

Final Report FORMATIVE EVALUATION OF VOLUNTEER COOPERATION PROGRAM

Submitted to:
Global Affairs Canada

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Acronyms

CAT: Capacity Assessment Tool

CCT: Cross Cutting Themes

CEAA: Canadian Environmental Assessment Act

CECI: Centre for International Studies and Cooperation

CENPHER: Centre for Nutrition and Public Health

CESO: Canadian Executive Service Organisation

CHC: Canadian High Commissions

CIDA: Canadian International Development Agency

COCAB: Coordinadora de las Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil Canadiense en Bolivia

COCAP: Coordinadora de las Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil Canadiense en el Perú

CSO: Civil Society Organisation

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

Cuso: Cuso International

CWY: Canada World Youth

DCP: Developing Country Partner

DFATD: Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada

EQWIP HUBS: Empowering Youth Innovation for Sustainable Livelihoods

EWB: Engineers Without Borders

FGD: Focus Group Discussion

FIAP: Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy

FTP: Financial and Technical Partner

GAC: Global Affairs Canada

GBA+: Gender Based Analysis Plus

GE: Gender Equality

IBCR: International Bureau for Children's Rights

ICT: Information and Communications Technology

IVCO: International Volunteer Cooperation Organisation

IVFD: International Forum for Volunteering in Development

IYIP: International Youth Internship Program

KII: Key Informant Interview

LAC: Latin America & Caribbean

LM: Logic Model

LOE: Level of Effort

LWBC: Lawyers Without Borders Canada

MDGs: Millennium Development Goals

M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation

MOFA: Ministry of Food and Agriculture

MRIF: Ministère des Relations internationales et de la Francophonie

MSME: Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise

MSR: Management Summary Report

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

NSS: National Service Secretariat

ODAAA: Official Development Assistance Accountability Act

OECD/DAC: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee

OHUN: One Health Network

PIP: Project Implementation Plan

PMF: Performance Measurement Framework

PMS: Performance Management Strategy

PQDI: Program québécois de développement international

PROLEMPA: Promoting Rural Economic Development for Women and Youth in Lempa

QSF: Québec sans Frontières

RBM: Results-Based Management

RFP: Request for Proposal

SADA: Savannah Accelerated Development Authority

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

SEG: Sustainable Economic Growth

SME: Small and Medium Enterprise

SoW: Statement of Work

SSA: Sub-Saharan Africa

SUCO: Solidarité Union Coopération

TA: Technical Authority

TFO: Trade Facilitation Office

TSF: Terre Sans Frontières

UFA: Utilization Focused Approach

UNGA: United Nations General Assembly

UNV: United Nations Volunteers

UPA DI: UPA Développement International

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

VCA: Volunteer Cooperation Agency

VCP: Volunteer Cooperation Program

VWB: Veterinarians Without Borders

WROC: Women's Resource and Outreach Center

WUSC: World University Service of Canada

YCI: Youth Challenge International

A Note on Proportionality

For proportionality, the following terms apply:

- “almost all to all” – findings reflect the views and opinions of 90% or more of respondents
- “most” – findings reflect the views and opinions of more than 75% but less than 90% of the respondents;
- “majority” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 50% but less than 75% of the respondents;
- “some” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 25% but less than 50% of the respondents; and
- “a few” – findings reflect the views and opinions of less than 25% of the respondents.

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Executive Summary

Rationale and Purpose of the Evaluation

This is the formative evaluation report of the Volunteer Cooperation Program (VCP) 2015-2020 commissioned by Global Affairs Canada (GAC). The evaluation was performed by Project Services International Incorporated / PlanNET Limited between January and July 2018.

The Statement of Work (SoW) calls for the evaluation to be conducted midway through the five-year program to assess overall progress toward achieving results and to provide GAC and the Volunteer Cooperation Agencies (VCAs) with the information necessary for adjusting program implementation and for planning future programs.

Specific Objectives of the Evaluation

The specific objectives of the evaluation are to: evaluate the effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of results; evaluate the efficiency of the VCP; and provide findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons to inform implementation of the current program and future program design.

Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation assesses the entire VCP 2015-2020 from its initiation in April 20, 2015 to March 31, 2018, the end of the third year. The evaluation criteria and the 14 key evaluation questions contained in the SoW cover the issues of: Effectiveness; Efficiency; Relevance; Sustainability; Coordination; Engaging Canadians; Innovation; and GAC's Cross Cutting Themes (CCTs) – gender equality (GE), environmental sustainability and governance. During work planning minor wording changes were agreed to clarify these questions.

Development Context

Major progress has been made in documenting the roles played by volunteers in sustainable development, and, since 2011, in integrating volunteerism into key global development processes, including the designation of United Nations Volunteers (UNV) as the focal point within the United Nations (UN), development of a plan of action to integrate volunteering in peace and development, and inclusion of volunteering in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The UN (Resolution 70/129 of December 2015) has identified the efforts of volunteers as an important component of any strategy aimed at such areas as poverty reduction, sustainable development, health, education, youth empowerment and climate change.

The work of umbrella groupings of international volunteer cooperation agencies (IVCOs) such as the International Forum on Volunteering in Development, and GAC's Civil Society Partnership Policy is also important. Furthermore, there is an international trend to address CCTs and corporate social responsibility (CSR) within the community development context; the Canadian government has recognized the importance of integrating these themes into their global programs such as the VCP.

Intervention

VCP 2015-2020 is the current five-year cycle of GAC support to volunteer-sending projects implemented

by Canadian VCAs in collaboration with their developing country partners (DCPs). The program started on April 20, 2015 and is scheduled to end on March 31, 2020. GAC provides financial support to 12 volunteer-sending projects being implemented by 15 Canadian VCAs (three consortiums) with some 700 DCPs in 42 countries. The total value of the VCP is \$460 million of which VCA contributions are approximately \$160 million, mostly the value of volunteers' time. GAC is contributing up to \$300 million to VCAs to allow them to recruit skilled, qualified Canadian volunteers and place them within DCP's to build their capacity to achieve sustainable development results; and also to conduct public engagement activities in Canada. The VCP also supports the placement of Southern volunteers to Canada (S-N), lateral placements of southern volunteers (S-S), and e-volunteers.

The thematic foci of VCA projects are varied and include economic/social empowerment, capacity-building, institutional-strengthening, protection of human rights, and different technical skills, as well as the three CCTs. The overall target is poverty-reduction and enhanced social and economic well-being of marginalized people.

Intervention Logic

At the ultimate outcome level, the VCP 2015-2020 aims to improve the economic and social well-being of poor and marginalized communities in developing countries. The desired intermediate outcomes are:

- increased capacity of DCPs (civil society or private-sector organisations, as well as local, municipal, regional and national authorities in developing countries) to deliver sustainable development results, in response to local needs, by making use of the skills and expertise of qualified Canadian volunteers
- enhanced Canadians' participation in Canada's sustainable development efforts (so as to foster a better understanding of development issues)

The ultimate and intermediate outcomes were included in the Call for Proposals for VCP and are thus the same for all projects funded under the program, but immediate outcomes and other elements of the Logic Models (LMs) were designed by the individual project proponents and are unique to each project.

Stakeholders

According to the SoW, the key Canadian and developing country stakeholders, in addition to GAC as the donor organisation, are: the VCAs, which act as executing agencies or implementing organisations; Canadian volunteers; DCPs; and Canadian men and women in general.

Evaluation Approach and Methodology

The team used a Utilization Focused Approach (UFA) to maximize the practical value of the evaluation to stakeholders. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected in January - July 2018 using 'mixed-methods' that included: document review; four country studies utilizing key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs); desk-based KIIs and FGDs; and two electronic surveys (E-surveys) using Survey Monkey.

A sampling methodology was used to identify an optimal mix of countries for field studies to ensure exposure to all VCA operations and areas of programming and an array of program stakeholders for the desk-based reviews. To select the four countries for the field missions, a two-step sampling method was used: first, a quantitative weighted criterion-based sampling; and, second, a qualitative assessment and selection based upon interviews with VCAs during the inception phase and the evaluation team's context-specific knowledge.

Ten-day field studies were undertaken in Ghana, Honduras, Senegal, and Peru between April and June 2018. Contact was made with GAC personnel, representatives of each in-country VCA, in-field volunteers, managers/directors of DCPs, beneficiaries and community leaders. Field-based KIIs and FGDs engaged 478 people (58.3% female). Desk-based KIIs and FGDs were held with a further 163 individuals (approx. 62.0% female), including VCA leaders and senior staff, Canadian partner organizations, DCPs (with a preference for those based in Asia or North Africa), returned volunteers, expert informants, and CCT specialists and VCP staff at GAC.

Two E-surveys were conducted: one with 3,469 volunteers and the other with 759 DCPs. The volunteer survey had a 33.1% response rate, while the DCP survey had a 51.1% response rate.

The team used a qualitative software platform called Dedoose to help capture KII, FGD and document insights, which enabled the team to sort by question and by respondent type. For the E-surveys, the online data platform called Survey Monkey automatically generates tables and graphs; additional statistical manipulations were undertaken to disaggregate responses by gender, VCA, and volunteer type.

There were no material limitations to the conduct of the evaluation.

Key Findings

At a Glance - Selected Data from Partner and Volunteer Surveys

Improvements among beneficiaries

- **82%** - developing country partners reporting “considerable” (46%) or “modest” (36%) beneficial change among people/communities identified as beneficiaries
- **59%** - in-field volunteers reporting “considerable” (23%) or “modest” (36%) beneficial change among people/communities identified as beneficiaries
- **81%** - developing country partners attributing these beneficial changes to VCA supports (including volunteers), specifically and to a “major” (41%) or “moderate” (40%) extent

Improvements in partner capacity/performance

- **86%** - developing country partners reporting “considerable” (50%) or “modest” (36%) improvement in the way their organizations function (e.g., in relation to program/service delivery, stakeholder engagement, GE policies and practices, governance)
- **82%** - developing country partners reporting specific improvements in GE policies and practices to a “major” (48%) or “moderate” (34%) extent - the area of improvement with the highest rating
- **62%** - in-field volunteers reporting “considerable” (22%) or “modest” (40%) improvement in the way their organizations function
- **69%** - in-field volunteers reporting specific improvements in GE policies and practices to a “major” (30%) or “moderate” (39%) extent - the area of improvement with the second highest rating
- **88%** - developing country partners reporting that volunteer contributions have contributed to perceived organizational improvements to a “major” (43%) or “moderate” (45%) extent

Extent of continuing involvement of returned volunteers in the international development activities:

- **84%** - North-South volunteers reporting that they are more involved in public awareness raising as a result of being a volunteer in a program like VCP (combining “minor”, “moderate” and “major” extent)

Expressed as a weighted average on a four point scale where 1 = not at all, 2 = to a minor extent, 3 = to a moderate extent, 4 = to a major extent

- More involved in raising public awareness - 2.7
- More involved in raising funds - 2.0
- More involved in advocating for an international development cause - 2.8
- Being directly involved in an international development activity in a developing country - 2.9
- More involved in consciously purchasing goods or services produced in developing countries - 2.9

(Gender differences most pronounced here - 13% more females than males say they are conscious consumers)

On Sustainability

- **84%** - developing country partners trace the attention they pay to sustainability to their partnership with their VCA to a “major” (40%) or “moderate” (44%) extent
- **59%** - developing country partners reporting it “likely” that they could continue the sustainability gains already made (25% report the likelihood at 50-50); volunteer perceptions are similar.

Partner and volunteer perceptions on use of innovative practices

- **86%** - developing country partners saying that their VCA partnership was assisting them to innovate with new ideas and approaches to a “major” (39%) or “moderate” (47%) extent
- **76%** - in-field and returned volunteers saying that the partnership was innovating with new ideas and approaches to a “major” (32%) or “moderate” (44%) extent

Effectiveness (3.1.1&2&3) Available data indicate that VCAs are making progress towards achieving the common Intermediate and Ultimate Outcome in all sectors of the VCP. Assessments from DCPs and volunteers support the overall finding that partner improvements meet or exceed expectations and that volunteers and other VCA inputs (e.g., training, network development, complementary funding to support partner initiatives) are playing a significant role in this capacity development. Data confirms that partners see a positive relationship between changes observed among beneficiaries and the support provided by VCAs. Data also shows that, across VCAs, a large majority of returning volunteers are maintaining or deepening their commitments to support Canada’s sustainable development efforts, through public awareness raising, public advocacy on development causes, continued direct involvement in developing countries or ethical consumer practices and fundraising. Variances in reporting practices (e.g., choice and specificity of indicator, variances in the way counts are made, and use of targets) are evident and have limited the understanding of results. Beneficiary level tracking and reporting is uneven and heavily focused around stakeholder “perception” of change. VCAs acknowledge the challenge of tracking beneficiary level changes given the wide scope and scale of program activities, the large number and type of actors involved and the proximity of the VCAs to these arenas of change.

Efficiency (3.2.1&2&3) A broad range of efficiency friendly measures are evident across VCAs, some focused on cost sharing, some on leveraging additional financing to support program delivery, some on engaging with other bilaterally funded projects. Based on evidence from past VCP programming and from the volunteer sending field of practice, the relationship between costs/resources and development results is reasonable. Data are not readily available for analysis of cost per volunteer placement and how this might vary by type of development intervention. The mode of delivery for volunteer services tends to be situation specific, with ‘best fit’ choices being made around length of stay, level of volunteer experience, and service delivery format. Further detailed research is needed when key quantitative data, such as number of volunteer-days and actual costs for key expenditure categories, can be compiled across the program. Some stakeholders are questioning specific measures and data collection procedures and expressing concern about whether the effort to deliver on rigorous reporting requirements is out of step with the knowledge to be gained from it.

Relevance (3.3.1&2) There is consistency between development context, needs/priorities on the one hand and partner project designs on the other. This holds across the sectors of programming focus. Care is taken to jointly assess capacity and then build and implement projects together. The partnership choices VCAs make are mostly sound, however, partnering decisions are sometimes founded on an incomplete understanding of the partner’s situation and *modus operandi*.

Sustainability (3.4.1&2) There is evidence that VCAs bring a sustainability perspective into their discourse with DCPs and that sustainability strategies are factored into project designs. At the same time, there are factors detrimental to sustainability that lie both outside and inside the partners’

spheres of influence, some to do with contextual factors; others to do with partner intentions and/or attention to the presence of volunteers; and still others to do with the design/orchestration of partner activities. Partners and volunteers agree, however, that steps can be taken to promote the longevity of gains stemming from partnerships and to ward against constraints posed from outside. Key among these are: authentic engagement and culturally-attuned relationship-building, a continued searching for shared purpose, sound business planning (with an exit strategy) and systems of accountability, and the development of quality personnel.

Coordination (3.5.1&2) Engagement with other donor initiatives (Canadian or otherwise) varies across VCAs, sectors and regions. The length of experience in volunteer sending and the scale of their operations contribute to this variance. Some VCAs are involved with GAC bilateral programs, and a few with other international (governmental and private-sector) donors, but more awareness of and linkages to these programs are needed.

Information-sharing routinely occurs among VCAs in Canada in pursuit of synergies and operational efficiencies. The extent to which this holds within the VCP countries and regions varies considerably. There are no obvious patterns to suggest reasons why this is the case other than that it hinges on the leadership inclinations, business models and synergies within the VCAs and the embassies/field missions. VCAs and Canadian High Commissions (CHCs) and Embassies visited valued the coordination they had, and where it was felt to be lacking, indicated that more coordination was desirable. Limitations on coordination, at home and abroad, include the number of staff in place and/or their proximity to those coordination fora. Many VCAs cited time constraints and heavy workloads as reasons to be cautious around making additional coordination commitments. Variability here is considerable given scale differences across VCAs.

Engaging Canadians (3.6.1&2) For a large majority of volunteers, involvement in the VCP reinforces or strengthens commitment to participate in efforts to promote international development by building public awareness, raising funds, serving as an advocate, being directly involved in a developing country, or being a socially conscious consumer. Such involvement builds self-confidence, resourcefulness, and cross-cultural competencies according to volunteers. Uniformly, VCAs described this component of the program as integral to the success of their activities in developing countries, that they must engage Canadians individually and in organizational settings in a thoughtful, focused way to attract the volunteer talent and additional supports they require. While meeting their engagement targets, for the most part, VCAs described as a challenge the task of attracting volunteer talent in what is perceived to be a segmented and competitive environment for recruitment. Two dimensions to this are: attention to audience identification and tailored engagement, and the use of information technologies to support that engagement.

Innovation (3.7.1&2) Practices consistent with the GAC definition of innovation are prevalent in all sectors of programming. Diaspora volunteerism, the use of complementary funding (e.g., seed funding), engagement of Canadian private sector partners, and the introduction of sub-sector (as distinct from organizational centred) approaches are notable among these. Use of E-volunteers, South-North (S-N) volunteerism and the encouragement/use of multi-stakeholder platforms are also in evidence. Drivers behind these and other practices include: a widening perspective on international volunteerism and the volunteer role, a related interest to embed international volunteerism deeper into a development paradigm with a focus not just on organizations but on systems, and a desire to engage a wider array of actors involved in those systems. By and large, DCPs and volunteers perceive that the VCP is fostering innovation, particularly in overseas programming. Volunteer perceptions regarding innovation in Canadian Engagement programming are somewhat mixed and, with exceptions, less specific. Innovative practices showing promise were observed in: the use of social media, instances where VCAs were supporting local volunteer groups, and VCA engagement with specialized constituencies related to the

VCAs' activities overseas (including with the private sector and post-secondary institutions).

Gender Equality (3.8.1&2) The VCP focus on GE features prominently in the strengthening of organizational commitment and capabilities according DCP leaders and volunteers. The voice of women and youth in decision-making at managerial and grassroots levels has increased and, in some cases, is helping to address structural barriers to change. The value addition which volunteers are making to the GE agenda at the partner level was evident in the management advice, technical support, research, and monitoring expertise they provided. All VCAs are operating with gender strategies and most are tracking results with sensitivity to the cross-cutting theme. There is some variance in rigour regarding gender-disaggregated reporting across the VCAs.

Environmental Sustainability (3.9.1) GAC has integrated environmental sustainability considerations at multiple levels within the program. All projects/VCAs are compliant with environmental sustainability requirements of the VCP. VCA projects have demonstrated environmental improvements and/or benefits, though a few require adjustments, such as adoption of environmental policies and/or strategies, to ensure yet more favourable outcomes. By virtue of not having an infrastructure component and of being directed toward Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and governance, an array of VCA projects under the VCP generally do not trigger CEEA concerns.

Governance (3.10.1) Document reviews, VCA interviews and survey results show that all VCAs have addressed governance outcomes related to supporting and strengthening civil society, promoting and protecting human rights, and the inclusion of marginalized people (mostly youth, women, and children), and to a somewhat lesser extent, promoting the political participation of women, although some unexpected positive results have come about regarding the latter.

Conclusions

The VCP, long considered a flagship component of Canada's international cooperation effort, has adjusted well to its strategic orientation (seen most clearly in its LM) and grown in size and complexity. While opportunities for improvement are evident, achievements have been considerable and widely appreciated by stakeholders.

Effectiveness

The extent of the progress reasonably matches program expectations for the end of the third year. With some exceptions, DCPs are exhibiting improvements in capacity and performance leading to enhanced economic and social well-being of beneficiaries. Expectations that volunteers participate in international development efforts in Canada upon their return are largely being met. Overall, the program story is rich though hampered somewhat by inconsistencies in reporting. At the beneficiary level, in particular, the story is still largely anecdotal. Detailed reporting against metrics in the program design is not yet adequate nor uniform enough to serve as a basis for understanding beneficiary level improvements. Indeed, the metrics themselves, focused on "perception", remain insufficient for the development of robust (actionable) results stories.

Efficiency

VCAs have been intent on reducing costs and seeking efficiencies in all aspects of their programming to maximize the impact of their work with DCPs and beneficiaries and, to date, the VCP is keeping costs to

a reasonable level. A broad range of cost-saving measures and strategies has forced some choices that have at different times helped (e.g., fostered synergy) or hindered (e.g., stretched volunteer resources too thin) the delivery of the VCP. As well, inconsistencies in the collection of program-wide data, time lags in their compilation, and doubts about the comprehensiveness of the measures in use have impeded the assessment of efficiency. At this point, there is simply no way to determine the relative efficiency or cost effectiveness of individual volunteer modalities; rather, the merits of each are situation dependent, with purpose and performance uniquely tied to application.

Relevance

By and large, VCA activities do align well with local development priorities and DCP needs. In their own ways, VCAs engage DCPs in cycles of assessment and design in which, at various stages, volunteers have their say. The success of these cycles, and of the project activities that flow from them, is contingent on the level of trust and reciprocity that undergirds partnership plans and activities. As the VCP engages with a broader range of actors and adopts programming approaches that embrace whole sectors or systems (not just individual partners), there is pressure on VCAs to be nimble in the way that they gauge relevance, to be less classically linear and more complex and adaptive in their management approach. Assessment, design, monitoring and reporting remain important, of course, but must be suited to this more emergent way of working (as distinct from more classical, a priori approaches). In the end, then, the process of discerning (continuing) relevance comes down to having probing yet not overbearing assessment and planning tools along with the presence of skilled, personable field office personnel to use them.

Sustainability

The idea that project benefits should outlast the volunteer or the project is consistently championed by the VCAs and understood by the DCPs. As well, there are examples across the programming sectors of projects and/or organizational processes either showing longevity or strong potential for such. Understandably, though, it is not a completely clean picture. Discontinuities between volunteers coming and going or between volunteers and local personnel do hamper sustainability. At times, DCPs lose sight of the idea that the VCP is to be a catalyst rather than simply a supplier of technical assistance to address gaps within the organization. And, of course, larger forces are always at work causing DCPs to change course unexpectedly or presenting new challenges that hinder outcomes among beneficiaries. At times the capacities are just not there to navigate what is a changing and often competitive donor environment.

Disciplined, democratic cycles of partner assessment, planning and monitoring do provide a firm basis for keeping the 'sustainability' question on the table. Where there is scope, efforts to develop revenue streams can help reduce donor dependencies, and efforts to help organizations foster reciprocal relationships in networks can generate resilience to withstand hardships and shock. As well, more flexible notions of partnership are being tried, relaxing the conventional idea that partner relationships have breadth, depth and some longevity. Often, these informal notions are tied into activities driven less by a single organization's capacity needs and more by larger, sub-sector challenges wherein the organization has but one part to play.

Coordination

The higher the level of co-ordination, the greater the array of opportunities for exploring complementarities across the suite of Canadian programming. For other programs/projects, these

include openings for VCAs to contribute sectoral expertise and/or advice on technical matters such as GE, environmental sustainability and governance. For the VCAs, these include opportunities to take advantage of the attributes that bilateral and other donor projects can lend to VCA-supported activities (or *vice versa*), namely enhanced scale/reach, influence and infrastructure.

VCAs recognize that engaging with GAC and each other at the programmatic level holds operational advantages for all while also making for good development practice. However, coordination tasks are also seen to take a significant level of effort especially regarding programming for major Canadian public engagement events. Differences in sizes of VCAs mean the amount of time for coordination activities and VCA abilities to be flexible varies. Without dedicated funds for the coordination of common VCA public engagement programming, akin to the Global Citizens for Change for the VCP group as in previous program iterations, VCAs are hard pressed to participate to the extent they would otherwise like to, even while recognizing the potential downstream time savings that the shared effort might produce. Among VCAs in developing countries, models exist for VCP coordination and they are demonstrating their worth particularly in regions of instability.

Engaging Canadians

The Engaging Canadians component represents the “leading edge” in the campaign to draw Canadian human and financial resources to the enterprise of strengthening capacities for development results. VCAs are aware that the scope and depth of their work in developing countries is highly dependent on the extent to which they capture imaginations and support at home. It is also clear that there is something fundamentally cyclical about the engaging Canadians challenge. Returning volunteers, empowered by their experience, long term or short, can do a lot to ignite further interest and to free up additional human and financial resources for development.

In this regard, while diaspora communities have been targeted as a source of volunteers from Canada, Indigenous Peoples as a group have not, thus far. Post-secondary learning institutions, for example, have many indigenous scholars and students who have a great deal to offer DCPs given their experiences as a group in third world conditions and their sensitivities to impoverishment and discrimination. Research shows that many benefits of volunteering accrue to the volunteers, representing added-value to Canadian society as a whole.

The evaluators see, in the VCP, a widening continuum of engagement typologies. On the one hand, there are the more familiar ones informing Canadians about development issues and attracting volunteer interest/talent to fill roles. On the other, there are typologies seeking to broker new kinds of enabling relationships. Investment in the engaging Canadians challenge is warranted and in some instances already in play. ICT can help connect disparate interests and amplify the profile of international volunteerism. Yet, its use should be informed by strategy, arguably at two levels. At one level, it would be to bring forward the individual profiles of each VCA. At another, collective level, it would be to carve out a contemporary public image of what constitutes international development oriented volunteerism 50 plus years after it first gained a foothold in Canada.

Innovation

There is an abundance of innovative practice across the scope of the VCP. It manifests in programming approaches and in the tools and techniques used to deliver capacity building and Canadian engagement activities. While the classical forms of international volunteer sending i.e., North-South placements to address capacity gaps at an organizational level, are still strongly evident, the current picture shows a widening array of developing country organization types; a programming analysis that extends beyond the traditional focus on individual partner organizations to encompass larger systems; a multiplicity of

volunteer delivery modalities; and widening opportunities for Canadian institutions and private sector organizations to enter into reciprocal relationships overseas. Innovations vary widely in their content and characteristics. At times, it is hard to discern where the innovation begins and ends. Sometimes, it manifests as small activity based on a best practice that is tried and true (e.g., varying the length of a placement). Other times it shows as an idea that is new to the world of volunteerism (e.g., strengthening value chains). And, it's also evident that what is innovative to one party is not necessarily so to another, i.e., innovation is context dependent. Innovations are also flowing from organizational learning across VCAs, particularly those with systematic approaches to reflecting on practice with their DCPs. Conventional wisdom is that it is good to be innovative so long as it doesn't distract from the core business of an enterprise and generates insight that can inform future practice.

Gender Equality

The VCP program focus on GE is helping VCAs to:

- strengthen the capability of developing country partners to mainstream GE
- find innovative approaches to ensure gender balance in programming across sectors
- give more voice to women and youth in decision making, and
- empower grassroots beneficiaries across their programs

Technical support provided by volunteers, especially gender advisors, is essential to the shift in GE awareness and capacity building across the DCPs and beneficiary groups. For example, there is evidence of: increased recognition of women's contribution to development efforts at the highest levels; strategic plan development and requests for GE advice; increased female quotas at management and staff levels; improved access to justice; and recognition of women's role in value chain activities.

In many cases, the emphasis on GE has resulted in 'no tolerance' to the absence or non-participation of women and girls in program activities. Furthermore, men have been gaining agency as champions of GE in their own settings.

Environmental Sustainability

At the program level of the VCP, GAC has appropriately integrated environmental sustainability considerations at multiple levels, from screening proposals, to contracting, to the inclusion of management and reporting requirements. All projects/VCAs are compliant with environmental sustainability requirements of the VCP, though a few require adjustments to their trajectory to ensure yet more favourable outcomes in this respect. In the main, there is alignment between VCAs and their Canadian and DCP associates in their strategies, policies and plans related to environmental sustainability. Such alignment has resulted in recognisable and tangible improvements to the work of DCPs, in which volunteers have played a role.

At the same time MSME projects, in particular, can produce impacts that could be mitigated or, conversely, can offer opportunities to enhance environmental sustainability. There may be missed opportunities to promote environmental sustainability in some areas.

Governance

Overall, the governance CCT is well integrated and is contributing to more sustainable results for poverty reduction in developing countries. Transparency and accountability are actively promoted by GAC and the VCAs, as is GE and social inclusiveness. The VCP is rich in terms of human resources (i.e., VCA and DCP volunteers and staff); however, bilateral projects have additional financial and

infrastructure resources which, if brought together, could lead to greater results by 2020.

Intersectionality is emerging as an international development concept calling for new ways of thinking about the ways that gender, age, race or ethnicity, religion or spirituality, disability, and social class or income all come to bear on communities, especially the most marginalized. Many VCAs and their DCPs are engaging in solid diversity, gender, CSR and ethical practices; however, codified policies and procedures are often lacking, as are performance measurement indicators with respect to governance. Some weaknesses exist within VCA governance systems and processes to address perceived governance and performance management gaps or risks. Most VCAs do not have a clear written strategy for tackling governance as a cohesive theme and for communicating it to volunteers and DCPs.

Recommendations

Effectiveness

1. **THAT GAC**, with its requirements for results-based monitoring and reporting, encourage VCAs to further refine annual reporting to more closely follow program guidance and assist in efforts to assess progress against relevant target levels. GAC should also develop harmonized templates for key outputs including the gender-disaggregated tracking of volunteers sent and their mandates.
2. **THAT VCAs**, through their collaborative mechanisms, should develop more sophisticated M&E methodologies that support VCA and partner management and learning while also providing assurance of program-level results. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) methodologies geared to demonstrating progress towards the program's ultimate impact should receive priority attention.

Efficiency

3. **THAT GAC** refine its practice of tracking, compiling and analyzing inputs and results across the program to satisfy stakeholder expectations of a return on effort and pressures (felt by donors worldwide) to increasingly emphasize the cost-effectiveness, scalability and value-added of programs and effectively communicate results.
4. **THAT VCAs**: a) open a dialogue with GAC on the question of how to understand, manage and measure for efficiency, and b) consider how they should engage with each other to benefit most from this enhanced understanding. Topics which may be suitable for inclusion in this dialogue are: the effect of precarious security contexts on project efficiency; identifying areas in which VCAs should coordinate, areas in which VCAs should strive to standardize, and areas which should be left for context specific and bottom-up innovation; and the administrative burden on VCAs of the competitive process and negotiation of contribution agreements.

Relevance

5. **THAT VCAs** continue to move away from traditional dependence on a selection of partners with which they may have maintained lengthy relationships and push ahead with refining partner identification and engagement processes that will: a) enable shared vision and understanding of boundaries, b) strengthen trust/reciprocity, c) clarify roles and responsibilities, and d) be adaptive to emergent situations and innovative practices. This may require strengthening relationships with country governments and making alliances with civil society in most countries.

Sustainability

6. **THAT VCAs** continue to integrate sustainability planning into their cycles of performance assessment, planning and project design with partners, paying more attention to potential alliances, to networking opportunities, to prospects for developing revenue streams, to proving up business cases, and to the formulation of exit strategies and system level learning.
7. **THAT VCAs** establish a shared, online platform for exchanging ideas and experiences regarding the application of sustainability approaches and operational pointers (e.g., succession strategies and tools for knowledge capture) under the VCP.
8. **THAT VCAs** should assess and engage national volunteer networks, where present, in order to share experiences and best practices in pursuit of the SDGs and take advantage of possible synergies.

Coordination

9. **THAT VCAs** enhance their engagement with other donor initiatives (Canadian or otherwise), capturing potential for complementarities and value additions. Specifically, VCAs should seek opportunities where volunteers can add sectoral expertise and/or advice on technical matters, and/or where bilateral or other-funded projects can lend attributes to VCA-supported activities. This may involve reaching out to the CHCs/Embassies along with other development partners for information and assistance, as well as tapping into the expertise of GAC at home.
10. **THAT VCAs**, supported by GAC, take advantage of annual departmental staff rotations at the missions to introduce themselves and the VCP, and discuss the status of country/region coordination opportunities.
11. **THAT VCAs** refine knowledge transfer among themselves, particularly in those countries without functional coordination mechanisms. This should occur around: a) programmatic issues to build upon the successes of VCP volunteer interventions and to learn from the not so successful ones; b) operational matters such as volunteer management, sustainability planning, innovation, remuneration, health, emergency preparedness, safety and security; and c) share and build capacity across the cross-cutting themes through coordinated training.
12. **THAT GAC** continue to support VCAs by earmarking support for joint public engagement events on behalf of the VCP and by encouraging coordination of the same.

Engaging Canadians

13. **THAT VCAs** assess their existing Engaging Canadians activities to see if they are sufficiently robust to: a) access and motivate target publics in provinces and territories across Canada, and b) engage return volunteers as supporters of program activities (e.g. in carrying out public awareness activities and/or in providing advice to volunteers starting on their mandates).
14. **THAT VCAs**, supported by GAC, collectively develop an evidence-informed messaging campaign aimed at helping Canadians discern good volunteer practice in the service of international development and inviting Canadians to consider supporting VCA activities.
15. **THAT GAC and the VCAs** put in place measures to increase recruitment of Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) as volunteers matching skills and experience to partner settings including, but not limited to, those that are specific to indigenous populations. In the same vein, it would be advisable to increase reciprocal S-N placements for Indigenous Peoples to come to Canada.

Innovation

16. **THAT VCAs** identify more explicitly the aspects of their work programs that constitute innovative

practice, and attempt to isolate the tracking of those innovative practices for the specific purpose of learning, sharing and adaptation.

17. **THAT GAC** commission proof of concept studies that can be applied to some of the larger and more program relevant innovations being tried by VCAs, e.g., supporting strategic change processes with layered programming at grassroots and national levels, clustering of volunteers to service multiple clients and complementing in-field placements with e-volunteering.

Gender Equality

18. **THAT VCAs** strengthen networks among partners for sharing context-relevant expertise, new and emerging knowledge and practices in GE, and resources (personnel, technology, programming and financial where possible). This could partly be accomplished using a shared, e-based platform.
19. **THAT VCAs** should intensify efforts to ensure that volunteers (particularly diaspora and male) are involved in supporting women's groups and strengthening their activities to transform socio-cultural practices and beliefs regarding women's roles and access to resources in agricultural and SME development.
20. **THAT VCAs** collaborate more in the design and implementation of pre-posting and in-country, GE and diversity training including gender based analysis plus (GBA+) which is available online.

Environmental Sustainability

21. **THAT those VCAs** which do not have finalised environmental policies/strategies should prepare them during the early months of Year 4, so as to provide requisite and timely guidance over the remainder of the program cycle; in a few cases, adjustments to specific project dimensions are warranted to improve environmental sustainability performance and outcomes of VCAs.
22. **THAT VCAs** be proactive in showcasing, both in Canada and within the target countries, examples of volunteer initiatives directly related to raising environmental awareness and eliminating or mitigating environmental harms, including actions related to climate change and adaptation.

Governance

23. **THAT VCAs** increase their own and their DCPs' linkages with relevant government authorities at the local, regional and national levels in order to build trust, influence policy-making in the sectors they focus on, and explore opportunities at the bilateral level for involvement by volunteers and grassroots organizations/communities.
24. **THAT VCAs and GAC** explore ways of bringing into the design and management of the VCP an inter-sectional perspective; this would inform the design and delivery of the VCP i.e., through public communications, inclusive governance guidelines, GBA +, volunteer recruitment and placement, project identification and partner selection.

Key Lessons

1. **Stay on course: continuity and standards are needed to achieve results.** At the same time, make incremental improvements to optimize performance, introduce more robust monitoring processes, and watch for opportunities to try new, smarter and more cost-effective ways of doing things.
2. **Adaptive management approaches are vital in a complex and insecure environment.** Draw on shared purpose, multiple types of actors, and link the scale of inputs to leverage resources and make rapid assessments and adjustments.
3. **Encourage coordination, connectivity and networking.** Participation and inclusion allow the

program to take full advantage of learning processes and collective brain power to deliver the best service with the wisest use of resources.

4. **Balance rigour and flexibility** in performance measurement, staying open to innovations in measurement and feedback processes so as not to miss out on the huge benefits of evidence-based decision-making.
5. **Explore the potential of new concepts** in the field like impact investing, sub-sector approaches and transformative partnerships to deepen beneficiary impact and keep up with the international field of practice including linkage to the SDGs.
6. **Explore the potential for increased engagement of specific communities** of learning, including Indigenous Peoples, rural Canadian farmers, and the diaspora to expand the potential for reciprocal relationships and contribute to international development practices.

1.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the Volunteer Cooperation Program (VCP) 2015-2020 and the development context in which it operates. VCP 2015-2020 is the entity to be evaluated.

1.1 Background

The VCP 2015-2020 is a five year (April 20, 2015 to March 31, 2020), Global Affairs Canada (GAC)¹ funded program of support valued at up to \$460 million, with up to \$300 million of funding from GAC and partner contributions of approximately \$160 million, mostly the value of volunteers' time.

1.2 Development Context

Canada's tradition of international volunteer cooperation dates to 1951 when the Colombo Plan was created to assist the development of newly independent Asian Commonwealth countries. Government of Canada support for the volunteer cooperation programs of Canadian VCAs began in 1961 and in 2004 the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) established the Volunteer Cooperation Program².

Encouraging Canadians to volunteer is one of the ways that GAC engages them in international development. Engaging Canadians is part of the International Development and Humanitarian Assistance Civil Society Partnership Policy (CSO Policy) published by GAC in February 2015 and revised in October 2017 (Government of Canada 2017b)³. In addition, "strengthening communications and engagement" with citizens on international development is an international best practice endorsed by the OECD-DAC for ensuring sustained attention and commitment to effective development.

Internationally, major progress has been made in documenting the roles played by volunteers in sustainable development, in integrating volunteerism into key global development processes for building Southern development capacity. Some of the milestones are:

- Designation of 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers and United Nations Volunteers (UNV) as the focal point for volunteer initiatives within the United Nations;
- A report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly (A/67/153) noting that volunteerism can significantly contribute to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), foster social cohesion and enhance social inclusion, and recommending that volunteerism should be an integral part of the post-2015 development framework;
- A General Assembly resolution (A/RES/67/138) requesting a plan of action to be developed by the UNV to integrate volunteering in peace and development in the next decade and beyond;
- A General Assembly resolution (A/RES/70/129) titled "Integrating volunteering in peace and development: the Plan of Action for the next decade and beyond" which welcomes the requested Plan of Action (section IV of the Secretary General's report A/70/118); and
- Adoption at the UN post-2015 Summit⁴ of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (A/RES/70/1) – with volunteering intrinsically rooted in Goal 17

¹ Global Affairs Canada (GAC) is the name given in November 2015 to the former Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD). DFATD was formed in June 2013 by integrating the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The names GAC, DFATD, and CIDA appear in this document.

² Detail presented in this paragraph was sourced from a profile of volunteer cooperation in Canada (CIDA 2005, pp. 13-20).

³ Government of Canada. 2017b. International Development and Humanitarian Assistance Civil Society Partnership Policy. October 2017.

⁴ The UN Sustainable Development Summit held September 25-27, 2015.

and volunteer groups specifically mentioned among the means of implementation of the new agenda.

- UN Resolution 70/129 of December 2015 (UNGA 2016) identifies the efforts of volunteers as an important component of any strategy aimed at such areas as poverty reduction, sustainable development, health, education, youth empowerment, climate change, disaster risk reduction, social integration, social welfare, humanitarian action, peace-building and overcoming social exclusion and discrimination. It recognizes volunteerism as a powerful and cross-cutting means of implementing 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and acknowledges the Plan of Action to integrate volunteering during the next decade and beyond, calling upon Member States, the UN system and other stakeholders to support the Plan.

Other key entities and initiatives include: the UNV reports every three years on the state of the world's volunteerism⁵; the work of umbrella groupings of international volunteer cooperation agencies (IVCOs) such as the International Forum on Volunteering in Development⁶; and the July 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development⁷.

1.3 The Volunteer Cooperation Program

The VCP 2015-2020 is the latest iteration of Canadian volunteer cooperation programming. It is managed by GAC's Partnerships for Development Innovation Branch, which has a mandate to engage Canadians in international development and to support the efforts of Canadian organisations working in partnership with local organisations in developing countries.

At the ultimate outcome level, the program aims to improve the economic and social well-being of poor and marginalized communities in developing countries. The desired intermediate outcomes are:

- Increased capacity of Developing Country Partners (DCPs) to deliver sustainable development results in response to local needs by making use of the skills and expertise of qualified Canadian volunteers
- Enhanced Canadians' participation in Canada's sustainable development efforts (to foster a better understanding of development issues)⁸.

The program Logic Model (LM) and the corresponding Performance Measurement Framework (PMF) are attached at Annex B). Gender equality (GE) is given high priority in all aspects of VCP management.

GAC funding is provided for VCAs to:

- Recruit skilled, qualified Canadian volunteers⁹ and place them within DCP organizations to build partners' capacity to achieve sustainable development results that meet local needs
- Conduct engagement activities in Canada to foster greater awareness and a better understanding of international development efforts, challenges and successes, ultimately mobilizing Canadians to contribute to these efforts.

For VCP 2015-2020, GAC issued a Call for Proposals in May 2014 and selected and signed contribution

⁵ The UNV report in 2015 titled "State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2015: Transforming Governance" (UNV 2015a) stated that more than 1 billion people volunteer globally, most of them working in their own countries.

⁶ A brief history of international volunteering and IVCOs is available in UNV (2015b). The International Forum on Volunteering in Development holds an annual conference; the theme of its IVCO 2017 conference was implementation of the SDGs through transformative partnership in volunteering.

⁷ The UN General Assembly resolution on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (A/RES/69/313) refers to civil society as an integral contributor to the implementation of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

⁸ Wording in parentheses is given in the Annex A, SoW, p.46

⁹ Wording from the SoW is presented here, just as it is in the subsequent listing of key stakeholders. It would be more correct to also acknowledge other types of volunteer placement such as S-S, S-N, national and e-volunteers.

agreements for 12 projects worth just over \$300 million¹⁰, with 15 Canadian Volunteer Cooperation Agencies (VCAs), including three consortia:

- Lawyers Without Borders Canada (LWBC) in consortium with International Bureau for Children's Rights (IBCR)
- Crossroads International (Crossroads)
- Cuso International (Cuso)
- Canada World Youth (CWY) in consortium with Youth Challenge International (YCI)
- Engineers Without Borders (EWB)
- Oxfam-Québec
- Canadian Executive Service Organisation (CESO)
- Solidarité Union Coopération (SUCCO)
- Terre Sans Frontières (TSF)
- Union des producteurs agricoles - Développement international (UPA DI)
- Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI) in consortium with World University Service of Canada (WUSC)
- Veterinarians Without Borders (VWB)

These VCAs will implement VCP 2015-2020. They are expected to recruit and field almost 9,000 volunteers (Table 1), who include specialists and professionals, the newly retired and youth. The majority are Canadians or North-South (N-S) volunteers including members of cultural (or 'diaspora') communities in Canada. Much smaller numbers (probably less than 15% of the total) are South-South (S-S) volunteers, national volunteers or South-North (S-N), i.e., nationals from the target countries undertaking exposure visits to Canada. E-volunteers, who do not travel, are a recent addition to the suite of volunteer types.

These volunteers will work with some 700 DCPs to enhance their capacity to deliver services to poor and marginalized people. DCPs range from civil society organizations (CSOs) such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), social enterprises and community-based organizations (CBOs), to public sector agencies (ministries, local governments and educational institutions) and private sector enterprises (small and medium enterprises and financial institutions). Some DCPs and VCAs have long relationships.

Activities typically involve training and provision of technical advisory and management system inputs including communications strategies and GE advice, and may encompass seed funding and support for meetings/conferences.

Half of the VCA projects involve Northern partners, e.g., organizations and companies in Canada which play a training or technical assistance role in the delivery of volunteer services or are committed to engaging Canadians in international development. No estimate is available of the anticipated number of Canadians reached by public engagement activities linked to the current VCP.

Projects are being implemented in 42 low or middle income countries in Africa, North Africa and the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Nine countries are host to five or more projects. The sectors of activity include, in order of prevalence:

- Local economic development
- Agriculture and food security
- GE and social inclusion
- Quality training health services
- Citizen responsive government service provision
- Human rights and legal reform

¹⁰ Not including contributions from other sources.

- Regulation and policy; economic development

The project names in the left-hand column of Table 1 are indicative of the variety of VCP projects.

