

### VSO at a glance

VSO is the world's leading independent international development organisation that works through volunteers to fight poverty in developing countries.

VSO brings people together to share skills, build capabilities and promote international understanding and action. We work with partner organisations at every level of society, from government organisations at a national level to health and education facilities at a local level.

### IDS

The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) is a leading global organisation for international development research, teaching and communications. The *Valuing Volunteering* project is being conducted in partnership with the IDS Participation, Power and Social Change Team.

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#### Credits

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# Abbreviations

CAD	Community Action Day			
СВО	Community-based organisation			
DFID	UK Department for International Development			
FCO	UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office			
ICS	International Citizen Service			
IDS	Institute of Development Studies			
KEMRI	Kenya Medical Research Institute			
КОРЕ	Kilifi Organisation of Peer Educators			
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals			
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation			
MPR	Mid-point Review			
NCS	National Citizen Service			
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation			
PSAR	Participatory Systemic Action Research			
PS	Programme Supervisor			
PSI	Participatory Systemic Inquiry			
SEP	Special Education Professional			
UK	United Kingdom			
UNV	United Nations Volunteers			
VSO	Voluntary Services Overseas			
WTL	Where Talent Lives			

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### **Executive Summary**

*Valuing Volunteering* is a two-year global action research project aiming to better understand how, when, where and why volunteering affects poverty. The project has been taken forward in partnership by Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and involved fieldwork in four countries – Kenya, Mozambique, Nepal and the Philippines.

The research in Kilifi in Kenya, a coastal town approximately 60km north of Mombasa, focused on the UK and Kenyan national volunteers undertaking International Citizen Service (ICS). ICS is a UK Government programme that recruits UK volunteers who are 18–25 years of age and sends them on three-month placements to developing countries where they are also partnered with local counterparts. In Kenya, the ICS programme is coordinated by VSO Jitolee.

The Kilifi research engaged with four 'cycles' (a cycle referring to one group of ICS volunteers undertaking a three-month placement) of ICS volunteers over the course of 12 months, representing more than 80 volunteers. As an action-research investigation, the work entailed designing an innovative community inquiry and orientation programme for ICS volunteers to strengthen their community induction process by promoting greater engagement with the local community and the increased use of participatory techniques.

### Implication:

#### Improving the volunteer community induction process.

The community inquiry and orientation exercise trialled by this research models a way of working that prioritises active fieldwork and community engagement which immerses volunteers and encourages them to focus on the needs and dynamics of host communities from the outset. The approach adds significant value over purely classroom-based exercises and is inherently flexible and transferable to other settings.

The research found that key defining characteristics of the ICS programme, such as the use of relatively unskilled volunteers on short-term placements, acted to severely limit the development impacts of volunteers. With the various personal/professional development and review commitments within the 10–12-week ICS placements, volunteers potentially only spend 36 days working with local partner organisations. This provides only a limited opportunity to bring about change and also restricts the roles that volunteers can take within host organisations – with few skills, it often does not make sense (in terms of development impact) for organisations to invest in providing substantial training to ICS volunteers.

Nevertheless, a number of approaches and measures were employed that did act to counter the programme's limitations and create a better environment in which developmental impact could occur. Two stand-out features that undoubtedly increased effectiveness were the role of programme supervisors and the use of host homes for volunteer accommodation.

#### Implication: Learning from programme supervisors.

In Kilifi, programme supervisors ensured vital sustainability and continuity across multiple ICS cycles. They achieved this by building lasting relationships with local partners and host homes, providing an effective volunteer-to-host home/ organisation matching process, ensuring partner needs were met and their expectations were realistic, making the best use of volunteer passion and enthusiasm, countering the underutilisation of volunteers in placements and sensitively mediating local disputes. All of this nurtured a better environment in which local development impacts could occur.

#### Implication: The use of host homes.

Using host homes allows volunteers to build relationships and trust with the community; it creates a two-way process in which local people can see and engage with volunteers first-hand and volunteers gain direct experience of what it means to live in the community. Paying allowances to host homes is also more likely to inject resources more directly into the community than using hostels or hotels. The research found that the ICS programme in Kilifi was treated as a stand-alone intervention with little integration into the wider work of VSO Jitolee. Given the wealth of skills and experience in the long-term VSO volunteer community, as well as amongst VSO Jitolee staff, there is a significant missed opportunity in terms of linking up skills and professional support. With increased organisational integration, real potential exists to link the contribution of ICS volunteers into bringing about wider systemic change.

#### Implication:

### Integrating ICS into wider and longer-term interventions.

The research found that ICS in Kilifi is treated as an isolated intervention, which significantly limits its effectiveness. However, ICS does have the potential to play a valuable role when integrated with other interventions (such as the activities of longer-term volunteers) and used, not as a short-term intervention, but as a succession of cycles in a longer-term process of change.

Partner organisations were found to be vital to the effectiveness of volunteer placements. In Kilifi, programme supervisors took a lead role in managing the key relationships with partners (in other areas a coordinating partner plays a larger role), establishing new partnerships when opportunities arose and temporarily pausing the allocation of volunteers to some when internal changes presented a risk that volunteers might do more harm than good. Importantly, a range of factors need to align in order for placements to be most successful.

#### Implication:

#### The vital and complex role of host organisations/partners.

Partners need to be worked with in order to assess their needs and ensure that all local staff/volunteers interacting with ICS have appropriate and realistic expectations of the volunteers and what they can achieve within the remit of a 10–12-week placement. Volunteers also need to be given effective support within their placements to make the best use of their time. The issue of partners is therefore not just one of initial selection but of maintaining and developing proactive working relationships. Although relatively unskilled, some ICS volunteers do possess relevant professional skills and experience. Potential exists to explore how such volunteers can either be concentrated in particular interventions or used in more supportive roles to wider teams of ICS volunteers. ICS volunteers demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm, commitment, a can-do attitude and were widely praised for bringing new ideas and inspiration to host organisations. These are valuable attributes and can be powerful forces for change when matched with suitable host organisations and roles.

#### Implication: Better utilising ICS volunteers with professional skills.

Although the majority of ICS volunteers are relatively unskilled and some of those with skills undertake ICS specifically to do something different, there are those keen to use their skills within the ICS framework. Potential approaches could involve using volunteers with relevant skills in more specific interventions or using specialist ICS volunteers to strategically support wider ICS teams working in their relevant field of expertise.

The importance of relationships was an overriding theme that emerged in many of the findings. When it came to building opportunities for cross-cultural learning and exchange between volunteers, the research found that differing national perceptions of volunteering had an impact on the relationship-building process.

#### Implication:

### Understanding differing country contexts on volunteering

Ensuring robust context analysis of national dynamics is conducted is important. In Kilifi, the research found that differing perspectives of volunteering affected how UK and Kenyan volunteers used their allowances, which, in turn, created tensions and led to some volunteers not participating in joint activities promoting cross-cultural exchange.

# 1. Introduction

The research inquiry in Kilifi, a coastal town approximately 60km north of Mombasa, presented an opportunity to work with young people undertaking the International Citizen Service (ICS), a UK Governmentfunded programme which recruits UK volunteers who are 18–25 years of age and places them for three months in developing countries alongside local/national volunteer counterparts. The ICS programme in Kenya is run by VSO.

With each three-month placement undertaken by ICS volunteers referred to as a 'cycle', work in Kilifi revolved around successive cycles of volunteers who were placed in local partner organisations and lived in local host homes. Two employed VSO Programme Supervisors (PS) remained in Kilifi across cycles to coordinate the process. The *Valuing Volunteering* research actively engaged with the programme supervisors and worked with four consecutive cycles of ICS volunteers from September 2013 to June 2014. A group of local volunteers from community-based organisations (CBOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Kilifi were also engaged in undertaking a community inquiry. The overall aims of working in Kilifi and particularly with ICS were twofold: to develop valuable learning on the impact of ICS volunteering through research and to improve the impact of ICS as an intervention through action and modelling more effective ways of working.

Within the broader context of the *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research, ICS as a volunteering intervention in Kilifi was interesting for four main reasons. Firstly, the ICS programme provided an opportunity to look at a form or 'modality' of volunteering not covered elsewhere in the Kenya research. The scheme's focus on youth volunteering was also seen as valuable to the Kenyan context given the demographics of the country. Secondly, the *Valuing Volunteering* research in the Philippines was undertaking research with VSO ICS volunteers, which presented the potential for cross-country comparisons.

Thirdly, analysis of volunteering interventions, particularly in terms of international volunteers, tends to draw distinctions between short- and long-term placements, with criticism often directed at the lack of impact in shorter placements. As the mid-term evaluation of the ICS programme acknowledges, "there is little evidence regarding the impact of short-term volunteering schemes, in particular in relation to the impact on the host community and on the poor" (Ecorys, 2013:7). There was therefore an opportunity for the research to fill a gap in that evidence. Fourthly, the research wanted to better analyse the impact of ICS volunteering from the perspective of the host community (utilising approaches developed in other research locations in the Kenya research) rather than focusing on the impact on the participant volunteers. This is an issue identified in previous evaluations, with it being noted that "impacts at a personal level were the most visible of the whole ICS programme for both IVs [international volunteers] and NVs [national volunteers]" (DFID, 2013:1).

With specific opportunities available to the lead researcher to work with ICS volunteers during their in-community induction at the start of their placements, four interconnected research questions helped to steer the work. These were:

- 1. How can ICS in-community induction encompass greater community engagement and increase volunteer understanding of local context and development issues?
- 2. How can ICS in-community induction increase volunteers' awareness of their role within ongoing cycles of volunteers and the developmental logic of how change happens?
- 3. What development impact do ICS volunteers have and how can this be better understood and improved?
- 4. With short three-month placements what development outcomes can be realistically achieved and how can sustainability and consistency be ensured over multiple volunteer cycles?

From the outset, it is important to stress that this investigation was never intended to be an evaluation of the ICS programme Kenya or specifically in Kilifi. Various monitoring and evaluation tools already exist to assess whether ICS meets set targets, and the programme has been and will continue to be subject to independent evaluations. Instead, this *Valuing Volunteering* inquiry represents an active attempt to trial innovative approaches whilst exploring specific dynamics and issues that affect the functioning of the ICS programme. Although findings are highly contextualised to the Kilifi context, wider lessons and learning are applicable to the ICS model more generally.

# 2. An overview of the International Citizen Service (ICS) programme

### The International Citizen Service is a programme designed to enable young UK citizens to undertake short-term volunteering placements in developing countries alongside counterparts from those countries.

The scheme was first announced by the UK Coalition Government in 2010 as an attempt to give young people, who would usually not otherwise be able to afford it, the chance to volunteer and make a difference in developing countries<sup>1</sup> (BBC, 2010). It was also designed as an extension of the UK-based National Citizen Service (NCS) for 16-year-olds. Despite being entirely separate initiatives, many see ICS as a reincarnation of the Global Xchange programme run by the British Council and VSO that saw UK volunteers visiting developing countries and their developing-world counterparts visiting the UK. That scheme came to an end in March 2012 but, with VSO involved in both programmes, many of the lessons learnt from Global Xchange fed into ICS. However, the ICS scheme does not include the reciprocal visits that formed the basis of Global Xchange.

The development logic of the ICS programme is based upon three goals that are considered interdependent and equal. These are that the programme will:

- lead to volunteer development both personally and professionally for UK and in-country volunteers
- bring about in-country development outcomes for partners and communities
- facilitate increased active citizenship through the advocacy and social action taken by volunteers after completing their placements (Ecorys, 2013).

The Department for International Development (DFID)'s business case and intervention summary for ICS also highlights how all placements will aim to conform to four minimum criteria for development impact:

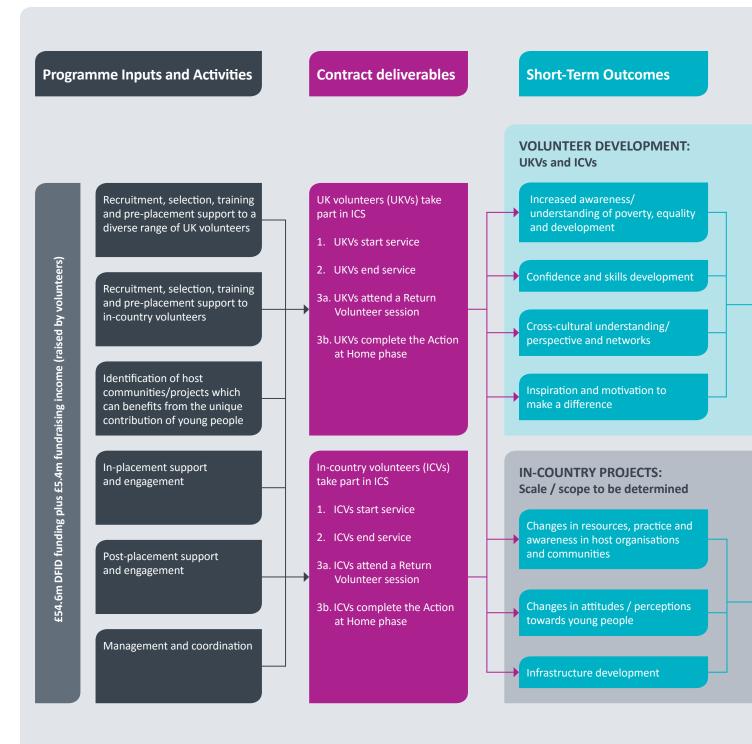
- "i. Projects will be delivered in partnership with local organisations and should contribute to the wider development programme of either the partner organisation or the ICS delivery agency.
- ii. UK and local volunteers will work together to encourage mutual learning and life-long links.
- iii. Activities of the volunteers should not economically disadvantage the organisations or communities within which they are placed (for example, by filling long-term job opportunities).
- iv. Placements should contribute to achieving or increasing the capacity of the host organisation to achieve one or more of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)"

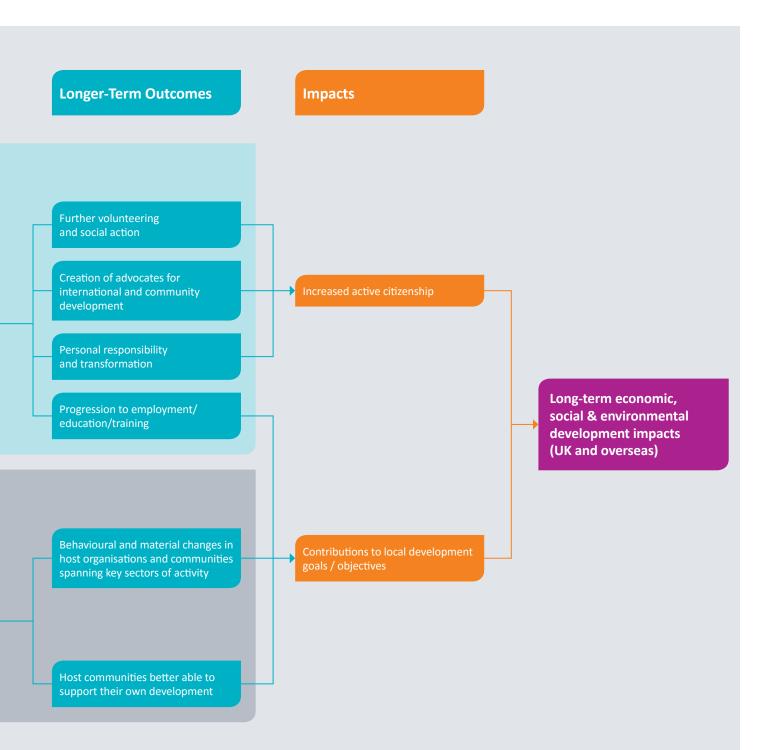
(DFID, 2013:3)

The theory of change for ICS specifically separates outcomes according to volunteer development which is linked to increasing active citizenship and in-country projects that contribute to local development goals. These are then linked to the desired goal of bringing about long-term economic, social and environmental impacts. The theory of change is shown as Figure 1 on the next page.

