Youth-led Assessment of the International Citizen Service with Y Care International

A Synthesis Report
Acknowledgements

Y Care International would like to thank the staff at the YMCAs in Liberia, Senegal, Togo, Sierra Leone and Bangladesh and the 139 UK and in-country volunteers (named below) who participated in this research. Your relentless hard work in completing this project is greatly appreciated. We would also like to thank all those who have been involved in ICS activities whether that be as a participant, as a teacher or as the chief of a community where ICS has operated, thank you for collaborating with us and supporting the programme.

ICS Volunteers in Kakata, Liberia


ICS Volunteers in Ziguinchor, Senegal


ICS Volunteers in Atakpame, Togo


ICS Volunteers in Lome, Togo


ICS Volunteers in Birisiri, Bangladesh


ICS Volunteers in Edilpur, Bangladesh

ICS Volunteers in Kenema, Sierra Leone


ICS Volunteers in Makeni, Sierra Leone


Front page photo courtesy of Javier Acebal March 2017, ICS
About us

About Y Care International

Y Care International (YCI) is YMCA’s aid and development charity. Together, we create opportunities for the most disadvantaged young people to earn a sustainable income safely and participate fully in society.

Working with YMCA’s and other youth-serving organisations, we create brighter futures for young people living in the world’s most challenging circumstances. Made vulnerable by inequality and injustice, we kickstart their journeys into work and out of poverty.

In the UK and Ireland, we engage vulnerable young people in global learning and provide platforms to act on global issues including, since 2014, through the youth volunteering programme the International Citizen Service (ICS).

About the International Citizen Service

The International Citizen Service (ICS) is a UK government Department for International Development (DFID) funded development programme, delivered by a consortium of 8 organisations and led by Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO).

ICS provides overseas volunteer placements for 18-25-year olds and Team Leader placements for 23-35-year olds. All UK Volunteers (UKVs) are paired with a volunteer from the host country where they are based (In-Country Volunteers, ICVs) and complete a ten to twelve-week placement. These placements aim to achieve a positive contribution to poverty reduction and sustainable development in the host country, enabling the personal and social development of volunteers, inspiring them to become active citizens.

Y Care International delivered ICS between 2014 and 2018, working with YMCA partners in Guatemala, Togo, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Liberia and Bangladesh. 810 UKVs were matched 1:1 with a volunteer from the community where they are based, living in a host home or YMCA accommodation for the duration of their placements.

About the YMCA movement

The Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) was founded in London in 1844. A global movement organised as a federation of independent national associations linked through the World Alliance of YMCAs, the YMCA is the world’s oldest and largest youth-serving NGO. It has a presence in 119 countries, 11,000 communities, and serves 58 million people.

A Christian and ecumenical movement, the YMCA aims to empower young people and through social, intercultural and international development programmes, works to foster peace and bring social justice to young people and their communities.
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Projects</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Led Impact Assessment</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Challenge Projects</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

This Y Care International ICS Impact Assessment has been collated from eleven individual community Impact Assessments that were undertaken between January- April 2018 (Liberia, Senegal and Togo) and April- July 2018 (Bangladesh and Sierra Leone). The Impact Assessments were youth-led, conducted and reported by ICS in-country and UK volunteers with the support of YMCA staff during their ICS placements.

Most of the findings reinforced what we had learnt through our monitoring of the ICS programme. For example, ICS has significantly increased the visibility of the YMCA in the areas in which volunteers have been present. This in turn has increased the membership of those YMCAs which is a key element to all project plans, ensuring more young people can access services provided by the YMCA. In most locations, ICS volunteers have also been able to support partner organisations to increase the scale and reach of their activities or services. However, in some areas this has led to uncertainty about the sustainability of these additional activities or services. ICS had volunteers offered additional human resources which may not be easy to replicate now that placements have ended.

Overall the impact assessment findings demonstrated that the YCI ICS programme has been a success. It has enabled the YMCAs to:

1. Increase membership and improve working practices
2. Allowed partners to deliver much needed extra services
3. Ensured the personal and professional development of In-Country Volunteers (ICVs) and provided target communities, and in particular the young people in those areas, with training in areas such as health, finance, employability skills, challenging gender stereotypes, skills development, and infrastructure to support their livelihoods. These benefits are in addition to meeting the overall aims of ICS, to deliver development impact, supporting young people to develop personally and become lifelong active citizens.

“I learned so many skills; teaching skills, conflict resolution skills, facilitation skills, public speaking skills, planning skills and the important of culture.” Yoko S. Kollie, ICV, Liberia

“I am proud that my leadership and advocacy skills have improve. I can now advocate for young people involvement in decision making in my community.” Z. Timothy Akoi, Jr., ICV, Liberia

“Despite the conditions of the prisoners they are very interested in entrepreneurship. An inmate told me that once he is released he will start making shoes. Another inmate told me that when he works with us he has no worries, it makes him feel good.” Victoire Mawuena ICV, Togo

ICS Volunteers Liberia, October – December 2017
Introduction

With the closure of YCI’s ICS programmes in July 2018, YCI wanted to assess the impact of its ICS programmes in 11 communities across Bangladesh, Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo through a youth led impact assessment. YCI wanted to look at what changes had been brought about through the activities of over 1300 volunteers in 11 communities from June 2015 – July 2018, producing one report from each community and then one synthesis report.

Working with young volunteers to produce these reports was imperative to YCI to ensure a youth-led impact assessment and is a unique approach in assessing the impact that ICS has made. This, coupled with the use of up-to-date data collection tools such as KoBoToolbox, has allowed a comprehensive and current approach to impact assessment reporting of youth development projects.

This report is the analysis of those 11 community reports which involved 7 months of gathering and analysing data and reporting on the changes seen across 11 communities where ICS was implemented.

The main objective of this youth-led impact assessment was to assess both programmatic and volunteer outcomes for 4 key stakeholders including the YMCA, local project partners, intended beneficiaries and in-country alumni.

All the findings, lessons learnt and recommendations in this report are based on those collected by ICS volunteers during their placement.
Background

Y Care International and the International Citizen Service

Aims of the programme
The International Citizen Service (ICS Programme) is funded by the UK Government through the Department for International Development (DFID). Y Care International began running the ICS programme as part of ICS1 in 2014. YCI then delivered ICS2 placements until July 2018. Every cohort of volunteers comprised of in-country volunteers and UK volunteers who were paired as counterparts for shared learning and to support each other’s personal development throughout the placement. The ICS programme has three tangible outcomes:

1. **Project Impact** - Enable young people to work in partnership with communities and to contribute to sustainable development programmes that reduce poverty and inequality.

2. **Personal Development** - Create personal, professional and leadership development opportunities for more young people through cross-cultural working and supported learning, so that young people are better able to raise their voices, increase their employability and build their skills as active citizens.

3. **Active Citizenship** - Increase the ability of ICS volunteers and community members to live their lives as active citizens, working with their communities to drive sustainable development, raise the voices of young people, and inspire and motivate others.

Throughout ICS2 YCI supported 649 UK volunteers (including 71 UK team leaders) to volunteer overseas alongside 673 (including 81 in-country team leaders) in-country volunteers.

Delivery model - YCI and the YMCAs
Y Care International runs the ICS programme in a unique way by working solely with YMCA partners in-country. This means that all staff are local to the community therefore allowing for strong local knowledge and a clear understanding of the needs of that community. The YMCA partners recruit in-country volunteers from within the community where the project is being implemented, meaning that in-country volunteers stay at home for the duration of their placement.

The YCI ICS2 programme took place in 5 countries: Togo, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Liberia, and Bangladesh. Each of these countries has an extremely well-established YMCA which is well-connected and respected within the community. This meant that many young people in project areas were interested in taking part in ICS as in-country volunteers (ICVs), who often became YMCA volunteers after the programme. Many went on to work or volunteer for the YMCA or other NGOs therefore ensuring a positive cycle of youth empowerment and employment.

All projects run by the YCI ICS programme complemented existing work of the YMCA and YCI, where YMCA staff developed the ICS project plans following detailed needs assessments. Activities included health education, WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) activities, training in micro-finance, training young prisoners in income generating activities, English clubs, creating and training youth groups and mentoring amongst many others. The YMCA worked with several smaller local partners in the implementation of their ICS projects such as health centres, prisons and schools. Throughout ICS2 the YMCA worked with approximately 45 local partners.

Volunteers in each team also managed their own Development Challenge project. Development Challenge activities were additional to the activities outlined in the ICS project plans. The Development Challenge involved ICS volunteers conducting a needs assessment, creating a proposal for a small project which addressed a need in the community with a budget of up to $1000, implementing, and finally arranging for
monitoring of the project. This was an opportunity unique to YCI which allowed teams of volunteers the chance to create and manage their own project from start to finish. Activities included:

1. Infrastructure projects such as water kiosk building and tippy tap provision¹,
2. Campaigning
3. Community clean-ups, and support for schools.

Development Challenge projects were designed to complement the placement and YMCA activities already taking place. Throughout ICS2 volunteers completed a total of 67 Development Challenge projects.

¹ A tippy tap is a hands-free way to wash your hands that is especially appropriate for rural areas where there is no running water. It is operated by a foot lever and thus reduces the chance for bacteria transmission as the user touches only the soap
Our Projects

Throughout ICS2 Y Care International and the YMCA delivered eight projects in the areas of health, education, civic participation and livelihoods. Every project included activities across the seven ICS activity categories of peer education, action research or needs assessments, awareness raising, resource development, training, community infrastructure development and community network development (see Appendix 1 for definitions).

Table 1: Projects delivered by YCI and the YMCA during ICS2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Communities²</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Thematic Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>Kaolack</td>
<td>Supporting Healthy Lives in Rural Senegal (Jun 2015 – Dec 2016)</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ziguinchor</td>
<td>Supporting Improved Economic Opportunities for Young People in Senegal (Jan 2017 – Apr 2018)</td>
<td>Livelihoods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sokode</td>
<td>Creating formal and informal education opportunities for young people in Togo (Jan 2016 – Sept 2017)</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lomé</td>
<td>Supporting improved economic opportunities for young people in Togo (Oct 2017 – April 2018)</td>
<td>Livelihoods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edilpur</td>
<td>Promoting improved education and gender equality in rural Bangladesh (Jan 2016 – July 2017)</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Birisiri</td>
<td>Developing employability skills and raising awareness of health and social practices (Sept 2017 – July 2018)</td>
<td>Civic Participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² This refers to the communities which are included in this impact assessment, during ICS1 and early ICS2 YCI delivered ICS in additional communities which subsequently closed
Table 2: Activities delivered across ICS2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Togo</th>
<th>Senegal</th>
<th>Sierra Leone</th>
<th>Bangladesh</th>
<th>Liberia</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer education (hours)</td>
<td>4529</td>
<td>1723</td>
<td>899</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>7879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer education (people reached)</td>
<td>4529</td>
<td>23027</td>
<td>4840</td>
<td>1228</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>68947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action research or needs assessments (projects completed)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness raising (hours)</td>
<td>1279</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness raising (people reached)</td>
<td>12353</td>
<td>9070</td>
<td>7824</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>29562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources developed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training (hours)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2345</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>2610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training (people reached)</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community infrastructures</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community networks developed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For a detailed breakdown of the activities delivered throughout each project please see annex 1.