Table 1: Summary Data on GAC's Volunteer Cooperation Program 2015-2020

Projects	VCA Partners	GAC Contribution (\$million)	No. of Volunteers (Planned)	No. of Local Partners (Planned)	No. of Countries (Planned)
Protection of the rights of children, women & vulnerable communities (PRODEF)	LWBC/IBCR	\$4.6	102	16	9
Skills for change: engaging volunteers for development results	Crossroads	\$14.5	376	21	8
Volunteers for international cooperation & empowerment (VOICE)	Cuso	\$65.0	1,250 + 2,000 e-volunteers	153	17
EQWIP HUBs: empowering youth innovation for sustainable livelihoods	CWI/YCI	\$36.8	666	12	6
Building innovative & adaptive capacity volunteer cooperation program	EWB	\$9.0	240	30	6
Access innovation: Increasing capacities for economic & social growth through innovation (PAI)	Oxfam-Qué.	\$54.3	747	72	10
Strengthening capacity through innovation & volunteer expertise (STRIVE)	CESO	\$22.0	1,749	60	16
Agir ensemble	SUCO	\$9.0	190	33	7
Voluntary cooperation of professionals to professionals	TSF	\$1.2	60	13	4
Réseau agro-innov	UPA DI	\$5.7	279	25	7
Uniterra 2015-2020 volunteer cooperation program	CECI/WUSC	\$74.4	3,000	260	14
Vets without borders volunteer cooperation program	VWB	\$3.9	102	30	6
Totals 12 projects	15 VCAs	\$300.2 million	8,761 volunteers	710 local partners	42 countries
<i>Source: Based on material presented in the SoW, Annex 1.5, with corrections supplied by VCAs. Planned numbers of volunteers, which do not take into account the duration of volunteer placements, may differ from actual numbers given inconsistencies in counting.</i>					

2.0 Evaluation Design

This chapter describes the objectives and scope of the evaluation as well as the design approach and methodology.

2.1 Evaluation Purpose and Objectives

As the Statement of Work (SoW) says (see Annex A), this formative evaluation is being conducted midway through the program to assess overall progress toward achieving results and provide GAC and the VCAs with information necessary to:

- Assess the progress on program implementation and make necessary adjustments to achieve the expected outcomes; and
- Improve knowledge and inform decision making with regard to planning and implementing any future iteration of the program.

The objectives of the evaluation are to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of results
- Evaluate the efficiency of the VCP
- Provide findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons to inform implementation of the current program and future program design.

The key stakeholders, in addition to GAC as the donor organization, are:

- the VCAs, which act as executing agencies or implementing organizations
- Canadian volunteers
- local partners in developing countries, i.e., DCPs
- Canadian men and women in general.

The key audience for the evaluation is GAC and its VCA partners. Local partners, volunteers and other Canadians engaged in Canadian international development efforts may also be interested.

2.2 Previous Evaluations

Previous evaluations and recent and relevant scholarly articles can be fertile ground for ensuring the evaluation team is benefiting from the latest thinking and experience about evaluation of international volunteering. This is also the case for the VCP 2015-2020 formative evaluation.

A review of the Canadian Volunteer Program was conducted for CIDA by Universalis, ET Jackson and Associates and SALASAN/GeoSpatial (CIDA 2005). This program review was commissioned to assess CIDA's decision to manage its contributions to VCAs programmatically as opposed to the Agency's longstanding practice of administering individual contribution agreements. The final report, dated March 2005 was completed after less than a year of the VCP's operation. Four countries were selected for detailed study: Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Vietnam. Much of the document focused on: volunteer cooperation in Canada, the evolving context for volunteer cooperation, developmental performance, and volunteer cooperation management. Findings were also presented on four 'developmental success factors': relevance, sustainability, cost effectiveness, and partnership. Along with an eloquent discussion of the "Power of Volunteering", the authors concluded that "CIDA support for the VCP is contributing to significant development results in both developing countries and Canada" (CIDA, 2005, p.88).

A mid-term evaluation of the 2004-2009 VCP was presented in a December 2007 report by ET Jackson &

Associates Ltd. (ET Jackson & Associates 2007). Field missions were undertaken in Burkina Faso, Mali and Ghana. The report's main chapters concentrated on context, program overview, development performance (i.e., VCP relevance and development effectiveness), public engagement, and management. In total, the authors added substantially to what was published about the content and *modus operandi* of the VCP. For example, Annex 1 to the report lays out a program-level LM that is complete with immediate outputs. Specific findings of the evaluation include: an increasingly difficult context within which VCAs work; growing capacity of VCAs to learn from their experience; and management of the VCP reflecting an open, transparent and collaborative style. There is also a revealing discussion of the presence within the body of VCAs of at least three different theories of change.

A July 2012 evaluation by Goss Gilroy Inc. (Goss Gilroy 2012) is a formative evaluation of the VCP 2009-2014. A key objective of the evaluation was to assess outputs and results (mainly immediate outcomes) and assess the effectiveness, relevance and efficiency of the VCP to date. Field investigation took place in four countries: Burkina Faso, Ghana, Honduras and Bolivia. Major chapters are titled Program Overview and Findings, the latter divided into discussions of continued relevance of the VCP, design and delivery, effectiveness, and efficiency. The evaluation report provides helpful descriptive information about the VCP 2009-2014 and the varied issues which the VCAs encounter in delivering their projects. Among these are security concerns, a growing mix of volunteer cooperation approaches, and improvements in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) flowing from VCA membership in an M&E community of practice. The report presents some thoughtfully worded best practices and lessons learned, including a few notations about limitations arising during the evaluation.

A 2014 summative evaluation of the 2009-2014 VCP was performed by RBMG and Econotec Consultants (RBMG and Econotec Consultants 2014). Nine evaluative sub-studies were prepared, one for each VCA project. The consultants then undertook a systematic review of the sub-studies to extract key conclusions and recommendations at the program level. The synthesis report presented findings under "Management Factors" (aid effectiveness principles, performance management, risk management and efficiency" and Development Results (effectiveness of results achieved, effectiveness of cross-cutting themes, relevance and sustainability). Sampled countries for this heavily project-focused evaluation were Burkina Faso, Ghana, Indonesia and Peru. Recommendations, all of them directed to GAC, were centred around: (i) improved performance management; (ii) facilitation of sharing, learning and alliances; (iii) greater geographic and sector focus; (iv) expanded use of discretionary funds for VCAs; and (v) provision of support to developing country partners until they are ready to assume responsibility for sustainability of the results achieved.

2.3 Evaluation Scope

The scope of the evaluation was restricted to the named projects and activities under the VCP 2015-2020, which is described above. The evaluation did not consider any other Government of Canada-supported volunteering program, but did assess the entire VCP 2015-2020 from its initiation in April 2015 to the end of the third year at March 31, 2018.

The evaluation team examined key evaluation questions in ten major categories of Effectiveness; Efficiency; Relevance; Sustainability; Coordination; Engaging Canadians; Innovation; and GAC's Cross Cutting Themes (CCT) – GE, environment and governance. The questions originated in the SoW and were revised slightly during work planning: minor editorial changes were made for clarity. The approved questions are shown in Section 3 and in the evaluation design matrix (Annex C) which breaks down the key questions into sub-questions that inform the selection of measures or indicators as well as the design of data collection instruments (Annex D).

2.4 Evaluability Assessment

Evaluability of the VCP 2015-2020 was established during the work planning phase of the evaluation.

Key findings of this assessment were:

- Essential elements of good practice have been followed in the design of the VCP program;
- The evaluation team undertook an assessment of data availability, validity and reliability;
- VCAS expressed a high level of interest in the evaluation and indicated that its timing was appropriate; and
- VCAs showed a willingness to assist the evaluators with additional documents, input to the evaluation design, access to local partners and volunteers, and logistical assistance during field missions.

With respect to sources of information and their known or expected reliability, the team determined that:

- GAC has shared with the evaluation team sufficient relevant documentation and addressed the evaluators' questions thoroughly during the start-up meeting and follow-on conversations;
- VCAs have in several instances provided documents which supplemented the material made available by GAC;
- Data on many indicators have been collected, including in most cases sex-disaggregated data, and the evaluation team was able to pose questions to the VCAs about a small number of information gaps; and
- The team found on the internet and reviewed relevant items in the literature which have direct relevance to the evaluation.

Other considerations on validity and reliability of data were as follows:

- There is a performance measurement framework for the VCP.
- Ultimate, intermediate and immediate outcomes related to developing country beneficiaries and to developing country partner capacities and performance are largely measured with perception data using scalars.
- Intermediate outcomes regarding developing country partner capacity are reliant on partner and volunteer assessments of enhancements on four-point scales.
- Some program level indicators appear misaligned with their associated outcome statements.
- Program targets are set as follows:
 - **Ultimate outcome** level (3 targets on beneficiary impact);
 - **Intermediate outcome** level (1 regarding partner skills, 1 regarding volunteer participation and one regarding audience impact);
 - **Immediate outcome** level (1 regarding partner skills and knowledge of project delivery, 1 regarding volunteer skills and abilities to work in international development);
 - **Output** level (1 regarding number of partnerships, 1 on placements, 1 related to the enhancement of partner management and capacity development tools, 1 related to volunteer satisfaction with supports).

Otherwise, the Program allows each of the VCAs to set targets for their individual project.

2.5 Evaluation Approach and Methodology

2.5.1 Approach

The team used a Utilization Focused Approach (UFA) which places a premium on maximizing the practical value of the evaluation to Canadian and developing country stakeholders. The work plan, which included an evaluability assessment, was reviewed by VCAs and GAC. A sampling methodology (see Annex E) was

used in the work planning phase to identify an optimal mix of countries for field studies and an array of program stakeholders for the desk-based reviews.

Quantitative and qualitative data was collected using “mixed-methods”, which included document review, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGD) reaching 641 people, 1,545 returned electronic surveys (E-surveys) and the development of examples. Data from the various sources was cross-validated. Given sample sizes the team believes the data collected is valid and reliable.

2.5.2 Methodology – Data Collection

Between January and July 2018, the team undertook four major types of data collection, described below.

a) Document review

Team members each took lead responsibility on specific evaluation issues, based on their expertise, and with associated evaluation questions in hand, examined the following documents (see Annex F):

- Program and project approval documents
- Project Implementation Plans (PIPs), annual plans and annual reports (years one to three)
- Evaluations of past VCP programs and of projects when available
- Monitoring reports prepared by GAC staff
- Management Summary Reports (MSRs) A variety of communications artifacts/ websites dealing with both Canadian and international volunteer-sending.

The sources of secondary information used by the evaluation team are varied and numerous. They pertain to both the VCP program and individual projects, as well as to the broader context of international volunteer-sending. They have been prepared by knowledgeable and credible writers, and have been subject to approval processes or peer review.

The document review process began during the work planning phase and continued until the writing phase.

b) Four field visits

Ten-day field studies were undertaken in Ghana, Honduras, Senegal, and Peru (see work schedule at Annex G). To select the four countries for the field missions, a two-step sampling method was used: first, a quantitative weighted criterion-based sampling; and, second, a qualitative assessment and selection based upon interviews with VCAs during the inception phase and the evaluation team’s context-specific knowledge.

This collection of countries allowed exposure to VCA operations, and all areas of programming. Field visits were designed in collaboration with VCA leads in each country visited, and all visits ended with a validation/debriefing session with CHC/Embassy and VCA leads. Table 2 highlights the coverage that was achieved in each country. The number of persons engaged in KIIs and FGDs was 478 (58% female).

Table 2: Key Informant Data during Field Missions

Ghana – April 2- 13	Senegal – May 7 – 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EWB, Crossroads, EQWIP HUBs, Uniterria, VWB active in the country • 122 individuals - 70 female and 52 male - engaged through a combination of 37 KIIs and FGDs • Contact made with GAC personnel, VCA representatives, in-field volunteers (N-S, S-N, and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUCO, SACO/CESO, Crossroads, Uniterria, EQWIP HUBs, UPA DI active in the country • 143 individuals – 73 female and 70 male - engaged through 8 KIIs and 23 FGDs (2-10 people in each) • GAC personnel, VCA representatives, in field volunteers, managers/directors of local partners (16

National), managers/directors of local partner organizations (20 in total), beneficiaries and community leaders

- Variety of sectors; urban and rural settings

in total), beneficiaries and community leaders

- Variety of sectors; urban and rural settings

Honduras – April 10 – 23

- LWBC/IBCR, CESO, Cuso, Oxfam-Qué., SUCO, TSF active in the country
- 91 individuals - 57 female and 34 male - engaged through a combination of 30 KIIs and FGDs
- Contact made with GAC personnel, VCA representatives, in field volunteers, managers/directors of local partner organizations (12 in total), beneficiaries and community leaders
- Multiple sectors covered plus urban & rural initiatives

Peru – June 4 – 13

- LWBC/IBCR, CESO, Cuso, EQWIP HUBs, Oxfam-Qué., SUCO, Uniterro active in the country & COCAP – in-country coordinating mechanism
- 122 individuals - 79 female and 43 male - engaged through a combination of 43 KIIs and FGDs
- Contact made with GAC personnel, VCA representatives, and a broad range of in-field volunteers, local partners (19 in total), and beneficiary groups
- Multiple sectors covered plus urban & rural initiatives

c) Desk-based Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

The number of persons engaged in desk based KIIs and FGDs was 163 (62% female).

- VCA leaders and senior staff: all, in two to four 90-minute sessions
- Canadian Partner organizations: all, in one to two 60-minute sessions per VCA, where relevant (14 in total)
- Developing Country Partner organizations (with a preference for those based in Asia or North Africa): one to two 45-minute sessions per VCA (13 in total)
- Returned volunteers: 60-minute focus groups (English + French) two to seven people in each (19 focus groups in total)
- Expert informants: four individuals – all with extensive understanding of the Canadian and international volunteer sending sector, either from an academic/research background and/or from voluntary sector leadership experiences (30 to 60 minutes each)
- GAC CCT specialists: Gender specialists, Governance specialists, Performance Management specialists. Unable to reach designated Environmental specialist despite multiple attempts (30 to 60 minutes each)
- GAC VCP staff: four Program Officers and the Director General of Global Citizens Directorate (60 minutes each)

d) E-surveys

The two E-surveys were drafted with input from VCAs, and then sent via the VCA to their own distribution lists. The criteria given to guide the development of the invitation list is as follows:

- **Volunteer Survey:** all volunteers, regardless of modality, who have been recruited in this program cycle and are in place or have already returned home
- **Developing Country Partner Survey:** all DCPs that have hosted or are hosting a volunteer, again in this VCP cycle

The E-surveys were launched on June 26th. VCA leads in Canada either sent invite emails directly to their volunteers and partner organizations, or routed them through their country office representatives. The cover email was jointly written by the VCA and the evaluation team. Reminders were sent in the same

manner in the first week of July. The survey closed on July 6th. Tables 3 and 4 provide the response data for each survey. The response rate in the volunteer survey was 33% and in the DCP survey 51%¹¹. These response rates compare favourably with those obtained in the 2014 program evaluation of the VCP and with several guideline sources¹².

Table 3: VCP Evaluation E-survey – Volunteer Response Rate

VCA	Sent	Returned	%
CESO	429	141	32.87%
Crossroads	209	44	21.05%
Cuso	814	268	32.92%
EQWIP HUBs	157	70	44.59%
EWB	156	42	26.92%
LWBC/IBCR	51	32	62.75%
Oxfam – Québec	269	108	40.15%
SUCO	114	39	34.21%
TSF	75	28	37.33%
Uniterra	999	289	28.93%
UPA DI	124	55	44.35%
VWB	82	34	41.46%
Total	3,479	1,150	33.06%

Given the population (3,479) and the sample size (1,150), the volunteer survey has a margin of error of 2.4%, 19 times out of 20¹³.

The profile of volunteer respondents is set out below.

- **986 (85.7%) N-S:** Canadian volunteering (39%) / having volunteered (61%) in a developing country — 60% female, 38% male, 1% other
- **27 (2.4%) S-N:** Developing country citizen participating/having participated in activities in Canada — 44% female, 52% male, 4% other; 13 countries represented, mostly African
- **65 (5.7%) S-S:** Citizen of one developing country volunteering/having volunteered in another developing country – 41% female, 58% male, 2% other; volunteers recruited by six VCAs from 26 countries predominantly African and Latin American.
- **37 (3.2%) National volunteer,** one participating in their own country – 60% female, 37% male, 3% other; 15 countries represented (6 from LAC, 6 from Africa, 3 from Asia)

¹¹ The evaluators note that in the administration of the surveys there was an initial problem with the email links that directed some respondents of two VCAs to the “collector” of a third. All respondents were accounted for addressed properly in the data analysis. The numbers in Table 3 and 4 reflect the true distribution of respondents by VCA.

¹² “Internal surveys will generally receive a 30-40% response rate (or more) on average, compared to an average 10-15% response rate for external surveys” according to [Surveygizmo](https://www.surveymonkey.com). Based on a round up from eight different sources [SurveyAnyplace.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) shows that the average response rate on an email survey is 30%.

¹³ This is based on the assumption that respondents represented a random sample of potential respondents, which was not likely to have been the case exactly. In addition, the margin of error (95% confidence interval) was calculated for a question where 50% of respondents answered “yes.” For questions where the proportion responding “yes” was higher or lower, the margin of error would have been smaller. Conversely, for questions where the total number of respondents was smaller (e.g., because only a subgroup was eligible to respond), the margin of error would have been larger.

- **35 (3.0%)**, Exclusively an **E-volunteer** (no travel)

Table 4: VCP Evaluation E-survey – DCPs Response Rate

VCA	Sent	Returned	%
CESO	100	84	84.00%
Crossroads	24	18	75.00%
Cuso	262	53	20.23%
EQWIP HUBs	11	9	81.82%
EWB	8	5	62.50%
LWBC/IBCR	18	10	55.56%
Oxfam – Québec	90	39	43.33%
SUCO	40	14	35.00%
TSF	16	8	50.00%
Unitererra	171	138	80.70%
UPA DI	23	10	43.48%
VWB	11	7	63.64%
Total	774	395	51.03%

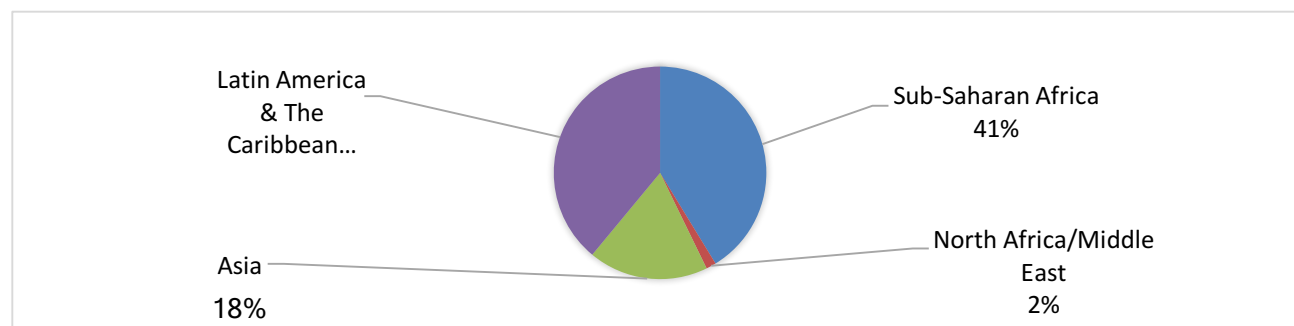
Given the population (774) and the sample size (395), the volunteer survey has a margin of error of 3.5%, 19 times out of 20¹⁴.

The profile of the DCPs is set out below:

- **121 (33.6%)** – Civil society organization
- **22 (6.1%)** – Network organization
- **31 (8.6%)** – School or training institute
- **34 (9.4%)** – Co-operative
- **39 (10.8%)** – Private sector enterprise
- **43 (11.9%)** – Government organization
- **70 (19.4%)** – Other

The distribution of partners by location is shown in Chart 1 below.

Chart 1: Developing Country Partner Survey Respondents, by Location



Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Developing Country Partner Survey

¹⁴ Ibid.

The list of all those consulted, either as individuals or groups, with their affiliation, is attached at Annex H. When needed to protect confidentiality, the names of individuals are not disclosed.

e) Illustrative Examples

In the work planning phase, the evaluation team opted in favour of (i) identifying in its evaluation report those VCAs associated with positive examples of performance against evaluation criteria which the team deems to be noteworthy; and (ii) not identifying VCAs associated with any examples of performance against evaluation criteria which are described as less than satisfactory.

During its initial visits with VCA representatives, the evaluation team heard clear indications of interest in innovations being pursued within the community of Canadian volunteer sending agencies. Comments were made that, apart from the time associated with completing applications for VCP funding, VCAs engage in a great deal of sharing and mutual support.

Additionally, several mentions were made by VCA representatives of their willingness to facilitate preparation (by the evaluation team) of examples of results being achieved in parts of the world not chosen for detailed study in the evaluation.

To avoid the possibility that the evaluation may be considered to favour some VCAs over others, the team sought to ensure that at least one positive feature of each VCA project is noted in illustrative examples positioned (in 'Boxes') throughout the findings section of evaluation report.

In summary, the team's reasoning regarding the acknowledgment of positive VCA experiences is based on:

- a belief that a culture among VCAs of cooperation and learning can best be fostered by openly recognizing excellence; and
- the team's desire that the evaluation report meets the needs of intended users, especially with respect to their learning objectives.

The team's reasoning regarding the anonymity of negative VCA experiences is based on the need to protect the welfare of participants in the evaluation.

2.5.3 Methodology – Analysis

Content analysis was used to examine and triangulate KIIs, the records of FGDs and qualitative remarks in the E-surveys. In each case, the analysis methodology was sensitive to the disaggregation of data by gender and used a gender sensitive approach. Analysis also included the identification of common trends across the data and cases which were less common.

a) Key informant interviews and focus group discussions

The team agreed on a set of criteria for organizing qualitative data. Generally, the criteria aligned with the evaluation questions and sub-questions. The criteria were programmed into the [Dedoose](#) software. Team members then posted notes from all KIIs and FGDs into Dedoose, each record classified by a range of search criteria: type and location of respondent, KII vs. FGD, gender of respondents. At the close of data collection, reports were prepared for team members based on topic areas assigned. All told, 2,108 Dedoose records were assembled based on KIIs and FGDs.

b) E-surveys

Survey Monkey automatically generates tables and graphs either through the Survey Monkey interface or through Excel. Additional statistical manipulations were required to disaggregate responses by gender, or

by VCA, or to examine cross tabulations. Participant responses to open-ended questions were reviewed by two analysts in conjunction with the evaluation team. Charmazian (2014) grounded theory was utilized whereby each participant response was interpreted and coded by one of two analysts. Like codes were grouped with one another and focused codes were derived. Themes emerged from focused codes and conclusions were derived from the most salient themes.

c) Proportionality

To aid in reporting, a limited number of terms describing proportionality were chosen and defined (see A Note on Proportionality following the List of Acronyms).

2.5.4 Schedule of Evaluation Activities

Following work planning data collection began in earnest in early January 2018. Annex G sets out the sequence of evaluation activities from preliminary meetings and work plan development to the production of the final report.

2.5.5 Limitations of the Evaluation

There were no material limitations to the conduct of the evaluation. Specifically, as identified in the evaluability assessment, the evaluation team was neutral, they did not experience limitations regarding data collection, including the availability of sex-disaggregated data, and there were no obstructions to a free and open evaluation process. The evaluability assessment did signal inconsistent collection of gender-disaggregated data across the VCAs, a topic which was pursued and reported on in the evaluation report findings.

3.0 Formative Evaluation Findings

This chapter contains the evaluation's findings. Each section in the chapter addresses one of the ten evaluation issues and begins with lines of inquiry from the approved work plan.

3.1 Effectiveness

3.1.1 Is the VCP on track to achieve the expected intermediate outcomes, and is it making progress toward the ultimate outcome as described in the logic model?

- a) To what extent are performance improvements by partners enhancing the economic and the social well-being⁵ of beneficiaries?
- b) Are volunteer placements reaching the expected number of beneficiaries (f,m)?
- c) How is DCP programming allocated across the following sectors: sustainable economic growth, food security, children and youth, democracy, and security and stability?
- d) To what extent are DCPs improving identified capacities to deliver sustainable development results?
- e) To what extent can observed performance improvements by DCPs be linked to the engagement of volunteers?
- f) To what extent are DCPs utilizing the tools, systems, policies, methods, etc. generated through the engagement of volunteers?
- g) To what extent are Canadian volunteers (f,m) participating in international development efforts in Canada upon their return?

3.1.2 According to stakeholders, is technical assistance provided by Canadian & southern volunteers effective in contributing to the achievement of development results?

- a) Do volunteers perceive that their placements with developing country partners have met (are meeting) results expectations?
- b) Do developing country partner contacts perceive the scope of support provided by the VCA (volunteers, mentors, funding, etc.) to be appropriately matched to identified needs?

3.1.3 Have there been any unexpected results, either positive, neutral or negative?

- a) Can volunteers and/or developing country partners link documented instances of unintended results to the contributions of the VCA – placements, funding support, other forms of engagement under the sending model?

3.1.1 Progress toward Intermediate and Ultimate Outcomes

***Finding:** The VCP operates with a LM whose Ultimate Outcome and Intermediate Outcomes are common for all VCAs. Available data indicate progress is being made towards achieving those outcomes, and that, at the program level, the extent of that progress reasonably matches VCP expectations for the end of Year 3. Improvements could be made to the annual reporting by VCAs in terms of consistency with program guidance and presentation of progress against relevant target levels. Available data suggest that anticipated numbers of beneficiaries are being reached. The sector in which most VCAs operate is sustainable economic growth. More than 70% of DCPs, and over half of in-field volunteers, indicated they had observed improved capacity in DCPs. There was a very strong recognition among DCPs that improvements seen in their organizations were linked to volunteer contributions, particularly with regard to GE. In*

E-survey results, DCPs named tools, systems, policies and methods as the most significant contribution by volunteers which was corroborated through field interviews. Finally, expectations for Canadian volunteers participating in international development efforts in Canada upon their return are largely being met.

a) Performance improvements by developing country partners

Year-3 annual reports from the VCAs indicate that progress is being made towards achievement of the intermediate outcomes. Most VCAs report they are above target levels on the majority of their indicators, below target levels on a few indicators, and in isolated cases lacking necessary M&E data to gauge progress.

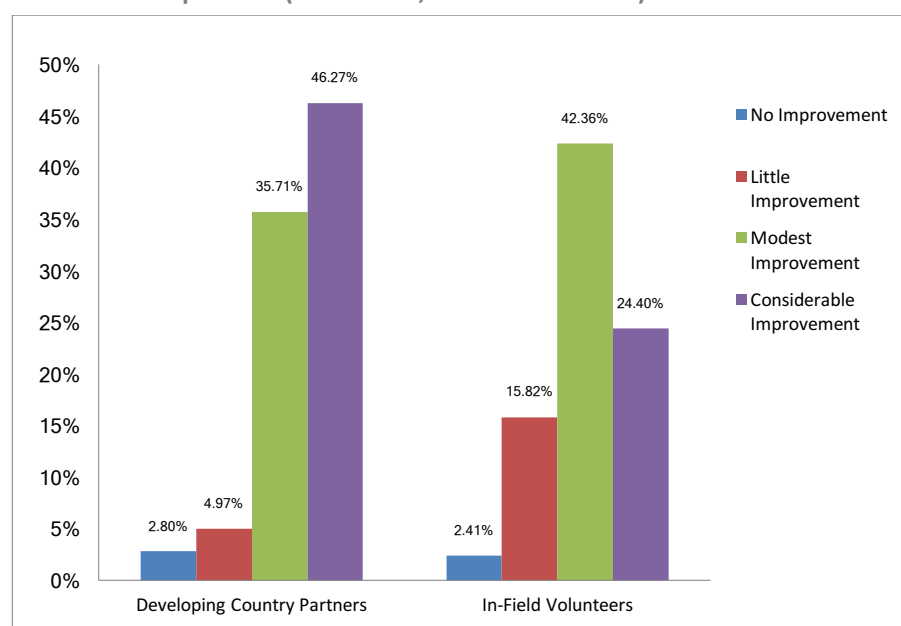
In many instances, VCAs have presented comprehensive assessments of progress (in Year 3 and cumulatively) of each intermediate outcome. All VCAs provided a detailed Outputs and Outcomes table (usually in an annex), however these are of uneven quality in terms of readability. Some VCAs only reference performance data against 5-year targets; the lack of more detailed target levels makes it difficult to assess progress at this point in the cycle, other than giving a general remark such as 'on track' or 'on schedule.'

Not much can be said at this point about whether the VCAs are making progress toward the ultimate outcome. Data are to be collected on established criteria (and compared to baseline data) during year five of the cycle. Three VCAs were able to show that progress is being made, either from analysis of completed initiatives or based on an assessment of the progress logged on intermediate outcomes. For these VCAs, progress on three ultimate outcome indicators was stated to be above target levels, one was shown to be on track and one (the percentage of beneficiaries reporting a positive change in their well-being as a result of partner support) slightly below the expected level. During interviews, several VCAs commented they are looking for ways to enhance the M&E of impact at the beneficiary level by reaching beyond a current focus on the use of stakeholder perception metrics, and that they regard the task of satisfactorily measuring achievement of the ultimate outcome to be challenging.

E-survey results show that, at the end of Year 3 in the cycle, DCPs have noticed improvements since the beginning of the VCP cycle in the way their organization operates and among the people/communities identified as beneficiaries. Forty-nine percent of respondents reported 'considerable' improvement and a further 37% reported they had noticed 'modest' improvement in the way their organization operates. When asked about the nature of these improvements, 40% or more of respondents indicated improvement to 'a major extent' in programs/service delivery, stakeholder engagement, strategic influence, and GE.

Forty-six percent of DCP respondents reported 'considerable' beneficial change among the people/communities identified as beneficiaries and an additional 36% reported they had noticed 'modest' beneficial change (Chart 2). National volunteers (often connected to those DCPs) had a similar though slightly more modest assessment (31% reporting 'considerable' and 50% reporting 'modest' beneficial change. In describing this change, 49% of DCP respondents suggested the change was to 'a major extent' in the social organization/participation of women and youth, 33% in the number of beneficiaries, 27% in environmental protection and enhancement, and 24% in livelihood status of beneficiaries.

Chart 2: Assessment of Improvements Seen in Beneficiaries since 2015 from Partner and Volunteer Perspectives (DCP n=322; In-field Vol n=372)



Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Developing Country Partner Survey & VCP Evaluation - 2018 Volunteer Survey

A further question in the DCP survey confirmed that this beneficial change was related to 'the work of your organization generally' (51% said 'to a major extent') and to 'VCA supports specifically' (40% said 'to a major extent'). These results are consistent with the data obtained by the team during field visits in all four countries.

As one would expect, in-field volunteers were more considered in their assessment of the change they observed among the people/communities identified as beneficiaries (Chart 2). Twenty-four percent of respondents reported 'considerable' beneficial change among the people/communities identified as beneficiaries and an additional 42% reported they had noticed 'modest' beneficial change. Again, their assessment of beneficial change in social organization/participation of women and youth was greater than in other areas (38% said 'to a major extent'). The proportions of returned volunteers reporting 'considerable' beneficial change (or beneficial change 'to a major extent') on these questions were slightly lower.

An independent project-level evaluation of a VCA-supported project provides confirmation that progress is being made towards attainment the VCA's ultimate and intermediate outcomes. Walabis, a Honduran NGO that has received Oxfam-Québec volunteers since 2008, sought and obtained funds from Oxfam International to commission a study of the impact of social arts on the livelihoods of young people previously involved in Walabis (Mejia 2018). Performed by a university sociologist, the study included interviews with a small but representative sample of young people. All 12 of the interviewees said their lives had been positively impacted, with most of them indicating positive social, cultural and economic changes and 83% had expanded their opportunities to earn a livelihood.

Similarly, an analysis of the experience over a ten-year period with youth employment and entrepreneurship centres (centros de jóvenes y empleo) in Peru shows progress towards the VCP's ultimate outcome (Cuso International and Asociación Kallpa 2018). Cuso International and Asociación Kallpa reviewed the continuing relevance of their work with young people in Lima and Cusco, and examined performance data and testimonials to present conclusions, lessons and recommendations for guiding future efforts. In addition to detailing the numbers of young people assisted between 2009 and 2017 (36,585 engaged, 10,192 advised on employment readiness and 1,346 coached on small business

entrepreneurship), the authors reported that 40% of those who completed the employment readiness training had found work and 30% of those who finished the entrepreneurship training started or improved their own businesses.

In KIIs and FGDs, many instances were encountered of partner improvements in capacity and performance leading to enhanced economic and social well-being of beneficiaries. In some cases, these could be linked to a Capacity Development Plan, in which the DCP set goals for capacity improvements during the 2015-2020 period. The visits with groups of beneficiaries produced multiple testimonies of changed lives and prospects particularly for southern based women's groups. In the youth empowerment area, this was especially the case with young people interviewed in a poor, large city neighbourhood who talked about what involvement in VCA-supported youth employment and youth entrepreneurship programs had meant for them (see Box 2 below). The testimonies of indigenous women beneficiaries in the Honduran partner AMIR regarding the impact of VCA assistance is provided in Section 3.3.1 (a).

In special circumstances, such as with human rights and GE initiatives in Honduras and Peru where opposition groups are striving to block further progress and weaken or obviate previous gains, performance improvements by partners did not necessarily translate into enhanced well-being of beneficiaries. In field interviews, partners reported that they have adjusted their expectations downwards to consider maintenance of the status quo, in place of improvements, as the desirable result.

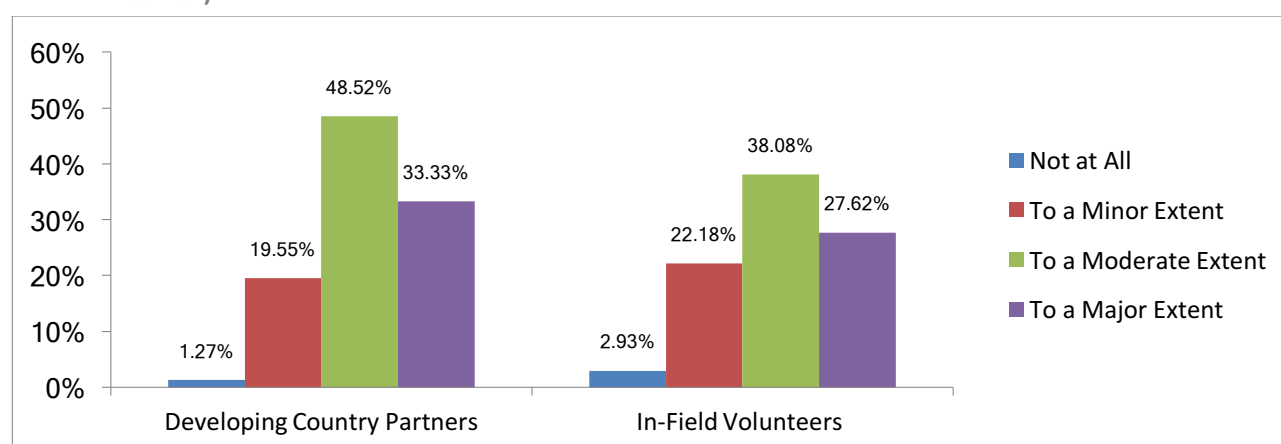
b) Impact of volunteers on beneficiary numbers

Year-3 annual reports from the VCAs generally provide estimates of numbers of beneficiaries reached as a result of volunteer interventions. For many VCAs it was possible to compare Year-3 actual and cumulative beneficiary numbers (many of these broken down by direct and indirect) against five-year targets presented in the PIP. Year-3 actual numbers of direct beneficiaries ranged from 2,300 to 28,000 (not counting one outlier) and totalled 117,000. The latter number encompassed nine VCAs; two VCAs did not report a number and one suppressed its number after determining it was unreliable. Overall, and in spite of difficulties in presentation, VCA reporting suggests that anticipated numbers of beneficiaries are being reached. Where beneficiary numbers for *Intermediate Outcome 1100* are reported, the evaluation team was not able to verify them since they were based on volunteer estimates. The potential for variability is high given different individual estimation skills, and the likely differences among the VCAs in instructions provided to volunteers on the estimation procedure.

Regarding *Intermediate Outcome 1200*, Year-3 annual reports for almost all VCAs presented numbers of Canadians informed or engaged about international development (in some cases these were broken out by informed and engaged or including and excluding social media). VCA reporting for 'engaged' Canadians in year three ranged from 600 to 90,000 (totalling 231,000 for 10 VCAs with two not reporting), while reporting for 'informed' Canadians in year three ranged from 19,000 to 2.4 million (totalling 3.9 million for seven VCAs with five not reporting). Those VCAs which provided data appear to be on track to meeting their five-year targets. The reporting on beneficiary numbers relating to Canadians informed or engaged about international development is based on a combination of volunteer estimates (e.g., attendees at a returned volunteer presentation) and counting of views and mentions on websites or social media platforms.

E-survey results show how DCP respondents and in-field volunteers characterized the positive changes they observed among people/communities identified as beneficiaries. Thirty-three percent of partners and 28% of in-field volunteers reported they saw changes reflected in increased numbers of beneficiaries 'to a major extent' (Chart 3).

Chart 3: DCP and Volunteer Assessments of Degree to which Changes among People/Communities identified as Beneficiaries are Reflected in the Number of Beneficiaries (DCP n=253; In-field Vol n=242)



Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Developing Country Partner Survey & VCP Evaluation - 2018 Volunteer Survey

Records of KIIs and FGDs suggest that end-beneficiary persons and communities respond in very different ways to DCP interventions. Estimates made of the number of persons directly benefiting from volunteer-supported interventions do not take into account differences in the extent or nature of the perceived benefit. The evaluation team believes many of the beneficiary numbers reported by VCAs may be underestimates since partner staff and volunteers are often unaware of the extent of the demonstration effect occurring among neighbours, relatives and online contacts of direct beneficiaries. Furthermore, the team believes estimates also tend to miss persons who subsequently benefit from the enhanced expertise of direct beneficiaries.

During the evaluation, conversations with VCAs and partners about the measurement challenge centered on the following ideas:

- there is a wide spectrum of benefits accruing from VCA supported activities;
- significant differences in scale exist among beneficiaries ranging from smaller in number and the more connected to partnership activities, to larger groups of less directly invested users or beneficiaries of policy or system changes;
- variability regarding what lies within the partnerships' sphere of influence.

The LMs of four of the VCAs recognize that growth in volunteers' own capacity is an immediate outcome contributing to *Intermediate Outcome 1200* (Enhanced Canadians' participation in Canada's sustainable development efforts). This causal link underscores the importance of the volunteer's own career trajectory and the likelihood that it will include involvements in international cooperation and produce benefit for others along the way.

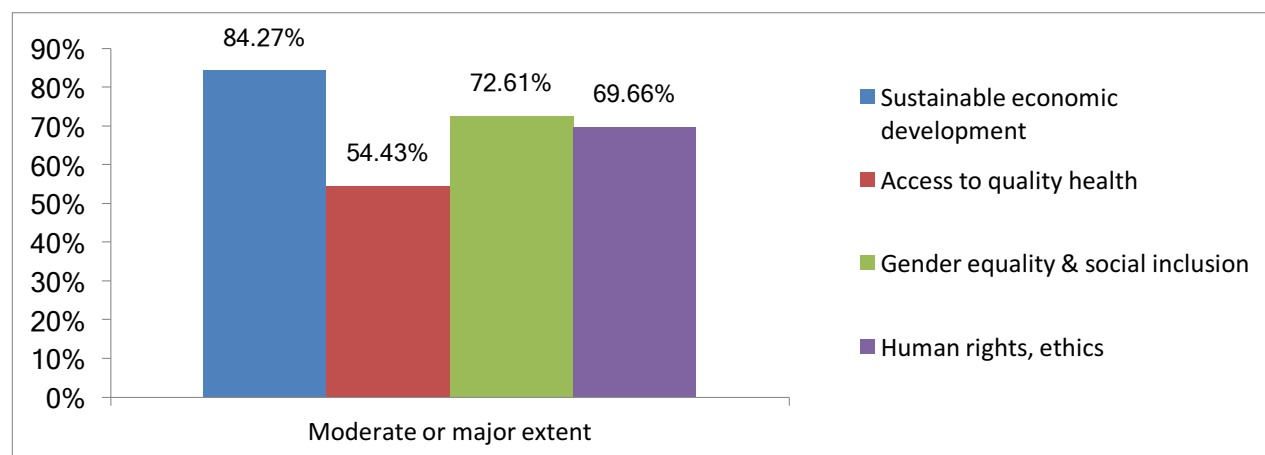
c) Allocation of partner programming across sectors

Year-3 annual reports from the VCAs indicate they vary from limiting volunteer sending activity to one sector to being active in all named key sectors. The sector in which most VCAs operate is sustainable economic growth (SEG). This is followed by food security, children and youth, and democracy/ security and stability.

E-survey results show that 84% of DCP respondents reported their organizations either works to a moderate extent or to a major extent in SEG (e.g., helping people benefit from economic activity). Similarly, 73% indicated they work to a moderate extent or to a major extent in GE and social inclusion, e.g., promoting broad participation in decision-making, 70% in human rights, ethics, corporate social responsibility and the rule of law, and 54% in access to quality health and basic services, e.g., water,

sanitation, housing, education (Chart 4).

Chart 4: Indication of Sectors in which DCPs are Most Active (n=360)



Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Developing Country Partner Survey

E-survey results for in-field volunteers (not shown in a chart) revealed a comparable pattern of involvement. Seventy-three percent of volunteers said they were active to a 'moderate' or to a 'major' extent in sustainable economic development, and 73% in GE and social inclusion. The proportion who said they work in human rights, ethics, CSR and the rule of law was 40%. Finally, the smallest percentage, 21%, indicated they were active in access to quality health and basic services.

Records of KIIs and FGDs support the patterns evident in the electronic survey results. Both partners and volunteers agree that their heaviest involvement is in SEG programming, and their lightest is in access to quality health and basic services. The interviews also revealed that almost all VCAs have multiple foci.

Some VCA efforts are clearly identified with a sector description; for example, human rights initiatives would clearly be linked to the header of democracy. Many other VCA efforts would be related to two or more of the specified headers; for example, an agro-ecological/food security/nutrition initiative may be classifiable under SEG, food security and children and youth.

d) Improved capacities of partners to deliver results

Year-3 annual reports from the VCAs provide assessments on how capacities of DCPs have improved as a result of volunteer placements. Nine out of 12 reports from the VCAs indicate an assessment by DCPs of the increase in their skills, knowledge or abilities due to volunteer placements (the other three VCAs did not report on this indicator). For seven VCAs, the cumulative data at the end of the year for partners who saw a moderate or significant increase was above or well above the 5-year target of 75% (in the range of 81-100%). For two VCAs, the reported assessments were well below the 5-year target level (at 17% and 48%).

