ICS EVALUATION (2019) SUMMARY
DANIEL BURWOOD, ELIZABETH TARNEY, MARINA TORRE, NICHOLAS ZHANG VSO
# Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AYSRHR</td>
<td>Adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health and rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAD</td>
<td>Community action day</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community-based organisation</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development (of the UK government)</td>
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<td>DPO</td>
<td>Disabled persons’ organisation</td>
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<td>FGDs</td>
<td>Focus group discussions</td>
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<td>ICS</td>
<td>International Citizen Service</td>
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<td>ICSV</td>
<td>ICS volunteer</td>
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<td>ICV</td>
<td>In-country volunteer</td>
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<td>INS</td>
<td>Inclusive neighbourhood spaces</td>
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<td>KFI</td>
<td>Knowledge for Impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>KSL</td>
<td>Kenya Sign Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals M&amp;E</td>
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<tr>
<td>POLAR</td>
<td>Participation of Local Areas (a UK measure of the proportion of young people accessing higher education)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PWD</td>
<td>People with disability?</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRH</td>
<td>Sexual and reproductive health</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOC</td>
<td>Theory of Change</td>
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<td>TOR</td>
<td>Terms of Reference</td>
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<td>UCL</td>
<td>University College London</td>
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<td>UKV</td>
<td>UK volunteer</td>
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<tr>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>Voluntary Service Overseas</td>
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<td>WASH</td>
<td>Water, sanitation and hygiene</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organisation</td>
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Introduction

International Citizen Service (ICS) is an international development programme that brings together diverse teams of youth volunteers to contribute to ending poverty in some of the world’s poorest communities. To date, the programme has enabled over 36,000 young people to volunteer in 33 developing countries. ICS is funded by the UK Government’s Department for International Development (DFID), and is led by VSO alongside a consortium of well-respected development organisations. Between 2011 and 2019, DFID committed a total of £173 million (inclusive of VAT) to the programme through a sequence of contracts with VSO.

ICS works through teams of volunteers aged from 18–25, who come from both the UK and the host country. Teams are supported by team leaders, likewise from both the UK and host countries, who are themselves volunteers and are aged 23–35. Individuals may only volunteer once as a team member, but can apply to go on as team leaders (who can in turn undertake multiple placements).

ICS volunteering placements last 10–12 weeks, and seek to make a positive contribution to:
- Poverty reduction and sustainable development outcomes in the host country;
- The personal and social development of the volunteers;
- Building the skills of each volunteer so that they better understand international development and act as agents of social change within their own communities and beyond.

The programme’s pilot scheme, in 2011, provided placements for around 1,200 UK volunteers and 720 in-country volunteers. The first phase of the full programme (ICS1) then ran from April 2012 to August 2015, providing placements for 7,000 UK and 7,000 in-country volunteers.

A second contract was subsequently signed to provide for a second phase (ICS2), which is the focus of this evaluation. This phase began in September 2015 with a contract end date of February 2019 and covered 298 individual projects in 28 countries (not including new initiatives as part of the current extension), of which 59 were implemented during 2018.

This evaluation was undertaken to learn from ICS2, with an overarching objective of developing a better understanding of how and to what extent the programme facilitated the development of volunteers and host communities. This understanding is intended to be used for:
- Feeding into future ICS programming adaptation and design;
- Contributing to the debate on youth volunteering for development in the broader sector, including generating knowledge on good practice to inform future international volunteering programmes.
## Evaluation Questions

The evaluation was guided by three main questions (with defined sub-questions) as follows:

**EQ1. What difference did ICS2 make for the involved communities?**
- What positive and negative changes (if any) did ICS2 contribute to in the involved communities?
- How and to what extent do different social groups, institutions and organisations experience these changes within the community?
- How do changes come about in different contexts, implementation models and sectors?

**EQ2. How sustainable are the positive changes to which ICS2 contributed?**
- What factors or programme attributes are found to be more likely to contribute to ICS delivering sustained change?

**EQ3. What changes, if any, do ICS alumni experience as a result of their participation in the programme?**
- To what extent do alumni experience any change in their personal and social development as a result of their participation in the programme and how does this differ by socio-economic background, gender, disability, geography, education, employment and economic status?
- Does participation in ICS influence whether alumni act as agents of social change within their own communities and beyond, and how?
Methodology

The evaluation utilised different approaches for EQ1 and 2 compared to EQ3. EQ1 and 2 was focused on 14 community based case studies from 6 different countries in Africa and Asia where ICS2 was implemented. EQ 3 included analysis of surveys with over 19,000 ICS volunteers since April 2015 as well as semi-structured interviews conducted remotely with former volunteers by the evaluation team. The methodology for each of the evaluation questions is outlined in more detail below.

Methodology for EQ1 and EQ2

To answer the evaluation questions and sub-questions, a two-stage process was used for EQ1 and EQ2: first, fieldwork was conducted at 14 sites to generate case-by-case evidence which was presented in 14 separate case study reports; secondly, a synthesis analysis of the case study reports was carried out. Fieldwork was conducted between May and August 2018 by six volunteers with a background in research and/or evaluation, globally recruited by the VSO Knowledge for Impact team (KfI) for a period of three months.

The 14 case studies selected are presented in Table 1 below. The case studies came from six different countries, covering six different agencies with various different sectors/thematic focus.

The ICS2 ways of working and broad expected outcomes outlined by the ICS Theory of Change (TOC) represented the overarching framework guiding data collection. Within this framework, the field evaluators were asked to refine the scope of each case study based on the lines of enquiry that they perceived as most useful to answer the evaluation questions and also most feasible in terms of the available time and other practical constraints. To collect data, they were asked to use a participatory approach aimed at bringing out the respondents’ views about the programme. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, validation workshops and interviews, observations and participatory visual methods (e.g. River of life) as well as forum theatre.

In total, 1,162 respondents were consulted during the fieldwork. These were broken down into different key stakeholders, depending on the focus of the intervention and those identified through stakeholder mapping exercises.

The primary data gathered as above were then analysed by the field evaluators through a thematic/content analysis approach and presented in a report (one per each case study), which was produced with input from both the KfI and the involved agency.

The second phase of this component of the ICS2 Final Evaluation entailed a synthesis analysis of the 14 case study reports for both Evaluations Questions 1 and 2.

The case study reports were reviewed to extract data on the following:
- Observed changes.
- Influencing factors.
- Factors affecting sustainability.

