



DFID's Youth Volunteering Programme, 'Platform2'

Project Completion Review

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By // Ellie Curtain and Jill
Edbrooke

IOD PARC is the trading name of International
Organisation Development Ltd//

Omega Court
362 Cemetery Road
Sheffield
S11 8FT
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0) 114 267 3620
www.iodparc.com

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This Project Completion Review was prepared by Ellie Curtain and Jill Edbrooke. Full responsibility for the text of this report rests with the authors. The views contained in this report do not necessarily represent those of DFID or of the people consulted.

Executive Summary

In response to a growing recognition of the need to ensure that people in the UK understand and are supportive of DFID's work, DFID identified UKAid funding of just under £10 million for a 3 year youth volunteering programme, that came to be known as Platform2. The programme, implemented by Christian Aid and BUNAC, intended to recruit less advantaged UK volunteers (aged 18-25) to complete a ten week community led development project overseas, followed by a programme of development awareness activities in the UK. The programme was launched in February 2008 and will end in January 2011.

This independent Project Completion Review was undertaken between August 2010 and January 2011, and evaluates the performance of Platform2 against the purpose and four outputs indicated in the programme's logframe¹. The purpose is stated as follows:

Through a programme of volunteering on overseas development projects increase awareness in the UK of global development issues among young adults and their communities.

The outputs broadly followed the experience of any young person engaging in the programme:

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

A variety of methods were used to carry out this review, including: a desk-based documentation study; informal, semi-structured interviews; and a field visit to the two Peruvian projects.

Platform2 is an ambitious but overall a highly successful programme. For the duration of the programme the consortium has maintained a national approach in the UK, utilising local Christian Aid offices as a base for a network of regionally-placed Volunteer Development Officers (VDOs) to recruit and engage with volunteers/returnees. Platform2 is built upon a model of participative group work, which appeals to the target demographic and supports the majority of volunteers for whom Platform2 is their first experience of international development. Throughout, the programme has been well managed and a strong working relationship exists between consortium partners. Clear lines of communication and partner roles were established early on, which has allowed each to play to its strengths. The partnership approach to working with national partners has worked well, with considerable responsibility awarded to 'front line' project staff supported by regular communication with BUNAC Country Coordinators. An unexpected outcome has been strengthened capacity of most national partners as a result of their involvement with Platform2, including the retention or promotion of project staff employed for the programme.

Risk mitigation and analysis has been a challenging but ultimately a strong component of the programme. Alignment with BS8848 policies and procedures for best practice ensured consistency in approach across all countries, with sufficient flexibility to account for the specifics of Platform2. The Operating Manual developed has embodied this in a living document, which has been constantly revised and consulted. Most national partners intend to keep on using aspects of this manual having seen considerable improvement in their own risk

¹ The PCR evaluated work against the final version of the logframe, agreed with DFID in August 2010.

management procedures. Platform2 has experienced a number of serious incidents, the first of which led to some revision of procedures on the ground. In each instance however, the consortium have demonstrated excellent crisis management capabilities.

As a programme that ‘hit the ground running’, there is no doubt that Platform2 has been a continuous learning process punctuated by many excellent achievements and difficult challenges. Despite this, Platform2’s dedicated staff have always maintained a clear focus on the programme’s purpose and how its four outputs interrelate. Key achievements include the following:

- The target of 1950 recruited volunteers has been successfully met by the programme; in total, more than 7000 applications were received. The final figures indicate that the aspirational target of 30% for the participation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) young people has been exceeded by 2%, and the informal target of 12% for the participation of young Muslims also reached.
- The Platform2 recruitment campaign led by the Christian Aid digital team was strengthened by innovative use of social networking and various other marketing strategies. This was supplemented by huge commitment on the ground shown by Christian Aid VDOs.
- Consortium staff are justified in feeling tremendously proud of achieving consistently high levels of participation by disadvantaged young people – many in the last year of the programme. ‘Disadvantaged’ has been defined in its broadest terms, to include lower levels of educational attainment; learning difficulties and mental health issues; physical disability; criminality; homelessness; and cultural factors.
- Over the course of Platform2, 17 projects have been established in 6 countries, with some running for the full 3 years of the programme. A rigorous process for establishing new partners and projects was designed and evolved over time as lessons were learned with each new departure. The projects themselves were varied and appropriate for the different experiences, skills and needs of the demographic.
- Experience of working with youth was an essential part of the criteria for sourcing partners and project staff. Whilst the demographic posed challenges for ‘front line’ supervisors in country, strong relationships were formed between staff and BUNAC Country Coordinators to provide the necessary support.
- Given the scale of the inputs and the capacity of the volunteers involved, the ‘development’ outcomes of these projects have been both appropriate and meaningful at community level. In-country evaluations have shown some excellent early results, revealing significant qualitative changes in the communities, including increased local motivation for community development and higher aspirations of the youth.
- A strong Global Learning Programme was devised by Christian Aid based on a Global Issues Framework made up of twelve DFID themes. This programme ran throughout the volunteer’s Platform2 ‘journey’, from pre-departure to post-return. The Programme incorporated various components, including: a pre-departure Global Research Project; Global Scrapbooks, weekly Global Discussions and context-specific Global Trips in-country. A wealth of online resources was also made available to returned volunteers.
- Volunteer engagement in development awareness really came alive in-country for Platform2 volunteers, as through their placements they interacted with local communities on their day-to-day issues. Offering the volunteers practical tools to support this engagement was very effective, including basic first aid training, peer supported teacher training, teaching through drama and so on, whilst back in the UK the Express residential provided structured skill-based sessions.
- Platform2 carefully defined what was meant by engagement activity and Christian Aid developed a unique and highly creative programme of events which appeals to young people. Activities have occurred at ‘grass roots’ level as well as at national level. These include: include photography/art exhibitions; poetry/open mic nights; fashion shows; film nights; talks and presentations; campaigns; volunteering; media work; training opportunities and promotion at festivals/road shows. A poetry book and an EP of tracks written by volunteers were also released nationwide. Such a range of creative events has appealed to volunteers and also successfully attracts wider audiences.

- A huge area of development which isn't monitored by the Platform2 logframe is the underlying personal and social development that the programme has facilitated for every volunteer taking part. The programme itself has provided employment opportunities through temporary VDO posts; some volunteers are reviewing their formal qualifications and/or pursuing careers in international development. A number of volunteers have been inspired by their experiences overseas to create their own fair trade fashion labels, found their own charities or film companies and meet with Prime Ministers and Presidents to speak about development.

Platform2 has also faced a number of challenges:

- Without the benefit of a sufficient lead in period before the first group departure, it took some time for the marketing and recruitment campaigns to get into their stride which put significant pressure on the second half of the programme.
- Similarly, the Global Learning Programme, although very strong, could have been strengthened with sufficient lead in time and rolled out from the outset. Ambitious targets introduced late on in the programme for development understanding were not quite met; had these been determined from the start there may have been scope to fine tune this aspect of Platform2. Having said this, establishing an accurate picture of development understanding post-trip has been difficult and so results may not be entirely accurate.
- The nature of the target demographic was new to the consortium and presented its own challenges: in-country, this was felt in terms of discipline and risk mitigation; in the UK, in terms of engaging with young people leading chaotic and/or busy lifestyles. In both cases, this challenge was handled well.
- Related to the above, a fine balance had to be maintained between keeping volunteers safe in-country and giving them sufficient independence as young adults to get the best out of their experience. Whilst this was an ongoing challenge, overall an appropriate balance was maintained.
- Defining 'effective engagement' proved a real challenge during Platform2. DFID in particular seemed to 'change the goalposts' regarding this objective and how it could be measured. Clarity was needed from the outset regarding the scale of engagement desired and its scope and duration. Measuring changes in development awareness among volunteers' wider communities proved to be equally difficult for much the same reasons.

Overall, the sheer challenge presented by Platform2 as a unique and pioneering programme should not be overlooked: for the most part, the consortium have successfully marketed the programme and recruited from scratch from a difficult target demographic; successfully established national partners and suitable projects in six countries, willing to commit to a steady influx of 1950 volunteers for 3 years; integrated a strong Global Learning component into the programme; and engage with hundreds of volunteers on their return to the UK through an array of development awareness raising activities. The Platform2 team have taken on this challenge with great commitment and passion.

Background and Introduction

In response to a growing recognition of the need to ensure that people in the UK understand and are supportive of The Department for International Development's (DFID's) work to reduce poverty in developing countries, DFID identified UKAid funding of just under £10 million and tendered for a 3 year youth volunteering programme, that came to be known as Platform2. The programme, implemented by Christian Aid and BUNAC (British Universities North America Club)², intended to recruit less advantaged UK volunteers (aged 18-25) to complete a ten week community led development project overseas, followed by a programme of development awareness activities in the UK.

The programme was launched in February 2008 and will end in January 2011. This independent Project Completion Review (PCR) was undertaken between August 2010 and January 2011 by Ellie Curtain and Jill Edbrooke, consultants from the Centre for International Development and Training (CIDT), University of Wolverhampton. The Terms of Reference for the work are given in Annex 1. The aim of this review was to evaluate the performance of Platform2 against the purpose and outputs indicated in the programme's logical framework (logframe). The purpose is stated as follows:

Through a programme of volunteering on overseas development projects increase awareness in the UK of global development issues among young adults and their communities.

² The original consortium also included Islamic Relief (IR), who withdrew amicably in early 2009 after it became increasingly difficult to reconcile their desired approach to risk management with that of the other partners and DFID.

Methodology

A variety of methods were used to complete this PCR, including:

- A desk-based documentation review.
- Informal, semi-structured interviews with key Christian Aid (CA), BUNAC and DFID staff and ex-staff, as well as past and present CA VDOs³.
- Interviews with returnees at local and national awareness raising events.
- Observation and interviews at an Express Residential.

A detailed account of documents reviewed and individuals interviewed can be found in Annexes 2 and 3 respectively.

A field visit was also undertaken to the Pachacutec and Viviendas Saludables projects in Peru, led by in-country partner INTEJ, a Lima based volunteering organisation. After meeting staff of the local NGO Tierra de Niños, both groups of volunteers were interviewed, together with community members hosting volunteers and beneficiaries, leaders, project supervisors and staff at INTEJ (see Annex 5).

Although the whole programme was under review, particular attention was paid to progress against the fourth output of Platform2 referring to volunteers' ongoing engagement on return to the UK. This area has developed considerably since the Mid Term Review, and was highlighted in the Terms of Reference along with risk analysis and mitigation, programme management and lessons learned for future programmes for specific focus.

³ Platform2 Volunteer Development Officers, employed by CA, who are responsible for volunteer recruitment and engagement.

Project Achievements

As a programme that ‘hit the ground running’, there is no doubt that Platform2 has been a continuous learning process punctuated by many excellent achievements and difficult challenges. Despite this, Platform2’s dedicated staff have always maintained a clear focus on the programme’s purpose and how its four outputs interrelate. In 2010, Platform2’s logical framework (logframe) was amended to include more measureable indicators and quantitative milestones and targets. This was a long, arduous process; the updated framework was not finalised until August 2010, 8 months after amendments began. For clarity and to ensure the correct data was being collated, it would have been preferable to complete this process sooner.

Using the updated framework, the achievements and challenges under each output will be discussed in turn and drawn together in the conclusion to this section that will address the extent to which Platform2 has achieved its overall purpose.

Output 1: Recruitment

To involve 1950 young adults, aged between 18 and 25, from the UK over 3 years, with a particular push to involve those from minority backgrounds, and those who would not otherwise have the opportunity to participate in such schemes.

Indicators:

- Number of volunteers recruited
- Levels of participation by BME young people (aspirational target of 30%)
- Levels of participation by those young people who would not otherwise have the opportunity to volunteer overseas

In the early months of 2010, discussions were held between DFID and the consortium regarding the possibility of extending Platform2 by one year, incorporating all programme learning to date and following the recommendation made in the Mid Term Review. Rather than extend the programme, the decision was made to reduce the recruitment target from 2500 to 1950, as reflected in the amended logframe. This target figure was based on the consortium’s view that approximately 230 volunteers per departure would take BUNAC and national partners to their maximum capacity, without jeopardising the quality (and security) of each trip and experience offered to each volunteer.

The target of 1950 recruited volunteers has been successfully met by the programme; in fact, the final two departures (August and October 2010) were heavily oversubscribed and BUNAC were able to create a ‘standby’ list of volunteers to cover pre-departure drop outs. In total, more than 7000 applications were received. The final figures⁴ indicate that the aspirational target of 30% for the participation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) young people has been exceeded by 2%, with 11% of volunteers defining their ethnicity as Asian, 12.3% as Black, 6.1% as Mixed and 2.5% as Other. The departure of IR, intended to lead on BME and Muslim recruitment, does not appear to have had an impact on these figures. In fact, IR’s reluctance to engage with

⁴ Based on 1861 volunteers – (i.e. numbers that travelled, subject to small discrepancy).

Platform2 in its early stages may have even hindered the recruit of young Muslims; in total 12% of volunteers were Muslim, in line with the informal DFID target of 11-12%.

At its peak, 232 Platform2 volunteers were departing the UK every 10 weeks. Whilst this provided a real challenge in terms of administration, selection/screening and document processing, an efficient and effective system was established by the team that enabled them to ensure that each group was departure-ready in good time.

692 volunteers were accepted onto Platform2 in its first year and a half⁵, with the remaining 1258 volunteers processed subsequently. Although this is broadly in line with initial intentions to increase numbers each year with a surge in the final year⁶, recruitment in the first year of the programme still proved to be challenging. However, there was a climb in numbers as a result of an increased focus on recruitment between January and April 2010. This recruitment campaign was led by CA digital marketing and VDOs (who were asked to prioritise this aspect of their role for the period in question) and built upon some aspects of audience research undertaken by an external company as well as lessons learned in the first half of the programme. A variety of marketing strategies were used as part of the central marketing strategy, including: internet based advertisements through Google, Gumtree and social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter; 'boomerang' postcards left in cinemas; bus posters; pub posters; and local and national radio and newspaper/magazine adverts. Finally, word of mouth became increasingly important as Platform2 progressed and its reputation grew along with a considerable level of brand awareness. Additional efforts were made to reach the BME target group, notably approaching black-led Pentecostal churches in inner-city areas. A BME VDO had already been appointed in response to IR's departure to focus specifically on this aspect of recruitment.

As all of the Platform2 advertising directed young people to the website, the decision was made in the second half of 2009 to revamp the site to make it more dynamic and user friendly for both potential volunteers and consortium staff. Interested young people could complete a two minute 'expression of interest' style document, which would then populate a spreadsheet to be sent on to all VDOs. The relevant VDO would then follow up each expression of interest and push for a full application form and relevant documentation. CA worked closely with its own digital marketing team to support this and bring the website under internal control, whereas in the initial stages of Platform2 it had been externally managed.