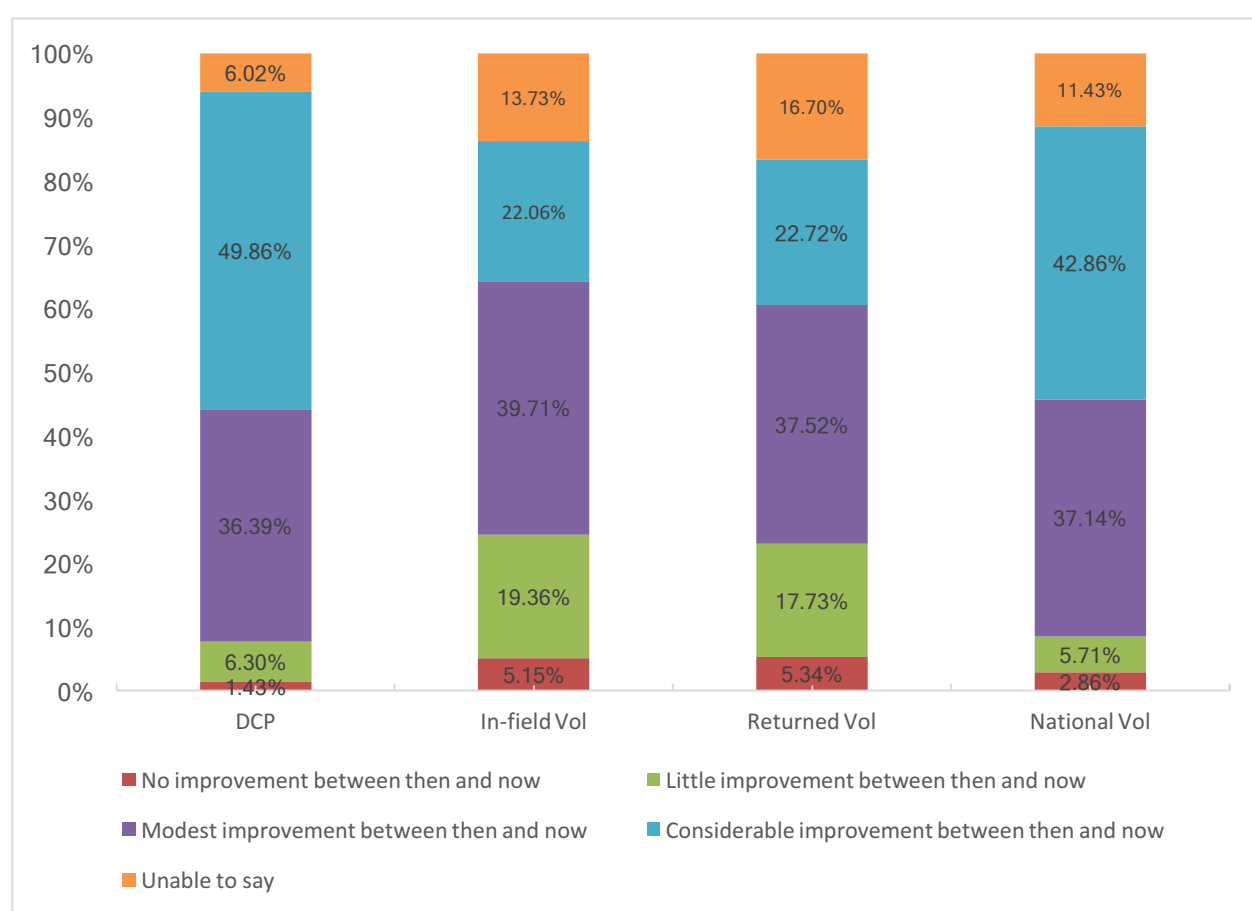
Data was also reported by VCAs about volunteer perceptions on their contribution to advancing DCP objectives by way of their placements. Eight out of VCAs indicated assessments by volunteers showed a moderate or significant impact of their placements (four VCAs did not report on this). Of these, seven VCAs reported perceptions that exceeded their five-year target level and only one reported volunteer perceptions which were below the five-year target level (actual five-year target levels varied from VCA to VCA; the exception noted here reported 59% versus a five-year target of 90%).

Chart 5 provides comparative data for DCPs, international volunteers (in-field and returned N-S & S-S) and national volunteers regarding perceived improvements to partner capacity within the program cycle. Across the groups, between 61% and 86% see "modest" to "considerable" improvement, and between 7%

and 24% see “a little” or “no improvement”. DCP respondents and national volunteers are most inclined to say that there has been considerable improvement, international volunteers are less likely to make these observations. There are at least a few factors bearing on this analysis:

- The period over which DCP respondents and volunteers observe change is variable, but generally one might expect that partner respondents would be making their comment on capacity improvements over the entire period of the partnership while volunteers would be making their observations over the (shorter) period of their mandate
- Partners would know their organizations better than volunteers and be able to inform their observations of change within the partnership with that historical context in mind
- At the same time, pragmatics and a sense of pride in their own organization, might lead partners to give a more generous assessment

Chart 5: Stakeholder Perspectives on Improved Organizational Capacity (DCP n=349; In-field Vol n=408, Returned Vol n=335, National Vol n=35)



The variance in responses noted in Chart 5 is reflected in stakeholder perceptions of improvements by specific areas of capacity building. However, there is a similar pattern of response within each stakeholder group. For the most part, respondents favour the same four areas of capacity building – programs/service delivery, stakeholder engagement, strategic influence, and GE policies and practices - when indicating improvement to a “major” extent, as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Comparative Analysis of Stakeholder Perceptions of Partner Capacity Development Improvement to a “Major” Extent, by Area of Capacity

	DCP (n=283)	In –field volunteers (n=243)	Returned volunteers (n=335)	National volunteers (n=24)
Board governance	18.07%	8.51%	10.98%	0.00%
Ethical leadership	27.20%	16.17%	15.08%	25.00%
Project monitoring using RBM	35.32%	26.36%	18.04%	13.04%
Administration	27.24%	18.49%	16.46%	26.09%
Programs/service delivery	43.63%	23.40%	26.69%	39.13%
Stakeholder engagement	43.14%	30.25%	33.74%	39.13%
Strategic influence	39.20%	28.27%	24.61%	25.00%
Gender equality policies and practices	49.23%	29.71%	22.87%	41.67%
Environmental management practices	30.98%	16.53%	14.63%	21.74%
Personnel security and planning	20.00%	17.95%	10.84%	12.50%

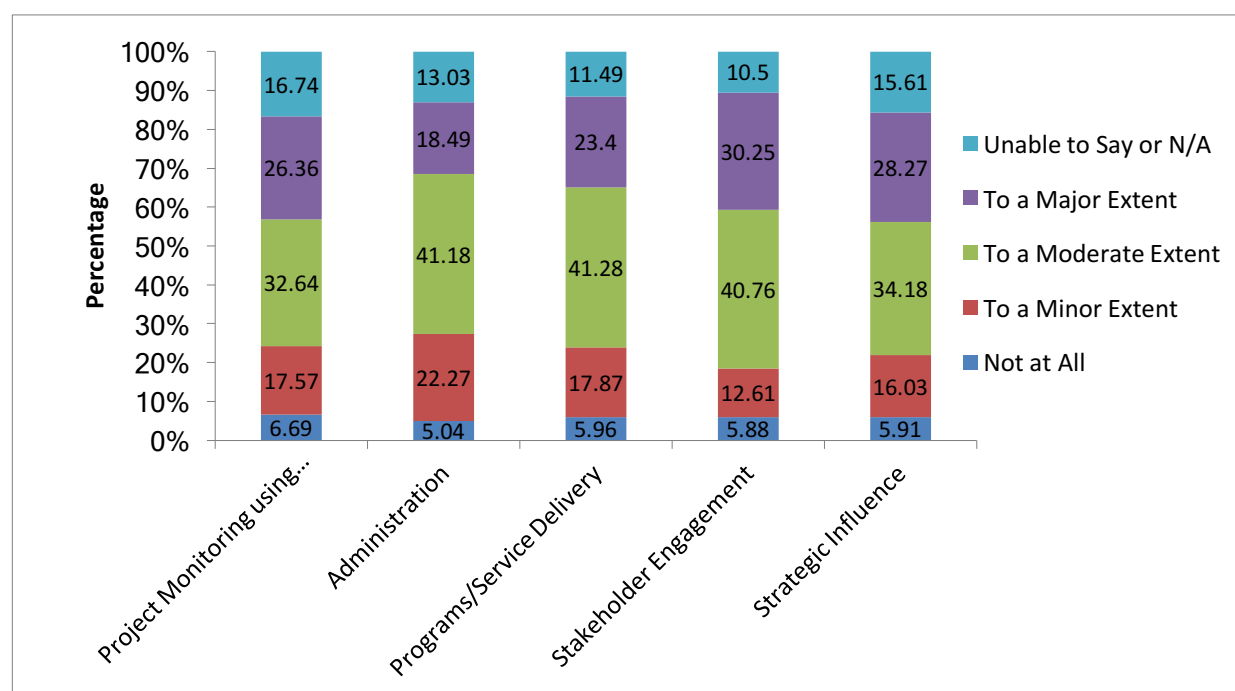
Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Developing Country Partner Survey & VCP Evaluation - 2018 Volunteer Survey

Data from the stakeholder group making the most critical assessment of improved organizational capacity, in-field volunteers, is provided in Chart 6. These volunteers assessed stakeholder engagement as showing the most improvement, where 71% noted improvement to a major (30.3%) or moderate (40.8% extent). At the other end of the scale, in-field volunteers assessed administration as the area with the least improvement, where 27% noted improvement to a minor (22.3%) extent or not at all (5.0%).

Records of KIIs and FGDs show that DCPs are becoming better equipped to deliver services to aid poor and marginalized communities (sustainability of this increased capacity is discussed in subsection (e) below and Section 3.4). Of special importance are:

- improved abilities to identify their own needs and to seek means of supporting them from available resources (in terms of volunteer assistance, this means increasingly sourcing volunteers with the appropriate skills/availability/resources from their agencies of choice, including both foreign and domestic)
- adopting information and communications technology (ICT) to improve their reach across target groups, to more satisfactorily link to young people and women, and to participate in national and (in some cases) international networks; and
- enhanced abilities to carry out baseline studies and monitor and evaluate progress, utilize findings for adaptive management, and communicate with and report to stakeholders.

Chart 6: In-Field Volunteer Perspective on Improvements seen in Capacity of DCP (n=243)

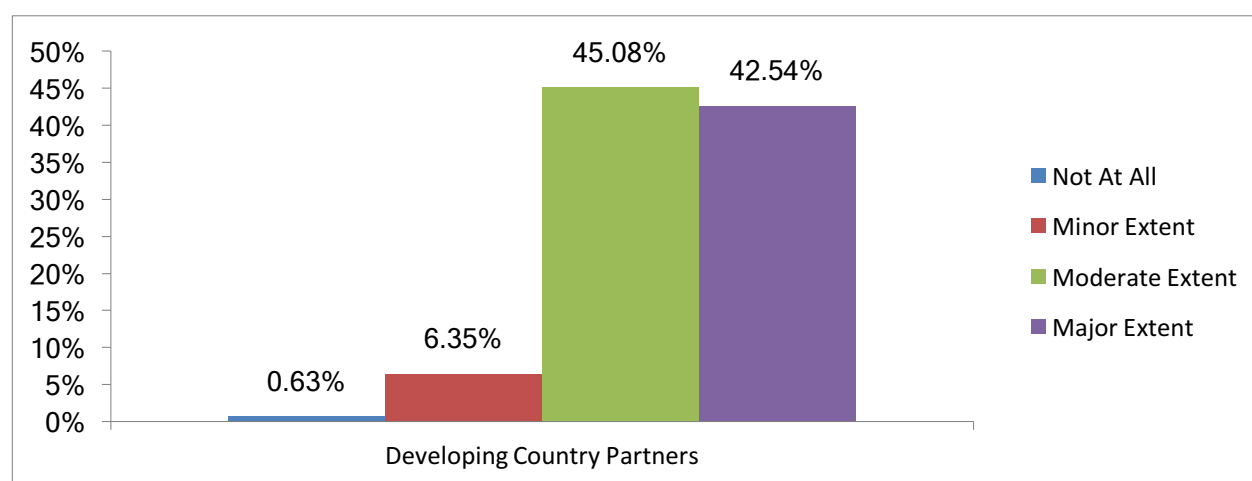


Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Volunteer Survey

e) Link between performance improvements of partners & engagement of volunteers

E-survey results reveal a strong recognition by DCPs of the contribution volunteers make to improvements in their organization. No less than 88% of partners who responded categorized the contribution by VCA volunteers as 'moderate' or 'major' (Chart 7). The evaluation team did not access data on the minority of partners which reported that the contribution of volunteers was 'not at all' or 'to a minor extent'.

Chart 7: DCP Perspectives on Extent to which VCA Volunteers Contribute to Improvements in their Organization (n=323)



Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Developing Country Partner Survey

Records of KIIs and FGDs show most DCPs recognize that the engagement of VCA volunteers was helping to build their organisation's capacity, find solutions and address gaps. In Peru, some partners mentioned how they had not been able to advance in a topic or an activity previously blocked/weakened through lack

of appropriate staff resources (e.g., specialist resources were not known or were not available, or were known/available but too expensive). In each case, there was an accompanying comment that it was not the partner's intention to allow VCP volunteers to replace ongoing efforts to find or train local personnel. There were also a couple of partners which noted that the relationship they have with their VCA and volunteers was mutually helpful, a sentiment very close to the concept of transformative partnerships in volunteering which was featured in the 2017 IVCO conference (IVFD 2017a).

In many cases, the recognition that VCA volunteers provided support for a limited time was apparent from the appreciation expressed by the partners for the VCP, and by the steps they were taking to maximize the benefit to their organizations. The evaluation team observed many specific actions being taken to ensure sustainability of results, including the designation of counterparts within the local partner organization, careful planning for VCA volunteer placements at critical points in the organization's growth, and instances of building up a local volunteer capability to in some ways 'mirror' the efforts of the VCA volunteers (this is discussed further in Section 3.4).

f) Partner use of tools, systems, policies and methods generated by volunteers

Annual reports from the VCAs indicate the numbers of guides, policies, procedures, methodologies, etc. created or adapted for use by DCPs in the first three years range from nine to 1,723 (eight VCAs reporting). The majority of the VCAs reported numbers that exceed their five-year targets. In the E-survey results, DCPs named the most significant contribution made by volunteers and a majority of responses listed various tools, systems, policies and methods. Examples were policies and procedures on gender, online marketing strategy, tour guide training curriculum, and M&E systems development.

Records of KIs and FGDs tend to give prominent attention to tools related to: (i) partner selection and monitoring of progress in capacity development; (ii) using information communications technology (ICT) to amplify the reach of the partner's work; and (iii) improved M&E practices. VCAs are increasingly searching out the best partners to work with and showing willingness to discontinue support for weakly performing partners. Some VCAs use a Capacity Assessment Tool (CAT) or equivalent to systematically investigate a potential partner's characteristics and needs, and subsequently elaborate a capacity development plan and measures of change in partner capacity.

Many DCPs are utilizing ICT for interacting with target groups, for involving stakeholders in decision-making, for offering virtual courses, and for networking nationally and internationally. Some partners maintain multiple network memberships either as a means of accessing resources and intelligence or in order to reach additional groupings of end-beneficiaries. While it seems plausible that volunteers have assisted in the seemingly widespread adoption of ICT among DCPs, the evaluation team did not collect data on this specific question.

Partners are also responding to encouragement from VCAs and GAC to upgrade their M&E capabilities, including performing baseline studies, tracking data for established indicators, building databases and reporting formats, nurturing a feedback loop to management, and supporting evidence-based decision-making. That said, there is clearly room for improvement, even in the most basic of data collection exercises – compiling gender-disaggregated numbers of volunteers recruited and completing their placements across the key categories (, N-S, S-S, e-volunteers, national, etc.).

g) Participation of returned volunteers in Canada's international development efforts

Year-3 annual reports from the VCAs indicate that expectations for Canadian volunteers participating in international development efforts in Canada upon their return are largely being met. For eight reporting VCAs, the percentage of Canadian volunteers actively participating in international development efforts in Canada at the end of the third year ranged from 40% to 100%. The six VCAs which reported percentages below their 5-year targets were not much below the expected 2019/2020 levels (they averaged 59%,

compared to most 5 year-targets which were almost all 75%).

Participation by returned volunteers is being accomplished in a very broad range of actions, including:

- Participation in information sessions in support of Canada's international development efforts, including GAC events such as International Development Week;
- Authoring of publications, articles and blogs and production of videos;
- Publication subscribers, Twitter followers/retweets/mentions, Facebook followers/'like'/comments/shares, and YouTube views; and
- Relationships with diaspora communities and organizations.

Small numbers of volunteers (especially short-term experts) participate in international development efforts upon their return by continuing their association with their DCP by way of email or other electronic communications. In the case of one VCA, returned volunteers continue to volunteer in Canada as associate staff members of their VCA (discussed under Section 3.7).

The career trajectories of individuals who become VCP-funded volunteers are varied and often involve increasing exposure to international development and international cooperation. Three VCAs explicitly recognize in their LM that development of the volunteers themselves is a desired immediate outcome of the VCP. Participation by returned volunteers in international development efforts in Canada is more fully analyzed in Section 3.6 (Engaging Canadians).

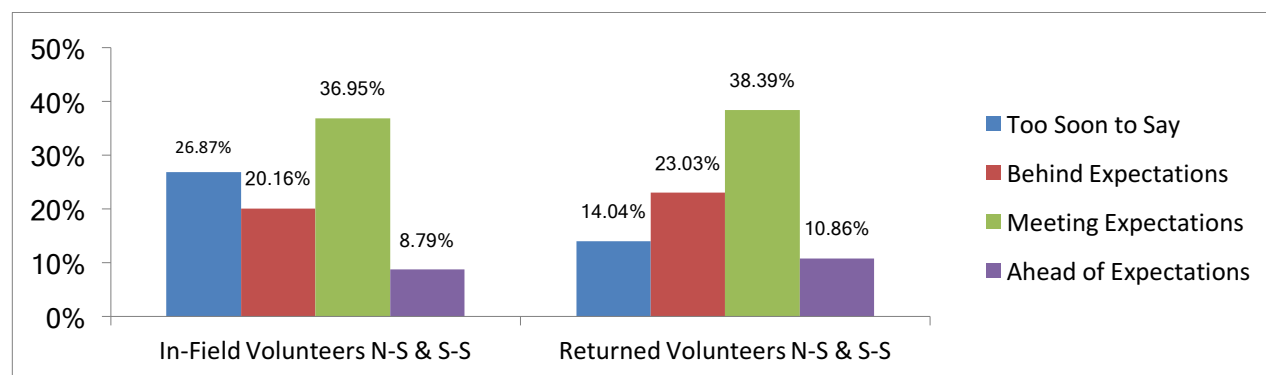
3.1.2 Stakeholder Assessments of Volunteer Effectiveness

***Finding:** Assessments from two key stakeholder groups, DCPs and volunteers, support the overall finding that partner improvements meet or exceed expectations. Data also confirm that partners see a positive relationship between changes observed among people/communities identified as beneficiaries and the work of the VCA.*

a) Volunteer perception of progress by developing country partners

E-survey results provide insights into how well volunteers see their placements with DCPs meeting expectations. The majority of volunteers, 46-49%, indicated that country partners are meeting or are ahead of expectations regarding improvement in the way the partner functions. Between 20% and 23% of volunteers felt that DCPs fell behind expectations (Chart 8). In-field volunteers were more willing in their assessments to conclude that it is too soon to say than was the case with returned volunteers.

Chart 8: Volunteer Perceptions of Improvements in the Way DCPs Function (In-field Vol n=387; Returned Vol n=534)



Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Volunteer Survey

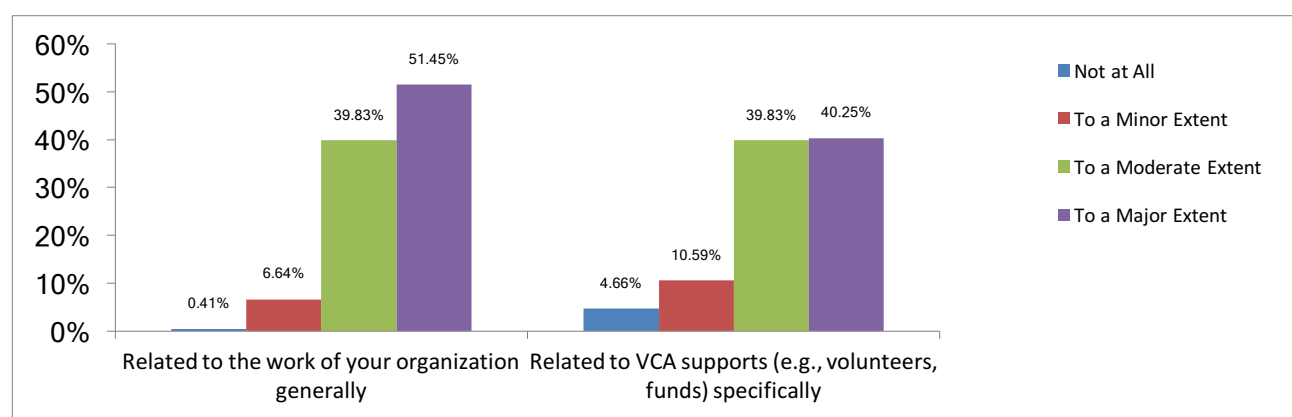
Records of KIIs and FGDs in the four countries visited include references to both satisfied and dissatisfied volunteer expectations. The majority of volunteers spoke of feeling included in the partner's organization, being listened to and having the opportunity to share skills with a counterpart or counterparts. Several Quebec-based VCAs gave special attention to identifying one or more counterparts (*homologues*) for each volunteer. Other volunteers spoke of the limitations rising from a lack of logistical support provided by some of the VCAs, hampering volunteers' contribution to the DCP.

The majority of volunteer comments was that change is a slow, sometimes uncertain process and even more so in national contexts that are deeply infused with traditional values and behaviours. In a few cases, volunteers reported feeling disappointed that their placement had not been better designed or that management of the DCP was unwilling to follow through on volunteer initiatives by making changes. On the other hand, a few DCPs reported that volunteers had arrived with unrealistic expectations and struggled to adapt to the country context, culture and language. In a few instances, comments were made about insufficient supervision by the VCA.

b) Partner perception of the link between supports provided by VCAs and changes among beneficiaries

E-survey results show that there is considerable agreement among DCPs that changes observed among beneficiary groups are related to the work of their organizations (91% said 'to a moderate extent' or 'to a major extent') and to VCA supports such as volunteers and funds specifically (80% said 'to a moderate extent' or 'to a major extent') (Chart 9).

Chart 9: DCP Perspective on the Relationship between Changes Observed among People/Communities Identified as Beneficiaries and the VCA (n=254)



Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Developing Country Partner Survey

Records of KIIs and FGDs show similarly positive assessments of the linkage between changes observed among beneficiary groups and the VCA's work. Interviews indicated that the DCP contacts of two VCAs were highly appreciative of VCA assistance with resources other than volunteer time, especially small-scale support funds, linkages to other Canadian partners and larger funding envelopes for awarding competitively (for example to incentivize innovation).

Some partners of other VCAs stated they would like to see volunteer resources complemented by the availability of support funds for elaboration and testing of innovative ideas. In these VCAs, lack of access to support funds (from within the local partner or from the VCA) meant that benefits from potentially excellent volunteer contributions are limited or deferred altogether due to lack of resources. Where they had experience of them, DCPs also expressed appreciation for other VCA supports, including referrals to mentors and experts, possibilities for arranging study tours/exposure opportunities to Canada, and opportunities to meet with other partners and share experiences. In the E-survey, 57% of DCPs indicated

that seed funding, i.e., financial support to develop an idea, added value to the partnership ‘to a moderate extent’ or ‘to a major extent’ (moderate was 26%, major 31%).

3.1.3 Unexpected Results of VCA Involvement

Finding: A number of unexpected results have been reported and these are largely positive. While both positive and negative unexpected results were noted, the net balance of these was not sufficient to alter the overall finding on effectiveness.

a) Unanticipated results

In the course of FGDs with women and youth beneficiaries during field missions, the evaluation team noted many instances in which results were acknowledged that were incidental to project goals but of major significance to the individuals involved. This ‘ripple’ effect was most evident among end-beneficiaries who had been assisted by volunteers in SEG, human rights and empowerment projects.

Asociación de Mujeres Intibucanas Renovadas (AMIR), an indigenous women’s organization in western Honduras, provides an example. Supported by a series of VCA volunteers, AMIR has been providing indigenous Lenca women with training in four areas: institutional strengthening, food security and health, small business development and citizen participation. In FGDs one woman described how they had been empowered, saying:

“Before all this we stayed at home a lot and our husbands wouldn’t permit us to go out. Now we’re comfortable going out and we’ve become much better at conversing with our husbands and children and getting them to support our efforts. There’s more integration in the family and lower levels of domestic violence. All this has happened little by little. Women never went to meetings and it was difficult to get transportation arranged – now they have access one way or another to getting transport. Women are now making their voices heard in their communities and playing a role in decision making.”

Similar stories were recorded in Senegal and Ghana.

A further unexpected result was reported in interviews with some DCPs. They commented that hosting Canadian volunteers brought credibility to their organisations and helped raise their level of visibility in regional and national fora. Additionally, it was felt that an ongoing connection with a VCA made it easier for their organisation to have a voice and express their challenges/ problems at the policy table with governments and national institutions. For instance, one of the VCAs was particularly effective in strengthening GE measures simultaneously at grassroots and national levels with respect to justice reform in Ghana and Tanzania.

One possible unanticipated result of the VCP is the growth of local volunteering in countries where VCP-supported volunteers have been active. Field missions undertaken for this evaluation suggest there has been recent growth of local volunteering in Honduras, Peru, and Ghana, but less so in Senegal. Several local volunteers, many of them university students, were encountered during site visits. Whether there is a possible link between the efforts of international volunteer sending agencies/programs, such as the VCP, and the rise of local volunteering will require further research. In Ghana two of the VCAs were reported to be making strategic efforts to link their programs with the government’s national volunteer program (National Service Secretariat) to strengthen the sustainability of their work.

Interviews have provided glimpses into the career trajectories of a few VCP-supported volunteers. Many of these individuals spoke of the transformative value of their volunteer experience. One person who had been a local volunteer with a NGO in her home city in Peru (while attending university) subsequently graduated and went on to become a S-S volunteer for a VCA in Honduras.

The evaluation team also noted what appear to be unexpected results of the way the VCP has evolved, including some results which relate indirectly to effectiveness of the program. Expansion of alternatives for delivery of volunteer services, discussed in section 3.2 on Efficiency, has had at least three consequences. They can be summarized as follows:

- Expanded diversity in the delivery of volunteer services has facilitated efforts by VCAs to place their volunteers (e.g., additional opportunities opening up for placements in bilateral and other multi-funded projects)
- Increased diversity of offerings (of volunteer service delivery) means that DCPs have greater choice among VCAs – DCPs now find it easier to partner with a VCA that can provide best-fit volunteer placements (e.g., additional opportunities opening up for e-volunteering especially for experts wishing to contribute beyond the end of short-term stays)
- A negative result of diversity in VCP operations is that program administration tasks, including M&E have become more labor-intensive and increasing program complexity is making uniform application of procedures more problematic

Box 1: Some key ingredients for effectiveness

EQWIP HUBs is experiencing success with its model for assisting young unemployed and underemployed women and men to improve their livelihoods. In collaboration with developing country partners, EQWIP HUBs teams of volunteers and locally employed staff are creating innovative employment and entrepreneurship HUBs for urban youth in developing countries. The volunteers are skilled Canadian (and small numbers of S-S) volunteers aged 21-35 who are placed at each HUB for between three and 12 months.

EQWIP HUBs focuses on four main interventions: (i) a continuum of services that includes training, access to financing, coaching, and mentoring; (ii) capacity building of partners so they can implement; (iii) working with system actors to improve the enabling environment; and (iv) identification, recruitment and placement of volunteers. Young people graduating from the project's entrepreneurship and employability streams start their own micro-enterprise or commence formal employment. Young men and women starting a business compete for small awards of start-up capital made available from an in-house Youth Innovation Fund.

With the assistance of two Northern partners, Education Development Center Inc. and TakingITGlobal, EQWIP HUBs is utilizing ICT to deliver training, set up interactive platforms to enable young people to access support services, and track progress using a customized self-assessment Capacity Assessment Tool (CAT). The EQWIP HUBs year 3 annual report shows that Alternativa, a centre of social research and popular education located in a poor outer neighbourhood of Lima, has progressed well on the 9 dimensions measured by the CAT. Advances at another Peruvian partner have occurred at a slower pace.

Alternativa staff have noted many cases of young people's lives becoming brighter as they move into business or take up full-time work. And they have received requests to set up additional HUBs to serve young people in other parts of the city. They have also seen a marked increase in interest among university students in becoming local volunteers attached to the EQWIP HUBs project.

The EQWIP HUBs partner in Northern Ghana is the government's National Service Secretariat (NSS) which is responsible for sending university graduates to public and private sector institutions upon completion of their degree program. The partnership with EQWIP HUBs has stimulated the NSS by replicating the employability and entrepreneurship training models in other parts of the country to embrace growing numbers of national volunteers in the program.

3.2 Efficiency

3.2.1 How efficiently are the different types of inputs (consultant expertise, staffing, travel, equipment and supplies, communications)-contributing to the achievement of the outcomes?

- a) Is the relationship between program costs and results reasonable based on past experience in VCP and what is known based on evidence from the volunteer sending field of practice/sector?
- b) What efficiencies are shown by clustering volunteers in single organizations or networked organizations?
- c) How have external factors negatively influenced VCA abilities to meet efficiency expectations?

3.2.2 How efficiently are the different types of chosen intervention mechanisms (types of volunteer placement) contributing to the achievement of the outcomes?

- a) How does the cost per volunteer placement vary by type of development intervention within categories defined by length of stay and by level of co-operant experience?
- b) To what extent has the investment of additional support (seed funding, mentoring, network development) amplified the partner level results over what could have been claimed by volunteers on their own?

3.2.3 To what extent are the projects consistent in their application of efficiency measures? Are there any significant deviations that can be referenced to program-level requirements / guidance?

- a) What efficiency seeking policies, tools and strategies have VCAs used most? And what has been tried that is more unique?
- b) What efficiency seeking policies, tools and strategies have generated the greatest dividends?

3.2.1 Cost Effectiveness of Different Types of Inputs in Relation to Outcomes

***Finding:** Based on evidence from past experience in the VCP and literature from the volunteer sending field of practice, the relationship between costs/resources and development results is reasonable. Further detailed research is needed to confirm this finding when key quantitative data, such as number of volunteer-days and actual costs for key expenditure categories, can be compiled across the program. Insufficient information is available to assess the cost-effectiveness of clustering volunteers to provide service to multiple DCPs, as opposed to assigning an individual volunteer to one partner. A variety of external factors can be shown to affect VCA abilities to meet efficiency expectations.*

a) Reasonableness of the relationship between program costs and results

Under the efficiency criterion, cost effectiveness analysis provides a frame of reference for relating costs to program results. Its practicality in a program evaluation is dependent on the availability of data that is comparable among VCAs and across different time periods, especially data on volunteer days.

The 2015-2020 VCP is the third cycle since CIDA support for volunteer-sending agencies was organized as a strategically planned program. Program costs (Government of Canada portion) in current dollars have risen from \$203 million (for 2004-2009) to \$266 million (for 2009-2014) to the current \$300 million (Table 6). Adjusted for inflation, i.e., calculated in 2014 dollars, planned spending for the first two five-year periods was \$245 million for 2004-2009 and \$284 million for 2009-2014. The increase between the first and second cycles was 16%, and 6% between the second cycle and the current VCP program.

Changes were evident in program size (admittedly, this is different from development results) with

increased numbers of participating VCAs, a reduced number of countries served, and expanded numbers of local partners and volunteers (the latter being a poor measure as it does not take into account duration of assignments). Comprehensive comparative data on the distribution of VCP expenditures by sector or by region could not be located.

Table 6: An At-A-Glance Comparison of the Three Post-2004 VCP Programs

	VCP 2004-2009 (5 yrs)	VCP 2009-2014 (5 yrs)**	VCP 2015-2020 (5 yrs)
Number of contribution agreements	10, reduced to 8 in 2005	9 (10 VCAs)	12 (15 VCAs)
Total amount of CIDA/GAC funding (in current dollars)	\$203 million	\$266 million	\$300 million
No. of countries where VCAs active	65	42	42
No. of local partners	Not provided	930	710 (planned)
No. of volunteers	6,413* (up to 2007)	8,181 (planned)	8,676 (planned)
Distribution of VCP expenditures by sector	Basic human needs 31%, Human rights, democracy & good governance 27% Private sector development 23%	Data not found	Data not found
Distribution of volunteer person-years by region	Africa 49%, Americas 27%, Asia-Pacific 22%	Africa 49%, Americas 36%, Asia and elsewhere 13%	Data not found

** of these, 3,331 were CWY volunteers; ** no information provided on 1 year extension 2014/2015*

Sources: Universalia et. al. 2005; E.T. Jackson & Associates 2007; Goss Golroy Inc. 2012; SoW for Formative Evaluation of VCP 2015-2020.

The evaluation team has not reviewed the actual costs of different types of inputs (such as consultant expertise, staffing, travel, equipment and supplies, communications) over the first three years of the current VCP cycle, nor has it studied the costs incurred by GAC in managing the VCP. However, based on evidence from past experience in the VCP and literature from the volunteer sending field of practice, the relationship between costs/resources and development results is reasonable. Further detailed research is needed to confirm this finding when key quantitative data, such as number of volunteer-days and actual costs for key expenditure categories, can be compiled across the program.

As seen in Section 4.1 of the Evaluation Work Plan, measuring the contribution of volunteering to development has not been a focus of the international literature on volunteer sending until recently. The IVCO 2017 Sub-Theme Paper on Measurement (IFVD 2017c)¹⁵ noted that the SDG indicator 17.9.1 related to capacity building under Goal 17 'Partnerships for the goals' is the dollar value of financial and technical assistance committed to developing countries. The authors stressed that even the simplest of measures, such as the expenditures of volunteer sending organizations and the amount of volunteer time mobilized, pose methodological issues. More sophisticated measures being studied are the financial value of a volunteer's time (a proxy for volunteer quality) and the quality of the relationship between volunteer and partner (viewed in the literature as the central mechanism through which change is brought about). These

¹⁵ The authors favour use of cost-per-volunteer-month but cautioned that this does not take into account volunteer quality or the effectiveness of their work.

are also measures highlighted in many of the team's interviews with DCPs and VCAs during the evaluation.

b) Efficiencies shown by clustering of volunteers to serve multiple partners

The evaluation team found that most VCAs had expanded the types of inputs they use in delivering volunteer services. Organizing volunteers in a cluster to provide support to multiple partners is one of several types of development intervention. The relative efficiency of the volunteer clustering model remains in question vis-à-vis the traditional individual volunteer placement.

In a few cases, the traditional assignment of a single volunteer to support a particular DCP has been replaced, wholly or partially, by VCAs organizing volunteers in a cluster and making them and their individual skill sets available to a number of DCPs. Volunteer visits to those partners are arranged on a periodic, e.g., one day per week, basis or on demand.

The rationale from the VCA perspective is suggestive of greater efficiency. For example, a volunteer specialist in M&E may not be fully utilized by a partner which is small or which already has well-functioning M&E procedures. At a time when VCAs are requiring DCPs to provide specific supports for their volunteer, the cluster concept may also be appealing to under-resourced local partners. However, a few DCPs expressed disappointment, saying that periodic access to a specific volunteer, for say one day per week, limited that person's integration into the partner's organization and reduced possibilities for volunteer/end-beneficiary interaction. A further disadvantage may be that the contribution of volunteers is more difficult to assess where a partner has partial access to several volunteers.

c) Influence of external factors on VCA abilities to meet efficiency expectations

Most KIs with VCA in-country representatives, DCPs and volunteers during the field missions included references to political instability and security concerns, natural disasters, the effects of climate change, difficulty in accessing remote locations, deterioration in the value of the Canadian dollar against other currencies, problems encountered in obtaining visas to enter the country, and turmoil associated with elections.

Factors such as these may serve to slow down VCA operations, lead to a volunteer's work plan being redesigned or their placement to be postponed or shifted to another location, or favour a strategic decision to recruit more diaspora or S-S volunteers familiar with the context. As can be appreciated from the following examples, external factors may undermine volunteer morale.

Instability and political unrest was a major challenge for Mali and the volunteer program was stopped, while instability in Senegal forced VCAs to keep a close eye on security, look for alternatives, and recruit unaccompanied single volunteers only.

Political instability and security issues have prompted GAC to issue travel advice and advisories for specific countries or regions. Particularly since the killing of a volunteer in Burkina Faso in August 2017 and suspension of volunteer activities in Mali, there have been several meetings of VCA managers in Canada to discuss precautionary measures. In countries experiencing extreme insecurity such as Burkina Faso and Honduras, VCAs have imposed restrictions on the mobility of in-field volunteers. Examples would be prohibitions on walking in the streets during certain times of the day or taking public transportation, requiring prior approval of field trips, and reporting of departure and arrival times. Some measures are even more limiting for females. Security concerns have also led VCAs to caution volunteers about email and social media communications.

One volunteer in Honduras spoke about how his assignment was affected by a natural disaster. He had been tasked with conducting a study in two remote coastal villages that had been devastated by erosion caused by storm damage. His hosts, who had planned to accommodate him in one of the villages, were unable to do so because severe post-storm flooding had affected the few houses considered suitable for

his lodging. He was obliged to stay in a nearby city and limit his on-the-ground time in the affected region.

Problems encountered by volunteers in gaining access to the country of their placement were highlighted in Peru. Some interviewees reported difficulties in obtaining visas to enter Peru as a result of changing rules, burdensome and time-consuming paperwork and difficulty getting visas for short-stay volunteers. Volunteer placements undergo delays and even interruptions; with no ability for a volunteer to obtain a short-stay visa the common practice is for such volunteers to enter on a tourist visa and leave the country before the three-month mark to re-enter on a fresh visa. The VCAs operating in Peru indicated they have sought Canadian Embassy help with the Peruvian authorities but to date little has changed.

There is evidence that the slow start of the 2015-2020 VCP cycle produced difficulties for some VCAs and for some partners. Late completion of the contract with GAC in April 2015 meant that VCA operations for year one were slow to commence. A review of VCA expenditures for 2015-2016 (based on Form E reporting) showed that eight of the 12 VCAs were 15% or more below anticipated spending levels at the end of Year-1 and seven of the 12 were 15% or more below anticipated spending levels at the end of Year-2. Interviewees in VCAs reported that operating costs were not covered for a period, recruiting and mobilization of staff was interrupted, volunteers had to be sent home even though some of them wanted to stay, and local partners experienced uncertainty about their programming. One local partner noted that its training project had to proceed without the benefit of the VCA volunteer's presence, which meant that locally hired individuals went ahead with the training of beneficiaries before themselves attending 'train the trainer' workshops.

3.2.2 Cost-Effectiveness of Different Types of Intervention Mechanisms in Contributing to Outcomes

***Finding:** Data are not readily available for a careful analysis of cost per volunteer placement and how this might vary by type of development intervention. The mode of delivery for VCAs' volunteer services tends to be situation specific, with 'best fit' choices being made around length of stay, level of volunteer experience, and service delivery format. Part of the richness of the VCP is its avoidance of prescriptive packaging (of volunteer services) based on notions of cost effectiveness that are unsupported by background data. The availability of additional VCA supports (besides volunteer time, i.e., seed funding, participation in conferences, networks, meetings, trainings) is viewed by both DCPs and in-field volunteers as being important value additions to their work and having a positive effect on partner results. The evaluation team noted in interviews that several VCAs and their DCPs were keen to acknowledge the role played by one or more of these supports in their work with beneficiaries.*

a) Cost per volunteer placement by type of development intervention

As the number of volunteer types expands, analyzing cost per volunteer and discussing how the type of development intervention contributes to achievement of the outcomes becomes increasingly challenging. A more appropriate measure of volunteer effort would be volunteer days (or months or years) but this data was only available in two of the 12 Year-3 VCA annual reports.

While a calculation of cost by type of development intervention might be feasible for a VCA project where service delivery types are few and outcome indicators are well defined, there are just too many variables to consider for the current level of analysis. Interviewees were encountered who had views on which type of intervention they favoured but these were not evidence-based. Table 7 sets out a few qualitative comments --based on multiple interviews with VCA in-country representatives, DCPs and volunteers --

about types of volunteer service delivery, along with comments on their potential for improved cost-effectiveness.

Table 7: Types of Volunteer Service Delivery and Likely Relationship to Cost-Effectiveness

Variables	Possibilities observed	Likely relation to cost-effectiveness
Duration of placement	Two or three weeks, three months, six months, eight months, one year, two years, three years	Largely dependent on the <i>modus operandi</i> of the VCA and DCP needs
Origin/destination of volunteer	N-S, S-S, N-S diaspora, S-N, e-volunteer (volunteers may continue to provide service electronically after their placements end)	Cost effectiveness of S-S and diaspora volunteers likely higher where N-S volunteers arrive with limited language capabilities
Expertise level of volunteer	Specialist, professional, youth leader, senior volunteer with admin responsibilities*	Dependent on <i>modus operandi</i> of the VCA and DCP needs
Planned or responsive assignment	Volunteer chosen as per Partnership Action Plan or equivalent, or volunteer selected to for a responsive assignment (i.e., to meet a specific request from a non-partner client)	Cost effectiveness may be enhanced with thoughtful planning
Volunteer orientation	Volunteer oriented to capacity enhancement of DCP or end-beneficiaries, or both	Likely situation dependent - cost effectiveness may not be differentiated on this variable
Mode of service delivery	Individual volunteer with a single partner, a cluster of volunteers available to multiple DCPs	Unclear whether advantages outweigh disadvantages

* A volunteer who takes on staff-like planning and coordination responsibilities for their VCA with respect to other volunteers and their placements.

Results from the E-survey suggest that the variety of volunteer service delivery types offers individuals a wealth of alternatives and may assist them in their decision making about whether to extend or take up a second or subsequent mandate and whether to remain with their first-choice agency.

Of the 984 volunteers who completed the survey, 43% said this was their first assignment while 57% indicated it was a subsequent placement. Of the respondents acknowledging multiple assignments, 40% said they have had two, 50% said between three and nine, and 10% indicated ten or more assignments. During interviews with VCA head-office managers, and in focus groups with returned volunteers, mention was made of the reduced need to screen returned volunteers for re-deployment as their suitability is (or is not) already established. In the same vein, extending placements was also described as an attractive cost effectiveness measure as it even more significantly reduces the overall time-cost ratio for volunteer placement. Provisos mentioned in this regard included: a strong performance to date by the volunteer, the continuing interest and absorptive capacity of the partner *vis-a-vis* a placement extension, a rationale drawn from the partnership agreement, and the way to extend visas.

No fewer than 53% of respondents who acknowledged taking multiple assignments did so with at least two different agencies. The evaluators were unable to disaggregate this data further on the basis of volunteer background.

A recent study by Benjamin Lough and Rebecca Tiessen (Lough and Tiessen 2017) provides a synopsis of the many different types of international volunteering. Based on survey responses from 288 development-oriented volunteer partner organizations operating in 68 countries (accessed through six international volunteer service networks IVSNs), this report addresses how different types of international volunteering influence common program outcomes. Particular attention was given to duration of service abroad, individual versus group volunteering, and age, education and skill requirements.

The first hypothesis they examined, whether skilled volunteering will be more effective than unskilled volunteering at strengthening organizational capacity, was strongly supported in the study. Both short- and long-term skilled volunteers were viewed as substantially more effective than less-skilled forms of volunteering at building organizational capacity.

The second hypothesis, which sought to understand whether longer-term volunteering is more effective at building relationships with local respondents, was only partly confirmed. The findings point to duration of service being more complex than a binary delineation between shorter and longer-term placements. What the data did show was that long-term development volunteers were viewed as substantially more effective than less-skilled short-term volunteers. This finding was confirmed in the majority of the team's interviews with DCPs in the four countries visited. The E-survey of developing country partners did not probe the effect of volunteer placements of different lengths or of placements involving volunteers with varying levels of skill/experience. However, respondents did comment on the extent to which VCA volunteers, across all volunteer modalities, are contributing to improvements in organizational capacity (see Chart 6).

The third hypothesis, which proposed that all types of international volunteers are equally effective at performing manual labour, was fully supported.