A hybrid approach was used to code and summarise the data: coding categories were identified both deductively, using the broad expected outcomes and the key aspects of the delivery model identified by the ICS2 TOC, and inductively, based on themes emerging from the data and further refined through successive rounds of testing. An Excel spreadsheet was used to code the data for analysis, which formed the basis of the evidence for the report.
Table 1: Case studies selected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Site/Project Name</th>
<th>Sector</th>
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<td>Disability inclusion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>Nanyuki</td>
<td>Livelihoods</td>
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<td>Education/Civic participation</td>
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<td>Gorkha</td>
<td>Health/Livelihoods</td>
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<td>Restless Development</td>
<td>Sindhuli</td>
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<td>VSO</td>
<td>Lamjung I</td>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Y Care International</td>
<td>Birisiri</td>
<td>Education/Civic participation</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Health/Livelihoods</td>
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<td>Livelihoods</td>
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<td>Liberia</td>
<td>Y Care International</td>
<td>Kakata (Monrovia)</td>
<td>Health and civic participation</td>
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Methodology for EQ3

Approach

The specific approach to this evaluation question was informed by the availability of data, and by VSO’s Impact Beyond Volunteering research into the long-term nature of volunteer impact. This research was not assumed to apply to all volunteers, but was used alongside the theory of change and the structure of the existing ICS surveys to draft a loose framework unpacking several components of change within each of the two evaluation sub-question areas. The analytical framework for this work was as follows:

1. Changes in personal and social development
   - New/improved skills and knowledge, including cultural and self-awareness
   - Greater clarity over desired career path
   - Career progress, such as increased responsibilities at work
   - New/improved personal strengths such as adaptability, confidence and resilience
   - New ways of working, such as being more collaborative

   • Greater ability and/or confidence to influence decision-makers, particularly within groups of which the volunteer is a member (e.g. their families, friendship groups, and workplaces)

2. Action for social change
   - Greater involvement in social action, including challenging negative stereotypes and behaviours in their families/friendship groups/workplaces
   - Activities that seek to influence others on behalf of marginalised communities; such as advocacy campaigns, writing to MPs, or global youth networks
   - Seeking or acquiring employment in the international development sector, or similar
   - Ongoing support to individuals and organisations in their placement location

This was used to develop templates for focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews that were undertaken as part of the in-country data collection for the previous two evaluation questions. Outputs of these conversations were later used to revise both the
The participation of local areas (POLAR) classification is based on postcode and looks at how likely young people within a certain area are to participate in higher education. A detailed description of this methodology is available at [https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/polar-participation-of-local-areas/](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/polar-participation-of-local-areas/)

The surveys developed for this purpose included online surveys sent to every ICS volunteer at fixed points in their ICS journey (e.g. at the beginning and end of placement). The current set of surveys were developed by ICS together with consultants from UCL, and the same consultants were contracted to undertake statistical analysis of this dataset.

Together, these survey datasets contain responses from more than 19,000 ICS volunteers since April 2015 and so are invaluable in identifying and establishing the extent of changes experienced by ICS alumni, including how these vary by demographic. Due to the reliance of the surveys on multiple-choice questions, the analysis did not allow for easy explanations of how change happened or how these changes were experienced by volunteers, so therefore a number of semi-structured interviews were conducted remotely by the evaluation team with a selected group of alumni.

Finally, in disaggregating results by demographics, the following approaches and definitions were adopted.

- **Gender**: The evaluation did not set out to use only a binary definition of volunteers’ gender. However, due to the numbers involved, comparisons have only been possible between male and female volunteers.

- **Age**: Rather than attempting to look at the continuous scale of age, volunteers have been categorised into two age groups; those aged 21 and under at the time of their application, and those who were aged 22 and above. This split was informed by an internal 2016 VSO review of conversion rates that found applicants aged 18 to 21 were most likely to withdraw.

- **Disability**: The disparate data sources have not allowed for one single definition of disability, but a consistent approach has been taken to prioritise what is available.
  - Wherever volunteers have self-identified as having a disability (or otherwise), this selection has been used in the analysis. This typically relates to in-country volunteers, or UK volunteers who applied prior to 2017.
  - UK volunteers who applied in 2017 or later were asked the Washington Group’s Short Set of Disability Questions, as were the volunteers interviewed as part of this evaluation. These six questions are based on the WHO’s ICF model, which recognises that human functioning is a continuum rather than a dichotomy, and so results can be interpreted in different ways. For the purposes of this evaluation, a person has been defined as having a disability if there is at least one domain of functioning in which they report a lot of difficulty or that they cannot do at all.

  - **Socio-economic background**: The ICS programme has a particular focus on encouraging participation from people with less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Since 2016, a summative scale has been used to quantify this for UK volunteers, and this same information has been used in this evaluation. The scale considers five components:
    - The income of the highest earner in the volunteer’s household
    - The level of the volunteer’s highest qualifications (if any)
    - Any benefits the volunteer is in receipt of
    - Whether the volunteer was eligible for free school meals (at any time)
    - The POLAR classification of the school the volunteer attended at age 16

Such data has not been collected of in-country volunteers, although this evaluation has used survey data to identify respondents who reported being unemployed before their ICS placements, and has sought to analyse whether this group have had different experiences from their peers who were in education, employment or training.

## Study Limitations

### Limitations for EQ1 and 2

There were a number of challenges faced by the evaluation team which were highlighted during the case study process for EQ1 and EQ2. These included:

1. A number of the field evaluation teams faced significant logistical and time constraints due to the timing of the evaluation, in many cases due to the fact that agencies were about to close down activities. As a result, the field evaluation teams had to work under very tight schedules which limited the time available for data analysis and reporting, and in some instances may have limited the number of stakeholders that they were able to consult.
2. For many of the projects there was an absence of consistent monitoring systems tracking both outputs and outcomes at community level. This made it difficult for evaluators to triangulate the information they collected, as there were no records to cross-check information. To overcome this limitation, they strived to triangulate findings with a range of sources as wide as possible. More broadly, this made it difficult to assess the effectiveness of the programme.

3. It was reported by some of the evaluators that they believed there was a bias in the information collected, due to the fact that many of the stakeholders were interested in seeing the ICS2 programme continue. As a result, it was often difficult to collect information about potentially negative changes or lack of change. In order to overcome this, evaluators tried to triangulate information sources as much as possible.

4. The evaluation assistants were locally recruited by the involved agencies with guidance from the evaluation team. Amongst other criteria, there was a requirement for them to be familiar with the agency’s delivery model whilst at the same time not to have volunteered in the ICS2 programme. Nevertheless, in some instances former ICS2 alumni were utilised as evaluation assistants, due to challenges in finding individuals who met both criteria. This could potentially bias the information collected, as the stakeholders may have been less open in disclosing information to someone who was involved in the implementation of the programme. However, attempts were made to limit the impact of this by ensuring alumni only visited sites where they had been less involved in programming and by not having them in the room during the interviews in some cases.

5. Due to the approach outlined above, the case study reports had different focuses. This meant that the evidence generated included some gaps which limited the extent to which this study could make comparisons between the different projects evaluated. The flipside of this limitation, however, is that the views of those impacted by ICS2 were effectively captured and lessons were learned on how to improve the programme’s ability to contribute to positive change in the host communities.

6. Due to lack of time and logistical constraints, the case studies were unable to adequately look at the role played by other actors and initiatives in the occurrence of changes contributed by ICS2, although some information on these was provided and helped better understanding of how the programme interacted with them.

7. It was not possible to provide a comprehensive assessment of the sustainability of the ICS2 programme in several of the case studies, due to the fact that some projects had only recently closed whilst others were still active. As a result, the majority of the findings in the Sustainability section are based on the Dinajpur case study from Bangladesh, which closed in 2016.

**Limitations for EQ3**

1. **Survey format limitations:**
   a. The data collected through the surveys is primarily categorical, and can offer limited insight into the detail of how change takes place or is experienced.
   b. Related to the above, such categorical data allows only limited exploration of unexpected or unintentional changes.
   c. There is a strong reliance on subjective ordinal data (e.g. asking for agreement on Likert-type scales from 1-5), which can be understood differently by different audiences.
   d. The surveys rely on an ability to link responses to the ICS database, and as such do not collect demographic information already collected at application. Unfortunately, such linking has not always been possible: for example, disability data is missing for some respondents.

