.
2. Volunteers participate in appropriate, community led development projects.
3. Volunteers develop an increased understanding of international development.
4. Platform2 results in the volunteers taking forward a programme of development awareness raising activities in the UK, which engages the volunteers' communities in development issues.

**Box 7: Further analysis of online recruitment system**

- ◆ *data providing a breakdown of website costs per successful application was unavailable. There was an absence of/limited understanding of volunteer movement between websites;*
- ◆ *there was an absence of analysis on the number of steps required for a volunteer to complete an application. This was a crucial factor affecting the success rate for completed applications among less computer literate applicants and a significant element of cost efficiency for online applications;*
- ◆ *an understanding of which aspects of the on-line process potential volunteers find challenging and alternative forms of support that could be made more widely available to support these applicants – or ways of adapting the overall process to reduce barriers. This should be explored further by the consortium.*

**The targeting of specific groups helped to make ICS more accessible.** The involvement of specialist partner organisations in recruitment (e.g. the Changemakers/ Forum) by VSO was successful and allowed the pilot to progress its achievement of its diversity objectives. International Service in Bolivia, Mali and Burkina Faso provided excellent opportunities for involving volunteers with a disability. Skillshare International has also made particular efforts to offer opportunities to deaf young people and its “hallmark” high-quality work with disaffected young people, particularly young men,<sup>12</sup> through football was a very effective way of recruiting this target group.

**However, overall the pilot did not achieve the balance between different groups aspired to in the programme documentation.** Although the recruitment of volunteers from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups (30%) and those from low income households (78%), was very successful<sup>13</sup>, the targets around white volunteers (70% against a target of 89%), middle income households (12% against a target of 25%) and high income households (10% against a target of 42%) were not successfully achieved – more understanding of the reasons behind this should be developed. In addition targets around males (35% against a target of 49%), those with a disability (2% against a target of 5%) and those from Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and in England, Yorkshire and Humber and the North West were not successfully met. The challenge of recruiting volunteers from all parts of the UK was considerable and clustering of consortium agencies in London exacerbated this both for recruitment and the RV phase. The challenges of recruiting young men and disabled volunteers are being addressed; more even geographical recruitment appears to have received less attention.

**Demand for ICS places was high overall.** The ratio between applications and placements was 2.5:1 in the pilot (Q6 Project Progress Report). Such a high ratio makes it possible to be considerably more competitive and selective. Some RVs interviewed endorsed this by suggesting that recruitment should seek ways to judge motivation and commitment to the objectives of ICS more effectively. The challenge for recruitment was how to achieve this whilst retaining a focus on personal characteristics and broad capabilities.

**The recruitment cycle may affect engagement.** The recruitment cycle coincided with the academic year and allowed students to spend their summer on ICS. Initial low levels of return actions following the return of the first cohort of volunteers may in-part be linked to volunteers returning to a new academic year and the pressures of term-time commitments. For Progressio the

<sup>12</sup> Together with International Service, Skillshare International added value to the consortium by offering a focus for recruitment outside London.

<sup>13</sup> The means testing system used for the Pilot programme was assessed thoroughly for the MTR and found to be ineffective as a means of providing an accurate assessment of the overall background/ current circumstances of a volunteers, in large part because their financial circumstances fluctuate dramatically as they enter/leave further education, the family home, employment etc. Whilst this figure is perhaps contestable, it reflects the national culture of volunteering and the experience of Platform2.

October cohort was the most challenging in terms of recruitment. These trends need to be explored further.

***There was considerable drop out between successful selection, pre-departure training and prior to departure.*** Of the 1,792 individuals selected, 1,278 completed the pre-departure training. Further drop-outs prior to departure meant that over the programme 32% of successful applicants failed to take up their placement offer.

This had implications for the cost of recruitment per placement and meant that agencies had to over recruit volunteers for each placement. In an effort to reduce attrition, consortium partners developed more focused briefing materials, improved the information available on their websites and increased the level of contact leading up to the selection days. Increased pre-departure contact may have reduced this attrition rate, but it requires further investigation.

***Continued focus on personal characteristics and broad capabilities rather than on specific skills.*** All stakeholder groups agreed that short-term volunteering placements involving young, relatively unskilled volunteers meant that a focus on personal characteristics and broad capabilities was more important than specific levels of skill, experience or knowledge of volunteers. Stakeholders felt that personal characteristics such as patience, confidence, flexibility and a commitment to the values of ICS (as opposed to “development tourism”) and broad capabilities such as adaptability, team work and initiative were most important for placement effectiveness.

***Matching of volunteers.*** While ICS placements are intended to be accessible to a diverse range of volunteers, applicants can choose which agencies and countries to apply to and allocation to a specific placement involves a degree of matching related to skills and interests, and to team characteristics. KAP returns showed that 81% of respondents had their expectations met around placements, however, the field visits showed that in some cases volunteers could have been better matched to placement opportunities.

- ◆ VSO and Restless Development matched volunteers to placements primarily within country. This allowed in-country staff (who had the fullest knowledge and experience of placements) to match volunteers but prevented detailed pre-placement planning (either by the volunteer or the host organisation) or an active role for volunteers or host organisations in placement matching;
- ◆ Progressio and International Service had specific roles (e.g. monitoring and evaluation, faith and community liaison, blogs/communication) which volunteers expressed interest in during the selection and recruitment processes. However Group Leaders and Skill Specialists were either recruited specifically or identified during interviews.

Some agencies strengthened the level of information made available to in-country partners about successful applicants and for next phase of ICS. Progressio now provides local partners with an indicative skill set for each volunteer developed through the UK recruitment and pre-departure training processes before each group arrives.

***Team selection.*** Stakeholders stressed the importance of selecting volunteers for specific placements to ensure a coherent team. The process of selection of Team Leaders was strengthened over the course of the pilot. Occasionally, however, team dynamics, rather than specific volunteer selection, caused disruption within the placements. This resulted in some volunteers coming home early.

### 3.2 Phase three: Training

All ICS volunteers (except THET volunteers) undertook the ICS training through a three-day residential course (two days generic ICS training and one day agency specific training). Some information regarding the placement was given at the agency -specific training. This was then supplemented by additional information through email and telephone communication.

**The training improved over the course of the pilot.** Much of the feedback from volunteers and distilled from the MTR was incorporated into training design and delivery. However, feedback on the training content remained somewhat mixed. Across the pilot, satisfaction with pre-departure training was 92% directly after the training, but fell to 69% (KAP survey respondents), after their placements. This demonstrates the difficult balancing act for trainers who wanted to reassure apprehensive volunteers without repeating what later training would cover. Interviews and field visits for the final evaluation showed that although pre-departure training was decentralised there continued to be concerns that some areas were repeated in the generic ICS training, agency specific training and then again during the in-country training and orientation.

The mix of generic ICS training and the additional agency specific day made any team training difficult given the available budget and logistics. Volunteers, however, valued being placed in country teams for the pre-departure training.

**There was a lack of placement specific information.** Despite improvements to the programme of training, there continued to be a lack of placement specific information provided to volunteers pre-departure (despite this finding emerging at the MTR stage). This came across very strongly from almost all volunteers across the ICS pilot. They felt this information was important for the following reasons:

- ◆ to reduce uncertainty and anxiety
- ◆ to allow for pre-departure preparation (e.g. work planning or bringing certain resources)
- ◆ to provide a clear narrative for fundraising

There were, however, legitimate reasons for *not* matching volunteers to placements – for example:

- ◆ to allow in-country agency inputs in matching volunteers to placements during in-country training
- ◆ to avoid raising expectations about what placements might involve

The evaluation suggests that providing local partners with appropriate details of selection assessments about volunteers could allow earlier matching to placements and as placement planning is strengthened through the Core Standards requirements, the basics of any placement (themes covered and main skills involved) could be made available to participants during their pre-departure training.

The decentralisation of training should allow agencies to devote more attention to some specific training in the full programme. In many placements the need for increased language training both pre-departure and in-country was stressed. This language training could be devoted to the specific vocabulary that will be encountered within placements as there are clearly limits to the amount of language training that can be offered. Some placements also required the volunteers to engage with relatively complex development issues such as gender. Where this is the case, more substantial attention should be devoted to these issues to allow for effective engagement and reflection during the placement.



### 3.3 Phase 4: Placements

The KAP survey showed a high level of contentment with the ICS placement experience reporting that it met the expectations of 90% of respondents. VSO, THET, Skillshare International, International Service and Progressio all experienced contentment ratings of 90% or higher. Restless Development experienced the lowest rating with 77% of respondents feeling their expectations were met by ICS. We have not been able to verify the reasons for this and suggest that the consortium investigates further. **In addition, the Project Impact Tool results showed that over the course of the pilot, 88% of overseas partners rated the usefulness of volunteers as either “useful” or “very useful”.** Field visits and agency interviews suggested that there was substantial improvement to the placements overtime with important lessons (especially around planning, support and volunteer activity) being developed across volunteer cohorts. The evaluation also generated a large amount of learning that could be taken through to the next phase of ICS. The remainder of this section categorises this learning around specific aspects of the placements.

**Selection of in-country partners.** ICS agencies began planning placements in countries where there was buy-in from their in-country counterparts. The characteristics of the organisations they identified as local partners/ hosts were central to the success of the placements. In some placements visited, the capacity and resources of the host organisation were limiting what volunteers could achieve (Skillshare International India, International Service Bolivia) and in-country ICS agency staff have learned lessons about which local partners simply did not have the capacity to make good use of the ICS offer. Overall, in relation to organisations with the necessary minimum capacity in terms of human resources and materials, the field visits showed that the “soft” characteristics of host organisations were more important to placement effectiveness than “hard” demographic characteristics such as the resources they had available or staff capacity (although a baseline “minimal” capacity also needed to be defined) These “soft” characteristics included features such as the following:

- ◆ a commitment to the aims of ICS and the value of volunteering (e.g. the contribution of volunteers was seen as an end in itself rather than a means to future fundraising or prestige);
- ◆ the activities of volunteers were integrated into wider on-going programmes;
- ◆ experience of effective volunteer coordination (of young international volunteers) or the capacity to effectively and safely manage a group of IVs;<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ existing strong relationships between the agency and the host organisations.

**Planning.** The approach to and success of placement planning varied considerably between sites and was a key factor in placement effectiveness. **Where planning was successful, it resulted in effective placements that realised sustainable impacts for host organisations and communities and offered a meaningful experience for ICS volunteers.** Examples of well-planned placements included the work carried out through ICS volunteers in Swechha in VSO India. In this example volunteer activity fitted into broad organisational objectives but the volunteers were also given freedom to design their own activities. In La Paz, Bolivia volunteers with International Service conducted their own baseline assessment and agreed with the local partner to pilot activities that will now be incorporated into didactic materials the local partner can use in its informal education work with children.

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<sup>14</sup> One of the partners visited during the field visit to International Service placements in Bolivia had clearly not got sufficient capacity to work effectively with such a large group, despite excellent relations with the team of volunteers and immense amounts of goodwill. The volunteers were in-effect covering for a lack of capacity and volunteer gaps.

Field visits to placements where planning had been weaker highlighted the importance of shared needs assessment between ICS agencies, in-country partners and local communities which took account of both the distinctiveness of what ICS volunteers could offer and their capacity (avoiding unrealistic expectations). Over the course of the pilot, the importance of embedding the work of ICS volunteers into wider programmes and planning for repeat cohorts in order to set a more realistic timeframe for meaningful and sustainable impacts influenced the planning of the placements being developed for the full programme of ICS.

**Continuity.** Effective communication and continuity between cohorts of volunteers on placements was a key challenge across sites and agencies. This was seen in VSO's programme in Nepal, where a lack of coherence in activities across the three cycles limited the impact causing some disappointment among community members. In the full programme, advanced planning of resource allocation and coordination of activities between volunteer cycles will be important.

**Activities.** In addition to careful planning, activities undertaken by volunteers were most effective when they maximised the potential contribution that the relatively unskilled, young volunteers on short-term volunteer placements could make (see section 4.2). The rationale for the distinctive contribution of this type of volunteer had not been clearly articulated or realised in many placements visited. Both the management of expectation (some local partners would have preferred more skilled volunteers) and careful support over the initial placement as local partners and communities learn more about the groups they are hosting, has enabled partners to strengthen the placements by improving the focus of activities.

**Specialised activities.** The pilot explored using volunteers with particular skills through the involvement of THET, where placements only involved volunteers with significant skills in healthcare and Progressio where volunteers with particular skills were matched to skills required in particular placements. Whilst the experiences of volunteers placed through THET was largely very positive, it proved more difficult for Progressio to recruit for specific one-off skill matches. The main argument against widening this approach was that the pool of volunteers from which such specialists were drawn would likely be much less diverse than the overall ICS Programme is aiming for.