Valid concerns were expressed by the consortium at the start of the pre-election 'purdah' period on the impact this might have on DFID and subsequently Platform2's advertising and recruitment campaigns. Fortunately, whilst marketing activity had to cease and website hits decreased, recruitment figures were not significantly affected.

Whilst the early 2010 recruitment campaign justified many of the strategies used by CA from the outset, Platform2's initial slow start put significant pressure on the second half of the programme. Although this slow start can be attributed to a number of factors, not least the lack of a lead-in period before the programme officially began and a lack of clarity and guidance from DFID (see Key Lessons Learned), there may have been less pressure on the second half of the programme if the Platform2 recruitment strategy had gathered more momentum at the start. This would have highlighted any gaps and allowed for fine tuning at an earlier point. Furthermore, a more user-friendly website should have been in place from the outset. It may also have been the case that Platform2 was not an 'easy sell' as may have initially been thought, and the complicated lives of the most disadvantaged among the target group underestimated.

Ensuring the eligibility of potential volunteers fell under the remit of BUNAC, who would receive application forms and supporting documentation, follow up references and interview the young people applying. The

⁵ Up to and including August 2009 departure.

⁶ Approximate targets of 300/year one; 900/year two; 1300/year three (recruitment target subsequently revised from 2500 to 1950).

eligibility criteria agreed by the consortium to ensure participation of young people who would 'not otherwise have the opportunity to volunteer overseas' defines disadvantage in its broadest sense and not purely in financial terms. Thus, attention was paid to lower levels of educational attainment; learning difficulties and mental health issues; physical disability; criminality; homelessness; and cultural factors. Equally however, the consortium have looked to include young people who may not fall into any of these categories, but come from lower income families or have simply never had the opportunity to travel abroad, for instance.

Particular attention was paid throughout the programme to volunteers' previous community work or volunteering experience; greater numbers of applicants enabled BUNAC to be more selective and recruit less from the 'extremes' of the eligibility spectrum to reach target numbers – that is, those who would not consider themselves particularly disadvantaged at one end; those with behavioural/ emotional difficulties that may be harder to manage in-country at the other.

Final Eligibility Statistics*

- 57% of volunteers not in full time work or education
- 21% unemployed
- 35% educated to A Level or equivalent; 28% educated to Degree or Masters level
- 126 care leavers; 206 with a social worker (likely to be higher in reality as can be under reported)
- 84.6% of volunteers in receipt of 1 or more benefit; 62.4% in receipt of 2 or more (refers to housing, disability, 'other' - likely to be higher in reality as not all possible benefits listed)

*1861 participants

The interview process itself was intentionally personal and thorough and the composition of the interview evolved along with Platform2 as lessons were learned. As the numbers to be interviewed increased, freelance interviewers were recruited (as planned and budgeted from the outset), rigorously trained by the BUNAC team and given clear guidance on the aims of Platform2, eligibility criteria and the nature of the target audience.

The intensive 1.5 hour interview process minimised the chances of offering a place to a young person who was likely to be unable to cope in-country and ensured that successful applicants were placed in the most suitable projects. Young people were thus asked about they're expectations of food and accommodation, living without 'things' they are used to and the emotional challenges of being away from home and in a developing country, as well as being asked to identify one of several generic project scenarios which appealed to them most. Any admissions of substance abuse, mental health issues or criminal records were carefully followed up, and interviewees were encouraged to be as honest and detailed in their answers as possible. The Code of Conduct was introduced to young people at the interview stage, despite the fact that some would be unsuccessful, so that expectations of behaviour were made clear from the outset (discussed further under Risk Analysis and Mitigation).

Consortium staff are justified in feeling tremendously proud of achieving consistently high levels of participation by disadvantaged young people – particularly in the last year of the programme. Furthermore, whilst the personal journey of the volunteer is not a specified output of Platform2, it is nonetheless a hugely significant outcome. Volunteers who had previously felt at a loss as a result of poor job prospects or difficult childhoods/adolescent years, for instance, have described Platform2 as a life-changing opportunity that has increased their self-confidence and self-belief and shaped their personal ambitions (see Annex 6 for some of these personal stories).

Output 2: In-Country Projects

Volunteers participate in appropriate, community led development projects.

Indicators:

- Projects are appropriate for the mix of volunteers and their skills
- Effective project planning and management
- Projects provide the volunteers with an experience of living in a local community in a developing country

Over the course of Platform2, a total of 17 projects have existed across 6 countries. 5 of these 17 were discontinued over time for various reasons, specifically: concerns for safety and security in two projects which had almost reached completion (False Bay, South Africa and Afadjato, Ghana, after a serious incident here in February 2009); insufficient work/resources for project or natural completion of project (Achiase and Tapa Ameyna respectively, Ghana); or transferred to a new location under the same national partner (Kandi, India, replaced by Dabla). The projects were a mix of classroom/childcare centre-based activities and manual/construction tasks, which accommodated the variety of skills and abilities of volunteers in any one group.

Given the nature of the programme and the volunteer demographic, BUNAC developed a rigorous process for identifying new national partners⁷, involving preliminary internet research, two rounds of specific questions and a field visit. The key criteria for new partners included experience of working with a high volume of young volunteers, sufficient capacity, infrastructure and resources and suitability of available projects (including community support and involvement; sufficient, sustainable work). Questions evolved over time – with more focus on sufficiency and sustainability – as lessons were learned with each new project. From the first point of communication, BUNAC would also ensure that prospective partners were fully aware of the objectives of Platform2 and the potential challenges posed by its young people.

It was established after the closure of the False Bay and Achiase projects that ensuring volunteers were productively engaged with meaningful work was a key factor in reducing risky or poor behaviour resulting from boredom. In the early stages of Platform2, the amount of work that each group could achieve over a 10 week period was somewhat underestimated. Where projects were purely community-led and not facilitated by an intermediary NGO (as was the case in some of the Ghana projects) ensuring there are sufficient materials and funding to keep the projects running was more problematic. Following these initial experiences, BUNAC developed a more rigorous process to establish the sustainability of projects, both during work and after completion, before agreeing to them. In addition, detailed, full work schedules (including information on trips, meetings and even meals!) were displayed at the start of each placement from the early stages of the programme to mitigate this, and opportunities were presented for volunteers to give their feedback at weekly meetings to be incorporated into the supervisor’s weekly report submitted to the country head office and BUNAC⁸.

⁷ Where possible, BUNAC utilised existing project partners that were known to be well-equipped to handle young volunteers (for instance, in Cape Town, South Africa and Ghana). New partnerships were established in Nepal, Kenya, India and Johannesburg, South Africa. Country selections were often a compromise between DFID country objectives and the consortium’s research into the suitability of the country to host such a programme.

⁸ In-country project management is discussed in more detail under Risk Analysis and Mitigation and Programme Management.

Furthermore, volunteers would complete a placement evaluation form in week 3 of their stay, and again in week 9 to establish project satisfaction. Week 9 evaluation results indicate that, when asked how firmly they believed their presence and work in their placement community made a difference, overall 92% of volunteers said they agreed 50-100% with this statement⁹. This is in line with the target: '90% of volunteers believe they have made a positive contribution to the project they worked on'.

In addition to main project activities volunteers were expected to spend a fixed proportion of their time each week interacting with the local community through structured opportunities, by teaching English or running clubs/groups, for instance. The amount of time and nature of activity varied project to project, depending on workload and location of volunteers. It was often through these additional activities that volunteers were able to demonstrate their particular skills or interests; for instance, one volunteer from the Meru project in Kenya set up a group for disabled community members, who have continued to meet weekly and now have full charitable status and full-time support from a local volunteer. After serious incidents in Ghana and India in 2009, it became clear that the interface between the community and volunteers during 'down time' (i.e. unsupervised time when volunteers are 'signed out' and away from the project/ accommodation) also needed to be carefully managed and structured (see Risk Analysis and Mitigation).

During the field visit to Peru (which took place during week 6), the majority of volunteers from both projects expressed satisfaction with their work. Whilst most were unlikely to use their newly-acquired construction skills on their return, they felt that the projects was useful to the community and enjoyed working as a team. Ongoing involvement of a significant number of volunteers for rolling 10 week programmes over an extended period has also led to greater impact than one-off projects would have done. There is a clear "adjustment" process for the communities involved as well as the volunteer groups, so that the later groups are benefiting from cumulative learning and impacts. This would allow more challenging activities to be planned in future. Establishing a partnership with the local NGO Tierra de Niños, which has a long term commitment to community development work in Pachacutec, has also meant that the construction work of the volunteers can feed into ongoing work on health, education and community organisation. In one instance, the Education Ministry was persuaded to fund four teachers in a school improved by volunteers.

Getting the 'right' partners has perhaps been easier than getting the 'right' projects; BUNAC had a wealth of experience sourcing local partners - and used existing partners in three countries - but less so in identifying long-term projects for large groups of young people from this demographic. With such a complex process of matching participants with preferred countries and interests, assessment of their capabilities and likely behaviour within a group and the capacity and priorities of the potential placements it was inevitable that projects would be shaped and refined iteratively during the initial stages of each project. Overall, it is felt by consortium staff that the projects and structures in place in the final year of the programme epitomise best practice.

Over the course of the programme there were 107 last minute cancellations for which flight costs could not be recouped, equal to 5.5% of 1950. There appeared to be a seasonal trend to cancellations relating to the academic year, with a higher number in August and fewer in January. One method used to try and reduce cancellations was to send out reminders prior to flight confirmation, which would often spur on those having second thoughts or facing new circumstances – this could have been done at an earlier point in the programme. However, increased applications and the resulting option a 'stand by' list of volunteers was a benefit here.

A total of 166 volunteers returned early – 8.5% of the 1950, failing to meet the target of 7.5% indicated in the logframe. 30.7% of early returns resulted from disciplinary issues, 28.9% on compassionate grounds, 22% who felt they were not coping and the remainder (16.9%) on health grounds. It is unfortunate that 26 volunteers

⁹ Breakdown of figures: 34.1% agreed 100% with this statement; 40.2% agreed 75% with this statement; and 17.9% agreed 50% with this statement.

returned early out of the last groups to travel to Lamatar, Nepal and the SKY Project, South Africa due to exceptional circumstances. The majority of this 26 were on compassionate grounds with five the result of disciplinary issues.

Volunteers living in group dorms were (in most cases) also assigned ‘adoptive’ families to spend time with, so as to learn about local life and culture and assist in day to day tasks. Those in homestays were also expected to spend a proportion of their time with their hosts. Feedback on homestay and dorm accommodation models has been mixed: homestays can offer more opportunities for community participation, more support to the volunteer and invoke a sense of responsibility towards the host family, however they can also be quite lonely experiences with complications for risk management and supervision. They also offer greater language challenges – although in Peru, developing English language skills within host families was beginning to give volunteers a ‘way out’ of learning Spanish! The group dynamics of dorm living can be seen as both an advantage and a disadvantage – supporting volunteers who feel the need for regular people contact without language barriers but problematic where groups do not get along or where a ‘pack mentality’ develops and behaviour becomes harder to manage.

Given the scale of the inputs and the capacity of the volunteers involved, the ‘development’ outcomes of these projects have been both appropriate and meaningful at community level. Community-led development is rarely linear and much of it is process based. While some staff of DFID have felt that small building projects are not the most effective ‘development’ outputs, the evaluation team believes that given the wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding among the volunteers and the use of group work as the main methodology, activities which responded to community priorities and produced visible change, combined with other more service based and socially interactive activities were the most appropriate approach for this demographic. A future project might consider more selective grouping of volunteers with particular skill sets or a more developed knowledge base, or more experience of travelling living in developing countries, but this was neither feasible nor appropriate within the very short time frame and clear Terms of Reference of Platform2.

In-country evaluations involving community focus groups and interviews with key community stakeholders have shown some excellent early results; at times interviewers have had to push for more critical feedback, which has mostly concerned minor behavioural/attitudinal issues or language issues – the latter particularly in school settings. These evaluations have revealed significant qualitative changes that were not monitored through the logframe, which similar projects in the future should address. These include improving the motivation of the local communities to engage in community development and particularly the aspirations of the youth and perception of race, class and gender roles amongst both the volunteers and local communities; one Kenyan partner, MEFECAP previously had just 9 local youth volunteers, now there are over 90.

Output 3: Development Understanding

Volunteers develop an increased understanding of international development.

Indicators:

- Understanding of poverty and related issues: aid architecture; globally oriented; causes of poverty
- Understanding of climate change
- Creation of development advocates

A more structured approach to improving development understanding amongst Platform2 volunteers has been a key feature of the last 2 years of the programme, with some excellent results. A part time Development Awareness Coordinator, VDO Andy Hancock (appointed after IR's departure), devised a framework for development education based on the 12 global issues¹⁰ displayed on the DFID website, which has run as a clear and concise thread through the pre-departure Connect event, the in-country placement and the post-return Express event. As part of the Platform2 Global Learning Programme.

The various strands of the Global Learning Programme are as follows:

- *Pre-Departure/Post-Return Questionnaires* – completed online prior to the Connect event to determine understanding of and attitudes towards certain global issues. The same questionnaire is completed on return following the Express event so that a before/after comparison can be drawn. Introduced around September 2009.
- *Global Issues Framework* – introduced at Connect.
- *Global Research Project* – prior to departure, volunteers are asked to research one of the 12 global issues relevant to their placement country and prepare a 5 minute presentation to be given in-country to their fellow volunteers.
- *Global Scrapbook* – volunteers are encouraged to keep a scrapbook during their trip in which to record thoughts and experiences in whichever way they prefer, to be linked with global issues where possible.
- *Global Discussion* – held in-country on a weekly basis (following on from weekly meeting) and facilitated by the Supervisor. These discussions are an opportunity to raise issues affecting the local community and to utilise the extensive resources sent to each project, including games, role-plays, DVDs etc which were regularly updated. Research project presentations also given here.
- *Global Trip* – the most recent aspect of the programme; volunteers visit a development organisation to learn first hand about development issues. These are often country and context specific (e.g. a gold mine is visited in Ghana) but CA and DFID offices are also utilised where possible.

BUNAC have endeavoured to facilitate the in-country aspects of the global learning process where possible, amending weekly meeting reports to cover global discussions and assisting in the organisation of global trips, for instance. BUNAC have also briefed CA and VDOs prior to Express of any issues which have arisen in-country - particularly during global discussions - that could be looked at or explained in more detail at the event. In-country Project Supervisors have mostly been supportive of this aspect of the programme. However, their recruitment was primarily based on experience of working with young volunteers and not development experience/understanding, so some have been less enthusiastic about this addition to their role.