2. **Survey process limitations:**
   a. Changing the surveys halfway through the ICS contract has reduced the number of volunteers whose journeys can be tracked from beginning to end. While the new surveys are generating better evidence than was available before, the inability to follow individuals between surveys that do not easily map onto each other means that the only volunteers who can be tracked across a complete set of surveys are those who went on placement before the end of January 2016, or in the six-month period from February to mid-September 2017. This has limited the ability of survey analysis to consider some longer-term effects of the programme.
   b. The surveys sent one year after placement have
received much lower response rates than the earlier surveys, although this has noticeably increased with the newer surveys (2.3 has received 26% as many responses as 2.1, while 1.4 received only 7% as many as did 1.1).

c. The statistical framework designed for the newer set of surveys was not designed around the specific evaluation question (and sub-questions) considered in this chapter. While efforts were made to align this framework with the evaluation’s analytical framework (as discussed in the earlier section on methodological approach), there remain questions that could perhaps have been explored in the survey data but that weren’t captured by the framework.

3. Interview limitations:
   - Due to a number of logistical and capacity difficulties, the final sample of 11 interviewees was smaller than the 20-25 that were originally planned (and included only one volunteer from a less advantaged socio-economic background). While information gained from interviews was only ever intended to be illustrative, rather than statistically representative, a larger sample pool had been envisioned to capture a wider range of volunteer stories.
   - Due to the nature of the interviews, there is again a risk of self-selection within the sample. Interviewees had all also volunteered relatively recently, with only one having been on placement in 2016 or before. Again, this may have affected the picture that was presented regarding volunteers’ perceptions of ICS, as this sample may well be more engaged in ongoing activities than the wider alumni pool.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that the authors of this report are employed by VSO, who hold the ICS contract under evaluation. Attempts have been made to mitigate any inherent bias by adopting the approach to developing the analytical framework as outlined above, to avoid cherry-picking results, and also by commissioning external consultants to conduct the analysis of the new surveys. The evaluation’s steering committee has also included oversight from outside of VSO; including other ICS agencies and DFID, as well as impartial experts with no stake in the programme.
**Findings**

**EQ1: What difference did ICS2 make for the involved communities?**

**EQ1.1. What positive and negative changes (if any) did ICS2 contribute to in the involved communities?**

ICS2 was found to have contributed to a wide number of both positive and negative changes in the targeted communities. These included both programmatic and relational changes, as described below.

**Programmatic Changes** – Programmatic changes were observed as having been experienced by the impacted communities as a result of ICS2 in all the thematic areas covered by this evaluation, namely health, education and livelihoods. This included:

1. **Changes in the level of information, awareness, skills and attitudes**
   
   One of the most frequently observed positive changes contributed by ICS2 was the increased levels of information, awareness and skills of community members on a wide range of topics in health, education, and livelihood as well as social issues such as gender equality, rights of people with disability, female genital mutilation, child marriage and others. This contributed, in some cases, to bringing about deeper changes (e.g. more children, including children with disabilities and girls, attending school); however, most of these behavioural changes were self-reported and could not be corroborated by triangulation with other sources.

2. **Partnerships**
   
   Key changes in partnerships noted within the case studies included improvements in the capacity of local organisations and community structures associated with the ICS2 programme to deliver quality services and better support communities. This included strengthening their members’ skills in a range of areas including institutional development, good governance and financial management. Thanks to the presence of the volunteers, it also included an increase in their functional capacity in the short term.

3. **Active Citizenship**
   
   Evidence showed a few strong examples of active citizenship taking place as a result of the ICS2 programme, namely of community members working with their communities to drive sustainable development, raise the voice of young people, and aspire and motivate others. These examples included community structures created and strengthened through ICS2, such as the various community groups working together to end child marriage in Dinajpur in Bangladesh. Instances of increased community mobilisation around issues affecting local people were also observed, such as the Water Users Committee which helped provide a sustainable water source for people in Makwanpur, Nepal.

**Relational Changes** - Evidence from the various case studies suggests that the ICS2 programme contributed to a number of relational changes in the communities, for example:
4.1 Inclusion
Changes were observed in the capacity of services to reach the poorest and most marginalised. Some of the strongest examples of these changes were found in case studies which were specifically focused on the inclusion of marginalised populations such as Nandi and Nanyuki in Kenya, where the programmes were focused on improving the inclusion of people with disabilities within local communities. Other examples were the increased participation of girls in activities from which they were previously precluded (e.g., going to school and playing with boys) as well as the more active involvement of youth in the life of their own communities (e.g., through the Community Action Days and the youth clubs).

4.2 Participation
It was found that in some instances there were changes in the extent to which partners and other stakeholders adopted participatory practices as a result of ICS2. There were a few examples noted through which ICS2 volunteers were able to promote participatory ways of working, which were aimed at improving the involvement of communities in decision-making processes impacting on them.

4.3 Collaboration and Networking
Across the different case studies, there were some important examples of how the ICS2 programme had promoted collaboration across multiple partners and stakeholders, including the strengthening and growth of community networks as well as exploration of new avenues for fundraising for key issues facing the communities. Some of the strongest examples of this included various groups within the community working together to achieve a collective goal, around issues such as child marriage and improved sanitation and hygiene.

4.4 Ownership and Agency
Changes were observed in the level of confidence, aspirations, belief (both the individual and collective level) that actions will make a difference, and sense of ownership of local development processes.

4.5 Innovation and Inspiration
The evaluation found some evidence of ICS2 having successfully promoted the use of innovative and creative ways of working amongst involved communities. These include, amongst others, the governance systems of some of the community structures supported by the programme; an example is the Green Clubs established with the help of the volunteers in the Sindhuli case study (Nepal), whose members were chosen through an election process involving the whole school. Evidence was also found of ICS2 contributing to inspire new ways of thinking and successfully challenge harmful social norms in relation, for example to people with disability and gender relations, amongst others.

Changes by Case Study
The table on page 12 provides a summary of the changes observed in each case study. It shows that while programmatic changes were observed across all case studies, changes in the domains of capacity building, active citizenship and relational outcomes were not observed in all of them. Overall, two-thirds of all the possible combinations of locations and types of change include a positive value, and one third is blank, that is no instance of that type of change was observed in that location. Moreover, there was considerable variation in the number of groups impacted by the different projects, which will be discussed further in the next section.
The table includes changes supported by evidence rated both as “somewhat credible” and “credible” (see Methodology), without differentiating them;

The cell value indicates the number of groups experiencing the change, with the cells with the highest value highlighted in green and those with the lowest value highlighted in pink;

The table only includes positive changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Case study</th>
<th>1.1 Awareness/skills</th>
<th>1.2 Thematic outcomes</th>
<th>2.1 Capacity building</th>
<th>3.1 Active citizenship</th>
<th>4.1 Inclusion</th>
<th>4.2 Participation</th>
<th>4.3 Collaboration &amp; Networking</th>
<th>4.4 Ownership &amp; agency</th>
<th>4.5 Innovation &amp; inspiration</th>
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EQ1.2. How and to what extent do different social groups, institutions and organisations experience these changes within the community?

Evidence from the various different case studies illustrated that different groups targeted by the ICS intervention experienced different changes, and in different ways, dependent on the design and implementation of the various projects. Some groups experienced more sustained and deeper change than other groups. The changes experienced by different groups are explored in more detail below:

**Children and Youth**

It was found that children and youth experienced increased levels of knowledge and improved skills on a wide range of topics. Improvements were also reported in aspects of their personality such as creativity, self-confidence, ability to speak in public, leadership and decision-making skills. There is some indication that in some cases these improved knowledge and skills led to changes in the children's behaviour such as being more engaged with their own education, setting up businesses and improving their health practices.