Field visits confirmed that at least some activities with fixed outputs provided a useful structure around which volunteers could build their activities and contribute to concrete impact. Volunteers may have been involved in identifying community needs through participatory research (seen during field visits to Restless Development, International Service and Progressio placements) through which volunteer activities for one or more cycles were identified. A balance needed to be struck between planning and flexibility, and should always have been progressed in partnership with the local community.

Evidence also suggests that there are gains to volunteer activities engaging with the wider community (at least to some extent) in order to expand impact, realise the distinctive contribution of ICS volunteers and increase the exposure of volunteers to development issues. In some placements, the volunteer activity was stretched across too many activities (e.g. Restless Development Uganda) or communities (e.g. Progressio El Salvador volunteers were moving to different communities every two weeks or so making it very difficult for volunteers to feel that they were developing any meaningful engagement).

Progressio was the only agency in the pilot programme to have an explicit focus on faith as part of its model<sup>15</sup>. It was clear during the field visit to El Salvador that some volunteers applied to

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<sup>15</sup> The volunteer orientation packs included some ideas for reflections on the role of Faith in development, but in practice the extent to



Progressio specifically because of the faith focus although overall the proportions of volunteers identifying themselves as having a faith was no higher than those applying to other agencies in the consortium. As a member of programme staff commented "it is good to 'have it in the mix' even if it is only touched upon. It probably makes the groups slightly more sensitive to some issues".

***In country orientation.*** The length and intensity of in-country orientation varied significantly throughout the ICS placements e.g. orientation in Restless Development Uganda lasted almost three weeks (volunteers were trained in training skills) whereas Skillshare International India lasted five days. Where volunteers were given language training, orientation was also longer. Overall, a period of more than two weeks began to affect the progress that could be made during the placement, so it seemed appropriate to limit this part of the in-country experience to two weeks and to look for ways to incorporate on-going training (such as language) into the main placement programme. The key finding is that more placement specific information and content directly relating to placements should be provided. Involving the host organisation more directly in training and orientation (either at a central site or at placement site) could help to achieve this, as well as helping to strengthen placement planning and fostering engagement with the host organisation.

***Support and training of volunteers.*** Effective placements involved substantial support for volunteers. The burden of this support has varied considerably between placements from agency staff (full time in-country staff and Programme Supervisors in VSO placements); host organisation staff (e.g. Skillshare International Tanzania), Team Leaders or a combination of all three. This support was crucial for resolving emerging issues; acting as a bridge between volunteers and host organisations; supervising volunteer activities; facilitating on-going volunteer development and learning; and dealing with group dynamics. Effective support required a combination of formal support (e.g. regular, structured supervision meetings and the mid-phase review) and informal, reactive support. It also involved on-going training which offered a guided volunteer learning journey which moved from general global issues, country specific issues and through to the local placement-specific issues e.g. VSO's Active Citizenship Days. Support from ICS agencies is also important for the host organisations especially around ICS volunteer management.

***Team leaders (TLs).*** The use of a TL (volunteer) and their role differs across agencies. Lack of clarity around the role of TLs within the pilot affected every stage from initial selection and training onwards. The role of Team Leader offered an exciting opportunity for young volunteers who already demonstrated leadership capabilities to develop these qualities and skills. The pilot demonstrated the importance of careful recruitment and supportive line management. These lessons led to role descriptions being introduced, development of targeted recruitment and training (Progressio) and planned longer term involvement of TLs (generally six months) in the full ICS programme.

***Living arrangements and allowances.*** Generally, the benefits of host homes increased depth of community level experience for the volunteers and this will (rightly in our view) be the modus operandi for the full programme. Where host homes were not used however, volunteers still benefitted from living in and having contact with families within the community (e.g. Skillshare International Tanzania and Skillshare International India). At times it was difficult to identify volunteer accommodation of an appropriate standard (safety and cleanliness) situated within the community they serve. This was likely to be compounded by inclusion of NVs where some may have lived at home and others are placed with families. The variable purchasing power of living allowances led to different volunteer behaviour in relation to travel at weekends and agency

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which groups engaged either internally or with faith-based community groups and churches appeared to depend on the extent to which the group leaders provided a lead

approaches to volunteers travelling during their placements also varied considerably.

**NV-IV relationships.** Where NVs were involved in the pilot placements, their relationship with counterparts was a defining element of placements and the way they influenced outcomes (and ultimately impacts) reframed the way that the ICS programme now views the contribution of young volunteers to international development. NVs will be an integral part of the full programme across all the agencies. They offered considerable support and a depth of experience to IVs. Stakeholders also reported that the involvement of NVs projected a distinctive (“development focused”) ethos to the ICS programme, which could aid the positive engagement of host organisations and communities as Box 8 illustrates:

**Box 8: Oliver Day, 21, Nottingham**

**Worked in Zambia as part of a Youth Development Organisation – the Network of Zambian People Living with HIV/AIDS forming support groups for education and emotional support, and generating funding to make the groups sustainable**

“Being able to work alongside local people who know the needs of their community was really important. I worked with a local person who was also a volunteer, we supported each other in our work and gave each other insight into our cultures and the real issues our communities were facing. This was essential to understanding more about the development work we were taking on. The lady I worked with, Theresa, bridged the language and cultural gap for me. I learnt a lot of the language from her and she also knew the history of the local impact of HIV and AIDS in Zambia which meant we could plan our work to meet the needs of local people, and not just what we thought they might need.”

### 3.4 Phase 5: UK RV Action

At the beginning of the pilot, DFID sought to minimise the budget allocations for RV engagement; however, it became clear during the course of the pilot that considerable support would be needed to achieve the kind of Return Actions that the programme intended. There was a lack of clarity in the design of the programme in terms of what should be the focus of this component. Thus agencies “felt their way” over the course of the pilot on how best to support RVs and many respondents highlighted the limited budget as a severe constraint. Some agencies contributed in kind support from other staff members, or identified additional funding. Later cohorts of RVs benefited from the involvement of ICS alumni.

The main form of support during the pilot was the RV days. They were intended to help volunteers through any “reverse culture shock”, but the principle objective was to encourage volunteers to complete a RV Action – and of course, move on from this into more active citizenship. A lot was learned over the course of the pilot and expectation management was once again been a critical factor. The RV days were very poorly attended by initial cohorts who were unclear on the purpose of the RV days and did not know what they were expected to get out of them. Later cohorts of volunteers were given much clearer guidance from the start of their placements about how they might want to develop their volunteering and citizenship roles on return and how they could use the placement experiences to support this and the volunteers we interviewed who *had* attended generally felt RV days were “*fine*”. One respondent saw great value in the RV days because it gave the group an opportunity to feedback their issues, which were all taken on board and contributed to improvements of the placement.

Motivation was a key factor. Some RVs interviewed felt that the ICS certificate, gained once a

completed action has been “approved”, provided little motivation to complete their actions, whilst others found the reference useful as they searched for work. The dates and locations of the RV days could also impact on their effectiveness. One staff member commented, “if they happen too early, the volunteers haven't had a chance to settle back; if they happen too late, then the volunteers will have already organised their actions without support”. After the intense experiences of being on a placement, not surprisingly volunteers were less motivated to travel a long way to be with other volunteers they had never met, so now they are invited to attend with their peers from the same placement.

The level of prescription for RV Actions varied across the consortium. Some agencies focused on active citizenship, whilst others embraced local community engagement/activism (the approach used in the full programme). For all volunteers, being asked to undertake an individual action was also a marked change from the team activities of the placements and the level of support they needed varied considerably. The decision to continue engaging volunteers through each agency rather than an overall ICS programme banner continued to influence the localised support volunteers could access, just as it did during the recruitment phase. Agencies took a range of steps to address the need for additional support. In addition to the RV days, Facebook was used to post information and opportunities that the volunteers may be interested in. Personal emails were sent out to the volunteers by some of the implementing organisations such as International Service. The last six months of the pilot saw an RV handbook produced, full of ideas and contacts for UK action. This hoped to influence the last cohort of pilot volunteers. Under reporting was evident – much re-engagement happens outside ICS and some volunteers became involved in a range of different activities and actions. By the end of August, a total of 842 Return Actions were recorded.

Some volunteers complained that the types of UK actions permitted were too restrictive and recommended making it “*more flexible*” and “*less strict*”. It would also be useful to explore this further in relation to “brand identity” and “loyalty” which some RVs reported made it less likely that they would maintain contact with either ICS or the specific agency (in favour of the local placement partner). The ever increasing number of RVs presents both opportunities and challenges to the new ICS consortium, which are currently being addressed. One of the most cost-effective forms of support is likely to be that of the ICS Alumni for whom ICS has triggered a decision to become community/development activists – this provides the consortium with an opportunity to establish a network of supporters who can mentor RVs *across* the UK. The range of engagement (both one-off to on-going commitment and variety of issues tackled/ audiences involved<sup>16</sup>) may render the linkage between completing a Return Action and receiving an ICS certificate less relevant than a separate form of recognition for on-going involvement such as developing an internship scheme across the consortium or more structured opportunities for involvement in leadership roles within the NCS.

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<sup>16</sup> The most common Action involves talks to schools, colleges, churches etc, more complex activities have included lobbying MPs, organising events, film, video and media work and campaigning.

## 4. Impact and sustainability

This section looks at the emerging impacts of the ICS pilot programme at the Outcome level<sup>17</sup>. Whilst the logframe indicator for higher level Impact is “groups of British people, representative of the UK population contribute to global poverty reduction as active citizens”, it noted this project phase (namely the pilot) would not measure indicators at this level and therefore would not examine the contribution of the programme to MDGs. The Business Case for the ICS pilot noted that the ICS consortia **would** aim to capture the following types of personal and development impact through its M&E system:

Figure 2: Impacts of the ICS Programme

Dimension of Change	Results	Indicator
a. Individual people <sup>18</sup> see how they can change their own life and that of others and start acting on it	Increased self-development and understanding of global issues for young people from the North and South through participation in the ICS Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ improved leadership skills</li> <li>◆ improved decision making skills</li> <li>◆ level of knowledge of global issues</li> <li>◆ increased levels of understanding between youth populations from different societies</li> <li>◆ number of participants and their reach</li> </ul>
b. Civil societies are stronger and more representative of poor and marginalised men and women	Increased capacity of partners organisations to involve youth in community development initiatives and in strengthening cross-cultural networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ level of improvement in partners skills in volunteer management, youth inclusion</li> <li>◆ level of involvement of partner in cross-cultural networks or initiatives</li> </ul>
c. Governments develop and implement pro-poor policies	Strengthening capacity of global youth networks to advocate for the participation of young people in development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ level of improvement in the sustainability of national youth services or other youth action networks</li> <li>◆ range of audiences engaged in dialogue and advocacy</li> <li>◆ level of improvement in the skills of young people to engage in north-south dialogue, advocacy and campaigns</li> </ul>

**It is clear from our evidence that positive impacts relating to the first two dimensions of change reported in Figure 2 emerged from the pilot phase.** Each volunteer journey, however, took at least four months, excluding the time spent on recruitment and pre-departure training and it took time for impact to materialise. With a significant number of placements taking place towards the end of the pilot the true extent of its impact is not yet evident. Moreover impacts within the UK will take longer

<sup>17</sup> Nomenclature of the DFID logframe has changed during the lifetime of the ICS Pilot programme and associated documents. The Project Goal and Purpose referred to in the project logframe are now respectively known as Impact and Outcome which complicates references to “impacts”. We refer to higher level impacts in relation to the Project Goal/Impact. Using the newer nomenclature, a project should be able to *directly attribute* how the different Outputs have led to impacts at the Purpose/Outcome level, considered in this Section. The indicators identified for the ICS pilot programme at Outcome level are not helpful/ relevant for assessing impacts: P1 Number of young and older volunteers disaggregated by sex, (M/F) SEG (Higher/Middle and Lower income), and region (UK regions) participate in international volunteer journey; P2 Percentage of partner organisations hosting volunteers reporting volunteer placement was either useful or very useful on a five-point scale; P3 - Criteria for effective international youth volunteering programmes generated. Section 4 therefore uses the dimensions of change referred to in the consortium Business case in order to analyse and discuss the impacts emerging from the Pilot ICS Programme.

<sup>18</sup> The individuals that ICS will focus on are the volunteers and those with whom they come into direct and regular contact e.g. national volunteer counterparts, placement counterparts, host families.

to emerge as this is the final part of the volunteer journey. Some of these constraints to the measurement of impact are noted in Box 9 below.