3 Please note this data does not include the details of the activities completed as part of the Development Challenge activities. The number of people reached may include those who have been counted more than once.
Youth Led Impact Assessment

Our approach

The objective of the youth-led impact assessment was to find out what changes have been brought about by ICS activities across the five programmes delivered by YCI together with our YMCA partners. We aimed to look at the programmatic outcomes as well as the outcomes for in-country volunteers. The final teams of ICS volunteers interviewed four groups of people including ICS in-country alumni, project partners, the YMCA staff and intended beneficiaries of the ICS project activities.

Through interviewing the four groups of project stakeholders, answers to the following questions were sought:

- What changes have been brought about in target communities?
- To what extent can a specific impact be attributed to ICS? Did the programme make a difference?
- To what extent can observed changes be attributed to the activities delivered by ICS volunteers?
- Have the changes experienced by the different actors been intended or unintended/ positive or negative?

Our methodology

As a youth focused international development agency we felt it was important to involve young people in the assessment of our ICS programmes. Using learning and tools created from a previous youth-led research project ‘Collecting Youth Voices for Enterprise Choices’ delivered by YCI and the YMCAs and funded by VSO, YCI and the YMCAs developed a training programme and set of tools to prepare young people to conduct an impact assessment.

Time frame

YCI and the YMCA began closing down the ICS programmes from January 2018 with the final volunteers finishing their placement in mid July 2018. From January – April 2018 the final teams of volunteers in Togo, Liberia and Senegal worked to close and assess the impact of the ICS programme in seven communities. From April to July 2018 the final teams in Bangladesh and Sierra Leone completed the same process, assessing the impact of the programme across four communities.

Training

In order to prepare the volunteers for the impact assessment work they received two days training after their initial in-country orientation training delivered by either YMCA or YCI staff. The training included a range of sessions on topics such as what is data, how to conduct an interview and focus group discussions, how to analyse data and report your findings. The impact assessment training sessions were participatory and allowed volunteers to practise the skills needed to conduct the impact assessment and also gave volunteers the opportunity to review the impact assessment tools and make any necessary amendments.

Process

After receiving the appropriate training, volunteers were supplied with target numbers of people to collect data from and were supported by YMCA staff to organise their interviews. As well as collecting the data, volunteers were responsible for inputting and analysing the data and writing a first draft report from their community. After the departure of the ICS volunteers YMCA staff were responsible for finalising the community impact assessment reports and for conducting a validation workshop with those who had participated in the research. In some countries, a report card summary was also produced displaying the key
results of the impact assessment report. To produce the final synthesis report, YCI collated findings from all 11 community impact assessment reports and conducted a feedback session on the findings included in this report, with members of its Youth Engagement Panel and UK alumni who had been involved in producing the initial 11 community reports.

ICS volunteers at the end of their impact assessment training in Bangladesh May 2018

Limitations of the methodology

Data collection tools

- Although there was collaboration between the YMCA and YCI in the design of the impact assessment data collection tools, and the opportunity for volunteers to make modifications, the short time frame for the production and amendment of these tools meant that very few changes were made to the tools after the first draft. We found that some of the data collection tools used could have been adapted to improve clarity and relevance to the community.

- The number of data collection tools and methods used was also mentioned as a limitation and a challenge for volunteers collecting the data.

- The resources provided for the research were often reported as being unreliable such as dictaphones, laptops and tablets and this slowed progress down and occasionally led to the loss of data for some teams.

Sample

- A few teams of volunteers who conducted the data collection felt that the sample size was not representative of the projects delivered. There were also challenges reaching the target sample size for a number of reasons such as the weather, the number of illnesses amongst ICS volunteers, resulting in fewer people able to collect data, public holidays and the availability of participants.

- In Kakata, Monrovia, there were challenges around the enthusiasm amongst people to get involved in project.
In Ziguinchor, Senegal the team mentioned how it was often difficult for beneficiaries to distinguish between ICS activities and other activities taking place at the YMCA and how this often led to confusion and potentially led to people speaking about other activities that have not been implemented by ICS volunteers when answering questions.

**Approach**

- The data that has been used for this synthesis report was collected and analysed by ICS volunteers. Volunteers collecting data from the different stakeholders involved in the assessment may have led to bias and participants not feeling they can be open and honest about the programme.
- There is also a chance that participants had a vested interest in the ICS project continuing and this may have influenced the feedback given to the volunteers.
- Volunteers received training on how to analyse the impact assessment data however there was feedback from volunteers and staff that more training would have been useful.

**Language barrier**

- Across a number of countries, the language barrier was mentioned to be a challenge and a factor which made impact assessment tasks lengthier and more complicated and there were concerns that when translating questions and responses that some information was lost in translation.

**Data collected**

ICS volunteers used paper-based and digital tools to collect data for their impact assessment reports. They collected qualitative data through semi-structured interviews, the most significant change methodology and focus group discussions. They collected quantitative data using questionnaires. During this project volunteers in Bangladesh and Sierra Leone were provided with two tablets per team and used the software KoBoToolbox to collect and analyse data.

The volunteers were aiming to collect data from those who had participated in projects conducted during ICS2, however, there are a number of intended beneficiaries who have participated in multiple projects and it is important to highlight that data may have come from projects conducted in both ICS1 and ICS2.

**Table 3: People reached through impact assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection tools</th>
<th>People Reached</th>
<th>Togo</th>
<th>Liberia</th>
<th>Sierra Leone</th>
<th>Senegal</th>
<th>Bangladesh</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YMCA staff members</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICS alumni</td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project partners</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Challenge beneficiaries</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>No data available</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beneficiaries of ICS activities</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
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<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questionnaire</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people</td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth group members</td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community members</td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus group discussion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2007</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For a breakdown of those involved in the research by gender please see annex 2.
Development Challenge Projects

Development Challenge projects are a unique part of how YCI and the YMCAs delivered the ICS programme. Development Challenge projects are youth led community projects which allow young people on the programme the opportunity to conduct primary research into the needs of a community, analyse these findings and put together a proposal for a project. Volunteers receive support from the YMCA and community members when putting these proposals together and have access to up to $1000 for their project. Once approved the volunteers, community members and staff must ensure the project is completed within the specified timeframe, usually around 4-5 weeks. Throughout ICS2 volunteers completed a total of 67 Development Challenge projects with each project involving around 3-4 individual activities.

In August 2018 YCI collected the view of ICS alumni on the Development Challenge through an online survey. In total 52 in-country volunteers and 49 UK volunteers completed this and shared their views with YCI.

Development Challenge activities

In total ICS volunteers completed 253 Development Challenge activities. The most common activity reported by alumni involved construction or other manual work (18%), with more community infrastructure development activities being completed than any other, chiefly in Bangladesh. Evidence suggests that volunteers also conducted a significant number of peer education sessions with young people (14%) and frequently delivered workshops sessions or campaigns that raised awareness of issues relevant to the community they were working in (15%).

Graph 1: Development Challenge activities 2015-2018

Overall Development Challenge activities were representative of project plans, with education and health being key activity themes, although alumni report that activities relating to the environment were also

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4 The Development Challenge survey was circulated to all YCI ICS Alumni, including those who had placements in locations that our ICS1 and early ICS2 programme locations that subsequently closed. As such, this data includes two responses from Guatemala, and three from Kaligram in Bangladesh.

5 Data Collated from Development Challenge reports and Project Debrief reports which detail the activities completed by ICS volunteers. Not all teams completed a Development Challenge report, accounting for the information not available.
popular. Across Bangladesh, Togo, Sierra Leone and Liberia, twelve projects can be attributed to the environment sector; with, as evidenced by our community impact assessment reports, activities like community clean-up campaigns, the provision of resources (bins) and awareness raising sessions (waste management) being run across all four countries.

**Graph 2: Development Challenge activities by sector as reported by ICS alumni**

Impact of Development Challenge activities
Development Challenge project activities aimed to meet the needs of local communities as identified by ICS volunteers with support of the YMCA. Evidence from the Development Challenge survey suggests that volunteers feel that their projects achieved this, and overall had a positive development impact. For example, 83% of ICS volunteers surveyed reported that their activities allowed volunteers to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people in the community, and 80% stated that such activities had a link to the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Of the 17 SDGs, the data collected from volunteers indicates that development activities most aligned with SDGs 4, 3 and 6, but also illustrates how volunteers felt their activities linked to all 17 goals.

**Graph 3: SDGs meet by Development Challenge activities as reported by alumni**
Regarding the sustainability of Development Challenge activities, alumni are largely positive with 56% reporting that they felt the results of their Development Challenge activities would improve in the future, and 33% suggesting the results would stay the same.

Overall 64% of alumni surveyed felt that Development Challenge activities where the best use of $1000, with more UK alumni stating that they did not in comparison to in-country alumni (12:7). Many alumni reported that they felt that a budget of $1000 was not always enough given the number of communities they were working and the high level of need.

“The £1000 given for Development Challenge is not enough to meet all the needs and demands of the people, especially because there are about 5/6 communities in which volunteers work, and volunteers find it difficult to equally distribute the funds, so each community could benefit” in-country alumni, Sierra Leone

“We wanted to help an agricultural project with a water pump but that ended up being almost five times as much as $1000.” UK alumni, Senegal

A key concern reported for alumni was that the aims of the projects often exceeded the budget, activities and plans were frequently left incomplete. Alumni suggested that this was frustrating and unhelpful for the communities who often could not finish the work started. A number of alumni surveyed highlighted how continuity was important, with effective reporting and handover needed from one team to the next to ensure sustainability of project activities. One alumna for example stated that: “more focus should be given to long term projects, rather than those of instant gratification, such as construction or building work” (UK alumni, Bangladesh).