There were also some important thematic changes which affected children and youth. For instance, in Bangladesh, ICS2 contributed to the reduction of child marriage through raising awareness amongst different social groups within the community and providing support to community structures aimed at fighting this harmful practice.

In terms of relational changes, it was found that thanks to ICS2, especially the work carried out in support of youth clubs, children and youth improved their ability to act as agents of change and to work in an innovative and participatory way.

No negative changes were observed in relation to this group. Nevertheless, some of the observed positive changes showed limited sustainability, as they were linked to the presence of the ICS2 volunteers. For instance, one crèche set up and by an ICS2 team had to close once the volunteers left, as there was no one to continue to staff it.

**Teachers**

Thanks to ICS2, some teachers reportedly improved their knowledge and awareness on a range of topics and their skills on how to teach in a more child-friendly way. These reports could not be triangulated with other sources however. In a few instances negative changes were found in which the role and legitimacy of the teachers were unintentionally damaged by the programme, with the risk of negatively impacting their motivation and engagement.

**Girls**

Through ICS2, girls improved their knowledge on various topics related to health (e.g. sexual and reproductive health). In some cases, as a result of this, evidence was found that this increased knowledge and awareness contributed to brought about deeper changes in the girls' behaviour and health. In addition, with varying degrees across several case studies, overall evidence suggests that ICS2 was able to contribute to challenging traditional gender roles and promoting gender equality, thus contributing to enhancing the girls' inclusion in society (e.g. more girls going to school).

Overall, no negative changes were observed in relation to this group, although in one project (Birisiri) it was unclear how/to what extent marginalised girls had been reached, in spite of this being clearly identified as an objective by the Project Plan.

**Women**

Women were found to have improved their knowledge and skills on various topics, including sexual and reproductive health and gender equality. As a result of these improved knowledge and skills, some instances of (self-reported) deeper changes affecting women were found, for example improved health practices. Additionally, as a result of the skills acquired through the training provided by ICS2 (and in some cases with additional material/financial support provided by the programme), some women managed to set up new businesses and to improve their livelihoods; in turn, this contributed to reducing their vulnerability and (in combination with an increased awareness of sexual and reproductive health) improving the quality of relationships within households.

This study was unable to ascertain, however, the extent to which the above positive changes were evenly spread amongst the women who had attended these trainings. Where the trainings did not bring about positive results, this was often due to lack of access to market, capital and other resources.

Finally, thanks to ICS2, some women improved their ability to act as agents of change, for example through their active involvement in the establishment and/or running of community-based groups. While no negative change was observed with regard to women, instances were found in which ICS2 did not effectively reach or positively impact on them.
Disabled People
Through awareness raising and lobbying work, ICS2 was seen to have contributed to improving the social inclusion of some disabled people; in Kenya, for example, there was an increased offer of interpretation services in Kenyan Sign Language. In addition, ICS2 was found to have contributed to increasing the self-esteem and agency of disabled people (including parents of children with disability) to exact their rights, for example a higher number of them registered to obtain a disability card. Factors contributing to this result included the increased awareness and inclusion as well as the inspiration provided by the volunteers, in particular the deaf volunteers placed in Nandi in the first cycle.

Finally, ICS2 contributed to improving the livelihoods of some disabled people through trainings aimed at improving the business skills of self-help group members and, in some cases, helping them to set up new enterprises.

Local Organisations and Community Structures
ICS2 was found to have helped to establish and reinforce some of the local organisations and community structures involved in the programme. This included improving their members’ skills and strengthening their financial capacity. Yet, there was considerable variation in the extent to which these results were observed across and within case studies.

The presence of the volunteers allowed some local organisations to increase their reach. However, this enhanced functional capacity was temporary and therefore not sustainable, except where accompanied by an increase in the capacity to autonomously deliver services. Nevertheless, a few instances were found in which the availability of the ICS2 volunteers, combined with the lack of appropriate measures to strengthen local ownership, contributed to weakening the ability of the local organisations to deliver services.

Local Authorities
There is some indication of some local authorities working in a more participatory and inclusive way thanks to their involvement in the programme. Available evidence is inconclusive, however, and more research would be needed to better understand the changes experienced by local authorities as a result of their exposure to ICS2.

Host Families
Positive changes experienced by host families included increases in knowledge and awareness (e.g. children improving their knowledge of English) and, to a lesser extent, improvements in income levels and positive behaviour changes. However, there were reports of some ICS2 volunteers behaving in an inappropriate way, thus creating distress for their host families. The latter also complained about being negatively impacted by instances in which the volunteers dropped out of the programme early and not being properly informed about the reasons behind their decisions (leading the hosts to believe it was the fault).

Wider Community
ICS2 contributed to enhancing the knowledge and awareness of community members on various topics related to health, education and various social issues. In some cases, this increased awareness reportedly led to deeper changes such as healthier practices (especially in combination with infrastructural work on water and health facilities). For instance, improved hand washing practices were reported in a number of different case studies.

Although with significant variations across and within case studies, by raising awareness and modelling positive role models ICS2 contributed to challenging harmful social practices and inspiring new ways of thinking. This was observed for example in relation to disability, gender and the ability to act (both at the individual and collective levels) as active citizens.

However, mixed evidence was found in relation to the programme’s role in challenging harmful stereotypes about “outsiders”, and concerns were expressed about aspects of the programme which may have unintentionally reinforced them.
EQ1.3 How do changes come about in different contexts, implementation models and sectors?
The various factors identified which were found to influence how changes came about in different contexts, implementation models and sectors included both ICS ways of working as well as those identified deductively by the evaluation.

i. ICS Ways of Working – It was found that different elements of the ICS2 design and different “ways of working” affected the ways in which different changes came about.

Community-focused and Host Homes
One of the key features of the programme was that volunteers lived and worked alongside local communities, being hosted by local families. In line with its relational approach, the programme intended in this way to help the volunteers to form quality relationships with community members, thus enabling the achievement of positive changes.

It was found that the quality of the relationships formed by the volunteers with the people they interacted with, which were facilitated by being placed in the community, played a key role in influencing the programme, both positively and negatively:
- Where relationships were positive, they contributed to inspiring and motivating community members to engage in the programme, thus enabling the achievement of positive results.
- Where relationships were negative, this was seen as caused by the volunteers behaving in an inappropriate way (e.g. being rude, culturally insensitive or unprofessional). These strained relationships hindered both the delivery of the programme and its ability to bring about positive change.

In addition, some challenges were found with some volunteers lacking the needed adaptability and resilience skills, as well as being insufficiently prepared for the work they were expected to do. As a result, there were reports of volunteers experiencing mental health issues and/or dropping out of the programme early. Adequate supervision of the volunteers was found to be key to preventing these problems, as well as their selection and preparation.

12-Week Placements
The data unequivocally shows that the short length of ICS2 placements was perceived by the overwhelming
majority of the interviewed stakeholders as a major factor limiting the ability of the volunteers to meaningfully engage with the communities and, in this way, contribute to bringing about positive change. For example, instances were found in which activities were left unfinished due to lack of time, an issue often worsened by the lack of adequate handover between cohorts. However, some examples of good practice to minimise these problems were also found across programmes, for example in the Sindhuli case study subsequent cycles targeted the same communities, a project staff member was based in the intervention area so as to provide ongoing support, and an effective handover system ensured continuity between cycles.