**Box 9: Constraints to the measurement of impact**

- ◆ *the nature of the pilot programme meant that earlier placements were, by and large less effective than later placements and less likely to result in quantifiable impacts; later placements benefited from a longer lead-in time and from learning from earlier placements. However, it is also worth noting that some programmes were structured to have more than one cohort of volunteers which has resulted in greater visibility of outcomes at the end of the third or fourth cohort;*
- ◆ *the data and framework for monitoring and information were not as well focused as they might have been; almost all data is self-assessed;*
- ◆ *there is no counterfactual through which direct attribution could be made to the ICS volunteers;*
- ◆ *the timeframe needed to achieve sustainable development impacts is considerably more than four months and outcomes are not expected to be seen within the pilot lifecycle (hence the importance placed on assessing continuity and communication across placements, within this report);*
- ◆ *the scale of change likely as a result of small groups volunteering (across such a wide variety of activities) makes it challenging for evaluation to move beyond a case study approach. Case study material has been generated across the consortium so the analysis presented here focuses on understanding the way and types of impact that are emerging;*
- ◆ *nonetheless, some impacts are starting to emerge and we examine in turn each of the types of impact generated by the pilot below – impacts on volunteers, host organisations and communities and active citizenship and development impact from RV actions. It is worth noting that impact generation from the pilot was positively associated with effective planning, strong partner engagement and cumulative placements.*

#### 4.1 Emerging impacts on volunteers

**Impacts at a personal level were the most visible of the whole ICS programme. Field visits and interviews with RVs provided clear evidence (from volunteers, host organisations, agency staff and wider community beneficiaries) of substantial and positive impacts.**

Impacts were categorised into *personal/ wellbeing; civic engagement; soft skills; hard skills*. Of these, the most significant impacts by far were personal/ wellbeing and civic engagement with less impact seen around specific skills development.

**Personal/ Well-being. Volunteers experienced substantial personal/ wellbeing impacts.** Successful placements gave volunteers a sense of achievement and enjoyment through participation. Many volunteers also experienced a changed perspective on their life in the UK, awareness of the high material quality of their life and life opportunities and a reduced sense of the importance of material standards of living. In a small number of individual cases, volunteers even noted profound improvements in their mental health as a result of participation i.e. from a state of depression to a state of relative mental wellbeing. Others explained how exposure to a different culture, way of life and people had affected their attitudes towards life. For those placed with families, the real relevance of family to culture, well-being and even survival had a very powerful impact on them.

Interviews with RVs suggested that the biggest impact ICS has on volunteers was an increase in confidence, which can lead to better job prospects – *“it feels like I can do anything!”* This is also reflected in the KAP survey results, which showed that 78% of volunteer respondents pre-ICS felt that they could not lead a group confidently, compared to 93% post-ICS. As one respondent puts it, ICS

was “a major confidence booster”, which helped him to decide his route in life.

Other personal impacts of ICS cited by the respondents include patience, tolerance and an ability to maintain calm under pressure. “The whole experience of doing something new makes you more flexible and can be put in strange situations and deal with it”. Indeed at the RV days, respondents were encouraged to think about how to draw on their ICS volunteering experiences when in a job interview, such as explaining how they cope with challenging situations. Other skills mentioned included: people management; qualitative research; interview; and teaching and workshop facilitation. Some volunteers found it interesting to learn how an NGO works, and practical experiences on ICS complemented knowledge they had through study at college or university.

**Civic engagement.** Civic engagement refers to any individual or collective activity aimed at addressing particular social issues. This is commonly split between civic orientation (a desire to tackle social issues), civic knowledge (an understanding of problems that exist and ways to overcome them) and civic skills (the ability to enact change e.g. letter writing, public speaking or project management). **The KAP survey showed that 58% of volunteer respondents pre-ICS had an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of active citizens, compared with 86% after the programme. This understanding carries with it the expectation of long term social action, which is a positive indicator of future impact.**

**Civic orientation.** Many volunteers and staff supporting placements noted that volunteers’ values changed as a result of participation with a strongly increased commitment to tackling global challenges such as poverty, environment and gender equality **and when placements were successful, volunteers had an increased belief that they were capable of enacting positive change.** Volunteers also noted that their experience changed their orientation to careers within social fields e.g. development or teaching. One implementing agency staff member suggested that ICS volunteers were more likely to volunteer again. Due to the limited sample size for interviews, reliance on self-reported KAP survey results and the lack of counterfactual information, it was not possible to quantify these impacts.

**In many placements the civic knowledge of volunteers had substantially increased around development issues.** These impacts were seen most where the placement activities were directly related to engagement with these issues, the host organisation had expert knowledge in these areas and, the placement involved guided learning and reflection on them. Evidence from our field visits indicated that in some placements this learning was not fully facilitated which can lead to the entrenchment of pre-placement views or lead to misunderstandings about the complicated dynamics of these issues (e.g. poverty or gender).

As part of the KAP survey exercise, ICS volunteers were asked to rate their knowledge/understanding about various issues:

1. Indicated they had no knowledge;
2. Indicated minimal knowledge;
3. Indicated medium levels of knowledge;
4. Indicated a lot of knowledge.

**The average pre-placement score of 2.67 increased to 3.26 immediately post-placement, a rise of 0.59.** This headline result is broken down by knowledge area in Figure 3.



Figure 3: Ratings of Changes in Knowledge/Understanding

Knowledge area	Average score PRE_PLACEMENT	Average score POST_PLACEMENT	Change
The meaning of Millennium Development Goals	2.20	3.12	0.92
The role of MDGs in international development	2.10	3.08	0.97
The role of volunteers in international development	2.82	3.41	0.59
Global poverty and the lives of poor people in poor	2.98	3.44	0.46
Root causes of poverty around the world	2.87	3.24	0.37
Links between poverty around the world and the	2.69	3.22	0.53
The role young people can play in national and	2.72	3.37	0.65
The role of international funding organisations in international development	2.61	3.24	0.63
Your rights and responsibilities as a global citizen	2.66	3.32	0.66
The causes and consequences of climate change	2.98	3.05	0.07
The role gender plays within poverty	2.78	3.37	0.59
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2.67</b>	<b>3.26</b>	<b>0.59</b>

Millennium Development Goals were viewed as an important way of encouraging volunteers to gain understanding about the important issues in development and the part they play as a global strategy for poverty reduction so it is encouraging that this appears to have been one of the most significant areas of learning. At the same time the programme appeared to miss an important opportunity to help the participants to understand more about climate change and to really examine the root causes of poverty.

The development of *civic skills* was more particular to individual placements and included public speaking, workshop facilitation, organising campaigns, marketing and project management, qualitative research skills and interview skills. RV days were used to re-contextualise some of these encouraging volunteers to think about how to draw on their ICS volunteering experiences during job interviews. For some volunteers the practical skills and understanding around organisational management and development complemented knowledge they had through study at college or University.

**Soft skills.** Sometimes called emotional intelligence, key competencies or people skills, soft skills generally include certain personality traits and social behaviours that complement hard skills. **Volunteers developed a number of soft skills as a result of participation including improved confidence, tolerance of difference, both verbal and non-verbal communication skills (with others from very diverse backgrounds), teamwork, empathy, determination, problem solving, adaptability, and resilience.** (see Box 10)

**Hard skills.** The hard skills developed by volunteers were felt less substantially than other impacts; however, **many volunteers did note that they had consolidated their existing skills by implementing them within the placement.** Some placements did offer opportunities to learn hard skills including teaching and workshop facilitation, public speaking, financial planning, project design, event planning, ICT, language and understanding of participatory development.

Many of the impacts noted above were experienced by both IVs and NVs. It is also important to note that NVs also experienced profound impacts in their own right – these impacts straddle volunteer and development impacts. In some cases, the positive impacts on the NVs were rated as the most important positive impact of ICS placements. **For older NVs, the ICS programme offered an opportunity for them to gain first-hand experience within a development organisation, which could**

**greatly enhance their future employability.**<sup>19</sup> The close relationship with IVs also provided a valuable opportunity to develop their English language skills and increase cross-cultural understanding.

**Box 10: Personal Development of volunteers**

**Jack Rayner, 19, Swindon**

***Worked in Vellore, India, on a civic participation and livelihoods outreach programme in schools teaching critical thinking, exploring themes around humans rights, democracy and community activism***

*"I left college after my first year and was working in a call centre selling insurance when I started looking for volunteering opportunities and found ICS. It's mind boggling the amount I've learnt. I've grown in confidence and built up some brilliant communication skills. I understand things more easily and pick up new ideas a lot quicker, it really has put me back on track.*

*"My whole experience has given me a new perspective and motivation for work. I'm back in college doing science AS levels because I've seen the work of Médecins Sans Frontières and been massively inspired by it. I'm interested in going into medicine and it's ICS that has been the game changer for me. I'm really committed to my study and I can't think of anything else that would've given me that drive."*

## 4.2. Emerging impact on host organisations and communities

**Field visits provided evidence of emerging impacts for host organisations and communities as a result of the ICS placements. Crucially, these impacts were emphasised most strongly by host organisations and host communities themselves.**

An important distinction needs to be made between the positive contribution of ICS volunteers in terms of time offered (e.g. time that could be contributed by additional host organisation staff or domestic volunteers) and the distinctive contribution of young and relatively low-skilled UK volunteers. Where placements articulated a clear rationale for ICS volunteer involvement (a process that developed during the pilot period as both local partners and agencies learned from successive cohorts), this distinctive contribution was more likely to be used effectively to increase impacts.

### **Impacts resulting from time and resource inputs**

During the field visits a wide variety of positive impacts were described by host organisations, agency staff and volunteers. The evaluation team has categorised these into "time and resources" and "distinctive contribution". The most substantial impacts observed during field visits across the placements have been felt in terms of the time and resources devoted by the ICS programme. These were related to the specific tasks of the ICS volunteers and include impacts such as report writing, producing fundraising letters, teaching, running health camps, etc. Although impacts from these activities were significant, they could *possibly* be achieved as effectively and at a considerably lower cost by host organisation staff or domestic volunteers. The real test of ICS – which should become clearer during the next phase – is whether UK volunteers act as catalysts for on-going activity by host organisation staff and local volunteers and how the presence of an IV links with other types of impact (e.g. changing attitudes about what young people with disabilities can achieve). Some examples of the distinctive contribution of IVs which can contribute to impact are outlined in Box 11.

<sup>19</sup> A number of NVs in Bodh Shiksha Samiti, Jaipur have gained employment as a direct result of their involvement in the ICS placement managed by VSO.



**Box 11: Some examples of the distinctive contribution of IVs**

**Peer or near-peer engagement** – a range of stakeholders noted the ability of IVs to increase engagement of young people within host organisation activities. This was seen in peer-to-peer education schemes such as International Service Bolivia; participation in Green Club or Dance4life in Restless Development Nepal and increased school attendance in Skillshare International India. Attendance rates rose from 60 to 170 pupils during the placement.

**Increased prestige and achieving civic rights for the host organisation and community** – Although to some extent these impacts trade on existing power inequalities between countries and cultures, some host organisations did experience important increases in reputation through their engagement with IVs. Perhaps the best example we found during field visits was in one of the Skillshare International India sites where the host organisation felt the engagement of IVs contributed to some degree to 'detoxify' the gypsy community in the eyes of the wider community and directly led to them gaining scheduled tribe status.

**Particular skills of IVs** – These distinctive skills include some (albeit limited) experience of work environments with formal processes and procedures such as project management, HR policies and even financial management; ICT skills (utilised for website development and data management) and perhaps most notably, native-speaker English language skills (utilised for report writing, press releases and funding applications).

**Unique position of young IVs** – The distinct "position" of IVs within the context they volunteered in allowed them to offer a distinct perspective on certain issues and sometimes meant they could challenge some taboos that were difficult for people from within the community to challenge e.g. sex and gender discrimination. With careful support (to avoid retrenchment without dialogue), it also allowed the young volunteers and community members to re-assess some pre-determined ideas they had of each other. The involvement of disabled IVs in placements, and even just working with disabled young people from the community more visibly offered a good example of this.

**Community mobilisation** – This was most clearly supported through the VSO Youth Action model and the monthly Community Action Days, identified in the MTR as good practice as a way of supporting community engagement and raising awareness of development issues. Other more spontaneous examples were fed back anecdotally to us during interviews, where volunteers had spotted an issue which they felt they could do something about and had worked with local people to address. International Service placements involved IVs in doing a baseline assessment and, like the Community Action Days, offered a useful way of integrating the possibility of community mobilisation flexibly within the main placement activities.

### 4.3 Active Citizenship and development impact of RV Actions

Agencies introduced new resources and a range of volunteering opportunities and a rapidly expanding series of case studies is developing which show various levels of reach and impact. High profile examples of individual actions include participating in campaigns such as "Living Below the Line" (one volunteer lived on less than £1/day for a month!), and providing weekly updates of EU policy on development aid to Ethiopia to a NV in Ethiopia (which was then used for advocacy) (see also Case Study Box 12).

