Introduction

International Citizen Service (ICS) brings together young people from the UK to volunteer side-by-side with young people from developing countries in some of the poorest communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

ICS is funded by the UK Government and led by VSO, in partnership with respected development organisations who work to agreed quality principles and standards. Since its launch in 2011, ICS has enabled over 25,000 young people to volunteer in projects around the world. By 2018, ICS will have created a global community of more than 35,000 active citizens: a lasting legacy of young people making a positive contribution to their communities and to fighting poverty.

Where we work

In the past year, over 6,500 UK and in-country ICS volunteers have made a difference in 22 countries around the world:

| Bangladesh | Nicaragua |
| Burkina Faso | Nigeria |
| Cambodia | Rwanda |
| El Salvador | Senegal |
| Ghana | Sierra Leone |
| Honduras | South Africa |
| India | Tanzania |
| Kenya | Togo |
| Liberia | Uganda |
| Malawi | Zambia |
| Nepal | Zimbabwe |

Key achievements in 2016-2017:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>26,400</th>
<th>3,300</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hours of peer education delivered</td>
<td>action research projects completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14,600</td>
<td>25,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hours of awareness raising carried out</td>
<td>hours of training delivered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,700</td>
<td>1,779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new resources developed</td>
<td>community infrastructure projects worked on</td>
</tr>
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Highlights from ICS volunteers’ contribution to tackling poverty (2016-2017)

**Y Care International ICS**
Y Care International ICS volunteers delivered 21 workshops to increase community awareness of topics such as gender equality and women’s and girls’ rights.

**Tearfund ICS**
Tearfund ICS volunteers worked on a health project in South Africa. They reached over 2,500 young people in the local community, running sessions which covered sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence and life skills.

**VSO ICS**
VSO ICS volunteers worked in partnership with local volunteers in Nigeria to identify children who were out of school and support them to get back into education.
How we work

ICS is an established youth volunteering for development programme that brings together volunteers aged 18-25 from the UK with volunteers from developing countries. Led by VSO, ICS is delivered by a consortium of ten development organisations.

All ICS volunteering placements must contribute to:

- poverty reduction and sustainable development
- personal and social development of the volunteers
- volunteers acting as agents of social change within their own communities and beyond

ICS sets the benchmark for responsible and inclusive youth volunteering. Our projects achieve clear, measurable results, contributing to long-term development impact.

Our work encompasses livelihoods and enterprise; health, including sexual and reproductive health; and education. A strong focus on social accountability runs through all our projects, and continues beyond them, as ICS empowers volunteers to engage as lifelong active citizens.

Development is at the heart of the ICS programme, as illustrated by the new Theory of Change (below), developed during the current contract with the UK Government.

**ICS Theory of Change**

- Providing *inspiration* for new ways of thinking and being
- Continuing *social action* activities and encourage others to become more engaged
- Promoting *participation*, which ensures that activities are informed by actual community priorities
- Increasing the confidence and capacity of communities, which strengthens *local ownership and agency* to take action
- Sparking further innovation and broker access to networks, information and resources through *collaboration*
- Promoting *inclusion* by extending the reach of services to the poorest and most marginalised
- Mutually exchanging knowledge and skills with the community, which fosters *innovation*
- Improving the *quality and effectiveness* of local services.

Positive, lasting changes for poor and marginalised communities where ICS is active

Relationships developed between volunteers, ICS staff, ICS partners and communities facilitate positive change.
The Theory of Change shows the four distinct elements of the ICS programme that underpin our success:

1. All ICS volunteers – from the UK and overseas – are supported through our unique volunteer programme design. This includes a selection process, comprehensive training and ongoing support throughout their experience.

2. The relationships and trust built between volunteers, poor and marginalised communities, partner organisations and host homes are crucial. Positive relationships lead to the design and delivery of more effective activities. This, in turn, creates enduring impact for local communities. That’s why ICS fosters effective relationships, embedding volunteers in communities and within host homes.

3. The eight ways in which ICS volunteers bring about positive, lasting change in communities have been identified in groundbreaking research, Valuing Volunteering, by VSO and the Institute of Development Studies.

