Evaluation Report Title:
Evaluation of DFID's International Citizen Service (ICS) Pilot

Response to Evaluation Report (overarching narrative)

Overall the findings of the review were very positive, reflecting the successes and challenges of the pilot phase if ICS accurately. The headline messages were very pleasing: *the delivery of this ambitious pilot programme was very successful – targets were met, a large amount of knowledge was generated about youth volunteering and the value of youth contributions to international development and poverty reduction was clearly demonstrated.*

Impact and sustainability

Impacts at a personal level were the most visible of the whole ICS programme for both IVs and NVs, spanning personal / wellbeing, civic engagement, soft skills and hard skills. The most significant impacts were personal / wellbeing and civic engagement.

Field visits also provided evidence of emerging impacts for host organisations and communities as a result of the ICS placements. Organisational impact was best amplified where the rationale for ICS volunteer involvement was clearly articulated i.e. the distinctive contribution of young volunteers had been clearly thought through over and above a simple contribution of time that could be contributed by additional staff or domestic volunteers. The evaluation report noted that it was too early to judge the impacts of return action by UK volunteers, and that future efforts will need to be underpinned by a clear theory of change about this part of the volunteer journey.

Effective programme planning and the allocation of adequate resource to support host organisations and volunteers were critical in realising impact. Though considerable emphasis was put on the development of robust monitoring and evaluation systems during the pilot, weaknesses in the approach adopted constrained the consortiums ability to evidence impact. Data management continued to be a challenge and drain on staff time.

The active involvement of volunteers and local partners in developing baselines and analytical frameworks was shown to increase buy-in and ownership with regards to M&E systems. At a personal level, the experience of volunteering abroad for almost three months had a significant and sustainable impact on volunteer attitudes and understanding of the issues faced by the people that they worked with. Through the pilot, the most important factor affecting the sustainability of impacts on host organisations and communities was identified as effective matching of each ICS cohort to broader host organisation and agency objectives. It is also important that relationships are continued beyond specific placements both between the agency and the host organisation and the volunteers and host organisation.

Efficiency and Value for Money

The partnership working between DFID and the ICS pilot consortium was recognised as 'hands-on' and largely supportive. Further, the consortium coped well with the start of the new contract whilst managing the largest cohort of pilot volunteers on placement, as staff turnover was high.

Though the VFM analysis was constrained by a number of issues relating to data availability, reliability and consistency between agencies, the evaluation found that the pilot was cost-effective and offered increasing cost-efficiency and good value economically.

The analysis found there to be substantial variance with respect to some aspects of the volunteer journey between the agencies. In particular, there is a need for more consistent procurement practices across agencies to maximise cost efficiencies for the pre-departure process. Variance in accommodation and subsistence costs between agencies confirmed that substantial cost savings were realised where the host home model was employed.

Evaluation Report Title: Evaluation of DFID's International Citizen Service (ICS) Pilot		

Recommendations	Accepted or Rejected	If "Accepted", Action plan for Implementation or if "Rejected", Reason for Rejection
1. Partnership and coordination: The ICS pilot has been a priority politically and at times subject to political pressure to make rapid investments which have impacted on the effectiveness of the pilot Programme. DFID should consider how best practice (learning through a pilot programme; consolidate learning; design and develop a full programme) could be followed in the future.	Partially Accepted	The timetable for delivery put pressure on the delivery team and the implementing partners. It is accepted that ideally more time would have been allowed for reflection on the pilot. Indeed, the highest level of pilot delivery coincided with full programme start up, making the first quarter of the contract particularly pressured. However, the full programme was subject to a full procurement under OJEU regulations, which gives time for development and reflection.
2. Partnership and coordination: The consortium should clarify and validate communication and learning systems with DFID for the full programme. Systems and mechanisms for horizontal communication and learning at different levels (including in country and between different countries) are needed, including opportunities for ICS staff to visit placements and learning events for key staff from different countries/ within countries and across agencies.	Accepted	Systems for communication and learning were included in the bid proposal and detailed in the inception period of the contracted phase of ICS. A placement visit programme and various mechanisms for the sharing of learning has been developed.
3. Programme design/ monitoring: Some aspects of the programme design and best practice still need to be tested and validated. Key aspects of the ICS approach should be further developed and tested as part of the MTR of the full programme, in particular recruitment of under-represented groups and the final stages of the volunteer experience as they return to their communities.	Accepted	A clear theory of change and a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework have been developed in conjunction with the first phase of the external evaluation of the ICS programme. Programme design was developed and key partnerships built from the outset in relation to inclusivity and this continues to be a priority area against which the programme is monitored. Programme design has also focused on the improved reporting of 'action at home' as volunteers return to their communities.