**Development Challenge activities have contributed to volunteer’s development**

The Development Challenge aimed to give ICS volunteers ownership over their own project and intended to provide an opportunity for them to develop new skills. Alumni reported they were involved during various stages of the project with most involvement being during the implementation stage of the project (77%). Evidence suggests that in-country alumni and UK alumni were equally responsible for the planning of activities (19%), however more UK alumni than in-country alumni reported that they were involved in carrying out research into the needs of the local community.

For one UK alumni the Development Challenge gave volunteers ‘a lot of freedom’ which she suggests helped with personal development. Likewise, 86% of alumni surveyed reported that planning and delivering Development Challenge activities contributed to their personal development, and 68% stated that the skills they developed doing these activities helped them when applying for future jobs or higher education. Here again more ICVs answered yes to these questions, while a greater number of UK alumni than in-country alumni suggested they were unsure about the impact the Development Challenge had on their personal and professional development.

**Graph 4: Development Challenge skills contribution as reported by alumni**
In terms of the skills gained through their participation in Development Challenge activities, alumni constantly reported that they had improved their knowledge and gained varied skills. In-country volunteers reported that they had improved facilitation and presentation skills, while all alumni suggested they had a better understanding of project planning and had developed relevant consultation skills.

**Table 4: The skills alumni report they have developed as a result of participating in a Development Challenge project**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>In-country Alumni</th>
<th>UK Alumni</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a better understanding of the importance of planning to deliver a project</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am better able to present my ideas to others</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am better able to guide group discussions and make sure everyone’s opinions are included</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have improved my ability to organise and manage an event</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have improved my ability to consult with the community and find out their needs</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am better able to raise awareness about a development issue</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have gained fundraising skills</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical skills related to the activities I delivered</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have improved my ability to manage a budget</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have improved my business skills (e.g. marketing, finance, human resources, etc.)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have improved my public speaking skills</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have improved my facilitation skills</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have improved my skills working with young people</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have improved my monitoring and reporting skills</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have improved my data collection and analysis skills</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommendations from alumni**

- More planning time should be built into programming for Development Challenge activities.
- Volunteers should have ownership of the project and activities should be different from those in project plan to effectively challenge volunteers and enable the development of skills.
- There should be a greater focus on sustainability, with better handover between teams. As $1000 has been reported as insufficient for many community infrastructure projects, a move away from this type of project or a greater investment in one activity across teams has been implied.
Findings: Intended beneficiaries

A key focus of the impact assessment work was to investigate the changes brought about by ICS for those who participated in activities delivered by ICS volunteers. During ICS26 YCI and the YMCAs supported 1322 volunteers to deliver 7879 hours of peer education sessions, 109 action research projects, 3140 hours of awareness-raising activities, 86 resources for the YMCA and partners, 2610 hours of training, build 222 community infrastructures and develop 33 community networks. In this section, we look at what changes were brought about by these activities. We will also discuss the challenge of attributing these changes to the work of ICS volunteers.

The majority of the evidence used in this section has come from semi-structured interviews with intended beneficiaries of Development Challenge activities, focus group discussions, questionnaires and most significant change stories with participants of activities and community members.

Improved knowledge on health and sanitation issues
ICS volunteers worked on a range of project activities which aimed to improve knowledge of health issues amongst members of local communities. We found across seven communities that there was evidence of improved knowledge on a range of different health and sanitation issues amongst those reached by ICS volunteers. Primarily peer education, training and awareness raising sessions were cited as having contributed to this improved knowledge.

We found that improvements in health and sanitation knowledge were in the following areas:

- ➤ Hygiene practices such as hand washing after using the toilet and before eating or preparing food
- ➤ Understanding the signs and symptoms of common illnesses
- ➤ Preventative measures which reduce the likelihood of contracting malaria such as sleeping under a mosquito net at night
- ➤ The importance of clean water and a clean-living environment
- ➤ Clarifying misconceptions around ailments
- ➤ Sexual reproductive health and menstrual health
- ➤ The negative impact of smoking and excessive alcohol and drug use.

In Atakpamé, Togo ICS volunteers spoke with participants of health awareness raising sessions. One participant, Leontine, explained how the health sessions built their understanding of health which they feel will have a positive impact on their behaviours and health status in the future.

“For health, I am more informed especially when it comes to pre-natal consultations for a pregnant woman and the various steps she needs to follow to ensure that she carries her baby to term and gives birth. Given that one day I will be a mum, I will put into practice all of this advice to keep my baby in good health.” Leontine (pseudonym), Apprentice, 16 years old, Atakpamé, Togo

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6 June 2015 - July 2018
The findings in Senegal echo these comments from community members in Togo, young people in health peer education sessions showed an increase in the percentage of young people who could identify symptoms and methods of prevention of health issues (e.g. malaria, SRH, hygiene practices) from 44% at the start of the project to 86% at the end of the project.

While overall, we found a positive perception of the increase in health knowledge gained; there are indications in some communities of concerns around the ability of young people and other community members to continue to put in place their new knowledge and make significant changes to their health status. Community members noted that the cost implications of health care, particularly for young people with low incomes, and a reliance on often underfunded and inadequate public health services were barriers to being able to translate improved knowledge to improved health.

**Sharing knowledge on health issues**

A key theme in most communities was how information, and in particular information on health issues, has been shared by those who have participated directly in ICS activities with their family, peers and wider community members. Young people have continued to share information both informally with peers and family members and in a more structured way through continued participation in clubs, through their Action at Home activities, a small project which ICS volunteers must complete after their placement in order to successfully complete the ICS programme, or through the YMCA.

As mentioned previously, ICS volunteers have shared information on health through a wide variety of different activities. As a youth-led programme, ICS has allowed young people to work in a cross-cultural team and have significant ownership over the delivery of activities and use creative and innovative means to deliver health messages to a range of audiences. There is evidence to suggest that this method of delivering health information has inspired others to realise the power of young people and of their own voice in creating change in their community. For example, in Kakata in Liberia, ICS volunteers supported YMCA health clubs which aimed to empower young people to continue raising awareness of important health issues in their community:

‘The teachings done by the ICS inspired me to teach and help spread the health messages I had been taught, by teaching groups of children sometimes up to 50 in a class room at break time.’ – A YMCA student and participant of Health Advocacy Group, Kakata, Liberia.

As well as through formal clubs, on a smaller scale, individual participants of ICS activities reported continuing to use the knowledge they gained from ICS volunteers to benefit their peers and family. Many of the activities delivered by the ICS volunteers finished with the end of the programme, however we found evidence of the sharing of health knowledge through formal and informal means across the majority of communities suggesting a continuing positive impact as a result of health activities. There is, however, no evidence – positive or negative – as to how durable this onward sharing of health knowledge may be.
“Before taking part in ICS programme activities, I think people in Hihéatro here lacked information on common diseases and I personally did not know about those diseases. After being involved in ICS health sessions, I can now spread information in the community, and I started avoiding diseases.”

Delali (Pseudonym), Apprentice Couture Cosmos, Atakpamé, Togo

Improved health and sanitation practices
We found evidence across many communities to suggest that improved knowledge of health and improvements made to community infrastructures has likely led to or at least contributed towards improved health and sanitation practices for those who have participated in ICS peer education, training and awareness raising activities. The following key impacts were reported by intended beneficiaries of ICS across the 11 communities we have worked in:

➢ Changed attitudes and reduced stigma towards Ebola survivors
➢ Improved hand washing practices
➢ A reduction of open defecation reported because of a provision of latrines
➢ Increased access to and participation in health services
➢ Increase in community members pre-washing food
➢ Improved menstrual hygiene, with girls attending school during menstruation and cleaning pads.
➢ Increased use of condoms
➢ Increased number of community members sleeping under mosquito nets.

In Ziguinchor, Senegal, and Makeni, Sierra Leone, community members reported that there had been a decrease in early pregnancy within their communities, while in Kenema, Sierra Leone, a decline in people contracting malaria has been attributed to knowledge gained through ICS sessions by community members. It was outside the scope of this assessment to substantiate these claims and/or definitely demonstrate that this was as an impact of ICS activity.

‘Hygiene changes and practices have increased among me and my grandchildren. I also sometimes talk to my children about HIV.’ – Health awareness session participant, Gbandi Community, Kakata, Liberia
**Table 5: A snapshot of key health activities delivered**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Bangladesh</th>
<th>Togo</th>
<th>Senegal</th>
<th>Liberia</th>
<th>Sierra Leone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health awareness raising sessions (hours delivered)</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>721</td>
<td>367</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health training sessions (hours delivered)</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health peer education sessions (hours delivered)</td>
<td>1035</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilets constructed</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tippy taps constructed</td>
<td>132</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Young people, local decision makers and staff at health centres gave examples of how individuals have benefitted from health activities delivered by ICS volunteers. In Makeni, Sierra Leone, as a result of awareness raising sessions to community members on practices to keep themselves healthy such as the importance of safe water and personal hygiene, town chief of Robuya, said that his community had “gained a lot on health... like how to take care of [their] compounds and [them] selves.” Additionally, there was evidence that families benefited from knowledge other members of their family had gained from ICS activities with a Foday Swarary community member from Kenema, Sierra Leone saying that she had “learnt about diseases and disease control”. She also described how her family now use soap and water to wash their hands and that this was not previously a common practice in their home before ICS, now these new practices have “helped reduce diarrhoea outbreaks” in her house.

As well as improvements in health practices in the home, an improvement was also seen with regards to young people seeking support for their medical issues. In Senegal, data collected through a questionnaire with young people at the end of the project found that there was an increase in young people accessing information and/or services from a health centre when they had a health issue. This increase was from 17.2% at the start of the project to 86% at the end. We do understand however that accessing health centres does not necessarily lead to improved health.
**Improved economic opportunities for young people**

YCI believe that enterprise and employment are the best routes out of poverty for young people, and since 2015 many of our projects focused on supporting young people to develop skills, access assets and connect with relevant networks to find work or set up their own business. Three of our ICS country project plans were specifically designed to support improved economic opportunities for young people and we found evidence in 3 communities that ICS activities had contributed towards achieving this aim.

In Senegal and Sierra Leone, the Development Challenge is reported to have benefited communities through the provision of assets and resources. Community members in Kaolack, Senegal reported the success of poultry farms constructed and established by ICS volunteers as an ICS Development Challenge activity.

In Senegal and Sierra Leone participants also spoke of having increased knowledge and engagement with community saving schemes. Schemes which helped businesses to grow:

> “Initially I didn’t know how to save, they called a workshop and taught us how to save so business can grow.” Micro-finance session participant, Kenema, Sierra Leone

While knowledge of business is reported to have been gained within these communities, evidence from Lomé, Togo suggests that this knowledge needs to be more market relevant, so that it could be more easily be put into practice. In Lomé, 66% of young people interviewed did not feel they had improved knowledge of the job market after participating in ICS training on topics like jewellery, shoe and soap making. This indicates to us that longer-term interventions and training is needed to adequately meet individual’s needs, with more research into the local job market required to ensure participants are equipped with relevant skills.