An important dynamic brought about through the multitude of ICS delivery partners is the variation in models of programme delivery. For example, some delivery agencies pursue a 'youth to youth' model where UK volunteers and developing-country youth volunteers work together in international teams developing their own projects and engaging with communities, whereas others adopt a 'youth to partner' model with volunteers directly placed into work placements with local organisations (ITAD, 2012). A third model, called 'reciprocal international exchange', combines elements of both. It should also be noted that individual delivery partners adopt different models in different countries. The specific model used in Kenya and Kilifi is outlined in the next section.

<sup>1.</sup> Countries had to be identified as low or medium in the United Nations' Human Development Index in order be considered as a developing-country destination for ICS volunteers.





# 3. ICS in Kenya and Kilifi

### Unlike some countries where multiple delivery agencies provide ICS opportunities, VSO is currently the only partner to offer placements in Kenya.

The history of ICS began in Kenya with its involvement in the pilot programme from March 2011. Pilot locations included Kisumu and Migori in western Kenya and Kwale and Kaloleni on the coast. Security concerns and a lack of host homes in Kisumu led to the location not being taken forward for the full programme. Following the pilot, the decision was taken to roll out the full ICS programme from March 2012 in the Kilifi and Malindi communities on the coast. A third location, Nanyuki in central Kenya, was added as part of the scaleup of the programme in 2014, and a new ICS pilot scheme focusing purely on social enterprise development began in September 2014 in the Nairobi region. Additionally, security concerns on the Kenyan coast from summer 2014 meant that VSO chose to bring to an end its ICS work in the Kilifi and Malindi communities. Nanyuki received extra volunteers as a result, and a new ICS group was set up in Loitokitok, where VSO already had a number of long-term volunteers placed.

Exact numbers vary but each location typically receives around 10 UK volunteers and 10 national volunteers in each three-month 'cycle'. During the research in Kilifi, the total number of volunteers in each cycle varied between 20 and 24 volunteers. Before the transition to using team leaders, volunteers in Kilifi were supported by two Programme Supervisors (PS) – one Kenyan and one from the UK – who took the lead in finding host homes for volunteers, managing relationships with partners and matching volunteers to homes and partners.

The VSO UK and VSO Jitolee offices take responsibility respectively for recruiting UK and Kenyan volunteers. The Kenyan volunteers are deliberately not recruited from the communities where they will be placed. This places emphasis on promoting intra-cultural learning for national volunteers. It also means that when UK and Kenyan ICS volunteers arrive in Kilifi, both are entering a new community where they may be viewed as an 'outsider', albeit often to differing degrees.

The structure and timeline of a typical ICS three-month placement in Kilifi is important context for understanding how ICS operates as a volunteering model. In Kilifi, each volunteer lives in a host home in the community for the duration of their placement and is placed in a local partner organisation, where they undertake a range of duties. Partner organisations are generally community-based organisations, locally based NGOs, schools and orphanages. Within their host homes, volunteers are typically paired with a same-sex volunteer who is a different nationality to themselves so that pairings have both UK and Kenyan participants. Volunteers then work alongside a different counterpart in their host organisations. This approach is designed to promote cultural interaction between UK and Kenyan volunteers whilst avoiding pairs spending all their living and working day together. In Kilifi, due to the town's relatively small size, it is not unusual for volunteers to split their time across a number of partner organisations, providing additional capacity as and when it is needed. Placements also align with and support VSO Jitolee's three strategic work areas of improving secure livelihoods, education and health. To provide an opportunity for joint working across the team of volunteers, a small dedicated budget exists to support Community Action Days (CADs) which tend to take the form of interactive community informational events focused on issues that the volunteers feel are important to local people.

ICS volunteers from across the various Kenyan locations spend their first week receiving an in-country induction by VSO staff which is mainly classroom-based. After this, they make their way to their respective host communities where programme supervisors provide a shorter in-country orientation. Within the Kilifi group, ICS volunteers come together at the halfway point (usually six weeks into their placements) for a week-long mid-point review (MPR) to reflect on progress and challenges. There is also a week-long debrief another six weeks later at the conclusion of their placements. In addition, to the induction, MPR and final debrief, volunteers participate and take turns in organising weekly Global Citizens' Days, which act as internal learning exercises for the group. In Kilifi, these inbuilt opportunities for reflection and critical thinking provided a potentially valuable platform for sharing learning and embedding action-reflection practices (Action Aid, 2012).

# 4. The Kilifi context

Kilifi is a coastal town located approximately 60km north of Kenya's second biggest city, Mombasa, and 50km south of Malindi, which is also host to a team of ICS volunteers. Kilifi is the capital of Kilifi County, one of Kenya's 47 counties established as a result of the 2010 Constitution, and home to the county administrative infrastructure. According to the 2009 national census, Kilifi County has a population of 122,899 (Government of Kenya, 2013).

Kilifi lies on the main coastal road connecting Mombasa in the south with Malindi, Lamu and Garissa to the north. Up until the 1990s, vehicles had to take a ferry to cross the imposing Kilifi Creek, which caused significant congestion and lengthened travel times but also provided numerous local economic opportunities to supply services to travellers forced into breaking their journeys. However, in 1991, with the help of a loan from the Japanese government, the Kilifi Bridge was completed and it remains Kenya's longest bridge at 420 metres in length. Despite being widely praised as a major infrastructure improvement, it had a substantial negative impact on the local economy as the industry catering to road travellers went into decline.

Although Kilifi County experiences a range of social development challenges, the dynamics of poverty vary, particularly between Kilifi town and its rural hinterland. This research found that residents in Kilifi town often refer to poor education, low income and problems associated with rubbish dumping. However, poverty levels across a range of indicators are generally worse in more rural locations, where infrastructure and the provision of basic services is almost nonexistent in some areas and income levels are even lower.

As the capital of Kilifi County, the town is home to a number of NGOs and CBOs undertaking a range of development activities. International NGOs including Red Cross, World Vision and Plan International have a presence in Kilifi, as well as a variety of more locally focused organisations, notable examples being Moving the Goalposts, which uses football as a tool for empowering girls and women, Kilifi Organisation of Peer Educators (KOPE), Kesho and Where Talent Lives (WTL). Demographically Kilifi town is more mixed than surrounding rural areas. The majority of residents are from the Mijikenda groups (Giriama and Chonyi), while others include Swahili-Arab descendants, Barawas, Bajunis, Somalis and migrants from other parts of Kenya. Kilifi's deserved reputation for its beaches and scenery has also made it a significant destination for expatriate communities from Europe, with Britons, Italians and Germans forming the largest contingents.

Kilifi's economy has historically been based on fishing. However, the emergence of plantation agriculture, as well as a number of research institutions, has slowly transformed the local economy. The harvesting of cashew nuts brought significant investment, particularly with the establishment of a milling factory in 1976. The closure of the factory in 1990, however, had a disastrous impact. Nevertheless a number of other plantations have since grown and are still in operation. The transition of the Kilifi Institute of Agriculture in Pwani University in 2008 has made Kilifi a destination for students and brought investment. Kilifi County Hospital has also helped establish the area's reputation as a major medical centre and is home to the joint KEMRI (Kenya Medical Research Institute) and British Wellcome Trust research programme, which conducts work on malaria and bacterial and viral childhood infections. Tourism also forms a major part of the local economy, with a range of hotels serving domestic and international visitors.

## 5. Methodology

The Valuing Volunteering project used two research approaches to collect and analyse insights about volunteering: Participatory Systemic Inquiries (PSI) and Participatory Systemic Action Research (PSAR). Both these approaches enable us to get under the surface of how communities operate and how change happens.

Participatory Systemic Inquiries (PSI) allow a system of actors, actions and contexts to be mapped as a baseline against which change can be assessed (Burns 2012). When identifying the starting points (our baseline) for a project we might typically record those factors that have an obvious direct relation to our intervention. For example, if our aim is to increase girls' access to education, a 'traditional' baseline might record factors such as school enrolment, attendance and participation. PSI allows us to go deeper and reflect on how people, processes and the environment within which they are situated influence one another and the path to change. Doing this involves asking both broad and detailed questions which take us beyond the school walls and into the complexities of social systems, such as, 'Are girls supported by their family and the wider community to attend school?' 'What are the power dynamics within the community and how might these influence girls' attendance in school?'

This data is then used to determine how different factors affect one another, with the aim of learning about why change is or is not happening. While causal links between each part of a system can be identified, they are frequently not linear relationships. By allowing us to observe volunteer practices as part of a wider system rather than in isolation, PSI challenges our assumption that if we do x it will automatically lead to y and forces us to consider each intervention within the context in which it is taking place. For example, strengthening our understanding of the factors that impact on people's perceptions of volunteering was important in some inquiries to make sense of volunteers' effectiveness. A PSI mapping and analysis might take place over a 2-12-week period and can involve working with many different individuals and groups. In the Valuing Volunteering project we ran many different PSIs at the community, organisational and national levels. Where actors were motivated to respond to emergent findings, PSI formed the beginning of an action research process.

Participatory Systemic Action Research (PSAR) is an action research methodology which embeds reflection, planning, action and evaluation into a single process. The core principle behind action research is that we learn at least as much from action as from analysis. It incorporates iterative cycles of action and analysis, allowing us to reflect at intervals on a particular action or approach and adapting it according to what we've learnt. The action research used by *Valuing Volunteering* was participatory because it was led by individuals directly affected by or involved in volunteering-for-development initiatives, and they defined the action research process and questions. It was systemic because we assessed the impact of these actions by considering the knock-on effects for the actors, actions and contexts comprising the wider social system. SAR typically takes place over a period of 18 months to three years.

### The Kilifi research process

From the start, the Kilifi programme aimed to use both action and research in an iterative process. As such, in working with ICS, the action-research methodology was used to model a learning process – as part of the volunteers' community induction – that could be replicated and become standard practice for future cycles. Crucially, the learning gathered by the volunteers during the community induction process also provided valuable research findings.

In total, the Kilifi inquiry entailed over 12 months of research utilising a PSAR approach. Four separate cycles of ICS volunteers – a cycle refers to each ICS group undertaking a three-month placement – were involved in the research, which amounted to over 80 volunteers. In addition to the ICS volunteers, over 30 local volunteers were involved in workshops and a separate PSI in the community (Burns, 2007).

Of the four ICS cycles involved, the first acted as a scoping opportunity for the research; workshops, interviews and informal discussions were held with volunteers and programme supervisors in order to build a picture of the ICS programme in Kilifi and identify opportunities for improvements and new approaches. The latter three cycles participated in an innovative community inquiry and orientation exercise (which is also often referred to as community induction) designed as part of the *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research to increase community engagement during the induction process, develop volunteers' understanding of local issues and reemphasise the role of ICS in bringing about development impact. Overall, it is estimated that ICS volunteers engaged over 200 local people as part of their initial community inquiries.

The Kilifi research did not start as a specifically ICS-focused study. In the initial stages of project scoping for the *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research from August 2012, efforts were made to identify possible sites and groups to form the basis for long-term systemic action research inquiries. Despite early interest in looking at the ICS programme in Kenya, gaining access to the volunteers and programme supervisors on the ground was challenging due to organisational, logistical and communication issues within VSO.

Nevertheless, fieldwork officially began in Kilifi in August 2013 with a three-day training and community engagement workshop with local volunteers from a range of local volunteer-involving organisations including Moving the Goalposts, Where Talent Lives and Kesho. Much of the organisation of this session was enabled through the help of a long-term international VSO volunteer placed in Mombasa who had relevant contacts in Kilifi. However, due to various factors, which are discussed in a subsequent section, 'Reflections on the process', the local volunteers did not form the basis for an ongoing PSAR process. Instead, the decision was taken to treat the exercise with local volunteers as a stand-alone PSI.

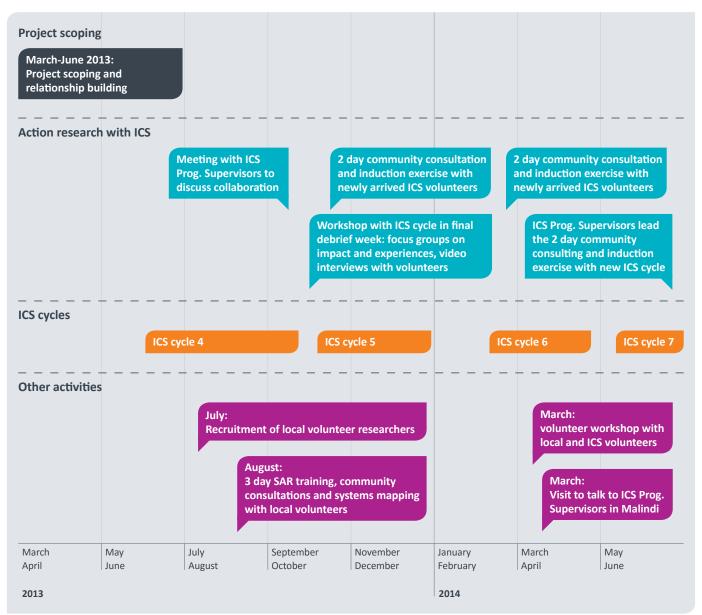
Following the initial workshop with local volunteers, it was a chance meeting with the two ICS Kilifi programme supervisors during a visit to the area that led to ICS becoming the focus of the inquiry. After positive discussions with the supervisors, an initial research visit by the lead researcher took place in October 2013 which coincided with the debrief week of the first ICS cycle engaged with in the process. Participatory sessions focused on the perceived developmental impact of volunteer efforts; these were later supplemented with a number of short video interviews or 'vox pops' with UK and Kenyan ICS volunteers.