Evaluation Report Title: Evaluation of DFID's International Citizens' Service (ICS) Pilot Programme

Recommendations	Accepted or Rejected	If "Accepted", Action plan for Implementation or if "Rejected", Reason for Rejection
4. Programme design/ monitoring: Learning in the pilot has shown that improving ICS Programme access will require adjustments to budgets and programming arrangements to attract particular target groups. The consortium should identify and allocate budgets to explore strategies to recruit volunteers from groups not currently well represented, then mainstream best practice and set targets for each sending agency	Accepted	The managing of diversity and recruitment has been built in as a core part of the ICS Hub function for the contract with resources allocated and managed across the consortium and results reported to DFID on a quarterly basis. New partnerships have been established specifically to attract and support harder to reach young people to access the scheme. As strategies are explored, best practice is shared with all sending agencies. Diversity targets are held centrally to enable the Hub to monitor progress, report against logframe targets and respond to gaps quickly.
5. Programme design/ monitoring: The pilot lacked an overall strategy to offer effective support across the UK for return actions. Instead support for return engagement was channelled through five different systems, each with its own focus, priorities and campaigns. The external evaluation team should work with the consortium to undertake a full VFM assessment of the approach to return actions and alternative approaches during the **MTR of the full programme**.	Partially Accepted	The ICS hub team are currently working with DFID on a refreshed strategy for supporting effective and high quality return actions and delivering more alumni engagement work for both for UK and in-country volunteers.
6. Phases 1 & 2: Recruitment and selection: **a)** The Hub should continue detailed analysis of web use to fully understand the effectiveness (and efficiency) of the on-line recruitment system and possible alternative approaches for applicants put off by the current system. **b)** The consortium should earmark budgets for targeting and recruitment of underrepresented groups across the consortium Agencies and any alternative application/ selection procedures (see also MTR recommendation 12 on higher income volunteers). **c)** The consortium should explore innovative approaches to geographic recruitment, or short term employment of youth motivators in regions where recruitment is very low.	Accepted	Full website analytics are available through the new revised website. These are monitored and considered closely. Individual support for completing application processes is also now offered to all. Money is available for specific recruitment activity targeting underrepresented groups and an appropriately adjusted application process is used where appropriate (e.g. for Deaf ICS programme in Philippines). The consortium now includes specific recruitment partners who specialise in youth work in the UK. Plans for recruitment in under-represented geographies are in place and constantly reviewed based on live recruitment information.

Evaluation Report Title: Evaluation of DFID's International Citizens' Service (ICS) Pilot Programme

Recommendations	Accepted or Rejected	If "Accepted", Action plan for Implementation or if "Rejected", Reason for Rejection
7. Phases 1 & 2: Recruitment and selection: **a)** Agencies should gather detailed feedback from all applicants who drop out in order to analyse and address how the attrition rate (between online applications and departure) could be reduced. **b)** The Hub should work with ICS alumni to consider other ways of assessing the commitment of applicants and their potential to add value to the programme without losing a focus on personal characteristics. **c)** The Hub should monitor student involvement in the programme (overall numbers and variation in participation across the academic year) to inform recruitment strategies.	Accepted	The new ICS database, Jobscience, has been set up to enable detailed information on reasons for drop-out at every stage of the journey to be analysed. ICS alumni are now actively involved as selectors, and volunteers were consulted as part of a process of streamlining and restructuring the assessment process across the consortium. The Hub actively monitors students (again using Jobscience data) and actively manages a student specific waiting list. Analysis of the central recruitment base directly informs consortium recruitment strategies.