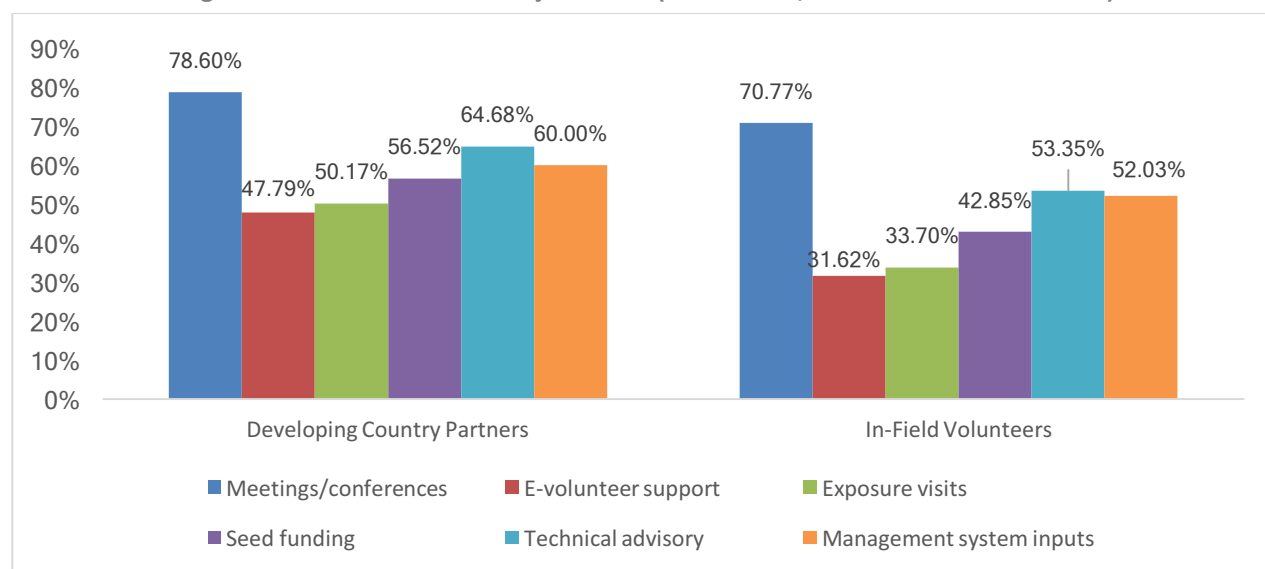
Lough and Tiessen's conclusion was that international volunteer cooperation organizations and their volunteer partner organizations will have greater success and impact when duration of service and educational/skill requirements are explicitly programmed into their volunteer activities. Setting aside the complexity of programming options, they stated "well-facilitated programs with comprehensive volunteer preparation, a careful eye on structural inequalities, and sound post-placement support can likely meet a diverse set of programmatic priorities, whether focused on strengthening capacity in partner organizations, developing international relationships, or performing manual labour" (Lough and Tiessen 2017, p.21).

b) Role played by additional VCA supports in amplifying partner level results

E-survey results indicate that DCPs view several kinds of additional supports as being important value additions to their work. Involvement in meetings and conferences was most highly rated, with 79% of partners indicating they added value to a moderate or major extent. Additional technical (advisory) inputs and additional management system inputs were ranked second and third in importance (see Chart 10). Seed funding, exposure visits and E-volunteer support were viewed as slightly less valuable. Volunteers were more cautious in their assessments; even so, more than half of respondents cited involvement in meetings and conferences, additional technical inputs and additional management system inputs, as important value additions.

Interviews revealed a surprisingly high number of DCPs whose beneficiaries were able to access one or more of these supports. Participants in study tours/exposure visits to Canada, some of them partner representatives, others from beneficiary groups, were eloquent in their descriptions of returning with an expanded vision and an improved network of Canadian contacts. Where comments were made about seed funding, i.e., financial support to develop an idea, interviewees recognized the incentivizing effect of funding being awarded using a competitive mechanism.

Chart 10: Extent to which DCPs and In-field volunteers view VCA supports (other than volunteer time) as Adding Value to a Moderate or Major Extent (DCP: n=315; In-field Volunteers n=374)



Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Developing Country Partner Survey & VCP Evaluation - 2018 Volunteer Survey

In their communications efforts, VCAs have conveyed the ability of additional programming features, such as seed funding and mentoring, to support the achievement of outcomes. Many of them present compelling on-the-ground examples on websites, in videos and written materials that are oriented to potential volunteers, donors and other stakeholders; these often highlight the stories of change to their diverse audiences.

3.2.3 Application of Efficiency Measures by VCAs and their Relationship to Effectiveness

Finding: As one would expect in a program that is growing in size and complexity, VCAs employ a broad array of efficiency seeking policies, tools and strategies to respond to pressures to control costs and respond to unfavourable external factors. The extent to which these actions have altered effectiveness is not known, although some in-field volunteers have signaled that reductions and inconsistencies in benefits/allowances may have affected morale. Among head office staff in Canada and in countries where there are VCA coordination mechanisms, VCAs have become more adept at identifying weaknesses in program-level requirements or guidance, and in making their interests known to GAC.

a)&b) Efficiency seeking policies, tools and strategies used by VCAs and their relationship to effectiveness

VCAs have been consistent in their drive to reduce costs and cope with external factors without adversely impacting the effectiveness of their programming. In the countries visited, VCAs were clearly cautious about spending, focusing on essential staff and equipment but often occupying or sharing the most basic office accommodation. Some VCAs were also exploring ways to share in country orientations for volunteers to reduce staff and other costs. Where observed, operations were volunteer-centred, task oriented and rarely limited to normal working hours. Similar conditions were seen with many of the DCPs as shown in Box 3 below.

To expand the impact of their volunteer sending work and to meet GAC expectations for contributions from other sources, VCAs have sought to leverage resources from donations, the private sector and a variety of other revenue streams. At least one VCA requires volunteers to undertake fundraising prior to their engagement to cover some of their placement costs. Cases were also encountered of volunteers willingly contributing additional resources of their own to support their mandate. VCAs have also successfully obtained program funds from other agencies, e.g., the Ministère des Relations internationales et de la Francophonie (MRIF) through grants from the PQDI and Québec sans Frontières (QSF), and accessed volunteers from other programs (unrelated to the VCP) such as the International Youth Internship Program (IYIP). In interviews, a few DCPs acknowledged that occasionally VCA-supplied volunteers play a role in identifying and accessing additional resources for their organization.

Some VCAs have questioned the valuation method used by GAC to recognize the in-kind contribution of volunteer labour for the purposes of calculating own fund requirements. There have been requests to replace the commonly used valuation from \$200 per day with a figure that is more clearly related to actual value. The evaluation team considers this adjustment necessary for all parties to appreciate the total value of VCP investments in Canada's international cooperation effort. There is also evidence that VCAs have begun to look at possibilities of inserting volunteers into Canadian bilateral projects or projects funded by USAID, the EU or other funding bodies to take maximum advantage of available human resources for completing project objectives. VCA comments on the draft of this evaluation report show that, in some cases, VCAs place volunteers in bilateral projects that are funded and supported entirely by the bilateral project itself rather than through the VCP program. In other contexts, VCAs place volunteers in projects (i.e., USAID or other funded programs) that are not connected with the VCA itself but provide interesting and useful opportunities for synergies.

VCP-supported volunteers are inserted into large Canadian bilateral projects in Peru, (see Box 3), Honduras and Ghana. Additionally, there are examples of VCP-supported volunteers being attached to projects that are funded by international agencies with development interests. Two of these are the large USAID-backed Alianza Cacao Perú public-private partnership project and the EU-funded Ruta-SAN food security and nutrition project hosted by developing country partner Red de Desarrollo Sostenible (RDS) in Honduras. Information was not accessed by the team on potential difficulties such collaborations may pose for measuring results that are attributable to VCP-supported volunteers as opposed to the total resource capability of these projects.

VCAs in some countries have drawn attention to the benefits of coordination at the national level and mentioned, in particular, the longstanding experience of Coordinadora de las Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil Canadiense en Bolivia (COCAB), the coordination body for VCAs in Bolivia. The coordination body for VCAs in Peru, Coordinadora de las Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil Canadiense en el Perú (COCAP), has adopted the same model; it encourages collegiality, sharing of resources and identification of synergies in field operations. Its importance cannot be overstated for encouraging collegiality and identifying synergies, also for surfacing issues with the Canadian Embassy such as difficulties obtaining visas, discussed above, and the need for meeting space. The Canadian Embassy has facilitated a meeting space in Lima which can be used by VCAs. In Senegal, VCAs are working together to ensure that security information is shared in a systematic and timely manner given the changing national context.¹⁶

Efficiency-creating coordination has also been noted among different (not necessarily Canadian) volunteer sending agencies. One multinational VCA has attempted to increase the efficiency of its in-country representation by housing staff of different sister organizations in the same building and sharing among

¹⁶ The evaluation team has been advised that a similar coordination network among VCAs active in Honduras was formed in mid-August 2018. The new entity is called Coordinadora de Organizaciones Canadienses Vinculadas al Voluntariado en Honduras (COCAHN).

those sister organizations certain overhead costs.

The expanding diversity in volunteer service delivery formats has arisen, at least in part, in response to pressures to ensure cost effectiveness. Efforts by VCAs to fill volunteer vacancies in Senegal, Honduras and Peru with S-S and diaspora volunteers have been pronounced. During evaluation field missions, representatives of developing country partners drew attention to the three months or more needed for adjustment by many N-S volunteers before they fully contribute to partner operations. They were quick to point out that S-S and diaspora volunteers were generally familiar with the political and cultural context, experienced no language issues and were more familiar with security risks.

The growth in e-volunteering among the VCAs can also be considered a cost effectiveness measure. In KIIs, staff of one VCA explained how a large proportion of their volunteers continue to interact by email or skype with their DCP hosts following their return to Canada. The possibility of volunteers continuing to supply input following the field visit is particularly attractive for a VCA which specializes in short-term (two-week) placements. In Senegal, one VCA reported that they arrange, for volunteers one to two months after their return to Canada, a follow-up meeting electronically with the DCP. The purpose of this measure is to ensure that the partner is able to seek further clarifications to recommendations, and monitor whether recommendations are workable and actioned where appropriate. In some cases, these lead to ongoing e-volunteering support by the volunteer.

While the evaluation team was able to identify several approaches being used by VCAs to control costs, it was not always possible to gauge the degree to which effectiveness has been preserved: how does fielding S-S volunteers affect engagement of Canadians, for example. This issue was most clearly seen among the volunteers themselves. During KIIs and FDGs, several volunteers indicated dissatisfaction with their VCA's position on certain benefits/allowances, e.g., allowances for accompanying dependents and benefits for schooling and health care, and with Treasury Board's travel directive. Concern was also voiced by volunteers that there are notable differences among the various VCAs with respect to benefits/allowances. This was particularly noted by volunteers who had experienced several mandates with different VCAs and had first-hand knowledge of diverse benefit/allowance packages. The IVCO 2017 Sub-Theme Paper on Enabling Environment (IVFD 2017d) noted that financial compensation has become a major issue for volunteer involving organizations. The authors state: "Failure to recognize the importance of different forms of remuneration (payment, coverage of expenses, training) can affect the capacity of volunteers to engage, reinforce or challenge existing inequalities, and create new hierarchies within the communities where they operate ... remuneration can also create competition between volunteer involving organizations" (IVFD 2017d, p. 18).

A final comment is needed regarding techniques/methods which VCAs have used to demonstrate impact, ensure responsiveness to emergent situations, and reinforce evidence-based decision-making. The evaluation team has observed instances of improved capacity in these areas which enhance the quality and comprehensiveness of outcomes leading to potential program impact. One VCA is making progress by training community volunteers including chiefs and elders in Ghana to secure grassroots level involvement in legal literacy, while at the same time equipping national justice institutions with improved skills in representing marginalised groups and becoming gender sensitive. Another VCA is pursuing a strategic approach of positioning of high calibre gender experts in a private sector company in the garment sector to improve GE policies and improving the conditions for workers especially women; this is having an impact across the garment industry since the private sector company is seen as a leader in the sector. Other effectiveness-related practices which reflect improved capacity of some VCAs to focus on achievement of outcomes are carefully crafted South-North exposure opportunities, concerted use of the homologue approach, and partnering with local organizations supportive of national volunteering.

Box 2: Cost-effectiveness at work

LWBC/IBCR is a relatively small VCA (GAG's portion of VCP 2015-2020 budget is \$4.6 million) which supports DCPs that are active in defending human rights. It sends small numbers of medium-term (usually 8 months with possibilities for renewal) Canadian volunteers, most trained lawyers, to nine countries including Honduras and Peru. In each country they are placed with a human rights NGO, often working alongside the partner's own lawyers.

The volunteers focus on strengthening the local partner through: (i) the preparation of human rights cases related to disappeared victims for presentation to the Inter-American Human Rights Court and Commission (emblematic cases are selected based on their potential for influencing the country's own justice system); (ii) assistance in the area of indigenous people's rights through researching activities of Canadian and other mining companies and training on how to take better advantage of international agreements such as the ILO Convention No. 169; (iii) protection of the rights of vulnerable communities, and specifically assisting with a proposal for legislative reform on the sexual abuse of girls and female adolescents (utilization of girls and female adolescents in pornography); and (iv) presenting cases (and advocating for follow-up to earlier court decisions) of human rights violations before the Inter-American Human Rights Court and Commission, including a case related to violations of the rights of individuals defending the natural environment.

Reflecting on the time spent with the DCP's lawyers, one volunteer said *"the three lawyers do a better job now in their work than they did before, and have a better grasp of international law and processes."* LWBC/IBCR strives to make volunteer contributions sustainable through identification of counterparts in the host organization, attention to preparing tools and their use in tailored training sessions, production of top-quality documentation on cases, and planning overlaps between a departing volunteer and the successor.

In addition to dealing with subject matter that is highly relevant for vulnerable people in these countries, the volunteers spoke of the challenges for their work posed by a worsening national security situation or the rise of powerful interests opposing further recognition (and proposing rollbacks) in the areas of gender equality, human rights and sexual rights.

Box 3: Cost-effectiveness of attaching volunteers to bilateral projects

In Peru, SUCO is inserting its volunteers into larger projects. VCP-funded volunteers (there are also volunteers supported by Province of Quebec) are long-term (one year or more) and are part of either the Formagro Canadian bilateral project or the BioPoint project funded by the Program québécois de développement international (PQDI).

Formagro is being implemented over the period 2015 to 2021 with Peru's Ministry of Education and Ministry of Agriculture. SUCO is working with a series of local partners, including Asociación Allpa and IDMA, which were interviewed during the evaluation team's field mission.

The project focuses on agricultural training and youth entrepreneurship and operates in two rural or peri-urban regions of the country: Ancash (north of Lima) and parts of Lima Region to the south and east of the capital. SUCO volunteers assist Allpa and IDMA with initiatives in agro-ecological farming, small-scale processing and marketing of agricultural product, food security and GE using a 'proximity model' whereby they are on the ground with the target groups, collaborating with local governments and working alongside partner staff helping them improve their ability to have impact.

In Ancash Allpa has achieved a more than 40% increase in milk production and the start of a cheese making industry now comprising 60 local women including a second generation of cheese makers. Formagro has its own management and reporting structure, and its annual report includes a quote from a 17-year old cheese maker who says *"I've been able to stand on my own feet ... I have my own cows, my own cheese making shop and my own production ... I didn't have the good fortune to finish in secondary school but with this cheese production work I'm able to bring money home."*

A SUCO staff person commented *"We see a lot of sharing and mutual support between the volunteers and the Formagro staff and local partners. We try to identify counterparts for each volunteer ... a person who will be there to carry on the work after the volunteer leaves. It's a very interesting fit ... sometimes it's necessary to step back and appreciate small steps and the complexity of the change process."*

3.3 Relevance

3.3.1 Are the strategies in place and results achieved to date relevant to the needs and priorities of the local cooperation partners and/or development plans of host countries?

- a) Have developing country partners incorporated national programming priorities into their VCP supported activities?
- b) Is there consistency between developing country partner capacity needs and project designs?
- c) Do developing country partner contacts perceive the VCP and its funded VCAs to be responsive to needs/priorities?

3.3.2 Is the choice of DCPs relevant and are they advancing the needs, rights and/or priorities of marginalized communities and the poorest?

- a) Has the VCA prioritized local cooperation partners in a manner consistent with developing country needs/priorities?

3.3.1 Alignment of Strategies and Results with Needs and Priorities

***Finding:** There is a dominant pattern of consistency between development needs/priorities on the one hand and partner project designs on the other. Care is taken to assess capacity and then build and implement projects together. In this process, partners judge VCAs to be responsive to country priorities and context.*

a) Incorporation of national programming priorities in VCP supported activities

In their PIPs, all VCAs confirm that activities planned under the project align with national poverty reduction and human rights protection priorities and other regional and global commitments notably the SDGs. In addition, the respective PIPs confirm that planned VCA activities are consistent with the five GAC development priorities (of the day): increasing food security, securing the future of children and youth, stimulating SEG, advancing democracy, and ensuring security and stability.

Over two years later, DCP survey respondents indicate alignment between partnership activities and identified needs:

- in the main, alignment to development priorities of the country: 82% (36.6% moderate extent; 44.9% major extent)
- in the main, alignment to the needs of population groups identified as priority: 87% (38.2% moderate extent; 48.9% major extent)

Volunteer assessments of alignment between partnership activities and development needs are generally consistent with those provided by DCPs.

b) Consistency between DCP needs and project designs

In the DCP E-survey, respondents indicate 91% (32.4% moderate extent; 59.05% major extent) alignment of partnership activities to organizational priorities. Volunteer assessments of the alignment with DCP priorities, while still robust, are noticeably more measured. Eighty-two percent (34.9% moderate and 46.9% major extent) of N-S and S-S volunteers presently working on their mandate indicated alignment between partnership activities and partner organization priorities. At the same time, about 12 percent of current volunteers see little or no alignment between partnership activities and priorities. Returned N-S and S-S volunteers are more measured still in their assessment of the alignment between partnership

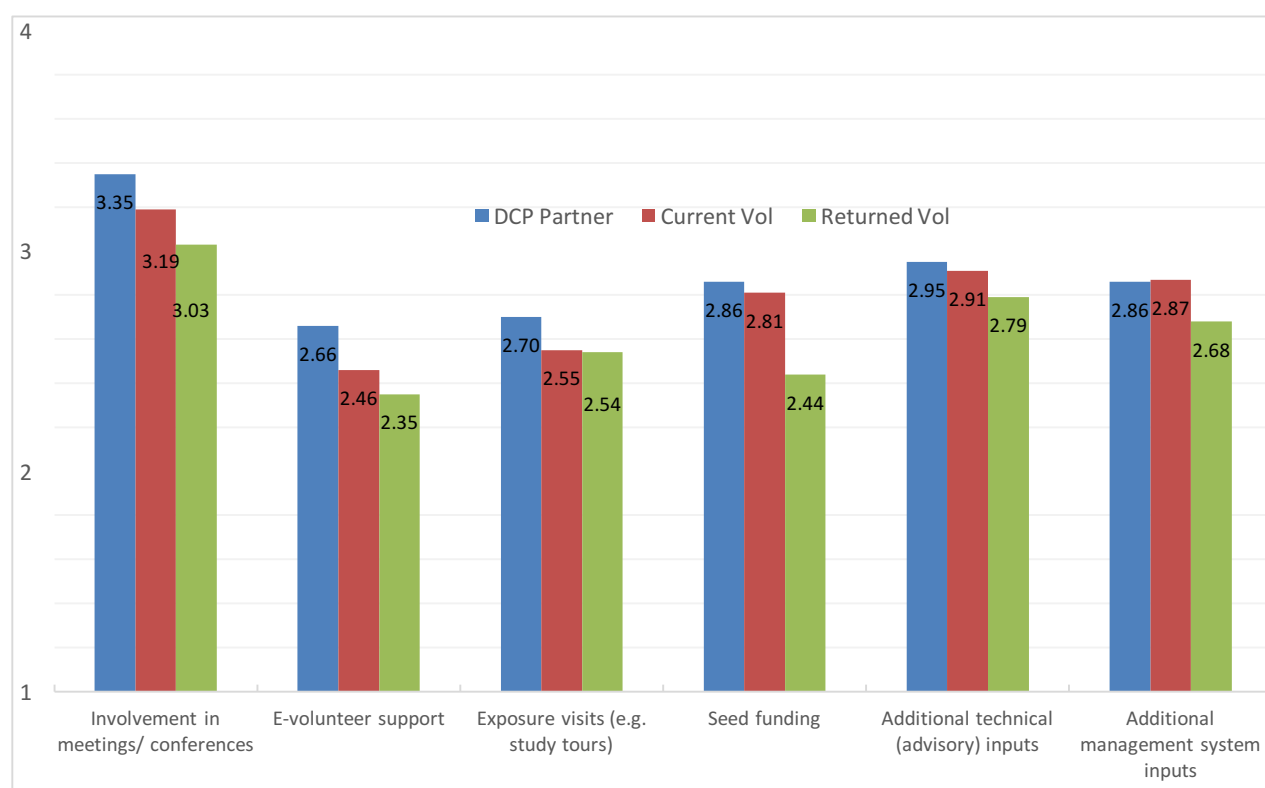
activities and organizational priorities. Seventy-six percent see alignment to a moderate (27.8%) or major (40.0%) extent, while about 18% see little or no alignment.

In most KIIs and FGDs, the evaluation team heard accounts of VCA projects aligning well with partner needs or opportunities in such areas as:

- engaging women's active participation in poultry guinea fowl projection value chain – Ghana
- application of mobile technologies to collect information that would assist design of health or social service delivery, help small holders access credit or micro insurance, or broadcast vital service information – Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda
- handling of human rights cases from violation committed in the 1980 and 90s – Peru
- developing youth as small business coaches – Palestine
- strengthening human rights organizations operating in an increasingly hostile political environment – Honduras
- engaging women and youth in housing construction trades training in response to high market demand – Ghana
- strengthening of girl's schooling in a political environment newly open to education for girls – Senegal
- strengthening lines of support (access to advisory services, contacts and equipment) to small businesses provided by regional administrations of government – Philippines
- assisting small holders in converting coca production into cacao and other non-forest-timber products – Peru
- promoting community based tourism opportunities through the mapping of gastronomical and other attractions at a neighbourhood level in the capital city – Bolivia
- supporting ministry capacity to maintain coordination related to an array of WASH actors and projects – Malawi
- livelihoods training of youth and incubation of small scale enterprises – Senegal, Ghana, Peru, Indonesia
- reviving a national federation of women's cooperatives with new business approaches, product lines and branding – Senegal
- making homeopathic medicines available to households with the least resources - Honduras (see Box 4)

Volunteers are important contributors to the work being undertaken by DCPs, the survey shows. Eighty-eight percent (44.6% to a moderate extent and 43.3% to a major extent) of DCP respondents say volunteers are contributing to observed organizational improvements. They also cite additional VCA inputs (to the extent that they are featured in the partnership). Their perceptions of the added value of these VCA inputs are consistent with those of volunteers (N-S and S-S) current and returned, as shown in Chart 11 on the next page.

Chart 11: Stakeholder perceptions of the added value of identified project features (excluding placement of volunteer) (1=Not at all, 4 = To a major extent) (DCP: n=315; Current Vol 374; Returned Vol 512)



Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Developing Country Partner Survey & VCP Evaluation - 2018 Volunteer Survey

In interviews and site visits the following were identified as determinants of relevance in voluntary cooperation:

- The presence of VCA leadership grounded with insight on context, and skilled in communication
- Attention to relationship and trust building within the partnership
- Engagement of diaspora volunteers to the extent that they accelerate trust building and bring “bridging insight” to the partnership
- VCA leaders and volunteers operating without pre-conceived notions
- Careful up-front assessment toward shared understanding of issues and opportunities
- A sufficient base level of readiness/capacity in the partner organization to host volunteers as enablers as opposed to gap fillers
- Nesting of specific, collaboratively derived plans/placement designs within this larger understanding
- Bias toward observed practices, policies, systems that are already enabling success
- Training in a partnership context adapted to local conditions with substantive upfront inputs from identified local beneficiaries (women, youth, farmers, etc.)
- Multiple channels for continuous learning and adaptation (mention made of N-S and S-N in combination)
- Patience and tolerance for experimentation/innovation
- An awareness of “satellite”, “enabling”, actors beyond core partners, and an openness to engage in pursuit of common purpose

The absence of one or more of these determinants can set the stage for a misalignment of need with project design. One volunteer put it this way, “It strongly depends on the partner. If the partner has a common vision with the VCA then volunteering is very useful, but it also happens that partners are only

there to benefit from the help without really sharing the vision”; while one DCP representative said, “The selection of volunteers is important – It is about matching our need with skill/experience and with the readiness of the volunteer to work with us – six out nine times it has worked out well, in three instances it was a mismatch”.

c) Perceptions of VCA responsiveness to DCP needs/priorities

Across VCA work plans and reports, consistent mention is made of planning cycles that engage partners in cycles of planning and review, usually initiated by some form of organizational capacity assessment. Mention is made in some documentation of a “tripartite” involvement that also includes volunteers. In two instances, specific mention is also made of beneficiary level advisory involvement.

In the DCP survey, 92% of DCP respondents agreed (67.4%) or strongly agreed (25.2%) that in their organizations there is broad agreement on organizational needs and priorities and, in similar proportions, that VCA supported activities aligned well to those needs/priorities. Further, 88% agreed (60.3%) or strongly agreed (28.2%) that how they have work with volunteers and other supports provided by the VCA is consistent with what was planned. Levels of agreement do not change appreciably across different organizational types (i.e., private sector enterprise/co-operative, government organization, civil society organization, school, network training organization).

When asked about VCA responsiveness to organizational needs, 91% agreed (61.6%) or strongly agreed (31.0%) that the VCA was responsive to their organizational needs. As a DCP representative in Senegal put it: “Volunteers respond an organizational need for expertise, technical support, advice. Volunteers allow us to develop our ways of doing things, to make our experience pertinent, and then to heighten our visibility. We learn from Canadian practices.” Interviews also suggest VCA responsiveness in setting higher standards for GE across the DCPs (see Section 3.8).

3.3.2 Assessment of VCA Selection of Partners given Developing Country Needs/Priorities

Finding: The partnership choices VCAs make are sound, for the most part. That said, partnering decisions are sometimes founded an incomplete understanding of the partner’s situation and modus operandi

a) Volunteer perceptions of partner choices made

Three quarters of N-S and S-S volunteer respondents currently placed and active in mandates indicated that the DCP to which they were most connected is a good (30.8%) or excellent (45.2%) choice for the VCP. The pattern of response is the same among returned volunteers. At the same time, 17% of currently placed volunteers assessed their partner as a poor (7.4%) or fair (12.0%) choice. Again, the pattern of response is similar for returned participants.

In their open-ended remarks, volunteers characterized organizations they considered a “good” or “excellent” choice as follows:

- they have well designed projects that are relevant to community beneficiaries
- they are well managed, with sound business and accounting practices
- have sufficient funds in place to undertake planned activities
- partners have dynamic, competent staff, are tied into relevant networks and engage communities as a matter of practice
- there is a good match between volunteer skill sets or expertise, on the one hand, and mandate on the

other

- there is a willingness on the part of the partner to support the volunteer starting at pre-departure, to provide oversight throughout the placement and to benefit from what the volunteer contributes

By contrast, they characterized organizations considered to be a “fair” or “poor” choice as follows:

- partners are uninvolved in the project
- projects do not feel relevant to the local context
- there is general disorganization, with management issues, and inadequate staffing
- expectations surrounding the presence of the volunteer(s) are not clear
- volunteer contributions aren’t felt to be welcomed; there is insufficient trust
- a misalignment of values between staff and volunteers
- in particular, little or no regard for GE

Senior management at least one third of the VCAs acknowledged that they were making enhancements to their diagnostic processes as a result of observations from volunteers, field staff and others that partner performance was at odds with needs/capacities as originally assessed.

Box 4: Identifying and tapping into local priorities

TSF has three member associations, one of dentists, one of ophthalmologists and one of homeopaths. All three associations work on priorities that are relevant to governments, southern populations and civil society, especially the health of vulnerable children and youth.

The work of TSF in Honduras is exclusively related to homeopathy, with professional short-term volunteers supplied by Homéopathes de Terre sans Frontières (HTSF). The Canadian volunteers set up dispensaries, almost always in collaboration with municipalities, which agree to take on certain operational costs. The volunteers train local staff on diagnosing maladies and administering homeopathic remedies, and members of the public are treated. The project also conducts research on the homeopathic treatment of specific illnesses -- a study is underway at present on the prevention and treatment of Chagas.

The project began in 2006 with a clinic and homeopathic dispensary (Clínica y Dispensario Padre Pedro Drouin) in a building provided by the Catholic University on the edge of Valle de Angeles. The PPD clinic and dispensary are named after a well-respected Canadian priest who was keenly interested in health care. The project now operates small dispensaries in six locations. Project staff stated that there are examples in each community of individuals who have received homeopathic care, who now show such improvement in their health that they become ‘walking advertisements’ for the TSF project. *“Improved health,”* they said, *“means becoming more productive leading to improved household income.”* The TSF project provides homeopathic treatment either at a nominal cost or gratis to persons with no funds at their disposal. *“Our purpose is to make homeopathic medicine accessible to persons with the least resources because they are the ones who can benefit most.”*

3.4 Sustainability

3.4.1 Have measures been put in place to support the sustainability of outcomes of projects funded under the current program?

a) Evidence that VCA partnerships develop strategies to sustain identified capacity improvements beyond the program cycle

3.4.2 What is being learned by stakeholders about achieving sustainable development results within the VCP (current and previous iterations)?

a) What is being learned by stakeholders about achieving sustainable development results within the VCP (current and previous iterations)?

3.4.1 *Incorporation of Strategies by Partners to Sustain Capacity Improvements*

***Finding:** There is evidence that VCAs bring a sustainability perspective into their discourse and implementation modalities/processes with DCPs and that this has resulted in these entities factoring strategies into their project designs. At the same time, partner confidence in sustaining capacity gains made through VCP can only be described as moderate. External factors beyond the control of the partner bear on this, but so do factors that are more in the purview of the DCP and the partnership to address.*

a) Evidence of partnership strategies to sustain capacity improvements

As would be expected under the VCP, VCA's PIPs confirm an intention to bring about sustained improvements within the Program's thematic areas, and annual reports consistently report on progress. Some of the outcomes to be sustained pertain to large scale policy or systems changes, while others confine improvements to single organizations or networks. Examples showing intent to sustain include:

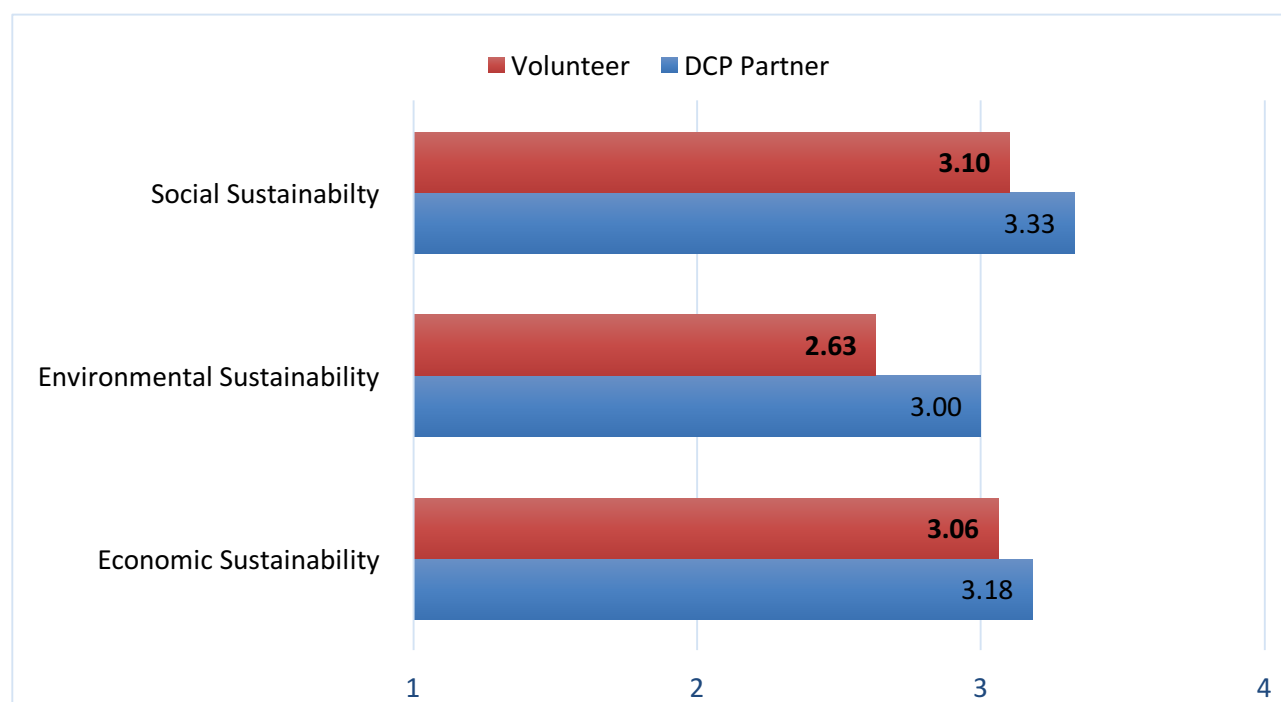
- a partnership preparing a credit management and recovery manual to reinforce capacity development activities at a national partner organization defending the interests of micro-finance institutions – Senegal
- partnerships identifying key staff (*homologues* or counterparts) to job shadow the volunteers; in the process they gained familiarity with international justice frameworks – Peru, Honduras
- a project reinforcing producer association systems improvements/cost reduction measures in situ with S-N exposure to potential buyers and connections to trade networks in Canada – Swaziland
- a project supporting partners to engage simultaneously at a practice level and at technical working group (policy) level with regard to GE and Women's empowerment, and to Gender Based Violence – Myanmar
- intentional modeling of a collaborative research and writing process demonstrating methodologies and writing processes to the point to publishing a flagship resource for this fledgling health sciences research organization – Vietnam
- a project which is focused on capacity building, employability/entrepreneurship, training, and trainers with government agency staff to replicate across districts – Ghana
- adapting Canadian volunteer cooperation in the creation of national volunteer programming – Philippines (see Box 5)

Volunteers and DCPs were each asked to assess the extent to which three types of sustainability influenced organizational practices:

- **Social sustainability**, for example: occupational health and social safety, human rights and labour relations, stakeholder engagement and empowerment of marginalized and vulnerable groups, business ethics and codes of conduct.
- **Environmental sustainability**, for example: impact mitigation, renewable energy generation/use, water conservation/quality, biodiversity protection, policies and practices, and education and awareness
- **Economic sustainability**, for example: return on investment, cost management, customer relations, and service improvement

On aggregate, both groups indicated “moderate” attention to sustainability at the partner level (Chart 12). DCPs are more generous in their assessment than volunteers. On all three variables, the weighted averages mask a wide distribution of response for partners and staff. Two factors likely to influence this distribution are: a) perceptions of the relevance of each type of sustainability for the respondent’s organization (e.g. it is plausible that a respondent for a human rights organization would not see environmental sustainability as relevant), b) an actual assessment of performance or non-performance on sustainability.

Chart 12: Perceptions regarding the extent to which developing country partners pay attention to "Sustainability" (1=Not at all, 4 = To a major extent) (n=301)



Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Developing Country Partner Survey & VCP Evaluation - 2018 Volunteer Survey

Those partners focused on SEG are, on aggregate, paying more attention to economic sustainability (3.18 on a 4 point scale), while those focused on access to health and basic services, on GE and social inclusion, or on human rights, ethics and corporate social responsibility and the rule of law are, on aggregate, paying more attention to social sustainability. Their scores on the four point scale are: 3.66, 3.61, and 3.80.

On aggregate, DCPs describe themselves as follows:

- “private sector” are paying attention to economic sustainability (3.57) more than those describing

themselves as “civil society” organizations (2.84)

- “schools” or “training institutions”, “government organizations” and “cooperatives” are paying attention to environmental sustainability (3.38, 3.22, 3.22) more than those describing themselves as “networks” or “private sector” (2.60, 2.89)

At the same time, all partner types indicate a moderate to major level of attention to social sustainability (ranging from private sector (3.26) to network organizations (3.44).

Where KIs described an absence or inadequacy in sustainability planning, their observations focused on one or more of the following in rough order of prevalence:

- a lack of resources on hand (either human or financial) to carry through with initiatives
- the absence during the placement of a locally based staff/volunteer counterpart or counterpart team
- little or no thought given to exit planning or sustainability as part of the partnership planning process
- discontinuity between volunteer placements
- inadequate documentation of the work done with the volunteer and means of housing it for easy access
- a lack of will/intention on the part of the partner to change
- insufficient attention paid in partnership to helping the partner understand and navigate the rigours of the donor environment (e.g., pressures to be gender and environment responsive, to focus on evidence, learning and accountability)
- partners acquiring a dependency on volunteer sending entities to fill gaps
- insufficient connections made during the partnership to organizations/projects/networks that would have something to gain and something to give the partner organizations
- the absence of layered strategy of capacity building (training +)
- highly unfavourable contextual factors that limit progress (mentions made of political shifts that are hostile toward efforts to improve social inclusion, or policy developments and/or economic turns that constrain enterprise development)

Across the range, DCP respondents traced the attention they pay to sustainability back to their partnership with the VCA. Eighty-four percent made this attribution to a moderate extent (42.9%) or major extent (40.5%). This pattern is evident for each VCA, though the range of perceived attribution spans from about 60% to just over 90%, combining the “moderate” and “major” extent choices. Tables 8 and 9 show perceived attribution by type of organization and by programming focus.

Table 8: Partner Attribution of Sustainability Practices to VCA, by Type of Partner

	moderate extent	major extent	Total
Private Sector	56.25%	34.38%	90.63%
Co-operatives	28.57%	60.71%	89.28%
Government Organizations	50.00%	31.25%	81.25%
Civil Society Organizations	45.00%	35.00%	80.00%
Schools or Training Institutes	37.50%	58.33%	95.83%
Network Organizations	41.18%	47.06%	88.24%

Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Developing Country Partner Survey

Table 9: Attribution of Sustainability Practices to VCA, by Programming Focus

	moderate extent	major extent	Total
Sustainable economic growth	41.10%	49.32%	90.42%
Access to health and basic services	44.62%	43.08%	87.70%
Gender equality and social inclusion	30.49%	52.44%	82.93%
Human rights, ethics, CSR and rule of law	30.00%	58.57%	88.57%

Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Developing Country Partner Survey

Fifty nine percent of DCP survey respondents indicated that it was “likely” that their organizations will be able to continue the sustainability gains already made with the support of their VCA. A further 25% indicated the degree of likelihood was “50-50”. The level of confidence among respondents is highest among those involved in SEG. Among these respondents, 67% said it was likely that they could continue to build on sustainability gains. Conversely, the level of confidence is lowest among those DCPs involved in programming on human rights, ethics, CSR and the rule of law. Among these respondents only 46% indicated that they could continue to build on the gains already made with the support of the VCA. In general, volunteers (in-field and returned) assess the likelihood of DCPs being able to continue sustainability gains in much the same way.

Interviews with VCAs across the four countries visited indicate that DCP leaders have an interest and commitment to ensuring sustainability in the long run. Some have put in measures including more dialogue with like-minded partners (e.g., government).

3.4.2 What is being Learned about Achieving Sustainable Development Results

***Finding:** Factors detrimental to sustainability inevitably lie beyond the spheres of influence. DCPs and volunteers agree, however, that steps can be taken to promote the longevity of gains stemming from partnerships and to ward against constraints posed from outside. Key among these are: authentic engagement and culturally-attuned relationship-building, a continued searching for shared purpose, sound business planning (with an exit strategy) and systems of accountability, and the development of quality personnel.*

When asked to name one thing they had learned about sustainability from the partnership, most DCP responses clustered around one of two themes, strategic planning and financial sustainability:

- Under strategic planning, the merits of involving and incorporating the needs of beneficiaries were highlighted. The reasoning was that plans would be relevant, would facilitate commitment to and accountability for the projects. Beneficiaries would become active participants and be willing to contribute solutions to problems as they arise. Under this theme, respondents highlighted the importance of medium and longer term thinking under the strategic plan.
- Under financial sustainability, partner comments focused the importance of developing a business plan and garnering support for it including financial support such as grants and revenue streams. They spoke of the importance of having sufficient resources to maintain qualified staff and to put in place

procedures and systems for accountability.

Meanwhile, volunteers offered up the following insights when asked what they had learned from the partnership about sustainability:

- The VCA needs to build trust with partners prior to sending volunteers
- Locals need to be a part of determining the focus/direction of the project
- Project designs must respect cultural practices and values of the community, and addresses local gaps/ opportunities
- Beneficiaries must feel ownership of the project, maintain involvement throughout the project and be a part of solutions to problems
- Sustainability requires up front planning; there need to be clear objectives along with transition/ succession planning
- There needs to be active involvement of all stakeholders (in partner and community), consistent communication within the organization and between the partner and beneficiaries. Partners need to preplan prior to volunteers' arrival, they should appoint a project manager or dedicated personnel to work with volunteers throughout the project
- Furthermore, organizations report the value of having a counterpart, or homologue, assigned to volunteers to ensure that learning and experience are transferred directly to a key person within a DCP thereby ensuring carry-over beyond the physical presence of the volunteers themselves
- Volunteers should have clear expectations; assignments should be logical and progressive. Information regarding best practices, lessons learned and project updates should be available from previous mandates
- Stakeholders need to be adaptable and open to new ideas, while holding onto a shared vision of the project; this may require adjusting expectations and timelines, and making time for progress assessment

Box 5: National volunteerism as a sustainability strategy

CESO's work in the Philippines illustrates this VCA's concern for the sustainability of its volunteers' efforts to strengthen capacity within DCPs. With its reliance on seasoned senior professionals going for short-term assignments, CESO is keen to plan its assignments so as to maximize opportunities for securing sustainable change.

One example of CESO's work in the Philippines is an IT project supporting different municipalities. CESO has assisted the Philippines Government with reworking their business permitting system (their software program was weak). Volunteers have re-done the software and helped roll it out to 200 municipalities. Impact can be seen in a system which now has greater transparency and improved democratic governance. Government revenues from licensing have also increased. CESO's work was not just in software development but also in strategic planning, and training of staff. The latter turned into a NGO called EGOV4MD which (almost like a baby CESO) has now become a CESO partner and is involving local Filipino volunteers.

As a strategy to support capacity building gains at the Philippine Department of Trade and Industry, CESO has helped establish a national volunteer program. "Building Entrepreneurs thru Advisory and Mentoring Services" (BEAMS) provides business mentoring and consulting services in such areas as marketing, taxation, financial management, product development to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) through the Department's service centres across one region of the country. BEAMS is formulated on the CESO model. Volunteers tend to be active with professional associations or are in teaching roles. Over half of the 55 volunteers are women. Enabling factors for BEAMS include: government policy alignment accompanied with limited funding to pay volunteer stipends, a culturally-embedded practice of volunteerism, a supply of able volunteers and a demand for their services, and the availability of CESO volunteers to provide additional subject matter expertise, mentorship training, management and M&E support. The BEAMS idea is currently being scaled up nationwide.

3.5 Coordination

3.5.1 To date, has there been coordination between VCAs and GAC's bilateral programs and other donors working in a similar sector or region, with a view to sharing information, avoiding duplication of efforts and promoting synergies?

a) How do development actors (e.g. implementing partners, mission staff) working in the same sectors perceive VCA participation in those sectors?