Further effort is needed to understand the support required by some groups of UK volunteers and it is clear that many will require further support to engage in Return Action than they were able to access during the pilot if they are to continue active citizenship. Efforts being made by the new consortium partners to strengthen and provide more structured opportunities for UK Return Action are very positive.

At this early stage, it is possible to say that the pilot has achieved a reasonable and largely positive profile, despite the limitations (restricted marketing) faced by the consortium. Its regional profile has been particularly notable as ICS volunteers send in articles about their experiences to the local press

and media. Unfortunately, no detailed information about web-based audiences has been available.

Once again, the challenge for the consortium is how to consolidate this into a meaningful impact assessment. This appears to be in-hand as plans for the impact evaluation of the full programme are developed.

#### Box 12: Action at Home

##### Usaama Kaweesa, 22, Mitcham, South East London

**Worked in Tuba, South Africa, in a Youth Resource Centre and Bhongolethu Senior Secondary School teaching soft skills, sexual and reproductive health, and offering career guidance.**

“Going through the ICS programme made me see that one person can make a difference. It’s a rare opportunity to see first-hand a completely different way of life; you get to live and work alongside local people and be part of them.

“Since I’ve been back I’ve continued to be involved in a grassroots, political campaigning group started by young people for young people, called Bite the Ballot. We’re encouraging young people to become politically active and trying to rebrand politics so that it’s more appealing for young people to get involved in. We do everything from touring schools to putting on gigs, with our overall aim being to get the highest ever turnout of young voters in the 2015 General Election. My experience with ICS reaffirmed for me the importance of youth political participation. The Youth Committee we set up in Tuba allows people to have the role of an activist and it’s something I really believe in. It means young people can have power and have a say on big issues and hold decision makers to account.”

## 4.4 Key constraints on impact

The evaluation team identified a number of factors which can constrain/limit the impact generated by the ICS placements (examples can be seen in the field visit reports at Annex 8). These included the following:

**Placement planning** – There are a number of challenges around effective planning (as outlined above). Locating the activities of volunteers within a wider programme either across ICS cohorts, a wider agency programme or a wider host organisation programme is a key element. Aspects which constrained impact in the placements visited include the following:

- ◆ insufficient response to host organisation and community needs;
- ◆ need for increased engagement from management within the host organisation;
- ◆ improved expectation management in communities required;
- ◆ insufficient specification of the target beneficiaries;
- ◆ the lack of realisation of the distinctive contribution of ICS.

Monitoring reports from the consortium/ Agencies and the field visit reports generated by this evaluation (which identified the examples listed here) are fed back to the placement organisers and ways of addressing the weaknesses/ sharing learning are discussed.

**Inadequate attention to continuity planning** can serve as a constraint to the promotion and realisation of impact. Continuity planning – related to the point above - allows for impact to be both cumulative and more sustainable.

**Weaknesses in the monitoring and evaluation system** – Considerable emphasis was put on the pilot to develop robust monitoring and evaluation systems yet there were areas where it has been acknowledged that inadequate information was collected. Learning in this area contributed to the

development of revised guidelines for monitoring and evaluation.

Placements where monitoring and evaluation worked effectively tended to be those where volunteers themselves developed baselines and identified what information to collect together with partners. However, too much time and effort was needed to meet changing demands concerning monitoring and evaluation requirements, particularly for those countries where reports and information had to be translated. Data management in the UK was also a drain on human resources over the course of the pilot, particularly for smaller agencies in the consortium having to deal with improvements to the Project Impact Tools and set-up of data management systems for the full programme (at the same time as dealing with data from the pilot). We support the comprehensive revision of the monitoring and evaluation framework which was being conducted during the inception phase for the full programme.

***The resource needs and capacity limitations of many host organisations.*** By the very nature of the development needs, the lack of capacity and resources of support organisations limited what they could offer to volunteers in terms of travel and classroom materials. A minimum capacity level is one of the pre-requisites that consortium members need to identify during partner selection. By offering ICS as one of a selection of support opportunities to their local partners, the consortium partners should be able to avoid overstressing local partners and guide the placement of the ICS volunteers appropriately in relation to capacity that exists.

***Resources for volunteer management and volunteer activities.*** Often linked to the overall capacity of local partners, adequate resources are needed to enable volunteer activities and engagement of host organisation staff in the activities of volunteers (which also serves to increase the sustainability of impact). In the UK, adequate support is needed to engage RVs, including the provision of resources, tools and opportunities to facilitate the planning of their Return Actions.

***Specific characteristics of volunteers.*** The majority of volunteers were focused on development impacts, and their impact has been greatest. A small minority were more focused on their own curriculum development, and occasionally volunteers broke the code of conduct in ways which did not create a good impression with host organisations and communities (e.g. drinking and smoking) (e.g. Restless Development Nepal). 12 volunteers (1% of those on placements) were sent home for behaviour/ discipline issues (Q6 Progress Report).

***Some more fundamental constraints to impact generation were identified by stakeholders.*** These are listed below in Box 13 and would require the redesign of the ICS programme or a tighter selection of in country partners:

**Box 13: More Fundamental Constraints to Impact Generation**

***More skilled volunteers.*** Some host organisations expressed their desire for volunteers with higher specific skills such as medical knowledge, teaching skills, project management or fundraising. In part this could be overcome by increased training for volunteers on placement specific activities or alternatively ICS managing the expectations of local partners concerning the types of skills available through the IVs;

***Placement time constraints.*** Although explicit orientation was scheduled for 1-2 weeks at the start of the placement, in practice most stakeholders felt volunteers were only effectively “settled in” and contributing substantially to the placements in the last month of the placement. This could be partly overcome by focusing on specific concrete tasks during the first half of the placement or allowing for some longer term placements across ICS e.g. Team Leaders. A focus on multiple placement cohorts may also address the constraints on impact generation resulting from individual placement cohorts.

### **Achieving a balance: maximising development impacts and the unique contributions of young volunteers**

The ICS philosophy is that personal and development impact are deeply intertwined, with individual change necessary to affect social change (Business Case for ICS, page 27). Our evidence indicates that indeed to some extent, the impacts on volunteers and development impacts are mutually reinforcing. Volunteers will gain more from substantial placements where meaningful activities generate concrete impacts. Moreover the development impact will be greater when volunteers are actively engaged in the placements.

In common with other schemes where relatively unskilled volunteers are working to achieve development impacts, to some extent the need to build volunteer capacity is prioritised over what might be more cost effective approaches to impacts. Accepting and sharing this parameter with local partners is an important aspect of placement planning, which was not always totally successful. The challenge for ICS has then been to identify best practice and how to capitalise on the unique contributions that young international (and national) volunteers can contribute. Going forward, with the full programme emphasising development impact to a much greater extent, there is a pressing need to further consider the most appropriate sets of skills and qualities of volunteers which best fit with this objective.

#### **4.5. Sustainability**

**At a personal level, the experience of volunteering abroad for almost three months had a significant and sustainable impact on volunteer attitudes and understanding of the issues faced by the people that they worked with.** As Section 4.1 discusses, the development of personal qualities such as confidence is likely to have sustainable impacts on the lives of many IVs after returning home. For a significant number of ICS volunteers, the impact has been life changing, whilst for others as different studies have shown (and we have no reason to believe that ICS will be different) impacts may take time (even years) to emerge – the key point is that these impacts will emerge because the changes are sustainable.

Through the pilot, the most important factor affecting the sustainability of impacts on host organisations and communities was identified as effective matching of each ICS cohort to broader host organisation and agency objectives and undertaking awareness raising activities or teaching English (often a default activity where placement planning had not been strong). Whilst the latter rarely have sustainable impacts, they need to be accompanied by other actions; participatory diagnosis of how communities understand particular issues needs to be turned into a strategy for action – and so on. For sustainability it is important that relationships are continued beyond specific placements both between the agency and the host organisation and the volunteers and host organisation.

Those placements that were less well planned and structured were observed to be less sustainable with reduced scale of change. As discussed in 4.4, if local partners were focused on organisational survival, they would be unlikely to continue embedding changes influenced by the ICS volunteers; placing volunteers in direct service delivery roles (seen in Kenya during the first cohort of volunteer placements, when volunteers were intended to be gaining work experience) also has limited prospects for sustainable outcomes beyond those achieved with a few individuals who might benefit directly from the efforts of the ICS volunteers.

As Section 4.3 noted, it is too early to judge the impacts of return action by UK volunteers. In order to



assess both impacts and sustainability, a clear theory of change about this part of the volunteer experience is needed and the consortium could develop a framework similar to that now in place for ICS placements: Minimum Standards including a typology of the areas in which volunteers are focusing their Return Actions, the distinct value they add as young volunteers and methods that are appropriate to support this; linking to wider programmes through which impact and sustainability are strengthened and allowing more flexibility in the time frame within which the programme will support Return Actions (according to the volunteers abilities and circumstances).

## 5. Assessment of the means testing system

As well as aiming to partly finance the ICS programme, a means test was put in place to ensure volunteers from a cross section of society were able to participate in ICS. As described by the Prime Minister, the scheme aimed to give “young people, who couldn't otherwise afford it, the chance to see the world and serve others.”<sup>20</sup> The ICS means-testing framework sought to be both fair and transparent.

The means-testing system was reviewed in detail for the MTR and since arrangements are now finalised for the full programme, this assessment will present the summary findings of our assessment from the MTR and the final data on the revenue generated by the system. A summary of the findings from the MTR concerning the means testing system are contained in Annex 9.

Overall we conclude that the current means test *neither* ensured that a diversity of volunteers from different income backgrounds participated in the ICS pilot nor raised the level of financial contributions that was originally expected because fewer volunteers were assessed as having to make a contribution than was anticipated. It was expected that £1 million would be raised through the means testing system.

Figure 4 presents monitoring data collected by the ICS Hub (Q6 Report) on the profile of volunteers in terms of income backgrounds looking at the aspirational targets and the actual numbers of volunteers in each income bracket. Throughout the pilot perceptions prevailed that the data profiling the income backgrounds of volunteers may not accurately reflect their situations. The questions posed related to household income and proved inadequate for reflecting the complex mix of situations that ICS volunteers live in. A more detailed study of social backgrounds conducted early in 2012 by the ICS Hub confirmed to the ICS agencies that responses to the questions posed were not producing an adequate reflection of the volunteers family income backgrounds. This study showed that in contrast to the figures obtained through responses to the means testing (see figure 4), 34% of volunteers came from families with income over £20k and, as a surrogate verifier, 16% of the cohort had been to independent schools. The official data in terms of the figures recorded in the progress reports to DFID indicate the following income distribution of volunteers.

**Figure 4: ICS targets versus Actual data on Income Distribution of Volunteers**

	< £25K	£25K to £40K	>£40K
<b>ICS Youth Volunteer Targets</b>	33%	25%	42%
<b>ICS Volunteers – actual</b>	78%	12%	10%

**Source:** Proposal for ICS pilot and Progress report #6, 1 June to 31 August 2012.

Volunteers accepted on the ICS pilot were intended to reflect broader society but as Figure 4 shows, the ICS pilot appealed mainly to young people from lower income households, perhaps “who wouldn't normally volunteer abroad” – over three quarter of volunteers were from this income group. Volunteers from higher incomes were not applying at the time of the MTR and a

<sup>20</sup> David Cameron speaking on October 6<sup>th</sup> 2010, as quoted on [www.Dfid.gov.uk/Media-Room/News-Stories/2010/Life-changing-opportunities-for-young-people-to-volunteer-overseas/](http://www.Dfid.gov.uk/Media-Room/News-Stories/2010/Life-changing-opportunities-for-young-people-to-volunteer-overseas/)

recommendation was made that the consortium should explore the reasons behind this. With the data skewed so heavily towards the lower income band, there is a risk of ICS becoming seen as “the government scheme for poorer young people”. Whatever is behind the imbalance, it seems that a broader approach than purely financial assessment is required if the diversity objectives are to be achieved.<sup>21</sup>

The total fundraising income of the programme was £402,960 or 40% of the target of £1 million. At the MTR stage (as of August 2011) the scheme was expected to generate £298,915 which represents a significant shortfall of some £701,085 in projected income for the pilot. The MTR presented a number of options going forward for ICS in terms of revenue generation. The application of fund raising targets per volunteer was recommended as the optimal system for the future programme, rather than the continuation of the means testing system. DFID has since decided to set targets for fund raising which are at £800 although volunteers are only required to make a satisfactory effort towards the target and will not be penalised for failing to raise £800. There is also a trigger related to income with volunteers with higher incomes or with family members from higher income brackets set a higher target of £1,500.