¹⁰ Poverty and Development; Agriculture and Food; Climate and Environment; Conflict and Security; Education; Gender Equality; Government; Health; HIV and AIDS; Human Rights; Trade; and Water and Sanitation.

The pre/post questionnaires provide the basis for analysing progress against the indicators for Output 3, however data only exists for six trips (trip L to trip Q), as presented below as overall percentages:

Criteria	% of Volunteers		Logframe target (Jan 2011)
	Pre-departure (baseline)	Post-return (to date)	
<i>Volunteers display a 'good attitude towards development issues'</i>	82.2	85.2	n/a (see 3.5 Programme Purpose)
<i>Volunteers recognise DFID</i>	67.2	96.0	n/a (see 3.5 Programme Purpose)
<i>Volunteers can't identify key issues (% should decrease)</i>	5.6	7.1	No quantitative target
<i>Volunteers understand 'aid architecture'</i>	27.2	80.2	85
<i>Volunteers are 'locally oriented' (% should decrease)</i>	41.4	19.5	10 (target is '90% globally oriented')
<i>Volunteers understand climate change</i>	46.3	60.7	80

Whilst these recent figures suggest that targets have not quite been met, particularly those pertaining to understanding of climate change, this may be partly explained by the disappointing completion rate of post-return questionnaires (estimated at around 50%). One explanation for this disappointing completion rate is the lack of incentive once the overseas placement has been completed. Comparisons between pre/post results show a greater degree of success, however, particularly for the three targeted areas, for instance a 55% increase in understanding of aid architecture. A smaller improvement (3%) in 'good attitude' (e.g. interested in learning more about development; see a sense of responsibility for the poor; believe global issues are important etc) may reflect that those who take part in Platform2 will have displayed such an attitude to development from the outset in order to have been interested in volunteering overseas and to have applied in the first place.

The apparent decrease in understanding of key issues may seem counterintuitive at first, however, it may simply be a reflection of the highly complex nature of poverty and development which may have been revealed to volunteers only during their placement. Feedback to BUNAC also revealed that where projects were not overtly related to development themes (for instance, building a market), some volunteers needed assistance in linking up their experience with their theoretical understanding.

Lack of progress against these indicators may be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, the targets in place are very ambitious but were also introduced late into the programme. Had they been established and progressed monitored from the outset, the Global Learning component could have been fine-tuned accordingly. Secondly, it may also have been necessary, after the departure of IR, whose role included development awareness aspects, to appoint a full-time coordinator, perhaps with a background in international development. A full time appointment would have enabled more regular liaison with in-country staff to maximise the effectiveness of in-country components (particularly the weekly discussion).

Statistics aside, anecdotal evidence from interviews with returnees and volunteers, past and present VDOs and returnees-turned-Platform2 staff indicates that the progress made against this output has been tremendous; all reported that development understanding was far greater in more recent volunteers compared to those who travelled earlier, as a result of the Global Learning Programme. To some degree volunteers are also the agents of their own learning, with those who want to learn more signposted by CA Platform2 staff to further resources. For instance, at the Express event volunteers have been given a USB wristband which contains a wealth of information linked into the DFID themes as well as tasks and activities for awareness raising. These were introduced in October 2009, but in May 2010 all pre-October 2009 returnees were also sent a wristband. This was intended to provide an opportunity for VDOs to re-engage with those less active, however view rates were disappointing at around 30% (compared to 80% of those handed out in person). This may indicate the

importance of face-to-face engagement opportunities, although social networking sites such as Facebook have enabled volunteers and returnees (particularly those in more remote areas) to engage in discussion online and to raise awareness of what is happening in-country, facilitated by VDOs who regularly inform the Facebook ‘group’ with upcoming events and opportunities to learn more in the UK.

The consensus among consortium staff and DFID is that development education should have featured more prominently from the start of Platform2, as well as from the start of the volunteer’s Platform2 ‘journey’. This, in turn, may have helped to ensure that all in-country staff were ‘on board’ with this aspect of the programme from the outset. Fostering development understanding had initially been assigned to IR, and their departure was undoubtedly a factor in the slow start, along with arguably too little focus on development understanding strategies in the programme design phase. Resources developed for use in-country were excellent, for instance, but if more lead in time had been available these could have been tailored to individual country profiles. A more complete and accurate data set to show progress could also have been produced if this had been clear from the start. Ultimately, however, it is the *timing* of the focus on Output 3 and not the *approach* used that falls short; the Global Learning Programme that existed by the end of the programme, whilst not perfect, clearly achieved some excellent results.

Output 4: Engagement

Platform2 results in the volunteers taking forward a programme of development awareness raising activities in the UK, which engage the volunteers’ communities in development issues.

Indicators:

- Levels of engagement in development awareness activities of the Platform2 volunteers
- Press and media coverage
- Impact of post trip development awareness raising activities on the volunteers’ communities

Supporting and Organising Engagement

Platform2 has a clear volunteer engagement strategy, led by CA and notably the VDOs. As with recruitment, a decision was taken to develop national coverage and Platform2 groups have been established in all regions. Mini case studies of engagement activities and the impact of Platform2 on volunteers can be found in Annex 6.

The importance of raising development awareness and engagement activities on return to the UK is made clear at the marketing stage of Platform2; the programme website states on its homepage: ‘A vital part of the programme is our returned volunteers creatively telling their story once back in the UK, and raising awareness of the global development issues they encountered while overseas’. This is reiterated during recruitment and then at the Connect event, but it is at the Express event that returnees are equipped with the practical skills to engage with their peers and wider communities and to turn their experiences and in-country ‘stories’ into development awareness-raising activities.

A key focus of Express is equipping the volunteers to raise development awareness on return to the UK – offering returnees practical workshops advising on how they may *Act* (campaigning/fundraising/volunteering), *Speak* (presenting/events/journalism) and *Create* (photography/art/film/music/performance) for development in ways which suit their skills. Workshops include: drama; photography; events planning; presentation skills; song writing; film editing; creative writing; and art. More recently, workshops on peer education and campaigning have been introduced. As discussed under Output 3, returnees are encouraged to present their experiences in terms of the global issues framework introduced at Connect. The 3-day Express residential also links up returnees with their regional VDOs so that they can discuss opportunities in their own areas for future engagement. Volunteers who returned to the UK early (particularly those on compassionate or health grounds) are also invited to attend Express events and take part in development awareness activities. Express events have tended towards 70% returnee attendance overall, and once supplemented by online communication via

Facebook/Twitter etc provides an effective medium for engaging with a significant number of returnees.

Whilst 'digital engagement' has been important to Platform2, face to face engagement has been fundamental for establishing relationships between VDOs and returnees. VDOs have led efforts to engage volunteers on their return and numbers have reflected peaks and troughs in the time they have had available for this. During the recruitment drive between January and April/May 2010 they were unable to focus on engaging with returnees being generated; since recruitment ended VDOs have worked solely on engagement and more have been deployed in London, where the largest numbers of volunteers live. This increased effort coincided with greater numbers of returnees with whom to engage. The period of Purdah also had an impact on engagement activities; with very little advertising of events permitted, national events were hugely underplayed and budget allocations had to be revised.

Monthly meetings in each region (best practice from London rolled out elsewhere), open to returnees and their peers, have offered an opportunity to discuss development issues and plan activities. The advantage of the planned step up in recruited numbers in the first year and a half of the programme was that VDOs were able to engage on a personal level with returnees and provide them with the support and encouragement which this target group have seemed to benefit from. Since numbers have dramatically increased, establishing this contact with as many returnees as possible as well as VDO attendance at Connect and Express events has been one of the crucial strategies.

Different regions have also faced their own challenges; in Scotland where there are fewer returnees (103), events have been hampered by bad weather at the start and end of 2010, plus the difficulties of getting between rural and urban areas. Wales poses similar challenges, particularly since public transport often makes it easier for volunteers to reach Birmingham or Manchester than Cardiff. This has made it difficult to engage with returnees but more so with wider communities. Attendance at national events based in London has often been beyond the means of the target demographic. Whilst there is perhaps a greater choice of events in London, engaging with the 450 returnees based there has been extremely difficult. Similarly, with fewer VDOs, the North West region has had to cope with 350 returnees spread across two major cities. From a national perspective, maintaining an up to date database of contact details for 1950 volunteers is a challenge, particularly for this target age group of 18-25 year olds, who are likely to be more mobile than older volunteers.

Engagement Facts and Figures: Key Findings

The engagement targets eventually agreed with DFID were challenging and established late on in the programme:

- Cumulatively some form of engagement in development awareness raising activities with an audience from their peers/community by 80% of returnees demonstrable.
- 60% volunteers take part in campaigning or awareness-raising groups (Platform2 Regional Groups, NGO activities, Ctrl+Alt+Shift, blogging, DFID young volunteers, media articles etc) for at least 6 months.
- 50% of volunteers organise or take part in some kind of event or activity that raises development awareness amongst their peers/ community members.

The most recent available figures suggest that 871 volunteers have engaged through some form of activity on return to the UK, excluding the 420 most recent returnees (Platform2's final two departures)¹¹. This constitutes around 63% of returnees, although it is extremely likely that some events go unreported and thus unrecorded,

¹¹ The 63% also takes into account the 107 last minute cancellations.

particularly at grass-roots levels e.g. presentations at schools/churches etc and activities that took place at the very start of the programme.

Volunteers' lack of engagement can be attributed to a number of factors, some of which have been alluded to above. VDOs may not have the required capacity (particularly in terms of time) to engage with all returnees to a sufficient degree – a clear concern during the early months of Platform2 and again at the start of 2010 when recruitment was prioritised. The tools provided through the Express residential and then ongoing VDO support is crucial for many volunteers; engagement statistics show that on their return from placements, the majority of returnees feel more comfortable taking part in activities organised by VDOs, CA more broadly and others, rather than instigating their own events.

Related to this point, there are some volunteers who do not gain sufficient confidence whilst on their placement to engage upon their return. Many young people, particularly in this demographic, may lead chaotic lifestyles or are simply too busy to commit to events. This can be further complicated by challenging geography, as discussed above in relation to Wales and Scotland, but also reported in the South West of England.

Finally, to put it bluntly, some volunteers may just not be interested in engaging further, despite their experience. However, a percentage of these young people may re-engage at a later point in their lives, having re-evaluated their experience and learning. At this stage any long term impacts are impossible to measure and the monitoring framework is not designed to track this 'journey' of engagement collectively or individually. However, unsystematic examples are emerging of volunteers who have become engaged once their life circumstances allow and volunteers who feel that they want to be engaged in the future but still lack the skills or confidence.

A future programme should consider longitudinal sample tracking as a way of examining qualitative and long term impacts more rigorously. CA are currently in the process of evaluating volunteer engagement at a much deeper level. This evaluation looks to identify what is meant by 'meaningful' engagement and also to shed light on why some returnees do not engage or engage very little. The output of this evaluation exercise will be of great use to future programmes.

To improve upon engagement figures, it will be crucial to ensure that there is sufficient support available in the last month of the programme to support the 420 most recent returnees. Plans to retain three VDOs through CA at their own expense to December 2011 will greatly assist with this, and 'Re-Connect' events over the last few months have provided an opportunity to re-engage with returnees.

The scale and range of development awareness raising activities has been vast¹², but can be broadly categorised as follows:

- Local/'grass roots' activities that returnees are encouraged to instigate themselves with support from VDOs.
- Regional events planned by VDOs with support from returnees.
- National Platform2 events e.g. the Poetry Book launch, EP launch and so on.
- National CA/Ctrl+Alt+Shift events or supported events in which all returnees are invited to participate.
- Non-CA development-related activities and events which are brought to the attention of returnees.

Pre-departure surveys show that most volunteers know little about development issues. The fact that 40% of active returnees have not just engaged, but taken part in *CA campaigning* highlights just how far many of them have traveled during their involvement with Platform2. Regional Platform2 groups (31%) and non-CA events (23%) are also popular. For some it is the friendships and shared experiences of being abroad that provide motivation for continuing their involvement, but the themes of development awareness can still underpin how these friendships are developing e.g. one group has now had two annual reunions and are planning a third – all to developing countries.

A significant and highly active minority of volunteers have had life changing experiences through their involvement in Platform2 and the programme itself has provided employment opportunities through the temporary posts made available as VDO staff have left to find other employment. Others are viewing their formal qualifications, as a stepping stone towards working in the field of development rather than the end in itself that they once perceived. There have also been a number of individual cases of volunteers inspired by their experiences overseas to create their own fair trade fashion labels, found their own charities or film companies and meet with Prime Ministers and Presidents to speak about development. MADE in Europe reported that at least 20 out of 80 recent applicants for 2 part time posts were Muslim Platform2 returnees.

Social Networking

Social networking has provided a useful means of maintaining a connection to multiple returnees and in-country volunteers as numbers have increased, but is also accessible to members of the public or friends of returnees who find the page or hear about Platform2 in a much broader way than email. The appeal of sites such as Facebook and Twitter is their interactive nature: individuals are able to comment on posts and exchange information on an immediate basis. Lines of communication are thus opened between volunteers/returnees, rather than channelled through the VDOs – this will be important for continuing engagement activities after the programme ends.

Significant analysis of the use of social networking has been undertaken by CA. The Platform2 Facebook page engages 944 'friends' (likely to be mostly volunteers), and is used as a means to inform volunteers of development issues and events and how they might be involved, as a platform to showcase activities that returnees are organising or participating in and as a point of contact for returnees with one another and Platform2. It is also clear that this account engages a variety of people e.g. 58 different people have engaged with the last 30 posts (by posting, commenting or 'liking'). Regional Platform2 pages as well as in-country pages exist, engaging 836 and 1126 young people respectively.

The combined figures for engagement via Facebook are considerably higher than the official active engagement figure and could be seen to feed into the 80% target for cumulative volunteer engagement. This raises the question of whether indicators/targets pertaining to social networking should have been included in the revised logframe. However, these figures should be approached with caution. The extent to which joining a Platform2 Facebook group constitutes *active* engagement needs to be considered, and should not be seen to replace face to face engagement opportunities. However, there is no doubting the power of social networking as a tool for communication.

Press and Media Coverage

Throughout Platform2, CA has taken a proactive approach towards engaging with the media and towards using it as creatively as possible. Media coverage of Platform2 has been both forward-looking (e.g. publicising upcoming events) and retrospective (e.g. returnees recounting their experiences). Many volunteers have been able to secure coverage of their particular experiences in local newspapers, radio shows and even local and national television. To identify strong stories for media coverage, volunteers are given the opportunity to fill in a form at Express with their five life-changing experiences, which are then followed up by the Media Officer. Volunteers are also encouraged to come to Platform2 staff if they'd like assistance accessing local media, which is then facilitated.