We found in Kenema, Sierra Leone that women, the target group for ICS micro-finance activities, have particularly benefited from vocational skills training and have improved their knowledge of business management. One case study from Ziguinchor, Senegal also highlights this, indicating how following Javel water and agricultural training from ICS volunteers in late 2017 several women in Lyndiane approached members of their community to gather support for their agricultural business proposal. These women reportedly now employ 34 other women within the community and fund other business ventures through their profits.

**Challenging gender stereotypes and taboos**

In two communities, Birisiri, Bangladesh and Makeni, Sierra Leone community members who had been involved in ICS community workshops and awareness raising events (such as those delivered on International Women’s Day), challenged taboos and stereotypes related to gender. In some communities it was reported that there had been reduced inequalities within these communities, with one peace club participant interviewed in Makeni, Sierra Leone highlighting how the perceptions of women being “inferior” have been changed. In Birisiri, community members highlighted how ICS workshops had ensured that communities were now more conscious of the threat of early marriage, and by association early pregnancy, and the risk this poses to a woman’s and a baby’s health. They reported that such awareness has led to early marriage becoming less prevalent. They noted awareness of the substantial negative impact on girls and women of these practices.

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7 Production of a solution which is used as a disinfectant
Young people have become leaders in their communities

Across all 11 communities, young people’s development of leadership skills and growth in confidence was cited as a significant impact of ICS activity. This was cited as an impact for both alumni and for young people who have attended ICS activities. The impact for alumni is discussed in the alumni section of this report.

Improvements in this area for young people was particularly noticeable in Bangladesh where the project aimed to empower young people to become agents for change within their communities and address important health and social issues through the creation of 10 community-based youth groups.

In Edilpur, Bangladesh project activities were designed to empower young people. A Joytetul Youth Group member for example, expressed how opportunities to speak in public and deliver her own workshops on ICS has encouraged her to assume leadership positions to fight against early marriage in her local community. She explained that her participation in the youth group and work with ICS was the “first time [she] delivered a speech and people listened to [her]”.

‘I loved innovating, making new things. With ICS I had the opportunity to do so. People around me saw a change. I am now a leader in my family and a source of inspiration.’ Beneficiary of ICS activities, Ziguinchor, Senegal

Much of the evidence gathered from these communities suggests that not only are young people reporting that they feel more confident and empowered as leaders, but that ICS volunteers have created more space for youth participation and leadership. Young people from Makeni, Sierra Leone, for example, were reported as more likely to attend community meetings and be on time following their involvement in ICS activities. In Edilpur, Bangladesh, one young participant of ICS activities for Joytetul Youth Group formed her own community group which helps to ‘spread information and raise awareness in the community about social problems like early marriage’. In such instances, young people are being perceived and accepted as agents for change within their communities and are running their workshops for their peers and taking on leadership roles within local organisations.

Improved English language skills

Working in cross-cultural teams to deliver ICS exposes volunteers to a range of different languages and language learning has been a recurring theme reported across the different ICS communities. An improvement
in levels of English was reported by ICS alumni students, detainees in prisons, youth group members and young apprentices who have participated in a range of ICS activities aiming to improve levels of English. Improvements reported by ICS alumni will be discussed in the alumni section of this report.

In terms of activities aiming to improve levels of English amongst young people, across ICS2 approximately 2200 hours of English peer education or training activities were delivered to over 14000 young people and community members. Although improvement in English was reported across a range of communities, the majority of strong evidence came from the reports provided by volunteers in Francophone countries YCI worked in - Togo and Senegal. It is interesting to note that as well as improvements in English ability, there was also increased interest and confidence in English reported, with a suggestion that this was due to participants being exposed to new methods and techniques of language learning initiated by ICS volunteers.

Teachers confirmed that they believed that sessions ran by ICS volunteers had been beneficial in terms of interest in English as well as attainment. In Lomé, Togo, one teacher from Aurore Boréale commented that “Students attitudes and behaviours have changed whilst also improving their vocabulary and grammar. Grades have also improved at Aurore Boréale”.

Bekou Odanwanou an English Teacher at Gamaliel Secondary School in Atakpamé, Togo also commented that “…activities run by ICS, they are a great present, the students really like the activities, it is something different and interesting for them. When you were absent [in between cohorts] they were asking about you […]. At the college, we follow the National Education Programme. We discuss our programme with the ICS volunteers, because the ICS activities are not in our programme, but the students need it. It is a time for them to be rejoicing in their learning, having fun with it.”

Ramjan Ali, of Buligaon, spoke to us about the impact ICS has had in his community in Birisiri, Bangladesh and for the young people who attend the school where he works. Through working with ICS, the English of his students greatly improved. They went from feeling "uneasy" about their English-speaking abilities, to being confident and more fluent.

Although there have been many references to improvements in English it is important to note that this evidence has been mainly been provided by alumni and project partners such as teachers. Evidence from students themselves has been limited and we have not been able to corroborate improvements reported with data on pupil’s attainment from partner schools as teachers have often been unable or unwilling to provide this data.

**Increased understanding of the value of education**

ICS teams across all 11 communities have worked in close partnership with schools. Many English classes, awareness raising sessions and events have been held at schools, and ICS volunteers have worked to improve educational resources and infrastructures. Development Challenge funds across many of the target communities have been used to improve school infrastructures (roofing, lighting, flooring, playgrounds, benches) which has been reported to have a positive impact on young people’s behaviour and attitudes. In Edilpur, Bangladesh for example, three partner schools interviewed by ICS volunteers reported that resources donated by the Development Challenge had a positive impact on students’ motivation to learn. While in Makeni, Sierra Leone 42 participants interviewed stated that they had an increased understanding of the value of education because of ICS activities in schools.

Likewise, further evidence from Birisiri, Bangladesh illustrates how ICS workshops on early marriage and early marriage have served to highlight the importance of education and kept girls in school. One young male participant of such workshops in Birisiri, for example, spoke of how he and a group of friends successfully intervened to prevent an early marriage in the community, and with support from local police, community members and teachers got the families agreement to keep the young girl in school. Another father reported how having planned an arranged marriage for his young daughter before she was of legal age, decided to put the marriage on hold until she was older, having found out this was illegal from workshops delivered from ICS.
volunteers. Such impacts were also noted in the impact report from Edilpur, with one female alumna reporting that she ‘shared [her] experiences and informed the families of the importance of education’.

**Access to higher education**

An important activity carried out by ICS volunteers across all three communities in Togo has been the provision of birth and nationality certificates. ICS volunteers in Atakpamé, for example providing 84 certificates to Datcha Primary School. This, according to the community reports of Lomé, Sokodé and Atakpamé has had a significant impact on communities by enabling young people provided with these certificates the opportunity to progress to secondary school and higher education.

“This project has brought a lot of positive change because the children are now able to provide the required documents for their CPD exam.”

- Kokou Tchodo, Headteacher at Datcha Primary School

**Improvements to community infrastructures and resources**

Throughout the ICS programme volunteers have supported the development of a number of infrastructures and have provided resources to different organisations including the YMCAs. The volunteers have supported community infrastructure development through Development Challenge projects which allow the volunteers access to a budget of up to $1000 to put towards a project that addresses a need in their host community. Throughout ICS2 ICS volunteers implemented 67 Development Challenge projects. Each Development Challenge project would usually involve from one to four main activities, designed by ICS volunteers based on the need of the local community. Across the Development Challenge projects completed from June 2015 to July 2018 approximately 123 infrastructure and resource development projects were completed.

The change brought about in the area of community infrastructure development has been mentioned across all community reports detailing positive changes for example teachers feeling better able to teach using resources provided by ICS in Edilpur, Bangladesh or more community members having access to clean water as a result of water kiosks in Kakata, Liberia.

Volunteers have found that there has been a constant request for support from the Development Challenge fund to address issues with infrastructures including schools requiring a new roof, health centres in need of a shelter for a waiting area, a demand for toilets at various locations and repairs to wells and water kiosks. The volunteers have provided a wide range of resources from musical instruments, text books and medical equipment to a different partners organisations and community members.

In Monrovia, Liberia volunteers conducted interviews with community members who had benefited from infrastructure improvements, these community members suggested that the buildings provided by ICS were being sustained either by the stakeholders involved in the project or through maintenance fees collected e.g. from a bathroom renovated in the Nicklay’s town community or from a water kiosk.

One beneficiary of the public latrine built in a community near Monrovia, Liberia, explained how it is being sustained:

“Yes, it (the bathroom) is still clean; the women who use it also clean it. But the co-chair is taking care of it and it is $10 dollars. The money is used to buy other things like chlorine, soap, clean it and also fix it when there is a problem.”

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8 The students must pass the CPD exam to go to secondary school.
A refurbished latrine converted to public use by ICS Volunteers in Monrovia, Liberia

In Kaolack, Senegal, community members benefitted from a new consultation room at a local health clinic. As well as improving the facilities for community members and ensuring community members have somewhere appropriate to wait, a Development Challenge beneficiary from Ndoffane community gave his view on how his part in this project has highlighted responsibilities to his own community:

“This project motivates us to give our time and ideas to our community. For example: the cleanliness of the community, but also the fact of knowing his duty as a citizen. If the project should be repeated, we will keep together the solidarity, the duty of the citizen, what I wish to add is that he will come and do more of what they have already done.”

Development Challenge beneficiary, Ndoffane community, Kaolack, Senegal

There is a mixed picture across the community reports with regards to the sustainability of these infrastructures and resources after the ICS provision or activity had ended. In some communities there is evidence that partners who have been involved in these infrastructure developments have successfully maintained them. However, there is a financial cost to maintaining buildings and resources and on occasions partners have not had the means to maintain structures and resources provided by ICS, which they had originally anticipated having, reducing the durability of positive impacts. Where this has worked best – for example in Atakpamé and Lomé, Togo or Kakata, Liberia, community members reported that projects have been successfully sustained where there had been significant engagement from the partner organisation or individual recipients.

**Increased knowledge of waste management**

ICS volunteers have frequently used their Development Challenge budget to address the issue of waste and litter within the communities they have been working. Litter and waste management being a reported concern with few communities having the infrastructure to manage waste.