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<sup>21</sup> A fuller discussion of the issues involved is given in Annex 5



## 6. Efficiency and Value for Money Assessment

### 6.1. DFID: ICS consortium partnership working

Since the MTR, the partnership working between DFID and the ICS pilot consortium has continued to be very hands-on and largely supportive. The consortium also had to cope with the tendering process, negotiations after being selected and the inception phase of the full ICS programme. The full ICS programme is being delivered through a contract rather than a grant, but continues to involve an unusually high level of scrutiny.

Both DFID and the consortium have been stretched coping with the start of the full programme whilst managing the largest cohort of pilot volunteers on placement, and for the consortium a nearly total staff change-over in the central "Hub" (which replaces the pilot PCB). DFID have supported the new consortium to develop a VFM framework that has been used from the start of the next phase, based on the proposals made in the MTR. DFID staff have also been closely involved in risk management in relation to the press and they have continued to work on developing a working relationship with the National Citizen Service programme.

### 6.2. Consortium arrangements and management of the ICS Pilot

The management structure of the ICS pilot involved a central Programme Coordinating Body (PCB), managed by and accountable to VSO. A Steering Group, comprised of representatives from each consortium partner as well as DFID, provided advice and guidance to VSO in managing the programme. The role of the PCB was to oversee specific aspects of the pilot including central financial management and reporting structures, development of monitoring and evaluation frameworks and analysis, marketing and media relations, quality assurance and initially at least the Pre-Departure Training. Management responsibilities for the volunteer journey were shared between the central PCB team and agencies and evolved over the course of the pilot. Some aspects of the programme management were decentralised following recommendations from the MTR – and vice versa. Recruitment has been centralised, whilst assessment and selection, placements and the RV UK Action remain agency based and pre-departure training has also been decentralised.

At the start of 2012, it was clear that Skillshare International would not continue in the ICS programme as it moved to the next phase. This was disappointing for everyone in the consortium, but appears to have been managed well in terms of consortium relationships and ensuring that the quality of placements and RV opportunities for volunteers with Skillshare International have not been affected negatively.

Change management has been the main theme for the second half of the pilot as the full programme was launched. The PCB was replaced by the "Hub", an expanded central management team in which core roles remained. Despite best efforts, it seems that communication and institutional learning have been less effective in some areas as a result of the overlap. It is a challenge felt most acutely by stakeholders outside the immediate Hub staff team. Some respondents (staff) reported feeling that change was a state of existence rather than a process with an end in sight, so communication systems will be an important area to monitor at all levels.

With huge amounts of data being generated, data management has continued to be a challenge and drain on staff time. To meet the need for more sophisticated data analysis, a new database was introduced for the full programme, but subsequently replaced. This has meant that data has had to be transferred up to three times during the course of the pilot, generating a huge amount of work for the staff affected. Other implications of the overlap between the pilot and the main programme



start-up are outlined in Box 14.

**Box 14: Implications of the Overlap**

Implications of over-lap between close of the pilot and start-up phase of the full ICS programme include the following:

- a) all the agencies who would continue into the new programme knew that NVs would form an integral part of the programme concept during the next phase. Those agencies who had not involved NVs during the pilot (Progressio, International Service) were thus able to start testing this new approach during the stages of the pilot. This was a valuable learning opportunity afforded by the pilot because the contract for the full programme was finalised before the pilot programme had finished.
- b) the last cycle of volunteers had the largest number of volunteers of the pilot. All agencies found themselves stretched, coping with both the pilot and first cohort of volunteers going out on placements for the full programme phase of ICS.
- c) high levels of staff turn-over have affected the consolidation of learning. A no-cost extension was negotiated with DFID, making use of an overall budget underspend to "catch up" on this learning process e.g. International Service hosted a workshop to share experiences and learning about inclusive approaches to volunteers with disabilities on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2012.

Anticipated shortfalls in recruitment for some agencies were made up as other agencies offered additional placements, including a number in new countries. Agencies were stretched managing the largest numbers of placements, during the closing stages of the pilot, at the time that the full programme was starting its recruitment work.

Management of RVs has also been challenging but has developed momentum during the final stages of the pilot and agencies are starting to involve some RVs in recruitment days, pre-departure training, supporting RV actions, etc. At least one agency has created bespoke training opportunities for RVs who want to develop training skills, whilst another is looking at how to include RVs in the governance structures of the agency.

### 6.3. Value for Money offered by the ICS Pilot

The UK National Audit Office (NAO) defines good VFM as "...the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes".<sup>22</sup> A VFM assessment seeks to determine whether the best possible results have been obtained from the money spent and resources available, and whether an organisation or an intervention can achieve the same results with fewer resources, or maximise benefits with the same resources. For the Project Completion Review (PCR), the focus of the VFM assessment is on whether the ICS programme is operating in an efficient, effective and cost-effective manner, that is to say, whether ICS is maximising benefits from available resources. To determine this, the 3Es approach will be utilised to systematically assess:

- 1) the **Effectiveness** of the programme: Qualitative and quantitative measures of increase or decrease in outcomes to show that a programme is effective in delivering intended objectives;
- 2) the **Efficiency** of the programme: A measure of the relationship between inputs and outputs, in other words "how much you get out in relation to what is put in";

<sup>22</sup> Definition used by the UK National Audit Office in their "Analytical Framework for assessing Value for Money".

3) the **Economy** of the programme: This focuses on unit costs, e.g. admin and operational costs, to measure what goes into the delivery of an intervention.

It is through these three lenses that an overall judgment on the VFM of ICS will be determined.

### Approach to measuring VFM of ICS

The purpose of the VFM assessment during the pilot stage of ICS has been twofold: to ensure better management of VFM by the consortium through identifying where economy and efficiency savings can be made and establishing robust processes for measuring and reporting across all agencies; and to help the agencies better assess the comparative VFM of the programmes between different agency models so as to identify which elements offer the greatest efficiencies and cost-effectiveness.

The evaluation team has worked with the consortium to develop a framework of VFM indicators (see Annex 7) against which all agencies have reported economy, efficiency and effectiveness data for the purpose of this assessment. The framework is built on the logframe indicators and the data sources available, and has been refined through an iterative process between what is "ideal" and what is currently "possible". This VFM framework is less systematic than we would like for reasons mentioned below.

### Limitations of the analysis

Although significant improvements have been made to the ICS financial monitoring and reporting systems since the MTR, guided in particular by the development of the VFM indicator framework, a number of caveats still remain on the data collected, data accessibility, reliability and consistency between agencies.

- ◆ while the logframe outcome (formerly purpose) indicators (P1, P2, P3) focus on diversity targets, satisfaction of partner organisations hosting placements, and the generation of criteria for effective international youth volunteering programmes, there is a gap in the specification of results around the Local Action in the UK part of the ICS journey (although output 3 focuses on this area). In addition, the levels of impact specified in the Programme Document (Proposal for DFID (Final)- Delivery of International Citizen Service (ICS) pilot phase March 2011, pg. 27) are not aligned with the indicators at outcome level specified in the logframe.
- ◆ subsidisation: One caveat lies in the subsidisation element of the programme. It is important to note that each agency has applied a different model of subsidisation across the pilot, and that figures used for this assessment were based on estimates provided by agencies in January 2012. This assessment is based on pre-subsidisation costs but takes into account, where appropriate, agency subsidisation. This is because there was considerable variation in the methods used by agencies to record types and levels of subsidy. Therefore post-subsidisation costs are less reliable in terms of comparison. Any post-subsidisation costs quoted here are therefore estimates.
- ◆ expenditure disaggregation: There has been some inconsistency in the allocation of expenditure to budget lines, with some agencies not being able to disaggregate expenditure due to the timing of the review, the fact that the VFM framework was developed during implementation, and inadequacies in the original design of financial monitoring and reporting systems for the pilot. Learning on financial monitoring and reporting systems has already been built into the new contract hence the consortium will be in a much stronger position to report effectively on ICS activities moving forward. Each agency is currently in the

process of verifying expenditure in preparation for the final ICS Hub report.

- ◆ data outliers: In some cases, explanations for data outliers have been difficult to obtain due to the need for further investigation to be carried out by the ICS Hub.
- ◆ early returns: The management information systems used to record information on volunteers participating in the pilot programme did not allow partners to cross-reference datasets easily. It has therefore not been possible to profile demographic information for volunteers who returned early for the purpose of the VFM assessment. Learning on this issue has informed the development of a bespoke database (Jobscience) for the new contract.
- ◆ partner satisfaction ratings: Analysis of partner satisfaction ratings as a measure of effectiveness has not been possible due to a lack of disaggregated data.

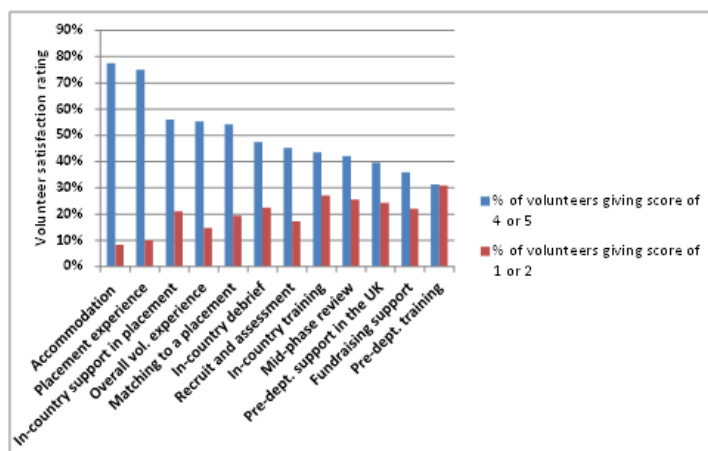
These issues should all be addressed in the full programme through the planned impact evaluation.

In the following pages the evaluation presents an assessment of the 3E's across each phase of the volunteer journey. It looks particularly at how management processes can be improved to keep better track of unit costs and improve VFM across the programme, as well as comparing programme efficiencies internally, e.g. between agencies, but also in some cases externally, using established benchmarks. The central question is whether there are more economic, efficient and effective ways to implement each stage of the ICS journey.

### **Effectiveness of ICS**

Although only just over half of volunteers completing their placement completed the post-placement KAP survey, it is clear that in nearly all aspects of the programme at least three in four respondents felt that expectations have been at least broadly met. Overall, 85% of respondents felt that the programme broadly met or exceeded their expectations, with an impressive 75% of those respondents stating that their expectations of the placement itself was exceeded. As stated in the MTR, the greatest concern still lies with the effectiveness of training overall (the combination of pre-departure and in-country). 69% of respondents from the post-placement KAP survey indicated that the pre-departure training broadly met or exceeded expectations, and just 31% of respondents felt that pre-departure training either moderately or substantially exceeded expectations. Furthermore, in-country training recorded a high level of dissatisfaction amongst respondents relative to other aspects of the volunteer journey, with 27% of volunteers indicating that it did not meet expectations (compared to just 10% for placement experience) (see Figure 5). This suggests that further attention is needed to ensure the pre-departure and in-country training content is relevant to the activities and experiences of the placement.

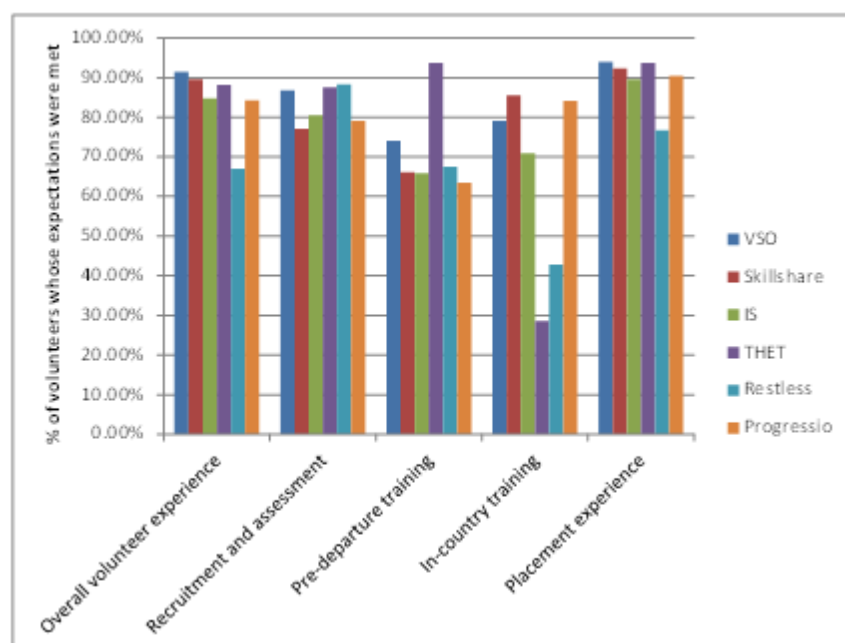
Figure 5: Volunteer Satisfaction with Aspects of ICS



Satisfaction with different aspects of the programme varied sharply between agencies. As Figure 6 below demonstrates:

- ◆ 92% of VSO respondents were satisfied with the programme overall compared with just 67% from Restless Development;
- ◆ 94% of THET respondents were satisfied with the pre-departure training compared to just 66% for Skillshare International and International Service and 64% for Progressio. A number of volunteers pointed out that they felt that the pre-departure training was not specific enough to their placement;
- ◆ views on in-country training were severely divergent with around 85% of Skillshare International and Progressio respondents stating that it met expectations, compared to just 43% for Restless Development and 29% for THET;
- ◆ for VSO and Restless, the only agencies to work with NVs, nearly 90% of IVs noted a positive effect of NVs on their placement.
- ◆ around nine in 10 respondents were satisfied with their placement experience across all agencies except for Restless Development, for whom three in four were satisfied.