Active review and management of the website has ensured good coverage both locally and online. Upcoming events are also publicised through local print listings and local websites. There are plans for the Platform2 website to be retained and managed by CA as a showcase for the programme and the stories of the volunteers. Consequently, the programme will not 'disappear' entirely from public view.

National coverage has been a much more sensitive area: all serious incidents and notably the two fatalities that occurred were handled expertly, providing clear, accurate information with consideration paid to the bereaved families, without attracting undue negative attention to the programme overall. Achieving national coverage of good news stories has been more challenging – tabloids particularly have been more interested in the nature of the target demographic than the programme itself.

In total there have been more than 330 media hits, with more expected in the closing months of the programme. The 400 media hits target established recently is likely to be narrowly missed; there were 51 media hits during the 7 months between 30th January and 2nd September 2010, so it is doubtful that 70 hits will be achieved in the final 5 months. The marketing ban in the pre- and post-election period may have contributed to this shortfall, as larger events were not to be publicised.

Community Impact

The highly creative programme of engagement activities put together at regional and national level serves a dual purpose: as previously discussed, it primarily empowers returnees by enabling them to engage with development issues and raise awareness in ways that best suit their personalities and skills; however, it is also intended to maximise peer audiences and make learning about development a more attractive proposition. To establish the impact of awareness raising activities on wider audiences, CA have introduced feedback postcards at events and VDO’s report on audience size for each activity by updating the Ascent database (where all engagement activities, by volunteer name and type, are recorded). Audience size has varied from small groups of 10-20 people at grass-roots events, into the hundreds where volunteers have spoken at schools, colleges or on radio/television. Of the 113 feedback cards filled in, the following results were generated¹³:

Roughly how much did you know about the subject...	Before the event?	And after?
	Response %	Response %
I knew a lot more than the average person	18.6	42.5
I knew more than the average person	22.1	42.5
I knew an average amount	42.5	15
I knew a less than the average person	11.5	0
I knew a lot less than the average person	5.3	0

Although the quantity of feedback is low (the result of the difficulties associated with getting individuals to stay on after an event to fill in a form etc), these figures broadly indicate an increased understanding of the issues covered by the events in question. However, the finer details of the content and extent of learning cannot be easily established through feedback of this sort. Monitoring this aspect of development awareness and particularly measuring the quantitative impact on wider communities has been a challenge throughout the programme. Both DFID and the consortium acknowledge this has never been fully resolved and deserved more attention during the programme’s design phases.

From the start of Platform2, DFID was interested in the engagement of young people from BME communities, in particular Muslim communities. IR was a key partner in the original consortium and provided a natural link to some of these. When IR withdrew, CA discussed the possibility of working more closely with MADE in Europe, but eventually decided to develop its internal capacity to support young BME volunteers. Specific targets for BME/Muslim engagement were not established, instead CA looked to engage BME and Muslim returnees through regional groups as with all volunteers.

There are examples of coverage in BME media, and anecdotal stories about the impact of volunteers' experiences on their families and communities, but at a wider level there is a feeling among some Muslim agencies that working through a partner organisation, or perhaps through different faith groups at programme level could have enabled young Muslim volunteers to access more appropriate support in order to engage with 'their' particular communities. To some extent this appears to have begun to happen naturally; MADE in Europe and IR both reported that several of their volunteers have joined Platform2, and it is likely that recent emphasis on previous experience of volunteering will mean that other voluntary groups could also form natural informal working partners with Platform2.

Programme Purpose

Through a programme of volunteering on overseas development projects, increase awareness in the UK of global development issues among young adults and their communities.

Indicators:

- Levels of understanding of global development issues among Platform2 volunteer including:
- Positive attitude to development – 90%
- Recognises DFID – 100%
- Understands climate change (and its impact on the country visited) – 80%
- Understands aid architecture – 85%
- Globally oriented – 90%
- Knowledge of causes of poverty – focus group demonstrates deepened understanding of causes and solutions
- Increased awareness of development issues and willingness to take action amongst volunteers and their communities

Considerable achievements have been made against all four outputs of Platform2, with significant progress made in Outputs 3 and 4 since the Mid Term Review. The sheer challenge presented by Platform2 as a unique and pioneering programme should not be overlooked: for the most part, the consortium have successfully marketed the programme and recruited from scratch from a difficult target demographic; successfully established national partners and suitable projects in six countries, willing to commit to a steady influx of 1950 volunteers for 3 years; integrated a strong Global Learning component into the programme; and engage with hundreds of volunteers on their return to the UK through an array of development awareness raising activities. The Platform2 team have taken on this challenge with great commitment and passion.

To a substantial degree, as discussed in more detail under Output 3 above, Platform2 has successfully increased local development understanding for the volunteers who took part. The introduction of development themes at the start of the volunteer's Platform2 'journey' suggests it would be very difficult for a volunteer to come back with no additional development understanding – as a minimum, volunteers will understand the challenges faced by the particular community they visited. The ambitious targets set against purpose indicators and introduced late into the programme are likely to be narrowly missed although promising progress has been made: 85.2% of volunteers display a 'good attitude towards development issues' (target of 90%); 96% recognise DFID according to post-return questionnaires, short of the 100% target but a considerable improvement against the 67.2% baseline (see Output 3 for overlapping targets/results). Overall, this confirms the need to ensure a strong Global Learning Programme is in place from the outset, established during a sufficient lead in period.

Whilst the impact of Platform2 on individual volunteers' lives is not part of the programme's purpose it should be considered as an unintended positive outcome. A significant number of volunteers have gone on to pursue a

career in development in some form.

Measuring changes in development awareness of wider communities has been an aspect of the programme that has always been challenging, and was written into the programme at a late stage. A full data set from feedback postcards distributed at events in recent months has not yet been compiled, and will only give a small picture of impact (although this is by no means a reflection of a lack of effort on the part of CA). However, taking into account the nature and extent of engagement activities undertaken by more than 60% of returning Platform2 volunteers, the audience sizes recorded for each event and the predicted multiplier effect, it can be assumed that substantial awareness raising at community level has occurred. Clearly it would not be practically possible to establish a full baseline for development awareness within volunteers' wider communities. For future programmes, other ways of 'measuring' impact at community level will require careful consideration.

Risk Analysis and Mitigation

Maintaining the balance between managing and mitigating risk in-country, ensuring the independence of volunteers of this age group, as well as providing them with sufficient scope to maximise their experience has been a key challenge for Platform2. Whilst this is a difficulty shared by many youth volunteering organisations, the nature of the Platform2 target demographic has compounded this difficulty.

IR's early withdrawal from the consortium centred upon this issue. Whilst a disappointment for the programme given IR's excellent contributions at the start, it would not have been possible to reconcile their desired approach to minimising risk with that of other consortium partners and may have seriously jeopardised consortium relations as well as the intended nature of the programme. However, some of their concerns as well as their earlier inputs on cultural/religious sensitivities have subsequently fed into the risk management programme now in place.

Alignment with BS8848 Policies and Procedures

Partly in response to concerns raised by IR, the decision was made in the early stages of Platform2 to align with recently released BS8848 policies and procedures reflecting industry best practice. Alignment as opposed to full compliance allowed for these policies and procedures to be moulded to fit the specifics of Platform2, the individual projects/countries and account for lessons learned over time. As a result, in some areas Platform2 exceeds the requirements of BS8848 by a considerable degree. Given BUNAC's extensive experience in this field, a large proportion of compliance had already been achieved. The creation of the Platform2 BS8848 Operating Manual by BUNAC in 2009 - distributed in person in hard and soft copy to all country offices and project locations and regularly updated - , has proved to be an invaluable resource, drawing together all aspects of risk analysis and mitigation into a coherent document and standardising the approach to risk management across Platform2. Although initially some national partners found the amount of paperwork required by the manual demanding, most if not all have since felt the benefit of tighter procedures. Many have embedded these procedures and are likely to remain aligned with BS8848 after the programme ends.

The approach to risk analysis and mitigation, embodied by the Operating Manual, has been highly appropriate and ultimately the balance between volunteer safety/happiness has been maintained well. Attention to risk has informed all stages of country, partner and project identification. Country level threat analyses were carried out by BUNAC prior to a decision on that country's suitability, and were subsequently updated on an annual basis and at any relevant interim points. As an example, identifying potential partners in Pakistan (to align with DFID priority countries) was promptly ruled out because of unmanageably high risk levels. With regards to interim updates, the potential impact of the South Africa World Cup was established in the build up to the event, and contingency plans were developed when the volcanic ash cloud threatened flight schedules of departing and returning groups¹⁴. Throughout the programme, day-to-day monitoring/necessary updates or changes to risk analyses has occurred through contact with national partners and attention to Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) alerts. Platform2 staff have also ensured that every project is visited at 6 and 12 month points each year to ensure compliance on the ground.

Risk Analysis and Management: Documentation and Responsibilities

An overarching Platform2 Security/Risk Assessment and Management matrix was completed in collaboration with national partners and regularly updated for each country and project (pre-departure onwards). This matrix utilises a 'traffic light' system (red = high; amber = medium; green = low) for identifying impact/probability of all conceivable risks in order to reach a 'gross risk' scoring. This particular document also covered potential activities that volunteers were likely to pursue during 'down time'. The form contained consortium and national partner mitigation measures, and provides a concise, one document overview then supplemented by a wealth of other threat analyses documentation.

Significant responsibility was assigned to national partners (notably Project Supervisors who live with or near volunteers for the duration of the programme) regarding risk management, with ongoing support and facilitation offered by BUNAC managers and Country Coordinators. This reflects the fundamental role they play on the 'front line' of in-country activity, getting to know volunteers over an extended period (to a far greater degree than CA or BUNAC partners are able to), as well as their superior understanding of local and cultural context. Outlined in the Operating Manual with relevant templates, national partners are expected to complete

the following on an annual basis, to be regularly reviewed/updated by the Platform2 team who may also undertake the same assessments during the biannual country visits and in response to incidents:

- Threat analysis of Orientation
- Threat analysis of Project
- Transport Assessment Form
- Hotel, Hostel or Guest House Assessment Form
- Project Accommodation or Home Stay Assessment Form
- Orientation Venue Assessment Form
- Work Site Safety Assessment Form
- Safety Equipment Track Sheet (end of each 10 week programme)
- Competencies Checklists for Venture Leaders & Project Supervisors
- 10-Week Timetable for Activities, as well as Meals, Accommodation & Transport
- Daily and Weekend Sign-Out/Sign-In Sheets

In-country staff have also worked with BUNAC to formulate an Emergency, Incident and Contingency Plan that reflects local context, and to ensure that all those on the ground are familiar with their roles and responsibilities within that plan.

The Platform2 Operating Manual also defines the roles and responsibilities of in-country staff, particularly the Project Supervisor who provides ongoing support to volunteers for the duration of their stay and is their first point of contact. Aligning with BS8848 requirements, Supervisors must: facilitate weekly meetings with volunteers to address any concerns or issues that have arisen, which are then minuted by a volunteer and sent with comments from the Supervisor to the in-country Venture Leader and BUNAC; submit an incident log for any Code of Conduct breaches, accidents/incidents/'near misses' or medical issues within 24-48 hours of occurrence (this can then be cross-checked against the weekly report); ensure that each working day begins with a 'safety circle' (reviewing use of tools and safety equipment, etc).

Whilst adhering to all of the above generates a vast amount of documentation and often quite tedious bureaucracy, there have been no serious incidents on project sites in any country throughout Platform2. The approach to aligning with BS8848 procedures has been dynamic and fluid, anticipating and responding to changes in context and regularly updated to reflect programme learning. The Operating Manual thus became a 'living document', consistently referred to and revised.

Implications of Major Incidents: 2009

Whilst always a tightly controlled component of Platform2 as the decision to align with BS8848 standards shows, like many aspects of the programme the approach to risk management has evolved over time - with a notable 'watershed' moment in early 2009 after the first serious incident in Ghana. Whilst BUNAC have an excellent record in facilitating overseas volunteering and CA have a long history of working in developing countries, this incident indicated that the consortium may have underestimated the challenge posed by the combination of the target demographic with a lack of travel experience and their exposure to heightened risk in unfamiliar surroundings. Gaps in the existing risk management system but more so in its implementation on the ground were highlighted, and some of the risk management documentation outlined above was introduced in response (e.g. country specific Emergency, Incident and Contingency Plans).

As short term responses to the incident VDOs accompanied the subsequent group travelling to Kasapin, Ghana for the full 10 weeks. The former provided an opportunity for VDO's to observe and feedback on situations as

well as staff-volunteer relationships. It would not have been appropriate or desirable to maintain this model for the remainder of the programme, as it could easily have been seen to undermine the in-country staff.

Long term changes resulting from this incident, a second serious incident in India and general programme learning included a ban on all alcohol consumption in the community. In some countries there was also a reduction in 'down time', and more control over down time activities. The Code of Conduct was strengthened and distributed at the interview stage. The implications of breaching this code and the reason for having it in the first place were made clear to volunteers: whilst Platform2 are unable to prevent volunteers from breaking the rules, they have full control of the repercussions of doing so. Repeated minor breaches of the code have been treated with the same severity as one-off major incidents, and volunteers have been brought home despite the financial implications.

In-country staff, notably Project Supervisors were reminded of their own responsibilities to adhere to the Operating Manual and to be clear as to how major incidents should be handled. Where appropriate, project supervision has been doubled and either the Venture Leader or Deputy Leader must be in-country at all times. Existing sign in/sign out procedures for 'down time' were also tightened, and established as an approval mechanism for volunteers' intended activities. BUNAC have expressed their full support for in-country staff where recommendations have been made to send volunteers home. Despite the use of one Code of Conduct, there has been a degree of flexibility in how project partners choose to deal with disciplinary issues. Whilst to some this may seem unfair, it has allowed for consideration of the very different contexts in which these projects operate and varying group dynamics.

The above is not intended to suggest that risk management in Platform2 is purely reactionary. After a series of break ins but no actual incidents involving volunteers at the False Bay project, South Africa, also taking into account that much of the project work had been successfully completed, a pre-emptive decision was made to close the projects and thus remove volunteers from the situation where the risk itself could not be mitigated. As a target demographic that can be less risk-averse than others, the ways in which volunteers are reminded of their own agency in mitigating risks has also been strengthened. Connect events included a more detailed session on staying safe which is reiterated at the in-country orientation session with more context specific information.