8. Phase 3: Pre-departure training:
a) Agencies should ensure that guided learning offered to volunteers builds on preceding activities rather than duplicating.
b) The consortium should clarify the Team Leader role and communicate this across the stakeholder groups. Team Leaders should be recognised as leaders within pre-departure generic training and, where appropriate offered:
    i) Substantial role-specific training (pre-departure and in-country)
    ii) Discrete support to TLs through UK and in-country agencies.
	Accepted	A full volunteer learning project has been initiated during the contract with streamlining of the training journey and constant review of resources available.
		
		Team leaders are selected on specifically designed assessment days against different criteria to regular volunteers. The team leader role has been strengthened with additional investment allowing for improved training and also longer placements where appropriate.

Management Response & Recommendations Action Plan

Evaluation Report Title: Evaluation of DFID's International Citizens' Service (ICS) Pilot Programme

Recommendations	Accepted or Rejected	If "Accepted", Action plan for Implementation or if "Rejected", Reason for Rejection
9. Phase 3: Pre-departure training: Even if the specific placement matching is done in-country, Agencies should provide volunteers with as much information as possible about the country and the range of placements available. Moreover, the rationale for not matching placements until volunteers are in country should be clearly communicated to all volunteers during pre-departure training.	Partially accepted	The communication of matching rationales has been fully accepted and agency recruitment teams have incorporated into their practice.

It is not always desirable or possible to disclose full placement information prior to departure from the UK – partly because placements are developed participatively once volunteers are in country and partly because there are always changes in placements that make the need to be flexible paramount. However, clarity on this is essential and is communicated with volunteers during training in order that their expectations can be successfully managed. |
| **10. Phase 3: Pre-departure training:**
a) Agencies should consider offering additional language training focused on the specific vocabulary that will be encountered within placements.
b) More substantial attention should be devoted to complex development issues such as gender to allow for effective engagement and reflection by volunteers in placement (Agencies and in-country partners). | Partially accepted | Pre-departure language training is not possible within current budgets, but more is being done to point volunteers to resources that they can access independently. The length of ICS placements means that language training in-country is very basic, but work on developing a central guide to minimum requirements is under way. A clear steer on promoting host homes as a support to language development has also been given.

A comprehensive learning matrix has been developed and is monitored through the KAP survey. The consortium has agreed to the development of a central learning resource that will supplement members in-house support materials. |

Evaluation Report Title: Evaluation of DFID's International Citizens' Service (ICS) Pilot Programme

Recommendations	Accepted or Rejected	If "Accepted", Action plan for Implementation or if "Rejected", Reason for Rejection
11. Phase 4: Placements **a)** The Hub should incorporate key elements of placement planning within ICS guidelines/standards: including the following: - identification of the wider programme within which placements are working; - agreement on overarching objectives between the agency and host organisation; - agreement on specific placement activities volunteers, agency and host organisation (guided by the distinctive contribution of ICS IVs and NVs); - include formalised placement plans to cover an agreed number of volunteer cohorts; - detail volunteer involvement across cohorts in setting baselines, specification of systems for monitoring, review and hand-over to the incoming volunteers.	a) Accepted	The recommendations were largely embedded into the enhanced proposal for the contracted phase of ICS. All placements are now integrated into wider development programmes and are the result of detailed discussions between the host organisation and the sending agency. Placements only occur where the specific role of volunteers has been identified and articulated and ICS volunteer support explicitly requested. Issues of continuity as well as detailed placement plans are dealt with in a renewed and strengthened monitoring and evaluation framework.
b) Agencies should provide detailed information about selected volunteers to in- country partners as soon as they are matched to countries (and possibly placements) to facilitate an optimal matching of volunteers to placements.	b) Partially accepted	ICS is explicitly not a skill based recruitment programme. However, all agencies look at individual volunteer profiles when making matching decisions.
c) In-country training and orientation should have - a clear rationale and; - engage host organisation staff; - provide country, issue and placement-specific orientation. - build on core resources for guided volunteer learning (this is a role for the Hub) - devote some attention to returnee action	c) Accepted	Agencies have reviewed their in-country training in line with an agreed central learning matrix and Programme Implementation Manual that contains resources as examples of good practice. Discussion regarding return action is threaded throughout the training journey, including at selection.