**Figure 6: Volunteer Satisfaction with Aspects of ICS by Agency**



Another measure of effectiveness was to analyse the diversity statistics for recruitment and selection of volunteers and compare these to the aspirational targets set during programme design. The key findings are as follows:

- ◆ only Skillshare International came within 10% of the original target for male volunteer applications whereas fewer than one in four applications received by THET were from males; International Service and Skillshare International achieved around 40-50% of the original target for applications from people with disabilities, whereas THET did not receive any;
- ◆ the proportion of disabled volunteers increased after selection for International Service and Skillshare International, although decreased to zero for Progressio;
- ◆ all agencies exceeded targets for recruiting volunteers from BME groups. International Service selected the highest proportion of Asian volunteers (15%), and Progressio and THET selected the highest proportion of black volunteers.
- ◆ International Service also recruited and selected the highest proportion of Muslim volunteers, with all agencies exceeding the aspirational target; likewise for Hindu volunteers, where Skillshare International and THET recruited and selected the highest proportion.

**Box 15: Summary of key findings: Effectiveness**

- ◆ 85% of volunteer respondents felt that overall the programme broadly met expectations, with 75% of these respondents stating that their expectations of the placement itself had been exceeded;
- ◆ pre-departure training needs may not have directly equated to the needs that volunteers identify in retrospect, having completed their placement, so pre-departure training needs to offer a balance covering the volunteer journey from recruitment to placement and preparation for return to the UK;
- ◆ around nine in 10 volunteer respondents were satisfied with their placement experience across all agencies, except for Restless Development, for whom three in four were satisfied.

## Efficiency of ICS

Before subsidisation, the overall cost per volunteer of ICS varied by over £1,000 per volunteer, with Skillshare International and VSO recording a total cost per volunteer of £7,120 and £7,118 respectively, whilst for Progressio, where placements were for 10 weeks rather than 12, the total cost per volunteer was £5927.<sup>23</sup> The analysis that follows assesses the efficiency of ICS by programme phase and demonstrates which programme models represented a more efficient use of resources.

**Phases 1 and 2 – Recruitment and Selection:** The total cost per volunteer for the recruitment and selection process varied between £184 for International Service and £324 for Restless Development (excluding THET which at £9 per volunteer employs a different approach not replicable for agencies recruiting larger numbers of volunteers).<sup>24</sup> Restless Development had a higher proportion of spend on recruitment days and outreach in relation to the number of volunteers selected, which needs further investigation, particularly given the findings above that Restless Development did not outperform other agencies with respect to diversity recruitment targets. International Service and THET did not incur any costs for selection days, which in the case of the former is partly due to the fact that volunteers paid their own travel costs. Agency staffing and subsidisation models also differed significantly. Recruitment days were heavily subsidised by VSO, and International Service employed a lighter staffing model in comparison to, say, VSO, which is not considered to be sustainable for the full programme.

**Phase 3 – Pre-departure:** It is not possible to assess the efficiency of the pre-departure training as within the centralised training expenditure data there is insufficient disaggregation between budget lines. The total cost of £253 per volunteer trained represents less than 4% of the average total cost per volunteer. The need for additional training for Team Leaders suggests that some further targeted investment in pre-departure training may be warranted. The cost per volunteer for pre-departure logistical costs ranges from £1,429 (Skillshare International) to £1,845 (VSO), with VSO consistently above the consortium average in all areas examined (flights, visas, insurance, medical and CRB). Whilst flight and visa costs depend very much on the countries where agencies operate (Progressio were highest due to more expensive destinations), as will be demonstrated below VSO are consistently more expensive compared to other agencies when sending volunteers to the same countries. A similar trend was noted in relation to visas, which in combination with high CRB fees due to outsourcing, highlights the need for more consistent procurement practices across agencies to ensure an efficient pre-departure process. We are aware that VSO is currently undertaking a full review of procurement practices focusing on volunteer logistical costs (e.g. flights), and that this work alongside a consortium-wide approach is being taken forward as a learning point for the main contract.

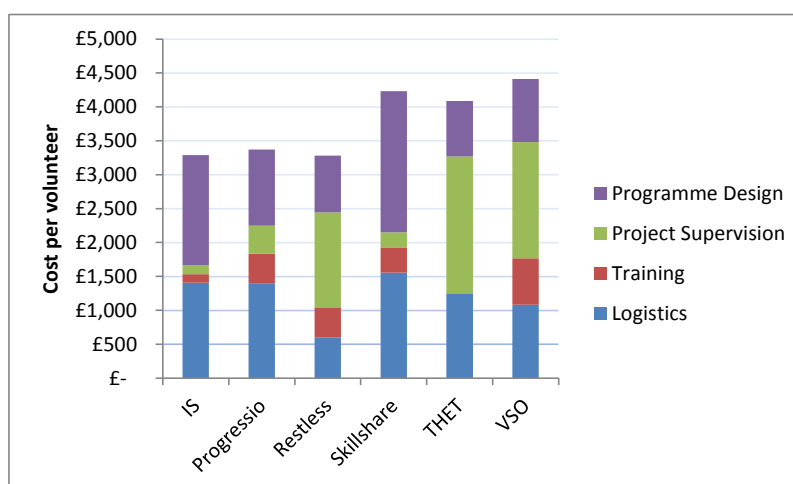
**Phase 4 – Overseas Placements:** The cost per volunteer for overseas implementation ranges from around £3,300 (International Service, Restless Development, Progressio) to £4,200-£4,500 for VSO and Skillshare International. Restless Development and VSO recorded the greatest cost efficiencies for project logistics due to savings made on accommodation through the exclusive use of host homes. VSO recorded significantly higher training costs than other agencies due to very high spend on in-country orientation – which should be investigated further – as well as additional costs for Programme Supervisors and Community Action Days (it is the only agency to use these). When

<sup>23</sup> Data are valid up to July 2012 and so do not include all costs of the Pilot. End of grant reviews may result in small changes to the figures presented here.

<sup>24</sup> Note that cost per volunteer is calculated here using pre-subsidisation figures, with post-subsidisation differences included where relevant. It is worth noting that THET subsidised this area through the use of King's Health Partners who provided office space and staff but were unable to quantify the costs of associated with the provision of these resources.

looked at together<sup>25</sup>, the cost per volunteer for programme design and project supervision varied between £1,500-£1,800 for International Service and Progressio, to over £2,500 for VSO and THET. VSO and Restless Development's costs were higher as they were the only agencies to work with NVs, which as the KAP survey analysis demonstrates, represented good VFM. Moreover, staff costs for VSO (both in-country and UK) were very high and should be looked at carefully for the full programme.

**Figure 7: Cost per Volunteer for Overseas Implementation**<sup>26</sup>



Different placement typologies were also assessed as part of the VFM assessment to identify which programme models offered the greatest VFM:

- ◆ **management structure:** VSO staff and management costs were significantly higher than other agencies (£2,337 per volunteer (cf. £1,075 for Progressio) due to the use of paid Programme Supervisors in country. Although VSO's in-country support was widely valued by volunteers (with 84% of volunteers stating that their expectations were met), the relative efficiency of other agency management models suggests that there is scope to increase the ratio of volunteers to supervisors.
- ◆ **placement length:** Progressio was the only agency to offer 10-week placements. Although over 90% of volunteers' expectations were met by their placement, and the shorter placements yield lower agency management and supervision costs, we would recommend retaining a longer placement length if possible, as this should lead to greater impact from the placements.
- ◆ **NVs:** VSO and Restless Development were the only agencies to work with NVs, and although this leads to higher logistical and management costs, it also brings greater benefits to volunteers and the programme as a whole in terms of impact and sustainability.
- ◆ **working with local partners:** Restless Development's project supervision costs were very high, partly due to the fact that it was the only agency to work directly on programmes in-country rather than through local partners. Further investigation is needed to assess the relative

<sup>25</sup> The precise allocation of costs to programme design and project supervision is not accurate as some agencies have been unable to break down expenditure data by specific budget lines.

<sup>26</sup> Based on pre-subsidisation data.



efficiency gains of this model versus the partner-based model of the other agencies.

**Phase 5 – Return Action:** Analysis of the efficiency of the volunteer return action phase is limited at this stage due to on-going expenditure and data omissions on the part of some agencies. International Service expenditure was much higher than other agencies, with particularly high costs for RV weekends, whilst Progressio only spent £99 per volunteer. Both VSO and THET recorded 100% of volunteers completing return actions yielding a lower cost per return action, whereas a much lower percentage of International Service, Restless Development and Skillshare International volunteers completed actions. Further investigation is required to assess whether varied costs per volunteer are due to completion rates or genuine differences in approach and cost models.

**Box 16: Summary of key findings: Efficiency**

- ◆ the total cost of £253 per volunteer trained represents less than 4% of the average total cost per volunteer. Some additional budget may need to be allocated to addressing training needs of Team Leaders.
- ◆ there is a need for more consistent procurement practices across agencies to ensure a cost efficient pre-departure process.
- ◆ Restless Development and VSO have recorded the greatest efficiencies for project logistics due to savings made on accommodation through the exclusive use of host homes.
- ◆ VSO and Restless Development costs for programme design and project supervision are higher as they are the only agencies to work with NVs. However, based on high KAP satisfaction ratings from UK respondents working with NVs, this appears to represent good VFM.

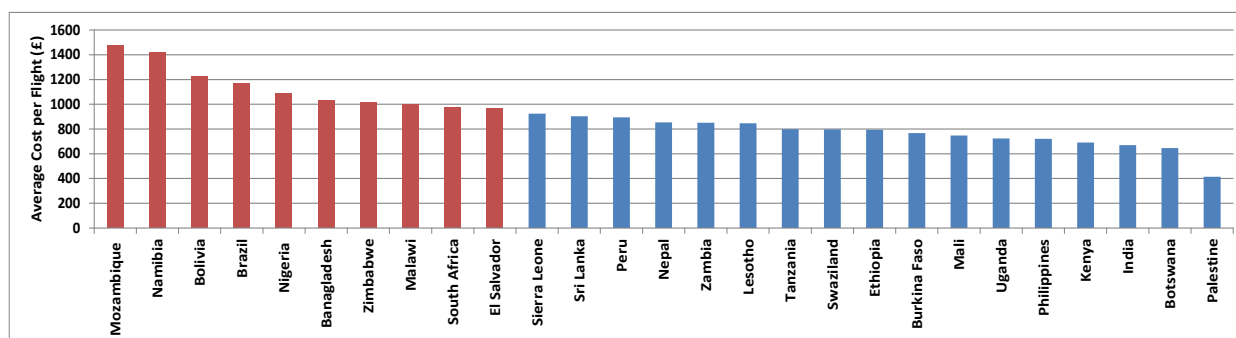
## Economy of ICS

The overall flight cost per volunteer across the consortium - £869 - is well below the budgeted amount of £950, with all agencies except Progressio (whose destinations are typically more expensive) recording an average cost per volunteer below budget.

Skillshare International recorded the lowest average flight cost (£801) and has procured flights to the same countries more cheaply than other agencies. For example, in India, Skillshare International procured flights on average £100 cheaper than VSO; and in Sierra Leone, THET has procured flights on average around £100 cheaper than VSO and Restless Development.

Further evidence of the VFM of ICS flight procurement is demonstrated by VSO 2010 benchmarking statistics, which show that the average volunteer flight should cost around £932, with around 49% costing over the ICS budgeted amount of £950. The graph below - Figure 8 - shows that average flight costs for 10 countries (including Mozambique, Brazil and Namibia which are not part of the full programme) exceeded the budgeted amount.