“Before ICS people were less aware about cleanliness and cleaning methods. People never disposed waste properly but now do.” A beneficiary of Development Challenge activities, Burma 4, Kenema, Sierra Leone

Three of the 11 communities (Kenema in Sierra Leone, Kakata in Liberia and Edilpur in Bangladesh) have reported how the provision of bins and community clean-up campaigns, largely funded through Development Challenge activities, have improved management of waste and care for the environment at the community level. Community members interviewed in Kakata, Liberia reported how tools provided by ICS volunteers are still being utilised to clean latrines and public spaces, while designated waste areas were reported as being used instead of rubbish being burnt in many family homes. More evidence may be needed to allow us to better understand whether such interventions have been sustained or will continue without the financial input from ICS activity, for example where bins have been damaged or where community-wide waste collection is not in place.
Improved understanding of conflict resolution

In Kenema and Makeni, Sierra Leone ICS volunteers have been leading and facilitating peace promotion sessions and establishing peace clubs within local communities. A reported impact unique to these communities, therefore, has been an increased understanding of how to deal with and solve conflict. Participants of these activities in Kenema reported that ICS has contributed to a reduction in youth violence, while in Makeni they suggest there is now an increased understanding of conflict resolution and decrease in practices like smacking children. An assertion made by participants of ICS activities in Makeni has been that knowledge of conflict management has created space for development, with communities more open to drive and discuss change peacefully, improving the overall level of peace in communities.

One participant of a focus group discussion in Kenema, Sierra Leone, shared that, “before this time there was diversity amongst us, but we thank god for your peaceful messages, we’re living in peace and unity now.”
Case study of Volunteer Development: Sokhana Sadio, ICV Ziguinchor, Senegal (Jan – April 2018)

Before taking part in ICS, Sokhna found it difficult to express herself in public, especially when speaking English. Through the activities she has been part of during her placement, her confidence in public speaking has grown and she also feels she now has a better understanding of the problems in the community.

For example, she has learnt how to deliver training on a variety of topics such as agriculture, soap manufacturing, sexual health and chicken breeding. She has also learnt how to create an enterprise and business, time management, leadership and how to work in a team with members from different cultures.

Looking to the future, Sokhna would like to train young people in chicken breeding and agriculture in order to encourage them to start their own businesses. This is not something she had considered before the ICS programme, but she now understands the needs of her community and this enterprise would go a long way to supporting them.
Findings: Alumni

One aim of ICS has been centred on a volunteer’s personal development. Participation in ICS intends to create personal, professional and leadership development opportunities for young people through cross cultural working and supported learning, so that young people can raise their voice, increase their employability and build their skills as active citizens. The extent to which this has been realised for in-country volunteers was an area of focus for this impact assessment. Most of the evidence in this section comes from semi-structured interviews with ICS alumni but also from interviews with YMCA staff who worked closely with in-country alumni during and after their ICS placement. After their ICS placement, ICS in-country alumni were provided with support from the YMCA to complete their Action at Home project. Throughout this impact assessment research, ICS volunteers spoke with 145 ICS in-country alumni to find out about what changes they had experienced as a result of their participation in the ICS programme.

Improved skills; especially confidence, leadership and public speaking

Regardless of the nature of the projects that in-country volunteers participated in, in-country alumni consistently reported across all communities to have developed new skills. In Makeni, Sierra Leone 100% of alumni interviewed said ICS had led to positive changes in their lives where they are still using the skills and resources developed on their ICS projects. In Kenema, all 15 alumni recognized at least three newly acquired skills that have been enhanced due to the programme. This sentiment was echoed by alumni in most ICS locations.

Confidence, leadership, public speaking and English language are amongst the most common skills that alumni have gained. A female volunteer from Kenema, Sierra Leone, recognized that following ICS she was much more confident and able to “stand and talk to thousands to people, [whereas] before ICS programme, it was difficult for me”. In Birisiri, Bangladesh 5 out of 7 females and 4 out of 12 males interviewed felt they had gained leadership skills.

“The ICS program helped me to develop my leadership and improve my communication…Thanks to the skills acquired, in the ICS program, I am the leader of an association in my community. The skills acquired in the program serve me to lead my association, to teach my children, and to raise awareness.” Daba Sene, ICS Alumni, Kaolack, Senegal

In Ziguinchor, Senegal we found that alumni had developed a variety of skills including planning, flexibility, timekeeping and conflict resolution. They reported being able to apply these skills in professional environments.
In Birisiri, alumni reported benefits of working in a cross-cultural team where they could teach as well as learn, gaining knowledge on a subject matter and skills in workshop delivery and facilitation. Even after their ICS project had come to an end, in some communities’ alumni had continued the work that had been begun, increasing the impact beyond the life time of the project.

“After the ICS programme I became much more engaged with YMCA activities, and was able to handle taking on much more responsibilities, until I was appointed a post in the Regional Delegation, and in Regional Communication. For me, the skill I developed was primarily leadership, and I have continued to use these leadership skills not just in the workplace, but in every aspect of my life since the programme.”

Emmanuel, ICS Alumn, Atakpamé.

Paul, ICS in-country team leader, and Emmanuel at the Atakpamé YMCA centre during Emmanuel’s alumni interview

Increase in English language and technical skills

In-country volunteer alumni moved beyond the development of solely ‘soft skills’, gaining technical expertise too. In Kakata, Liberia, this included the use of Microsoft Word and Excel, in Makeni, Sierra Leone this included increased mathematical competency and in Kenema, Sierra Leone report writing, and project development were reported as new skills developed by alumni.

The skills developed were also observed by YMCA staff:

“[At the] beginning of the placement [the in-country volunteers] were too afraid to speak in front of public, end of placement they get enough confidence to deal with government officials [and] local community leaders” Proshit Bonowary, ICS Volunteer Supervisor Birisiri YMCA, Bangladesh

English language was one of the most common skills that alumni have gained. Alumni reported that as English is an “international language” the development of their English language skills has, and will, support them into work or to secure university places in the future. In Lomé, Togo, Edem Kossi Yovogan an alumni of the ICS programme, regarded his new-found English skills as “the most important change” from ICS, and now works at the YMCA helping school children to improve their English.
Atchou Kossi Yao, ICS Volunteer Supervisor in Atakpamé, Togo explains:

“the changes have been extremely positive, for example one volunteer who was involved in the programme spoke no English before. This [ICS] provided a platform for him to learn, and afterwards he found a rewarding and challenging work opportunity in the USA”.

In Atakpamé one alumni, Catherine, explained that she had ‘mastered some entrepreneurial skills such as [how to make] liquid soap, jewellery and artisanal shoes”. It is evident that ICS supported alumni to develop both soft and technical skills.

**Increased knowledge of community issues**
We found that alumni in two communities (Kenema, Sierra Leone and Edilpur, Bangladesh) reported that they had increased their knowledge on issues facing their community as a result of their participation in the programme. In Edilpur, ICVs had increased understanding of social issues affecting people in their community such as gender inequality, early marriage, teenage pregnancy, drugs, alcohol and eve-teasing9.

ICS has provided the opportunity for ICVs to work cross-culturally with both the UK volunteers and with other people and communities present within their own countries. This was demonstrated in Kenema, Sierra Leone, where alumni said they had a better understanding of problems facing Sierra Leone. They were able to mix with diverse groups in areas and communities they had not previously visited, where they subsequently delivered peer education and awareness raising activities. They have been able to build on these experiences with one alumni from Makeni, Sierra Leone stating, “I always teach about tolerance in my community, irrespective of religion, race or political affiliation.”

**Increase participation in the YMCA or local community organisations**
Participation in ICS has provided alumni with connections to other organisations and opportunities to increase their participation through continued work the YMCA.

In Kenema, Sierra Leone nearly all alumni of the 15 interviewed had joined another group or organisation or had created their own group to meet the needs of young people after their participation in ICS. Ten out of 11 alumni in Makeni, Sierra Leone, felt they had built new connections and became part of new groups because of ICS. In addition to the YMCA, these new connections included social clubs, other NGOs, radio stations and youth groups.

Eight out of 14 alumni in Edilpur, Bangladesh stated that they had used new connections to motivate and share skills within the community, raise awareness on women’s rights, and try to prevent situations regarding early marriage and dowry system. Additionally, in Bangladesh there is the National Youth Engagement Network (NYEN)10 where ICS alumni from multiple ICS delivery agencies come together to act as a greater force for change. 79 YCI ICS alumni have joined this network, been up-skilled with advocacy, networking and linkage training and have been part of campaigns on child marriage, dowry and violence against women, drug abuse and the SDGs11.

**Alumni using skills and knowledge gained from ICS**
Through the Impact Assessment, alumni have reflected on how ICS has positively contributed towards their current circumstances and how they have been able to use the skills and knowledge they gained during ICS to further their careers.

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9 Eve-teasing is a euphemism used throughout South Asia and refers to the making of unwanted sexual remarks or advances by a man to a woman in a public place.

10 The National Youth Engagement Network in Bangladesh was one of four VSO /ICS Innovation projects in 2017.

Through supporting an enterprise project in Atakpamé, Togo, one alumnus described how they had “learnt how to manage my business. I buy honey and I sell it on. Before ICS I wasn’t doing very well, now thanks to what I have learnt my business is going well”. Edilpur has seen alumni move onto careers in teaching “using lessons plans they had learned from teaching during ICS”.

Furthermore, as a result of a Development Challenge project run in Niaguissi, Ziguinchor between January- April 2017 on agriculture and entrepreneurship\(^\text{12}\), volunteers have been able to draw upon their knowledge and skills in this field to implement agriculture projects in their communities, sharing their expertise with other young people in Ziguinchor.

\(^{12}\) The January-April 2017 ICS Team provided materials to create a sustainable irrigation system in Niaguissi, Ziguinchor and trained 30 young people and volunteers on how to use this.
Findings: YMCA staff

This section looks at the impact of ICS on YCI’s YMCA partners. We looked at the ways that YMCA have benefited or been challenged by delivery of the programme, particularly with regards to organisational development. We have also looked at any networks developed through new partnerships or strengthened working relationships. We were particularly open to assessing the unintended impacts of the delivery of the programme. Most of the evidence was gathered through interviews with YMCA staff, interviews with staff from other project partners, in-country alumni and from participants of ICS activities.

The ICS programme was primarily delivered through 11 local YMCAs; these are known as local branches or associations. Each local YMCA is a volunteer-led organisation who have their own staff and leadership and a local management committee/board. They would then be affiliated to the National Council of YMCAs who YCI primarily worked with to deliver the programme. In our ICS partner countries, the National Council of YMCAs have strong oversight of the local branch, but with local oversight and accountability through the local Board. In each YMCA branch there was a Volunteer Supervisor, who was a full-time member of staff focused on supporting the ICS volunteers. They were line managed by the ICS Programme Manager who was usually based at the national YMCA headquarters in the capital city.