Crisis Management: 2010

It is deeply unfortunate that the last two departures saw two volunteer fatalities (Peru September 2010; Nepal December 2010). Both were accidental deaths occurred during 'down time' on fully approved weekend trips. It is difficult to see how anything could have been done by BUNAC or national partners to prevent either fatality occurring. It was not possible to access information on average statistics for serious incidents/fatalities in similar volunteering schemes, in order to establish whether the figures for Platform2 are high, low, or as expected.

These two incidents have revealed the excellent Crisis Management Plan that Platform2 have in place, based on BUNAC's pre-existing crisis management plan. The plan is reviewed every 10 weeks so that all staff members of the Crisis Management Team are familiar with their roles and the issues that need to be considered: it is a heavily prescriptive and formal procedure to ensure that the situation is handled with maximum efficiency and minimal delay. The team consists of staff from both BUNAC and CA, including the relevant Country Coordinator. Clear, single channels of communication are established between all relevant stakeholders and all conversations and actions are carefully logged and circulated so that the Team is kept as up to date as possible. The Plan is extremely comprehensive, covering issues ranging from how to add an alert to the Platform2 webpage, to how to engage with the insurance company and how to liaise with the FCO. There is extensive advice on dealing with media interest and ensuring that priority is given to informing next of kin.

In both aforementioned incidents, in-country staff have worked effectively with the Platform2 team to deal with the practicalities associated with such an event; where necessary, Platform2 staff have travelled to the country in question to assist on the ground. Platform2 management staff also liaised with the bereaved families and supported them in whatever ways necessary. In both cases, BUNAC staff continued to offer support to remaining volunteers and facilitated the early return of those who felt unable to remain in-country, whilst CA staff have given pastoral support to families and volunteers on return to UK. DFID have rightly commended Platform2 staff on their handling of these two incidents, dealt with efficiently and with great sensitivity whilst also managing communication flows to DFID.

Programme Management

The strength of the CA-BUNAC consortium has certainly contributed to the success of Platform2. Roles are clearly defined and lines of communication between the two organisations are well established (see Annex 4). The consortium has faced several challenges, particularly in its first year. Difficulties regarding initial slow recruitment were dealt with openly and effectively, as CA improved its marketing and BUNAC developed increased understanding of the VDO role and importance of the Global Learning Programme. Similarly, the build up to and departure of IR was a testing time for all concerned, and there were understandable reservations of how Platform2 would be perceived without their involvement. These reservations proved to be unfounded, and programme publicity was re-launched without any individual organisation branding, establishing 'Platform2' in its own right.

Approach and Management

In such a programme where the two organisations share responsibility for achieving overall purpose, but individually focus on different outputs, there is scope for both interference and lack of communication. Contractually CA oversees the programme, but throughout such difficulties has largely been avoided, with each respecting the strengths and experience of the other, keeping abreast of their progress and showing interest in their approach. For instance, BUNAC staff are encouraged to attend Connect/Express events, whilst travelling CA staff are encouraged to 'drop in' on projects. Early difficulties surrounding the duplication in the areas of risk management and security were resolved through the introduction and continued development of the Operating Manual.

For the duration of the programme, roles have been clearly defined:

- CA hold responsibility for all Platform2 publicity and marketing. VDOs will assist in generating completed application forms, at which point recruitment is handed over to BUNAC. CA are responsible for Connect and Express events and all engagement activity.
- Communication with DFID has been the responsibility of CA via Head of Programme Mark Vyner.
- BUNAC are responsible for taking application forms forward to interview and acceptance stage. They are then responsible for all trip-related and in-country activity, managed on the ground by national partners, apart from the Global Education component (although this has been built into weekly meetings, etc).

For the duration of the programme the consortium has maintained a national approach, utilising CA regional offices to accommodate part/full time VDOs and occasionally as volunteer interview venues for BUNAC.

Both CA and BUNAC have employed a number of returnees over the course of the programme, which has been very effective. These returnees offer an insight into what works on the ground and what doesn't, and all of those interviewed could clearly identify ways in which the programme had improved since their own overseas experience. Where staff turnover has increased, particularly in CA, returnees can 'take the baton' from VDOs and utilise their knowledge of the programme immediately. Platform2's youthful team have been an asset to the programme - any lack of experience has been more than made up for by their commitment to and passion for Platform2's purpose, particularly in its final year when all staff were operating at full capacity.

Christian Aid

Some changes were made to the distribution of VDOs to better accommodate demand. For instance, there are now four as opposed to two VDOs in London, one of whom was withdrawn from a quieter area of the country. Lead VDOs were established in the North and the Midlands and were responsible for managing others in their area. This proved to be very successful.

In more recent months, partly as a result of staff turnover, it has not been possible to continue with the lead-VDO system and the flat management structure has been reintroduced. However, certain VDOs act as mentors to newer staff members, and regular webex conferences enable VDOs to exchange ideas and receive briefings on upcoming events. CA and Platform2 'gappers' have proved to be an extremely useful resource to VDOs,

particularly as the number of returnees has escalated.

As Platform2 is built upon a group work model, which appeals to its target age group, it has been difficult to keep returnees in more remote areas engaged. As such, some less populous regions have faced more difficulty in maintaining levels engagement than others – notably Wales and to a lesser extent Scotland. In terms of recruitment in these areas, smaller populations within the target demographic result in fewer volunteers, and so lower figures for these regions should be considered in relative terms.

BUNAC

Similarly to CA, BUNAC have adapted their team to respond to demand. The size of their team increased from four to eight as recruitment figures and the number of projects rose. As discussed under Output 1, external interviewers were also brought in to respond to growing numbers of applicants as planned. BUNAC have continued to operate with efficiency and effectiveness, and for the final departure (October 2010) operated with a skeleton staff of four

Whilst BUNAC has also experienced some staff turnover, this has had very little impact on the programme: as a relatively small team BUNAC have ensured that all members are fully briefed on all projects and partners and all team members are copied into email communication. Programme knowledge and understanding has thus remained consistent.

The Country Coordinator role has worked well, providing a single point of contact to the national partners and allowing each Coordinator to establish a rapport with Project Supervisors and Venture Leaders that enables both parties to be forthcoming with concerns and to mutually seek resolutions to any problems that arise. In every project, Country Coordinators have maintained high levels of communication with their partners in whatever way works best for the in-country staff. Relationships thus differ between partners and between countries with some more formal (India) and others more informal (Kenya). This degree of flexibility has allowed BUNAC to mould their approach to fit different cultural sensibilities.

With a clear end point to their role, there has been little need for a detailed exit strategy aside from the planned reduction of staff. BUNAC have ensured that all national partners understand when and how the programme will end and have carried out evaluations with the project staff and communities in all countries. Getting the last group of volunteers back to the UK proved rather more testing than usual due to the adverse weather conditions in December and resulting complications, but was safely achieved nonetheless.

National partners

The partnership model employed by BUNAC worked well in-country, although developing projects for groups of this nature and size has been a learning process for BUNAC. Consequently, not all projects have worked as well as intended, although changes have been made where necessary and in the light of feedback and experience.

To instil ownership of the project, national partners have been responsible for the appointment of project staff, namely Project Supervisors and Deputy Supervisors. BUNAC have played a fundamental role in establishing the criteria for these posts, however. Employment of locally based Supervisors has been appropriate and effective, given their understanding of local culture and customs.

Whilst criteria for the Project Supervisor role includes ‘confidence in dealing with people from a variety of backgrounds’, some Supervisors have found the target demographic difficult to handle and especially in cases of persistent low levels of bad behaviour. Equally, volunteer feedback on some project staff has been fairly critical. Clearly, Supervisors are ‘on the front line’ regarding the enforcement of the Code of Conduct, which can make them unpopular. Furthermore, cultural differences play a significant role here, for instance, volunteer frustration at ‘African Time’. Placing Supervisors in or near volunteer accommodation has benefitted the programme in terms of safety and risk mitigation, but may have placed additional strain on staff. However, the introduction of a formal requirement for breaks for Supervisors during each 10 week trip has helped relieve some of this strain.

Best practice has been shared between Coordinators and also to national partners through a newsletter distributed every 10 weeks. BUNAC would have liked to have brought all partners together at some point in the programme to share experiences and lessons learned, which would have also provided an excellent opportunity

to take partners through the Operating Manual.

As a result of their participation in Platform2, national partners have experienced significant capacity strengthening, notably in health and safety and risk management; BUNAC have encouraged them all to continue using a context-specific version of the BS8848 guidelines and many are keeping on supervisory staff recruited for Platform2.

In terms of a broader exit strategy, national partners were advised several months in advance that Platform2 would be coming to an end. Whilst there is significant disappointment to lose this constant stream of volunteers and income as shown in the mostly positive evaluations, most have been able to identify ways of continuing their involvement with communities where this is appropriate, albeit at a slower rate of progress. IDEX in India, with its 40+ volunteers in each placement, will feel the biggest impact through the loss of Platform2 volunteers. Community-run projects such as the two in Ghana are likely to find it more difficult to maintain momentum, although it is hoped that the Platform2 experience will have helped them establish how local or international volunteers might contribute to the community. The evaluation process itself has also allowed many to reflect on what they have learned and what elements of Platform2 they would like to retain and incorporate within their ongoing programmes. Working with and through local development NGOs has enriched the way that some partners have worked. The role of Project Supervisors and Deputy Supervisors of many local partners has been widened considerably through Platform2 and they have thrived on this challenge, developing their skill base and becoming involved in the Global Learning Programme on a personal level.

Relationship with DFID

Whilst DFID have expressed their reservations about the wider impacts of Platform2, particularly regarding meaningful volunteer engagement and awareness raising on return to the UK, they have been very forthcoming in their support for the consortium, the strong working relationship in place and the speed and clarity with which it has provided DFID with requested information. After an initial period of micromanagement, particularly around marketing, DFID disengaged somewhat once the project was underway. Whilst this may have been testament of their confidence in the Platform2 management team, this was a ground breaking programme and partners often needed clear guidance on certain key issues which DFID managers had at times not thought through with other colleagues. The consortium also experienced three managerial handovers over the course of the programme.

The pre-election period was a frustrating (and unexpected) time for the consortium and getting input from DFID on key decisions at this time was more difficult. As a regular component of General Election build up, it seems reasonable to assume that DFID could have done more to forewarn the consortium of the implications of purdah. More challenging still was the post-election period. There was substantial confusion at this time, during which the future of the programme was threatened and publicity of engagement activities suspended. The extent to which Platform2 should be publicising its activities caused significant tension, given pressures to reach engagement targets on the one hand and suspension of marketing activity on the other. There is now more clarity, however, with a focus on engaging returnees at a local level, maximising audiences at awareness raising activities and events and demonstrating impact wherever possible.

Working on a contractual government-funded programme has been a learning experience for the consortium partners, particularly at moments of high pressure such as in the aftermath of the first fatality. Whilst there have been challenges including those outlined above, overall the consortium have felt that Platform2 had the support of DFID and recognise the department's own challenges to achieve measurable results at justifiable costs.

Platform2 Exit Strategy

There have been different exit strategies for different parts of Platform2, with those of national partners and BUNAC already outlined above. The exit strategy for CA has not been as clear. At the start of 2010 CA negotiated with DFID the option of continuing to use Platform2 as a brand name, and the intention at this point was for the consortium to seek further funding from other sources to continue the programme in some form, with the same basic principles and format.

Government plans, announced at the Conservative Party Conference in September 2010, to initiate a new volunteering programme to be known as 'International Citizen Service' has effectively pulled the rug out from under the exit strategy of the Platform2 consortium; whilst this scheme will focus on a wider demographic and

have a stronger development component, it does share some broad similarities with Platform2, and as a result it is very unlikely that funders would opt to set up a programme which might seem to overlap with the 'official' government programme.

As a result of the above, the Platform2 exit strategy for the UK is only partially formed. The long term strategy of CA is to capture as many returnees as possible as lasting champions for development. The general message communicated to returnees is that Platform2's work continues through their ongoing engagement in development awareness activities. On a positive note, CA have extended the contracts of the Project Manager and three VDOs until the end of 2011, with a view to engage with most recent returnees as well as supporting longstanding returnee development activities. The Platform2 website will also remain under the management of CA, as a showcase for the programme and as a resources site.

Returnees are also encouraged to link up with Ctrl+Alt+Shift – CA's youth programme. However, as a relatively new organisation, Ctrl+Alt+Shift is yet to be subsumed into the regional and local structures of CA and there is a distinct lack of resources and capacity at local level. The model has not attempted to explicitly forge new partnerships with other organisations to support volunteer engagement in the UK. To some extent, however, this is beyond the objectives of the Platform2 programme. Sustainability of the engagement activities of the returnees has been the primary focus; whilst encouraging other organisations to offer the volunteers opportunities to engage might have strengthened this, CA is putting considerable resources into this in the ways described above. However, more work is needed to signpost volunteers to opportunities for continued engagement before the programme ends. This is particularly important for the target demographic, who have already demonstrated a preference for guidance and structure.

In view of this situation, it would appear more appropriate to investigate ways in which Platform2 volunteers could in some way act as mentors for the volunteers returning from the newly established scheme, and for CA (Ctrl+Alt+Shift and Platform2 Regional groups) to offer ongoing support to enable these volunteers to engage in development related activities in the UK.

Data Management

A wealth of data has been collected and actively used by the consortium over the lifetime of Platform2, which has been used amongst other ways to monitor recruitment of BME and Muslim volunteers, monitor levels of engagement in different regions and in different activities and inform alterations to Connect/Express events and in-country practice. This has rightly been commended by DFID. The CA Ascent database was used from the programme's mid point onwards to manage Platform2 engagement data, with a function to import from BUNAC's in-house database in place. Whilst this has worked fairly well, a coordinated IT system established from the outset – perhaps some form of extranet – would have been a more efficient way to manage the amount of data generated from a single point, particularly in the last year of the programme during which the volume of data has escalated.

Financial Management

Financial management has been efficient and decisions about spending reflect the approach and objectives identified by the consortium. A detailed Platform2 budget was established in the very early stages of programme development. With this in mind, the Platform2 budget has been managed very well, with an overall underspend of between £300,000 and £400,000 estimated at present. Half of this underspend can be attributed to lower flight costs than expected – partly as a result of locations chosen. Intelligent use of the CA gap year scheme also allowed Platform2 to 'employ' gappers to assist VDOs in local offices at a lower cost than that of employing additional VDOs.

There is likely to have also been some underspend on Express, as a result of lower than expected attendance. This may have extended to the engagement budget more generally, for activities at both national and regional level, which is somewhat disappointing. Early cautious spending may also have influenced figures in this way, along with the focus on local, grass roots events and fewer large scale events at DFID's instruction from May 2010 onwards. However, some of this underspend will go towards maintaining the Platform2 website and adding additional resources. The use of gappers and money saved through using this strategy have also provided valuable lessons on project management and good practice in terms of youth employment.