3.5.2 To date, has there been coordination among VCAs, or alternatively among developing country partners, with a view to sharing information, avoiding duplication of efforts and promoting synergies?

b) Are VCAs coordinating their activities with other and (other organizations, government, etc.)

3.5.1 Coordination between VCAs and Global Affairs Bilateral Programs and other Donors

***Finding:** Engagement with other donor initiatives (Canadian or otherwise) varies across VCAs, sectors and regions. The length of experience in volunteer sending and the scale of their operations contribute to this variance. Some VCAs are involved with GAC bilateral programs, and a few with other international (governmental and private-sector) donors but more awareness of and linkages to these programs is needed.*

a) Perception of mission staff of VCAs participation in sectors and regions

Coordination refers to any efforts made to share information, avoid duplication and promote synergies between VCAs, GAC's bilateral programs and other donors. Generally, the VCP enjoys a favourable reputation within Canadian missions abroad where it is widely considered a flagship program for Canadian international cooperation. Knowledge about the program among mission staff and interest in interacting with in-country VCAs may be dependent on individual personalities. With the rotation of staff at Embassies and CHCs, it may be necessary for GAC program officers to periodically give presentations on the VCP and its purposes to maintain awareness and interest levels.

GAC has a focal point in the missions to follow in-country activity being undertaken by the Partnerships for Development Innovation Branch. Mission staff in Peru commented that although monitoring and support for the VCP was not formally one of their responsibilities, they felt a need to be aware of volunteer placements, achievements and issues, and to assist when absolutely necessary. It was evident that mission staff would likely respond favourably to requests for assistance from the VCP received through the appropriate channels in Ottawa. Mission staff in Senegal indicated that the coordination they have with the VCAs is encouraging. Annually, the Embassy in Senegal holds a forum for partners and volunteers; in March 2018, the event attracted about 50 people.

Interviews revealed there are increasing opportunities for VCAs to insert volunteers into larger projects, either Canadian bilateral initiatives or projects launched by other international entities. This was seen in Peru (see Box 3, above) and in Honduras, where work was about to begin on Promoting Rural Economic Development for Women and Youth in the Lempa Region of Honduras (PROLEMPA), a new Canadian bilateral project being implemented by CARE Canada with a VCA as a consortium partner. In addition, a Honduran DCP, RDS had just concluded a large EU-funded project in food security and nutrition, Ruta-SAN, in which VCA's volunteers had been active. Interviews with VCA staff and partners in Ghana also revealed that one of the bilateral programs had benefitted greatly from highly-skilled volunteers being sent regularly over the first 3 years to contribute to the bilateral agriculture value chain program. In each case,

the evaluators were told by implementing partners and end-beneficiaries that the contributions of VCA volunteers were highly valued.

Canadian missions abroad are typically active in a range of coordination mechanisms oriented to avoiding duplication and maximizing synergies in development assistance efforts. For example, embassy staff in Honduras indicated there are now 17 to 18 donor coordination roundtables in the country, with the Government of Canada chairing the GE Table and actively participating in several others such as Education, Security, Agro-forestry, Health, Dry Corridor Alliance, Governance and Elections. These roundtables include all major donors, although the Government of Honduras representatives are often absent. Similar mechanisms operate in the other countries.

There is evidence that some VCAs are coordinating their activities with entities that fall outside the VCP. One strong example is where the Trade Facilitation Office Canada (TFO) and a VCA teamed up in a joint program to assist Vietnamese companies, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs), in the processed foods and seafood industry within the Danang area. The model they co-developed is being tested now in Senegal for the matching of skills, resources and roles, and will eventually be rolled out to other areas in Vietnam and Peru.

Another development initiative highlighting coordination includes one in Vietnam where the VCA works alongside the Centre for Nutrition and Public Health (CENPHER), which was instrumental in establishing a One Health Network (OHUN) in South East Asia with partners in Laos, and included other countries as well. This was accomplished by engaging the International Livestock Research Institute based in Kenya and with outreach activities in Laos, to work with local communities.

In Northern Ghana, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) and Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA) are the key government partners in the promotion of private sector involvement in guinea fowl production. One VCA collaborates with existing organizations implementing similar programs, thereby reduces possible duplication and improves synergy among organizations within the relevant sectors. The VCA also coordinates with state institutions like MOFA and SADA at national and sub-national levels as well as working with NGOs and CSOs who have similar programs running in the relevant areas or whose activities are relevant for the sectors it is working in. The use of coordination and networking by the VCA reduced duplication and facilitated efforts to address industry issues through advocacy.

An additional example of coordination is seen in one VCA's work to encourage the relevant government ministries to become engaged and to help ensure that important animal health services continue. This type of coordination lays the foundation for sustainability of government services to civil society.

While the team found many examples of coordination, without an in-depth analysis of all the micro-data collected from KIIs, FGDs and E-surveys, it is difficult to assess with any kind of conviction the extent to which VCAs in general are coordinating their activities with other organizations and governments.

3.5.2 Coordination among VCAs or, alternatively, among DCPs

***Finding:** Information-sharing routinely occurs among VCAs in Canada in pursuit of synergies and operational efficiencies. The extent to which this holds within the VCP countries and regions varies considerably. There are no obvious patterns to suggest reasons why this is the case other than that it hinges on the leadership inclinations, business models and synergies within the VCAs and the embassies/field missions. VCAs and Canadian High Commissions (CHCs) and Embassies visited valued the coordination they had, and where it was felt to be lacking, indicated that more coordination was desirable. Limitations on coordination, at home and abroad, include the number of staff in place and/or their proximity to those coordination fora. Many VCAs cited time*

constraints and heavy workloads as reasons to be cautious around making additional coordination commitments. Variability here is considerable given scale differences across VCAs.

a) VCA Coordination

Generally, among VCAs there is ample evidence of a strong commitment to joint VCA activities in Canada. Examples include the on-going CEO level working group and Program Manager thematic working groups which meet at least quarterly. VCAs expressed great appreciation for these joint platforms as a basis for dialogue with GAC and are interested in venturing further into programmatic areas, namely exploration of implications of feminist approaches, priorities on volunteer cooperation, performance measurement, environmental sustainability, safety and security, and governance, to name just a few.

The network of VCAs has become helpful, especially with regard to issues arising from Treasury Board Guidelines, security information sharing, measurement and tools. There have been instances of sharing of office locations and pre-departure orientation training. Additionally, VCAs have organized and/or participated in events centered on international volunteering. Success stories include the Human Library events for knowledge-sharing, collaboration on international conferences such as IVCO 2018 being held in Montreal October 26 – 31 (SUCO and Oxfam-Québec co-hosting the event alongside the International Forum for Volunteering in Development), and joint participation on an annual basis in National Volunteer Week in April and International Volunteer Day in December annually. Constraints to increased cooperation mentioned by the VCAs include a shortage of time in the face of onerous workloads, language barriers as not everyone is bilingual, and logistical challenges arising from VCA headquarters being based in different cities and provinces. For an illustration of what one VCA achieves, see Box 6, below.

However, it is a more of a mixed story in the field. For example, in Honduras and Ghana, the evaluators found that coordination with other VCAs, with the CHC or Embassy or with other Canadian-funded projects has been very limited. Candid comments in Honduras from a small number of volunteers indicated that they have seen VCAs exhibiting cautiousness around other agencies, even a sense of rivalry over accessing the ‘best’ local partners. Embassy staff indicated that a GAC evaluation in early 2017 of all Government of Canada programming in Honduras noted that there was little coordination between bilateral and partnership project activities.

Similarly, in Senegal it was reported that the meetings between various partners and projects has been at the initiative of the Embassy of Canada, and not the projects themselves. It did not include sharing with other organisations at the project level. One FGD with VCP volunteers put forward the suggestion that coordination meetings amongst the volunteers across different VCAs could indeed strengthen their work, especially if initially focussed on topics such as the three CCTs.

However, in Peru COCAP serves as an effective coordination body for VCAs. COCAP was set up in 2014 following a series of breakfast meetings for VCA representatives convened by the Canadian Embassy¹⁷. Based on the Bolivian model (COCAB), COCAP has in total 13 members, all of them international NGOs active in development cooperation. Six of the Canadian VCAs active in the country are members. They have regular meetings, share information and discuss issues of common concern, e.g., the difficulties VCAs face over visas for volunteers (changing rules, burdensome and time-consuming paperwork plus difficulty getting visas for short-stay volunteers). COCAP encourages collegiality and identifies synergies, raising and presenting development-related issues to the Embassy and Peruvian authorities. The presence of this

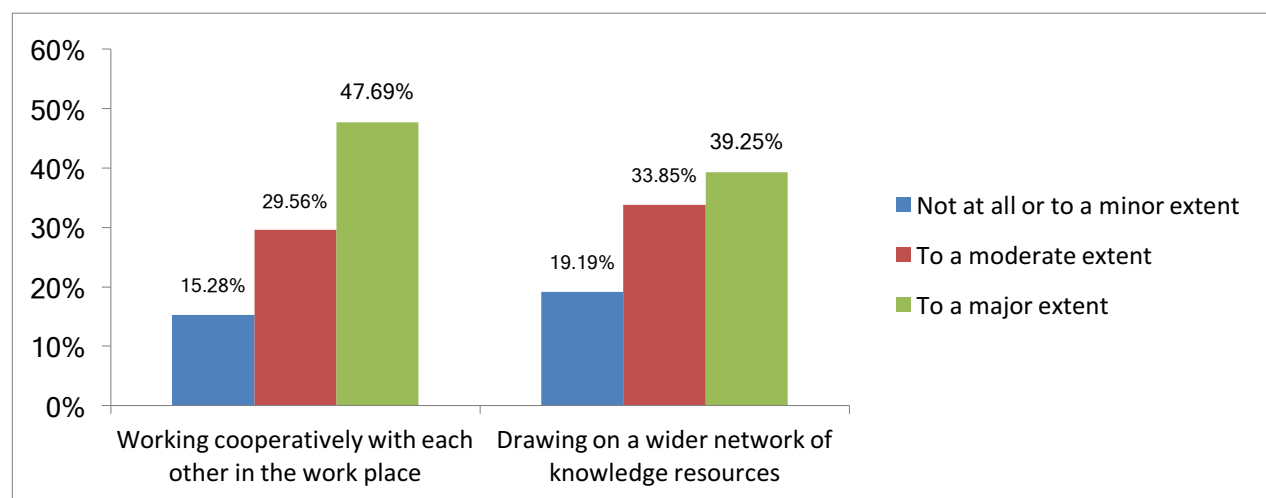
¹⁷ Also in Peru, COECCI is a broader grouping of 50 NGOs working in international cooperation in the country. This network was established in 1994 and includes WUSC, Cuso International, SUCO and Oxfam-Québec.

coordination body also facilitates Embassy efforts to regularly consult with NGOs to explain Canada's priorities and exchange information---a coordination advantage. The Canadian Embassy in Peru has a volunteer meeting as well.

From E-survey responses, the evaluators found that approximately three out of every four volunteers reported working cooperatively together, either to a moderate or a major extent. Forty-eight percent indicated they worked cooperatively with each other in the placement or workplace to a major extent. A further 30% said they worked cooperatively with each other to a moderate extent (Chart 13 below).

As for drawing on a wider network of knowledge resources such as best practices, tools, and strategies tried in other places, or other volunteers and/or participants with relevant subject matter expertise, 39% reported that they did so to a major extent and 34% to a moderate extent. Internet-based communities of practice were mentioned in many volunteer interviews as providing important sharing and learning opportunities among peers. Other networking mechanisms may be focused on communications, M&E initiatives or showcasing of Canadian business connections.

Chart 13: Extent to which volunteers said they cooperated with peer volunteers or networks (n=910)



Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Volunteer Survey

One VCA's liaison officer who works with both volunteers and partners reported being asked by the CHC to coordinate issues such as safety and security. This request was viewed positively by the in-country VCAs because it served as the impetus for closer interaction with other Canadians on the ground. This example highlights the perceived need for greater coordination at the VCA level; VCAs would like to see more coordination at the CHC/Embassy level as well.

A final insight is that there is little coordination and networking of the VCAs across countries in spite of the possibilities and merits of developing global networks of volunteers and beneficiaries. This was particularly evident in Senegal with youth who have been supported by one VCA, but who had no idea what is happening in other VCA locations. This represents a lost opportunity to facilitate the formation of a potentially dynamic regional and global network that is ripe for realization. The same holds true for other beneficiary groups on other projects around the world. The evaluators found that there is an overabundance of national compartmentalization of the DCPs through the VCP as currently structured.

Box 6: Coordination for collaborative outcomes impact

With larger, development outcomes in view, Unitererra has sought collaborations with other VCAs in Canada and abroad, with DCPs in a number of countries, and between the program and other bilaterally funded projects. This occurs in a number of ways.

Unitererra and the bilateral program teams work in a complementary way to optimize effectiveness. This has occurred in Sri Lanka, for example, around vocational training as well as skills development in tourism and textiles. The same is true in the rice sector within Burkina Faso. In both instances, the goals of the VCP and projects have overlapped. What consortium members WUSC and CECI have gained through the collaborations involving bilateral projects is access to a wider set of budget resources than would otherwise be available through the VCP. What they have brought under the VCP is volunteer “bench strength”.

Unitererra coordinates with other development actors, for example, in Malawi where there is an ethical tea partnership between a consortium of international private companies and non-profit organizations from Holland and Great Britain. It's a private public partnership aimed at increasing wages, reducing gender-based violence on plantations, where each partner takes on one component of the work. Unitererra's working model is “collective impact” or “collaborative outcomes”. In every country, Unitererra has sub-sector planning committees, using their resources to help the committees work together. Unitererra was also seen as a lead coordinator in Senegal, where it helps facilitate meetings among the VCAs on upcoming initiatives and security information based on advice received from Canada.

On a higher level, the Unitererra consortium sits on coordinating bodies with funders and GAC, some more inclusive than others, very much depending on the approach of the driving entity (e.g., the Canadian mission). One KII at Unitererra headquarters revealed they find that their value-added contribution within these fora is that their volunteers are “*ears and eyes on the ground*” in a lot of areas and often off the beaten track.

3.6 Engaging Canadians

3.6.1 Are returned volunteers participating more in international development following their involvement in the VCP?

a) Does volunteer participation in the VCP increase the likelihood that returning individuals will intensify their efforts to support international development?

3.6.2 Are Canadians either more aware of international development issues or participating more in international development initiatives through the outreach efforts of the VCP?

a) To what extent are VCAs demonstrating that their public engagement initiatives are: a) reaching intended audiences? b) causing those audiences to participate in some form of international assistance?

3.6.1 *Returned Volunteer Participation in International Development*

Finding: Volunteer involvement in the VCP reinforces or strengthens commitment to participate in efforts to promote international development in Canada in a majority of cases

Consistent with the VCP logic model, all VCAs maintain an Engaging Canadians component within their projects. Up to 10% of VCA total direct program costs can be earmarked to the shared pursuit of the VCP (1200) Intermediate Outcome - Enhanced Canadians' participation in Canada's sustainable development efforts. PIPs show that most VCAs delineate two streams of activity under the shared intermediate outcome. One stream focuses on public awareness-raising, often with reach targets disaggregated by sex, ranging from the several thousand persons to the millions where VCAs have factored in social media contacts. The other stream focuses on the engagement of individuals (female and male) to volunteer overseas.

There are variances on both counts. Regarding the stream focused on awareness-raising, some VCAs are more specific than others about the audience segments they are trying to reach. They may be focused on professional groupings like veterinarians, dentists, those in legal or health professions or students; or they are paying attention to constituents connected to the volunteers they send (e.g., families, friends, professional bodies or even communities). In a few instances, the unit of analysis is not the number of people reached but the number of campaigns or activities launched and the success rate related to awareness and some form of engagement (e.g., fundraising and actions in support of international development).

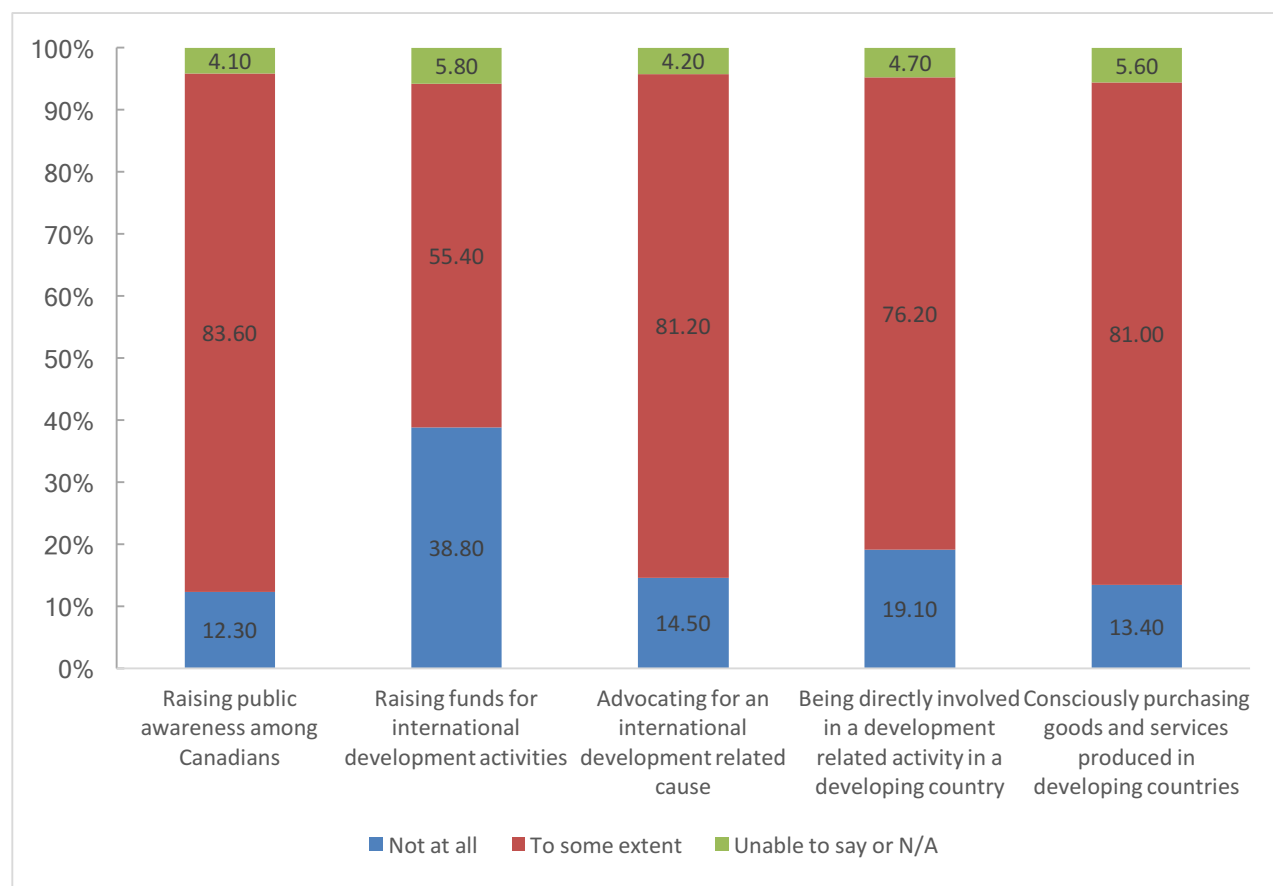
Regarding the stream focused on more direct engagement, most VCAs have set volunteer recruitment targets (usually disaggregated by sex). Some have focused their attention not just directly on the volunteer but on Canadian entities that might recruit volunteers from within their own ranks, for example private sector companies, post-secondary institutions, student bodies, professional associations. In a few instances, VCAs are seeing these entities as something more than suppliers of volunteers but also intermediaries that can link with DCPs in mutually beneficial ways. Across the LMs of VCAs, the actual recruitment and placement of volunteers is inconsistently placed. In some instances, it appears under the 1100 level intermediate outcomes (related to partner capacity development), while in others it is part and parcel of the Engaging Canadians component.

a) The link between volunteer participation and increased commitment to support international development

By and large, VCA third annual reports show that volunteer placements reinforce or strengthen the

commitment of returned Canadian participants to be involved in international development efforts. The figures (where they exist) vary across VCA and cannot be compared directly on account of differences in the way questions were posed to the volunteers. That said, the trend suggested in the data is corroborated in the volunteer survey carried out for this evaluation. Just over 800 volunteer respondents reported increases to involvement in international development as set out in Chart 14, below.

Chart 14: Volunteer reported increases to involvement in international development activities, post placement (n=808)



Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Volunteer Partner Survey

Expressed as a weighted average on a four-point scale (i.e., not at all (1), to a minor extent (2), to a moderate extent (3), and to a major extent (4)), the scores are as follows:

- More involved in raising public awareness among Canadians: **2.66** (f 2.74, m 2.58) (toward moderate extent)
- More involved in raising funds for international development activities: **1.98** (f 2.01, m 1.95) (toward minor extent)
- More involved in advocating for an international development related cause: **2.82** (f 2.89, m 2.74) (toward moderate extent)
- Being directly involved in a development related activity in a developing country: **2.87** (f 2.87, m 2.89) (toward moderate extent)
- More involved in consciously purchasing goods and services produced in developing countries: **2.85** (f 3.03, m 2.65) (toward moderate extent)

On aggregate, most former volunteers are involved in a development related activity in a developing country and least are involved in fundraising. Gender differences in these weighted averages are most

pronounced with the variable related to conscious purchasing (13% more females than males say they are more conscious consumers, “to a great extent”).

In FGDs, returned volunteers were mostly consistent in saying their experience as a volunteer had shaped them personally and/or professionally including encouraging them to become involved in international development. In rough order of prevalence, they mentioned gains in:

- self-confidence, flexibility, resourcefulness - an “ability to think outside the box”, as one volunteer put it
- cross-cultural competencies
- an enhanced appreciation for institutions and systems that function (mentions made in a general sense and with respect to volunteers own professions), or “our place of privilege”, as one volunteer put it
- a sharpened sense of the complexities and nuances to understanding development issues and social advocacy, as one volunteer noted, “the more I see and learn from being there, the less I think I know”
- appreciation for how people within their own profession can put skills to work in a development context, as one VCA staff person put it, “we could see accountants realizing for the first time that there was an important role for them”

The same message came from key contacts of corporate volunteer initiatives (three). Mentions were made of gains in soft skills (resilience, cross-cultural competence, respecting different views), curiosity and resourcefulness. One contact, a human resource professional, observed positive impacts on retention and mobility within the company. Another, a senior manager of a large pharmaceutical firm noted, “You are better at your job when you have a more global sense of your field of practice”.

In the FGDs, several volunteers spoke of “reverse culture shock” experienced upon returning that made them want a re-assignment. Whether feeling pushed by the lack of attractive options at home or drawn by the opportunities away, more than half met in FGDs had already returned more than once from an overseas volunteer mandate. That same prevalence of volunteers with multiple mandates is reflected in the profile of volunteer survey respondents. Among the nearly 965 North-South respondents to the volunteer survey, 58% had completed more than one mandate and about 10% more than 10.

Volunteers spoke of their re-entry experience as an influencing factor on attitudes and behaviour once back home. Most, if not all, spoke well of the group debrief sessions they attended. That said, some observed that because of their intermittent scheduling, quite a bit of time could elapse before a returned volunteer had a chance to attend a debriefing. In the FGDs, nearly half of the volunteers described missing or not being satisfied with a more personalized follow-up. Elements thought to be lacking or missing, by at least some VCAs, included:

- access to housing advice and career counseling
- the availability of financial assistance to cover initial living expenses
- connections to other returned volunteers that might be in the vicinity
- guidance on how to participate further – for example, engaging with the community, continuing as an E-volunteer
- requests to utilize returnees to advise volunteers coming on stream with the same partner, in a similar line of activity, and/or in the same part of the world

Several who made these remarks were also quick to indicate an understanding that VCA staff are busy and resource constrained. Good practices most often mentioned to strengthen continued volunteer engagement in international development are:

- the practice of linking new to returned/existing volunteers and less experienced to more experienced volunteers
- alumni conferencing, both virtual and in person

- resources to guide the design of public engagement activities, including use of ICTs for communication
- localized clubs or chapters that can provide a platform for volunteer engagement, particularly when supported by VCA personnel (see Box 7)

Very few volunteers spoke of not being able to continue in a volunteer capacity, post-placement (at least in the foreseeable future). In two instances the reasons had to do with work schedules, in one it had to do with graduate school and in another, starting a family. One person cited location on the rural prairies as a detriment to continued involvement. However, a sizable number of volunteers spoke of the need to constrain their volunteer commitments time wise because of work schedules or seasonal variations in work patterns (such as those experienced by Canadian farmers).

3.6.2 Evidence of Audience Reach and Uptake

***Finding:** VCAs are taking seriously the task of engaging Canadians. It is not a side show to the program's developing country focus. In the main, VCAs are engaging Canadians understanding that they must do this in a thoughtful, focused way to attract the volunteer talent and additional supports they seek. Identifying audience segments and finding ways to engage is a work in progress. While they may be meeting targets, many VCAs are feeling challenged to take better advantage of what technology offers.*

In their third annual reports, the VCAs convey the following:

- all maintain public engagement functions more or less as set out in their PIPs
- all track results related to outreach, audience uptake and to actual recruitment
- most of this tracking is disaggregated by sex, but this is not a universal practice
- most VCAs are on track with volunteer recruitment (some itemizing it as an *LM 1100* task)
- all are close to, meeting, or exceeding numeric audience targets, and
- most are showing that message uptake levels are meeting VCA targets

In describing implementation, about half of the VCAs characterize the public engagement/volunteer recruitment space as “crowded” and “competitive”. Some are addressing this by focusing on constituencies that fit with their mandates. In some instances, these are defined by professional affiliation, e.g., the legal profession, engineers, accountants or vets. For others, constituencies are delineated more by demographic groups, e.g., students or senior level and retiring executives.

Still others are focusing attention on organizations or networks in Canada that are relevant to their partnerships in play overseas, e.g., civil society, government, private sector organizations or entrepreneurs that may relate to VCA activities associated with enterprise development, food security, human rights and social inclusion, or services in health or education. Some VCAs are pursuing more than one of these audience segmenting strategies at the same time.

VCA representatives described what amounts to continuation of public engagement programming approaches that include, at one end, headquarters-instigated campaigns that invite volunteer participation, the creation of headquarter animated/supported activities for volunteers to take up individuals or in groups, and passive support/encouragement of volunteer level engagement within their own realms of reach. At least half the VCAs are explicit with their intent to engage diaspora communities, in some instances through strategic partnership arrangements with ethno-cultural communities in Canada.

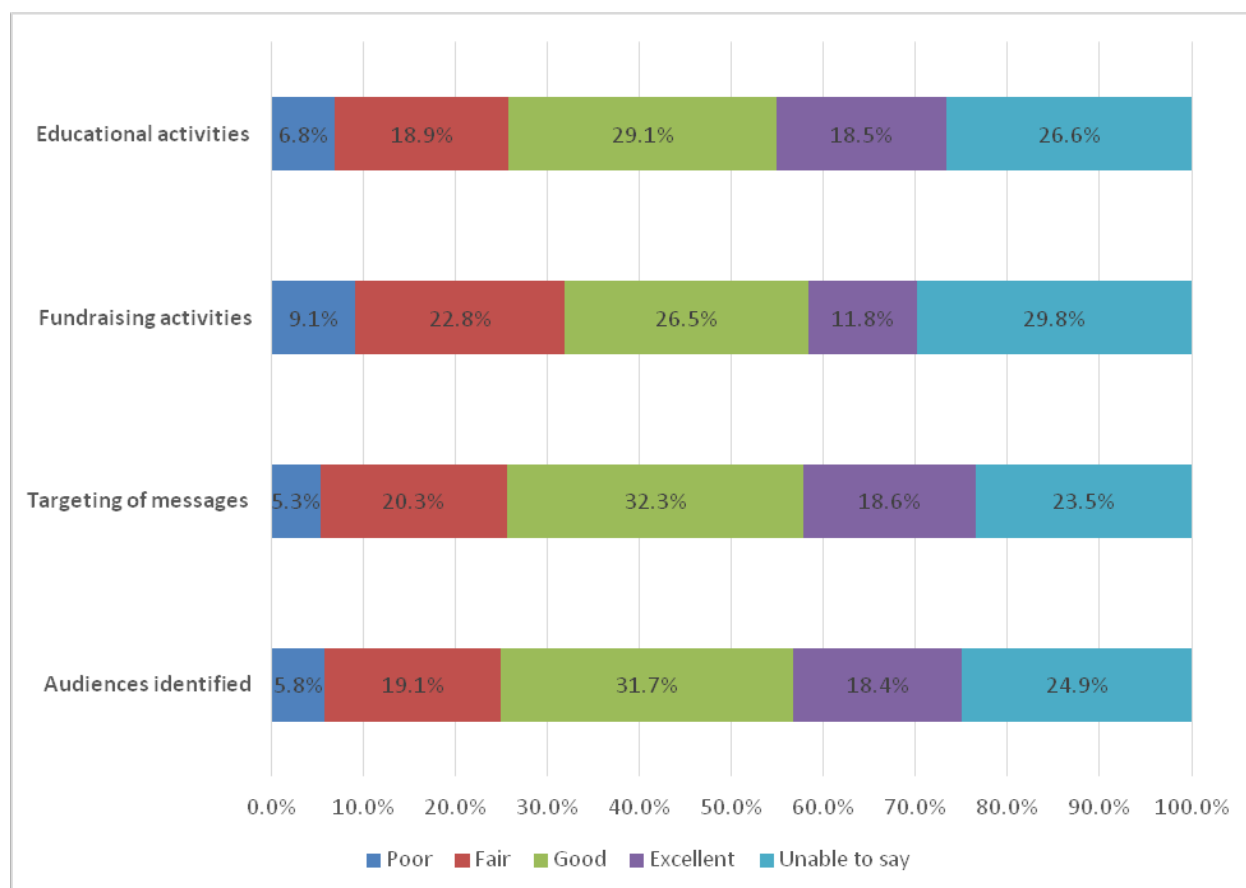
Two VCAs maintain partnerships with Canadian private sector entities implementing employee sending initiatives. The win-win-win scenario hoped for here is that developing country partners gain the benefits of relevant, short term expertise, employees find a way to offer up their workplace skills in a meaningful

way, and the participating firm demonstrates CSR as well as productivity gains from a staff that are empowered and additionally tooled.

And, at least three VCAs provide internship opportunities for university students which include placement opportunities with partners, pre-departure briefings, in-situ support, and debriefings. Representatives of several VCAs indicated efforts were made within the VCP so far to rethink or refine engagement strategies and/or ways of measuring the effects of engagement activities. In some instances, this came in the form stepping up engagement with returned volunteers. In others, it came in the form of hiring external communications expertise or in bringing on board that expertise.

Chart 15 below shows how current and returned volunteers rate their VCAs public engagement activities in Canada, in particular, the way they identify audiences, target messages, solicit funds and undertake educational activities.

Chart 15: Volunteer rating of public engagement activities in Canada (n=799)



Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Volunteer Partner Survey

Expressed as weighted averages, volunteers assess public engagement activities as follows:

- Audiences identified: 2.84 (fair to **good**)
- Targeting of messages: 2.84 (fair to **good**)
- Fundraising activities: 2.59 (fair to **good**)
- Educational activities: 2.81 (fair to **good**)

There is no discernible difference in these ratings, by gender. Table 10 shows that, across VCAs, the distribution of weighted averages straddle the “good” threshold regarding audience identification, message targeting and education programming. On fundraising, volunteer ratings are much more

consistently in the “fair to good” category.

Table 10: Volunteer rating of activities to engage Canadians – distribution of aggregate scores (using weighted averages), by VCA

	Poor to Fair (weighted average of between 1.0 and 1.9)	Fair to Good (weighted average of between 2.0 and 2.9)	Good to Excellent (weighted average of between 3.0 and 4.0)
Audiences identified	0	7	6
Targeting of messages	0	7	6
Fundraising activities	1	12	0
Educational activities	0	7	6

Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Volunteer Survey

During encounters in field placements and in KIIs and FGDs, the evaluators heard a range of opinion that is consistent with that put forward in the survey.

On messaging, the evaluators noted the following:

- There are many social media platform options, but what’s important is that there is sound (business) strategy guiding its use: it must be done well. Social media a crowded space and strong branding is essential for breaking through the noise
- It requires careful segmentation of population groups, e.g., those at the levels of university student, working professional and retired professional) and pitching of messages accordingly focused on enticing, recruiting, supporting, fostering continued engagement post placement
- At the same time, “face to face” is the preferred mode. Tooling up and encouraging returned volunteers to do this is important
- Measuring audience reaction/uptake of messaging is necessary to understand audience profiles and to gauge the pitch and tone of what is being communicated, but the field of measurement is also advancing to understand the process of “conversion” along the continuum from awareness to action
- Public outreach messaging is most effective when it clearly links the subject matter to the audience, and in an “enabling” way. This is easy to say but hard to do, volunteers say, it requires getting inside the heads of the unexposed. Mentions of promising campaigns included one on ethical purchasing and one attempting to make the 2030 SDGs “fashionable”
- There is a critique among volunteers that some VCA messaging lacks “pop” particularly for younger audiences. Suggestions also that some messaging:
 - puts too much focus on volunteers and not enough on impacts
 - unwittingly conveys stereotypical “deficit” notions of development and/or
 - oversimplifies the conversion of problems to solutions
- S-N volunteers can enliven messages if their engagement with Canadians is well-crafted (the subject matter is relevant and the activity purposeful)
- Strategizing “Community/Sector” engagement is occurring, yet there is of room to build here, some volunteers suggest. Mentions made of engaging audiences (e.g., through conferences) that are already interested in the subject matter in a Canadian context (e.g., domestic violence), or engaging diverse audiences e.g., student leaders, government, non-profits, industry in interdisciplinary exploration of a development issue into which various stakeholder could offer up ideas and resources (human and financial)

In connection to the last point, while not pursued as a specific line of inquiry, the evaluators did not encounter any engagement strategy with indigenous communities in Canada including as a source of N-S volunteers. VCA documentation shows that as many as half of the VCAs have identified indigenous

communities as part of their target audience at the beneficiary level in developing countries.

On engaging employers and internship candidates:

- The VCA is instrumental to the work place volunteer and intern experience: from placement design, to pre-departure briefing, to in-situ support, to final debriefing; leaders of two employer groups and one student program were emphatic; these initiatives could not run without the VCA
- Good matching of workplace volunteer to placement (one firm with 55 placements specified a placement success rate of 70%). This is similar for the internship program, while all observing the potential for mismatches
- While VCAs track the engagement of corporate volunteers while in situ; knowledge of beneficiary impact is often scant (anecdotal mainly) and the business case for volunteering hinges mainly on the ambassadorship of returned volunteers, the demonstration of soft skills learned (adaptability, cross-cultural competencies, self-confidence) and on morale
- Some workplace partners exploring the merits of reducing the number of placement sites in favour of deeper project engagement where organizational compatibility is carefully matched and where individual mandates within the partnership can build on each other. This a work in progress

Regarding perceptions of “international volunteerism” as a whole, while not a dominant theme, several volunteers spoke of a mixed reputation they felt international volunteerism has in general and of the role the VCP could play in sharpening public discernment of what constitutes good development- oriented volunteerism. As one volunteer put it, “Building schools is not what serious volunteer sending is about. The nuances of serious volunteer sending are not communicated well. This needs to change”. One idea emerging from this line of thinking is that VCAs with GAC could jointly undertake some messaging around what constitutes good international development volunteerism.

Box 7: An integrated approach to engaging Canadians

Engineers without Borders (EWB) maintains a membership base of 1,770 members, mostly students, organized across 40 chapters across Canada. Most chapters are located on university campuses though “city” chapters have also emerged. Chapters vary in size from 15 to 150; each in their own ways supporting the work of EWB Canada.

Students engage in international development activities often by organizing local events under the banner of EWB’s national campaign. The current campaign is [Hello 2030!](#) introducing the Sustainable Development Goals. Volunteers engage in leadership development activities - delving into development concepts and issues (i.e. climate change, poverty and inequality, fair trade) as well as more practical aspects such as skills building for citizens work and skills associated with project design and delivery. Each year, the [XChange](#) national conference brings chapter delegates, other EWB stakeholders and thought leaders together around a chosen topic. These three-day events are set up to inform strategy at EWB.

Chapters play a significant role in EWB-Canada decision-making. In addition to participating in XChange, they are represented on “distributed teams” that address such topics as inclusive development and gender. Chapters are key to the annual recruitment of short-term volunteers (“fellows”) for placement with developing country partners (“ventures”) overseas. The national office reviews applicants before the new crop of short-term fellows is finalized and matched with ventures. This occurs in December. Short-term fellows are fielded in May. In the interim, they undertake preparatory assignments including, where they begin to engage with their venture placement. This process culminates in a pre-departure training workshop. While overseas, short-term fellows blog about their experience and once back become part of the Chapter’s education and recruitment effort for a subsequent cycle.

The chapter “president” role and being a fellow represent the pinnacle of student involvement in EWB. Many Junior Fellows go on to become long-term fellows with EWB. Once graduated, chapter members become alumni.

EWB’s integrated approach to mobilizing Canadians relies on an innovative theory of change whereby the chapter network learns about international development and leadership, and in turn educates and mobilizes a larger group of the Canadian public around these issues. (Source: EWB website and KIIs).

3.7 Innovation

3.7.1 According to the stakeholders, are there any examples of innovations in the current program related to building capacity of DCPs to achieve sustainable development results?

- a) In what new ways are VCAs attempting to deepen their development impacts through volunteer cooperation?
- b) How have innovative practices by VCAs affected their contributions to developing country partner capacity / performance?

3.7.2 According to the stakeholders, are there any examples of innovations in the current program related to increasing Canadians' participation in Canada's development efforts?

- a) In what new ways are VCAs attempting to engage Canadian audiences in Canada's international assistance programming?
- b) How have innovative practices in public engagement by VCAs and their returned volunteers helped the program extend its reach in Canada?

3.7.1 Innovations in Partner Capacity-Building

***Finding:** There is an abundance of innovative practice evident in the VCP and to varying degrees across the participating VCAs. It is driven by a desire to deepen beneficiary impacts and to broaden Canadian engagement in the effort.*

a) VCA initiatives to deepen impacts

Innovation in relation to international development is broadly defined as: “new approaches, business models, policy practices, technologies, behavioural insights, partnerships, or ways of delivering products and services that benefit and empower the poor in developing countries - any solution that has potential to address an important development problem substantially more effectively than existing approaches” (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). One observation about, “innovation” is that it should not be pursued at the expense of activities already proven to be effective, and that innovative practices be informed by evidence.

The VCAs in the program were well aware of the need to innovate in order to improve outcomes, efficiency, effectiveness and long term sustainability in the program and with their partners. Most of the VCA's had a similar understanding of innovation but different approaches to innovation within their program. The evaluators find that VCAs are taking strategic steps to innovate, employing strategies which include:

- diaspora volunteerism – expanding opportunities for diaspora Canadians to put their skills to work in contexts that are culturally and linguistically familiar;
- complementary funding – to assist partners and volunteers in support roles to experiment, to strengthen capacities, and to leverage the potential for scalability;
- strategic Canadian partnerships – with entities positioned to facilitate trade and market growth;
- sub-sector programming approaches – based on an analysis of integrative market systems and assessed potential to improve value chains for development impact, particularly in the agricultural sector; and
- providing placement support to university internship programs and to private sector employees.

Other examples of innovation found were: E-volunteering, S-N volunteerism, and multi-stakeholder

engagements geared to bolstering national or regional advocacy efforts (also see Box 8). The innovations listed here are not necessarily new to the VCP in this program cycle. Some innovations have their origins in the previous VCP¹⁸.

VCP key informants described an increasingly complex approach to volunteerism which challenges VCAs to “think outside the box” and innovate across several program dimensions to achieve impact. Driving factors that were mentioned include:

- a widening perspective on international volunteerism that now extends beyond traditional notions of the volunteer as one who fills organizational deficits
- a drive to embed international volunteerism deeper into a development paradigm by focusing attention beyond organizations and toward the systems within which they operate
- an accompanying interest to engage with the range of actors that occupy those systems (i.e., private sector, government, civil society, networks)
- a competitive and increasingly segmented market place for volunteers in Canada;
- ICT advances that make possible a much wider range of interactions between and among volunteers and partners and other stakeholders, and
- increasing sophistication among some DCPs *vis-à-vis* identifying sources of volunteer support (international and domestic)

FGDs and KIs with partners, VCA leads and volunteers yielded examples of innovations geared to building capacity of DCPs to achieve sustainable development results. Table 11 highlights some of these key approaches which VCA’s are adopting across their part of the VCP.

Table 11: Innovative practices across selected VCAs

Effective Innovative Practices	
VCA 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-volunteering and e-mentoring • S-N missions focused on trade and market development • Forging strategic Canadian partnerships with TFO to assist DCPs access Canadian markets • S-S knowledge-sharing and regional meetings
VCA 2:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-stakeholder platforms/working groups – 20 events in year 3 – related to SDGs, climate change, and resource management advocacy • Program funds for <i>innovation</i> initiatives • Formalized 4-step approach to innovation: research and proof of concept, testing and prototyping, piloting and planning to scale, learning and evaluating (cycle) • research and sharing including multi-country platforms • E-volunteering with a training guide
VCA -3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leveraging \$ for adaptive/piloting/strengthening existing programming • Integrative perspective on programming themes: Access to Justice, Women and Girls Leadership, and Economic Empowerment for Women and Girls
VCA -4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Sector Innovation Platform that generates and spreads sector-wide innovations with ventures and boundary partners

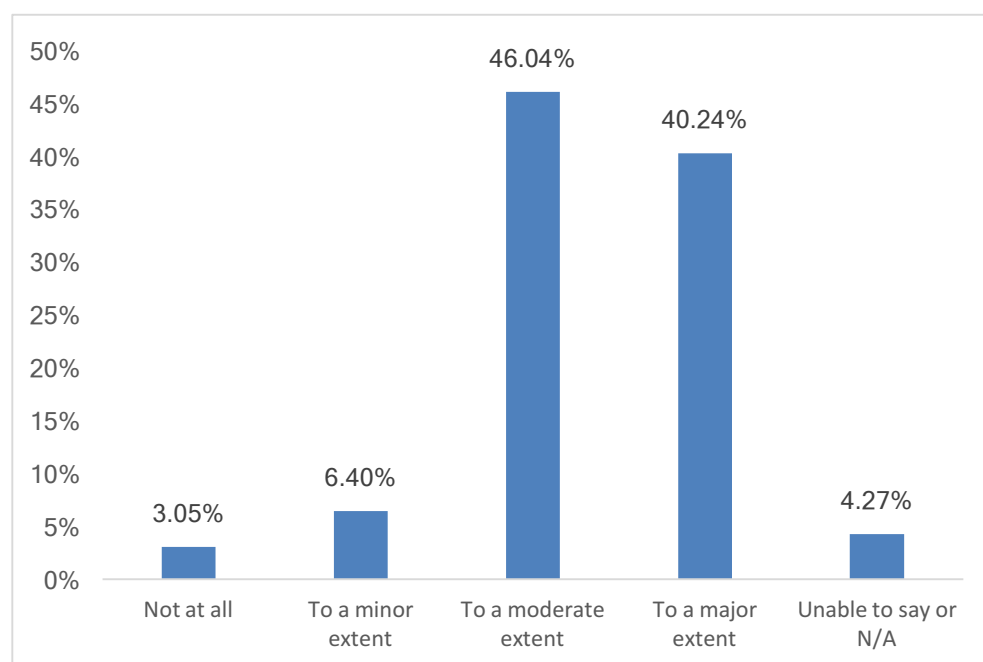
¹⁸ The 2014 evaluation of the VCP made note of several innovations, including: South-North systems of volunteerism to support market expansion, technical training and network building; South-South volunteerism encouraging regional affinity, cross-fertilization and national skills development.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting SGB ventures with access to financial and human capital - access to service providers (technical, legal, fundraising, etc.) and HR support impact investing that enables the release of seed funding
VCA -5:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner capacity assessment which is gender-focused Multi-stakeholder platforms/working groups S-S knowledge sharing and regional meetings Private sector engagement and partnerships

b) Innovation – perceptions of effects on DCP capacity

In the E-survey carried out for this evaluation, DCP representatives were asked whether the partnership was assisting them innovate with new ideas and approaches (Chart 16). Over 40% of respondents said that the partnership had to a ‘major extent’ assisted them innovate and 46% stated that it had helped to a “moderate extent”.