ICS has increased the visibility of the YMCA

In almost all communities we found evidence that ICS had increased the awareness of the YMCA amongst community members. The most significant impact was a reported increased knowledge amongst community members of the existence of the YMCA and of its activities. Community members described that the YMCA was now better known, more visible and that they could now state the activities of the YMCA. Some described the volunteers as being good publicity for the YMCA.

In Liberia, staff reported how the increased visibility had created an untapped demand for new volunteer opportunities:

“ICS impacted branch activities and serve as a motivating drive for more young people, they learn and involve with taking advantage at the branch level. It has impacted us positively increasing our membership and also impacted us by increasing knowledge for young people who are attending high schools” He also said: “we will strengthen our health advocacy in community, and peer educators referring to post-ICS.” Mr. Charles Marshall, YMCA staff & ICS Programme Manager, Liberia

Activities of ICS challenging community perceptions on the YMCA

The YMCA is an ecumenical movement which works with young people and community members from all faiths or none. There is no requirement for UK or in-country volunteers to be members of the YMCA movement in order to participate in the ICS programme with YCI, however it was hoped that in-country volunteers would continue to engage with the YMCA after participation in ICS and potentially become members. An unintended change that has been reported by YMCA staff members was the change in perception of the YMCA being an organisation only for those of the Christian faith.

In some locations the YMCA branch members and volunteers are predominantly Christians, but this will vary by location (e.g. in Senegal, a Muslim majority country, many members are Muslim). In Bangladesh community members reported that the increased understanding of the YMCA had challenged their knowledge that the YMCA only served the Christian community. As ICS volunteers had engaged the Muslim majority, alongside the Christian Garo community with whom the YMCA had traditionally reached, it helped to build wider understanding of the ethos of the YMCA. In Bangladesh, reach and engagement has broadened across
the Muslim and Hindu communities as ICS volunteers went about conducting campaigns and workshops throughout a range of different communities helping to change the perspective of the YMCA only serving Christian members of the community. YMCA Bangladesh staff members reported that community members were increasingly happy for their children to come to the YMCA since ICS and that the image of YMCA had become exactly what they hoped it to be.

Referring to community members, YMCA Birisiri General Secretary Mr Biplop said “they are more involved […] community members are now allowing young people to come and get involved more with YMCA. Its more diverse.”

ICS has increased the membership of the YMCA

Most local YMCA branches have some form of membership. This is usually a voluntary arrangement whereby community members will gain access to some YMCA activities and services in return for a small annual fee. Whilst the YMCA will often deliver many services and activities which are open to the wider community and all ICS supported activities were free at the point of access; the local membership is a key income for the branch and supports the core running costs of the organisation. With their membership, individuals receive democratic rights to elect the local management committees, influence the development of YMCA activities and to also be involved in the democratic management of the National Council of YMCA’s. Some ICS teams specifically aimed at growing membership to aid the financial sustainability of the YMCA and increase the opportunity for democratic engagement and accountability to local community members.

There was reported evidence of growing membership through the period of ICS programme delivery in seven communities across all 5 countries. YMCA staff reported that the increase in visibility and awareness generated by the activities of the ICS volunteers had reached new audiences who in turn had shown interest in the YMCA and chosen to join. Conversion from interest to membership varied depending on the size of the local branch and their range of activities.

“There is no consistent evidence as to whether the increase was as a result of a more diverse group of individuals becoming members or whether the increase can in fact be attributed to the ICS volunteers. However, in Bangladesh where ICS teams worked in more rural areas and their activities were undertaken in across wider geographical areas, there was some evidence that new volunteers from further away from the branch location were engaged. In Edilpur, Bangladesh, membership has increased from 220 members, since ICS programming started in January 2016, to 250 members by May 2018. The General Secretary, Nipun Sangma, of Bangladesh YMCA said that “when we call [volunteers] to do something for the YMCA they come, and they respond to do some volunteering’.

In Kenema, Sierra Leone, local YMCA staff reported that ICS had also deepened the participation of branch volunteers as well as increasing membership. The increase in membership was partly due to in country volunteers joining due to the skills learnt on the ICS programme and their desire to continue to be involved. For example, in Makeni, Sierra Leone, 10 out of the 11 ICS alumni interviewed as part of the impact assessment said that they were now engaged with the YMCA since their ICS placement, with one member, becoming the Youth Chairman of the YMCA Makeni branch. This leadership progression as also seen in other locations, for example in Togo:

“ICS has affected the local branch positively. For example, many ICS volunteers become members and volunteers in the local YMCA after the programme. This can be seen in
Animation is a programme of activities that engage children.

This growth also continued as the in-country volunteers exit the formal programme and become ICS alumni. For example, in Lomé, Togo the YMCA Communications Co-ordinator Sylvain Amewu noted that “alumni have become YMCA volunteers and members and these alumni attract other members, others come thanks to the work of alumni”.

In some communities, for example in Kakata, Liberia, there was no significant increase in YMCA membership linked to ICS activity. A key challenge in measuring the change is the lack of clear baseline data on the size of membership per branch at the time of the ICS activities beginning. In addition, in some locations the branch membership is not managed in a fixed period manner or with demographic data collected, with a greater focus on engagement of individuals rather than whether they are in date or in arrears with paid membership. Some YMCAs also have informal dispensation for membership for individuals experiencing challenges, but this is not recorded. There was no evidence – positive or negative - on the sustainability of any membership generated alongside ICS activities collected.

**ICS has increased the range of local organisations working with the YMCA**

In all countries there was evidence that ICS activities had both created new partnerships. In urban locations with larger presence of INGOs there were also some new relationships between the YMCA and the INGOs, for example in Liberia where a new collaboration with Peace Corps volunteers emerged.

Where the ICS projects had specific intended outcomes relevant to education, such as in Bangladesh, there were also closer relationships formed with schools, including state run schools, disabled schools and YMCA run non-formal schools.

Given the timing of data collection there is limited evidence of the sustainability of the partnerships after ICS activities ended. A challenge reported by local partner organisations, for example in Bangladesh, was that the partnership was also underpinned and enhanced by the resources that ICS volunteers brought with them and that without this additional resource it may be difficult to continue to work with the YMCA.

**ICS has led to improved facilities or provided materials for use by the YMCA**

There are a number of examples provided by YMCA staff where the presence of ICS volunteers had also improved the facilities of the YMCA. This impact was particularly noticeable in the smaller YMCA branches who hosted ICS volunteers. For example, the main meeting/ function room at YMCA Birisiri, Bangladesh was redecorated and is now a bright and functional room that can be used by YMCA members and the wider community. The YMCA has been able to install a toilet block and more benches, creating a "visible" change. In Edilpur, Bangladesh, there had been resources such as fans, a new concrete floor for the YMCA informal school, a bookshelf and computer for the YMCA Youth Forum room, and day-to-day resources like board markers for youth forum activities. In Atakpamé, Togo, ICS resources have contributed to a new building for the Hiheatro YMCA Local Union as well as a photocopier and roundabout which were purchased for the YMCA centre at Atakpamé, Togo.

In addition to these physical assets, some YMCA staff noted that the provision of new computers, projectors, stationary and other materials which whilst used primarily by ICS volunteers were also able to be used or borrowed by other parts of the YMCA. In a low resource environment these ad-hoc benefits were highly
valued. Staff at Ziguinchor YMCA have increased access to a projector, computers and a camera but there was frustration that these were not replaced when they broke due to low budgets.

**ICS has built skills of YMCA staff**

In almost all countries YMCA staff reported that engagement in ICS had improved their professional skill set. Key improvements included increased understanding of and ability to manage risk, safety and security. There was also reported improvements in the understanding of cross-cultural working and communication skills and in Togo improved English language skills.

One staff member, Idaoni Kpêtsu, the Regional Secretary of Lomé YMCA, stated it was thanks to ICS that most of the staff could speak English, acknowledging that by improving her language skills she had been able to work more effectively with her centre’s Anglophone partners. Staff had noted that it also had allowed for increased engagement with YMCA staff in other countries; in particular stronger local links between Sierra Leone and Liberia (geographic neighbours) and Togo and Senegal (both Francophone countries).

Francis Amadu, Regional Coordinator at YMCA, Kenema described how ICS had facilitated the exchange of knowledge and services between different organisations, including between the YMCAs, and allowed for better use of resources whilst achieving a stronger and focused impact.

“We share challenges, where [other] institutes may need to come in for help...we amalgamate and pursue things together until justice prevails”. (Francis Amadu, Regional Coordinator, YMCA Kenema.

**ICS has increased the reach of the YMCA**

In some locations, primarily in Bangladesh, Senegal and Liberia, there was some evidence that ICS volunteers had added capacity which enabled the YMCA to reach increasing number of community members as intended beneficiaries. Staff reported that the ICS volunteers have provided useful ‘manpower’ to help with activities such as at community awareness raising events.

“The ICS project in Kakata began before the Ebola outbreak. The health system in Liberia is very weak and fragile, so it became necessary for the YMCA and YCI to become involved. ICS has been very supportive and has helped the YMCA become more visible in the communities and schools in Kakata, both via group discussions and teaching and also through one on one engagement in communities. We have mostly gained exposure. As a youth orientated organisation, we [the YMCA] will use the ICS principles to continue with positive interventions and hope that this will encourage young people to remain involved in positive practice.” – Moore Zinnah, Branch Co-ordinator, Kakata YMCA

This was a particularly strong perception in Bangladesh where ICS was based in smaller and more rural branches. All staff interviewed highlighted the involvement of ICS in the operational capacity of the YMCA had increased with more projects running and an increase in the number of communities which the YMCA had reached and worked in. For example, in Birisiri, Bangladesh, YMCA partnerships with schools increased from one school to four local schools.
Findings: Local project partners

This section looks at the impact of ICS on local partner organisations. These are the organisations or establishments the YMCA collaborated and partnered with during the delivery of the ICS programme. These partners could include schools, universities, prisons, health centres and NGOs amongst many others. This impact assessment looked at the extent to which ICS contributed to the work of partner organisations, the benefits and lessons to be learnt regarding these partnerships and any indications on the durability of the partnerships as ICS programming ends.

Most of the evidence was gathered through interviews with partner organisation staff and through the insights of ICS alumni and the views of YMCA staff. Where relevant, the feedback from community members and young people who have participated in ICS activities has also been included.