At the time of the revision to target recruitment figures, a proportion of the budget was moved to cover increases to the cost per head of the programme, reflecting foreign exchange movements and the international

rise in food prices. Additional supervision costs were also accounted for here after the revisions to risk management procedures. All parties were satisfied with these decisions.

With the benefit of hindsight, it may have been useful to have an increased budget for in-country activities (i.e. a nominal amount per volunteer), notably as back up to purchase resources/materials for community-run projects given the link established between insufficient work for volunteers and increased chances of poor or risky behaviour resulting from boredom and frustration. However, this had to be balanced with the commitment made by the communities involved to support the work being undertaken by the volunteers. Having said this, unforeseen events, such as large funerals or adverse weather conditions could mean that financial contributions were interrupted in even the most committed communities.

Key Lessons Learned

The challenges faced by Platform2 are represented in the lessons outlined below, together with the programme's achievements:

Programme Design

- Platform2 has shown the importance of establishing the 'right' consortium for programme success. Identifying consortium partners that can play to their strengths and understand development and how to engage with young people is essential. A strong consortium relationship, with clearly defined roles and well established communication has allowed for effective and efficient management of the programme.
- The basic model of sending groups of volunteers for extended periods to communities, with local supervisors and with a mix of home stay and hostel accommodation, is premised on the ability of all staff involved to work effectively through group dynamics using participative informal education approaches. Overall, it has worked very well indeed.
- A lead in period prior to the first departure is important, so that clear strategies for recruitment/engagement can be devised and put in place. Many of the challenges faced by Platform2 (particularly regarding slow recruitment in the programme's first year) can be attributed to a lack of time before the first group of volunteers were due to depart the UK.
- The approach to measurement of development awareness, in quantitative and qualitative terms, needs to be clarified and agreed at the programme design phase so that impact can be monitored and baselines established from the start of the programme.
- An agreed 'volunteer pathway' needs to be established, which clarifies how long a volunteer will engage with the programme, and the exit strategy when this engagement finishes.
- There is potential to identify associate UK based partners for a consortium, who can support volunteers to deepen their engagement in communities where activism is uncommon.

Recruitment and Selection

- The Platform2 team may have underestimated the difficulty of 'selling' such a programme in its early stages. A range of innovative marketing strategies are essential for recruitment, with particular attention paid to the power of digital media and social networking.
- A successful programme will generate new volunteers so a tapered recruitment strategy is a viable approach (starting with fewer numbers and increasing) as this also allows systems and procedures to be embedded.
- Approaches to recruitment have to be flexible and take account of local contexts and the different challenges these present – for example, simply meeting young people in rural areas can be a considerable task, while recruitment in a small University town is likely to be quite seasonal. In some communities, contact with families will be needed if volunteers are to get permission to travel.
- Suitability as well as eligibility of volunteers should be considered during the selection process, as BUNAC were able to do so with increased applications. This has implications for safety and security in-country as well as engagement on return.
- To reduce the number of last minute cancellations who have 'nothing to lose' by dropping out of a programme of this nature, it may be worth considering ways in which commitment to the overseas trip as well as to the post-trip engagement programme might be gained in some way. However, fostering this commitment amongst individual and scattered volunteers in a programme such as Platform2 which is built upon a group work model on return is a challenge. A long term programme might consider some form of UK based pre-volunteering phase, through which volunteers with particularly chaotic lives might be able to

demonstrate a level of commitment through some form of short term volunteering.

- Platform2 has shown how one organisation utilising multiple approaches can engage with a diverse population.
- In-house management of the programme website is preferable and potentially less costly.

In-Country Projects

- In-country projects that have required inputs of several groups – in some cases placements have run the length of Platform2 – have developed their own development processes. Initially communities can expect volunteers to be there to ‘fix things’ for them, but over time they have started to realise that their own input is just as important. With longer projects, more challenging global learning opportunities could be created and the possibility of volunteers working together with local young people could be considered.
- A 10 week placement often seems like a huge commitment to volunteers before they go. In practice, they realise that they need this time to acclimatise, gain the trust of local people and really start to understand some of the social/cultural/political dynamics of their placement community and country.
- The pre-departure Connect day has worked well throughout Platform2. However a longer, residential briefing building on this model would offer more opportunity to: improve development understanding (including a country/project-specific focus); cover risk mitigation/personal security in greater depth; establish stronger foundations for engagement on return; allow volunteers to gel prior to departure to reduce the chances of group conflict in early stages when volunteers are finding their feet in unfamiliar surroundings.
- Maintaining the balance between keeping volunteers happy and keeping them safe has been a major challenge overseas. Ensuring all project-related risks are managed as far as possible and that assessments are regularly updated has been crucial to addressing the challenge for Platform2, but accepting that 24-hour supervision is neither practical nor desirable has allowed volunteers to get the most out of their experience.
- Related to the above, committed and experienced local supervisors play a key role in managing risk and supporting volunteers. Experience of working with youth was rightly prioritised over a deep understanding of development for Platform2, with this aspect of the programme facilitated through excursions and the Global Learning Programme.
- ‘Down time’ has undoubtedly been the most difficult aspect of the in-country programmes to manage in terms of risk mitigation and is when all serious incidents have occurred. It is during periods of ‘down time’ that volunteers have felt least safe according to evaluations, yet is also the time they value the most and plan collectively precisely because it is so precious.
- DFID or consortium-partner presence in-country does not appear to make a huge difference to programme experience and development understanding. Platform2 has shown that the nature of the projects themselves and the suitability of the national partner should be the priority in-country selection, along with overall risk levels.
- Volunteers need to understand the purpose of projects where links to basic development themes are not overtly obvious, so that they feel they are ‘making a difference’ and can develop their understanding of more complex development themes. Related to this, BUNAC quickly established that dissatisfaction with quality and quantity of project work was more likely to result in risky or poor behaviour, so there are implications for risk mitigation here too. Full, detailed work plans for the duration of the trip, such as those developed for Platform2, should be considered a basic requirement.
- Community-run projects, operating without the support of an intermediary NGO can underestimate the amount of materials needed to keep a group occupied, and may be more susceptible to financial difficulty as a result of unforeseen events (e.g. large funerals).
- Where communities are already working with a local NGO there are likely to be significant levels of commitment to development and an understanding of how the community itself will contribute to these

processes. In this context, volunteers can add value and create synergy by complementing the input of the NGO and learning from this work at the same time.

Development Understanding

- The model for global learning that had been developed by Platform2 offered a basic framework of key themes through which volunteers could develop their understanding of the underlying causes of poverty. It was flexible enough to allow country specific themes to be developed in-country and to be accessible to the range of abilities and interests among the volunteers taking part. A future programme might look at ways in which local young people in the placement communities could be involved in this part of the Global Learning Programme.
- It proved important to begin the process of development understanding prior to departure, for Platform2 this meant including elements within the Connect day and introducing global research project.
- Ensuring volunteers have access to local or international development organisations during their placements that can provide an account of the realities of development on the ground should supplement this Global Learning Programme, building on the existing global trips component.
- Volunteer engagement in development awareness really comes alive through their placements as they interacted with local communities on issues such as rubbish collection, personal hygiene, corporal punishment in schools and so on. Offering the volunteers practical tools to support this engagement was very important. During the placements this took different forms, including basic first aid training, peer supported teacher training, teaching through drama and so on, whilst back in the UK the Express residential provided structured skill-based sessions.

Engagement

- Defining 'effective engagement' proved a real challenge during Platform2. DFID in particular seemed to 'change the goalposts' regarding this objective and how it could be measured. Clarity is needed about both the scale of engagement desired and its scope and duration.
- Platform2 successfully redefines what is meant by engagement activity and has developed a unique and highly creative programme of events which appeals to young people. Programmes of a similar nature should approach engagement and awareness raising in similarly innovative ways to ensure maximum participation.
- Establishing a national programme with regional groupings allowed Platform2 to develop an appropriate programme of engagement opportunities for the volunteers. This has shaped CA's own approach to working with young people. Good use was made of CA advocacy and engagement work to 'piggyback' on high profile events.
- Allocation of a budget for VDOs to use to support volunteers practically worked well and in some areas was supplemented by local funding, for instance, the Co-op in the North East.
- As with recruitment, the human resource implications of supporting volunteers in very rural/large urban areas require flexible management.
- A huge area of development which remains invisible throughout Platform2 is the underlying personal and social development that the programme has facilitated for every volunteer taking part. Not one volunteer interviewed during this evaluation or the Mid Term Review failed to mention the personal impact that the programme has had on them; on their confidence, interpersonal skills and aspirations. A future programme should acknowledge this aspect of the work and ensure that it is recognised and articulated in a way that volunteers can use to build their own curriculum and employment opportunities.

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference

Independent Project Completion Review (PCR) of DFID's Youth Volunteering Programme, 'Platform2'

1. Background

DFID's Platform2 youth volunteering programme was launched in February 2008. It is fully funded by UKaid from the Department for International Development (£10m over 3 years) and implemented by Christian Aid and BUNAC.

Platform2 recruits less advantaged UK volunteers (aged 18-25) to complete ten week community led development projects overseas followed by a programme of development awareness activities in the UK. There are currently Platform2 projects in Ghana, India, Peru, Kenya, Nepal and South Africa. These projects are managed by a national partner. Platform2 had an original target of placing 2500 UK volunteers over the 3 years, with a particular focus on Black & Minority Ethnic backgrounds. The target number of volunteers has now been reduced to 1950

DFID's support to Platform2 will end in January 2011 and an independent Project Completion Review (PCR) is required. Consultancy support is required to produce this. These terms of reference (ToR) outline the focus and scope of the evaluation, as well as timing and the expected number of person days required.

For further information about the project, please visit the Platform2 website: www.myplatform2.com

2. Purpose of the Consultancy

The objective of the consultancy is to conduct a high quality independent, PCR of DFID's Platform2 youth volunteering programme. The consultant will identify to what extent the project has achieved its purpose and outputs.

3. Scope of review

Specifically this review will consider the following:

The review will assess the project's achievements since the project's start date (January 2008), taking account of the findings of the Mid-Term Review (in September 2009) against all output and purpose indicators in the revised log frame. This will include a particular focus on output 415, and should include a review of the impact and outcomes of the programme on a sample of volunteers from early departures from their trip to the current day.

The consultant will review the risk analysis for the programme, and assess whether the risk level and mitigation actions taken were appropriate.

The review will consider the programme management role played by the consortium partners and DFID in the UK, as well as the national level partners in-country, and any programme management issues/weaknesses will

be highlighted. There will be a short assessment of the financial management of Platform2 as part of this. (NB This is not an audit).

The review will highlight key lessons learned through the Platform2 programme which may inform similar future programmes. Part of this lesson learning will include highlighting any challenges the programme faced.

The key recipients of the final review will be DFID, the project partners and potential future sponsors of Platform2.

4. Inputs

The selected consultant will have considerable experience of leading and coordinating successful development programme evaluations and will have worked on volunteer initiatives. They will have extensive experience of projects which involve young people both here in the UK and in developing countries and have ideally worked on DFID programmes/evaluations.

This consultancy will be for up to 18 days from July 2010 to Friday 23 January 2011. This will include preparation, conducting the review and report writing. Please note: (i) Travel is required within the UK and to visit the projects in Peru Travel time is already factored into the 17 person days required (ii) The consultant must be available to attend at least one Express day in October16. Otherwise, all other dates for review activities can be determined between the consultant and Christian Aid.

An approximate breakdown of inputs per person days is as follows:

2 days for desk based review of project documents (to be provided to the selected consultant by Christian Aid).

2 days for interviews/meetings with UK based Platform2 team members (Christian Aid, BUNAC, Volunteer Development Officers, DFID project team). This will enable the consultant to review the programme management approach to the initiative

4 days for interviews with returned Platform2 volunteers. This should include a review of development awareness activities undertaken by Platform volunteers and the impact they have had. The consultant will attend some development awareness activities as part of this. Christian Aid will work with the consultant to agree a range of activities.

1 day at Express in either August or October. (An 'Express' residential is arranged for all Platform2 returned volunteers to share their experiences and plan their development awareness activities.)

5 days (including travel) for visit to Platform2 project in Peru.

3 days for drafting the narrative report and completing the DFID PCR template.

1 day for debrief meeting in December 2011 to discuss the draft report.

Christian Aid will facilitate the scheduling of any meetings required for the review. All logistical arrangements for accommodation and travel will be made by the consultant with support from Christian Aid.

5. Outputs

The consultant will submit the following to Christian Aid & DFID at the end of the review:

i) A narrative report of around 15 pages (and no more than 20 pages). This report will include an executive summary/ key findings section (of less than 1.5 pages), and it will address all the points in section 3 of this ToR.

ii) A completed Project Completion Report template, as per DFID format.

The consultant will also debrief implementing partners (Christian Aid/ BUNAC) and DFID on the findings of the review in December 2010.

6. Timing

The project completion review will be conducted between August 2010 and Friday 23 January 2011. The final draft of the PCR should be submitted to Christian Aid (Mark Vyner, Head of Programme, Platform2) and DFID's Platform2 project lead (Manisha Prajapati, Deputy Programme Manager Education & Youth, Outreach and Stakeholder Relations Team, DFID).

The draft narrative report and PCR template should be received no later than one week before the debrief in December. These reports should be finalised and submitted by the end of the third week in January.

7. Reporting

The consultant will report to the Christian Aid Head of Programme for Platform2, Mark Vyner, and the DFID project lead for Platform2, Cathy Welch.

July 2010

Annex 2: Programme Documents Reviewed

- Platform2 Terms of Reference; Revised logframe (Aug 2010).
- Final general and technical proposals by Christian Aid, BUNAC, Islamic Relief Consortium.
- Platform2 budgets and forecasts.
- Quarterly reports 2008-2010.

- Eligibility score sheet.
- Eligibility statistics for all volunteers: including breakdown of ethnicity; education; criminal records etc.
- Early returnee statistics for duration of programme: including pre-flight and disciplinary/compassionate/health/other grounds.

- Audience Research Report.
- Breakdown of how applicants (successful and unsuccessful) heard about Platform2.
- Interviewer guidance/briefing for applicant interviews.
- ‘Thinking about project placements’ documentation for use in interviews.
- Sample of interview reports (16 volunteers from January 2010 and October 2010).
- Pre-departure documents for volunteers.