**Ratio of UK to In-country Volunteers**

Pairing volunteers from the UK and the host country was a key aspect of ICS2, underpinned by the assumption that this would enable peer-to-peer sharing of knowledge and skills, with positive results both for the volunteers themselves and for the host communities. There is some indication that, where their relationships were good, pairing volunteers from the UK and the host country enabled peer-to-peer sharing of knowledge and skills, with positive results both for the volunteers themselves and for the host communities.

Although in general relationships between volunteers were found to be good, instances were found of tensions between the UK and in-country volunteers. These were due to a number of factors, including the prominent role often played by the UK volunteers within activities (especially where coupled with the misconception held by community members that they had more skills and knowledge than their national counterparts), the inadequate ability of some volunteers to deal with cross-cultural challenges and issues of self-confidence.

**18–25-year-olds for standard volunteer placement and 23–35-year-olds for team leaders**

The young age of the volunteers helped them to form positive relationships with their peers in the community; this acted as an enabler of positive outcomes for local children and youth, especially when combined with the use of engaging and creative ways of working. These positive results included enhanced self-confidence, motivation to undertake social action, improved knowledge and skills, changes in behaviour and new ways of thinking around diversity (broadly defined) and gender.

One of the key mechanisms behind these changes was the inspiration provided by the volunteers, who were seen as role models for the local children and youth. However, the young age of the volunteers led some adult individuals in the community to restrain from collaborating with them, especially where (as observed across different case studies) they were expected to perform tasks not consistent with their lack of technical skillsets.

**ii. Relational Factors – The different relational elements and design of the ICS2 program were also found to influence how changes came about in different contexts and sectors.**

**Inclusion**

ICS2 was found to have contributed to increasing the social inclusion of some marginalised groups through the use of tailored approaches (e.g. involving both boys and girls in activities). Both positive and negative examples were found in relation to the extent to which communication within the project was found to be inclusive. The former included the volunteers’ efforts to learn and communicate in the local language. The latter comprised some students’ complaints that they struggled to understand the English spoken by the volunteers either because of their accent or because they used lots of “big words”.

**Participation**

Significant variation was observed in the extent and modalities with which key stakeholders were involved in the design and delivery of ICS2 interventions. Where they were meaningfully involved, evidence shows that it significantly contributed to the success of the programme. Participatory practices used by ICS2 included participatory action research or similar learning exercises to ensure that projects were locally relevant as well as regular meetings held with key stakeholders to ensure their engagement in the programme. Yet, instances were also found in which project stakeholders were inadequately involved, with negative impacts on both their ownership of the interventions and their ability to sustain the positive changes that they had contributed to bringing about. For example, some clubs established in schools did not continue due to the lack of a shared understanding of the intervention.

**Collaboration and Networking**

Where approaches aimed at promoting and enabling collaboration across multiple actors were used, this enabled the achievement of positive and sustainable results. Amongst other cases, this was observed in Nandi and Dinajpur in relation to the positive outcomes achieved in relation to, respectively, the inclusion of people with disability and child marriage.
Ownership and Agency
Both positive and negative examples were found of ICS2 having been effective in ensuring the ownership and agency of those involved at the local level:

- Positive examples include the establishment/reinforcement of collective forms of water management and the use of key persons in the community as champions of the project.
- Negative examples include the inadequate involvement of key stakeholders described under “Participation”. They also include two issues observed in the Weenen/Chesterville case study: in one location, the programme took over an activity from a local partner, whilst in another location it unintentionally weakened the partner’s ability to recruit and maintain local volunteers.

New Ways of Working/Creativity
The innovative and creative style used by the volunteers was seen as a key factor contributing to the success of the activities delivered by them. The use of an interactive and fun teaching style in school activities, for example, was described as effective in conveying information to students. ICS2 volunteers also effectively used innovative and creative approaches to engage adult members of the community, for example through the use of street drama to raise awareness on social issues.

Quality and Effectiveness
ICS2 contributed to building the capacity of some of the supported organisations through enhancing the knowledge and skills of their members, providing material support (e.g. mobilising resources), and working to improve their organisational processes. Additionally, the programme helped some organisations to expand their reach through the ICS2 volunteers. However, as they were closely linked to the presence of the volunteers, the benefits of this enhanced functional capacity were found to be not sustainable unless accompanied by positive outcomes in the organisation’s ability to autonomously run activities.

Active Citizenship
Working through, and in support of, community structures such as youth, girls’ and women’s clubs and self-help groups was a key enabler of the positive outcomes achieved by the programme in relation to active citizenship. Further enablers were the inspiration provided by the volunteers and the enhanced awareness raised by the programme on a number of social issues.

Inspiration and Learning
ICS2 volunteers were often seen as role models by the host community, especially but not exclusively in relation to children and youth. This key factor was observed as playing a role both positively and negatively:

- Where relationships with the host community were good, the volunteers were seen as inspiring positive behaviours; for example, by developing relationships with discriminated social groups they were reported as having contributed to challenging stigma and increasing their social inclusion.
- Where the volunteers’ behaviour was perceived as inappropriate, consulted community members expressed concerns about their presence, as they feared that the local children and youth may be negatively influenced.

Reflection and Adaptation
Some (limited) evidence was found of ICS2 projects having continuously learned from their implementation and adapted to changing circumstances to improve project outcomes.

iii. Additional Influencing Factors Related to Design Aspects - - Some additional elements related to the context and design of the ICS2 program were found to affect the ways in which change came about.

Context and Project Design
The way in which contextual features were adequately reflected in the design of ICS2 interventions was found to have played a key role in enabling or hindering the delivery of the programme and its effectiveness. For instance, the positive attitude held by some of the targeted communities towards the programme was identified as a key mechanism underpinning their engagement and enabling the achievement of positive outcomes.

In addition, the local relevance of activities was seen as a key factor influencing both the community’s attendance and their ability to bring about positive change. For example, in Liberia the community’s desire to learn more about disease prevention in the wake of the Ebola crisis was reported as having been harnessed by the project’s focus on health. Conversely, some of those who had attended livelihood trainings across different projects complained that they had not been able to put into use the business skills that they had learned due to lack of access to market, capital and other resources, thus suggesting that these contextual features had not been adequately taken into account in the activities’ design.

A common challenge faced by the programme in different locations was found to be the frustration of some community members resulting from their unmet
expectation to receive material support (e.g. a stipend to attend a training). Although the study was unable to look closely at how ICS2 dealt with these issues, it has been identified as an important example of a contextual feature that needs to be reflected by the project design so as to minimise the risks associated with it.

Finally, the curiosity shown by many host communities about the “outsiders” (mostly but not exclusively the UK volunteers) was seen as having both positive and negative effects: on one side, it contributed to ensuring the participation of community members in the initiatives; on the other side, however, where combined with a prominent role played by UK volunteers in the delivery of activities, it arguably contributed to reinforcing harmful stereotypes about people of different backgrounds.

**Clarity and Robustness of Project Design**

Whilst some projects were found to have been guided by a clear theory of change, others were found to lack cohesiveness and focus (both spatially and thematically). A key issue was identified across several case studies as the excessive focus on outputs/volunteers rather than outcomes/host communities.
In addition, instances were found in which intended groups had not been adequately reached by ICS2, for example some livelihood trainings targeting youth which were attended by women instead. A lack of clarity was also observed across some projects about the strategies put in place to reach intended groups.