4. Sustainable long-term change and impact is catalysed by the ICS model. Empowering people living in poverty to take ownership and strengthening their skills and capacity enables them to steer their own development processes.
Key achievements (2016-2017)

ICS development impact

In the past year, ICS volunteers worked in 141 projects across 22 countries, delivering innovative initiatives that directly contribute to poverty reduction. This includes over 75,000 hours of volunteer time across a range of projects that have helped people earn a decent living, get a good education, lead healthy lives, and understand and claim their rights.

ICS volunteers collaborate with local partners who understand the key issues affecting communities. VSO recently undertook a mid-term evaluation to demonstrate the impact of our programmes. The evaluation spanned five countries, across 16 projects, reaching over 1,000 respondents.

How volunteers’ personal development triggers change

As well as bringing about change in the lives of people in local communities, ICS furthers volunteers’ learning and personal development. In 2017, VSO published research entitled Impact beyond volunteering. The study, which drew upon a network of 15,000 VSO volunteers, including ICS volunteers, found that ICS had enhanced their personal development.

The experience sparked significant changes in the lives of many ICS volunteers: they learned transferable skills that enabled them to find a job or change their career path.

Challenges Worldwide ICS

At 16, Mahomed lost his sight in both eyes. Aged 26, he took a leap of faith by travelling to Zambia with Challenges Worldwide ICS. It took him out of his comfort zone, living with a host family for three months in a city where getting around as a blind person presented extra challenges. Mahomed had to place his trust in the UK and in-country volunteers and staff who he was working with on placement.

Mahomed is now looking forward to new opportunities and challenges in 2017. “I’m very lucky,” he said. “Instead of travelling, ICS was an experience working, being immersed in a culture I wouldn’t have had any other opportunity to be engaged with. How else could I have lived in Zambia? I thought I would be defenceless in a country I didn’t know. But I had a safety net of great people and great support. What I realise now is I can go anywhere.”

Restless Development ICS

Wanting to make a change, Catherine, aged 26, from Tanzania, took up a Team Leader role in her home country with Restless Development ICS. She discovered a passion for helping young people to find jobs, and decided that she wanted to continue the work after her ICS placement, using her new skills and knowledge.

Catherine received an ICS in-country volunteer alumni grant which helps returned volunteers to create positive change in their communities. She launched a project helping young people to start their own businesses. Working with 212 unemployed people, Catherine encouraged them to network and come up with business ideas in groups. “Through our lessons people changed their way of thinking,” she said. “The biggest impact we had was linking the participants to the ward councillor, who helped participants to register their groups and make their businesses a reality.”
Diversity and inclusion

ICS is committed to providing valuable volunteering opportunities to all, regardless of their background. Young people from low-income, disadvantaged backgrounds often face barriers to taking part in programmes such as ICS. That’s why we participated in the International Volunteering Opportunities for All (IVO4All) programme in 2016. This entailed recruiting and supporting young people who were not in education, employment or training through a mentoring scheme and workshop to prepare them for the ICS selection process.

Senara from Cornwall benefited from this extra support. She completed a volunteering placement in Nepal with VSO ICS, working on a project to improve education and sanitation for children in rural areas. She developed new skills and gained confidence.

“Before I even stepped foot in Nepal I had gotten over certain fears and anxieties, and had experienced things that would never have been possible if it weren’t for ICS.”

Sustained social action and active citizenship

The impact of ICS endures beyond the overseas placement. Volunteers must carry out at least one project that benefits their local community or seeks to bring about positive social change. This final phase – called Action at Home – harnesses volunteers’ passion and enthusiasm by encouraging them to continue as active citizens in their own communities.

Jimmy from Brighton volunteered with Raleigh International ICS in Nicaragua, working on a community health programme. On returning to the UK he was inspired to tackle local issues in Brighton. The goal of his action at home was to galvanise more people to become active citizens. To achieve this, Jimmy organised an awareness-raising event. It brought together a number of local and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who set up stalls as points of information for the local community. Many people signed up to volunteer.

“Any change – no matter how small or big – that aims to improve the lives of others is one worth taking,” he said. “Like ICS, I wanted to inspire other people that anyone can change the world in a positive way and that it’s in your hands to do so.”