The ICS programme was primarily delivered through 11 local YMCAs; these are known as local branches or associations. In advance of the start of the ICS programme an assessment was undertaken on the local context, the key issues affecting the community and other relevant stakeholders who may be impacted by ICS activity. This informed the design of activities undertaken by ICS volunteers, including where joint working with other organisations was planned. In addition, each individual team of ICS volunteers may have initiated some activities with particular partners to respond to new or emerging needs, following lessons learnt from previous cycles of volunteers and/or to respond to new partnerships developed elsewhere by the YMCA. Sometimes these partnerships were also forged to assist delivery of ‘Development Challenge’ activity.

Skills development for partner organisations
Some of the clearest reported changes were in improvements in the skills and abilities of the staff and volunteers at partner organisations. For example, feedback stated that they had increased knowledge of key development topics that the ICS volunteers had been intending to raise awareness of. Rajia Khatun, previously an employee of the Church of Bangladesh Social Development Project (CBSDP) in Edilpur said,

“I had a lot of training on different topics and though [my organisation] were engaged with them... I could not share my knowledge with the community properly. Through ICS I was able to implement my skills and all my training was not in vain.... ICS helped with the organization of the meetings, advertising to get the peoples together, providing the tools and giving logistical support. We [CBSDP] engage with other organisations... but we don’t work actively with them like we do with ICS.’

Much of the activity of ICS volunteers delivered saw them working with local education providers and schools e.g. in Sierra Leone volunteers worked with primary and secondary schools as well as universities, in Togo working in apprentice centres in addition to schools and in Bangladesh volunteers worked with the YMCA non-formal schools. There was some evidence, particularly from Birisiri, Bangladesh, that the presence of ICS volunteers in schools had a knock-on impact on teachers, for example in giving ideas for methods of instruction and pedagogy. In Birisiri, Bangladesh, school staff reported that this had helped them to deliver more enjoyable and engaging lessons for students. Some school staff stated that working with ICS volunteers had positively developed their cross-cultural understanding and they had a stronger appreciation of working with people from a different culture. Furthermore, many teachers noted that exposure to, and discussion with, UK volunteers had aided their English language skills.
ICS activity has increased the scale and reach of the partner organisation

In the vast majority of locations, ICS volunteers have been able to support partner organisations to increase the scale and reach of their activities or services. The additional human resource of the volunteers enabled the partner to plan new ways of working, which reached more members of the communities they sought to serve. For example, in Edilpur, Bangladesh, the ICS activities included raising awareness of and preventing early marriage and gender inequality. Partner organisations noted that ICS logistical support and reputation enabled their organisation to reach a wider audience to share their expertise on relevant social and health issues.

In Kaolack, Senegal, the National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment (ANPEJ) stated that ICS volunteers had increased the number of young people visiting the services and who they could work with. This had contributed toward an increase in the visibility of their organisation.

"Before the ICS program we had never worked with YMCA, it was with the ICS program that we partnered with YMCA. We have won a lot with this partnership in terms of numbers; in terms of areas of intervention; in terms of the number of registrants. It is from awareness that we receive young people who are interested in the structure and this boosts the number of young people enrolled and the number of young people being sensitized. There are also villages, localities, municipalities that have known the ANPEJ via the ICS program" Moussa NDOUR representative of the National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment (ANPEJ) Kaolack, Senegal

In addition, there is evidence that pre-existing partnerships were strengthened and sustained by ICS activities. Partners suggested that this was due to the increase in visibility and understanding of the work of the YMCA and the additional resources (human and material) ICS activity offered the partner organisation.

In many locations, local partner organisations reported that ICS volunteers had enhanced their capacity to deliver their activities. This was either through their placement being with the local partner organisation and/or through one-off provision/sharing of resources for complementary activities.

It was highlighted that the youth-focused nature of ICS helped to engage young people. Leaders of partner organisations noted that the leadership skills that ICS instils in its volunteers had a knock-on impact on the wider community and young people they seek to work with. Some partner organisations noted that the make-up of the ICS team, being mixed UK and in-country volunteers helped to engage local community members in a way that, in their experience, other interventions had not. In Edilpur, Bangladesh, partner organisations noted that working with UK volunteers was perceived differently by community members:

‘When foreigners talk about the issues with the students and with the community then we have found they are more engaged with the information’ (Luftor Rahman, Head Teacher, Kuralia BK High School, Edilpur, Bangladesh) and ‘the presence of UK volunteers as it is viewed as a good sign that people from a developed country are saying [positive health and social messages]’ (Salma Afroz, Head Teacher, Bokerbaid Girls’ School, Edilpur, Bangladesh).

Whilst this was spoken of positively by the partner organisation, the extent to which this would reinforce traditional power dynamics and/or perceptions of predominantly a white British UK team of volunteers was not explored in our collected data.
ICS has led to improved facilities or provided materials for use by the partner organisation

In some communities, ICS activities have led to an improvement in the facilities and resources of the partner organisation. Partners have benefited from these improvements through the Development Challenge projects which allowed volunteers to dedicate up to $1000 on a small community project. For example, in Kenema, Sierra Leone, ICS volunteers have helped to provide learning materials such as textbooks, pens, pencils and rulers and in some schools additional classroom furniture such as benches, desks and blackboards. Teachers reported that this had increased pupils’ productivity and ensured they had better resources in order to cover the curriculum more effectively. In Lomé, Togo, through the Development Challenge activities, partner organisations received fans and other infrastructure support which supported ICS volunteers to better deliver activities with them.

In Atakpamé, Togo, the ICS volunteers refurbished spaces in prisons and supported the delivery of workshops to detainees:

“The volunteers have replaced the mill (used to grind maize), they have also built a quarantine building to be used by prisoners who have a contagious disease. They also bought chairs and benches for the prison … when the prisoners leave the prison they have the ability to employ skills that can help them earn money. The business sessions have worked particularly well, especially for the women.” – Sani Maman, Prison Director at Prison Civiler d’Atakpamé, Togo.

Partners are concerned about the sustainability of initiatives begun through ICS

One of the key benefits provided by ICS volunteers has been to offer additional capacity in the form of human resources which has positively impacted the reach of the partner organisation. As such, there was a clear concern that this would not be easy or possible to replicate with the end of ICS volunteering placements.

This was clearly acknowledged by YMCA staff across most locations where many shared their concerns on the difficulty in maintaining the work undertaken through ICS placements without funding, which relied on volunteers being present and offering their time. As a result, it was anticipated that the level of activity and range of partnerships would be greatly reduced after ICS.
Conclusions

Key changes

Y Care International, our YMCA partners, in-country alumni, beneficiaries and community partners have in no doubt seen, and reported, changes and impact as a result of ICS. This Impact Assessment has evidenced changes at personal, community and organisational levels, evident across all eleven ICS communities in Bangladesh, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo.

The degree to which these changes occurred is varied, as is the number of communities in which these changes were reported. The most common change reported across all project stakeholders was an increase in knowledge or skills as a result of their participation in the ICS programme. This was reported across a range of thematic areas such as health, for participants and alumni delivering health peer education and awareness raising activities.

Impact on beneficiaries and target communities

Across the eleven communities, ICS enabled activities and initiatives to be delivered at scale. Volunteers delivered 7879 hours of peer education sessions, 3140 hours of awareness-raising activities and built 222 community infrastructures.

Evidence from several communities suggest there has been improved knowledge and practice on a range of:

- Health and sanitation issues
- Changed attitudes and reduced stigma toward Ebola survivors
- An increase in young people accessing advice and services when they had concerns about their own health
- A reduction in open defecation following the provision of latrines
- An increase in use of condoms and mosquito nets
- An increased knowledge of community saving schemes
- Improved economic opportunities for young people and communities through the provision of assets and resources in West Africa
- Improvements in gender equality where taboos and stereotypes related to gender were challenged
- Greater awareness in Bangladesh of the impact of early marriage on young women in terms of their health and education

Overall in each community young people’s development of leadership skills and growth in confidence was cited as a significant impact of ICS activity.

Those engaging in ICS activities shared learning with families, peers and the wider community. The impact has a wider reach than the statistics that can be reported here. In-country volunteers continued workshops beyond their formal placements, increasing the impact and intended benefit that demonstrates ICS Alumni’s commitment to Active Citizenship.

However, low incomes of individuals and families in host communities, cost implications of health care and poor health services meant what had been learnt, could not always be implemented. Subsequently, for all the immediate community benefits emanating from Development Challenge projects, the longer-term sustainability of these initiatives has been questioned without ongoing ICS finance and resource — how will
infrastructure projects be repaired and managed, how will equipment and educational materials be maintained or replaced? However, as seen in Liberia there is willingness within communities to preserve and maintain new facilities built through Development challenge initiatives.

**Impact on ICV Alumni**

Improvements in English language skills as a direct result of a cross-cultural programme is high on the list of reported benefits to ICS Alumni (and indeed for YMCA staff and partners). Leadership, communication and public speaking were skills that were regularly reported by Alumni in addition to this, along with conflict resolution, workshop facilitation and delivery, plus the development of technical skills (IT, entrepreneurship) and knowledge on subject matters.

With ‘Personal Development’ a key aim of ICS, Alumni reflected how this confidence and experience supported them to take advantage of opportunities post ICS.

For some Alumni, they developed a greater awareness of issues affecting members of their communities. ICS not only provided the opportunity to work alongside volunteers from the UK, but from cultures within their own locality; in-country volunteers had diverse backgrounds and projects took place in diverse community settings supporting tolerance and cohesion. Alumni were more inclined to continue to engage in YMCA activity, or participate in groups facilitated by partners whom they were introduced to via ICS.

**Impact on YMCA local branches**

A notable success of ICS has been the increased awareness within communities of the YMCA. ICS helped to challenge perceptions that the YMCA was solely for those of Christian faith, garnering a greater understanding of the role it played to support and provide activities to all members of the community.

Most YMCA’s have a paid membership offer, where members are involved in the democratic governance of each branch. Membership increased at seven of the eleven YMCA branches that delivered ICS, which increased the number of young people participating in decisions that would directly impact them – from YMCA management or delivery of activity, to exercising their democratic right to influence the National Council of YMCA’s. However, data does not exist to attribute this directly to ICS.

Evidence from all countries demonstrates that ICS led to the development of new partnerships with INGO’s and schools, increasing the reach and impact YMCA’s were able to make. However, at the time of the Impact Assessment it was unclear whether these partnerships would be sustained following the withdrawal of ICS teams who provided significant resources.