The ICS programme supervisors were instrumental in enabling *Valuing Volunteering*'s involvement throughout the process, and their enthusiasm for being open to possibilities for the research to improve the ICS initiative was vital. Consultations with them led to the identification of the in-community induction process being a critical time for volunteers and also something which could benefit from a more innovative approach that promoted more community engagement. As a result, the *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* lead researcher put together a community inquiry and orientation programme that incorporated participatory approaches and tools used as part of PSAR. The approach was implemented by the lead researcher with the new ICS cycle a couple of weeks after the initial visit in order to build the momentum behind the work and make

#### Figure 2: Key events in the research process

the most of the opportunity offered by the arrival of a new cycle of volunteers. After incorporating learning and feedback, a slightly modified induction process was run by the lead researcher with the subsequent cycle in February 2014. A third cycle took part in the induction process in June 2014, when programme supervisors took the lead in running the sessions.

In addition to the ICS community induction process, a workshop with ICS and local volunteers was facilitated by the lead researcher and local facilitators in March 2014. For the ICS volunteers this took place around the time of their MPR. At the same time, a similar workshop took place in Malindi and, whilst there, the lead researcher took the opportunity to meet and share findings with the programme supervisors overseeing the ICS group there. In terms of wider *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* logistics, the lead researcher would often combine visits to Kilifi with trips to an accompanying research site in Mombasa to the south. Unfortunately, the deteriorating security situation in the Mombasa region from May 2014 and the associated issuing of security advisories with attached travel restrictions by the VSO Jitolee office and various international embassies hampered efforts in the final months of the research to carry out planned follow-up and validation activities. Figure 2 sets out the key events during the research process.



### Methods

A selection of the tools and techniques used during the three-day community consultation are described here. More detail is provided in the findings sections, as the iterative relationship between action and research in the process meant that modelling of innovative approaches also provided critical learning.

During the course of the research, a separate training guide was produced to assist programme supervisors in running the community inquiry and orientation sessions. This has since been handed over to the VSO International office where it will hopefully be further developed and potentially made available more widely in future.

#### 1. Informal discussions and semi-structured interviews

A core component of the ICS community inquiry and orientation programme involved going into the community to ask people about their views and experiences. Conducting conversations in the community was vital in terms of power dynamics as it allowed respondents to express their views in settings in which they felt comfortable. Informal discussions, with some set questions providing structure where appropriate, were the most common form of interaction between ICS researchers and community members. Again power dynamics played a part in this approach. Rather than using very prescriptive questions or getting respondents to fill in surveys, which would have made them feel like they were being studied, the exercise was designed as a more twoway exchange; so whilst ICS volunteers learnt about local issues, local people also had the opportunity to learn about them, which supported a relationship-building process.

Before going to talk to communities, ICS volunteers received training in interview technique and practised through role-play exercises where participants would take it in turns to be the interviewer, interviewee and note-taker. A number of small groups also undertook their role-play exercise in front of the wider team, with members providing constructive criticism and suggestions. Discussion included agreeing on an appropriate procedure for approaching people in the field, explaining the ICS programme and asking for permission to take notes and contact details. Volunteers were particularly keen to record contact details so that respondents could be invited to future Community Action Days organised by the team later in their placements. An interview guide, which helped in building confidence when in the field, was developed, a copy of which is attached as Appendix A. Eight general questions were formulated that would help build an understanding of the community, provide additional information for the Valuing Volunteering research and also assess the degree to which the community had come across ICS volunteers and their work before. The latter was a direct attempt to gain insights into the possible impact of ICS volunteers beyond the individual three-month cycle. Although the interview guide set out a number of steps and questions, strong emphasis was placed on letting conversations flow naturally rather than adopting a question-and-answer approach. Questions were intended only as a guide and there was no requirement that all questions be asked to each respondent.

During the time spent in the community, ICS volunteers generally split into groups of five to six, with a mix of UK and Kenyan volunteers. Typically, these groups then subdivided into pairs or threes when talking to community members so as to not be too intimidating, but remained in relatively close proximity to each other as a security precaution. Volunteers were encouraged to take turns in asking questions and taking notes so as to gain experience in a range of research skills. Following the community consultation, notes were used in the construction of systems maps, a technique described below.

As an incentive to talk to community members and help overcome the inevitable nerves in approaching strangers, basic (usually edible) prizes were offered to the groups that had the most encounters and spoke to the most people. The categories differed, as in some instances groups would hold impromptu focus groups, thereby talking to multiple people in one encounter. In order for groups not to value quantity over quality, a third prize was offered to the group that shared the most insightful learning point or community story from their research during a sharing session the following day. As stories had to include significant detail concerning the local people they spoke to and the stories they shared, the process was considered to encourage genuine community engagement and not be undermined by offering a small incentive.

During the community engagement exercise, the team of ICS volunteers generally split into four smaller groups. With Kilifi being a relatively small town, there was a risk that groups would cover the same area and repeatedly talk to the same people. To avoid this, each group was provided with a map of Kilifi and agreed with the other teams on where they would go. A copy of the map used is attached as Appendix B. A designated contact person in each of the four teams took responsibility for sending a text to the lead researcher every time they had a research encounter. Texts were required to include a grid reference, number of people encountered and keywords summarising the issues raised. By doing this the lead researcher could monitor in real time where each group was, how many people they had spoken to and the emerging issues. In turn, this enabled texts to be sent back to research groups redirecting them if they were about to cover ground that had been repeatedly crossed; it also provided a platform for the lead researcher to motivate the research groups and give them an indication of how they were doing in relation to other groups.

#### 2. Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions were a standard method used as a complementary part of many sessions during the ICS community inquiry and orientation programme. Whilst in the community, ICS volunteers also occasionally conducted impromptu focus groups when opportunities arose. For example, volunteers spoke of facilitating focus groups when they would go into local communitybased organisations where there would be many members present. In one case, a group found themselves conducting a focus group when a discussion with a couple of people at the main Kilifi bus stage ended up attracting a large number of interested community members.

During sessions with ICS and local volunteers facilitated by the lead researcher, discussions generally started by agreeing ground rules and expectations and finished with reflections on the issues that had been raised. These sessions were generally in English, with Kenyan participants generally translating into Swahili any words or phrases that were not widely understood. Focus group discussions in community settings were observed to be more challenging. Whilst English was widely spoken and Kenyan ICS volunteers communicated in Swahili when people were more comfortable speaking Swahili, there were community members who only spoke local dialects. In these cases other local people often helped to translate, though it does serve to illustrate how Kenyan ICS volunteers were in a similar situation to UK volunteers in terms of culturally learning from different communities. Discussions in community settings were generally recorded by a dedicated note-taker. Focus group discussions with volunteers were usually documented using a mix of flip charts, audio and video recording.

#### 3. Systems mapping

With each ICS cycle comprising 20–24 volunteers and divided into four groups to undertake the community inquiries, a challenge existed in terms of making sure all the learning was documented and shared amongst the wider team. A method called systems mapping was ideal for both these purposes.

Systems maps are a means of graphically illustrating the myriad relationships between issues and stakeholders. The tool works effectively as a way of making sense of complex environments where exploring links between seemingly unrelated issues can reveal important and unexpected dynamics (Burns, 2014). For newly arrived ICS volunteers the technique was well suited to making sense, and building understanding, of the local Kilifi context including the challenges communities faced, their ideas for change and what development interventions had and had not worked in the past. Importantly, the process of constructing systems maps is as important as the outcome as participants share learning and develop mutual understanding.

The systems mapping method used standardised colour-coding that allowed maps to be compared with those produced by other cycles of ICS volunteers. On the maps, the colour red signifies issues, blue denotes stakeholders, green shows factual information and observations, and black indicates possible solutions and future lines of enquiry. Figure 3 shows a systems map constructed by ICS volunteers.

Whilst constructing the systems maps, participants were encouraged to discuss their findings with each other, take time to view the maps being produced by other groups and ask questions. The process of explaining the links between issues and stakeholders proved useful for participants in critically analysing the emerging findings. Figure 4 shows ICS volunteers in action constructing systems maps.

In a couple of examples, groups incorporated further innovative elements in their maps. For example, one group illustrated the process of coconut production and exportation and Kilifi's role within it. Another group took photos (with permission) of some of the community members they spoke to and included printed copies in their map, thereby helping to bring their community stories to life.

In addition to exploring relationships between issues and stakeholders, the approach proved useful for sharing the learning and experiences across members of the research team. Whereas each volunteer had had their own experience and had made their own notes, the systems maps provided a large canvas for every volunteer's evidence to be documented and shared in one place. Each mapping session concluded with the systems maps being presented to the whole team and a discussion on the key dynamics and revelations. Figure 3: Systems map produced by ICS volunteers

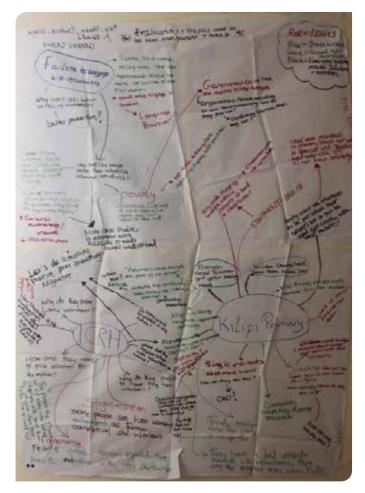


Figure 4: ICS volunteers work on systems maps following their community engagement exercise



One challenge, which formed the basis for experimentation throughout the research, was finding the ideal number of participants per map. The first time the exercise was run with ICS, each research group of five to six volunteers constructed and presented their own systems map. The second time, all the groups came together to produce one much larger map. Both approaches had their benefits and limitations; smaller group sizes led to some very detailed systems maps, with considerable thought given to understanding complex relationships. However, the active construction of those maps was restricted to fewer people, with the larger team only being observers. One large map produced by the whole team of over 20 volunteers allowed for extensive sharing, but the dynamics of such a large group, somewhat inevitably, made it more difficult to ensure everyone actively participated. There is no right or wrong approach, although in future the research would suggest experimenting with a number of participants somewhere in the middle.

#### 4. Problem/solution trees and causation maps

Following on from the systems mapping exercise, participants were asked to focus or 'zoom in' on a specific issue that interested them or that they considered especially important. Either individually or in groups of three to four, ICS volunteers used two techniques to do this: problem/solution trees and causation maps.

Trees form the basis for a range of participatory tools, and in this case the technique was adapted from one used in the UN Volunteers handbook for assessing the contribution of volunteering to development (UNV, 2011). In that example, a results tree was used by volunteers to show their placement (the trunk of the tree) and how it is influenced by numerous factors (the roots) along with how their placement activities (the branches) lead to outcomes and impacts (the fruits).

Despite shifting the focus to problems and solutions, many of the concepts and elements remain the same. So instead of putting the volunteer placement on the trunk of the tree, a pertinent issue or problem formed the centrepiece. Some examples from ICS problem/ solution trees included unemployment, teenage pregnancy, gender inequality and poverty. Participants were then encouraged to think of the roots as causes contributing to that problem – the literal association with root causes helped in building understanding. Looking ahead to their placements and beyond, branches were used to depict activities or interventions that might help alleviate the problem.

Volunteers were encouraged to think of buds or leaves on the tree as showing short-term outputs, fruits as outcomes of the activities and new trees or saplings as subsequent longer-term sustainable change. Wider contextual factors could also be drawn by adding features to the background landscape. Participants displayed considerable creativity in their efforts, and a sample of their problem/solution trees is shown as Figure 5. Figure 5: A selection of problem/solution trees produced by ICS volunteers in Kilifi



The approach proved to be an effective method for pulling out information and relationships from the 'messy' systems maps and making them easier to understand. It also helped participants to consider the factors contributing to problems and to start planning ahead to activities they could undertake to address them during their placements, as well as the potential impacts after they had finished their placements.

Whilst many volunteers chose to construct problem/solution trees, some decided to follow an alternative approach and develop causation maps. Many of the principles are similar, but instead of using a tree as a framework, causation maps are more free-flowing, starting with an issue and then interrogating understanding around its causes and effects. Figure 6 shows an example of a causation map produced by ICS volunteers looking at the issue of local reliance on NGOs.

Causation maps worked well when participants had the confidence to adopt a more fluid and less structured approach. As such the method also allowed for greater interrogation of issues and particularly the complex interrelations between factors. However, problem/solution trees were useful as an introductory technique for participants less used to critically analysing development issues. Figure 6: An ICS volunteer causation map looking at the issue of local reliance on NGOs



#### 5. Theories of change and monitoring and evaluation frameworks

As part of the community inquiry and orientation programme run with ICS volunteers, sessions were facilitated on theories of change and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks. By doing so, the aim was to encourage critical thinking around the potential development impacts that volunteers could have and how their placements should not necessarily be seen as stand-alone threemonth placements but as playing a role in a succession of ICS cycles.

Sessions started by looking at the general ICS 'theory of change' model (shown previously in this report as Figure 1). Across all the cycles, no volunteer had seen the theory of change before. Particular attention was paid to discussing the logic behind the impact of ICS on personal volunteer development and, more importantly, local development outcomes. With the ICS theory of change broken down into short-term outcomes, longer-term outcomes and impacts, the introductory discussion provided a good foundation for looking at the role of M&E and how volunteers could develop their own theories of change. This was intended to serve two purposes. Firstly, greater understanding of M&E aimed to improve volunteer awareness of their potential developmental impacts. Secondly, analysing theories of change aimed to increase volunteer sensitivity to their role as part of a wider system in bringing about positive change.

Sessions on M&E were conducted with the help of a guided example, after which volunteers were asked to develop their own examples. Following an explanation of the difference between outputs (actual activities completed and the products produced), outcomes (the effects from the outputs) and impact (the wider and longer-lasting results), participants were guided through a hypothetical example with discussion and questions encouraged throughout. Figure 7 illustrates one of the guided examples which imagined what would happen as a result of the French government investing in facilities to promote elite athletes. In the wake of the London Olympics and with the recent Kenyan investment in high-altitude training facilities for elite athletes, the example was chosen as being relevant to both UK and Kenyan volunteers, yet with France selected as a neutral country.