**EQ2: How sustainable are the positive changes to which ICS contributed?**

Within the 14 case studies evidence was found of different factors and elements of the ICS2 programme which are likely to contribute towards improved sustainability. However, the evidence found related to EQ2 was much more limited compared to EQ1, due to the fact that the evaluation took place shortly after many of the projects had closed and while some were still ongoing. Nevertheless, the evaluators were able to get detailed information regarding sustainability from the Dinajpur case study, an ICS2 intervention delivered by VSO Bangladesh, which specifically focused on analysing the sustainability of the changes brought about by the ICS2 programme.

The overall findings from the various case studies highlight that there are elements of the ICS2 programme which have the potential to improve the level of sustainability of the positive changes brought about by it, if harnessed properly, while there are other features of the programme which are not supportive of sustainability.

**Active Citizenship**
The findings of the Dinajpur case study highlighted the importance of the use of approaches which encourage active citizenship in promoting sustainability. This was clearly illustrated through the focus of the ICS2 programme in Bangladesh on the creation and strengthening of community structures, particularly for young people. These structures were found to be an important in promoting the sustainability of the programme due to the important role they played in sustaining activities in the community as well as encouraging greater ownership and inspiring social action. Meanwhile, in other case studies there was a lack of capacity and buy-in to local community structures in some instances which threatened the sustainability of positive change and discouraged active citizenship.

**Ownership, Agency and Empowerment**
The findings from the evaluation showed that the use of approaches aimed at increasing the confidence, aspirations, ownership and agency of local partners and community members was critical in improving the sustainability of positive change. One approach which was found to be particularly effective in increasing ownership was working through influential community members, including “community champions”.

Additionally, evidence suggests that the higher the engagement of influential community members, the more sustainable the changes brought about by the intervention are likely to be. Meanwhile, the lack of involvement of community leaders was found to negatively influence the sustainability of positive change.

Another approach which was found to be important in terms of increasing levels of ownership and agency of local partners and communities was building the capacity of local actors in order to transfer knowledge and skills to the community.

**Inspiration and Learning**
The use of approaches aimed at ensuring that volunteers inspire new ways of thinking in communities was found to be a critical element in promoting the sustainability of positive change. For example, one of the most salient features of the Dinajpur case study was the level of fervour, dedication and commitment displayed by some key individuals involved in the ongoing community work following the closure of the ICS2 programme. These individuals played a vital role in bringing about change, by continuously pumping the community with knowledge, awareness, skills and increasing their access to resources.

**Participation**
Utilisation of participatory approaches which aimed at ensuring that ICS2 activities are more responsive and informed by actual community priorities was found to increase the likelihood of sustainable change. This included close collaboration with the government in case studies from Kenya as well as working closely and in a participatory way with local organisations and community structures. Nevertheless, in order to ensure the ongoing participation of community members, it was found that ongoing interest by the community was only sustained if they had participated meaningfully in the ICS2 programme from the outset – in both the design and delivery of activities.

The evaluation found several examples where activities had not continued following the departure of the volunteers due to the fact that they did not fit into the needs and schedules of the community. This illustrates the importance of ensuring that activities undertaken by the programme are adapted to fit the needs of the community.

**Collaboration and Networking**
Within the Dinajpur case study, there are several examples of how promoting and enabling collaboration
between different actors both within and beyond the community can help contribute to improved sustainability of positive change. Meanwhile, evidence from several case studies suggests that pairing community volunteers with local organisations can play a positive role in promoting sustainability.

12-Week Placements
The majority of the case studies highlighted the short-term nature of the placements to be a considerable concern. In most instances, placements were reported to be between 10 and 12 weeks long, which was considered far too short to enable the changes brought about by the ICS2 programme to become entrenched within the community.

Ratio of UK to In-country Volunteers
It was frequently noted that the presence of foreign volunteers builds community interest in the programme. While this can be said to be positive in that it can increase engagement by the communities, data shows that there are also negative aspects to this, in that there is a risk that the sustainability of positive changes is reliant on the presence of the volunteers. This was also found to be the case instances where ICS volunteers replaced local volunteers and capacity, meaning that the activities they had been doing could not continue once the ICS volunteers had left.

EQ3. What changes, if any, do ICS alumni experience as a result of their participation in the program?
The analysis of this question draws upon surveys from over 19,000 ICS volunteers, as well as a small set of alumni interviews, to explore the effects of the ICS programme on the participants themselves. Findings appear to support the assumptions of the TOC, which states that participation will “contribute to positive changes in volunteer knowledge, attitudes and practices related to development, volunteering and global citizenship”.

EQ3.1 To what extent do alumni experience any change in their personal and social development as a result of their participation in the programme and how does this differ by socio-economic background, gender, disability, geography, education, employment and economic status?

Changes in Personal and Social Development
A total of 77% of 4,647 survey respondents reported their ICS experience as being “very useful” for their personal development. Changes in personal attributes such as adaptability, resilience and confidence (including confidence to lead others) were found to be key outcomes for the majority of volunteers throughout the evaluation.

Likewise, there are strong positive indications of changes in problem-solving abilities, teamwork and collaboration skills, and increased belief in the power of personal actions. Volunteers also appear to have valued the opportunity to work cross-culturally with teammates and others from a variety of backgrounds. This opportunity may be associated with a range of changes for alumni, including:
- Greater feelings of connection to, and responsibility for, their communities. This includes the local communities in which they live, but also their wider national and (perhaps especially) global communities. These feelings help to motivate many of the social actions that alumni are seen to be involved in, and the conversations that they have with others.
- Greater confidence in their understanding of poverty, inequality and other development issues – including the roles they themselves can play as young people. Though the evidence for absolute changes in hard knowledge is limited, the experiential learning by volunteers on placement seems to be very highly valued for bringing academic and theoretical knowledge to life.
- Greater communication skills, particularly within groups or when communicating across cultures. These skills draw on increased confidence and self-awareness, as well as a new understanding of the differences and/or commonalities in their own and others’ perspectives.
- In some cases, the above also corresponds with volunteers becoming more sensitive to issues around inclusion and participation, trying harder to understand views that they don’t agree with, or having had existing misconceptions dispelled by their interactions with others. However, there is generally weaker evidence for these types of changes among volunteers.

There is also evidence of change in employment, with the proportion of individuals in full-time work rising from 16% before ICS to 30% by one year after their placements (based on a survey of 569 alumni), although much of this is likely to be due to the age groups involved and the fact that many volunteers will have already been moving on from full-time education. A majority also expressed a high level of satisfaction in the effect of ICS on their professional development, with a suggestion that ICS leads to changes in other aspects of alumni’s career paths, such as clarity over new directions or motivations.

Who experiences change?
This evaluation intentionally explored how changes
for alumni differ based on various demographic characteristics, and the differences identified were described as the “most surprising” findings during feedback to stakeholders. This reflects the fact that the ICS TOC does not set out different pathways for different groups, and instead expects similar outcomes for all participants. The findings of this report should not necessarily alter that expectation, but would in that case mean that there may need to be changes in the types or levels of support provided to different groups in order to ensure greater consistency in experience.

The changes identified by this evaluation are in fact remarkably consistent across alumni groups in most areas, but some notable differences include:

- Female volunteers experience greater increases (compared to males) in their confidence, their sense of connection to global, national and local communities, and in their belief that they can make a difference within them.
- In-country volunteers experience greater changes (compared to UK volunteers) in teamwork and collaboration, their sense of connection to their (specifically local) communities, and the belief that they can make a difference. They are also much more likely to report high levels of ICS influence on their attitudes towards social action in their local communities.
- UK volunteers, by contrast, experience greater changes in their confidence, resilience, and understanding of development issues.
- UK volunteers from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds experience similar changes on-placement to their more advantaged UK peers, but are not always as able to build on these experiences when they return home – although overall levels of civic participation are the same across all backgrounds.
- Gender may affect the types of social actions that alumni are involved in after their ICS placements, although again there is no difference in the overall level of civic participation.
- Disability and age were not found to be significant factors in the changes experienced by ICS alumni.