- Project identification documentation: Initial email contact; 1st and 2nd rounds of questions.
- Project summaries for all projects that have existed over the course of the programme.
- In-country evaluation guidance for focus groups/interviews.
- In-country evaluation interview notes for Ghana; Nepal; Peru.
- Volunteer Code of Conduct.
- Full BS8848 Operating Manual including: risk management documents; crisis management plan; leadership team breakdown etc.
- Risk Assessments for Ghana projects May 2009.
- Ghana Threat Assessment Country Level.

- Sample of weekly reports from all countries.
- Development awareness strategy paper.
- Global Learning Programme PowerPoint for Connect Events.
- Global Scrapbook/Research Project templates.
- Pre-departure/post-return questionnaire form.
- Statistics for development understanding based on pre-departure/post-return questionnaires for last 6 departures.
- Recent Connect/Express event itineraries.
- Breakdown of engagement activities and budgets at regional and national level.
- Google Documents folder with pictures, YouTube videos and other examples of engagement activities.
- Feedback postcard template for audiences at engagement events and breakdown of comments.
- Analysis of social networking statistics.
- Ascent report (updated to 5/12/10) including breakdown of activities by category and volunteer; numbers of volunteers engaged; projected audience size per event etc.
- Various materials produced by volunteers including the poetry book, e-zine, CD of songs etc.
- Media coverage breakdown for full programme.
- Dashboard of website hits for duration of programme.
- Platform2 Coverage booklet 2008.

Annex 3: Interviews Conducted

(* denotes phone interview)

DFID

Cathy Welch – Programme Manager (present), Outreach and Stakeholder Relations Team

Saadia Mahmood – Programme Officer (present), Outreach and Stakeholder Relations Team

Nicolette Stoddart* – Programme Manager until April 2010; Outreach and Stakeholder Relations Team

Manisha Prajapati – Deputy Programme Manager until September 2010; Education and Youth Outreach and Stakeholder Relations Team; Communications Division.

PLATFORM2

Head Management Team

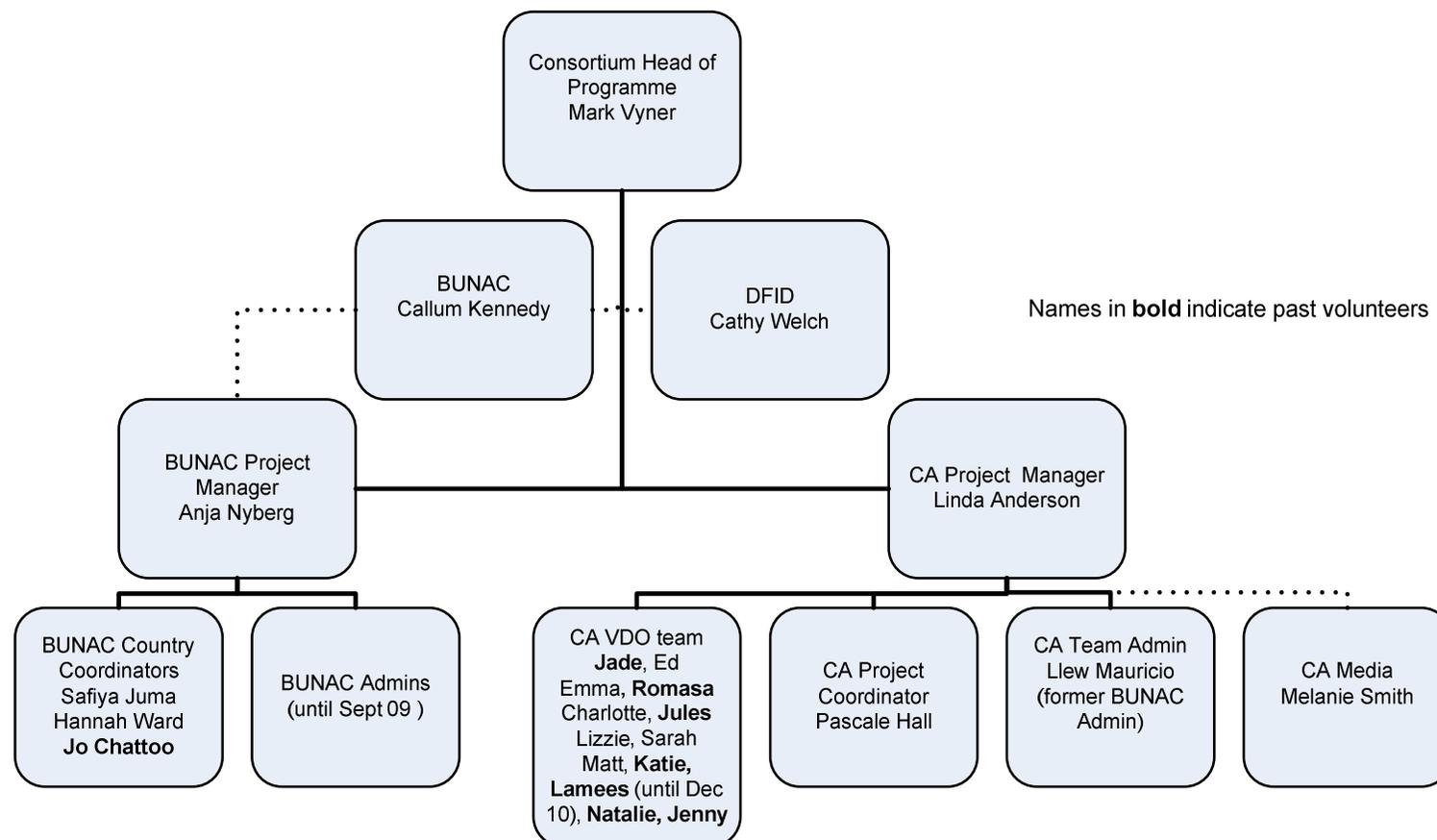
Mark Vyner – Head of Programme (CA)

Linda Anderson* – Project Manager (CA)

Anja Nyberg – Project Manager and SA Country Lead (BUNAC)

CA VDOs	BUNAC
Jules Suit* (London – also returnee and former gap volunteer)	Callum Kennedy – Director
Jenny Kehoe* (North West – also returnee and former gap volunteer)	Safiya Juma – Nepal/Peru Country Coordinator
Natalie Williams* (Midlands – also returnee and former gap volunteer)	Jo Chattoo – Kenya/India Country Coordinator
Katie Ormerod (Midlands – also returnee and former gap volunteer)	Hannah Ward – Ghana/India Country Coordinator
Matt Grady* (Scotland - 50%, also CA youth coordinator in Scotland)	Caroline Clark* – ex Manager
Sarah Rowe (Yorkshire – former CA gap year volunteer)	Caroline Hodges* – ex Coordinator
Jade Lambert (South West – also returnee, and former BUNAC administrator)	Amanda Summerscales* – ex BS8848 Compliance Officer
Lizzie Spencer (North East)	
Ed McGregor (Wales and West of England)	
Lamees Hafeez (BME VDO – also returnee)	
Andy Hancock* (Ex VDO for South West and Development Awareness Coordinator)	
CA (Platform2)	
Llewellyn Mauricio* – Team Assistant (and former BUNAC administrator)	
Mel Smith* – Media Officer	
CA (Headquarters)	
Paul Langley – Head of Marketing Division	
Kiruja Micheni – Corporate Security Manager	

Annex 4: Platform2 Organogram at Programme Completion



Annex 5: Report of Field Visit to Peru 22nd – 25th November 2010

Schedule

MON 22

06:50 Arrival and Transfer to Las Flores

10:00 Meeting with Tierra de Niños (NGO)

11:00 Visit PRONOEI (pre-school) in Pachacutec where Las Flores volunteers are working. Meet teachers and Ministry of Education representative

14:00 Lunch in Las Flores

15:30 Observe weekly meeting

16:00 Talk with families hosting volunteers

17:00 Talk with volunteers

(Overnight in Las Flores)

TUE 23

09:30 Talk to Project Supervisor from Las Flores (en route to and from medical surgery with poorly volunteer)

10:00 Viviendas Saludables project, visiting houses where volunteers are working

11:00 Talk to mothers hosting the volunteers

12:00 Visit PRONOEI where volunteers worked in 2008

13:30 Lunch at VS project

14:30 Talk to Project Supervisors

15:00 Talk with mothers who had new bathrooms earlier in the year

17:30 Meeting with Dario (community representative)

19:00 Observation and informal chats with volunteers at the Community Centre following their workshop with local young people

WED 24

07:30 Safety circle - visit work site VS-project houses where volunteers are working

10:00 Meeting with volunteers

12:30 Lunch

Return to Lima

16:00 Meeting with Carlos López, Director of Intej

(Overnight in Lima)

THU 25

09:00 Breakfast with INTEJ staff

The field visit focused on Output 2:

Volunteers participate in appropriate community led development projects

Peru was chosen because African projects were seen during a field visit for the Mid Term Review and because the projects use home stay rather than volunteers staying together in a hostel. The visit was undertaken during the sixth week of the final placement of volunteers for the Platform2 programme. In Peru the programme is managed by Intej, a well established partner of BUNACs which manages a variety of placement programmes both for visiting volunteers in Peru, and for Peruvian young people going abroad.

Indicators for Output 2:

1. Projects are appropriate for the mix of volunteers and their skills.

In Peru, the volunteers in both projects have been involved in construction work during the mornings. The group working with Viviendas Saludables (Healthy Homes) have been building a pre-designed bathroom

(shower, toilet and sink, with a waste tank 1.8m deep in the garden) adjacent to a bedroom (approximately 2x3m); the group working with the PRONOEI (preschools) have been building additional classrooms and developing the grounds (boundary fencing, play areas, safety fences, access ramps etc). The volunteers are supervised by professional builders and learn basic skills such as mixing cement, how to dig, plastering and brick laying.

In the afternoons, a range of activities are undertaken by the volunteers: teaching English to children or to adults in the community; art/ craft workshops for children; dance workshops; cookery exchanges with the mothers in their houses and additional activities they develop over the placement.

Most of the volunteers expressed a sense of satisfaction in their building work and were surprised at how much they had achieved from a standing start (most had no previous experience of building work at all). Whilst they would probably not use these skills much on their return, they felt that their work was useful to the community and enjoyed working as a team. Workshops were also a challenge for some volunteers because the group living in Las Flores were not allocated workshops in the areas that they had specific skills, however none of the volunteers felt that the system should be changed as they had probably learned more from doing something new.

Supervisors stressed that both of the groups in Peru at the time of the field visit had been exceptionally “smooth” in terms of dynamics and personalities, with little if any tension between members of the group.

2. Project planning and management

Background and local partners: Intej uses a home-stay model for all of its programmes and decided to adapt this model for Platform2 which required volunteers to remain together as a group. There was an early decision to base the programme in/around Lima for practical management and communication constraints, and for risk management. Intej had decided to work with a partner NGO to develop this programme, in part because this is how it prefers to work, but it would also save time - the community had already been involved in development work and would have a relationship of trust and confidence with the partner, allowing selection of the families who would participate to be based on experience of their attitude and commitment to development (incidentally avoiding any likelihood of patronage through the community leadership, although this was not mentioned by anyone interviewed).

Tierra de Niños had already established a community development programme in Pachacutec¹⁷ and agreed to work in partnership with Intej to develop a programme for Platform2. Although the partnership involved developing work programmes for 2 groups of volunteers, in the end only one of the groups was based in the community with families who had been working with Tierra de Niños. The location of this group was based on strong community leadership and overall safety considerations. Initially there were concerns about safety in Pachacutec so the first group were based in Las Flores - a more established community on the other side of Ventanilla from which volunteers are transported daily to their work in Pachacutec. Initially a small Association was contracted to develop afternoon workshops for this group, but this partnership was dissolved after 3 months and Intej has worked directly with the community leadership since then. However, the Viviendas Saludables project was later established after the success of Las Flores volunteers working in the Pachacutec area. This project was established with additional safety measures like an earlier curfew, volunteers placed in pairs etc.

Each project has had an English speaking Supervisor and Deputy Supervisor living with the volunteers throughout their placement – picking them up from the airport, running their induction and staying with them throughout their stay in-country. Although the projects are almost adjacent, the groups are oriented in different accommodation to strengthen separate group identities. The groups do not see each other during their stay in order to avoid comparisons being made, although an exception is made for a one day ‘exchange’ to look at the differences between the communities. The project manager for Intej is able to identify and share good practice

where it is relevant.

Coordination between the Project Supervisors and the Project Manager has been good overall, despite difficulties in communication; each Supervisor has a mobile phone although reception is very poor – in practice the distances within the community are small so it is often easier to walk a few blocks. Organising the logistics of the building materials has also been challenging; local contractors have had to provide relevant order numbers and invoices which the Supervisors scan and email through to the Intej office in Lima and Supervisors access their weekly cash flow through a local bank account. The Project Manager provides strong leadership and effective line management, carefully responding to the strengths and weaknesses of each Supervisor and their Deputies. Overall, reporting and financial management from the supervisors to the programme manager and thus to BUNAC has been on time and adequate despite several changes of supervisor during the course of the programme.

Risk management has been thorough; community leaders are charged with the safety of the volunteers they are hosting; volunteers are given detailed guidance during their induction which is reinforced once they arrive at the community; they have curfews at night; they undertake safety circles each morning and throughout the field visit were all wearing the correct safety clothes; guidelines and Platform2 health and safety notices are posted in prominent places in the host family houses; volunteers are encouraged to report even the mildest illness/accident immediately and at the time of the visit the current groups had had very few health problems accidents or other incidents. Although a volunteer had tragically died in the previous group, this was due to a heart attack which could not have been predicted and the procedures for dealing with the incident were handled efficiently and sensitively.

It is worth noting that preparations had been made to ensure that the programme is accessible to non-ambulant volunteers and Intej would have welcomed the opportunity to support volunteers with disability of any kind, but few volunteers with special needs were recruited. One non-ambulant volunteer in the final departures group was eventually sent to Mamre, as a result of the sand in Pachacutec.

The project plan was very carefully developed during the initial stages, Tierra de Niño running an induction process for both Intej, the community and then with the initial group of volunteers to make sure that all partners were clear about their development objectives and roles within these; Intej retains responsibility for managing the volunteers and their work, but this is seen by TdN, Intej and community as a partnership process complementing and strengthening the work of TdN. Intej has a “filtering role” – one of the strengths of Platform2 perceived by TdN is that volunteers have empathy with the communities because many come from similar backgrounds, but at times this can bring different challenges for individual volunteers (particularly around drugs and alcohol) and Intej has to make sure that this does not impact negatively on safety or the group and partnership dynamics.