Importantly, it was stressed that not all change is positive. Outputs, outcomes and impacts were shown to be both positive and negative and labels were used to illustrate how they could also be direct and indirect, internal and external, intended and unintended, and short, medium and long term. After group reflection on the guided example, participants were divided into breakout groups and asked to construct their own theories of change for activities that they might undertake during their placements. Volunteers were encouraged to think of potential activities, other inputs, key assumptions and the logic between outputs, outcomes and impacts.

Figure 7: The anticipated outputs, outcomes and impacts from a hypothetical investment by the French government in facilities and coaching to support elite athletes



#### 6. Surveys

As part of the community inquiry and orientation programme, ICS volunteers were asked to complete a short survey in the form of a questionnaire. The survey was broadly split into three parts. The first focused on assessing differences before and after the training in relation to volunteer understanding of local issues, personal confidence in engaging with local people, understanding of participation in development and how the volunteer might go about their placement activities. The second part asked questions on the quality and relevance of the training programme using a multiplechoice scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The third section included more open-ended questions relating to participant views on volunteering and what they hoped to achieve during their ICS placement. A copy of the questionnaire used during the February 2014 ICS induction is attached as Appendix C.

Completed questionnaires were subsequently analysed using a variety of tools. Numeric answers were collated and used to produce statistics and averages. Answers to open-ended questions were inputted in freely available online software to create a series of 'word clouds' which show words that were mentioned more often in larger text.

#### 7. Network strings

During a workshop with ICS volunteers and local volunteers from a range of community-based organisations, a method called network strings was used to ascertain the relationships between volunteers and their organisations in Kilifi. The exercise is similar in principle to drawing a network map but is more practical and participatory. The VSO facilitator's guide to participatory approaches was used for inspiration and guidance when undertaking the exercise (VSO, 2004).

Volunteers were asked to group into their respective organisations and form a circle. Following this, each group took it in turns to identify other groups of volunteers in the circle that they had links to. This led into a discussion on the nature of the links they had, with typical examples being personal friendship, attendance at the same events and working together on joint projects. As the groups described their relationships, lengths of string were stretched between the respective parties, with each piece of string indicating a relationship. Figure 8 shows Kilifi volunteers engaged in the network strings exercise. Figure 8: ICS and local volunteers use network strings to illustrate the connections between them



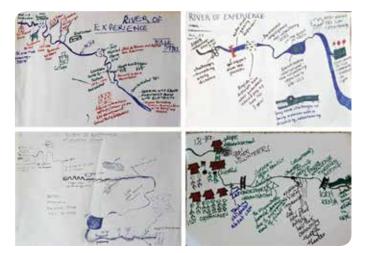
Once every group had taken their turn to identify their connections to others, the discussion was opened to the whole group on what the network strings showed. Participants were encouraged to reflect on who had the most relationships, whether certain groups or organisations held critical positions in the network and how power may be a factor in terms of who was more connected and who was less so. As the exercise was carried out on a warm afternoon, its practical element acted as a good energiser for the group and allowed participants to clearly visualise links in Kilifi's volunteer network. One participant was blind and was assisted by a colleague. Despite the visual nature of the exercise, the person who was blind held the network strings in their group which, combined with the discussions, allowed them to fully participate.

#### 8. Rivers of experience

In order to explore the life journeys of volunteers in Kilifi, ICS and local volunteers were asked to take part in a 'river of experience' exercise. Participants were provided with pens and paper and told to imagine that their volunteer journey represented the course of a river. They were encouraged to be as creative as they liked and to annotate their drawings with notes explaining the main steps in their journey and the symbolism of key features. A range of possible features in a river system and what they could mean was provided in the form of a hypothetical guided illustration by the lead researcher.

For example, whether a river flowed straight or meandered could be a sign of having a sense of direction or the smoothness of the volunteering experience; rocks or rapids could indicate challenges or troublesome times; bridges could illustrate helping factors or links to people or opportunities; irrigation or extraction of water from the river could show volunteer exploitation or alternatively volunteer efforts leading to outcomes; lakes or seas could depict easier times or being lost at sea; river animals could represent key people; and waterfalls could be dramatic events. Participants were also encouraged to consider wider contextual factors and include them on their river. Examples included volunteers drawing clouds to depict opportunities, and hills in the distance showing wider changes and challenges in society. Ultimately it was up to each participant as to what they felt the features in their rivers depicted in real life. One volunteer who was blind was assisted by a co-facilitator, drawing the river as the participant described it. As a learning point, the opportunity for the facilitator to interrogate experiences as the journey was described resulted in a very detailed and valuable depiction. Figure 9 illustrates four examples of volunteer rivers of experience from various inquiry sites across the Valuing Volunteering Kenya research.

Figure 9: Four examples of volunteer rivers of experience from across the Valuing Volunteering Kenya research (some areas are blurred or blanked out deliberately to protect the identity of the volunteers)



The results were impressive and the technique acted as a great way of gaining rich insights into the experiences of volunteers throughout their lives. A particularly interesting insight came from the comparison of volunteer journeys from UK volunteers, Kenyan ICS volunteers and local volunteers.

Once completed, the images were photographed and those wishing to share their volunteer journey presented their river of experience to the rest of the group. With permission, a number of the presentations by participants were also video recorded.

Overall approximately 30 volunteers – UK and Kenyan ICS and local volunteers – completed rivers of experience depicting their volunteer journeys. This evidence formed part of a wider database of *Valuing Volunteering* work on volunteer experiences as the same exercise was conducted with volunteers in Mombasa, Malindi, Wundanyi and Nairobi. In total over 100 volunteers constructed rivers of experience for the research.

# 6. Findings

As an action-research inquiry, a significant component of the approach was dedicated to improving the ICS community induction process by placing an increased emphasis on participation and actively engaging communities to learn about the realities of life in the local area. As such the findings begin with a substantial examination of the community inquiry and orientation programme that was trialled with three cycles of ICS volunteers from October 2013 to June 2014.

The importance of relationships was a key overriding theme to emerge from the findings. In the following analysis, various relationships are examined under separate findings sections. So for instance, the relationships that programme supervisors maintain with host organisations and volunteers are looked at under the section on the role of programme supervisors. Section 6.5 includes analysis of the relationships between local partner/host organisations and volunteers, and section 6.4 specifically examines relationships in terms of volunteer-to-volunteer relationships and the relationships between volunteers and host homes/communities. Additional elements of volunteer-to-volunteer relationships are also covered under the differing motivations of volunteers in section 6.7.

In all sections, specific attention is paid to analysing findings in relation to the development impact of the ICS programme.

### 6.1 An innovative approach to ICS induction: engaging and understanding communities

Early scoping of the ICS programme in Kenya revealed that in-country induction and training was spent almost entirely in the classroom. At no point was any attention paid to attempting to better understand the communities in which volunteers would be working by going out and engaging with local people. For a volunteer intervention that specifically promotes local development impacts as one of three equally weighted goals, this presented itself as a missed opportunity in terms of focusing volunteers on the needs and dynamics of host communities from the outset. The research was of the firm belief that development impacts are not something that is tagged on or just happens once a volunteer is in their placement, they need to be considered and built into approaches from the very beginning. The ICS community inquiry and orientation programme – developed as part of *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research – was a direct attempt to address this issue and also served as a key action component of the inquiry. The three-day workshop combined interactive sessions on participation, complexity, M&E and theories of change with practical community fieldwork using participatory methods and collective sense-making and reflection exercises. Interestingly, although developed before the publication of the mid-term evaluation of the ICS initiative, the community inquiry and orientation programme also pre-emptively addressed a number of recommendations made in that evaluation. These included that:

- "• Volunteer learning should include explanation of the theory of change at programme and project levels. This will help volunteers to better understand their role and the intended outcomes of their work. This learning should be facilitated by team leaders during the placement.
- Following on from the above, volunteers should be made aware of their role in relation to other volunteer cycles in order to understand how they contribute to the bigger picture."
- In-country training should focus on providing placement specific skills and information, rather than training on more generic topics, to ensure that volunteers feel comfortable with the role they are asked to perform."

(Ecorys, 2013:3)

By including sessions on the general ICS theory of change and encouraging volunteers to put their learning into practice by developing their own theories of change for their placements, the induction programme specifically aimed to increase volunteer awareness of their role and possible impact in the wider ICS system. During the community consultation exercise, volunteers asked local people whether they had ever come into contact with ICS volunteers or their work before and, if so, what they thought of them and what they were doing. Such an approach essentially represented an emergent form of M&E whereby newly arrived ICS volunteers attempted to gauge the cumulative community impact of previous cycles. It also helped to increase ICS volunteer awareness of the cycles that came before them and the ones that would come after. Finally, by using direct engagement with the community to build understanding of the local context and dynamics, the programme focused on providing placement-specific skills and information (referred to in the third recommendation from the mid-term evaluation shown above). Importantly, whilst the workshop itself

provided an opportunity for participants to develop personal and professional skills, the entire content was dedicated to laying the foundations for volunteers to be aware of and increase their developmental impacts.

The results from feedback forms completed by ICS volunteers following the workshop give an indication as to the potential of the new community inquiry and orientation approach. In total, 41 feedback questionnaires were collected from all the ICS volunteers that started the two placement cycles starting in October 2013 and February 2014.

When asked to indicate their understanding of local issues on a scale from 0 (lowest) to 5 (highest) before and after the *Valuing Volunteering* induction programme, the average score went from 2.3 to 4.4, representing an 88% increase. Table 1 shows the exact breakdown according to nationality and shows that Kenyan volunteers felt they improved their understanding more than their UK counterparts, although all volunteers reported significant increases. Revealingly, despite not being from Kenya, UK volunteers reported having a better understanding at the start than Kenyan volunteers. Whilst this may reflect levels of confidence or education, there is also a risk that it represents a degree of arrogance or hubris, with UK volunteers potentially more likely to feel that they know best. This is an issue that would be worthy of further study.

Table 1: Understanding of local issues before and after the *Valuing Volunteering* community consultation and orientation programme (0 = lowest, 5 = highest)

	Average before	Average after	Increase
Kenyan	2.3	4.4	93.3%
British	2.5	4.3	67.9%
Overall	2.3	4.4	88.2%

When asked to report their understanding of how they might undertake their placement activities before and after the workshop, the average across all participants increased dramatically from 1.6 to 4.0, representing over 150% increase. Table 2 provides the detailed breakdown of results. Again Kenyan ICS volunteers indicate a markedly higher increase, which could be the result of differing pre-departure training for UK and national volunteers and/or varying pre-placement confidence levels. Importantly, however, the results suggest that the training, with its emphasis on participatory methods and community engagement, is having a direct effect on how volunteers are approaching their placements.

Table 2: Understanding of how you might go about your placement activities before and after the workshop (0 = lowest, 5 = highest)

	Average before	Average after	Increase
Kenyan	0.9	4.2	388.2%
British	2.4	3.8	61.5%
Overall	1.6	4.0	151.6%

Promoting participation as a principle for development and ICS placements appears to be an area where the *Valuing Volunteering* approach added significant value and may suggest that it is not being given due importance in preceding training. When asked to state their understanding of participation in development before and after the workshop on a scale of 0–5, the overall average increased from 2.0 to 4.4, representing a 119% increase. Table 3 provides the breakdown of results. Kenyan volunteers report the biggest increase in understanding, although UK volunteers report a higher finishing understanding of participation in development.

### Table 3: Understanding of participation in development before and after the workshop (0 = lowest, 5 = highest)

	Average before	Average after	Increase
Kenyan	1.3	4.0	207.7%
British	2.8	4.3	51.6%
Overall	2.0	4.4	119.2%

When the community induction programme was facilitated the second time in February 2014, participants were also asked to say whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that the training would make them more effective as an ICS volunteer. Overall, 95% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that it would make them more effective (only one volunteer was neutral in their response). Kenyan volunteers were more likely to strongly agree than their UK counterparts. Table 4 provides the breakdown of the results. Although only asked to one ICS cycle, the initial results suggest that the research's modelling of a new community induction process is having an impact in preparing volunteers to be more effective in their placements.

Table 4: Results in response to the statement 'the training will make me more effective as an ICS volunteer' (the question was asked to the 20 ICS volunteers that took part in the workshop in February 2014)

	Kenyan		British		Overall	
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Neutral	0	0.0%	1	9.1%	1	5.0%
Agree	3	33.3%	8	72.7%	11	55.0%
Strongly agree	6	66.7%	2	18.2%	8	40.0%

Results indicate that, on a personal level, the Valuing Volunteering approach helps to build the confidence of volunteers in engaging with people in local communities - something which can be daunting for volunteers recently arrived in unfamiliar surroundings. When asked to rate their personal confidence in engaging with people in local communities before and after the workshops (on a scale from 0 to 5), the average scores went from 2.3 to 4.4, which represents an 87% increase. Although Kenyan volunteers indicated a higher increase, both UK and Kenyan volunteers reported similar starting and finishing levels of confidence. Table 5 provides the exact breakdown of results.

Table 5: Personal confidence in engaging with people in local communities before and after the workshop (0 = lowest, 5 = highest)

	Average before	Average after	Increase
Kenyan	2.3	4.4	93.3%
British	2.5	4.2	70.4%
Overall	2.3	4.4	87.1%

ICS volunteers also provided written feedback on the training in response to a series of open-ended questions. The following provides a sample of the comments received:

"Encouraging us to speak to the community was really helpful as I now feel as a volunteer I can make more informed decisions about what certain groups in the community need and will benefit from"

UK female volunteer

"This training will impact my effectiveness as an ICS volunteer. This is because I have now learnt how to exactly do my research, how to approach people in different capacities and easily understand the challenges they are facing and coming up with effective solutions" Kenyan female volunteer

"[The] talk on first morning a bit long, but the rest was better than any other VSO training" UK female volunteer

"I interacted with the community on a much greater level. This will be valuable when running CADs [community action days]" UK volunteer

"Going into the community was very valuable and most relevant out of all of the training" UK male volunteer

"I am more aware of local issues. It teaches you ways to interact with the community, eg; tree of issues" UK female volunteer

"Have improved my feeling about community approach techniques. Interaction amongst different kinds of people. Facilitation in different types on techniques like use of trees and maps. Motivation of the winners in competition leading to knowing more about the people in the diverse backgrounds" Kenyan male volunteer

The comments clearly show the value the volunteers attached to going into the community and better understanding local issues. Crucially a number referred to using their learning and, importantly, participatory methods, during the course of their placements. In response to additional questions on the effectiveness of the community induction process, over 95% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the training was valuable to them, over 95% agreed or strongly agreed that they would apply the knowledge learned and over 95% rated the training overall as good or excellent.