Chart 16: Perceptions by DCPs on the extent of innovation in the partnership (n=328)



Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Developing Country Partner Survey

A similar question was posed in an E-survey of active and returned volunteers. Respondents echoed similar though slightly less emphatic feedback that the partnership was stimulating innovation through new ways of thinking and approaches. Nearly a third (32%) said the partnership was innovating “to a major extent”, while 44% said it was doing so “to a moderate extent”.

Sub sector approaches and capacity-building with partners

Three of the 12 VCAs have developed innovative approaches to supporting agriculture value chains and social enterprise strengthening. These approaches involve complex interactions amongst an array of partners and stakeholders. The agriculture value chain work is innovative in that it is building capacity among less visible partners in the agriculture development sector through volunteer technical assistance; it is providing incentives to engage with a wider range of grassroots partners and adapting sustainable technology through volunteer technical assistance. Partner and volunteer survey respondents pointed to sub-sector applications aimed at women and youth small business development, in particular, product

diversification, product design, sustainable practices in tourism and agricultural sectors, along with the introduction of product monitoring systems. Volunteers named urban agriculture, sustainable eco-agricultural practices, organic farming, and the development of value-added products as innovations showing the greatest promise. Specific reference was made to: aquaponics, nut farming, small crop storage silos, meat exportation, products manufactured from recycled materials, irrigation schemes, solar power start-ups, agri-tourism, safety/quality management and the introduction of new crop varieties.

Several of the innovations identified across the VCA programs were focussed on developing capacity within the VCA partners themselves through learning and sharing platforms. Four out of the 12 VCAs are using regional meetings to convene partners to learn and share from one another.

Training of trainers and mentoring

Another innovation cited by volunteers as showing promise was capacity building through the training of trainers using new more innovative approaches. Here, trainers positioned with the DCP are trained with the support of volunteers. Examples by volunteers included: training with mobile trainers working with a cluster of partners, peer training and the development of training workshops with expanded curriculum, virtual gender training, design thinking workshops and partnerships with local educational institutions. E-survey respondents indicate that these approaches are helping partners become more open to exploring new training ideas/ theories and to build capacity within partner field offices.

Returned volunteers also cited the importance of mentoring and coaching for strengthening farmers' groups, women leaders and managers, and to strengthen local organisations, gender relations and business management; in interviews DCPs also suggested that this type of training was helping beneficiaries become more self-sufficient, independent, and empowered. The exposure of southern based civil society groups to best practices in organizational leadership and management in Canada was particularly innovative in the manner it influenced the DCPs. Their immersion and exposure to the cooperative unions in Quebec for instance, led to more innovative thinking in their own organizational change management processes.

Volunteer support for partner implementation of GE policies and practices was highlighted by volunteers as an innovation showing great promise. Evidence from the E-survey suggests that women are increasingly observed to be occupying leadership positions within the organization. Knowledge and training related to GE is being provided through education and training from partner to beneficiaries. Training addressing issues such as gender-based violence and gender lens investing has resulted in the creation of girls' empowerment programming.

Inclusion of diaspora volunteers

A program innovation growing in impact is the contribution and approach of diaspora volunteers to the VCP. At the moment, the phenomenon is prevalent in at least four VCAs. In one VCA, over 53% of their N-S volunteers in year three were from the diaspora.¹⁹ In this VCA's annual report, 73% claimed that their knowledge and understanding of the social and cultural context "contributed a lot to the success of their placement". Evaluation visits in two countries of West Africa confirmed that several of the diaspora volunteers are contributing significant technical knowledge, gender equality/cross-cultural insights and financial resources in the work with the partners and beneficiary communities, particularly in the agriculture sector. Volunteer technical know-how, innovative agricultural approaches and their connection based on culture, and language position these volunteers with particular influence. Interviews with beneficiary groups suggest that diaspora volunteers were challenging local cultural norms and pushing communities in new ways of thinking and working due to their beliefs in GE, and their collaborative /consultative approach to working with local committees, women's groups and male leaders. Field

¹⁹ This percentage was based on reporting from the VCA third year report but did not indicate the number.

interviews with DCPs and beneficiary groups in Ghana and Senegal revealed that male diaspora volunteers were making a significant impact on women's groups -- their uptake, organisation and performance in relation to agricultural improvement techniques and business development. The male diaspora volunteers interviewed strategically worked with local community leaders and male youth due to their potential resistance to change and improved status of women; through their relationship building, the diaspora volunteers ensured that community male leaders accepted support and performance improvements in socio-economic conditions of the women and their groups. These newly acquired values were noted to be having a transformative effect on the local population.

A representative of VCA put it this way in a KII: "Having (diaspora) volunteers assigned to our organization has made it more possible to embrace change and seek improvement through innovation... Without their presence, we may not have realized that we needed to innovate, seek new solutions, but their arrival has brought learning and renewal to our work." From the field interviews with local partners it was observed that diaspora volunteers often add value by their familiarity and understanding of the cultural context particularly regarding women's status. This familiarity and sometimes language competency placed in them in an advanced position to build on local knowledge and understanding. The interview data shows particular added-value of diaspora volunteers in Africa.

The evaluators encountered diaspora volunteers in some cases, supporting their own work financially, for example by purchasing a vehicle to travel. There were several cases of diaspora volunteers making these investments in order to ensure that they could provide the full complement of their services to some of the most remote areas of Ghana and Senegal. The financial contribution by diaspora volunteers was more pronounced in some VCA's.

Grassroots and national volunteers working with different levels of the change process

This practice sees VCAs and partners attempting to influence structural changes at national levels, drawing on their community level experience with beneficiaries. Sometimes this innovative approach occurs naturally due to the structure of the partner organisation in having regional and local level activity, constituencies and placement opportunities in each. In other cases, the VCA has proposed project designs to embrace all levels of change within a country context. For instance, in southern Ghana, legal literacy volunteers (national) are working at the community level; while other volunteers (international and national) are working in the national court and justice system to advocate and strengthen the justice system. Each level of activity is simultaneously informing and influencing the other producing greater awareness of women's rights and improving the gender-sensitive practices in the court system. At least three VCA's were demonstrating that engaging volunteers at the grassroots and national levels was helping DCPs better understand and bring about social transformation and policy reform.

E-volunteering

E-volunteering provides access to a wider pool of volunteer talent and expertise and makes it possible for partners and volunteers to engage post-placement. It also serves to start a relationship between volunteer and partner prior to placement. In the volunteer E-survey, more than 18% (f - 11%; m - 20%) of the N-S volunteer respondents said that they had supported partner organisations as an E- volunteer over the internet. Over half of those volunteers who are now returned said that E-volunteering support had continued post placement. Three-quarters of them have found the E-volunteering experience to be moderately (42%) or highly (32%) satisfactory. Table 12 below sets out the reasons given for this assessment.

Half of respondents reported mixed experiences with e-volunteering. Differences in time zones and poor internet connections were the most frequently stated concerns by respondents whereby making scheduling sessions and meetings difficult. Most volunteers preferred face-to-face interactions with DCPs, but felt that e-volunteering provided a good alternative if the partner remained committed to completing project objectives. Interviews with VCA staff suggest the need for VCA's to better integrate e-volunteering

in the design of the mandate and at the start up and/or end of the volunteer placement.

Table 12: Volunteer perceptions of E-volunteering

	Reasons for high level of satisfaction High (12)	Reasons for low to moderate levels of satisfaction Low (12) / Moderate (27)
Volunteer responses from E-survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuing responsibilities, participation and collaboration with partners and beneficiaries remotely as an E-volunteer • effective means of fulfilling goals • providing sense of continued participation (volunteering) • facilitating volunteers sharing of expertise • excellent communication between client/partner • providing opportunity to do meaningful work (research) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of time/motivation of clients to continue relationship • lack of commitment by partner/client – short commitment to project • delayed responses • no response from partner • language barrier and complicated by language translation • time differences and difficult to schedule meetings • poor internet connections • requests for funding not accommodated • preference for face to face • free help (from volunteer) not valued/used by partner • impossible to sustain long-term

Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Volunteer Survey

Volunteer coordination and alumni innovations

The evaluators encountered a wide range of practices to foster interactions among DCPs and volunteers at a country/regional level. Examples found to be “innovative” based on the E-survey and KIIs include:

- initiatives to build partner networks
- organized sessions to re-engage returned volunteers with partners and country/region level WhatsApp groups/conferences
- training on networking skills
- coordination meetings among partners

Two of the VCAs were holding alumni network conferences to bring together volunteers after they returned home from the field. Another important follow-up approach to volunteer placements was that volunteers were asked to have a Skype call with the DCP after two months to “discuss with the partner the types of action which was taken since the volunteer arrived home”, as a DCP in Senegal put it.

Youth to youth mentorship and capacity-building

Two of the VCAs employ a strong youth empowerment approach to programming. Youth from the North share experiences, skills and knowledge with youth in the South, many of whom are struggling to find employment seek support and are trained in the ‘hubs’ in order to create their own jobs, develop small businesses and/or find direction. The model is focused on behavioural change to the extent that it encourages northern and southern participants to find a lifelong purpose. For the Canadians, this includes possible transformation around a commitment to international development.

Discussing the model, participants of a joint VCA-partner FGD made the following observation:

“The livelihoods training that we have tested appears to work well. At least half of our graduates have been integrated into the job market. Participants get lots of support: training, counselling, mentorship

and exposure to private sector enterprises, and some get access to innovation funds to push their ideas further”.

Linkages: DCP to Canadian and other resources

Several VCAs are linking DCPs with the private business sector in Canada and/or with other entities in or beyond Canada to share best practices, explore opportunities for partnerships and to leverage financing. For example:

- strategic Canadian partnerships are being brokered with organizations to share knowledge on gender-related violence and justice;
- VCAs are partnering with other international NGOs to assist in the design and evaluation of curriculum materials for youth employment centers;
- DCPs are diversifying their product range and improving their marketing, quality of products and their presentation through connections made to Canadian private sector companies;
- VCA programs are also designed with strong corporate linkages using an impact investment model whereby volunteers and/or investment specialists are identifying and stimulating start-ups in the south using mentorship and financing support or “angel investment” from the North.

Social marketing and ICT learning models

E-surveys and KIIs identified mobile phone innovations in data collection, survey activities, education programming and engagement with key stakeholders. ICT innovations are being used by DCPs to expand visibility, extend communication through social media, to establish websites in field offices, and to promote DCP programming. ICT is being used by VCAs in knowledge management and research in order to run surveys, analyze data and establish centralized data bases. In relation to the education/training sector specifically, volunteers report the usage and training in applications in marketing, registration/enrolment, delivery of on-line tutorials, research, production of newsletters, E-libraries and Cloud back-ups. Some of the VCAs were also taking advantage of social media platforms and radio to promote their work (see Box 8 below).

Multi-stakeholder platforms

Multi-stakeholder platforms are being used by VCAs to convene discussions on sub-sector issues in areas such as: agriculture, GE equality, non-traditional trades and women’s empowerment. The platforms aim at policy influence, identifying and scaling best practice and to create communities of practice. These platforms include; coalitions for strengthening agriculture development and gender equity in a few countries of focus. These platforms also include performance reviews led by government with DCP involvement in providing evidence of what works in youth employment, and vocational training reform. High level meetings with DCP membership groups and coalitions at national levels to lobby on key issues in relation to gender equality, access to justice, youth training and entrepreneurship.

Use of seed and innovation funds

The evaluators identified at least three types of funding envelopes to assist entrepreneurs and small business start-ups across the VCA programs. In Senegal and Ghana the team encountered a “youth innovation fund” which assisted the prospective entrepreneurs put their business plans into an appraisal process, linking it business mentors and more training.²⁰ Entrepreneurs interviewed felt that the access they had to the fund enabled them to launch their start-up businesses and that the VCA training and experience in general provided them with the confidence, support and follow-up to make their enterprises viable. The youth innovation funds are raised by the Canadian volunteers before they begin their

²⁰ The volunteers estimate that about 4 to 5 entrepreneurs have received innovation funds and have started their own businesses since 2017 when the entrepreneurial training started.

mandates. A linkage between the VCA and the governments' National Innovative Fund enhances sustainability since successful participants can be assured of funding for their projects. The Youth Innovation Fund also partners with media outlets to give visibility to their business plans and also to market products of the various beneficiaries. This is innovative because through the competitive application process, individuals are exposed to other sources of funding from the private sector, as well as already established businesses which can result in other business partnerships.

Two other VCAs were also using innovative funds with their partners. One VCA was using the funds to support DCP capacity development. In this instance, the VCA allocated three \$100,000 grants to be spent over the last 30 months of the project. The projects were chosen on a competitive basis. The VCA reports excellent progress to date.

Innovation funds particularly in relation to SME and enterprise development enable the DCP's to take their training one step further and capacitate potential beneficiary entrepreneurs with an opportunity to start up the business. The prospective entrepreneurs, are also able to better actualize their business proposals through the linkages and competitive nature of the grant processes which assists them think creatively while fostering synergy among the applicants.

Leveraging additional financing for the VCA and volunteer initiatives

Four out of the 12 VCAs are leveraging additional financing for their VCP activities and volunteer placements. The leveraging of additional funds for the volunteer placements was deemed essential in bringing the projects to fruition and ensuring that the volunteers were able to fully achieve their mandates. Table 13 below highlights some of these leveraging approaches:

Table 13: Observed leverage approaches by VCAs

VCA 1	In Senegal, the local partners with one VCA are beginning to leverage other types of partnerships and relationships to strengthen their Honey Bee program. This includes going back to Canadian partners who can offer a particular technical experience to address operational issues. In the search for additional partnerships, the VCA is approaching Chambers of Commerce and linking the local partners to the Quebec community of Learning in Agriculture (Interview with VCA representative in Senegal)
VCA 2	The VCA is reaching out to a larger numbers of Canadian organizations to support their ongoing volunteer program; for instance they have partnerships with Nutrition International and Enablis, both of which have compatible mandates with the VCA. One is assisting a selection of partners to work as a consortium and to develop proposals for support. (interview with VCA representative)
VCA 3	The Women's Resource and Outreach Center in Jamaica (WROC) is opening up new partnerships with Canadian organizations with the help of its VCA. This has yielded additional volunteer/interns. Non-program funds have also been used to support community initiatives on climate change and sanitation. These initial projects have now paved the way for WROC to establish a more elaborate community programming. (Interview with Country Director of WROC)
VCA 4	The VCA secured additional program funding from private sources along with a grant from the Quebec government. This funding added about 20% to the programming budget allowing for an increase in the size of the VCAs volunteer contingent. (VCA, Third Annual Report, 2018)

Student internships to build capacity

Three VCAs are using local interns to build capacity with their DCPs (usually partners engaged in research) and to support the long term impact of the volunteer mandates within the institution. These interns are

often sourced from universities; they are in a position to work as translators and technical assistants to the more highly skilled experts from the North, for example on topics related to climate change, agro-ecology and community resilience. These interns are learning how to develop and use tools, in many instances to the point where they can play an important role after the northern volunteers have left. The evaluators learned that student interns who demonstrate ability and commitment are often maintained with the research institutions, performing invaluable service to other researchers within the institution.

In situations where DCPs are unable to counterpart local staff with the northern volunteers, the VCAs are exploring approaches to engage interns from the national universities. This is a particular focus in those countries where mandatory service is required after completion of a university degree.

3.7.2 Innovations in Canadian Engagement Programming

***Finding:** The landscape of innovative practices is rich, as it is for VCA programming with DCPs. There are two levels of innovation. Volunteers are mostly latching on to the tactical means of reaching Canadians when naming what they think represents innovation – the tools and techniques needed to tell the VCP story. But the VCAs are clearly busy at a strategic or systemic level and are coming up with new and potentially powerful ways to engage Canadian talent and resources for development impact. Understanding the current impact and future potential of these strategies remains a work in progress.*

a) VCA initiatives to engage Canadians

Table 14 highlights five different types of innovation that evaluators found during field visits, KIs and document reviews. Each are loosely associated with one of the VCAs but are not necessarily unique to them. Section 3.6.2, on Engaging Canadians, provides findings on their implementation and results to date.

Table 14: Observed innovations aimed at engaging Canadians

Innovations for Engaging Canadians	
VCA 1	Thematic campaigns and niche approaches to engage audiences - reaching out to professional associations and the private sector to engage experts with a wide range of backgrounds and experiences; often with an emphasis on specific skills relevant to targeted priority sectors. Active VCA participation in relevant industry/sector conferences, collaboration through institution-owned communications channels, as well as by maintaining communication with these groups and inviting them to participate or support VCA events and campaigns
VCA 2	An active campaign to establish relationships with diaspora Canadians centred on building partnerships with relevant ethno-cultural organizations and networks. Jointly planned publicity and programming. Some capacity development to support joint efforts. Engagement with a Bachelor's level international studies program. Students were assigned research to support a VCA supported urban food security project in Lima. Four themes identified for student exploration: networking, marketing, policy, and land/water use. Liaison occurred through the VCA country office. Final presentations were made over Skype. Since replicated with other study programs and other projects.
VCA 3	The VCA engages the public through partnerships with Canadian organizations – non-profit, government and private sector. Partnerships may be based on alignments of interest around programming topics such as criminal justice reform, enterprise development, or on VCA strategic challenges, for instance branding and reaching new

Innovations for Engaging Canadians

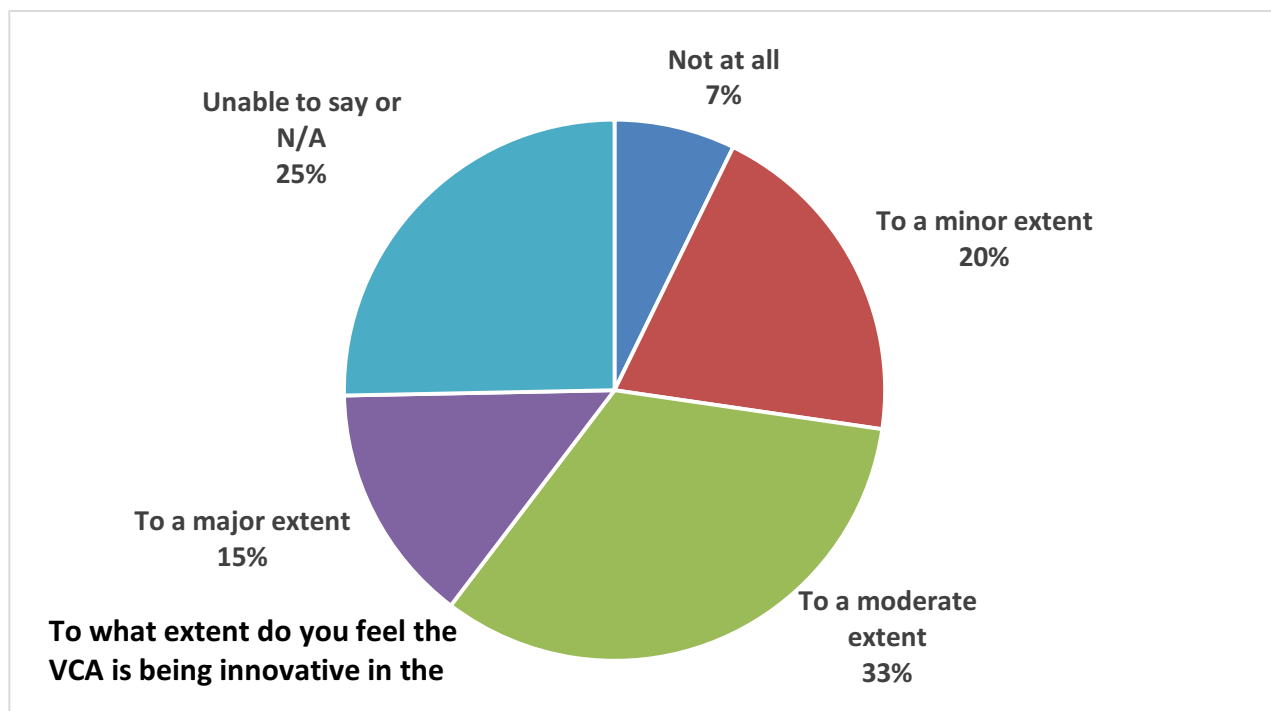
	audiences.
VCA 4	The VCA maintains a network of students for VCA work in developing countries at the chapter level – leadership training offered, including practical management skills (e.g., RBM/M&E). Exposure to development content, also. Chapters are active in the design and delivery of learning events, with content support from headquarters. South-North fellows engage as well. Decentralized growth strategy such that chapters can themselves sign people up. Opportunities for chapters to feed into decision-making at headquarters.
VCA 5	VCA manages a program with Canadian companies in which employees spend a short period of time as a volunteer with a DCP. The VCA assists with recruitment, provides orientation and supports the placement through to a debriefing. The firm covers employee replacement costs as well as service fees to the VCA. A variation on this theme is to provide a similar range of services to post-secondary institutions wishing to provide student exposure to development contexts.

Source: 3rd year Annual reports from VCA's, 2018, KILs

b) Innovation – perceptions of effects on Engaging the Canadian Public

Returned and active Canadian volunteers were asked the extent to which they feel the VCA (to which they were most recently attached) is being innovative in the way it engages with the Canadian public. In their responses, just under half indicated that innovation was occurring to a moderate (33%) or major (15%) extent. One quarter of respondents indicated that they were unable to make a judgement on this. There is no appreciable difference in the distribution of responses by gender. Across VCAs, the dominant response was “moderate” in nine VCAs, while the dominant response was “major” in one. The responses “minor” or “not at all” did not predominate with any VCAs (Chart 17 below).

Chart 17: Volunteer perceptions regarding innovation in VCA public engagement programming (n=803)



Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Volunteer Survey

Asked to name innovations with the most promise, most volunteer respondent concentrated at a tactical

level. There were lots of comments about the utility of social media including the use of photos and videography to tell the story. On-line volunteer support mechanisms were mentioned as well. More tactile forms of communication were also mentioned though to a slightly lesser degree. These included face-to-face, “showcasing” type participation in meetings/trade fairs, the preparation of content newsletters, and the insertion of articles and postings in local newspapers. The second largest mentions from groupings were around university study and workplace volunteer opportunities. The value of local volunteer group/chapters was also mentioned.

Results from the E-survey indicate that “strategic private sector collaboration and partnerships” were among the most important innovations having the greatest promise. The responses suggest that developing partnerships with private sector, expanding a partner’s international network, strengthening government collaboration at local and national levels, developing more partnerships with NGOs and government along with Canadian NGOs, were all part of strategic steps in assisting the organizations to innovate.

Several of the VCAs are engaging the private sector in Canada to widen their support network and strengthen their DCP capacities. Strategic Canadian partnerships were being brokered with organisations to share knowledge on gender-related violence and justice, agro-ecological techniques and international development. Some of VCAs are also partnering with other international NGOs to assist in the design and evaluation of curriculum materials for the youth employment centers and which includes an assessment of livelihood curriculum. Examples were found in VCA reports where the DCPs diversify their product range and improve their marketing through the connection to Canadian private sector companies and improve the quality of their product and presentation.

Some of the VCA programs are also designed with strong corporate linkages using an impact investment model whereby volunteers are stimulating start-ups in the South using financing support from the North. Private entrepreneurs are linked to southern entrepreneurs who are identified through technical assistance from the VCA. Strategic private sector collaboration is also taking place through placing highly skilled volunteers directly from the private sector into similar agencies in the southern world where their skills can be directly transferred.

Engaging with Canadian universities/colleges and students in volunteering

Three of the VCAs are engaged in significant effort on university/college campuses to promote their work and increase the awareness and knowledge of Canadian post-secondary students on issues of international development. Some of these VCAs are also engaged in supporting work with university entities to engage students in applied research which can support DCPs in solving problems and improving their approaches in the field. Interviews with the volunteers and staff of the VCAs describe their work at the university level as a lifelong engagement process to build commitment in the volunteer sector. Post-secondary institutions are also taking the lead on “indigenization” of their curricula, academics, support staff and student population which is deemed progressive.

Box 8: Changing women's lives through innovation

Vets without Borders (VWB) has been working across several countries particularly in some of the most remote areas of Sub Saharan Africa to provide veterinary support in the agriculture sector. In Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, bio-waste management and training in manure and other agricultural waste products has led communities to reduce environmental degradation and increase animal health. In Ghana, livestock and agriculture production training by volunteers has focused on the lack of irrigation structures and erratic rainfall. With the addition of livestock production and proper feed management during dry season, farmers have been able to supplement their agricultural income (Annual narrative report, year 3). Three innovations of note are set out below:

Fielding of diaspora veterinarian volunteers. This has had a favorable impact on the local communities and farmers groups, especially those led by women. Language and cultural familiarity are factors, along with a gender sensitive dimension. Diaspora veterinarians in Ghana, for instance, have been able to use their technical skill in improving animal health through their engagement of women's groups in northern and southern Ghana. Traditionally, animal rearing has been male dominated with little access of women to both animal ownership and technical support. Through consultation and encouragement from diaspora male volunteers trained on gender sensitive approaches, women have been given access to important technical expertise and innovative approaches to animal rearing.

Communicating stories of change. Like other VCAs in the program with a technical focus, VWB has honed much of its engagement work at home on veterinary training and professional entities and has focused its messaging on stories of change based on partner developments. Increasingly, VWB complements the more traditional newsletters and blogging including video productions. And, social messaging, the power of returned veterinarians speaking to their peers has been influential on their ability to recruit. A communications tool was developed for the Volunteers for Healthy Animals and Healthy Communities (V4H2) project, which helped volunteers understand and better convey VWB/SVSF's key messages through their public engagement activities. A variety of forms of communications about the V4H2 project were disseminated including VWB/SVSF's 'postcards from the field' series, "The Big Picture" quarterly newsletters, and volunteer blogs.

Complementing bilateral programming. VWB has also demonstrated strategic innovation in the VCP by integrating and linking its own volunteers to technical assistance demands created in ongoing bilateral funded programs. One large scale GAC supported food security in West Africa was supported by VWB in order to embed much needed veterinarian services in the implementation process which enabled the program to more fully focus on local needs and capacity building. This added valued of volunteerism to the program was able to improve the outputs of the bilateral program by widening the reach and deepening the vet technical support to women's groups in hard-to-reach areas for government.

3.8 Gender Equality

3.8.1 Has the program (GAC and the general pattern of response by VCAs) put in place measures to achieve gender equality outcomes (decision making, realization of their human rights, access to and control of resources and benefits of development)?

- a) How have gender equality strategies for the VCAs and local partners enhanced women's decision making opportunities?
- b) What policies, strategies, plans and compliance measures have the VCAs and local partners put in place for the realization of human rights by females (women and youth) on an equal basis with males (men and youth)?
- c) What policies, strategies, plans and compliance measures have the VCAs and local partners put in place in pursuit of equal access to and control of resources?
- d) To what degree has GAC's Gender Equality Policy been mainstreamed into VCA program and management structures to ensure program results?
- e) How compliant have the VCAs been towards meeting the GAC benchmarks and the actions/ targets set in their own gender strategy?
- f) What targets and strategies related to volunteers and their numbers by sex have been influenced by GE?

3.8.2 To what extent has the program become more gender sensitive, i.e., incorporating gender analysis and gender equality perspectives?

- a) To what extent have the VCAs incorporated and mainstreamed gender data analysis across their results frameworks (PMF), baseline, and monitoring/evaluation tools and processes?
- b) To what extent are women and youth voices being heard and given agency at all levels of the VCA programs and on which types of platforms?
- c) What gender equality performance data and targets are being collected and monitored to maximize and ensure full and equitable participation of men and women in the VCA (volunteers and beneficiaries)?
- d) To what extent is training, capacity-building and education on gender equality mainstreamed within the VCA, its partners and its programming?
- e) To what extent have the partners become more gender-sensitive in their program implementation and monitoring on the ground?
- f) To what extent has the VCA utilized performance monitoring data on gender equity to inform project management decision-making and strategic improvements to the program?

3.8.1 Measures to Achieve Gender Equality Outcomes

Findings: The VCP focus on GE is helping to strengthen organizational capabilities to mainstream GE, develop strategies and find innovative approaches to ensure access to and control of resources. The evaluation also found evidence that the voice of women and youth in decision-making at managerial and grassroots levels had increased and in some cases, it was helping to address structural barriers to human rights.

The VCP has set high standards on GE with the VCAs and their DCPs striving to ensure that commitment levels are raised and that the understanding among staff and beneficiaries is developed. Despite the fact that Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) was launched after the VCP began, GAC's cross-cutting framework on GE, the contribution agreements and program design have pushed all participants, including VCAs, volunteers, DCPs and beneficiary communities, to new levels of GE recognition. Since the FIAP, the GE priorities have intensified efforts among at least some of the VCAs. Several strategies are used by the VCA's and DCPs to ensure that GE results are achieved:

- Mainstreaming of GE across all the program activities, modalities and stakeholder inputs with a focus on behavior change
- Training and capacity-building within the VCA and its partners
- Gender sensitivity in the selection, orientation, and placement of volunteers
- Active engagement of men in the process of GE advocacy and behavioral change activities
- Partnerships with key GE expert organizations and communications groups to promote GE

Practices aimed at influencing GE systems change are illustrated in Box 9 and 10.

a) VCA/Partner Gender Equality Commitments - effects on women's decision-making, promoting and protecting women's rights and access to productive resources

An analysis of field data, VCA annual reports, LMs, and PMFs point to a strong GE focus in program design, implementation, and policy development among VCAs and their partners. The concept of GE is embraced and promoted by all VCAs as part of their mandate and enshrined in their operational guidelines. Strategies for GE are written into VCA PIPs. In practice, some are more effective and intentional than others in demonstrating responsiveness to GE through their project reporting.

Several design innovations in program delivery have reinforced GE, including: S-S linkages, diaspora volunteerism and experience-sharing, offering relevant and value-added opportunities for partners to learn from each other (see section on Innovation). Some VCAs, less experienced in integrating a GE perspective into their programming, have taken foundational steps in this regard. For example, during Year 3, one VCA created a Gender Roadmap to guide the implementation of gender-inclusive strategies across the whole of the organization. The tool outlines a framework for strategic implementation – programs, governance and operations. The same VCA also drafted a Gender Statement, outlining a commitment to GE as a key determinant to accomplishing the organization's mission.

Over the period, VCAs have made efforts to invest in female-owned and/or led businesses. For example, one VCA presently has more than 50% of its partner organizations having at least one female founder. Some of the VCAs are aiming to maintain at least a 50/50 split of women/men led businesses in their portfolio, which is a positive step towards redressing the lower number of female entrepreneurs.

The evaluation team found that several of the VCAs were promoting the participation of women in decision-making at national, regional and community levels. As one DCP E-survey respondent said: "Now women in different communities are becoming more and more often part of the councils that make decisions. Before, women in the same communities, even when they were part of the committees they were not heard, but now through different processes women feel more empowered and they speak out more often".

The evaluation team found a diversity of experience in how project design and policy strategies for VCAs have enhanced women's decision-making opportunities. Some VCA annual reports point out that capacity-building on GE, the cross-fertilization of partners sharing at conferences, support for scaling-up models of GE that work, and the provision of volunteer support are the main strategies used in pursuit of GE outcomes. VCA examples of volunteer placements which have worked closely with senior management of NGOs or private sector agencies have made an impact on restructuring the space for women to influence and engage with senior level members of organizations. One example of this was found in Sri Lanka where a volunteer gender advisor fully engaged the senior management of a prominent garment and textile company in reflecting on a study of GE within their female-dominated workforce (70,000 employees, 70% women, mostly low-skilled workers). The gender analysis conducted by the volunteer resulted in the development of a gender strategy which now drives an organizational change management process that is targeting 20% of women in management positions by 2020 (*see Boxes 9 and 10 for an illustrative GE example*).

VCAs and DCPs were making significant efforts to ensure that women and youth were being heard in what are often male-dominated contexts and traditional settings. A content review of VCA reports suggests a large number of strategies were being used to achieve this. E-survey results from DCPs suggest that over 53% of DCPs indicated that they “agree” women and youth participate in decision-making and are being consulted within their VCA partnership under the VCP. Over 35% indicated that they ‘strongly agree’ and only 1.43% said they ‘disagree’ that women/ youth participate in decision-making.

N-S, S-S current and returned volunteers were asked to “name the most significant improvement seen during the time of their assignment, even if it was not anticipated from the outset”. DCP representatives were asked a similar question. Gender inclusion and participation surfaced as the most significant improvement across all three groups. Respondents commented on how the GE focus had heightened gender awareness and inclusion strategies and often resulted in women occupying more space within management and serving on more decision-making bodies within organizations. Mention was made of the following:

- Growth in number of women employed
- A larger proportion of top positions occupied by women
- Significant participation of women in agricultural income-generating activities
- Greater openness and acceptability for women’s participation in activities
- Higher commitment levels to equality between women and men within the organizations
- Increased income for women’s groups and youth business plans
- Communications and awareness-raising activities on women’s rights and GE
- Training of female staff was improved and valued

S-S volunteers reported in the E-survey that their VCA partnership had been a positive influence regarding women’s participation on decision-making platforms and in events, as well as had strengthened the DCP’s capabilities to handle gender issues within and outside of the organization. Empowerment and autonomy of women, along with the improvement of their political, social, economic and health status, were identified as key outcomes based on the VCA support to DCPs. One volunteer reported that the following changes were taking place in response to the E-survey: “Promoting equality and equity in education, empowering women to play a more active role in decision-making both within and outside the family”, “political participation of women (advancing democracy in VCA’s project design, management & implementation”, “inclusion of women in decision making entities”.

Evidence from the field visits in Senegal, Ghana, Honduras and Peru also suggest that the selection of VCA partners has also been a major factor in enhancing women’s voice at the country and partner level. For instance, in Senegal the large scale nature of the VCA emphasis on women’s empowerment and the focus on GE by all the six DCPs in the country has resulted in more awareness at national level of the need for women’s voices, particularly in the agriculture, and SME sector. The VCA partners represent some of the most influential agricultural cooperatives in the country and have been able to ensure that women are well-represented on national platforms. The capacity-building processes supported through S-N exchange programs have further exposed women to new models of cooperatives, to opportunities to ask questions concerning governance and to gain the confidence to engage more fully in these processes. Women in the cooperative organisations shared their experiences and started questioning their organizational structures and embarking on a process of how to make these structures more democratic and responsive to the needs of their membership.

b) Promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls

The evaluators encountered a few instances of VCAs putting in place measures with their local partners to ensure that all levels, including the national levels, were being challenged to ensure the realization of women’s and girls’ rights. Here, VCAs have engaged with state structures and experienced GE partners to

improve laws with regard to enhancing reproductive health rights of women, to gaining greater access to land rights, and to enhancing access to education for girls. Some of the VCAs were helping improve “access to justice” through measures aimed at aligning the function of the judiciary system with the latest laws on GE and women’s rights. For instance, one VCA in Ghana has adopted strategies to protect the rights of women and girls. Under the ‘Court Watch Project’, a gender-based violence court has been established to monitor the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act in Ghanaian Courts²¹. So far, about six courts have been established under the project which has proven to be effective in upholding the rights of women and girls, especially in communities that have very little regard for the rights of women according to FGD with local legal volunteers and N-S volunteers in Ghana. There is a similar VCA initiative showing strong results in Tanzania.

In terms of addressing gender-based violence, a VCA Coordinator in Ghana said: “One DCP has established a toll-free telephone hotline which provides the platform for female Senior High students to call in and report issues of sexual harassment and abuse against them either at the community or school level”. In another case, a VCA Representative stated: “One initiative right now is the development of a virtual course on violence against women, one for member organizations and the other for the private sector”.

The E-survey responses by returned volunteers revealed that there was a wide variety of measures VCAs and local partners were putting in place to address the promotion and protection of women and girls’ rights and that the intensity of these efforts depended, not surprisingly, on the VCA’s choice of partners, their orientation toward GE and their level of capacity to address the GE focus. Volunteers suggested that where the capacity/orientation toward GE was weak, there is a need for organizational strengthening and training on advocacy for women’s rights and more women’s participation and involvement in meetings and conferences, more visibility to their activities and attention to commitments to promote women’s rights. Interviews with volunteers also suggest that the visibility of Canadian Volunteers was having a unique impact on Southern governments improving the policy environment for gender-responsiveness in the justice system. The direct involvement of the Canadian Volunteers and their physical presence in courts during case trial, direct engagement with the prosecutors of domestic violence cases heightened their visibility and the judicial systems uptake of gender sensitive approaches being introduced. For instance, Canadian Volunteer monitoring of the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act in Ghana’s Courts played a significant role in ensuring some courts were more gender friendly. Policy wise, the volunteers contributed significantly to the development of an abridged version of the Domestic Violence Act which has been adopted by the Ghanaian government, and the judiciary.

Mentions made by volunteers and DCP staff on GE initiatives and results are highlighted in Table 15.

Table 15: Volunteer and DCP reported initiatives and results in Gender Equality

On girls’ empowerment programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We are tackling harmful (gender) social norms in refugee camps with young women and young men through an innovative theatre approach” • “Volunteers trained in feminism and gender equality go to the community (schools, cultural centers, ministry office events, fairs, etc.) to give workshops on these topics” • “The creation of ‘girls’ spaces” to provide remedial training in IT and mentorship has improved the participation and completion of female hub participants in the training program”
Gender responsive training and capacity-building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Through mentoring, women have been able to express their need for day care services in the workplace” • “We are raising the interest of women through their participation in pilot projects” • “The strategic analysis workshop with rural women from all over Burkina Faso has

²¹ Ghana’s Domestic Violence Act was passed in 2007 as a policy strategy in ending domestic violence

	been a great moment of exchange and sharing between rural women”
Gender-sensitive reproductive health issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We have produced a sexual and reproductive health education guide” • “Former female sex workers have been trained as peer educators for sexual and reproductive health rights awareness and sensitization activities”
Sustainable livelihoods and empowerment activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Seed funding for small projects has quick impacts. Sometimes, small seed funds are used to unleash the full potential of solicitors, especially groups of women. A small amount of funding (less than \$10,000 per project) can accelerate or quadruple their profitability” • “Training women in non-traditional trades has created employment for young women the area of residential construction”
Addressing gender-based violence	<p>“VCAs are strengthening the partners’ capacity to put into practice gender training. Topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing fair treatment between women and men in women's social relationships • women's awareness of their power in decision-making • financial autonomy of women in small business development • gender equality in the context of a rights-based approach”

c) Increasing access /control of women to productive resources and benefits of development

Almost all the VCAs maintain a women and youth-oriented economic empowerment emphasis to their programming. VCA strategies include:

- Strengthening agricultural cooperatives particularly for women and youth
- Advocating for women to obtain access to traditional ‘family’ lands which are normally given to men, even after her spouse has passed away
- Helping women learn more sustainable and eco-friendly farming practices
- Helping women diversify, add value and innovate in relation to their produce
- Supporting women to create and identify a ready market for their farm produce
- Strengthening women’s small business start-ups by providing seed capital
- Empowering women and youth to learn to market and develop their businesses and other ventures
- Working with existing small and medium businesses to mainstream gender initiatives to ensure that more women and vulnerable groups are reached

Some of the VCA programs have been designed to integrate economic empowerment as a first step towards women’s overall empowerment. In the field visits, the evaluators observed that VCAs tended to ensure that their main target groups were vulnerable women and youth in rural and urban settings, and would provide additional services to them to improve their enterprises and their agricultural or other products. Some of the VCAs take a value chain approach in engaging not only female-owned or women’s cooperatives, but ensuring that all institutions and partners along the value chain are sensitive to ensuring gender equality within their organisations and activities.

Some of the VCAs were also taking steps to ensure that their DCPs had gender strategies and were developing more gender-friendly production and marketing models. In Tanzania for instance, it was observed that there were deep-rooted traditions that systematically excluded women from benefitting from family economic activities. Using the Gender Action Learning System (GALS), the community reflected upon and subsequently changed community practices. This included adding women to the irrigation steering committee as well as establishing a women’s cooperative made up of 20 women. As a result, the DCP observed that the Chairman of the community has become a gender champion. While he was initially comparing women’s intelligence with that of the ‘chickens they raised’, he now insists that women attend all community meetings: “Through training I learned about involving a woman in economic

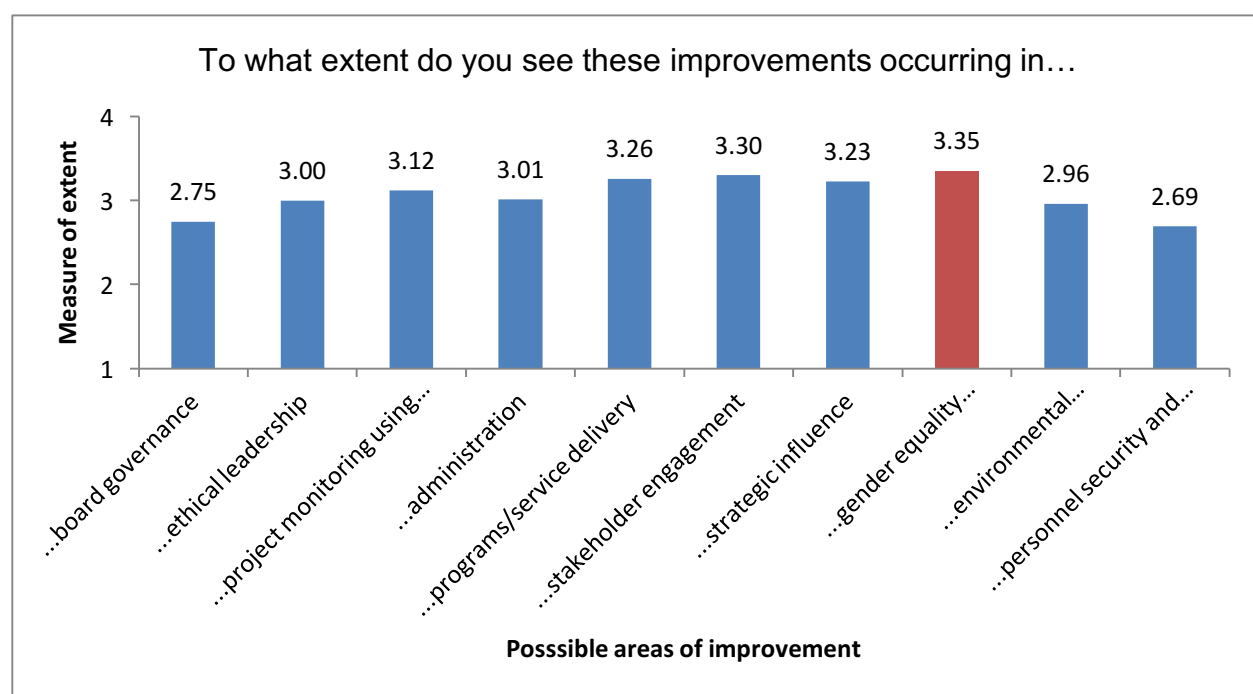
activities at all stages. I went back home and told my wife the new things I learned. I also asked for forgiveness because I was considering her as someone without any potential” (VCA 3rd Annual Report).