YMCA staff engaged in delivery of ICS reported improvements in their professional skills such as managing risk, safety and security, furthering their English language skills and gaining experiences in cross-cultural working. Improvements to physical spaces at YMCA branches (meeting rooms, toilet blocks etc.) and the infrastructure and resources available to the community and staff (IT equipment, workshop materials) were also acknowledged. However, without on-going funding via ICS, maintenance of such space or replacement of broken equipment was not sustained, leading to frustrations.

**Impact on partner organisations**

YMCA community partners were engaged in ICS either through core programming, or via volunteers’ Development Challenge initiatives.

Key successes for these partner organisations have been the skill and knowledge development of their own staff and volunteers through the information that ICS volunteers had imparted. ICS volunteers supported partner organisations’ communication efforts and helped mobilise community engagement, specifically the engagement of young people. The model of having UK and in-country volunteers collaborating to deliver programmes was reported as advantageous, engaging the community in a way that other interventions had not, although as previously discussed has been criticised.
Education providers were the partners that ICS volunteers would most commonly work with. Some teachers in these settings said working alongside ICS volunteers enabled them to increase their repertoire of teaching methods, delivering more engaging and enjoyable lessons.

Much like for YMCA’s, partners reported ICS had enabled them to increase the scale and reach of their activities and services, affording them the opportunity to review their delivery models to further their impact.

However, the reported benefits to partner organisations appear to be time-bound and are not considered as sustainable. The benefits reported were as a direct result of added resource in terms of physical capacity, budgets to support improvements and the cross-cultural nature of the ICS model. This would reduce the level of activity, and therefore impact, that was achieved in the ICS era, and it was anticipated the range of newfound partnerships between YMCA and community groups were unlikely to fall. This is an area that could be given greater consideration in the design of programmes of a similar nature.

The role of young people

Through this Impact Assessment it is evident there is an important and valuable role for young people in to play in delivering community development programmes.

The fundamentals of youth participation are that young people can design, deliver and evaluate initiatives that they engage in, or the services that are aimed at them. These are fundamentals that Y Care International’s ICS programme has adopted wholeheartedly, and this Impact Assessment is a product of.

This is not to deny there are challenges in this approach. Young people, particularly young volunteers, may not have experience, expertise or specialist technical knowledge that some community development programmes need. For example, where young beneficiaries engaged in a livelihoods project in Lomé, Togo, their feedback stated greater knowledge of the local job market would have strengthened activities, combined with a greater ability to support them to gain or acquire relevant skills to meet this market demand.

But it is evident in this Impact Assessment that the challenges presented – which can be prioritised and worked on to overcome in a future ICS programme – are outweighed by the benefits that have been reported.

Aside to being agents of their own development through the skills, confidence and networks young peoples involvement in such programmes provided, our ICS programme has enabled young people to understand the issues and challenges faced by others in their community. It has facilitated and fostered an understanding of these issues and challenges across cultures, enabling young people to be active players in identifying and delivering tangible solutions to deliver positive social changes.

Peer education sessions – delivered in a language, context and format that relate and appeal to young people - have led to a greater understanding and knowledge of young people of the key issues prevalent in their communities, empowering them to take steps to overcome them. The way in which young volunteers have delivered these sessions and maintained the engagement of young people in the community has influenced teaching practices of professionals they worked alongside, as seen in Bangladesh.

With young people visible as leaders in the community, this has inspired young people from the wider community to participate in YMCA or other partners initiatives and activities, bringing greater, longer-term benefits to these young people in these communities where young people themselves are agents of change.
Recommendations

The future of ICS

▶ **Extend voluntary placements**: Eight out of eleven community reports recommend that any future voluntary placements be extended to at least six months. Alumni, partners and YMCA staff consistently asserted that extended placements would have longer-term impacts on communities and on volunteers. Many suggested that longer placements would allow more time for community needs assessments, partnership building and language lessons for volunteers. They also proposed that longer placements would allow for a more extensive handover with future teams; with our community reports and project de-briefs highlighting how beneficial this is for the success of project activities. However, there is a chance that longer placements may exclude some young people from participating so this may be more appropriate for team leaders or a range of placement lengths may be more suitable.

▶ **UK voluntary placements for In-Country volunteers**: Our community reports highlight how a cross-cultural exchange between volunteers significantly benefits the personal development of the volunteer. Five of eleven community reports recommended that in-country volunteers would further benefit from the opportunity to volunteer in the UK as part of their placement. The staff of YMCA Sierra Leone suggested this two-way cross-cultural experience would give in-country volunteers an opportunity to experience another culture, expand their networks, and further develop skills that could be utilised in their own communities.

▶ **Project specific training**: Volunteers receive 4 days training prior to their placement, but five of eleven community reports recommended that this should be developed with a more specific focus on project activities. The Kakata, Liberia report for example suggests that in relation to awareness raising on health issues, volunteers require more extensive training to deliver sessions that would more effectively meet the needs of the local community. Similar assertions are made by the Atakpamé, Togo and Kaolack, Senegal reports, in which YMCA staff report that some volunteers are often unprepared for the realities of placements or lack motivation for activities. A further recommendation made by Atakpamé volunteers being that staff ensure volunteers are matched to placements relevant to their current skills and interests.

Youth volunteering for development

▶ **Prioritise sexual reproductive health education**: Our research with project partners, staff and recipients of ICS activities has shown that a significant impact of ICS activity has been an increase of health knowledge within communities. Health awareness raising activities have clearly had a positive impact, and in many cases have been sustained by alumni undertaking social action following their ICS placements. The reports of Monrovia and Kakata in Liberia, Birisiri in Bangladesh and Atakpamé, Togo however, identified that gaps remain with regards to young people’s knowledge of sexual health education and family planning. Evidence from the reports highlights that while there is some suggestion from participants of ICS activities that numbers of early pregnancies have declined, levels of understanding on the reproductive system and transmission of STIs remains low. Volunteers would therefore recommend that sexual reproductive health education becomes a focus of future project planning with additional training given to alumni, future volunteers and staff on how to discuss these topics across various cultural settings.
Longer-term investment in, and monitoring of, vocational training: Evidence from participants of ICS activities in Lomé, Togo and Kenema, Sierra Leone, suggests that more sustained training is needed for young people hoping to gain vocational or entrepreneurship skills. Research from Lomé and Kenema highlights how increased understanding of business and one-off training events on topics like shoe or soap making does not guarantee improved economic opportunities for young people. A key recommendation from these reports along with those from Monrovia, Liberia and Ziguinchor, Senegal is that the YMCA/YCI invest in further training, support and monitoring of individuals on training courses and further support through start-up initiatives or micro-loans, being endorsed as more beneficial than one of training sessions.

Working in partnership with YMCAs

Regular all staff training: Evidence from YMCA ICS staff across almost all our placement countries indicates how the programme has improved YMCA staff’s professional skill set, particularly in relation to understanding of cross-cultural working and communications skills. With reference to miscommunication issues community reports from Monrovia and Kakata, Liberia and Makeni, Sierra Leone recommend that YMCA staff continue to be supported to develop skills in these areas. One recommendation for this being that country staff across our placements come together for training more regularly prior to ICS placements. The community report from Lomé, Togo for example highlights how all partner workshops run by YCI in London and Togo had been especially beneficial for building the capacity and skills of staff.

Working with local partners

Project planning: from across the community reports there was lots of positive feedback on how local partners have supported ICS, however there are improvements to be made in how YCI and the YMCA engages local partners in the programme and how they work together. The Atakpamé, Togo community report mentions that there were other organisations working on issuing birth and nationality certificates and how it would be beneficial for the YMCA to have more contact with NGOs working in the same area in order to ensure that they are not targeting the same members of the community and that there could even be opportunities to collaborate in order to share resources. Although a number of partnerships are established at the start of an ICS project, the Makeni community report suggested more work on this area at that start of a project in order to improve this way of working.

Partnership support: there is feedback from volunteers on the support provided to partners and on the management of these partners by the YMCA and YCI. The Kakata, Liberia community report mentioned reviewing partnerships and ensuring that all partners are engaged in the ICS activities and are able to support volunteers appropriately. The Lomé, Togo report recommends that training is provided to local partners as the ICS programme evolves and having structured meetings to review how the partnership is progressing.

Alumni engagement and continuing social action

Better resourcing of alumni activities: a number of the community reports mention that there is enthusiasm amongst in-country volunteers to continue the activities of the ICS programme post placement and that having more resources such as grant funding for small projects could be an effective way of supporting ICVs to continue their work as active citizens.

Follow up support and training: there was feedback across community reports to provide additional training to alumni who are particularly engaged in the work of ICS to allow them to continue the work ICS has started in their community and further provide personal development opportunities. The
Lomé, Togo community report mentioned better informing alumni of the job market and supporting them to find work as a recommendation for the future. The Monrovia, Liberia community report suggested that after their experience working in a cross-cultural team, there are alumni who are interested in international opportunities. The volunteers recommend linking alumni to international fellowships and training programmes available.
Appendix 1

ICS Activity Definitions

Peer education - ICS volunteers engaging other young people in learning and debate, through developing strong oral communication skills and relationship-building, which encourages behaviour change and/or action.

Action research/needs assessment - ICS volunteers working with the wider community to gain knowledge, through developing strong information gathering and analytical skills, that informs and empowers community members to take action.

Awareness raising - ICS volunteers increasing the profile of partners and issues, through developing strong motivational, creative and campaigning skills, which engages key decision-makers and the wider community to take action.

Training - ICS volunteers design and facilitate training sessions, through developing strong planning and presentation skills, to encourage debate and action on community issues. This can also include recruiting and developing a pool of trainers in the community for sustainability.

Resource development - ICS volunteers develop practical tools for organisations and communities, through developing strong written communication and often IT skills, to document best practice and increase knowledge-sharing.

Community infrastructure development - ICS volunteers contribute to improved community structures and systems through developing strong project planning skills.

Community networks - ICS volunteers extend the reach and influence of partners by establishing new contacts and strengthening existing relationships with a range stakeholder groups.
# Appendix 2

## Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANPEJ</td>
<td>National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBSDP</td>
<td>Church of Bangladesh Social Development Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICS</td>
<td>International Citizen Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organisation (non-profit organisation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>Voluntary Service Overseas</td>
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<tr>
<td>WaSH</td>
<td>Water, Sanitation and Hygiene</td>
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<tr>
<td>YCI</td>
<td>Y Care International</td>
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<tr>
<td>YMCA</td>
<td>Young Man’s Christian Association</td>
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</table>
Y Care International creates opportunities for vulnerable young people across the globe to change their lives for the better. Inspired by and faithful to our Christian values, we work with people of all faiths and none to build a more just world, free from poverty.