Volunteers felt that the induction process on arrival was excellent, highlighting several points which have been introduced over the course of the programme; supervisors meeting the groups at the airports; time to get to know the group (each works separately from the start);

Mixed views about whether the groups should be introduced before leaving the UK e.g. through a Facebook page;

Both groups felt that information/ guidance at Connect days was inconsistent and needed to be strengthened, possibly through information directly prepared by the staff of Intej in Peru; after being accepted information sent to volunteers had been excellent, although some had to wait for several months to hear the outcome of the interview (a result of being placed on the ‘eligibility standby’ list).

The Global Learning Programme (GLP): This has been strengthened since the MTR and volunteers now choose 5 themes to develop in their Global Scrapbooks, one of which they will present at a weekly GLP meeting. The presentations are complemented with DVDs, and other exercises on different aspects of development which

Christian Aid has provided for all the country placement supervisors. Most of the sessions had been very positive, stimulating considerable debates on occasions, but there was a general feeling among volunteers in Las Flores that the materials provided could be tailored further to reflect the way that issues impact on Peru (particularly the HIV/AIDS DVD). Additional themes relevant to Peru were suggested; oil and gas, drugs, export agriculture and free trade/ economic issues (Peru for Peruvians). In the Healthy Homes project it seemed that this was less of an issue, possibly because the Project Supervisors have quite strong views on particular issues (this is an impression generated through interviews and has not been verified, but does raise the issue of skills and understanding required for effective facilitation of the sessions when Supervisors are appointed for their communication and youth work skills rather than understanding of development).

3. Projects provide the volunteers with experience of living in a local community

Both projects have involved home stays with local families, most of whom speak no English, and living conditions are fairly basic, particularly for those in Pachucotec. Volunteers are mostly placed in pairs and by the time of the visit had almost all felt that they were really part of the family, spending time with them trying to practice their Spanish, cooking, learning to knit, playing with the children etc.

For both partners this part of the project was an integral part of the process they are trying to facilitate: they feel that the volunteers stimulate the families and Tierra de Niños described it as “the missing thread” to their work, linking their work with families to the wider project work.

Project beneficiaries also described many positive outcomes of the work:

As well as the financial benefits, the mothers hosting volunteers described positive impacts on their families as the volunteers provide good role models for their children and broaden their aspirations.

Young people in the Healthy Homes project in Pachacutec were clearly getting tremendous enjoyment out of interacting with the volunteers and were able to talk about what they had offered to the volunteers as well as what they had learned. The current group in Las Flores had found local young people less enthusiastic. This might be because volunteers don't live and work there, but it could also relate to the nature of the current volunteers, the end of the academic year or a number of other factors. Over the course of the programme particular groups of volunteers “stand out” for better or worse and this also affects the engagement of local children and young people.

Mothers in families where the volunteers work have been through 12 months of workshops covering a variety of topics including hygiene, child protection and child development and hosts are selected because they have put their training into practice i.e. their households have begun to be cleaner and better organised with areas for the children to sleep and to play. Further stimulus of having a decent bathroom and bedroom, helps them to feel that they can achieve more, and the presence of a member of the family whilst the volunteers are working has led to them being trained and able to undertake further construction work.

Tierra de Niños trains promoter in psycho-motor methodologies to support the children's development¹⁸ and the work of the volunteers has led to improved quality in the external play areas, overall security of the site and conditions of the toilets. Wider impacts include the government providing 4 new classrooms in the PRONOEI where volunteers first worked in 2008, and the local UNGEI coordinator for the PRONOEI network described how the work of Tierra de Niños and Intej (i.e. Platform2) has allowed her to cascade new approaches among Promoters in other PRONOEI. The work undertaken by Platform2 in 2008 has now been recognised as a government kindergarten and salaried teachers have been appointed.

Although the wider community is not directly involved in the education work, local mothers do benefit from improvements in their children's behaviour and after initial problems of vandalism, the local residents have begun to care for the infrastructure and resources in their PRONOEI.

As well as more tangible improvements such as the toilet under construction in the grounds of the Community Centre, the wider community has been strengthened through taking responsibility for the security of the volunteers and benefits from the workshops that volunteers organise. In both communities where volunteers live they have clearly become a familiar and much valued part of the community; the Community Representative of Zone 3 where volunteers work and live in the Healthy Homes project described very movingly how local people from across the whole of Pachacutec came to pay their respects when one of the volunteers tragically died during a week end trip.

The volunteers themselves were universally positive about their experiences and the impact that living with a family has had on them – this is reflected in the number of past volunteers still in contact with their families and a high return rate (two ex-volunteers were in las Flores during the field visit and 3 more were due to return to Pachacutec in December and February).

Challenges and lessons learned:

A range of views were expressed by the volunteers, families and staff about the level of Spanish volunteers should have on arrival. In one case fluency proved to be quite divisive and undermined the role of the Project Supervisor, at the same time a working knowledge helped the communication between the builders contracted to supervise work in the Healthy Homes project and the small groups working in each house. Families were initially very worried about communication, but by the time of the field visit had realised that a huge amount of communication is possible with mime and patience! Despite this, by the sixth week many volunteers were unaware of the psycho-motor approach TdN uses in the PRONOEI and in the Healthy Living Project most had only grasped the basic outline of how the community had been established ten years ago.

Over the programme period many local young people have been able to develop their English to the extent that if the programme had continued they might have started acting as interpreters for newly arrived volunteers; it would be important at that stage to find ways of widening the target group for English classes and ensuring that local young people used their English to reinforce volunteers' grasp of basic Spanish vocabulary.

At this stage of the stay (week 6) volunteers were rather vague when asked what TdN is doing. As the volunteers choose their GLP themes it would be worth guiding those who are presenting on education, health and governance (not a clear theme) back to interview the staff in TdN responsible for these sectors to reinforce the links between local/national/global issues.

Rather than dwelling on the fact that all of the Peruvian partners were disappointed Platform2 will not continue, they were encouraged to put forward ideas about how a programme such as Platform2 could be strengthened over time, or replicated elsewhere. Both of the partner organisations prioritise partnership working and there would be considerable potential to strengthen the focus on governance in partnership with TdN because they run a specific youth governance programme through local schools in Ventanilla/ Pachacutec as well as working directly to strengthen community leadership and engagement with the Municipal Authority. Working with local young people has the potential for allowing a more shared experiential learning approach.

Intej staff explored the possibility of linking the Platform2 model with local young Peruvian volunteers from different regions and also discussed the challenges of basing programmes in the Sierra or the Selva (mountain and tropical areas of Peru). Both of the latter would present considerable communication/ management challenges, and for the volunteers very different cultural and environmental challenges. A final thought offered by the Director of Intej is that the network of Latin American organisations hosting volunteers, Foro Latino America, has a vast range of experience and contacts and should be the first point of contact for any future volunteering programme focusing on development because these organisations have the skills in youth work and informal education on which programmes such as Platform2 are built.

Annex 6: Examples of Engagement Activity (Output 4)

In the limited time available, 4 observation visits were undertaken; the last day of an Express Residential; Christian Aid Mass Lobby of Parliament, around the theme of fair taxation and climate change; Parliamentary Question Time Event; and the final night of a Photo Exhibition in Brighton. Bad weather disrupted plans to visit a Reconnect Day, where the focus would have been on volunteers who have not engaged to a significant extent.

Express Residential 29.10.2010

The Express Residentials are arranged two weeks after each placement returns, in order to renew contact with the volunteers and to make sure that they have been able to process their experiences: for many the placements are life changing and it takes volunteers time to adjust to their new understanding of community, poverty and development when they return to the “normal” life.

There was a perceptible change in the level of analysis and understanding demonstrated in the Express Residential visited for the PCR (compared to the MTR) and although the MDGs were still being used as hooks to frame discussions, they seemed to be more embedded in experiences that volunteers had explored and recorded on placements.

Circus of the Invisibles, lobbying Parliament 20.10.2010

P2 volunteers taking part in the Mass Lobby of Parliament had three activities:

To be part of the morning meeting at Westminster Central Hall, where they heard and later met, Rev Jesse Jackson and other speakers.

To be part of the lobby of Parliament between 2-4pm

To take to the streets with a colourful and vibrant Circus of the Invisibles.

There were around 70 people between 17-25 (ish) taking part in the Circus of the Invisibles. Most were P2 Volunteers; perhaps 20 were Ctrl+Alt+Shift volunteers and/or ‘friends of..’ They had come from all over UK, some from Scotland having set off at 4am that morning.



Volunteer 1 (on stilts)

This young woman volunteered between January and March 2010 in Peru. Although she had no choice about where she went and had never been anywhere before, she is now “hooked” and wants to travel again. She is still in touch with her ‘little sisters’ from the family in which she stayed. “ I call them my family”. This volunteer actually works for Circus Invisible (based in Bristol) and got involved in this day as she kept being googled, wrongly, about it and then realised the event was relevant and that she had skills to contribute. She was not very invisible and made a great colourful splash as we walked around (she didn’t have her stilts on throughout).

Volunteer 2

This (British Asian) volunteer was a student at Birmingham University. He went to Peru. He rated his experience as “life changing”. The volunteering “opened [his] eyes” to the importance and potential of grassroots involvement to effect change. Although he had always followed world events and was orientated towards human rights, he says he was very materialistic before leaving for the P2 trip.

Following his return, Sadiq has been involved in setting up a company, Future Voices International and a Changemakers project, Youth 4 Latin America (<http://www.global-changemakers.net/projects/project/youth-for-latin-america>). This organisation will concentrate on Grass Roots level engagement. The process followed by this, and his second company, (Future Voices International - <http://www.futurevoicesinternational.org/>), will be to train up volunteers in active citizenship techniques including community organising. They will then go to a country (2 are planned to go to Peru and another trip to Brazil is already planned for Y4LA) and cascade their training to larger numbers of people organised in ‘classes’. FVI will take young people for 4-6 week summer media schools and will be branded to work on issues of disability and diversity, social cohesion and child rights in particular. A report on this vision is available at <http://www.global-changemakers.net/projects/project/future-voices-international>

Volunteer 3

This (British Asian) young woman went to Nepal and came back in August. She was interested in aspects of poverty before she went and gave up studying for an Aerospace engineering degree after the first year. Her family have not been vociferous but they did support her going. Since coming back her interest in trade ethics has increased – for instance she has stopped eating chocolate as she is not sure she even believes that the Fairly traded chocolate really is! She would like to study for a degree in International Development and asked advice about where to do this.

Brighton Photo Fringe Platform 2 Exhibition 15.11.2010

This photo exhibition had been organised by Platform2 volunteers studying in Brighton. The volunteer who originated the idea studies marketing and enjoys photography, so she felt that the Photo Fringe event would provide a great opportunity to raise awareness of some livelihood issues that she had come across during her placement. The Fringe programme described the exhibition thus:

“Young and upcoming documentary photographers capture the diversity of peoples’ livelihoods in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Livelihoods is a powerful collaborative project curated by local photographer, Rachel Tavernor, which explores how people on the poverty line innovatively earn a living. The striking photographs document stories from across the world that show the very real and human side of poverty. All participating photographers lived in the communities they documented as part of the government-funded programme Platform2.”

The use of a local pub for the exhibition ensured long opening hours for the 6 week period and on the final night various Platform2 volunteers travelled to Brighton to read poetry they had written, now published in the Platform2 poetry book, play music and give critical opinions of the global discourse on development. There was an interesting mix of students who are friends with the exhibition organisers, members of the public who happened to be in the pub and were attracted by the music, and one or two Platform2 volunteers who have not yet been significantly involved because they lack the confidence, but came to the event because they want to do something and continue to identify with Platform2.

Volunteer 4

This P2 volunteer has been wanting to do something ever since she returned from her Platform2 trip (to Ghana) so was really glad when Rachel organised the photo exhibition. She regrets not doing more when she was on her

placement and feels the same now “I don’t have enough skills to do anything” she says – although she is clearly really interested what she appears to lack more than anything still is confidence in herself!

Volunteer 5

No lack of confidence in this young man! He has been actively involved in a number of Platform2 events since returning from his placement. He meets up regularly with some of the volunteers he travelled with and he has brought along all his flatmates and half of his fellow-students to this event, one of whom has written a thought provoking political analysis arguing that Aid is the best way of achieving development.

Volunteer 6

Has driven down from Huddersfield to read her poem and enjoy the evening. She has brought with her a young man from the Youth Project she is working with. Travelling to Nepal with Platform 2 changed the course of her life from hairdressing to youth work – she is now studying in Manchester and brings development issues into her work with young people whenever she can.

Parliamentary Question Time Event 09.11.10

This event took Platform 2, MADE and Zedack¹⁹ almost a year to plan, during which time there was a change of government. The Secretary of State for the Environment was eventually unable to attend, despite having been consistently involved and clearly interested in the event from the start. However, the fact that the event was taking place in Parliament and Krishnan Guru-Murthy was Chairing attracted many young volunteers to the event.

Questions were pre-selected from a wide range submitted by young people prior to the event and focused on climate change and the MDGs. It was unfortunate that the only politician taking part was the Labour Party Shadow Minister, because he was able to evade close questioning by referring to the policies of the two absent parties, but the guest panel members offered challenging and critical perspectives on the range of issues raised by the audience. The participants also engaged with great passion and enthusiasm, and demonstrated a good level of understanding of some complex development issues. They also demonstrated considerable ability as advocates and public speakers; skills which some had developed as a result of their involvement with Platform2 since returning from their placements.

Although a detailed analysis of participants was not undertaken, a high percentage of the participants were BME in part reflecting the two partner organisations. Several had travelled from other parts of the UK and it did not appear that disproportionate numbers were university students/graduates.

Volunteer 7

This young man had travelled down from “the Valleys” (South Wales) very early that morning, making use of the opportunity to see some of London earlier in the day. Living with his parents, he loves being involved with Platform 2 and although he hasn’t been able to find work, is a very active volunteer in his community. He was determined to put a question to the panel and despite not having his question selected, managed to get himself noticed by Krishnan and posed it as a supplementary question at the end of the debate.

Volunteer 8

This young woman has been working as a VDO for Platform 2 to promote involvement of BME volunteers following her involvement as a volunteer. Now she is about to take off around the world to visit family in Pakistan, then to volunteer for a few months after which she will travel to Indonesia and the Philippines where

she hopes to get involved in practical development work. Hugely dynamic, she tells of many other BME young people who have become involved in Platform 2 and who are influencing their siblings and immediate family, and the challenges some of them face as they try to create new roles for themselves when they return. Lamees is typical of several young people now working with Platform2 who have contributed endless energy and enthusiasm. At the same time as they soak up information about different development issues, they are gradually shaping their commitment to justice and poverty reduction into strategies that enable them to continue making meaningful contributions, gain employment or identify courses that are relevant to the new focus they have developed in their lives.