In the E-survey, returned volunteers identified seed funding, participation in meetings at the office, community and district levels, exposure visits, technical advisory support, and enterprise coaching as important empowerment strategies for improving livelihoods and access to resources. In Year-3 program reports, three VCAs suggest that a key lesson emerging in the entry point for GE programs is the focus on economic empowerment as it translates into voice, agency and decision-making opportunities.

d) Gender Equality Considerations Integrated into VCA Policies, Programs & Projects

DCP E-survey responses indicate that, since the partnership with the VCAs, their organizations have seen improvements in relation to GE policies and practices to a major (48.2%) or a moderate (33.6%) extent. Expressed as weighted averages, Chart 18 below shows the significance of these reported improvements as compared to other possible areas (e.g., board governance, ethical leadership, project monitoring, administration, service delivery, and the like).

Chart 18: Comparative analysis of DCP perceived improvements in capacity (1=Not at all, 4 = To a major extent) (n=283)



Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Volunteer Survey

Volunteer responses to the same line of questioning similarly highlight improvements in gender equality policies and practices. Sixty-nine percent of volunteers currently in the field see improvements to a moderate (38.5%) or major (29.7%) extent. As compared to other possible areas of improvement, gender equality policies and practices rank second based on weighted averages. The picture is similar among returned volunteers. About 60% indicate improvements in gender equality policies and practices to a moderate (36.9%) or major (22.9%) extent. As one Volunteer reported: “Gender mainstreaming should be embedded in every partnership. If the global south partners aren’t interested, and won’t move forward in advancing women and girls’ equality then partnership agreements should end with these organizations”.

Self-assessment by the DCPs along with volunteer assessments shows a lack of improvement on GE equality in some instances. About 15% of DCP respondents indicated little or no improvement regarding

the integration of GE policies and practices, while current and returned volunteer assessments of the same were closer to 25%. Volunteer assessments can be summed up as follows:

- GE strategies and training provide solid general orientation
- In the field, however, this may not be sufficient to help volunteers navigate the dynamics of their particular setting
- In the absence of contextually attuned GE expertise, it is difficult to know how to proceed

Going beyond organizational improvements to those experienced among the beneficiaries, 80% of current volunteers (and 69.9% of returned volunteers) were of the view that there have been moderate to major changes with respect to the social organization/participation of women and youth beneficiaries. Returned and active volunteers viewed the change in relation to women's participation as the greatest change in comparison to other changes occurring such as: the livelihood status of beneficiaries, and environmental protection and enhancement. Thirteen percent of current volunteers and 21% returned volunteers noticed minor or no change with regards to social organization and/or participation of women and youth beneficiaries of their VCA partners.

Current and returned volunteers as well as national volunteers were asked to explain if their expectations had been met in relation to the partner's progress and achievements. On matters related to GE, volunteers provided a range of responses, with most registering more positive than negative ones. Examples are set out below in Table 16.

Table 16: Volunteer assessments against expectations on Gender Equality

Beyond Expectation	Below expectation or just meeting it
"I was told that the women-headed businesses had little chance of building a client base for long term sustainability. Fortunately, I was able to facilitate discussions with several potential clients. Through those experiences, I was able to help them develop their brand and messaging for future engagements."	"I was expecting a more open-minded partner and a better reception on gender issues. But the openness is not yet where it should be to implement a program focused on gender equality without hiring a professional---respected (not voluntary)"
<p>"Women realized the importance of advancing the organization through knowledge of their mission and the sharing of common interests."</p> <p>"We were able to help the gender equality situation while being there for the construction of the irrigation scheme".</p> <p>"I did not think that on issues of gender equality and inclusion of young people, partners would reach this level so quickly within the organization-widen policies to take into account GE... elaborate as well as people designated for positions and ensure implementation, I think it's invaluable" (National Volunteers' perspective)</p>	"I expected that there would be more gender policies and that partners would be more interested and engaged on this theme."

Source: E-survey results, Volunteer Expectations in relation to GE, 2018

e) Compliance of VCAs towards meeting the GAC benchmarks and their own targets

The SDGs position gender equality as a pre-condition for sustainable development. With the SDGs and GAC's new FIAP, even more support is aligned for VCAs to develop and revise existing gender policies. All VCAs under the VCP have gender-specific policies which directly inform their programming. Some of the

VCAs have started consultations on what changes will be needed to bring their policies into line with Canada's FIAP.

Up to this point some VCAs have used gender audits and assessments with the DCPs and lower level organizations; VCA gender advisors have been involved with local DCP staff to carry out these assessments. The audits or assessments typically identify strengths and weaknesses that pave the way for gender action plans or strategies, helping the partners to (re)align action plans for the coming year. Interviews with DCPs suggest that some of them have been able to appoint internal staff to ensure that action plans are being carried out and that there are channels for staff to provide feedback on the progress of these action plans in their quarterly and monthly reporting.

Efforts are being made by the VCAs to orient, support and consult on GE policies to ensure compliance with their partners in the field. DCP survey responses reveal that over 75% of the DCPs are well-informed of VCA gender policies and strategies: 44% were informed to a 'major extent', 32% informed to a 'moderate extent'. E-survey results with volunteers also suggest that they were informed about their VCA's GE strategy and policies. The survey showed that 82% of volunteers are informed to moderate and major extents. At the same time, just over 15% of volunteers suggested they had only a minor amount of information or no information in relation to the GE strategy of their current VCAs.

Regarding the conversion from knowledge of GE commitments to actual partnership activity, the DCP E-survey suggests consistency in the work of DCPs through the partnership, and the VCAs commitment to promote gender and social inclusion. Over 84% of DCP responses indicate moderate to high levels of consistency, while 10% believe such consistency is minor or none existent. Current and returned volunteers also see favorable congruence between partnership work on GE and VCA GE commitments, as shown in Table 17.

Table 17: Volunteer perceived congruence between partnership work on GE and VCA GE commitments

Volunteer Type	Moderate Alignment	Major Alignment
Current North-South & South-South Volunteers	30.79%	50.00%
Returned North-South & South-South Volunteers	27.76%	39.92%

Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Volunteer Survey

That said, volunteers also reported "under performance" regarding integration of GE with as many as 25% reporting non-alignment. Returned volunteers indicate 26% (where "minor" is 19.2%, and "not at all" is 6.5%); current volunteers indicate 17% (where "minor" is 14.7%, and "not at all" is 2.1%).

f) Involvement of Volunteers in Gender Equality

Several of the VCAs were found to be implementing strategies to ensure gender targets were met in relation to the number of volunteers that were sent on a yearly basis and the type of volunteer mandates. E-survey results reveal that most volunteers were involved in GE and social inclusion activities, either directly or indirectly. This came through in all forms of evaluative interactions with the volunteers. In the volunteer E-survey, 94% indicated this was the case. Among them:

- 36.9% indicated involvement in GE and Social inclusion activities 'to a major extent'
- 36.1% to a moderate extent
- 21.4% to a minor extent

At the same time, 34% of DCPs reported that their organisation is involved in GE and social inclusion activities to a "major extent" and 39% to a 'moderate extent'. Only 10% of DCPs 'do not work' on GE and social inclusion in their organisations. In their survey, just under half (47.6%) reported that GE and gender

strategies were the second most important contribution volunteers were making toward DCPs' work with the first most important contribution being related to communications and consultation.

DCPs were asked to name the most significant contribution that volunteers have made regarding GE and social inclusion. Most responses relate to the development of policy and procedures in gender strategies and practices more specifically:

- Facilitating gender training activities and advising on gender policy
- Developing a monitoring and evaluation system for gender mainstreaming
- Product development and gender trainings
- Training on gender activities and advising on the gender policy
- Systematizing cases of victims of gender-based violence
- Building manuals to mainstream the gender focus in information services for young people
- Developing strategies for the social inclusion of people with disabilities in GE
- Providing advice on audio-visual production and reflections on gender

Interviews with returned volunteers and Canadian partners show that volunteers are coming back to Canada with a "greater appreciation of the importance of a gendered perspective". Interviews revealed that this heightened appreciation could be traced to witnessing prevailing gender behaviors and/or being exposed to GE champions and organisations working on GE in the global south.

3.8.2 Measures to Achieve Gender-Sensitivity by Means of Incorporating Gender Analysis and Gender Equality Perspectives

Findings: The value addition which volunteers were making to the GE agenda was clearly visible through management advice, technical support, research, and monitoring expertise they were bringing along with new ways of thinking concerning gender mainstreaming and its recognition as a high priority for VCA's and their partners.

All VCAs are operating with gender strategies and most are tracking results with sensitivity to the cross cutting theme. There is some variance in rigour regarding gender-disaggregated reporting.

a) Extent of gender analysis and inclusion of gendered perspectives in VCP project decision-making, results frameworks, data analysis and monitoring processes

VCAs have mainstreamed gender approaches to data analysis in their programming. The LMs and PMFs of the VCAs have gender-specific 'Expected Results', which are clearly linked to measurable gender-based indicators and targets. Several VCAs were providing rigorous reporting in relation to GE in their baseline studies which provided the context of GE and status, along with annual reporting indicating how they have been able to achieve the stated targets. To a very large extent, VCAs had mainstreamed gender analysis in their reporting frameworks as well as their M&E processes. Most of the VCAs were collecting gender-disaggregated data as a way of responding to gender dynamics and targets in their programs. There were a few (three of the 12 VCAs) who were weaker in collecting detailed sex-disaggregated data across their project monitoring frameworks. Examples of their gender analysis was best contained in their PMFs which captured the number of volunteers (by sex), the inputs and outputs achieved by sex, in addition to the outcome results.

Most VCAs are collecting both quantitative and qualitative data on gender to ensure responsiveness to gender targets. Their project LMs and PMFs have objective variable indicators on gender which are

measured quantitatively. However, most of the VCAs were also collecting qualitative data such as case studies in order to demonstrate significant changes in relation to perception, knowledge, attitude and behaviours.

The VCAs have extensively utilized monitoring data with clear linkages to their PMFs. Based on the results achieved on key GE indicators from their PMFs, the VCAs initiate or modify their program with their DCPs aimed at achieving greater GE and inclusion across their programming. The key area of the utilization of monitoring data by the VCAs was training and capacity-building of DCP staff, improving gender targeting of program beneficiaries. For instance, following the completion of a gender audit, one of the VCAs included more women in leadership and decision-making roles within their organization, while improving targeting of beneficiaries to include more vulnerable women, youth and persons with disabilities. Additionally, another VCA has also trained staff of its key government partner to collect gender-disaggregated data for reporting purposes.

b) Extent of capacity-building on GE at partner and DCP levels

Annual reports, survey responses and interview data reveal that to a very large degree VCAs and their partners were conducting extensive training, capacity building and mentoring on GE across the program. Gender advisors were tasked in many of the DCPs to ensure that internal staff capacity was built in order to conduct: training, research, gender assessments, coaching/mentoring, systems support and other types of capacity-building to ensure gender mainstreaming within the VCAs. Training and capacity building mostly targeted DCP staff, and beneficiaries of local organisations including women groups. One VCA Director put it this way:

“Our focus has been on consolidating partnerships and scaling them up, spreading its most successful models such as the Girls Empowerment Program (GEP) across countries (using the opportunity of African-wide meeting of partners that allowed cross-fertilization on experiences), enhancing a few initiatives with key private sector partners, using capacity-building and volunteer engagement as the main mechanisms for achieving gender equality”.

Training for staff of DCPs focus more on gender programming and organizational development (e.g., collecting and analysis gender-disaggregated data, monitoring and evaluation), leadership and mentorship. There were several examples of how volunteers were adding value and contributing to capacity-building of the DCPs: these include building capacity to put in place gender policies and gender action plans, helping organizations strengthen their governance structures by involving women, training and animation, fund management support, and the introduction of new approaches to sustainable development. Most importantly, the volunteers were conducting research and writing studies which would help influence policy level and programmatic change within the country. Examples of this were in Bolivia where the volunteers wrote studies on human rights violations among a minority group within the country. Examples of some of the key contributions of volunteers to the DCPs and their beneficiaries in relation to gender capacity-building include:

- Instructing women who will work /support gender committees and sexual harassment and discrimination committees on the basics of conflict management, active listening skills, complaint taking, public speaking, and leadership
- Identification of leadership needs, capacity-building to include more women in leadership, and awareness of need for succession planning in the organization
- Empowerment of farmers (especially women and youth farmers) to improve their livelihoods and have financial stability. Providing long-term improvement of the farmers access to training/services via training of the organization’s veterinarians and extension staff
- Documentation on the formation of basic concepts in gender for partner organizations. Talks and awareness-raising activities on International Women's Days on March 8 and International Days for the

Elimination of Violence Against Women on November 25

- Develop legal and educational tools that encourage the building of trust with victims who also seek the creation of more favorable conditions of access to justice for female victims of abuse within the legal system by providing adequate tools for defending women's rights

c) Gender-sensitivity in DCPs implementation and monitoring

Most of the DCPs were found to be gender-responsive based on the volunteer support, training and capacity-building. The E-survey suggests that observed changes in the DCPs' beneficiaries are moderately reflected in the social organization/participation of women and youth beneficiaries. DCP responses indicate that 49% saw 'major changes' in the organization and 37% saw the changes to a 'moderate extent' reflected in the social organization and participation of women and youth in the organization and its activities. Only 8% of DCPs reported 'minor' changes in relation to the social organizations and women and youth's participation. As reported in one KII: "One of the strategies deployed was to use men to lead the discussion and advocacy on gender issues. This reduced the risk of the perception that gender empowerment means making women more powerful than men".

The DCP E-survey results also suggest that the most significant changes reported by the DCP on enhanced GE results based on the VCA partnership included, for example, increased knowledge around gender, human rights, family law, sexual and gender-based violence. Some DCPs reported that they were able to mainstream and monitor GE in all their programs. They also reported that 'there has also been the recognition of the importance of the gender approach among officials of government partners', while others have learned to work directly with women with disabilities' to ensure GE and social inclusion.

Box 9: Influencing GE systems change with three key practices

Crossroads International influences GE with:

A Synergistic Approach to GE Programming: The approach involves placing skilled GE focused volunteers in a single mandate distributed across multiple partners/projects operating at multiple levels within a sector. This allows for an interplay of gender equality analysis, reporting and strategy between those stakeholders focused on change at community level and those focused on national reforms Crossroad's GE approach in Ghana's justice sector, for example, involves supporting volunteer legal literacy workers at community levels who are raising awareness of GE rights and continued abuses, and are documenting challenges women continue to face in accessing the justice system. At the same time volunteers at the national level are working on gender equality rights reforms in the justice system. The ability of local volunteers many of who are national, to share learning and key facts related to women's abuses at the local level is building an evidence base for national level stakeholders working with Crossroads in reforming the justice system at national level.

Network Weaving: Crossroads has set up an array of complementary partnerships with GE advocacy and organisations positioned in their field to bring about change. The presence of these additional organizations reinforces the programming of DCPs through the exchange of knowledge, skills and most importantly, strategic influence. In Ghana, for instance, Crossroads has provided international volunteers which have built on existing experience of partners dealing with highly vulnerable and at risk groups (sex workers in the inner city); the partners has existing programming in reproductive health and HIV counseling and has expanded their reach and depth in reaching beneficiaries through the VCA by supporting women's groups with alternative income generating activities such as micro enterprise initiatives and linking them with Canadian companies for improving product diversification and marketing. In other cases well established human rights organisations have built on their grass roots initiatives, local capacity and attained national recognition though the court watch monitoring program which includes links to Canada's justice professionals. Linking these Crossroad's southern partners with well-matched Canadian partners in the Gender equality field has assisted to expand their beneficiary base leading to a ripple effect in the protection and promotion of women's rights.

Economic Empowerment as an entry point for GE - At the same time, Crossroads considers economic empowerment as an entry point to addressing gender based violence, protecting women's human rights, and promoting women and girls' leadership. Crossroads has partnered with several southern partners promoting the rights of women in the agriculture, jewelry and cosmetic sectors through web based links in order to assist women build linkages internationally to strengthen their businesses. Partnerships with [Green Beaver Canada](#) has assisted women in Senegal improve their product line and diversify their cosmetics and soaps. Canadian private sector partnerships with women's groups in Ghana have also resulted in heightened visibility of women's' cooperative and small business in the jewelry/ bead industry in order to improve their marketing and international linkages on line. In all cases, these grassroots initiatives have been linked by Crossroads to national platforms to strengthen their business products, diversification, and marketing and ensure that women are strengthened as entrepreneurs in the global south.

Box 10: Transforming GE through a focus on leadership, capacity building and human rights

Oxfam-Québec has implemented the “Program ACCES Innovation” (PAI) which is intended mainly to reduce the inequalities between women and men, particularly in access to and control over the resources and benefits of development and the advancement of the human rights of women and girls. The program framework revolves around three themes: economic empowerment of women (AEF), combating violence against women and girls (VAWG) and women's transformative leadership (LTF).

Here are four examples:

- The 'Bongo Te Tika' project was implemented in the Democratic Republic of Congo which involved sensitization on violence against women and girls through social awareness. Following 32 writing workshops with 210 men and 600 women that enabled collection of their experiences and perceptions in relation to VAWG, a play was created and launched in February 2018. The piece was performed 44 times, and each performance was followed by a large scale discussion with the audiences. There will be 36 more performances in 2018-2019.
- In Burkina Faso, the "Restorative Women of Ouagadougou Street" project was completed this year (2018) and enabled 21 women to increase their income by an average of 40%. All the female beneficiaries of the project reported that the support of their spouse contributes positively to their personal development and that of their family. The project integrated a component which involved working with men to promote harmonious marital relationships, stimulating an increase in the level of control these women had over their occupations and their income, as well as reducing the risk of domestic violence.
- Through the project 'Reconstruction of the Social Fabric of the FEDEMUCC Organisations', the FEDEMUCC women in Colombia, have learnt the principles and values of a social economy, equality between women and men and the protection of the environment. In addition, women, men and youth in 4 of the 8 host municipalities, recognize the importance of a strong social fabric and the participation of young people for sustainable global development.
- In Benin, the 'Acceleration of Young Women's Enterprises in the Agriculture and Agri-food Sector' project allowed the development of 77 business plans and the creation of an innovation fund for the provision of production equipment. This saw many of the women and young women who participated in the project doubling their production capacity, with about 75% of them noticing growth in their income.

On partner capacity building, Oxfam-Québec has focused on the supporting several southern partners. Equality between sexes was defined as a priority theme by 33 of Oxfam-Québec's 75 partners, and 13 others defined GE as their key arena of strategic work. After specific GE support to 34 partners, 55% of the partners noted a significant improvement in gender mainstreaming skills in their programs, and in policy advocacy for women's rights. Other important GE initiatives have strengthened Oxfam-Québec's GE work including the integration of gender equality in fundraising with partners in Jordan, cultural adaptation of a violence prevention tool for youth and partners in Peru, and the women's transformative leadership project in Colombia. Two virtual meetings so far in the current program cycle have allowed for the exchange of GE tools, practices and experiences between volunteers from different countries and regions. All Oxfam-Québec projects include gender mainstreaming strategies, support the participation of women and girls in the sustainable development of their communities, their access to and control over resources and benefits of projects, as well as the promotion of their human rights. In addition, several projects, like those listed above, are specifically aimed at the empowerment of women and girls.

3.9 Environmental Sustainability

3.9.1 Has the program (GAC and the general pattern of response by VCAs) put in place measures to mitigate environmental risks and/or favour environmentally sustainable outcomes (adaptation to climate change, improved natural resource management, access to clean water and sanitation)?

- a) What is the extent to which environmental screening has been undertaken for the VCP?
- b) What is the extent to which VCAs have established environmental sustainability strategies, policies and/or plans?
- c) How satisfied are stakeholders that VCA environmental sustainability strategies / policies/ plans are effective in mitigating risks and/or favouring environmentally sustainable outcomes?
- d) What is the extent to which environmental sustainability strategies / policies / plans of VCA align with those of partner organisations? (To what extent do they contribute to improving upon or are themselves improved upon by those of partner organisations?)
- e) Is there any evidence that of environmental degradation as a result of the VCP program? If so, is there evidence of actions taken to remediate the damage and or improvement?
- f) Is there any evidence of environmental improvement/benefits as a result of the VCP program?

3.9.1 Evidence of Measures to Mitigate Environmental Risk or Favour Environmentally Sustainable Outcomes

Findings: Environmental sustainability is a key cross-cutting issue for GAC, in all programs and projects that it undertakes and supports, including the VCP. At the program level of the VCP, GAC has appropriately integrated environmental sustainability considerations at multiple levels, from screening proposals, to contracting, to the inclusion of management and reporting requirements with program VCAs.

All projects/VCAs are in strict compliance with environmental sustainability requirements of the VCP, though a few require adjustments to their trajectory to ensure yet more favourable outcomes in this respect.

An appropriate majority of projects see VCAs and both Canadian and DCP organizations aligned in their strategies, policies and plans related to environmental sustainability. Such alignment has resulted in recognizable and tangible improvements to the work of developing country partners in this respect.

VCP projects have demonstrated environmental improvements and/or benefits, across the world. Developing country partners point to the efforts and activities of volunteers as having made major contributions to their realization.

a) Extent of environmental screening by VCP

Environmental sustainability was included in the 2014 VCP-Call for Proposals. Applicant organisations were appropriately required to outline how best practices of environmental sustainability have been included in their proposed projects. This is in line with GAC's Environmental Integration Process (EIP), requiring that all international development initiatives undertake such an environmental analysis if they

pose anything more than “negligible environmental risk or opportunity”. Applicants were encouraged to consult *CIDA’s Policy for Environmental Sustainability*²², *Environment Handbook for Community Development Initiatives*²³, *Strategic Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan, and Program Proposals Handbook*²⁴, *Strategic Papers on Gender Equality, Environmental Sustainability and Governance*²⁵, as well as a few related others.

In the proposals submitted by applicants, as well as in project reporting by selected VCAs, environmental sustainability was to be included in the LM, PMF and in reports “at least to the immediate outcome level”. A plan for managing and monitoring environmental sustainability was a requirement of the VCP. In the *Partner Guidelines for Narrative Reports under Global Affairs Canada Contribution Agreement (International Assistance Programming)*, the following reporting guidance is provided: “Environmental sustainability: Reporting should validate the original environmental assessments and show how environmental considerations have been integrated. Reports should explain how environmental sustainability issues are being managed and discuss any environmental outcomes of the project.” Further, the VCP application process required that VCAs share their assessment of their DCPs’ capacities, experiences and resources for ensuring that program/project implementation is in line with environmental sustainability requirements and priorities of the VCP.

This reflects a program-wide consideration for environmental sustainability, requiring of VCAs that they approach this cross-cutting issue with intentional consideration of the implications of their outputs on environmental sustainability (e.g., including environment-related indicators to measure progress of measures to manage environmental effects). Applicant organisations to the VCP were also required to outline risks to the achievement of environmental results, as part of the risk and response analysis they were to provide in proposals.

Finally, all applications were screened by an environment specialist using the Environmental Integration Process – Screening Tool²⁶, to ensure that projects were in line with GAC requirements and priorities, in compliance with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA 2012). Despite numerous efforts, the evaluation team was not able to secure an interview with a GAC environment specialist to discuss this process. However, the evaluation team confirms that all projects were subject to an Environmental Integration Process (EIP) form, which has required VCAs to further develop their environmental objectives and practices (e.g., developing the PMF to include at least one environmental indicator at the immediate outcome level; sourcing environmental expertise; etc.). Finally, the December 2014 Performance Strategy of the 2015-2020 Program concluded that “[t]he VCP does not raise any major direct environmental concerns. Negative environmental impacts associated with the VCP are minimal...”.

On this point, with so many VCAs involved in supporting income generation and MSMEs, it is likely there may be projects which produce environmental impacts that have been or can be mitigated, even though these projects do not necessarily trigger CEAA concerns. In the same vein, it is likely that with these kinds of projects in particular, there are opportunities to enhance environmental sustainability.

A review of minutes from meetings between GAC and the VCAs reveals that environmental sustainability considerations were never raised (as compared with gender considerations, for instance, which were frequently discussed).²⁷ This in no way reflects a lack of interest on matters of environmental

²² http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2013/acdi-cida/E94-29-9-1-eng.pdf

²³ http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/funding-financement/environment_handbook-manuel_environnement.aspx?lang=eng

²⁴ <http://www.international.gc.ca/development-developpement/priorities-priorites/enviro/seapppp-eespppp.aspx?lang=eng>

²⁵ http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites/strategic_papers-documents_strategiques.aspx?lang=eng#part1a

²⁶ http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/funding-financement/screening_tool-outil_examen_prealable.aspx?lang=eng

²⁷ Minutes from meetings held on: 9 November 2015, 28 November 2016, 8 December 2016, 9 November 2017.

sustainability; for instance, of the 10 mission reports reviewed by the evaluation team, eight included either mention or visits to projects and project partners with an environmental sustainability component.²⁸ However, it is clear that environmental sustainability is of secondary or even tertiary concern to these missions, as the quality and quantity of environment-related reporting is limited. Given there are no significant environmental concerns raised through any other data collection for this evaluation, the evaluators interpret this low-level interest as reflective of the fact that there were few concerns needing to be flagged or addressed during these missions.

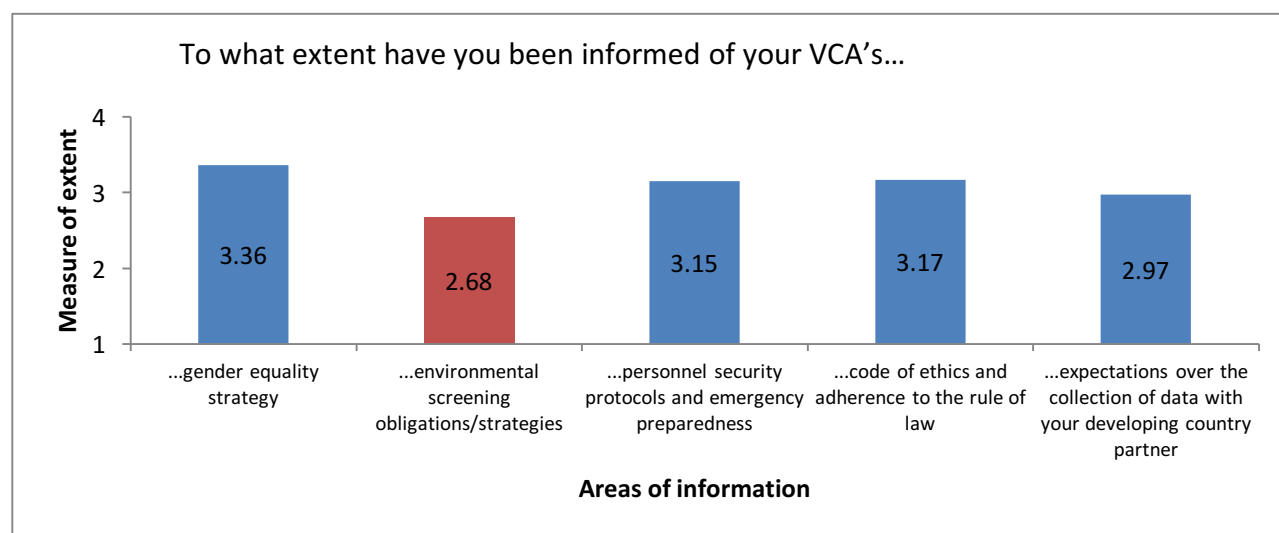
b) Environmental Sustainability Strategies/Policies/Plans of VCAs

Having received formal guidance on environmental sustainability in line with official GAC priorities, VCAs were largely left to develop their own strategies, policies and plans. A review of the project Contribution Agreements, PIPs, and 3rd Year Reports confirms that all funded VCA projects demonstrated written alignment with GAC requirements and priorities in their initial stages. Just beyond the mid-point of the program cycle, all VCAs remain in strict compliance with formal environmental sustainability obligations established by the program.

A few points merit being flagged at this stage. Of the 12 projects (and of the 15 VCAs), nine have environmental policies and/or strategies in place. Of the 12 projects, 10 have specific expert staff capacity in-house providing leadership on environmental sustainability issues. In other words, there are at least two projects that will require work to be done to ensure continued compliance with program-level requirements.

As compared with the other cross-cutting themes, it is clear that environmental sustainability is the least prioritised of the three. The experience of volunteers underscores this point. On average, when surveyed, volunteers consistently indicate that environmental sustainability matters receive relatively little attention by VCAs in training and at other moments of key programmatic communication.

Chart 19: Information received by the volunteer on the environment as compared to other cross cutting themes (1=Not at all, 4 = To a major extent) (n=828)



Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Volunteer Survey

²⁸ These include reports from the following missions: 28-30 October 2015, 11-22 January 2016, 26 September-5 October 2016, 20-30 October 2016, 31 October-8 November 2016, 21-24 November 2016, 22 February-2 March 2017, 12-26 October 2017.

Asked if they have been informed of their VCA's environmental screening obligations/strategies, about 40% of volunteers respond either 'not at all' or 'to a minor extent'. By comparison, 15% provide the same responses (i.e. 'not at all' or 'to a minor extent') when asked if they have been informed about the VCA's GE strategy. Of the 12 projects, three stand out as having limited environmental sustainability focus in their pre-mission training. At least one was specifically identified by volunteers as not providing adequate and "enforced" guidance on environmental sustainability reporting.

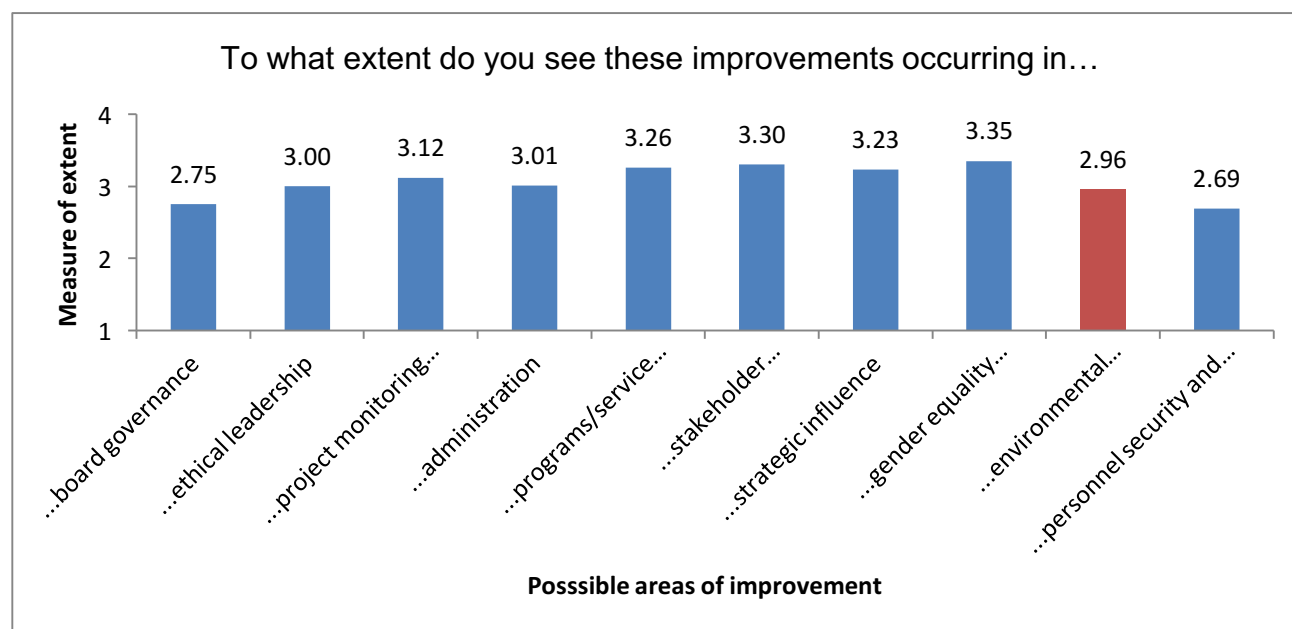
While GAC and the VCAs all demonstrate concern and sensitivity to climate change, the VCP does not have an explicit, program-wide carbon offset policy and programming expectation in place. This is a shortcoming, given the current critical importance of climate adaptation and mitigation measures in light of the VCP's global air travel outputs, including the flights of GAC staff, VCA staff and volunteers.

c) VCA Alignment with Strategies/Policies/Plans of Partner Organizations

Overall, most VCAs demonstrate strong alignment with the environmental sustainability strategies, policies and or plans of partner organisations. At the top level, VCAs have clearly taken environmental sustainability matters into consideration in the selection of their partners. One of the more proactive projects in this respect has involved the development of agro-ecologically oriented partnerships both in developing countries and in Canada, involving CSOs and university departments and institutes. It is also important to note that all projects have demonstrated innovativeness in this aspect of their partnership development: one project, which has not yet finalised its environmental strategy, actually has a significant and recognisable environmental sustainability orientation, in line with the priorities of the program as a whole.

Of the 12 VCP projects, 10 focus on awareness-raising, technical training and/or capacity-building of partner organisations, in line with shared environmental sustainability strategies, policies and/or plans. Across the board, the vast majority of DCPs indicate modest to considerable improvements in the way they operate overall.

Chart 20: Partner Perceptions of improvements by capacity type (1=Not at all, 4 = To a major extent) (n=277)



Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Developing Country Partner Survey

More than 66% of these organisations indicate improvements occurring in their environmental management practices. Clearly, the project partnership strategies and work are effectively contributing to

the capacity of developing country organisations as related to environmental sustainability activities.

d) Evidence of Environmental Degradation – with/without Remediation/Improvement

A review of program and project documents, interviews, survey data and case studies has to-date revealed no evidence of environmental degradation stemming from the VCP or any of its supported projects.

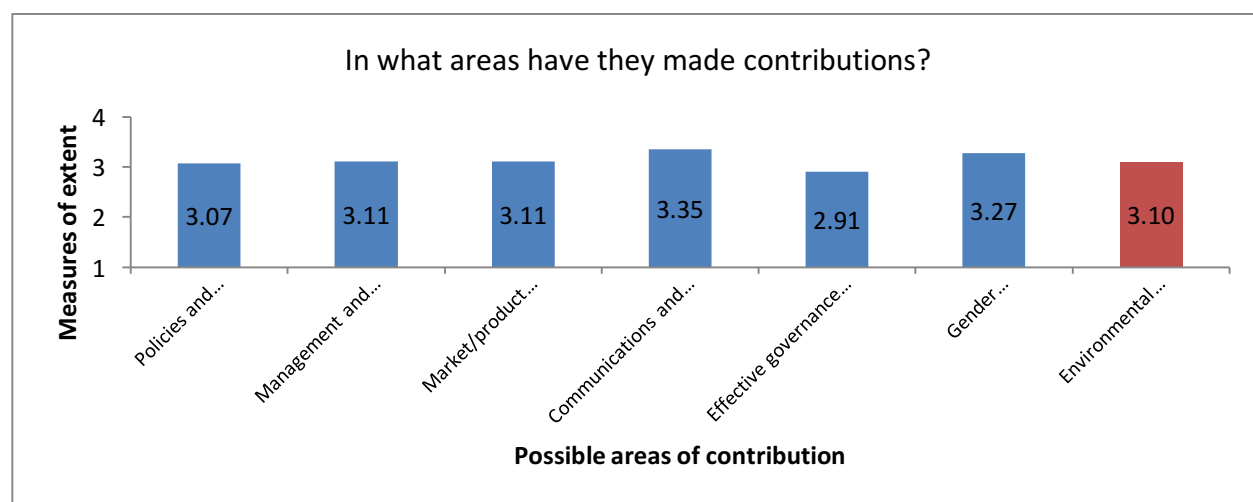
e) Evidence of Environmental Improvement/Benefits

While the VCP is not specifically environmentally-focused, it has had notable environment-specific and environmentally-related benefits, with volunteers making important contributions in this respect. A review of project documents as well as interview and focus group discussion materials indicates that all 12 projects have generated or contributed to environmental improvements/benefits and can be expected to continue doing so through to the end of the program cycle (barring any dramatic changes in VCA and partner approaches). A sampling of such reported improvements/benefits is provided by country, as follows:

- Tanzania: bio-waste management has been improved
- Philippines: improvements in rainwater and sewage management
- Peru: increased organic crops production
- Senegal: development and promotion of bio-pesticide use; pilot projects of gardens with solar energy
- Guatemala: working with major bottling company on plastics recycling
- Ghana: improved animal carcass disposal practices, thereby preventing disease and minimizing air pollution; promotion of solar energy technologies instead of kerosene for lighting
- Honduras: promotion of land rights in areas threatened by extractives industries
- Indonesia: greening campuses underway, with reduced use of styrofoam and plastics reported on university campuses
- Benin: implementation of sustainable waste management
- Globally: promotion of youth-led green businesses

On average, volunteers are perceived by DCPs as making moderate to major contributions to the improvements of organisations that are partnered with VCAs.

Chart 21: Partner perceptions of volunteer contributions, by topic area (1=Not at all, 4 = To a major extent) (n=277)



Source: VCP Evaluation - 2018 Developing Country Partner Survey

These contributions are being made and experienced by DCPs in a number of areas, including environmental protection/sustainability practices (see Box 11). This level of contribution is very high, given the range of other possible contributing factors. It should also be noted that the data indicates contributions to environmental protection/sustainability practices are lower than contributions to gender strategies for instance. This raises no concerns given the tripartite nature of the VCPs cross-cutting themes and the centrality of GE and other issues to the program.

Box 11: Farmer-to-farmer capacity building

UPA Développement International (UPA DI) pursues an innovative partnership model based on maintaining a direct relationship between UPA DI's Quebec-based headquarters and partner organisations in developing country context, without keeping a VCA field office or presence. This has also translated into what the project proponents refer to as a "farmer-to-farmer" relationship, as summarised by one developing country partner: *"The whole approach is innovative. This is a partnership of organisations based on solidarity between farmers."* One such partnership is between UPA DI and the Union des groupements paysans de Meckhé (UGPM), which has seen N-S volunteers from Canada work in Senegal, as well as S-N volunteers from Senegal find placements in Quebec.

Through this partnership, Canadian farmers went to Senegal and provided support to their Senegalese counterparts on agricultural techniques, pest management, soil health, water management, organisational management, advocacy, marketing, internal communication and accounting, as well as gender integration. The partnership also enabled Senegalese farmers to learn about Quebec-based Canadian agricultural sector governance practices, having attended a UPA congress in Quebec City, and expressing notable interest in the relationship between the UPA DI, the multiple governments and the financial services sector. This has also allowed Canadian farmers to learn from the approaches and challenges faced by farmers in Senegal and to build a partnership between equals, though from differing contexts and with access to different resources.

3.10 Governance

3.10.1 Has the program (GAC and the general pattern of response by VCAs) put in place measures to achieve governance outcomes (inclusion of marginalized people, supporting and strengthening civil society, promoting and protecting human rights, political participation of women, strengthening accountability mechanisms at different levels of government, etc.)?

- a) Integration of Governance with at least one of GAC's priority themes: sustainable economic growth & development, food security, children & youth, advancing democracy, and ensuring security & stability utilizing a rights-based approach?
- b) Risk Management Strategy observed implemented by the VCA and its partners (e.g., Personnel Security & Safety Protocols & related procedures)?
- c) Shared responsibility and accountability of the VCA for the management & implementation of their VCP project using RBM principles?
- d) To what extent has the VCA utilized performance monitoring strategies to inform project decision making?
- e) Existence of a diversity policy and strategies re: integration of gender, age group, dis(ability), minority considerations, etc.?
- f) Existence of a corporate social responsibility policy and strategy re: integrated social, economic, and environmental considerations?
- g) Existence of a communications &/or consultation policy and strategies re: integration of stories & experiences of beneficiaries?
- h) What types of transformative capacity-building & institutional-strengthening support is provided to DCPs by the VCA (i.e., project management, communications, networking-building, technical assistance, ICT, etc.)?
- i) Existence of an Ethics Code for the VCA's project & its shared use by DCPs (e.g., compliance with local laws, regulations & customs; procedures related to conduct required & disciplinary measures)?

3.10.1 VCP Measures in Place for Achieving Governance Outcomes

Finding: Document reviews, VCA interviews and survey results show that all VCAs have addressed governance outcomes related to supporting and strengthening civil society, promoting and protecting human rights, and the inclusion of marginalized people (mostly youth, women, and children), and to a somewhat lesser extent, promoting the political participation of women, although some unexpected positive results have come about regarding the latter.

GAC incorporated requirements for effective governance within the respective VCA contribution agreements, namely standard clauses dealing with 1) diligence and professionalism in project implementation, 2) the mandatory need for at least one environmental sustainability indicator at the immediate outcome level, 3) the obligation to integrate GE throughout the project's lifecycle, including budgetary considerations, 4) accountability by means of regular reporting, 5) Declarations and Guarantees around anti-corruption and anti-terrorism, as well as respecting international sanctions (with the further necessity of including these three matters in subsequent sub-contracts or sub-agreements) and non-discrimination (according to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms), in addition to 6) General Conditions such as mandatory security assessments and public recognition of funds received with a view to transparency. Each VCA committed itself to comply with these legal and ethical standards throughout the lifecycle of the five-year Program. GAC monitors contract compliance rigorously as evidenced by the MSRs for Years 1 and 2 of the VCP.

To determine whether governance was effective or not within the VCP projects, it was necessary for the evaluators to explore the general pattern of responses by the VCAs, as well as GAC staff members involved in the VCP as either project officers, CCT specialists or performance management/M&E specialists to the questions put to them at home and abroad. We found that there were variations, sometimes based on the relative size of the projects and their implementing VCAs: the larger projects having greater financial and human resources at their disposal dedicated to compliance. Related to that were the differences based on the length of time VCAs have been involved in volunteer sending under Government of Canada funding mechanisms and RBM modalities, with the newer and smaller VCAs being on steep learning curves for the first two years.

Generally speaking, the evaluators found that DCPs saw improvements to a moderate/major extent in the enumerated categories of board governance (58.3%), ethical leadership (69.6%), project monitoring using RBM principles (74.6%), administration (71.6%), programs/service delivery 79.2%), stakeholder engagement (84.3%), strategic influence (80.0%), gender equality policies/practices (82.3%), environmental management practices (67.1%), and personnel security and safety planning (57.1%). Interestingly, the volunteer E-survey results are lower on average by 14% in each category, suggesting that the DCPs may be inflating their responses somewhat as regards governance outcomes and/or volunteers may be more conservative in their responses. However, volunteers cited disorganization of the DCP, internal politics (hierarchy and bureaucracy preventing change), insufficient time to put everything into place, a lack of human resources and a lack of openness of management committees as some of the difficulties encountered, plus that they expected greater commitment and stronger leadership from the DCP. Mention was made that their skills and expertise were undervalued and therefore underutilized by the DCP, and that the partner was not interested in capacity-building.

Over 85% of DCPs also indicated there was consistency between the work being done through their partnership and the VCA's commitment to promote effective governance, human rights and the rule of law to a major extent (37.5%), to a moderate extent (34.7%) and to a minor extent (13.4%). These mid-term results are encouraging; however, there is an overall need for continued rigorous efforts to improve the practices in every category. Specifically, volunteers desired better communications with DCP leaders and management, more sharing power in a meaningful way with women, better follow-up of results from previous projects, and enhanced DCP buy-in and availability.

Additionally, 79% of DCP respondents assessed that VCA volunteers contributed to improvements within their organization in terms of effective governance (for instance in human rights, rule of law, transparency, and social inclusion), either a lot (29.7%), some (32.9%), or a little (16.5%). With respect to policy and procedure development, 86% of DCPs determined that volunteers contributed a lot (37.6%) some (34.3%), a little (13.8%) to improvements. Again, there is a need for strengthening the skills of all volunteers, regardless of volunteer-sending modality, in the thematic area of governance to enable them to contribute significantly more towards institutional-strengthening.