Evaluation Report Title: Evaluation of DFID's International Citizens' Service (ICS) Pilot Programme

Recommendations	Accepted or Rejected	If "Accepted", Action plan for Implementation or if "Rejected", Reason for Rejection
12. Phase 4: Placements: Agencies and in-country partners should strengthen placement planning across an agreed number of cohorts and: • include longer term volunteer placements e.g. six-month TLs; • increase written and spoken communication between cohorts such as – handover notes, telephone or face-to-face meetings between different cycles of volunteers; • change the mind-set of volunteers to thinking of their placement as a contribution to a longer term project; • engage host organisation staff directly in the activity of volunteers; • ensure gaps between placements are kept to a minimum (whilst allowing some time for reflection and development).	Accepted	Additional investment has enabled longer team leader placements. Standard in-country tools ensure that each team captures learning for following teams, and that this is incorporated into the M&E process. There is an emphasis is on written communication as this ensures a historical record is possible. Increased use of blogs has also been encouraged. Training on the M&E tools now includes discussion of project and programme goals and the relationships between outcomes and impact as standard, and efforts made to avoid development jargon that is often alien to volunteers and partners alike.
13. Phase 4: Placements: **a)** Agencies should seek host homes wherever possible and is appropriate (security and additional support needs have to be prioritised). Living standards (including accommodation and allowance) should be comfortable but basic. **b)** Agencies should ensure that there is equity between international and NVs in all aspects of the programme. This will require clear guidance at programme level about rates for living allowances and volunteer travel during the placements. **c)** The MTR of the full programme should assess possible differential impact resulting from the placement experiences of NVs who remain at home and those placed outside their home community, as well as the impact on group dynamics.	Accepted (a & b) Partially accepted (c)	The Hub continues to support agencies to maximise the use host homes and this is monitored and reported against to DFID. Guidance on the entire volunteer journey for in-country volunteers (or NVs, to use ITAD terminology) has been incorporated into the Programme Implementation Manual, and a working group established to support the consortium to build on their learning and good practice in this area. Living allowance reviews have been carried out where necessary, and travel guidelines now clear. The comparison of different ICV models was not considered a priority for the Mid Term Review (MTR), but has been incorporated into the working group set up by the Hub.

Recommendations	Accepted or Rejected	If "Accepted", Action plan for Implementation or if "Rejected", Reason for Rejection
a) Deeper analysis of RV actions by the external evaluation team is recommended at MTR stage, in order to : • understand the wider impact of the RV actions; • identify the distinctive contribution of young volunteers; • clarify the VFM of different approaches to the RV days and other forms of support.	a) Rejected	This was not considered a priority for the MTR.
b) The consortium should develop/ identify volunteer pathway(s) for RVs so that volunteers are clear about what they can expect from and offer to ICS as returned volunteers.	b) Accepted	There has been considerable work to develop a series of volunteer pathways for RVs. This has been developed both at agency level and also at Hub level, where the new ICS website details a series of recommended and suggested actions with advice and support available.
c) The options for return action should be expanded (Hub lead) to include group actions and build creatively on the distinctive contribution that young people make (MTR Recommendation 20).	c) Accepted	Group actions are now accepted as long as individual contributions can be tracked. The range of possible actions accepted is now clearly defined and inclusive with emphasis on personal development of the volunteer as much as it is on the activity outcomes themselves.
d) The consortium should explore ways in which highly motivated ICS Alumni can be supported to establish a network of mentors across the UK.	d) Accepted	Alumni are now actively encouraged and trained to become ICS selectors. Further plans are in development to extend the participation of alumni as mentors.