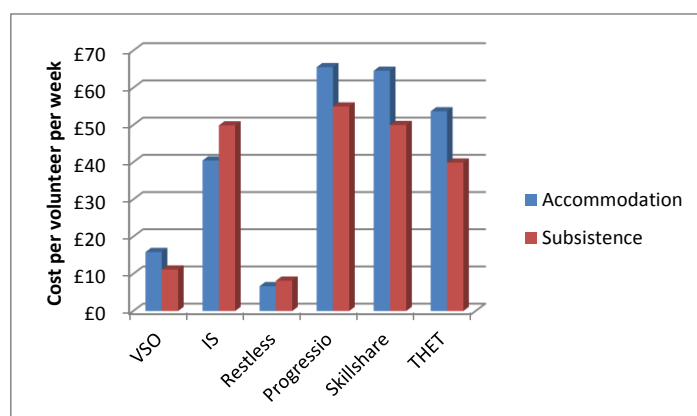
**Figure 8: Average Flight Cost per Country (£)<sup>27</sup>**



Further to the findings of the MTR, which found that visa costs had generally been procured at the expected level, this assessment found that at the end of the pilot phase there were eight countries where average costs have exceeded £100, and that there was significant inter-agency variance for some countries. For example, average Skillshare International visa costs to India are nearly £70 cheaper than VSO; and for visas for Sierra Leone, average costs for Restless Development and THET are over £100 cheaper than VSO.

Variance in accommodation and subsistence costs between agencies confirms the economies of the host home model employed by VSO and Restless Development. As figure 9 demonstrates, the exclusive use of this model by these two agencies yields substantial cost savings,

**Figure 9: Accommodation and Subsistence Costs by Agency**



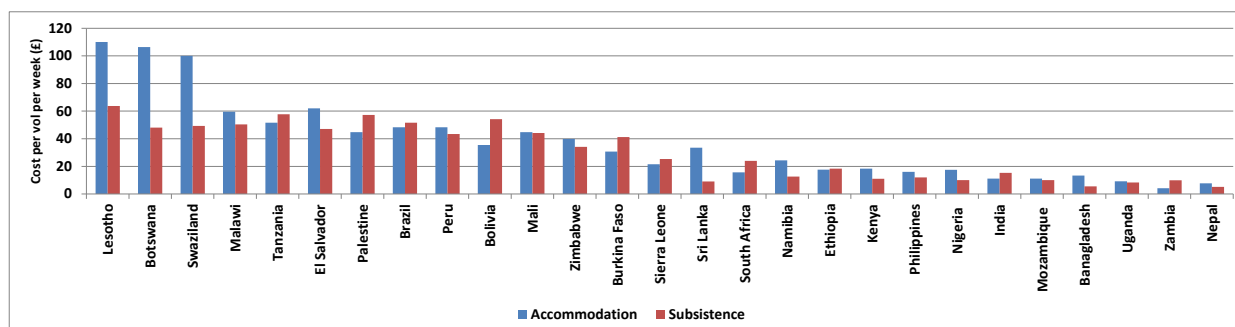
whereas the use of mixed accommodation models by Progressio and Skillshare International brings about an increase in cost of £40-60 per volunteer.

Figure 10 shows that Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland are three outliers in terms of accommodation costs (all Skillshare International countries), and that the Skillshare International model in these countries of mixed accommodation, including guest

houses in partner compounds, is not cost-effective. There are inter-agency variations within countries too (e.g. £2 per volunteer per week in Zambia for Restless Development in comparison with £54 for THET) which strengthens the justification for the use of host homes by all agencies. There is also significant inter-agency variation for subsistence costs, for example Restless Development average costs per week are £30-40 cheaper than Skillshare International. Although Restless Development's subsistence rates do not include food costs and the average figure includes NV costs, the benefits brought by the Restless Development model need to be explored further.

<sup>27</sup> Flight costs for VSO in Zambia are missing

Figure 10: Average Accommodation and Subsistence Costs per Country<sup>28</sup>



More generally, the management of VFM and collection of VFM data by the consortium has improved significantly since the MTR. Although there is still work to be done to ensure that individual agencies are recording VFM data consistently and accurately, the VFM indicator framework has guided the consortium in the analysis and reporting on VFM and in the generation of a useful set of data which aids understanding of where the key programme efficiencies/inefficiencies lie.

**Box 17: Summary of key findings: Economy**

- ◆ the overall flight cost per volunteer across the consortium is well below the budgeted amount of £950 at £869, with all agencies except Progressio recording an average cost per volunteer below budget.
- ◆ Skillshare International recorded the lowest average flight cost (£801) and procured flights more cheaply than other agencies for the same countries.
- ◆ variance in accommodation and subsistence costs between agencies confirms the economies of the host home model employed by VSO and Restless Development.

<sup>28</sup> Note that no costs have been recorded yet for VSO in India

## 7. Lessons Learnt and Good Practice to inform sustainability and full programme

The 18-month pilot phase of the ICS programme provided the full ICS programme with a valuable opportunity to learn what works and investigate areas of improvement. **Overall the programme is highly innovative and designed to push the boundaries of international youth volunteering programmes, notably in achieving development impact.**

Although the MTR was prepared early on in the cycle of the pilot (during the placements of the first cohort of volunteers) it generated valuable feedback which fed into the design of the main programme. At this stage, the pilot phase is close to completion and the implementation of the main programme has already started. The findings below, distilled from the implementation of the pilot phase, indicate there are still some areas of improvement, which are important to drive the future effectiveness and impact of the full ICS programme.<sup>29</sup> We are not fully aware of the lessons that have already been incorporated into the full programme so some of these lessons may already have been integrated into the on-going programme. Good practice and key elements which worked well during the pilot phase are also noted.

The pilot phase achieved its objective as an opportunity to test the design and implementation arrangements for the scheme going forward, although care should be taken that pressing operational demands of starting the new programme do not erode the value of the learning generated during the pilot phase.

### 7.1. Programme design/ monitoring

- ◆ the inclusion of national peer volunteers as equal partners to the IVs strengthens the relevance and coherence of the overall ICS programme objectives by focusing the return action element on global engagement and active citizenship which will increase the sustainability of impacts both in the UK and in ICS programme countries.
- ◆ core standards are an effective way of assuring coherence across different agencies. They provide a necessary baseline from which different approaches to training, placements, and return action have been tested. Development of the standards has also provided a learning forum for agencies with less experience and strengthened communication between the consortium partners.
- ◆ the presence of consortium partners with a faith base offers volunteers an added dimension to their placement. Volunteers working with Progressio were no more/less overtly religious than volunteers working with the other agencies, but a significant proportion had opted for Progressio *because* the faith aspect is important to them/ interests them.
- ◆ risk assessment and management procedures and Core Standards can be new for local partners and staff in-country. Consortium partners need to be vigilant about reporting as the programmes progress to ensure that a) it does not lapse and b) that incidents are reported to the right people in appropriate time frames. In countries where security is a particular concern, the level of active risk management and communication to volunteers about their own responsibility in risk assessment and management has to be particularly rigorous.

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<sup>29</sup> An ITAD led consortium recently tendered for the evaluation of the main ICS programme. As a result, detailed information on the main programme, was not accessible to the evaluation team to ensure that the team were not conflicted in terms of participation in the evaluation of the main programme.

- ◆ active involvement of volunteers and local partners in developing baselines and monitoring frameworks helps to increase buy-in and ownership, as well as ensuring that different stakeholders understand the objectives of placements and the purpose of monitoring.

## 7.2. Pre-departure, Phases 1, 2 and 3:

- ◆ online recruitment and word of mouth are effective ways of attracting a wide sector of young people to apply for ICS, but for a significant minority other approaches are needed. Where young people have greater support needs or are living in more vulnerable situations, longer lead-in times should be planned, with agreed milestones. Ideally, local support workers should be identified who can take on “key worker” roles before and after a volunteer goes on placement.
- ◆ management of expectations is important at every stage. Well-presented and relevant information helps volunteers to understand what they are committing to, what they can expect and what is expected of them. This can reduce stress, enable volunteers to prepare better, improve group dynamics during placements and increase the effectiveness of ICS through increased engagement on return. Steps have been taken to strengthen management of expectations.
- ◆ the time period from application to pre-departure needs to be at least six weeks to allow successful volunteers to make plans for the period they will be away and in order to achieve their fund raising target. It is important to also maintain contact with applicants during this period.
- ◆ the role of Team Leader is an important one and all stakeholders need to understand what responsibilities this volunteer has. Separate training which builds leadership and management skills prior to departure and during the placement needs to be built-in to the programme;
- ◆ although spot testing did not reveal any attempts by volunteers to misrepresent their financial circumstances, the rapidly changing circumstances of young adults proved too complex for a straightforward means testing system to assess accurately and fairly. Fund raising is a more effective and equitable way, rather than means testing, for volunteers to contribute to the ICS programme and to demonstrate their commitment.

## 7.3. Phase 4, Placements:

- ◆ the pilot enabled ICS to identify thematic areas where the distinctive contribution of young volunteers can be best utilised. This will help to embed ICS outcomes and impacts within wider programmes and increase sustainability;
- ◆ successful placement planning involves a clear alignment of sender agency, implementing partner organisation, beneficiary and national objectives across placement cohorts.<sup>30</sup> This overarching planning is most effective when undertaken between agencies and host organisations, and when volunteers can negotiate specific placement activities.
- ◆ appropriate host organisations have key characteristics which include commitment to ICS aims, experience or capacity in volunteer management and existing relationships with the agency.
- ◆ involving NVs has emerged as a key part of the ICS programme model. The relationship is most

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<sup>30</sup> VSO is currently systematizing its learning from the Pilot by developing a briefing note for prospective national partner, identifying good practice and key learning.

effective when it involves a peer or near-peer 1:1 relationship with UK volunteers which facilitates both personal and placement-specific interaction.

- ◆ extending the involvement of the TL over two or more placement periods increases the effectiveness and continuity of ICS inputs.

#### 7.4. Phase 5: UK RV Action

- ◆ to improve the likelihood and level of Return Actions being completed, clear planning and expectation management is needed at all stages of the volunteer journey. External factors also need to be considered e.g. further understanding is needed of how the academic year affects return actions.
- ◆ adequate support is needed at each stage, although this varies for each volunteer. RV days are a useful way to re-engage ICS volunteers, but need to be carefully timed in relation placements. Offering structured opportunities for engagement is an effective strategy and the development of resource materials (written or online) providing information about volunteering opportunities, ideas for what to do and so on has also proved effective.
- ◆ the use of ICS alumni as peer motivators is an effective way of a) allowing highly motivated volunteers to become involved in the running of the ICS programme and b) engaging RVs.

## 8. Conclusions

**Overall the evaluation has found that the delivery of this ambitious pilot programme has been successful. Targets have been met and the ICS pilot programme has made progress towards its overall purpose of generating knowledge about youth volunteering and demonstrating the contribution that young British volunteers from a variety of backgrounds can make to International Development and poverty reduction.** Learning and best practice has been generated in many areas, although this is less evident in the later stages of the volunteer journey (RV Action) where learning is on-going, and in terms of increasing the demand for volunteering opportunities from all sections of the community. The programme was designed on the assumption that web-based marketing would attract applicants from across all regions of the UK and that RVs would have sufficient motivation and self-confidence to develop their actions without significant local support. Neither assumption has proved correct and going forward the consortium needs to continue efforts to offer effective support across the UK for recruitment and return actions.

An overall theory of change could now be articulated for the ICS programme as a result of the pilot work. This would include the contribution of young volunteers from the placement countries that ICS works in, which both strengthens the potential impacts that can be achieved in developing countries and frames the subsequent engagement of young volunteers in terms of active citizenship, where their activism might relate to local community development (in the UK or developing countries), national policy development or international development. It also increases the scope for sustainable impacts by including the legacy on development that sustainable changes in civic engagement (knowledge and skills) of NVs may have. However further work is needed (and envisaged in the framework of the evaluation of the main ICS programme) to test the assumptions underpinning the pathway of change for the programme and indeed to fully understand and measure the extent and types of development impact that can accrue from or are attributable to a programme like ICS.

Within the consortium, International Service (and Skillshare International to a lesser extent) has driven forward and tested approaches to inclusion of disabled volunteers; similarly VSO and Skillshare International in particular have taken more of a lead on approaches to working with "NEET" young people. To be truly inclusive, a real effort is needed to change mind-sets across the consortium. The recent Learning Workshop on inclusive approaches to disability run by International Service sets a good precedent for this. We welcome the inclusion of Catch22 and Islamic Relief within the new consortium and hope that the longer programme timeframe will allow efforts to develop relationships with strong local partners in the UK to be successfully renewed and developed.