In terms of learning from the approach implemented by Valuing Volunteering Kenya, there is significant potential to introduce the same community inquiry and orientation exercise in other ICS areas. Indeed, as a central component of the process is understanding local contexts rather than forcing a set structure upon them, the approach is inherently flexible to the dynamics of host communities. VSO and other delivery agencies may wish to explore how the approach, its principles, or elements of it could be used to enhance in-community induction and engagement as part of their ICS processes.

Looking ahead to how the Valuing Volunteering Kenya exercise could be further developed, two potential areas warrant further attention. Firstly, there are interesting opportunities to link the acts of conducting community inquiries and systems mapping local issues into M&E frameworks. One challenge of M&E associated with ICS is that M&E timelines tend to be aligned with the short three-month placements of ICS volunteers. In Kilifi, at the end of each cycle, programme supervisors go through the substantial undertaking of interviewing the volunteers, getting feedback from partners and writing case studies of key activities and events. However, checking back on interventions from previous cycles is not a priority or a requirement of the M&E framework and so rarely occurs. In other words, M&E is too focused on the individual volunteer rather than the potential longer-term impacts of the cumulative efforts of multiple ICS cycles.

By asking local people whether they had ever come across ICS volunteers or the work they did, the Valuing Volunteering community inquiry deliberately attempted to assess the impacts interventions had had on everyday life. It also represented an experiment in trying to link M&E across multiple ICS cycles. The approach took inspiration from the Global Giving storytelling project, which has collected over 60,000 community stories on local development from across Kenya and Uganda (Maxson, 2012). Importantly, in that project, respondents were not asked about specific interventions. Instead they were allowed to talk about projects of their choosing, after which they were asked a series of questions that categorised their examples in terms of a range of factors such as success, failure, level of community involvement, empowerment, etc. This created an emergent form of M&E that avoided the initial bias of asking people to talk about particular interventions. It also placed the views of the community at the forefront as, with enough stories, a picture could be built of what worked where and why.

Plans were in place to start trialling Global Giving story-forms with ICS volunteers in Kilifi, but unfortunately it was not possible within the timeframes of the research. Nevertheless, the principles underlying the approach and the concept of having newly arrived volunteers evaluate the impact of previous cycles may have potential for wider implementation.

Secondly, there is potential to involve members of staff from local partner organisations, and even community members, in the PSAR methodology that underpinned the induction exercise. Indeed Valuing Volunteering Kenya did work with a group of local Kilifi

volunteers using the same techniques before work started with ICS and, if the research had continued for more cycles, plans were in place to link the groups in joint community inquiries. Involving local partners in community inquiries and systems maps would also go some way to meeting a recommendation made in the evaluation of the ICS pilot programme evaluation which stated that "agencies and in-country partners should strengthen placement planning across an agreed number of cohorts and: engage host organisation staff directly in the activity of volunteers<sup>2</sup>" (ITAD, 2012:50). DFID's response to the evaluation accepted that recommendation.

Experience from the wider Valuing Volunteering Kenya research suggests that appropriately timing the involvement of local partners in community inquiries with ICS volunteers is potentially important. For example, there is a risk that partnering newly arrived ICS volunteers with established local volunteers or staff when conducting the community inquiries may lead to a one-sided picture of local issues and challenges. This can occur when local volunteers use the exercise to portray their own interpretation of their local area, taking the new volunteers to see things and talk to people who support their views of what they think is important.

Whilst the opinions of local volunteers are important, it is possible that what should be a mutual learning experience may be undermined by pairing local and ICS volunteers right at the start of their placements. For this reason, a preferable option may be to let UK and Kenyan ICS volunteers conduct the exercise first on their own during in-community orientation and then repeat it at a later date, such as the MPR, with members of their host organisations. Alternatively, ICS volunteers could take responsibility for independently cascading the approach to their host organisations over the course of their placements. Evidence suggests that there are significant potential benefits for local organisations, particularly

#### CASE STUDY 1: Systems mapping in Mathare Valley, Nairobi

In 2012–13 Valuing Volunteering Kenya was invited to work with the Spatial Collective on a project it was undertaking to gather views and experiences from people in Mathare Valley as part of 'Participate: Knowledge from the Margins for post-2015'<sup>3</sup>. Mathare Valley is a large informal settlement in Nairobi and, despite having many challenges, it seemed local researchers had predetermined that sanitation and waste disposal were the key issues. In video interviews with local people, researchers would begin by asking what they thought about sanitation. It is perhaps not surprising then that sanitation was the issue everyone seemed to be talking about. At this stage Valuing Volunteering Kenya facilitated a systems mapping exercise which encouraged local researchers to look at all the interconnected issues in Mathare Valley and take a step back to view the bigger picture. Many other issues emerged including the possibility that sanitation became a bigger issue because, after dark, it was too insecure for many to visit shared latrines. The exercise proved useful in providing perspective, and the local researchers learnt how to better listen to the community rather than start with set assumptions. The result was that security emerged as a key issue in their subsequent inquiries, rather than only sanitation. smaller grass-roots CBOs, in learning how to use such approaches in order to improve their issue identification, planning and M&E processes. Case Study 1 provides an example of how a systems mapping approach helped one organisation identify important issues in a local community.

#### Implications

#### For ICS delivery partners:

• Too much of ICS community induction is spent in the classroom. In order to move ICS beyond developing the skills and active citizenship of the volunteer to achieving local development impacts, dedicated efforts are required to promote understanding of local issues, contexts and challenges. The community inquiry and orientation approach trialled as part of this research models a way in which active fieldwork and community engagement are prioritised so that volunteers are focused on the needs and dynamics of host communities from the outset. Because the approach looks at understanding local contexts rather than imposing rigid structures for doing things, it is inherently flexible and is therefore transferable to other ICS sites.

### For ICS delivery partners, team leaders and programme supervisors:

- The ICS model of three-month placements presents a challenge in terms of knitting them together into a continuous intervention. This challenge is especially pertinent in relation to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) as within-cycle monitoring can miss the longer-term development impacts of volunteer activities. By getting newly arrived ICS volunteers to ask local people about the work of their predecessors, the research took an initial step in modelling an emergent form of M&E that can link across multiple ICS cycles. There is significant potential to further develop the approach trialled in this research's community inquiry and orientation exercise so that M&E is better aligned to capture the development impacts of ICS as a volunteering model rather than an individual cycle of volunteers.
- To increase the development impact of ICS volunteering, there is no reason why training and skills development needs to be limited to just the volunteers. The community inquiry process modelled as part of this research can easily be extended to include volunteers and staff of host/partner organisations and even interested members of the local community. Approaches such as this can be powerful tools in promoting cross-cultural exchange and learning – creating what the global Valuing Volunteering synthesis refers to as 'insider-outsider knowledges'. When combining local and ICS volunteers in joint activities, particular attention should be paid to the issue of appropriate timing. For example, local volunteers may initially impede ICS volunteers from developing their own understandings if they present the local context from only one point of view. As such, in some cases, it may be more appropriate to build-in specific joint learning opportunities at strategically chosen points in the ICS placement timeframe.

<sup>2.</sup> The recommendation (number 12) also included four other points.

<sup>3.</sup> Participate is working to democratise the way in which development happens through participatory research to influence policy. The initiative was conceived in relation to the post-2015 development agenda, with an ambition to start with those who are most affected by policy decisions. Participate as a network brings together diverse organisations and movements committed to achieving this goal. To support this vision, the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Beyond 2015, a global campaign of civil society organisations, agreed on a collaboration aiming to influence the post-2015 development framework. www.participate2015.org

# 6.2 Integration of ICS into wider interventions and working across cycles

One of the most revealing findings from research into the ICS programme in Kilifi was how little it was integrated into VSO Jitolee's wider organisational functioning and volunteering interventions. On paper it appears that ICS in Kilifi is aligned with two of the three VSO Jitolee programme areas – secure livelihoods and inclusive education. However, the selection of many of the volunteer placements in the community was driven more by the availability of suitable partners in particular fields (such as special education schools and units) and the common sense of programme supervisors who sought out placements where they felt volunteers could make a difference.

The research heard how the process of integrating ICS into VSO's wider work was limited to ICS management staff based in the VSO Jitolee office in Nairobi requesting programme supervisors to state which thematic areas their volunteers were working in within their host communities. This amounted to little more than a 'tick box exercise', with no attempts being made to actually link ICS into more systemic interventions.

Over the course of the research, it became increasingly clear that ICS in Kenya was viewed and treated as a stand-alone programme with very little integration with other interventions or programme areas. The effect of this was that ICS cycles appeared to be treated as isolated 12-week placements rather than as a succession of cycles that – with appropriate mechanisms – could be effectively stitched together into an ongoing longer-term intervention.

Part of the separation of ICS from wider VSO Jitolee working may be due to the physical distance between host communities, particularly those on the coast, and the main office in Nairobi. Indeed, findings from research with other long-term VSO volunteers found that many felt less supported the further they were placed from Nairobi. Nevertheless, Kenya's telecommunication coverage is relatively good and there are few issues in communication between coastal areas and Nairobi. As such, the physical distance should not be used as a justification for a lack of integration.

The research found that by not better integrating ICS into wider programming, VSO Jitolee was missing a major opportunity to increase development impact. One of the consequences of this detachment of the ICS programme was that the Valuing Volunteering Kenya lead researcher started to act as an informal link person between ICS volunteers, programme supervisors and the wider VSO volunteer community - thereby informally filling the gap of a lack of formal integration. In one case, the lead researcher assisted in helping programme supervisors get access to a list of currently serving longterm VSO volunteers. With the volunteer contact list, ICS programme supervisors were able to inquire and seek advice from a much wider pool of professionals - many of whom had significant relevant skills and experience in areas of work being undertaken in Kilifi. In one case there was even a long-term volunteer special education professional (SEP) based in Nairobi who could have provided valuable support to the many ICS volunteers based in special education schools and units. Unfortunately, by the time the research attempted to facilitate collaboration the volunteer had come to the end of their placement. However, the volunteer had been on an 18-month placement, which raises the question why no process was in place to promote networking between the two parties at an earlier stage.

VSO Jitolee has a wealth of skills and experience within both its long-term volunteer community and its staff members. The finding from the ICS Kilifi inquiry is that a substantial missed opportunity has emerged and been allowed to continue by a lack of integration in VSO's organisational systems. In management this is commonly referred to as 'working in silos'. ICS volunteers bring immense enthusiasm to their placements but generally lack professional skills and experience; with just a little support and direction from professional volunteers or staff there is significant potential to increase the development impact of the programme. With greater integration and support from other volunteers and staff, there is real potential to tie the ICS programme into wider systemic interventions over longer timescales that achieve impacts which go far beyond using volunteers just as 'an extra pair of hands'.

#### Implications

For ICS delivery partners:

 ICS has the potential to play a valuable role when integrated with other interventions (such as the activities of longer-term volunteers and delivery partners) and when used, not as a short-term intervention, but as a succession of cycles knitted together into a longer-term intervention. In Kilifi the research found that a significant missed opportunity was allowed to occur because of a lack of basic organisational processes to promote integration and avoid 'working in silos'.

# 6.3 The role of programme supervisors: sustainability and community relationships

The ICS programme, by virtue of its design, faces challenges in fulfilling its ascribed goal of achieving in-country developmental impact. With volunteers only undertaking short 10–12-week placements, the programme is time-poor in terms of how much can be achieved with limited in-community contact time. Working on the basis of a 12-week placement, when a week each is deducted for volunteer induction, MPR and final debrief as well as weekends and one day a week for global citizen days, volunteers may only spend 36 days working with their host organisations.

Within this context, the role of supporting and facilitating volunteers in the field becomes all the more important. ICS delivery agencies use different models to provide this support. Whilst many use team leaders, recruited through ICS as volunteers, VSO during the course of this research used paid programme supervisors (although VSO also shifted to using team leaders in 2014). In Kilifi the team of approximately 20 ICS volunteers was supported by one UK and one Kenyan programme supervisor.

Programme supervisors undertake a wide range of duties including project administration, facilitating induction, mid-point and debrief sessions, and collecting and compiling M&E data. These are the core activities against which their performance is assessed. However, the research found that programme supervisors play a far more significant role by providing continuity for ICS across multiple cycles. By remaining in the community across ICS cycles, programme supervisors play a vital role in maintaining and developing relationships with local partners and host homes – something which individual volunteers or ICS cycles simply cannot do. Whereas the team leaders used by other delivery agencies typically support two cycles over six months, programme supervisors are more likely to serve for one to two years and in some cases longer. This brings them more into line with the timescales of long-term volunteers.

The result is that programme supervisors are able to build up a deep local knowledge, understanding of the community context and extensive networks of contacts that are invaluable to the programme. Volunteers benefit from supervisors who are aware of local dynamics – in contrast to team leaders who are often learning alongside the volunteers – and host organisations and host homes benefit from having a long-term dedicated point of contact through which to raise any issues that emerge. In essence, programme supervisors act to anchor or root ICS in the community.

Importantly this also helps increase the potential development impact of volunteer activities. Firstly, programme supervisors take responsibility for pairing volunteers and matching them with host homes and partner organisations. It is inevitable that not every volunteer will get their first choice of partner, home or placement, but the supervisors are in a unique place to ensure the best fit possible, combining their knowledge of local organisations and host homes with their ability to directly consult with and listen to volunteers. On a practical level this has logistical benefits in terms of the daily travel patterns of volunteers. However, programme supervisors are able to build relationships with volunteers to understand where they may have particular skills and what kind of activities they are passionate about undertaking during their placements. Additionally, the fact that supervisors have direct relationships with partners also means they are aware of the needs of host organisations. Though other factors come into play once a volunteer starts in a host organisation, the likelihood of a volunteer having an impact is increased through having a matching process that effectively connects the skills and enthusiasm of volunteers with the needs and dynamics of host organisations. The research observed the process of placement matching during one of the cycles and it was clear to see the excitement and enthusiasm of the volunteers, especially when they were allocated to placements they were more interested in doing.

Crucially, programme supervisors are able to intervene during the course of placements to address the under-utilisation of volunteers. In Kilifi it was not unusual for volunteers to be doing work with a number of host organisations. In some cases this was agreed during initial placement allocation because programme supervisors knew in advance that there would not be enough to fulfil a dedicated volunteer in specific organisations. In other cases, supervisors would play an intermediary role during the course of the ICS cycle, often listening to the issues (and frustrations) of volunteers and adapting their placements accordingly by allowing them to take on additional work at other host organisations. It should also be acknowledged that many volunteers were committed to making a difference and so would actively ask for extra work rather than remaining in a placement in which they felt they were contributing little.