ICS amplifies volunteers’ voices supporting them to shape the development agenda and decision making at the highest level, raise the profile of ICS and showcase the value of UK Aid.

Highlights include:

- Over 150 young people took part in the Girls’ Education Forum (July 2016), aimed at accelerating progress towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and 5.
- Five ICS alumni attended the Junior 7 Summit in Japan (April 2016), where they presented their ideas to the Prime Minister of Japan, and a returned volunteer was chosen to attend the World Humanitarian Summit (May 2016).
- ICS former volunteers engaged in public debates on UK Aid, most notably in the #ProudofAid campaign (June 2016).
- An ICS returned volunteer was selected to be part of the UK delegation to the UN General Assembly (September 2016) to share her experiences with ICS.
- The ICS photo competition (December 2016) was exhibited at a gallery in Westminster and at the UK Parliament, giving ICS volunteers the opportunity to engage with their MPs.
How youth volunteering works

Livelihoods

ICS volunteers work with local communities on livelihoods projects, helping to increase economic opportunities and self-sufficiency, particularly for disadvantaged groups. This includes delivering workshops to strengthen people’s technical or soft skills, thereby improving their chances of finding employment; helping aspiring entrepreneurs to set up new businesses; and working with business owners to boost their income.

Snapshot of ICS livelihoods (2016-2017)

- 3,090 volunteers
- 68 projects
- 17 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America

Balloon Ventures ICS

Jeramiah was struggling to develop his carpentry business, and was referred to Balloon Ventures ICS. The team delivered training, identified new customers and developed a marketing strategy to bring in more business. Together, they carried out market research to ensure Jeramiah created the best products to meet customers’ needs. Jeramiah was awarded a £280 loan to buy materials. His monthly income rose from 6,500 KSh to 40,000 KSh and he hired two employees. “Whatever my family needs I can get faster because the cash is readily available,” he said.
Health

ICS projects contribute to the improved delivery of and access to basic health services, and promote healthy practices among local people. ICS volunteers raise awareness of the importance of sanitation and hygiene as well as promote the availability of government and NGO health services. Many ICS health projects improve sexual and reproductive health and rights, which is vital to empowering women and girls and advancing gender equality.

Snapshot of ICS health (2016-2017)

1,569 volunteers
32 projects
11 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America

When he was just 17, Nathaniel received the life-changing news that he was HIV positive. Inspired by a couple’s experience of volunteering in South Africa, he applied to ICS. He volunteered with Progressio ICS in Malawi, a country where HIV prevalence is one of the highest in the world. On placement, the ICS team carried out peer education sessions in many schools in Tovwirane and helped young people learn about STIs, HIV, AIDS, HIV testing and counselling, positive living and voluntary medical male circumcision. “It’s been great working on a project that relates so much to my experience as an HIV positive man. If we’re doing a session on positive living in school, talking about how you can live a healthy life while being HIV positive, I’m living proof,” he said.

Students practice methods of filtering water through material as part of the Raleigh ICS SWASH (school water, sanitation and hygiene plan) project. Raising awareness of the importance of sanitation and hygiene is a component of many ICS health projects.

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Education

ICS education projects improve delivery of and access to basic education for poor and marginalised girls and boys. The mid-term evaluation demonstrated the positive impact ICS is making within the education sector of the countries we operate in. Results include: enhanced community awareness of the importance of education, increased engagement with out-of-school children, increased use of participatory teaching methods and a reduction in corporal punishment, mainly as a result of volunteers’ peer education activities.

Snapshot of ICS education (2016-2017)

1,277 volunteers
26 projects
12 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America

VSO ICS

Last year, VSO partnered with Deafway to support a team of deaf ICS volunteers in Kasabet, Kenya to improve access to information for the deaf community, promote integration and advance equality. The ICS team raised awareness of deaf people’s needs and rights, trained community members on basic Kenyan Sign Language (KSL) and created inclusive neighbourhood spaces where deaf people could discuss issues. “I’m glad VSO volunteers came on board - for once we had a clear interaction with the children through the help of Antony (Kenyan volunteer), Levi and Shona (UK volunteers),” said Simon, Director, Urafiki orphanage.
Civic participation

ICS civic participation projects amplify the voice of marginalised groups, increase knowledge of their rights and strengthen their capacity to exercise control over decisions and resources. Local people have – with ICS volunteers’ support – acquired new skills in areas such as advocacy. ICS has energised active citizenship and community participation.