The three areas of impact anticipated from the ICS pilot are interlinked and the pilot has made progress in testing how to generate synergies between them. This has involved developing an understanding of what the distinctive value young volunteers can add to development. Approaches which facilitate this include resource development, research, awareness raising and campaigns and training; and roles in which young people can thrive include peer educators; English language inputs; community mobilisers and researchers. Key areas in which young international and NVs can make a distinctive input have also been identified: Increasing access to basic services; breaking down taboos and promoting equality; increasing civic participation of young people, and; enhancing capacity of partners to carry out effective participatory approaches.

The pilot has developed a more systematic approach to assessing VFM, revising its reporting framework considerably after the MTR. Despite difficulties in generating responses for the KAP survey and reliance on this self-reported information for much of the data analysis, the pilot appears





to have been cost-effective and offers increasing cost-efficiency and good value economically. As best practice has been identified it has also been put into place across the programme e.g. use of host homes, development of the Team Leader roles, consistent pre-departure procurement and so on. The improvements to data management capacity currently being introduced are welcomed, so too is the improved focus of placement planning and monitoring.

## 9. Recommendations for the Pilot & Implications for the ICS full programme

Annex 5 summarises the recommendations coming out of the MTR and the responses that the PCB has made following these. The final section of this evaluation builds on these and contains the recommendations moving forward to the full Programme. Recommendations from the MTR are referred to where the evaluation considers that further action could be taken.

### 9.1. Partnership and coordination

Conclusion	Recommendations
<p>1. <b>(6.1 DFID: consortium partnership) The ICS pilot has been a priority politically and at times subject to political pressure to make rapid investments which have impacted on the effectiveness of the pilot Programme.</b></p>	<p>a. DFID should consider how best practice (learning through a pilot programme; consolidate learning; design and develop a full programme) could be followed in the future.</p>
<p>2. <b>(6.2 Management of the pilot) Two-way communication (across the consortium as well as from agencies to local partners) has been vital to supporting learning and understanding/sharing the different perspectives and experience of consortium Partners. As the programme size increases this will become ever more challenging although the same needs remain.</b></p>	<p>a. The consortium should clarify and validate communication and learning systems with DFID for the full programme. Systems and mechanisms for horizontal communication and learning at different levels (including in-country and between different countries) are needed, including opportunities for ICS staff to visit placements and learning events for key staff from different countries/ within countries and across agencies.</p>

### 9.2. Programme design/ monitoring

Conclusion	Recommendations
<p>3. <b>(2.2 Programme Design) Some aspects of the programme design and best practice still need to be tested and validated.</b></p>	<p>a. Key aspects of the ICS approach should be further developed and tested as part of the MTR of the full programme, in particular recruitment of under-represented groups and the final stages of the volunteer experience as they return to their communities.</p>
<p>4. <b>(Effectiveness 3.1&amp; 6.3) Learning in the pilot has shown that improving ICS Programme access will require adjustments to budgets and programming arrangements to attract particular target groups.</b></p>	<p>a. The consortium should identify and allocate budgets to explore strategies to recruit volunteers from groups not currently well represented, then mainstream best practice and set targets for each sending agency.</p>
<p>5. <b>(3.4, 4.3, 6.3 Return Action) The pilot lacked an overall strategy to offer effective support across the UK for return actions. Instead support for return engagement was channelled through five different systems, each with its own focus, priorities and campaigns.</b></p>	<p>a. The external evaluation team should work with the consortium to undertake a full VFM assessment of the approach to return actions and alternative approaches during the MTR of the full programme.</p>

### 9.3. Phases 1 & 2: Recruitment and selection

Conclusion	Recommendations
<p><b>6. (3.1 Effectiveness recruitment and selection) The design of the pilot relied overwhelmingly on online recruitment and some groups of young people were under represented. Detailed analysis of barriers/ efficiency of the on-line system only started towards the end of the pilot.</b></p> <p>Efforts made to target particular groups have resulted in considerable learning, particularly around improved access and support needs of disabled young people with disabilities. New partners have been brought into the consortium to strengthen links to some groups (notably NEET and Muslim young people). More even geographic recruitment remains an issue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The Hub should continue detailed analysis of web use to fully understand the effectiveness (and efficiency) of the on-line recruitment system and possible alternative approaches for applicants put off by the current system.</li> <li>b. The consortium should earmark budgets for targeting and recruitment of underrepresented groups across the consortium Agencies and any alternative application/ selection procedures (see also MTR recommendation 12 on higher income volunteers).</li> <li>c. The consortium should explore innovative approaches to geographic recruitment, or short term employment of youth motivators in regions where recruitment is very low.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. (3.1 Demand for places, 6.3 Value for Money). Recruitment, selection and pre-departure training systems are now reasonably comprehensive, consistent and cost efficient. There is potential to further reduce pre-departure drop-out rates. Setting fund raising targets has been one way of ensuring there is a degree of commitment. Volunteers suggest strengthening systems to ensure that volunteers are really committed to the aims of ICS.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Agencies should gather detailed feedback from all applicants who drop out in order to analyse and address how the attrition rate (between on-line applications and departure) could be reduced.</li> <li>b. The Hub should work with ICS alumni to consider other ways of assessing the commitment of applicants and their potential to add value to the programme without losing a focus on personal characteristics.</li> <li>c. The Hub should monitor student involvement in the programme (overall numbers and variation in participation across the academic year) to inform recruitment strategies.</li> </ul>

### 9.4. Phase 3: Pre-departure training

Conclusion	Recommendations
<p><b>8. (3.2 Training) The decentralisation of training should allow agencies to devote more attention to the provision of some specific training during the full programme.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Agencies should ensure that guided learning offered to volunteers builds on preceding activities rather than duplicating.</li> <li>b. The consortium should clarify the Team Leader role and communicate this across the stakeholder groups. Team Leaders should be recognised as leaders within pre-departure generic training and, where appropriate offered:                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Substantial role-specific training (pre-departure and in-country);</li> <li>b) Discrete support to TLs through UK and in-country agencies.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

9. **(3.2 Training) More information about countries and placements will help to engage and prepare volunteers.**
10. **(3.2 Training) In many placements opportunities for specialist training (particularly languages) both pre- departure and in-country would be valuable.**
- a. Even if the specific placement matching is done in-country, Agencies should provide volunteers with as much information as possible about the country and the range of placements available. Moreover, the rationale for not matching placements until volunteers are in country should be clearly communicated to all volunteers during pre-departure training.
  - a. Agencies should consider offering additional language training<sup>31</sup> focused on the specific vocabulary that will be encountered within placements.
  - b. More substantial attention should be devoted to complex development issues such as gender to allow for effective engagement and reflection by volunteers in placement (Agencies and in-country partners).

## 9.5. Phase 4: Placements

Conclusion	Recommendations
<p><b>11. (4.4 Constraints on impact) While the pilot has generated considerable learning and enabled the consortium to identify best practice, a number of factors limit the impact being generated by volunteers during placements.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The Hub should incorporate key elements of placement planning within ICS guidelines/ standards: <i>including the following</i>:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ identification of the wider programme within which placements are working;</li> <li>◆ agreement on overarching objectives between the agency and host organisation;</li> <li>◆ agreement on specific placement activities volunteers, agency and host organisation (guided by the distinctive contribution of ICS IVs and NVs);</li> <li>◆ include formalised placement plans to cover an agreed number of volunteer cohorts;</li> <li>◆ detail volunteer involvement across cohorts in setting baselines,</li> <li>◆ specification of systems for monitoring, review and hand-over to the incoming volunteers.</li> </ul> </li> <li>b. Agencies should provide detailed information about selected volunteers to in- country partners as soon as they are matched to countries (and possibly placements) to facilitate an optimal matching of volunteers to placements.</li> </ul>

<sup>31</sup> In line with earlier comments about the length of in-country orientation, this might take place during placements and would not always involve additional external trainers – International Service has successfully involved students studying English to build language skills with volunteers in Mali, and many NVs themselves, with additional guidance, would probably be good trainers because of their strong peer relationships with the UK volunteers.

**12. (4.4 Constraints on impact) Where repeat cohorts of volunteers are sent on a placement, the continuity and coherence of efforts can easily be lost.**

- c. In-country training and orientation should have a clear rationale and;
  - ◆ engage host organisation staff;
  - ◆ provide country, issue and placement-specific orientation.
  - ◆ build on core resources for guided volunteer learning<sup>32</sup> (this is a role for the Hub)
  - ◆ devote some attention to returnee action<sup>33</sup>
- a. Agencies and in-country partners should strengthen placement planning across an agreed number of cohorts and:
  - ◆ include longer term volunteer placements e.g. six-month TLs;
  - ◆ increase written and spoken communication between cohorts such as – handover notes, telephone or face-to-face meetings between different cycles of volunteers;
  - ◆ change the mind-set of volunteers to thinking of their placement as a contribution to a longer term project;
  - ◆ engage host organisation staff directly in the activity of volunteers;
  - ◆ ensure gaps between placements are kept to a minimum (whilst allowing some time for reflection and development).

**13. (7.3 Placement good practice) The pilot has demonstrated the value of increased involvement of host communities and NVs**

- a. Agencies should seek host homes wherever possible and appropriate (security and additional support needs have to be prioritised). Living standards (including accommodation and allowance) should be comfortable but basic.
- b. Agencies should ensure that there is equity between international and NVs in all aspects of the programme. This will require clear guidance at programme level about rates for living allowances and volunteer travel during the placements.
- c. The MTR of the full programme should assess possible differential impact resulting from the placement experiences of NVs who remain at home and those placed outside their home community, as well as the impact on group dynamics.

<sup>32</sup> The KAP has highlighted that key knowledge areas to strengthen include understanding the root causes of poverty around the world and climate change. The Hub should consider how this can be addressed in guided learning both in terms of resources and guidance on how placement activities and visits could be developed.

<sup>33</sup> This has been recognised by the consortium and is now timetabled in from the start of the placements. The final evaluation of IS placements for example now look as at the return action volunteers might do and during the placement resources are developed to assist volunteers e.g. photos, PowerPoint talks etc.

### 9.6. Phase 5: UK RV Action

Conclusion	Recommendations
<p><b>14. This evaluation has not analysed the impact of the RV actions themselves, nor assessed the efficiencies and effectiveness of different agency approaches to the RV days.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Deeper analysis of RV actions by the external evaluation team is recommended at MTR stage, in order to :                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ understand the wider impact of the RV actions;</li> <li>◆ identify the distinctive contribution of young volunteers;</li> <li>◆ clarify the VFM of different approaches to the RV days and other forms of support.</li> </ul> </li> <li>b. The consortium should develop/ identify volunteer pathway(s) for RVs so that volunteers are clear about what they can expect from and offer to ICS as returned volunteers.</li> <li>c. The options for return action should be expanded (Hub lead) to include group actions and build creatively on the distinctive contribution that young people make (MTR Recommendation 20).</li> <li>d. The consortium should explore ways in which highly motivated ICS Alumni can be supported to establish a network of mentors across the UK.</li> </ul>

## 9.7. Value for Money implications

Conclusion	Recommendations
<p><b>15. (6.3 Value for money) Issues about the cost-effectiveness of the consortium approach need to be addressed in some parts of the volunteer journey.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The Hub should further develop the indicator framework to ensure that:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ data is collected consistently and accurately by individual agencies to inform the VFM assessment; and</li> <li>◆ robust effectiveness indicators reflecting the updated programme logic are developed, which facilitate a judgment on the cost-effectiveness of ICS (see also MTR Recommendation 20);</li> </ul> </li> <li>b. A key aspect of the cost-effectiveness for in-country programme management is the ratio of volunteers: Team Leader. The consortium should review these and ensure greater consistency between agencies.</li> <li>c. The use of Team Leaders (under 25) rather than Programme Supervisors is recommended.</li> <li>d. The Hub should work with the external evaluation team to analyse the efficiency and effectiveness of different agency approaches and cost models for the full programme (see also 9.6).</li> <li>e. Recognising different programme models, it is none-the-less clear that to improve cost efficiency and effectiveness, agencies should agree common standards in relation to use of host homes, working with NVs and a consistent approach to pre-departure procurement.</li> </ul>
<p><b>16. (6.3 Value for Money) Cost efficiency of the full programme could be further strengthened</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Where procurement remains decentralized, Agencies should develop consistent procurement practices. Use of benchmarking across agencies is recommended to support a cost efficient pre-departure process.</li> <li>b. The VFM framework developed by the Hub should incorporate:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ an analysis of the demographics of volunteer dropouts by agency at each stage of the ICS journey;</li> <li>◆ partner satisfaction ratings, disaggregated by agency and programme typology and linked to fulfilment of placement objectives.</li> </ul> </li> <li>c. The Hub should review the variance of unit costs across agencies and make recommendations improve management, monitoring and controls to ensure the most economic use of resources</li> </ul>