The under-utilisation of volunteers is an issue which has been observed in a range of short- and long-term volunteering interventions – the wider *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research noted many cases of VSO volunteers easily fulfilling placement objectives and, as a result, they would either become disillusioned, use the extra time recreationally or take on additional activities which were often not picked up or measured as impacts within M&E frameworks. Programme supervisors in Kilifi, however, demonstrate how having hands-on support, facilitated by close relationships with volunteers and partners, can help in addressing the issue of under-utilisation.

Programme supervisors play a key role in conflict resolution and mediating disputes. Such disputes, which are often relatively minor, can occur between volunteers or between volunteers and host organisations or host homes. For volunteers, programme supervisors provide pastoral care, listening to their frustrations and helping them to navigate the issues that emerge through being a volunteer in an unfamiliar community. They also work with partners to ensure they have the right expectations of volunteers and have roles that are appropriate for them to perform.

In one example, a partner which was a regional branch of a larger organisation was going through a time of difficult internal restructuring. As a result, its attitude toward working with volunteers became difficult as staff members started seeing them as a threat to their positions. Newly arrived volunteers went to visit this potential placement partner and had a rather distressing experience. Programme supervisors had the awareness to talk to the partner, and consequently the organisation did not receive any volunteers in that cycle, with volunteers allocated to other host organisations instead. In this way, the programme supervisors prevented a negative situation from developing and gave the partner some time to remedy its internal tensions. In terms of development impact, a lesson to be learnt from this is that interventions need to be considered not only in terms of achieving positive impact but also avoiding negative impacts – something which programme supervisors are well placed to ensure.

In Kilifi, programme supervisors play a very active role in coordinating volunteer placements, particularly in comparison to other ICS host communities in Kenya. For example, further north along the coast in Malindi, ICS works through a coordinating partner that takes on more of the responsibility for placing volunteers in relevant partner organisations. Technically, there is also a coordinating partner in Kilifi, but its role is much less active, which meant programme supervisors have to play a more significant role in the process.

In Kilifi the more active role of programme supervisors in coordinating volunteer placements comes with both strengths and risks. On the positive side, programme supervisors hold a remarkable amount of knowledge on local partners and are in a prime position to directly link and mediate between host staff and ICS volunteers. They are also well placed to use their local expertise to identify potential new partners - something which was evident and clearly a positive development in Kilifi. However, at the same time, having a linking role focused on one or two programme supervisors, rather than an organisation, also has risks. The programme supervisors in Kilifi were undoubtedly performing a valuable service but, if one or both of them were to leave their posts, the future sustainability and continuity of the work in the community would come into question. Most likely a great deal of institutional knowledge and local relationships would be lost with any new programme supervisors having to start afresh.

One area of future debate is what role is envisaged for programme supervisors in terms of pastoral care. This relates to the dynamics of the relationships between programme supervisors and the volunteers. Whether deliberately or not, VSO appears to have recently changed its recruitment of international programme supervisors in Kenya. Compared with their predecessors, new appointments have been slightly older. This has led to a shift away from programme supervisors being seen by ICS volunteers as friends and colleagues, to programme supervisors as substitute parents and managers. There is not necessarily a right or wrong approach but the issue does have important implications in terms of how the programme functions and the role that programme supervisors are expected to perform.

Programme supervisors are in position to witness and document changes brought about by ICS over multiple cycles. In this regard, they add value over the team leaders used by other agencies which tend to only support up to two cycles. Team leaders may help in the handover between cycles but cannot document long-term impacts over multiple cycles. The challenge is to ensure that the right M&E frameworks exist that enable programme supervisors to measure longer-term changes rather than purely in-cycle outputs and outcomes.

The structure of ICS is dictated by the short three-month placements that volunteers undertake. However, this research has seen that programme supervisors play a critical role in ensuring a degree of sustainability over multiple cycles. This does not entirely overcome the challenge of the short ICS placements, but it does help provide some continuity to what would otherwise be a very disjointed volunteer intervention. Programme supervisors achieve this by being rooted in communities and nurturing productive relationships with local partners and host homes. In essence, they act as the glue that holds successive ICS cycles together. Although programme supervisors are paid employees of VSO rather than volunteers, it may be that their role could be performed by long-term professional volunteers. However, what is clear is that the role of programme supervisors adds value to the ICS programme in Kilifi beyond what could be delivered by shorter-term team leaders.

#### Implications

#### For ICS delivery partners:

- The value of programme supervisors needs to be appreciated in terms of how they help to overcome the challenge of ICS using short-term placements. They do this by ensuring sustainability and continuity across multiple ICS cycles. Their ability to build lasting relationships with local partners and host homes adds value in terms of providing a more effective matching process, ensuring partner needs are met and their expectations are realistic, making the best use of volunteer passion and enthusiasm, countering the under-utilisation of volunteers in placements and sensitively mediating local disputes. All of this nurtures a better environment in which local development impacts can occur.
- Programme supervisors need to be better enabled to make the best use of their longer posts in local communities: for example, through M&E frameworks that make it easier to document longer-term changes, and shorter gaps between ICS cycles as supervisors are the ones having to maintain the relationships during handovers. With ICS delivery agencies shifting to the use of team leaders, learning from how programme supervisors add value should be used to enhance the role of team leaders on shorter placements.
- Consideration should be given to the recruitment criteria
   of programme supervisors and the kind of dynamics that
   are sought in terms of the relationship between supervisors
   and volunteers. The research has found that combinations
   of factors such as the age of programme supervisors and
   the roles they are perceived by volunteers to undertake can
   greatly affect the type of relationship between programme
   supervisors and ICS volunteers. For example, this can range
   from programme supervisors being seen as colleagues and/or
   friends to more pastoral and managerial roles.

### 6.4 Volunteer relationships

A number of key relationships define the ICS programme in Kilifi. These include relationships with host homes and communities, relationships between volunteers, relationships with programme supervisors and with partner organisations. The dynamics of the recruitment criteria of programme supervisors and how that affects the nature of the relationship with volunteers was discussed in the previous section on the role of programme supervisors. Similarly, relationships with partner organisations will be examined in the subsequent section on partners. This section will focus on the two remaining relationships – those between volunteers and those with host homes/communities.

#### Volunteer-to-volunteer relationships

With the promotion of cross-cultural exchange and learning an important component of the ICS programme, factors that affect the development of volunteer-to-volunteer relationships are significant. In terms of the cross-cultural exchange between volunteers, especially between UK and Kenyan volunteers, four issues emerged as being significant in the relationship-building process. These were power relations, gender dimensions, age differences and differing motivations and understandings of volunteering.

Starting with power relations, the ICS groups revealed interesting dynamics in terms of dependency, respect and power hierarchy. In an insightful discussion on what volunteers hoped to gain from participating in ICS, one male Kenyan volunteer pointed to a UK volunteer who had a degree in engineering and explained that by making friends with the UK counterpart it meant that when that volunteer returned to Kenya later in life and established a company they would give them a job. It should be noted that most UK volunteers felt uncomfortable being put in situations in which they were seen as having greater opportunities and were expected to later assist their Kenyan counterparts. However, the reality of the programme for Kenyan volunteers meant that many saw it as a chance to make beneficial contacts with UK volunteers.

Power relations also emerged as a result of the general disparity in skill levels between UK and Kenyan volunteers. Due to the differing education standards in the two countries, UK volunteers were often better qualified and more likely to challenge and think critically. In research workshops this was often visible, with UK volunteers finding exercises easier than their counterparts. In some cases, particularly in the sessions with volunteers coming to the end of their placements, it was not uncommon for UK volunteers to almost talk for their Kenyan counterparts when answering questions or presenting. In many cases it was clear that UK volunteers only wanted to help, but such power dynamics were seen to have detrimental impacts upon the participation of some volunteers, particularly Kenyan volunteers.

The issue of gender influenced group dynamics and volunteer-tovolunteer relationships. In terms of UK volunteers, recruitment figures on applicants reveal that over the course of the ICS cycles nearly two-thirds were female compared to a third male (Ecorys, 2013). As the mid-term evaluation for the whole ICS programme observes, "looking at the profile of applicants compared to diversity targets suggests that the most significant area of variation is gender. It is clear that the programme has so far proved relatively more appealing to females" (Ecorys, 2013:29). In Kilifi, the higher proportion of female UK volunteers was clearly visible and in one cycle there was only one male UK volunteer. Interestingly, the same imbalance was not echoed amongst Kenyan volunteers where, if anything, the balance swung towards more males. Such imbalances have the potential to impact upon the cross-cultural relationships between UK and Kenyan volunteers. For example, a number of informal discussions revealed how female UK volunteers tended to feel that male Kenyan volunteers were particularly immature.

The age range of participants was mentioned by some volunteers as affecting who they made relationships with. The ICS programme is open to young people in the UK and Kenya aged 18–25, although the issue is complicated by the fact that the categorisation of 'youth' in Kenya extends up to the age of 35. If ICS is to operate as a peerto-peer learning opportunity for young people, then the programme must ensure that volunteers are peers. Some UK volunteers expressed concern about potentially being partnered with Kenyan volunteers who were significantly older than the age range permitted by the programme.

Perceptions and understandings of volunteering vary greatly across cultures and countries. The *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research has found that the practical realities surrounding volunteering in Kenya are context-specific. In Kenya, many people see volunteering as a survival mechanism because of the small allowance it brings, or as a 'stepping stone' to paid employment. This was seen to affect relationships between volunteers, as UK volunteers would use their living allowance for social activities whereas Kenyan volunteers were more likely to save their allowances or send them home to their families. This created some tensions in terms of volunteers not participating in activities together. This issue is addressed in more detail in the subsequent section on volunteer perceptions and motivations.

### Relationships with host homes/communities

The research found the use of host homes to be a valuable experience for ICS volunteers. Not only does it provide an excellent opportunity for volunteers to learn about the local culture, it also immediately embeds them in the local community. This acts to quickly build relationships and trust between volunteers and the community as local people are given the opportunity to see and engage with volunteers first-hand. The visibility of volunteers living in the community helps to build a sense of solidarity and also provides volunteers with direct experience of what it means to live in communities. Given the short-term nature of ICS placements, the use of host homes was found to be an excellent method of facilitating significant cultural immersion in a relatively short period of time. In many ways ICS volunteers were seen to achieve deeper levels of cultural immersion and integration than many long-term VSO volunteers on much longer placements.

The use of host homes also means that accommodation allowances are paid straight to the host families rather than hostels or hotels, thereby injecting a higher proportion of resources into the local economy. It should, however, be noted that host homes are usually relatively prosperous as their properties have to have a spare room and meet minimum standards. As such, the living allowances paid to host homes should not be seen as reaching the poorest or most marginalised people in communities.

The research found that host homes built strong relationships with their ICS volunteers and often stayed in contact after their placements finished. ICS volunteers generally treated their host homes with considerable respect – an important cultural learning/personal development process in itself – and any issues or tensions appeared to be sensitively and easily dealt with by programme supervisors.

One issue that recurred frequently was that of language. Undoubtedly the use of host homes was extraordinarily useful to volunteers in helping them to pick up the basics of Swahili and, in some cases, local dialects. This was particularly useful to Kenyan volunteers who could not speak the local languages. Evidence suggests that the ability to speak the local language can be immensely valuable in building relationships and gaining the trust of communities. Long-term VSO volunteers receive two days of language training and a small tuition allowance, whereas ICS volunteers are only given a basic lesson. The evaluation of the pilot phase of the ICS programme recommended that agencies consider offering additional language training on the specific vocabulary that will be encountered within placements, but the DFID response stressed how pre-departure training was not possible within budgets and emphasised the importance of volunteers learning independently. Given the short duration of placements there is a strong argument against offering additional training, particularly if it occurs in-country and so delays volunteers from getting to their placements. Often an effective approach is to 'dive in' and pick things up through real-world experiences. Nevertheless, some attention to learning the basic courtesies can help the initial process of integrating into local communities and host organisations.

#### Implications

### For ICS delivery partners, programme supervisors and team leaders:

 Greater awareness and attention should be paid to the group dynamics that affect relationship building between volunteers

 particularly between UK volunteers and their in-country counterparts. This is especially important in light of the fact that ICS is being promoted as a platform for cross-cultural learning and exchange. The research has found that a range of dynamics affect volunteer relationship building including power dynamics (in terms of North–South hierarchy and differing skill levels), gender dimensions (gender imbalances being a major issue), age differences and differing cultural understandings of volunteering. Increasing awareness and discussing such factors openly may lay the foundations for addressing them.

#### For ICS delivery agencies:

- The use of host homes is an excellent method for enabling significant cultural immersion in a short period of time. Using host homes allows volunteers to build relationships and trust with the community; it essentially creates a two-way process in which local people can see and engage with volunteers firsthand and volunteers gain direct experience of what it means to live in the community. The use of host homes should therefore be acknowledged as adding significant value to the ICS model; crucially, there is also potential for such an approach to be used more widely in other volunteering interventions.
- The short duration of placements makes extensive language training unrealistic, particularly if it encroaches on the time volunteers spend in-community. However, steps should be taken to encourage self-learning including the provision of learning materials, especially before volunteers start their placements.

# 6.5 Partner organisations: suitability, volunteer roles, expectations and support

Partners play a pivotal role in the effectiveness of the ICS programme in Kilifi, from the suitability of the partners themselves to the nature of the volunteer roles/placements within them, their expectations of volunteers and the support they give them. Findings suggest that when all or most of these align, there is real potential for volunteers to have positive development impacts. However, when they do not, impacts can be negligible or even negative.

The process of partner selection is critical and this is an area where programme supervisors, based in communities (and/or a reliable coordinating partner), can really add value. Partners come in a range of different forms and, whilst some are more suitable than others, it should not be assumed that larger, more established CBOs or NGOs make better partners than smaller emerging or struggling organisations. The evaluation of the pilot phase of the ICS programme suggests that "if local partners were focused on organisational survival, they would be unlikely to continue embedding changes influenced by the ICS volunteers" (ITAD, 2012:27). However, this needs to be balanced against the potential developmental impacts of helping the poorest and most marginalised people in communities. If local community impacts really are to be one of the core achievements of the ICS programme then it may be that smaller organisations struggling for survival are the ones that would most benefit from the support of volunteers.