Measures to Achieve Governance Outcomes by Civil Society & Non-State Actors (with reference to the main question)

Objective 1: Supporting and Strengthening Civil Society

The evaluation team determined that VCAs expressly supported and strengthened civil society in their project design, management and delivery. All twelve projects work closely with community-based individuals, groups and organizations in implementing their activities, some more so than others. The evaluators found that 34% of the DCP respondents characterized themselves as civil society organizations, 6% as network organizations, and 19% as "other" organizations which were neither in the public nor private sector. Regarding access to quality health and basic services such as water, sanitation, housing and education which is fundamental for a thriving civil society, 305 DCP survey respondents reported that they

worked in that area: 27% to a major extent, plus 28% to a moderate extent and 26% to a minor extent. Nine percent of respondents characterized themselves as educational institutions, for instance schools or training institutions. Cumulatively, these findings align well with GAC's Action Area 5: *Human Dignity (Health and Nutrition, Education, Gender Responsive Humanitarian Action)*.

In terms of sustainable economic growth and development, the VCP supported a considerable number of projects in the SME and business sectors. The evaluation team found that 11% of the respondents characterized their organization as private sector enterprises and 9% as co-operatives---both categories concerned with making a profit/surplus. Furthermore, 95% of all organizations worked in SEG helping people benefit from economic activity to some degree: 52% to a major extent, 33% to a moderate extent and 10% to a minor extent. Specific to social sustainability, the E-survey of DCPs illustrated that 91% of these organizations focused on matters such as occupational health and safety, human rights, labour relations, stakeholder engagement, and the empowerment of marginalized or vulnerable groups, as well as business ethics and/or codes of conduct to the following extent: 50% major, 32% moderate, and 10% minor.

Objective 2: Inclusion of Marginalized People

The evaluators found that 88% of DCPs determined there was consistency between the work being done through the partnership and the VCA's commitment to promote gender and social inclusion to a major extent (54.0%), to a moderate extent (30.3%), and to a minor extent (8.1%). While the cumulative finding of 84% is admirable for the first two categories alone, it is noteworthy that 10% of respondents reported a minor level of consistency (8.1%) or an absence of consistency (2.0%), and another 6% were unable to say, especially for a program that mandates the mainstreaming of GE throughout the project's lifecycle by way of VCA contribution agreements, and whose ultimate outcome is to enhance the economic and social well-being of impoverished beneficiaries in the developing countries. One reason cited by volunteers to explain the lack of attention to gender and social inclusion in these instances was a lack of interest on the part of the DCPs' male leadership in sharing power with women and a corresponding unwillingness to change the status quo. Potential solutions were not addressed by the volunteer E-survey respondents.

Without a specific VCP requirement to disaggregate data by age group, sociological minority group (ethnicity, race or religion), disability, and economic status (income/class), it is difficult to determine the overall number of marginalized or vulnerable people empowered by the VCP except by means of the broad category of sex. Even that does not capture the growing awareness of complex gender dynamics and vulnerable people who do not self-identify as simply male or female, plus the fact that there are an increasing number of women in developing countries who come from the privileged social classes relatively speaking (evidenced by having university degrees and full-time salaries). Having said that, some VCAs expressly target children and/or youth in their project design, management and delivery as a central core objective. As many as six VCAs named indigenous communities among their beneficiary groups.

From the E-survey of DCPs, 93% of respondents assessed beneficial changes reflected in the social organization/participation of women and youth during their partnership with the VCA to a major extent (48.8 %), a moderate extent (36.7%) and to a minor extent (7.7 %). Furthermore, 88% of DCPs indicated that in their VCA partnership, women and youth participate in decision-making, with 36% strongly agreeing and 53% agreeing. These findings align well with GAC's Action Area 4: *Inclusive Governance (Human Rights, Governance, Democracy and Inclusion)*.

Objective 3: Political Participation of Women

DCP respondents to the E-survey indicated the extent to which their organization works in the GE and social inclusion area of activity with a view to promoting broad participation in decision-making: 34% reported to a major extent, 39% to a moderate extent, and 18% to a minor extent. Again, the finding that 10% of DCPs reported an absence of this focus, coupled with the 18% that reported only working in this activity to a minor extent, means that a total of 28% of DCPs have much work to do to align their projects

with VCP requirements. For example, during the field mission to Ghana, the evaluators determined that overall, there was less emphasis seen on the importance of democratizing organizations and ensuring women's voice and agency throughout project lifecycles.

Measures to Achieve Governance Outcomes by State Actors (with reference to the main question)

To begin with, the evaluators found that 12% of the DCP respondents to the E-survey characterized their organization as a local, regional or national government. This finding suggests that additional work can be done over the next two years of the VCP to engage the public sector with a view to local community development, whether civil society or the private sector. However, a VCA senior officer noted that volunteers are more reluctant to be placed in government organizations because they are deemed to be slow moving and bureaucratic. In Ghana, one VCA reports having had *"no collaboration with government or any state institution."* What the evaluators found lacking in general were some VCAs being pro-active in initiating contacts with the different levels of government.

Objective 4: Promoting and Protecting Human Rights

In general, all the VCAs confirm that they comply with local laws. What is not yet clear is whether they collaborate with state level partners in compliance with state level human rights commitments utilizing a rights-based approach to development.

In Peru, the contribution of VCP-funded volunteers to the protection and strengthening of human rights in the country has been significant. Part of the contribution lies in assisting local partners to access international legal systems, especially the Inter-American framework. Comments which the evaluators received from Formagro on the value of volunteers and the *Defensoria del Pueblo*, the Peruvian Ombudsman's Office, provide evidence of Canada's continued commitments to human rights in Peru. One such comment from a Peruvian DCP staff member is indicative of this finding: "Canadians have another way of thinking, a horizontal or participatory approach, and in their work they show thoroughness, punctuality, a desire to contribute, humility and sensitivity to gender issues and racism/discrimination....Canadians have (human) rights in their heads; they've been taught how to treat people."

Also in Peru, there were a few instances where VCA efforts were directed towards social, economic and environmental sustainability of indigenous communities and their organizations. This included institutional-strengthening of representative bodies, countering sexual violence, youth empowerment, cultural preservation, defence of water and natural resources against commercial and industrial interests, and recognition of traditional knowledge and intellectual property rights. However, in Honduras, evidence shows that formalities related to gaining legal status and permits can and do impede efforts of beneficiary groups to solidify their organizations, and for enterprises especially, to break into new markets, thereby restricting beneficiaries' rights. This was found to be an issue across the VCP projects.

Objective 5: Strengthening Accountability Mechanisms at Different Levels of Government

In previous sections of this evaluation report, there are numerous examples of where transparency and accountability has been strengthened in the public sector through the VCP. However, one not yet mentioned is a new alignment which has just been established with Honduras's Consejo Nacional de Anticorrupción to work on transparency standards. What has yet to be fully explored is whether there is shared responsibility and accountability of VCAs for project management using RBM tools and modelling GBA+ analyses alongside their DCPs within local, national or regional governments.

Specific Measures to Achieve Governance Outcomes by All Development Actors (with reference to sub-questions a) through i)

a) Integration of governance with at least one of GAC's priority themes

As mentioned above, 95% of DCP respondents to the E-survey worked in the area of SEG to some extent. Eighty-eight percent of DCP respondents saw beneficial changes reflected in the livelihood status of beneficiaries during their partnership with the VCA: to a major extent (24.2%), a moderate extent (45.8%) and to a minor extent (18.8%). These findings are in alignment with GAC's Action Area 3: Growth that Works for Everyone.

As regards advancing democracy, the evaluators found that 90% of all DCP respondents worked in the area of GE and social inclusion: 34% to a major extent (e.g., promoting broad participation in decision-making), 39% to a moderate extent and 18% to a minor extent. These findings were corroborated by the Volunteer E-survey.

With respect to ensuring security and stability utilizing a rights-based approach, the evaluators found that 89% of DCP respondents indicated that they worked in the area of human rights, ethics, CSR and the rule of law: 28% to a major extent, 41% to a moderate extent and 20% to a minor extent. This finding was also corroborated by the volunteer E-survey and aligns with GAC's Action Area 6: Peace and Security.

Regarding food security, particularly significant for poor and marginalized groups, the VCP supported a large number of specific agricultural sector projects. These were in food crop or agricultural production, industrial/export crops, agro-industries, agricultural co-operatives, policy, administrative management, research, development, services, education/training, or finance, as well as livestock and veterinary services. Only a few VCAs did not have specific programming related to food security and agriculture.

During the field mission to Senegal, the evaluators found that involvement of young people was witnessed throughout the country, although there was a diversity of satisfaction among young people about the quality of their participation. It was also determined that the VCP offers an opportunity for people to become highly mobilized, including youth, and the quality of the engagement offered is largely satisfactory.

b) Risk Management Strategy observed implemented by the VCA and its partners

With a view to ensuring security and stability, a few VCAs have specifically included this goal in their project design, management and delivery. From a review of VCP documents, it was determined that compulsory risk assessments were completed and there is evidence of a number of operational security plans. Several DCP key informants praised the VCA for their handling of security issues, for example, during the two Kenyan elections where they collaboratively mapped out an escape route should things have become dangerous for volunteers.

Generally, a total of 78% of DCP survey respondents indicated they had been informed of the VCAs personnel security protocols and emergency preparedness to some extent. Of concern is the 22% who either had not been informed at all or who were unable to say. This finding was corroborated by the volunteer E-survey, and in an ever-increasing unsettled world, this finding is of concern. Canada does not want to send VCP volunteers and VCA staff into harm's way. The recent death of one volunteer in the field has driven this point home, therefore the VCAs have been collaborating on how to better ensure the safety of volunteers, staff and VCP project beneficiaries.

c) Shared responsibility and accountability of the VCA for the management & implementation of their VCP project using RBM principles

As mentioned above, the VCAs respective Contribution Agreements require the deployment of RBM principles and tools such as the LM and PMF which provides evidence of this shared responsibility and accountability. GAC staff have been monitoring and evaluating by way of field missions and review of

mandatory VCA reports, for instance baseline, annual, and risk reports. From the E-survey of DCPs, the evaluators found that 82% of respondents indicated they had been informed of the VCA's expectations with respect to the collection of data alongside their partners. Written agreements between VCAs and DCPs, in addition to regular reporting requirements, are the primary tools used to ensure sufficient data is collected by DCPs to enable VCAs to report annually to GAC. Mini-courses on RBM methodologies are conducted on an "as-needs" basis depending on the facility of the DCP with respect to RBM frameworks.

d) **Extent to which the VCAs utilized performance monitoring strategies to inform project decision-making**

Evidence gleaned from the desk-based data collection exercises on governance matters, which included performance management via RBM, expressions of concern arose that the need to collect "numbers" and make "targets" have inadvertently influenced practice (e.g., over-emphasized "training" and under-emphasized more nuanced forms of capacity development such as mentoring, coaching and creating job shadowing opportunities). Related to that, some volunteers have taken up data collection and reporting roles more fully than is the case of their partner agency staff. This raises the issue of volunteers "doing" rather than "transferring" their skills and knowledge which needs to be addressed in volunteer pre-departure training and reinforced during negotiations with DCPs, especially with the deployment of inexperienced volunteers.

In terms of mainstreaming GE matters with respect to governance, Canadian volunteers and partners alike consistently mention that volunteers are coming back with a greater appreciation of the importance of a gendered perspective which is a function of prevailing gender-based behavioural changes and/or exposure to what GE championship looks like in practice. Exploratory conversations come into play within some VCAs determining how non-binary, intersectional perspectives could better influence messaging, recruitment, volunteer support, and engagement with partners, for instance. These discussions around gender relations create opportunities to learn and engage stakeholders and beneficiaries. Several key informants mention that gender strategies provide an overarching framework, but that meaningful action requires a more nuanced understanding with whom and how to engage at a local level. Often there are cultural protocols to respect, not unlike those in place when working with indigenous communities in Canada. However, at times this guidance was found to be lacking to the satisfaction of key informants.

When integrating governance with environmental sustainability, exceptions notwithstanding, and in comparison to GE, the desk-based data collection exercise found that environmental sustainability was mentioned as less of a driver within the VCA and at the DCP level. It is up to GAC staff to ensure that the mandatory requirement for at least one environmental sustainability indicator at the immediate outcome level is in the EMS and PMF for each project, and subsequently reported on annually. Evidenced by the two MSRs on file for each VCA, this is monitored.

Almost 84% of DCP respondents to the E-survey assessed that VCA volunteers contributed to improvements in their organization in terms of environmental protection and sustainability practices, either a lot (37.5 %), some (30.4%), or a little bit (16.4 %). Although satisfactory, there is still much work to do on the part of VCAs and DCPs to ensure improvements over the next two years, even if it is only to enhance the "greening" of their offices and adopting a gendered approach to the determination of environmental impact assessments. Additional efforts being made cited by survey respondents and KII interviewees include environmental education (biodegradability and water conservation), promotion of renewable energy, and turning waste into marketable products (e.g., bottles discarded by tourists transformed into glass souvenirs for sale). Cumulatively, these initiatives align with GAC's Action Item 2: Environment and Climate Change.

During the Honduras field mission, the evaluators found that there is an important unfolding of effort related to governance that is characteristically diverse in its expression. Some interesting debates are underway on GE, environmental sustainability and governance, the integration of these three CCTs with

each other, as well as with the other evaluation criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, sustainability, coordination and engaging Canadians in international development. In both the Peru and Honduras field missions, key informants indicated that more effective indicators (e.g., diversity and gender sensitive qualitative indicators, not merely quantitative ones), performance measurement and monitoring of CCTs would help in reporting on VCP results. Numerous other KII respondents expressed this sentiment as well.

e&f&g) Existence of policies and strategies for the promotion of diversity, CSR and effective communications and/or consultations

With respect to diversity policies and strategies for the integration of gender, age group, disability, minority status, and income/class considerations, 90% of DCP respondents to the E-survey assessed that VCA volunteers contributed to improvements in their organization in terms of gender strategies and practices, either a great deal (48.3%), somewhat (29.0%), or a little bit (13.1%). A number of VCAs have included disabled communities as targeted beneficiary groups; however, without a way to report that in the statistics collected, it is difficult to accurately identify numbers of beneficiaries in this category. “Intersectionality” is the new buzz word in development circles around integrating diverse categories of people(s) in order to understand how many marginalized and vulnerable people fall within two or more of those categories, and sometimes three. GAC has offered guidance on this matter in terms of collecting data disaggregated by a number of categories: *“The unit of analysis is who or what will be observed: individuals, institutions, social artifacts or social groups. The type of unit of analysis will determine whether the data will need to be disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, rural/urban setting, socio-economic status, ownership or any other category relevant to the project or program. This disaggregation is vitally important to the usefulness of the data collected. For example, it is impossible to measure changes in women’s access to basic services if the data collected during project monitoring does not disaggregate by sex. Similarly, a project that aims to improve the health of a specific marginalized ethnic group through the rehabilitating and staffing remote regional health centres would need those centres to collect patient information in a way that allows disaggregation by ethnicity.”*²⁹

A few VCAs have an explicit CSR policy that takes into account” the social, economic and environmental impacts of its development interventions on local citizens. Evidence of strategies for the integration of social, economic and environmental considerations in VCP project implementation and results has been well-documented in previous sections of this evaluation report. However, evidence of formalized CSR policies at the VCA and/or DCP board levels is beyond this formative evaluation.

As for the evidence of communication/consultation policies and strategies for the integration of experiences and stories of beneficiaries, 91% of DCP respondents to the E-survey assessed that VCA volunteers contributed to improvements in their organization in terms of communications and consultations, either a great deal (51.9%), somewhat (27.5%), or a little bit (12.0%). They went further and agreed that communication with the VCA partner was sufficient to keep their shared project on track (21.5% strongly agreeing and 65.9% agreeing). The volunteer E-survey corroborated this finding. During the Peru field mission debriefing with Embassy staff, there was some discussion about VCAs being required to ensure recognition of Canada’s contribution to projects which feature VCP-funded volunteer work. Since this is a mandatory general condition incorporated in the VCA contribution agreements dealing with public recognition (clause 10.3.3), there seems to be some uncertainty within the Embassy as to compliance. One staff member suggested that pre-departure orientation sessions for volunteers need to emphasize that VCP volunteers are representatives of Canada and opportunities be taken to seek recognition on publications and other products produced with the assistance of VCP volunteers.

²⁹ http://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/assets/pdfs/funding-financement/results_based_management-gestion_axee_resultats-guide-en.pdf, p 52.

In addition, at the meeting with COCAP at the end of the Peru mission, two persons spoke about the importance of drawing GAC's attention to the slow start of the VCP cycle and the disruption caused to some VCAs, local partners and volunteers by the budget reductions and the gap in timing between the 2009-2015 and 2015-2020 program cycles. As this was found to be a communications issue, they recommended that GAC improve its communications with VCAs to avoid any future occurrences of this nature.

As volunteers stated in one FGD, they were satisfied their projects were taken up with partners according to the DCPs identified needs. They witnessed firsthand the selection process and research being done in Montreal before going into the field. The VCA initially approached known contacts on the ground to determine prospective partnerships. Both the VCA and selected DCPs crafted the posts regarding calls for volunteers according to the needs of each organization. The volunteers assessed the selection process to be consultative (not horizontal nor top-down) and conducted in a respectful manner, responding to the needs of the local organisations. Hence, the volunteers were very impressed with this collaborative process, particularly in the case of Cote d'Ivoire where they worked with very solid and professional partners who applied the values of the VCA.

Evidence of formalized communications and/or community consultation policies at the VCA and/or DCP board governance level is again left for the final summative evaluation in 2020. The evaluators found that there are a number of policies and strategies being deployed in the field; however, there remains the ever-present objective for increased transparency and hence accountability around ensuring more formalized board policies and strategies on diversity, CSR and communications/consultations are embedded in VCA-DCP agreements.

h) Types of transformative capacity-building and institutional-strengthening support provided to DCP organizations by the VCA

During the field mission to Senegal, the evaluators found that there is an immense diversity of partner organisations to be recognized. They found that associations and cooperatives are more traditional and hierarchical organizations, which needs to be taken into account. Organizational development was deemed to be strongly in evidence, thus capacity-building of both organizations and individuals was determined to be well underway. However, a handful of partner organizations struggle with internal management and governance issues, which have been noted elsewhere by the evaluators. They found that collaborative reflection by the coordinators and country representatives with their counterparts within the partner organizations must form part of M&E exercises to become more effective in project management.

i) Existence of ethics codes for VCA projects and its shared use by DCPs

From the responses of DCPs to the E-survey, the evaluation team found that 84% of the organizations had been informed of the VCA's code of ethics and adherence to the rule of law to a major extent (21.1%), to a moderate extent (37.5%) and to a minor extent (24.6%). The volunteer E-surveys corroborated this finding. Whether the VCAs complied with the requirement in their Contribution Agreements to include these same guarantees or declarations in their sub-agreements with DCPs around anti-corruption, anti-terrorism, compliance with international sanctions, and non-discrimination, is beyond the scope of this formative evaluation. Only a close audit of VCA files would verify whether this was done, and the evaluators were not afforded the ability to do that.

The specific prohibition against engaging in sexual harassment, including sexual assault which is a more serious criminal offense, would normally be covered off in an ethics code and commitment to uphold the law. The recent notorious case of an international organization based in the UK has raised the profile of this important issue, along with the #MeToo movement in the news. Consequently, it was reported that the VCAs have been deliberating on this matter collectively and are revisiting their policies and procedures to ensure adequacy and rigor in protecting staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries. The two boxes below

highlight some of the gains made towards effective governance within one of the VCAs active in Latin America and within GAC and the VCP (Boxes 12, 13).

Box 12: Governance communities of practice

Cuso International's VOICE project has a strong governance strategy, integrating governance as a cross-cutting theme by increasing accountability and transparency within government and NGOs, supporting citizen participation and ownership of decision-making processes; and strengthening public sector service delivery at local, regional and national levels. A few highlights from the Andean Region of Latin America illustrate their on-going work:

- In Bolivia, Cuso's work has been focused on strengthening the DCPs' internal operations and communication strategies, organizational structures, and M&E procedures to enhance accountability outcomes.
- In Colombia, Cuso has been working with their government partner, PNN, to support the development of inclusive and sustainable public policy on land-use management.
- In Peru, Cuso presides over COCAP, an association of Canadian NGOs which organized a workshop on governance in October 2017 and brought together public sector and civil society leaders for dialogue around governance-related topics.
- Also in Peru, Cuso is part of the COEECI board and participates in several other multi-stakeholder entities collaborating as international NGOs in the country, enabling Cuso to form strategic alliances, share information and engage in policy dialogue around governance matters of interest to members.
- Cuso has also been working on an organizational sustainability manual for civil society partners, which among other things, includes a focus on promoting volunteerism at the local level---in Peru and other developing countries

Furthermore, to strengthen their own governance system, Cuso has been active in a number of communities of practice in Ottawa or Montreal, namely on M&E and Learning Community of Practice alongside international development professionals, as well as the Women's Rights Policy Group, GAC's Innovation Community of Practice, and the Women's Economic Empowerment Community of Practice -all in Ottawa - in addition to other international development groups in Montreal and Ottawa. (Source: Year 3 Annual Report)

Box 13: On effective governance at the VCP level

GAC advocates for the utilization of the participatory approach and integration of the CCTs throughout the design and management of projects, in the comprehensive analyses of issues and contexts, the determination of project contributions and influences to the problems, RBM including M&E, continuous adjustment or iterative methods, risk management and lessons learned.

Furthermore, GAC calls for the use of the participatory approach by way of involving key stakeholders, including intermediaries and beneficiaries for increased effectiveness and compliance with their legal obligations under the *Official Development Assistance Accountability Act (ODAAA)*, June 28, 2008. For example, Section 4.1 enumerates three requirements of the VCP to ensure that it (a) contributes to poverty reduction; (b) takes into account the perspectives of the poor; and (c) is consistent with international human rights standards (ODAAA, Statutes of Canada 2008, c. 17, s. 4.) The participatory approach calls for the following requirements: a) shared ownership; b) involving the appropriate people; c) allocating appropriate time and resources during the project life cycle; and d) using the appropriate methodologies.

One fundamental methodology is to ensure that the CCTs of GE, environmental sustainability and governance are taken into consideration in all aspects of results-based project planning, design and implementation. Advancing GE, supporting environmental sustainability, and helping to strengthen governance institutions and practices are three foci.

“Integrating crosscutting themes is much more than a paper exercise. Crosscutting themes provide a lens through which all aspects of results-based project planning, design and implementation should be viewed. Integration of these themes strengthens development and other international assistance programming by enhancing its inclusiveness, sustainability and effectiveness, which leads to better outcomes.”

GAC has identified governance as a CCT in all its international assistance programming, meaning that governance considerations must be reflected in situation analyses, strategic planning and designs of VCP projects. They should also be reflected in expected outcomes and tracked with appropriate governance indicators. Governance considerations are also key to ensuring compliance with the ODAAA. The Act specifies that for investments to be considered as ODA, the minister responsible must be of the opinion that they contribute to poverty reduction, take into account the perspectives of the poor and are consistent with international human rights standards. The two latter criteria are key to the integration of governance.

This formative evaluation is focused on mid-term results (intermediate outcomes) with respect to determining the extent of changes in behaviour, practice and performance of the VCP and by association, the VCAs collectively over the past two to three years as a result of capacity-building and institutional-strengthening. The evaluation is also focused on the long-term impact (ultimate outcome) with a view to determine the likelihood of sustainable changes in the status, condition and well-being of beneficiaries. Therefore, all VCP project inputs (human, information, financial and material resources), project activities (work performed and actions taken), and then outputs (services and products) must lead to achieving the 12 VCP projects’ cumulative expected outcomes by 2020.

Derived from: http://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/assets/pdfs/funding-financement/results_based_management-gestion_axee_resultats-guide-en.pdf

4.0 Conclusions

The VCP, long considered a flagship component of Canada's international cooperation effort, has adjusted well to its strategic orientation (seen most clearly in its LM) and grown in size and complexity. While opportunities for improvement are evident, achievements have been considerable and widely appreciated by stakeholders.

This section sets out the evaluators' conclusions flowing from the evaluation findings. The conclusions provide an assessment of the implementation of the 2015-2020 VCP at the end of the third year.

Effectiveness

The extent of the progress reasonably matches program expectations for the end of the third year. With some exceptions, DCPs are exhibiting improvements in capacity and performance leading to enhanced economic and social well-being of beneficiaries. Expectations that volunteers participate in international development efforts in Canada upon their return are largely being met. Overall, the program story is rich though hampered somewhat by inconsistencies in reporting. At the beneficiary level in particular, the story is still largely anecdotal. Detailed reporting against metrics in the program design is not yet adequate nor uniform enough to serve as a basis for understanding beneficiary level improvements. Indeed, the metrics themselves, focused on "perception", remain insufficient for the development of robust (actionable) results stories.

Efficiency

VCAs have been intent on reducing costs and seeking efficiencies in all aspects of their programming to maximize the impact of their work with DCPs and beneficiaries and, to date, the VCP is keeping costs to a reasonable level. A broad range of cost-saving measures and strategies has forced some choices that have at different times helped (e.g., fostered synergy) or hindered (e.g., stretched volunteer resources too thin) the delivery of the VCP. As well, inconsistencies in the collection of program-wide data, time lags in their compilation, and nagging doubts about the veracity of some measures have impeded the assessment of efficiency. At this point, there is simply no way to determine the relative efficiency or cost effectiveness of individual volunteer modalities; rather, the merits of each are situation dependent, with purpose and performance uniquely tied to application.

Relevance

By and large, VCA activities do align well with local development priorities and DCP needs. In their own ways, VCAs engage DCPs in cycles of assessment and design in which, at various stages, volunteers have their say. The success of these cycles, and of the project activities that flow from them, is contingent on the level of trust and reciprocity that undergirds partnership plans and activities. As the VCP engages with a broader range of actors and adopts programming approaches that embrace whole sectors or systems (not just individual partners), there is pressure on VCAs to be nimble in the way that they gauge relevance, to be less classically linear and more complex and adaptive in their management approach. Assessment, design, monitoring and reporting remain important, of course, but must be suited to this more emergent way of working (as distinct from more classical, a priori approaches). In the end, then, the process of discerning (continuing) relevance comes down to having probing yet not overbearing assessment and planning tools along with the presence of skilled, personable field office personnel to use them.

Sustainability

The idea that project benefits should outlast the volunteer or the project is consistently championed by the VCAs and understood by the DCPs. As well, there are examples across the programming sectors of projects and/or organizational processes either showing longevity or strong potential for such.

Understandably, though, it is not a completely clean picture. Discontinuities between volunteers coming and going or between volunteers and local personnel do hamper sustainability. At times, DCPs lose sight of the idea that the VCP is to be a catalyst rather than simply a supplier of technical assistance to address gaps within the organization. And, of course, larger forces are always at work causing DCPs to change course unexpectedly or presenting new challenges that hinder outcomes among beneficiaries. At times the capacities are just not there to navigate what is a changing and often competitive donor environment.

Disciplined, democratic cycles of partner assessment, planning and monitoring do provide a firm basis for keeping the 'sustainability' question on the table. Where there is scope, efforts to develop revenue streams can help reduce donor dependencies, and efforts to help organizations foster reciprocal relationships in networks can generate resilience to withstand hardships and shock. As well, more flexible notions of partnership are being tried, relaxing the conventional idea that partner relationships have breadth, depth and some longevity. Often, these informal notions are tied into activities driven less by a single organization's capacity needs and more by larger, sub-sector challenges wherein the organization has but one part to play.

Coordination

The higher the level of co-ordination, the greater the array of opportunities for exploring complementarities across the suite of Canadian programming. For other programs/projects, these include openings for VCAs to contribute sectoral expertise and/or advice on technical matters such as GE, environmental sustainability and governance. For the VCAs, these include opportunities to take advantage of the attributes that bilateral and other donor projects can lend to VCA-supported activities (or *vice versa*), namely enhanced scale/reach, influence and infrastructure.

VCAs recognize that engaging with GAC and each other at the programmatic level holds operational advantages for all while also making for good development practice. However, coordination tasks are also seen to take a significant level of effort especially regarding programming for major Canadian public engagement events. Differences in sizes of VCAs mean the amount of time for coordination activities and VCA abilities to be flexible varies. Without dedicated funds for the coordination of common VCA public engagement programming, akin to the Global Citizens for Change for the VCP group as in previous program iterations, VCAs are hard pressed to participate to the extent they would otherwise like to, even while recognizing the potential downstream time savings that the shared effort might produce. Among VCAs in developing countries, models exist for VCP coordination and they are demonstrating their worth, particularly in regions of instability.

Engaging Canadians

The Engaging Canadians component represents the "leading edge" in the campaign to draw Canadian human and financial resources to the enterprise of strengthening capacities for development results. VCAs are aware that the scope and depth of their work in developing countries is highly dependent on the extent to which they capture imaginations and support at home. It is also clear that there is something fundamentally cyclical about the engaging Canadians challenge. Returning volunteers, empowered by their experience, long term or short, can do a lot to ignite further interest and to free up additional human and financial resources for development.

In this regard, while diaspora communities have been targeted as a source of volunteers from Canada, Indigenous Peoples as a group have not, thus far. Post-secondary learning institutions, for example, have many indigenous scholars and students who have a great deal to offer DCPs given their experiences as a group in third world conditions and their sensitivities to impoverishment and discrimination. Research shows that many benefits of volunteering accrue to the volunteers, representing added-value to Canadian society as a whole.

The evaluators see, in the VCP, a widening continuum of engagement typologies. On the one hand, there are the more familiar ones informing Canadians about development issues and attracting volunteer interest/talent to fill roles. On the other, there are typologies seeking to broker new kinds of enabling relationships. Investment in the engaging Canadians challenge is warranted and in some instances already in play. ICT can help connect disparate interests and amplify the profile of international volunteerism. Yet, its use should be informed by strategy, arguably at two levels. At one level, it would be to bring forward the individual profiles of each VCA. At another, collective level, it would be to carve out a contemporary public image of what constitutes international development oriented volunteerism 50 plus years after it first gained a foothold in Canada.

Innovation

There is an abundance of innovative practice across the scope of the VCP. It manifests in programming approaches and in the tools and techniques used to deliver capacity building and Canadian engagement activities. While the classical forms of international volunteer sending i.e., North-South placements to address capacity gaps at an organizational level - are still strongly evident, the current picture shows: a widening array of developing country organization types; a programming analysis that extends beyond the traditional focus on individual partner organizations to encompass larger systems; a multiplicity of volunteer delivery modalities; and widening opportunities for Canadian institutions and private sector organizations to enter into reciprocal relationships overseas. Innovations vary widely in their content and characteristics. At times, it is hard to discern where the innovation begins and ends. Sometimes, it manifests as small activity based on a best practice that is tried and true (e.g., varying the length of a placement). Other times it shows as an idea that is new to the world of volunteerism (e.g., strengthening value chains). And, it's also evident that what is innovative to one party is not necessarily so to another, i.e., innovation is context dependent. Innovations are also flowing from organizational learning across VCAs, particularly those with systematic approaches to reflecting on practice with their DCPs. Conventional wisdom is that it is good to be innovative so long as it doesn't distract from the core business of an enterprise and generates insight that can inform future practice. As highlighted under Effectiveness, the VCP remains challenged in being able to measure impact, particularly at the beneficiary level. This is, by extension, the case for all the work that is deemed innovative in VCP.

Gender Equality

The VCP program focus on GE is helping VCAs to:

- strengthen the capability of developing country partners to mainstream GE
- find innovative approaches to ensure gender balance in programming across sectors
- give more voice of women and youth in decision making, and
- empower grassroots beneficiaries across their programs

Technical support provided by volunteers, especially gender advisors, is essential to the shift in GE awareness and capacity building across the DCPs and beneficiary groups. For example, there is evidence of: increased recognition of women's contribution to development efforts at the highest levels; strategic plan development and requests for GE advice; increased female quotas at management and staff levels;

improved access to justice; and recognition of women's role in value chain activities.

In many cases, the emphasis on GE has resulted in 'no tolerance' towards women and girl's absence and non-participation in program activities. Furthermore, men have been gaining agency as champions of GE in their own settings.

Environmental Sustainability

At the program level of the VCP, GAC has appropriately integrated environmental sustainability considerations at multiple levels, from screening proposals, to contracting, to the inclusion of management and reporting requirements. All projects/VCA's are in compliance with environmental sustainability requirements of the VCP, though a few require adjustments to their trajectory to ensure yet more favourable outcomes in this respect. In the main, there is alignment between VCA's and their Canadian and DCP associates in their strategies, policies and plans related to environmental sustainability. Such alignment has resulted in recognisable and tangible improvements to the work of DCPs, in which volunteers have played a role.

At the same time, MSME projects in particular can produce impacts that could be mitigated or, conversely, can offer opportunities to enhance environmental sustainability. As such, there may be missed opportunities to promote environmental sustainability so long as these are not addressed.

Governance

Overall, the governance CCT is well integrated and is contributing to more sustainable results for poverty reduction in developing countries. Transparency and accountability are actively promoted by GAC and the VCA's, as is GE and social inclusiveness. The VCP is rich in terms of human resources (i.e., VCA and DCP volunteers and staff); however, bilateral projects have additional financial and infrastructure resources which, if brought together, could lead to greater results by 2020.

Intersectionality is emerging as an international development concept calling for new ways of thinking about the ways that gender, age, race or ethnicity, religion or spirituality, disability, and social class or income all come to bear on communities, especially the most marginalized. Many VCA's and their DCPs are engaging in solid diversity, gender, CSR and ethical practices; however, codified policies and procedures are often lacking, as are performance measurement indicators with respect to governance. Some weaknesses exist within VCA governance systems and processes to address perceived governance and performance management gaps or risks. Most VCA's do not have a clear written strategy for tackling governance as a cohesive theme and for communicating it to volunteers and DCPs.

5.0 Recommendations

This section sets out a number of recommendations, with clear references to associated conclusions. Recommendations are offered in an effort to contribute to discussion on necessary adjustments to the program, both during the remainder of the current cycle and in a future iteration of the program. Some recommendations are addressed to GAC where a programmatic response is suggested. Others, more focused on the implementation of the current program cycle, are addressed to the VCAs.

Effectiveness

1. **THAT GAC**, with its requirements for results-based monitoring and reporting, encourage VCAs to further refine annual reporting to more closely follow program guidance and assist in efforts to assess progress against relevant target levels. GAC should also develop harmonized templates for key outputs including the gender-disaggregated tracking of volunteers sent and their mandates.
2. **THAT VCAs**, through their collaborative mechanisms, should develop more sophisticated M&E methodologies that support VCA and partner management and learning while also providing assurance of program-level results. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) methodologies geared to demonstrating progress towards the program's ultimate impact should receive priority attention.

Efficiency

3. **THAT GAC** refine its practice of tracking, compiling and analyzing inputs and results across the program to satisfy stakeholder expectations of a return on effort and pressures (felt by donors worldwide) to increasingly emphasize the cost-effectiveness, scalability and value-added of programs and effectively communicate results.
4. **THAT VCAs**: a) open a dialogue with GAC on the question of how to understand, manage and measure for efficiency, and b) consider how they should engage with each other to benefit most from this enhanced understanding. Topics which may be suitable for inclusion in this dialogue are: the effect of precarious security contexts on project efficiency; identifying areas in which VCAs should coordinate, areas in which VCAs should strive to standardize, and areas which should be left for context specific and bottom-up innovation; and the administrative burden on VCAs of the competitive process and negotiation of contribution agreements.

Relevance

5. **THAT VCAs** continue to move away from traditional dependence on a selection of partners with which they may have maintained lengthy relationships and push ahead with refining partner identification and engagement processes that will: a) enable shared vision and understanding of boundaries, b) strengthen trust/reciprocity, c) clarify roles and responsibilities, and d) be adaptive to emergent situations and innovative practices. This may require strengthening relationships with country governments and making alliances with civil society in most countries.

Sustainability

6. **THAT VCAs** continue to integrate sustainability planning into their cycles of performance assessment, planning and project design with partners, paying more attention to potential alliances, to networking opportunities, to prospects for developing revenue streams, to proving up business cases, and to the formulation of exit strategies and system level learning.
7. **THAT VCAs** establish a shared, online platform for exchanging ideas and experiences regarding the

application of sustainability approaches and operational pointers (e.g., succession strategies and tools for knowledge capture) under the VCP.

8. **THAT VCAs** should assess and engage national volunteer networks, where present, in order to share experiences and best practices in pursuit of the SDGs and take advantage of possible synergies.

Coordination

9. **THAT VCAs** enhance their engagement with other donor initiatives (Canadian or otherwise), capturing potential for complementarities and value additions. Specifically, VCAs should seek opportunities where volunteers can add sectoral expertise and/or advice on technical matters, and/or where bilateral or other-funded projects can lend attributes to VCA-supported activities. This may involve reaching out to the CHCs/Embassies along with other development partners for information and assistance, as well as tapping into the expertise of GAC at home.
10. **THAT VCAs**, supported by GAC, take advantage of annual departmental staff rotations at the missions to introduce themselves and the VCP, and discuss the status of country/region coordination opportunities.
11. **THAT VCAs** refine knowledge transfer among themselves, particularly in those countries without functional coordination mechanisms. This should occur around: a) programmatic issues to build upon the successes of VCP volunteer interventions and to learn from the not so successful ones; b) operational matters such as volunteer management, sustainability planning, innovation, remuneration, health, emergency preparedness, safety and security; and c) share and build capacity across the cross-cutting themes through coordinated training.
12. **THAT GAC** continue to support VCAs by earmarking support for joint public engagement events on behalf of the VCP and by encouraging coordination of the same.

Engaging Canadians

13. **THAT VCAs** assess their existing Engaging Canadians activities to see if they are sufficiently robust to: a) access and motivate target publics in provinces and territories across Canada, and b) engage return volunteers as supporters of program activities (e.g. in carrying out public awareness activities and/or in providing advice to volunteers starting on their mandates).
14. **THAT VCAs**, supported by GAC, collectively develop an evidence-informed messaging campaign aimed at helping Canadians discern good volunteer practice in the service of international development and inviting Canadians to consider supporting VCA activities.
15. **THAT GAC and the VCAs** put in place measures to increase recruitment of Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) as volunteers matching skills and experience to partner settings including, but not limited to, those that are specific to indigenous populations. In the same vein, it would be advisable to increase reciprocal S-N placements for Indigenous Peoples to come to Canada.

Innovation

16. **THAT VCAs** identify more explicitly the aspects of their work programs that constitute innovative practice, and attempt to isolate the tracking of those innovative practices for the specific purpose of learning, sharing and adaptation.
17. **THAT GAC** commission proof of concept studies that can be applied to some of the larger and more program relevant innovations being tried by VCAs, e.g., supporting strategic change processes with layered programming at grassroots and national levels, clustering of volunteers to service multiple clients and complementing in-field placements with e-volunteering.

Gender Equality

18. **THAT VCAs** strengthen networks among partners for sharing context-relevant expertise, new and emerging knowledge and practices in GE, and resources (personnel, technology, programming and financial where possible). This could partly be accomplished using a shared, e-based platform.
19. **THAT VCAs** should intensify efforts to ensure that volunteers (particularly diaspora and male) are involved in supporting women's groups and strengthening their activities to transform socio-cultural practices and beliefs regarding women's roles and access to resources in agricultural and SME development.
20. **THAT VCAs** collaborate more in the design and implementation of pre-posting and in-country, GE and diversity training including gender based analysis plus (GBA+) which is available online.

Environmental Sustainability

21. **THAT those VCAs** which do not have finalised environmental policies/strategies should prepare them during the early months of Year 4, so as to provide requisite and timely guidance over the remainder of the program cycle; in a few cases, adjustments to specific project dimensions are warranted to improve environmental sustainability performance and outcomes of VCAs.
22. **THAT VCAs** be proactive in showcasing, both in Canada and within the target countries, examples of volunteer initiatives directly related to raising environmental awareness and eliminating or mitigating environmental harms, including actions related to climate change and adaptation.

Governance

23. **THAT VCAs** increase their own and their DCPs' linkages with relevant government authorities at the local, regional and national levels in order to build trust, influence policy-making in the sectors they focus on, and explore opportunities at the bilateral level for involvement by volunteers and grassroots organizations/communities.
24. **THAT VCAs and GAC** explore ways of bringing into the design and management of the VCP an inter-sectional perspective; this would inform the design and delivery of the VCP i.e., through public communications, inclusive governance guidelines, GBA +, volunteer recruitment and placement, project identification and partner selection.

On the matter of priority, the evaluation team suggests that the following recommendations receive attention as soon as possible within the current VCP cycle: Recommendations #1 (GAC – encourage VCAs to further refine annual reporting/develop harmonized templates for key outputs), #3 (GAC – refine tracking, compiling and analyzing inputs and results across the program), #4 (VCAs – open a dialogue with GAC on how to understand, manage and measure for efficiency/how to engage with each other on this), #16 (VCAs – identify more explicitly innovative practice and track those practices for learning, sharing and adaptation), #17 (GAC – commission proof of concept studies for some of the larger and more program relevant innovations being tried by VCAs), and #18 (VCAs - strengthen networks among partners for sharing expertise, knowledge and practices in GE, and resources).

6.0 Lessons Learned

- 1. Stay on course: continuity and standards are needed to achieve results. At the same time, make incremental improvements to optimize performance, introduce more robust monitoring processes, and watch for opportunities to try new, smarter and more cost-effective ways of doing things.**

The VCP is grounded on a wealth of experience which is already present in the collectivity of Canadian VCAs; it also has momentum and vision. The program is well aligned to support eight of the nine objectives of the Government of Canada's Civil Society Policy: #1 empower women and girls, #2 facilitate a safe and enabling environment for civil society, #3 protect human life and dignity, #4 CSO leadership in innovation, #5 integrate the role of CSOs as independent actors in international assistance programming, #7 foster multi-stakeholder approaches to international assistance, #8 engage Canadians as global actors in international assistance, #9 promote sustainability, transparency, accountability and results.

- 2. Adaptive management approaches are vital in a complex and insecure environment. Draw on shared purpose, multiple types of actors, and link the scale of inputs to leverage resources and make rapid assessments and adjustments.**

In the face of the increasing complexity of the programming environment, more complex adaptive management styles are essential, which means lots of iterations, shorter time horizons and changed partnership commitments, all of which have implications for the design requirements for a future VCP cycle.

- 3. Encourage coordination, connectivity and networking. Participation and inclusion allow the program to take full advantage of learning processes and collective brain power to deliver the best service with the wisest use of resource**

The key players in the VCP are coordinating to a certain extent, and in a gainful manner. Yet the competitive nature of the program funding mechanism constrains the extent to which VCAs collaborate with each other and engage with GAC. At the level of partnerships, inclusion and participation are well practiced, as is the use of lateral exchanges for learning. On both counts, these processes should be intensified.

- 4. Balance rigour and flexibility in performance measurement, staying open to innovations in measurement and feedback processes so as not to miss out on the huge benefits of evidence-based decision-making.**

The ongoing challenge for the VCP is to balance the need for context-relevant assessment and learning with assessment across scales in order that there is useful information for all. Methodologies should be flexible enough to allow for discovery.

- 5. Explore the potential of new concepts in the field like impact investing, sub-sector approaches and transformative partnerships to deepen beneficiary impact and keep up with the international field of practice, including linkage to the SDGs.**

With the freedom that is given within the program framework, VCAs are pushing the boundaries of what is entailed in international volunteering. Perhaps more than in earlier times, VCAs are viewing their partners as set within a context that also needs to be understood and interacted with. They are seeing the Canadian landscape filled with opportunities that extend beyond awareness raising and provision of volunteer services.

- 6. Explore the potential for increased engagement of specific communities of learning, including Indigenous Peoples, rural Canadian farmers, and the diaspora to expand the potential for reciprocal relationships and contribute to international development practices.**

There are opportunities for the VCP to further distinguish itself, among international volunteer-sending programs, as one which fully embraces inclusivity in volunteer service delivery.