The last two of these bullets perhaps speak of additional barriers that certain groups encounter in their journeys after ICS; for example, in some contexts, it may be much harder for female alumni to get involved in certain types of social action. These issues are unlikely to be within the control of the ICS programme, although a fuller understanding of the range of alumni experiences could help ICS to better support individuals in the future or to prepare them for the challenges they are likely to face.

Finally, it is worth remembering that all of the above bullets are of course based on averages, and experiences of any given volunteer may vary. Indeed, although this evaluation has on the whole found strong evidence of many notable positive changes across all demographic groups, it is likely in a programme of this size that there will be a minority of people whose experiences have been more negative. Ongoing monitoring of the ICS surveys (particularly the end-of-placement survey) should be used to identify any such individuals in order to provide additional support, as well as to identify any programme weaknesses and so further reduce the numbers of negative experiences in future.

**Pathways to change**

This evaluation finds that a key driver of changes in personal development is the successful navigation of challenges that alumni encounter on placement. This is particularly true for the areas of personal attributes (e.g. confidence) and of skills, with “challenges” including unexpected difficult situations as well as activities and responsibilities that are integral to ICS (such as public speaking).

The overcoming of such challenges is eased by volunteers’ enthusiasm for the goals of their placements, the presence of a supportive environment in which volunteers can get involved and try new things, and by training provided by ICS.

ICS therefore needs to continue balancing the opportunities that volunteers have for developing confidence and skills against the provision of sufficient support so that volunteers do not feel overwhelmed by their responsibilities and so that activities are run for the benefit of host communities. There is no evidence to suggest that this balance is currently lacking, although the report does note differing levels of responsibility among different demographic groups. Those organising placements in non-English-speaking locations also need to pay particular care to power dynamics between in-country and UK volunteers, so that the latter can be involved in conversations without the role of the former reduced to merely interpretation.

It should also be remembered that personal and social development are not linear processes, and there are interdependencies between all the different facets as presented in this report. The relationships that volunteers build on placement also play a significant role, as does their belief (or otherwise) that their placement made a difference to the target community.

**EQ3.2 Does participation in ICS influence whether alumni act as agents of social change within their own communities and beyond, and how?**
The data considered in this evaluation strongly suggests that many ICS alumni go on to act as agents of social change within their own communities. There is evidence of increased civic participation – whether independently, informally, or through active engagement with membership organisations.

One area where this appears particularly clear is through ongoing volunteering, with many alumni being more involved in such activities after their placements than they had been before. The ways in which alumni go about such volunteering, and their motivations for giving their time to particular causes, is reported by many to have been influenced by what they learned and experienced on placement. Indeed, 66% of 1,610 survey respondents report ICS to have had “a lot” of influence on their attitude towards volunteering.

This evaluation also suggests a shift in the types of charities with which alumni engage, and an apparent increase in support for charities working in international development. Beyond that, there are very high levels of enthusiasm for involvement in a wide variety of further aspects of active citizenship, with many alumni engaged in campaigning, promoting volunteering, or raising awareness of social and/or development issues. However, the data does not allow for an assessment of the extent to which this is a change from before ICS participation.

Changes in social and community action were also found to relate to aspects of personal and social development, with causality likely running in both directions. Increased civic participation has also been found to be associated with a wide range of factors, including volunteers’ relationships, the training they received from ICS, their original motivations, and a whole assortment of on-placement experiences.
This evaluation report provides a synthesis of the evidence (and its limitations) generated through 14 case studies carried out in six countries across Africa and Asia with the goal of shedding light on the difference made by ICS2 to the involved communities; in particular, it found that there were many changes observed as a result of the ICS program. Programmatic changes included changes in knowledge, skills and attitudes, some deeper behavioural changes as well as changes in the capacity of local organisations and community structures. Changes were also observed at the relational level: in fact, instances were found in which partners and other stakeholders adopted, as a result of their exposure to ICS2, more participatory, inclusive and innovative practices. They also reinforced their belief that, through working collaboratively with other local actors, their actions will make a difference. It was unclear, however, how these changes were evenly spread and instances were found in which project delivery was not conducive to achieving the expected relational outcomes.

The study highlighted the importance of the following aspects in influencing (both positive and negatively) the achievement of positive outcomes, as well as in some cases, the sustainability of positive change:

- **Volunteers living and working in the community:** this key design feature was found to enable the achievement of positive results, allowing the volunteers to develop quality relationships with the people they interacted with. Yet there were several reports of volunteers behaving in an inappropriate way (e.g. being rude, culturally insensitive or unprofessional); this led to strained relationships with community members and, in turn, hindered both the delivery of activities and their effectiveness.

- **Length of placement:** in the view of most consulted stakeholders, the length of placement (between 10 and 12 weeks) was too short for the volunteers to meaningfully engage with the community and achieve the expected results. It was also noted that it did not take into account the time needed by the volunteers to adjust to local living and working conditions.

- **Pairing UK and in-country volunteers:** there is some indication that this key design feature of ICS enabled peer-to-peer sharing of knowledge and skills, with positive results both for the volunteers themselves and for the host communities. Tensions between UK and in-country volunteers were observed across several case studies, however; these were due to a number of factors, including the inadequate ability of some volunteers to deal with cross-cultural challenges, issues of self-confidence and the prominent role often played by the UK volunteers within activities, especially where coupled with the misconception held by community members that they had more skills and knowledge than their national counterparts.

- **Young age of the volunteers:** The good relationships generally formed by ICS volunteers with children and youth thanks to their similar age (18–25-year-olds for standard volunteer placement and 23–35-year-olds for team leaders) acted as an enabler for the positive outcomes experienced by this group. Conversely, the volunteers’ young age in some cases represented an obstacle in ensuring the engagement of adult members of the community, especially when they were expected to perform tasks not consistent with their lack of technical skillsets.

Unsurprisingly, the achievement and sustainability of positive outcomes was also seen as having been influenced by the quality of the design of ICS projects. One aspect of this was the extent to which project design adequately reflected contextual features; for example, some projects maximised their impact through delivering the same messages delivered by other actors (as was the case in Bangladesh around child marriage). Yet, instances were found in which project design had not adequately taken into account the features of the local context; for example, some of the livelihood training participants complained about their inability to put into practice what they had learned due to lack of access to capital, markets and other resources.
Finally, on the first two evaluation questions, the clarity and robustness of project design was also crucial. A key issue identified in this regard was the excessive focus on the volunteers’ activities rather than on the positive results that these were expected to bring about for the host community. Additionally, some projects lacked a clear focus, with the design of activities having been refined with the input of the volunteers based on their skills and preferences. These issues were closely related to the observed lack of a robust programme-wide monitoring system tracking the (outputs and) outcomes experienced by the host communities as a result of ICS2.

**What changes do alumni experience?**

This evaluation has found evidence that the ICS experience is associated with positive changes in alumni’s personal and social development, including their ongoing active citizenship. Findings therefore validate, as well as contribute to a better understanding of, key elements in the ICS TOC. The clearest changes appear to be those relating to personal attributes such as resilience, adaptability and confidence. There is also strong evidence of ICS having led to positive changes in volunteers’ abilities to solve problems, communicate and collaborate, as well as in their sense of responsibility to the world around them and their belief that they can make a difference.