Snapshot of ICS civic participation (2016-2017)

493 volunteers
19 projects
8 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America

In Rajasthan, India, access to various government welfare schemes was hampered by a lack of awareness among poor people in the community, in particular women. To address this barrier, Pravah ICS volunteers delivered training sessions, showing people how to fill in forms to apply for government funds. As a result, 300 people received pensions which had been delayed and 200 new applicants were supported.

Speakers at a Community Action Day organised by Pravah ICS volunteers. ICS civic participation projects amplify the voice of marginalised groups and strengthen their capacity to address barriers they are facing.
ICS partners

Led by VSO, ICS is delivered by a consortium of ten development organisations:

- balloon
- Challenges worldwide
- International Service
- PROGRESSio
- Raleigh
- RESTLESS DEVELOPMENT
- tearfund
- VSO
- Y Care International

Fundraising

Since the start of ICS2, ICS volunteers have raised just under £5.89 million to support the programme. When young people raise funds to participate in ICS, they learn new skills, gain confidence and demonstrate a commitment to social action.

“\textit{I have learned and gained a lot through ICS, including new organisation skills. I’ve also been pushed out of my comfort zone by asking people for donations, which has helped me become more confident. I’m on a really low income, but with the resources I do have, and something I feel passionate about (keeping fit), I’ve found a way to gain more and more donations.”}

- Arron, International Service ICS, Rwanda

Media & marketing

In 2016, the ICS marketing team brought in over 30,000 eligible applications. We’ve opened up ICS to a diverse range of young people, while delivering value for money and promoting the ICS brand further than ever before.

With 755 pieces of media coverage generated through our partners, the work of ICS volunteers across the world reached 60 million people. ICS was featured positively on BBC News and ITV as well as in the Guardian and The Times.

Last year’s Aid Attitude Tracker underlined the value of volunteers as advocates for development. Our media strategy has supported this, showcasing the value of UK Aid through the benefit to our young UK volunteers and the countries they work in.

And on social media, we’ve been busy engaging directly with young people and influencers, sharing positive stories from our programmes and publishing targeted, compelling content across our channels.
The year ahead: scaling up and magnifying impact

In 2012, ICS worked with just 900 volunteers. This grew to over 6,500 in 2016. We are looking forward to opening new programmes this year, including Balloon Ventures in Uganda, International Service in Malawi, and VSO in Malawi, Ethiopia, and India in collaboration with Pravah.

The recent mid-term evaluation has shaped our understanding of how ICS volunteers contribute to lasting change for communities. The learning generated will inform ICS programmes to improve effectiveness and maximise development impact.

Volunteer support

As a truly inclusive programme, we want to ensure the right level of support for all volunteers. In 2017, we will be putting the lessons learnt from projects such as Deafway in Kenya and IVO4All into action. We will launch bespoke disability programming, unlocking funding to create accessible placements which draw on the skills and experience of young disabled people.

Using a grant from the Fidelity Foundation, ICS will work with young people in the UK from deprived backgrounds to understand the barriers they face in taking part in volunteering programmes such as ICS. This research will enhance the support we offer. We will also conduct new research to ensure volunteers have a positive and safe experience. This will be carried out in partnership with Lancaster University, to understand the mental health issues faced by young people and the support they need while on placement.

Sustaining active citizenship

In order to support our alumni to continue to be active citizens beyond their placements, we will develop six national youth engagement networks in developing countries. These networks will engage with DFID country offices and other partners to drive meaningful youth engagement around the SDGs. ICS will encourage and empower young people to influence key policies at the community and national level.

Livelihoods and enterprise programming

ICS is exploring new ways of enhancing livelihoods and enterprise programming. This year will see the completion of four enterprise innovation pilots. Each pilot will add value to the ICS programme, enhancing our knowledge and experience: enabling us to catalyse positive, lasting change for communities.
Restless Development ICS volunteers hug after carrying out an education session in their placement community. ICS is committed to giving young people from all backgrounds the opportunity to make a real difference in some of the world's poorest countries.

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