It should also be noted that the issue of partners is not just one of initial selection but of maintaining and developing working relationships. It has already been examined how programme supervisors play an important role in this regard, particularly in maintaining relationships during handover periods. Situations within partner organisations can also change and as such they need to be re-evaluated in terms of their suitability. In the section on programme supervisors, one example was referenced where a partnership was temporarily put on hold as the organisation went through a delicate and disruptive restructure. Placing volunteers into such an environment would have potentially created conflict with local staff and had a negative impact. The selection of the right partner alone is not sufficient to ensure that volunteers will make a difference. A complementary key requirement is that partners also have appropriate roles for volunteers. Unfortunately, the two do not always go together. The following example of the experiences of one ICS volunteer in Kilifi highlights how a well-respected partner organisation did not succeed in effectively using the volunteer it was allocated.

"My main placement is with [a well-established organisation]. When we first visited they had a number of objectives they wanted us to achieve. Many of these were [in technical areas] I had little skill in so was already wary. Although when choosing placements I knew this could be the case I thought there would be more hands on work and interaction with the ['beneficiaries'] than at the moment there appears to be.

We are placed in the... team and had been assigned a task to create a [technical] workshop for the staff members so that they learn how to use [the technique]. Having being told they are complete beginners we created some interactive workshops on tips [covering the key areas]. However when we had a meeting with the supervisor it turned out this is not what they wanted, they wanted us to go step-by-step [through the technique] and then let them practise. After working on this for a while this was pretty disappointing. Also the workshop was assisted by... experts so although it was good experience for us, we weren't really all that needed.

Furthermore I had now spent two weeks sat 8–5 at a computer screen interacting with only two of the other volunteers. So I enquired about our other uses. We have been asked to assist with [another technique] but we have yet to see the ['beneficiaries'] to be able to help them... Our input has been minimal even though I have been continuously trying to push myself forward. So what I am trying to say is I feel like as volunteers we are not greatly needed here and I am getting very little out of the work as I interact with the community very little." ICS volunteer

In this case, despite having set objectives, the volunteer felt underutilised and may even have been given tasks that exceeded their skill level. Miscommunication between the partner and the volunteer also contributed to a misuse of valuable time. In order to increase effectiveness, partners need to identify roles for volunteers that either allow for achievements in-cycle or are fluid enough to be smoothly handed over to volunteers in subsequent cycles. Additionally, roles should not be a drain on the resources of host organisations or potentially deny opportunities to local volunteers or staff.

In terms of the roles that ICS volunteers undertake which contribute to local development impacts the mid-term evaluation of the programme states that

"the evidence suggests that the programme is having a largely positive effect on partner organisations and communities. ICS volunteer teams provide partners with additional capacity which enables them to do more than would otherwise have been the case. There is also recognition of a range of other benefits for partners including increased profile/visibility, new skills/ways of working and improved relations with local communities, all of which would be expected to support the organisation to develop and sustain its activities post-ICS." Ecorys, 2013:2 The research in Kilifi found evidence to support the claims that ICS volunteers brought new ideas, increased visibility and profile as well as enthusiasm and a can-do attitude. However, many were also engaged in relatively basic supportive roles, which although they may have increased capacity, did so only temporarily and were not likely to lead to long-lasting sustainable impact. For example, whilst many volunteers placed in special education schools or units were valued by teachers for the respite they provided, their efforts were generally seen as a temporary measure with positive effects ending once they finished their placements.

One mechanism that yielded highly visible impacts was the community action days organised by volunteers and host organisations on key issues. ICS volunteers in Kilifi were seen to have significant success in engaging the local community through such events, and on one occasion even succeeded in getting the support of the county administration. The community action days also acted as a means of developing links between the various host organisations in Kilifi, potentially building links that would last beyond the duration of the ICS placements. Additionally the action days provided focus points over the course of placements and served as a useful basis for increasing the visibility of both volunteers and partner organisations in the community.

Partner expectations of volunteers and effective support mechanisms are important factors alongside the need for suitable partners and appropriate volunteer roles. Such considerations are also likely to directly affect the nature of the relationships that volunteers have with their host organisations. Ensuring partner expectations are realistic and that they are aware of potential challenges, such as language and the culture shock experienced by some volunteers, is critical in establishing mutual understanding and laying the foundations for positive volunteer-partner relationships. Furthermore, it is important to manage the expectations of all staff, particularly those who have frequent contact with volunteers, rather than just getting the buy-in of senior staff members. Cases were noted of enthusiastic managers and organisational leaders who welcomed volunteers, only for issues to emerge once volunteers began working with other staff on a day-to-day basis, who had little understanding of what the volunteers were there to do or what they had the potential to contribute.

It is also important for volunteers to feel they have sufficient support and lines of communication open to them within host organisations. Too often miscommunication can lead to a substantial waste of volunteer time and effort and end up causing frustration with the placement. In such cases there is a vital role for programme supervisors to play in ensuring partner expectations are realistic, and that effective support and lines of communication are provided to volunteers.

#### Implications

#### For ICS delivery partners:

Volunteer host organisations (partners) are vital players in enabling ICS to achieve positive development impacts. In working through partner organisations, the Kilifi research has found four issues to be particularly important:

- Partner selection some partners will be more suitable to hosting volunteers than others. For example, some organisations will be working in thematic areas that ICS is focused on supporting; other organisations may be well structured to receive volunteers in a way that does not jeopardise opportunities that might otherwise fall to local staff or volunteers; and some organisations may enable ICS volunteers to reach out to the poorest and most marginalised.
- Volunteer roles volunteers need to be given appropriate roles that either allow for achievements within cycles or are fluid enough to be smoothly handed over to volunteers in subsequent cycles. Care should be taken to ensure that volunteers are not a drain on a host organisation's resources. Working closely with partners to assess their needs and effective volunteer–partner matching is essential to achieving this.
- Expectations of volunteers host organisations need to have appropriate and realistic expectations of ICS volunteers and what they can achieve within the remit of a 10–12-week placement. Often, young ICS volunteers will not have the professional skills or experience that some partners may expect; there is thus a key role for programme supervisors to play in managing those expectations. Additionally, expectations need to be managed across all local staff that the volunteers may interact with rather than just senior leadership (who may make the initial decision to receive a volunteer).
- Volunteer support and lines of communication within host organisations – when miscommunication occurs within host organisations, ICS volunteers can waste significant amounts of their time during short placements. There is therefore a need to ensure that effective support and lines of communication are available to volunteers within host organisations.

The issue of partners is not just one of initial selection but of maintaining and developing proactive working relationships. Here programme supervisors based in the community (or a reliable coordinating partner) have a vital role to play. Not only can they ensure the selection of suitable partners but they can help to manage their expectations, assess the needs volunteers can address, provide continuity across ICS cycles and deal with the continually evolving contexts/suitability of local partners.

### 6.6 Volunteer attributes

As the mid-term evaluation of the ICS initiative highlights, "the contribution to organisational development made by this relatively inexperienced cohort will differ from that which would be provided by older, skilled professionals who would be expected to provide more practical knowledge and experience" (Ecorys, 2013:12). This begs the question as to what ICS volunteers are expected to bring to their placements which will contribute to local development impacts.

The research found little evidence that ICS volunteers brought specific skills in terms of approaches to engagement or participation with local communities. This was one reason why the decision was taken to develop the community inquiry and orientation exercise during the ICS induction; by giving volunteers a grounding in participatory approaches at the start of their placements, it was hoped that they would be able to introduce or cascade that learning to their host organisations.

On the whole the Valuing Volunteering Kenya research found ICS volunteers to be incredibly enthusiastic, with a positive can-do attitude that often exceeded that of older longer-term VSO volunteers. This mindset was useful and to a certain extent compensated for some of the challenges and limitations associated with the design and nature of the programme – namely the short placement duration and relatively low skill levels of many volunteers in comparison to experienced development professionals (DFID, 2012). This enthusiasm and commitment to making a difference can be incredibly powerful, particularly in overcoming challenges that may stunt the placements of less dedicated volunteers. Indeed, to an extent, the shorter placements of ICS volunteers appeared in some cases to be a motivating factor as they tried harder to achieve outcomes in shorter timescales (shorter placements also meant volunteers were less likely to 'burn out'). Frustrations are also less likely to have the time to build to become a debilitating factor the way they were observed to do in the cases of some longer-term volunteers encountered as part of the wider Valuing Volunteering Kenya research. However, the ICS volunteers' enthusiasm for quick results does need to be balanced against the need to ensure sustainable change by working with and engaging host partners and communities rather than quickly forcing through externally imposed solutions.

The case of one UK ICS volunteer provides enlightening insights into the challenges that can be encountered but also how commitment and enthusiasm can facilitate change. As the volunteer describes in their own words,

"Our input has been minimal [at the host organisation] even though I have been continuously trying to push myself forward. So what I am trying to say is I feel like as volunteers we are not greatly needed here and I am getting very little out of the work as I interact with the community very little. Furthermore I am gaining small amount of experience and skills. I am however helping out with other placements and organising our own CADs [Community Action Days]. I have helped [another partner organisation] and at the special unit in [a local primary school] where I think I am getting somewhere with the projects and actually making a very small difference. I am also working with others to set up projects that we recognised as problems from our interaction with the community." ICS volunteer

For some volunteers who find themselves in placements where they are contributing little, there is a temptation to continue and complete their placements whilst enjoying the general experience of being in a foreign country or different community. Certainly cases of this were recorded, particularly where placements stagnated toward the end of the three months. But ICS volunteers in Kilifi were generally more likely to come forward, raise issues with their programme supervisors and host organisations, and seek opportunities to make a difference in their limited time. The key challenge for the ICS programme is to ensure that the right opportunities exist for volunteers to funnel their enthusiasm into bringing about change. Often this is dependent on having the right host organisations, which are accustomed to working with volunteers, and the right roles that play to the strengths of volunteers who may not have significant professional experience but are passionate and keen to introduce new ideas.

As an interesting exception to the assumption that ICS volunteers are unskilled, it should be noted that the research did encounter a number of volunteers with significant skills and experience. Examples included teachers, engineers, pharmacists and trained medical professionals. In some cases their motivation to do ICS was to gain experience outside their chosen profession, but they were also often keen to indirectly use their specific skills to make a difference. In one example, a trained nurse was eager to use their skills in a local primary school. However, insurance and legal liability issues prevented them from doing so. The 18–25-year-old window for ICS means that some volunteers toward the older end of the age bracket will likely have some professional skills and experience. The programme supervisors in Kilifi would generally consult with such volunteers to see how and if those skills could be put to good use. In terms of the wider ICS programme, there may be opportunities to see how specific skill-sets could be applied in particular interventions. This could include dedicated projects, such as recruiting young teachers for school interventions, in an approach similar to the Teach First initiative in the UK, or using skilled volunteers in support roles to the wider ICS team in a host community. For example, in Kilifi, ICS volunteers were specifically in need of someone with experience of working with children with special educational needs. An education professional in that case could have had a significant impact.

#### Implications

#### For ICS delivery partners and host organisations:

 ICS volunteers bring enthusiasm, new ideas and a commitment to bringing about change in a short period of time. These need to be celebrated as key areas where ICS adds value over other volunteering interventions. The challenge is to ensure the right opportunities exist for ICS volunteers to funnel their enthusiasm into bringing about change. Key factors are suitable host organisations that are accustomed to working with volunteers, and the right roles that play to the strengths of young volunteers who may not have significant professional skills but are passionate and keen to introduce new ideas. There may also be opportunities to explore how ICS volunteers on short-term placements can be used to provide timely injections of volunteer effort within longer-term or broader volunteering interventions.

#### For ICS delivery partners:

 ICS volunteers, in a minority, yet a significant number, of cases, do possess valuable professional skills and experience. In order to promote development impact, ICS delivery partners should explore possibilities for using these volunteers with specific skills in specific development interventions. This could include dedicated projects for skilled ICS volunteers or having such volunteers play supportive roles to wider ICS teams of less-skilled volunteers undertaking placements in their relevant field of expertise.

#### 6.7 Volunteer perceptions and motivations

The Valuing Volunteering Kenya research wanted to better understand how ICS volunteers perceived the act of volunteering and what motivated them to take part. By doing so the aim was to explore factors that may impact upon the effectiveness of ICS as a volunteering intervention.

In October 2013, ICS volunteers were asked what the term volunteering meant to them before they started their placements. The results were assembled into word clouds, with the size of font indicating how frequently the words were mentioned. Figure 10 illustrates the results of the exercise.

Kenyan and UK ICS volunteers expressed similar views around the key themes of helping the community and giving time. In both cases the phrases most often referenced were community and time. In terms of differences, Kenyans were more likely to talk about the concept of personal sacrifice and the financial side of volunteering. Multiple mentions of working without pay or for free were made, along with references to sacrificing or offering oneself for the good of the community. Interestingly, Kenyan volunteers made little reference to religious associations, which were commonly encountered in similar exercises with Kenyan volunteers at other *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research sites. UK volunteers still emphasised how volunteering was an activity done without anything expected in return but also stressed how it was an experience, reflecting their personal journeys of coming to another country. They also mentioned how volunteering involved the sharing of ideas and supporting others.

The following quotes indicate views on volunteering from UK and Kenyan perspectives:

"It is the act of giving a helping hand just from your heart without expecting payment or reward. It is also the passion" Kenyan volunteer

"Understanding local community and try to make a lasting impact. Learning from others and achieving personal development" UK volunteer

"Giving out myself to assist without necessarily wanting something in return" Kenyan volunteer

"Fully devoting yourself i.e.; time, resource, skills, knowledge, position to serve others whole heartedly without any reward on offer"

Kenyan volunteer

"Volunteering is a chance to do something which will really impact on a community without expecting anything in return" UK volunteer

Observations within the Kilifi inquiry sites and wider Valuing Volunteering Kenya research did reveal differences in perceptions of volunteering between Kenyan and international volunteers. In Kilifi, Kenyan volunteers were much more likely to value the financial living allowance offered as part of the stipends. UK and Kenyan volunteers received the same basic allowance and, whilst it was by no means excessive, it was noted that Kenyan volunteers were much more likely to try and save their allowance and/or send it home to their families. UK volunteers were more likely to use it to fund social activities during the course of the placements. Given the disparity in incomes and living conditions between the UK and Figure 10: Word clouds indicating which words were most often mentioned in relation to what the term 'volunteering' meant to ICS volunteers. Subsequent word clouds show the responses separated according to UK and Kenyan ICS volunteers.



Kenya this is not altogether surprising. However, it does suggest that the ICS programme is potentially valued by some Kenyan volunteers for its monetary benefits in a way that it is not by UK volunteers. In some instances this was seen to create barriers to cross-cultural integration as Kenyan volunteers would be less likely to participate with their UK counterparts in extracurricular activities that involved financial costs. This would occasionally cause friction within the groups, as members struggled to see things from the others' perspective. This illustrates how better understanding the motivations and realities of UK volunteers and their counterparts is important for building cross-cultural understanding.