Further areas of change include volunteers’ understanding of poverty and development. Measurable increases in academic knowledge appear comparatively small, but are statistically significant and are supported by a much larger apparent increase in volunteers’ confidence in their understanding. Alongside data from interviews, this suggests that the contribution of ICS to this area is to help “bring to life” knowledge that had previously been theoretical.

Significant changes are also seen in alumni’s attitudes and practices around volunteering, including their motivations, the causes they support and the types of activities they undertake, as well as the frequency and depth of their volunteer engagements. These changes are reflected in the overall increase in alumni’s civic participation after their placements, seen across a wide range of activity types but perhaps clearest in the numbers of ICS volunteers who go on to:

- Promote volunteering, e.g. speaking at events, report writing.
- Set up new groups or initiatives, e.g. support groups, campaigns or charities.
- Work in grassroots or local community organisations.

**How do changes vary for different alumni groups?**

The changes reported were found to have not been experienced evenly by all ICS volunteers, although changes were on the whole remarkable consistent across different groups of volunteers. Increases in confidence (especially around decision-making and leadership) appear greater for female volunteers, whose ICS experiences appear to help them close a previously-existing gender gap. This may be seen alongside greater increases for female volunteers in their feelings of connection to their various communities, and their belief that they can make a difference within them. Gender also appears to be a factor in the types of social and community actions that alumni are involved with after ICS, although does not appear to make a difference as to the overall level of civic participation.

Differences between UK and in-country volunteers were also seen in a range of areas, including positive changes in confidence, resilience and adaptability and increases in understanding of poverty related issues which was higher in UK volunteers, and affect on attitudes towards social action in their own communities, which was higher for in-country volunteers.

The socio-economic background of UK volunteers has also been considered, and in general it appears that ICS is succeeding in providing equal personal and social development for individuals of all backgrounds. However, there is a concern that alumni from less advantaged backgrounds are less able to build on their experiences after placement, and so further support in this area would be encouraged.
How may changes have come about?

Changes experienced by alumni were often found to be inter-related across all areas of personal and social development, and active citizenship. As is understood by the ICS TOC, change is not a linear process but multi-faceted, and different combinations of attributes can contribute to change in different contexts.

Overall, evidence supports the TOC’s assumption that says changes will result from “cross-cultural working and supported learning”, as well as offering further learning that may help to deepen understanding or inform future rearticulations of the TOC.

The findings of this evaluation have also helped to confirm, at least to some degree, the value of ICS for volunteers in regard to their personal and social development and their longer-term active citizenship. Indeed, all alumni interviewed for this evaluation spoke positively of their experience, with most being enthusiastic about the impact of ICS and many having gone on to encourage their peers to volunteer.

“I heard ICS was going to end, I felt so bad – so many lives still need to be touched . . . You can impact on lots of other people, change people’s paths and destinies. I am a testament because it has changed mine. ICS is causing generational impact. ICS shouldn’t be stopped for any reason, in any country. In fact it should be broadened.” (In-country team leader, female, Nigeria)
Recommendations

Based on the findings from EQ1 and EQ2, and with inputs provided both by the individual case studies and the stakeholders’ workshop held in London in March 2019, the following recommendations have been identified:

1. **Project Design**
   - Project design should create a clear focus on strengthening/creating community structures as a channel through which to foster participation and active citizenship and participatory practices and ownership.
   - The young age and related lack of technical skills of the volunteers needs to be reflected in project design, for example through focusing on peer-to-peer activities (using creative and innovative approaches) and restraining from activities which require technical skills.
   - Interventions must be guided by clear and simple theories of change which outline the type and role to be played by each involved actor.
   - Project design should adequately reflect contextual features, and be cohesive and purposeful with a clear focus on bringing about positive outcomes for the host communities while striking an appropriate balance between breadth and depth.
   - Within the framework of an improved project design as per above recommendations, the length and timing of the volunteer placements needs to be reconsidered so as to better reflect the time needed by the volunteers to adjust to the local context and to be more aligned with the goals expected to be achieved by each placement through meaningfully engaging with the host community. It is also important that during project design, realistic outcomes are set which are achievable within the time the volunteers are on placement.
   - Build staff capacity to ensure that projects are designed to a consistently high standard. This should include ensuring that strong quality assurance mechanisms are in place to guarantee that project design meets expected standards.

2. **Project Implementation and Delivery**
   - Aspects of volunteers’ selection, preparation and supervision needs to be improved so as to ensure that they have the necessary skills and competencies (e.g. resilience, as well as intercultural awareness) and to minimise the risk of them behaving in an inappropriate way, with negative impacts for the host community.
   - Activities must be carefully designed, for example by ensuring an adequate balance in terms of prominent roles given to UK and in-country volunteers, so as to minimise the risk of tensions between these two groups and that the presence of UK volunteers unintentionally reinforces stereotypes about foreigners.
   - Effective handover mechanisms between volunteer placements need to be in place.
   - Clear focus is needed to strengthen partners’ ability to autonomously run activities and to ensure their ownership of local development processes.
   - Need to ensure effective communication amongst project stakeholders, for example by making sure that relevant information is shared and paying attention to the language/style used.
   - Need to partner and work closely with local organisations and structures as well as local leaders who can continue to work with communities to ensure sustainable change.

3. **Monitoring and Evaluation**
   - A consistently robust M&E system needs to be in place, tracking both the outputs and the outcomes achieved in host communities.

Further recommendations have been made based on EQ3, which could be taken forwards by ICS or by other volunteering programmes. Some of these are reiterations of existing good practice, some are areas that could be done differently, and some are suggestions for future study.

These recommendations are grouped into five categories:

1. **Volunteer on-placement experiences**
   - Continue to prioritise the planning process for each placement, and use this time to identify the likely challenges that volunteers will face and the support that will be needed.
• Ensure that opportunities for volunteers to get involved in different activities are shared as equitably as possible among all team members.
• Review the training provided to volunteers concerning issues of poverty, inequality and development.
• Avoid having placements focused on construction or other manual work (which are found to be less associated with volunteers gaining new skills).

2. Volunteer post-placement experiences
• Continue to prioritise volunteers’ Action at Home, and seek new ways of understanding and supporting these activities.
• Review the training and support provided to alumni (including in-country alumni) concerning their future personal, social and career development. Both this and the above recommendation may involve different levels or types of support for different demographic groups.

3. Ongoing programme monitoring
• Review the demographic data that is collected concerning in-country volunteers (which is less detailed than for UK volunteers).
• Review the surveys that are used to collect information from volunteers, based on the findings from this evaluation.

4. Areas of possible additional analysis
• Invest further time in exploring survey data not covered by this evaluation, including free-text responses.
• Invest further time in exploring the relationships between different areas covered by the surveys, in order to better understand pathways to change.
• Review the five-point socioeconomic scale used for volunteer analysis, which is effective for its current purposes but could be refined for additional learning.
• Further develop processes for ongoing monitoring of data collected by surveys.

5. Areas of possible future research
• Consider investing in a study of the reasons behind the demographic differences that have been identified by this evaluation. This would require more in-depth qualitative data than has been available for this evaluation.
• Consider investing in further study of alumni’s post-placement experiences, including their active citizenship and employability. This would require collection of data covering a longer period of individuals’ journeys than the surveys primarily used for this evaluation.
• Consider investing in further study of the possible unexpected and/or negative experiences of ICS alumni. This is an area where exploration has been limited due to a reliance on structured survey data.