When the line of questioning was changed to what personally motivated volunteers to participate in the ICS programme rather than general definitions of volunteering, slightly less altruistic factors came to the fore. Kenyan volunteers were more likely to mention gaining skills and experience in order to gain employment, possibly reflecting the high rates of youth unemployment and strong competition for jobs in Kenya. This echoes findings from the wider *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research which found that volunteering was often perceived by young people as a 'stepping stone' to paid employment. However, UK volunteers were also not shy in admitting their ambitions to use ICS as a springboard into international development work or further volunteering. The following comments illustrate some typical views from Kenyan and UK perspectives:

"I chose to volunteer with ICS to gain knowledge about the communities and to improve my social skills and I wanted to update my CV and be in the database of ICS so that they can offer me a job some time to come" Kenyan volunteer

"I find this a useful opportunity to see how people are living and responding to issues in society. For myself this is useful to develop for future jobs/roles" UK volunteer

"I hope to know how to work with my community from my placement eg; communication skills and be able to secure a job from any given non-governmental organisation" Kenyan volunteer

"To make a positive and lasting improvement in the Kilifi community and personally I hope this will lead to further international volunteering" UK volunteer The reality of the ICS programme is that, whilst it aspires to achieve in-community development impacts where other youth volunteering schemes have largely failed, personal and professional development remain significant motivations for participants (DFID, 2012). This is not surprising given that volunteers are young people who have recently entered the job market and sign up to do ICS with little knowledge of what kind of area or roles they may be undertaking. Nevertheless, many spoke of their desire to help others and make a difference; comments such as wanting to "achieve something great for the benefit of an individual or a community" (UK volunteer) and "sacrificing one's time to do something helpful for the community" were typical. The reality is that both UK and Kenyan volunteers have a range for motivations for participating, although national variations do exist and understanding these variations can help to increase opportunities for cross-cultural learning and exchange.

#### Implications

#### For ICS delivery partners:

- UK and national volunteers have a range of motivations for participating in ICS. For many young people entering or new to the job market, ICS provides an opportunity to gain valuable skills and experience. This is a valuable component of ICS that should not be ignored, particularly when marketing the opportunity to potential volunteers. However, it also needs to be balanced with a very strong emphasis on ICS's focus on making a difference and bringing about local development impacts. The ICS recruitment process also needs to be sensitive to the range of volunteer motivations, placing importance on both altruistic intentions and personal development.
- Motivations of national volunteers often differ from their UK counterparts. A contextual analysis of the national dynamics and perceptions of volunteering in the host country is valuable in understanding these motivations and how they may impact upon opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and learning as well as the implementation of volunteer activities.

#### For ICS delivery partners, programme supervisors and team leaders:

 Tensions may emerge between ICS participants in relation to how living allowances are perceived by UK and national volunteers. When national volunteers save their living allowances (and/or send them back to their families), it may also prevent them from taking part in joint social activities with their UK counterparts. This has the potential to negatively impact upon opportunities for cross-cultural integration and learning. To counter this, sessions on exploring the UK and incountry context along with seeing things from other points of view may help to increase cultural understanding.

# 7. Reflections on the process

### The value of the process

The action-orientated nature of the Valuing Volunteering Kenya research was undoubtedly one of the greatest strengths of the inquiry in Kilifi. In essence, the whole process became an arena for experimentation and action structured around improving the community induction process for ICS volunteers in order to increase developmental impacts. The relatively regular cycles of three-month ICS placements also provided a good platform for reflecting on actions and incrementally improving the community inquiry and orientation programme in time for the next group of volunteers.

Working closely with the two programme supervisors was vital and ensured that learning was mutually supportive and beneficial for the volunteers, the programme in Kilifi and for the wider research on volunteering. Feedback from volunteers, covered in the findings section, clearly shows how much the community induction process – the main action component of the research – was valued. The fact that programme supervisors continued to run the sessions without the direct input of the researcher also illustrates how well it was perceived, not only in terms of volunteer development but also in relation to community engagement and local development.

It was evident during research sessions with ICS volunteers that, for many, the approach challenged them to think critically and reconsider their volunteer placement within a longer-term programme of multiple ICS cycles. In terms of improvement, it was hoped that in future exercises it may be possible to include some local volunteers. ICS volunteers do have significant contact with local volunteers once they start their placements in local organisations. In order for volunteers to first develop their own understanding of the local context, it may be beneficial for groups to carry out initial community consultations independently, but there may be valuable insights and cross-cultural learning opportunities to be gained from conducting subsequent community inquiries with local volunteers at a later stage, perhaps during the mid-point review (MPR).

## Challenges during the research process

Over the course of the research, five main challenges were encountered:

# i. Selecting the research site and ICS as the focus of the investigation

The process by which Valuing Volunteering came to work in the Kilifi community and specifically with ICS volunteers was not straightforward; instead it illustrates how the research was able to make the most of emergent opportunities. Initial work in Kilifi began with a participatory systemic inquiry with a group of local volunteers from various CBOs; contact with these groups had been facilitated by a long-term VSO volunteer based in Mombasa. However, despite some positive results from a three-day training session in August 2013, logistical challenges and a lack of time and enthusiasm on behalf of local participants led to the decision being taken to not take Kilifi forward as a full systemic action research site. Specific challenges included a lack of suitable or interested candidates to be local coordinators of the research combined with time pressures on the lead researcher who was already committed to facilitating two community inquiries in Mombasa and Nairobi. It was only during the visit to conduct the initial training with local volunteers that contact was made with the ICS Kilifi programme supervisors. The enthusiasm of programme supervisors to be involved and play a role in facilitating the research along with specific opportunities within the ICS programme cycle to engage volunteers made ICS in Kilifi a much more viable case study. As a result, the research changed focus from

#### ii. Making initial contact with ICS groups on the ground

Making contact with the ICS groups, and particularly the programme supervisors based in host communities, through the VSO Jitolee office was initially difficult. This may have been the result of staff changes in the team centrally managing the ICS programme in Kenya. Nevertheless, initial communication difficulties delayed the research's engagement with ICS volunteers in Kilifi.

### iii. Differing skill levels amongst ICS volunteers

UK and Kenyan ICS volunteers came from a variety of backgrounds, had a range of different skills and varied in terms of their level of educational attainment. With ICS spanning the 18-25 age range, there could be significant differences in maturity and skill levels between someone straight out of school and someone who has completed university and/or has a number of years of work, and more life, experience. This presented a challenge in relation to pitching research sessions at a level that enabled everyone to learn and participate, but also challenged those looking for more advanced learning. One solution was to offer a range of techniques to participants when undertaking exercises. This allowed volunteers to either adopt an approach they were comfortable with or challenge themselves with something more advanced. Generally, UK volunteers were more accustomed to critical thinking and challenging ideas than their Kenyan counterparts. Whilst UK volunteers would often assist Kenyan colleagues, this did occasionally create another challenge when UK volunteers adopted a more teacher-pupil rather than collaborative approach.

On the whole, the attitude and approach of the ICS volunteers to learning and participating was excellent. Only a very small minority of exceptions occurred; on one occasion a group of male Kenyans was resistant to participating and, in other isolated cases, individual UK volunteers viewed some sessions condescendingly as being too easy.

#### vi. Security issues

In May 2014, in response to a number of incidents and a perceived terrorist threat, the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and a number of other developed country governments issued travel warnings against all but essential travel to the Mombasa region to the south of Kilifi. This was followed by warnings against travel to Lamu County to the north in July 2014. The VSO Jitolee country office quickly followed suit, relocating their volunteers based in Mombasa and restricting all travel to the region. The timing of the security advisory had a substantial impact on the research. Although not off-limits, research trips to Kilifi were often combined with visits to another inquiry site in Mombasa. Additionally, the most common route for reaching Kilifi from the lead researcher's base in Nairobi was through Mombasa. As a result, gaining access to Kilifi in the latter

stages of the research was more challenging. Shortly afterwards, VSO also stopped using Kilifi as an ICS host community, with volunteers instead sent to other parts of Kenya including Nanyuki and Loitokitok.

#### v. Timeframes and regularity of research visits

Over the course of the research, four cycles of ICS volunteers were involved. Whilst this should be seen as a success, the short-term three-month placements of each cycle did make it difficult to conduct substantial work and organise repeat research visits with individual groups. If ICS in Kilifi had been the only research inquiry then more engagement would have been possible, but it proved challenging to balance the set schedules of ICS cycles with the multiple commitments of other *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* inquiries which were running in parallel.

# The lead researcher's positionality with regard to the research site

The issue of positionality was relatively straightforward in Kilifi and certainly easier to navigate than at other research sites in Kenya. The main reason for this was that, as a long-term volunteer from the UK, the lead researcher was working either with people in a similar position or people who were already working alongside UK volunteers.

In terms of the UK ICS volunteers, it was very easy to build a constructive working relationship with them, in part because of shared cultural backgrounds but also because, as a volunteer, the lead researcher had some idea and experience of the journey international volunteers go through during their early days in-country. The only real challenge in relation to both UK and Kenyan volunteers was the occasional participant perception of being the pupil in relation to the lead researcher as teacher. As one UK ICS volunteer said during an informal discussion with the lead researcher, "you're like a proper volunteer". Additionally, in Kenya, academic qualifications are highly respected and, whilst the lead researcher having a PhD did help in gaining respect, it was also a barrier to being seen as a facilitator as opposed to teacher. This was an issue that the lead researcher repeatedly attempted to overcome by stressing how they all had equal roles to play as volunteers in bringing about development. Overall, this power dynamic was visible, but only occasionally, and it was not perceived to have had any negative effects on the research or community inquiry and orientation programme.

An additional challenge related to the working relationship with Kenyan ICS volunteers. As a UK volunteer, the lead researcher was sensitive to the issue of not wanting to be seen as being one-sided or favouring UK volunteers – this was perceived as a risk given that shared cultural background made it easier to connect with UK volunteers. To avoid this, the lead researcher made sure to use examples during sessions that were equally relevant to both UK and Kenyan volunteers, and during break-out sessions conscious efforts were made to ensure that equal attention was given to all participants.

# 8. Conclusions

The International Citizen Service aims to develop the personal and professional skills of volunteers, increase active citizenship and bring about local development impacts (Ecorys, 2013). In Kilifi, the research found that the personal and professional development of ICS volunteers was the primary area for outcomes. Programme supervisors and volunteers were aware of and wanted to achieve local development impacts, but actual impacts were minimal, often only temporary and/or not measured.

A number of areas and issues emerged from the research that could help to promote local development. These included promoting participation and engagement by taking volunteer induction into the community, not missing opportunities for increased organisational integration and valuing the importance of building strong relationships with and between partners, communities, host homes, programme supervisors and volunteers.

The ICS programme prides itself on being different from other youth volunteering initiatives because of the increased emphasis it places on development outcomes. As the DFID ICS business case states, "ICS is different – with an explicit focus on the development impact on the ground" (DFID, 2012:10). However, the research found that key defining characteristics of the programme, such as the use of relatively unskilled volunteers on short-term placements, acted to severely limit the development impacts of volunteers. With the various personal/professional development and review commitments within the 10–12-week ICS placements, volunteers potentially spend just 36 days working with local partner organisations. This provides only a limited opportunity to bring about change and also restricts the roles that volunteers can take within host organisations - with few skills, it often does not make sense (in terms of development impact) for organisations to invest in providing substantial training to ICS volunteers. Nevertheless, a number of approaches and measures were employed that did act to counter the programme's limitations and create a better environment in which developmental impact could occur. Two stand-out features that undoubtedly increased effectiveness were the role of programme supervisors and the use of host homes for volunteer accommodation.

Programme supervisors play a crucial role in ensuring sustainability and continuity across multiple ICS cycles by building lasting and reciprocal relationships with local partners and host homes. Although not volunteers like the shorter-contracted team leaders used by other ICS delivery agencies, programme supervisors add significant value as a result of the increased time they spend in host communities, which uniquely enables them to build vital networks and local knowledge as well as witness long-term impacts first-hand. For this reason, M&E frameworks would benefit from being expanded to allow for programme supervisors to document lasting changes rather than being purely focused on in-cycle impacts. Programme supervisors also add value in a range of other areas including providing a more effective matching process, ensuring partner needs are met and their expectations are realistic, making the best use of volunteer passion and enthusiasm, countering the underutilisation of volunteers in placements and sensitively mediating local disputes. Whilst programme supervisors do not directly undertake the volunteer activities that lead to in-community development impacts, their work contributes substantially to nurturing a better environment in which positive change can occur.

The use of host homes for volunteer accommodation served as an excellent means of facilitating cultural integration into the community in a relatively short period of time – something that is all the more important given the short 10–12-week placements. Host homes not only give volunteers deep insights into the nature of communities but also help to build trusting relationships and links between volunteers and local people. Furthermore, the monetary benefits of volunteer accommodation allowances were likely to go more directly into the community and local economy through the use of host homes than using local hostels or hotels. Language barriers remain an issue but, given the short placement duration and budgetary constraints, providing in-country language training is likely to be unrealistic. Better opportunities for self or group learning are reasonable alternatives.

The inquiry found that there were a number of ways in which the ICS programme could be improved. The action phase of the research, which implemented a new approach to the ICS community induction, was immensely successful in increasing volunteer understanding of participation, active engagement and the issues that were most important to the community. The act of getting out of the classroom and into communities was particularly valuable and was a change to much of the other in-country training volunteers receive. Further opportunities exist to use the community inquiries as a form of M&E across ICS cycles and also to include or cascade the approach to host organisations so that local people can build their capacity in participatory techniques.

The research found that the ICS programme in Kilifi was treated as a stand-alone intervention with little integration into the wider work of VSO Jitolee. Given the wealth of skills and experience in the long-term VSO volunteer community, as well as amongst VSO Jitolee staff, there is a significant missed opportunity in terms of linking up skills and professional support. With increased organisational integration, real potential exists to link the contribution of ICS volunteers into bringing about wider systemic change.

Partner organisations were found to be vital with regard to the effectiveness of volunteer placements. In Kilifi, programme supervisors took a lead role in managing the key relationships with partners (in other areas a coordinating partner plays a larger role), establishing new partnerships when opportunities arose and temporarily pausing the allocation of volunteers to some when internal changes presented a risk that volunteers might do more harm than good. Importantly, a range of factors need to align in order for placements to be most successful. These include not only selecting suitable partners but also making sure they have appropriate roles for volunteers, that their expectations of volunteers are realistic and that volunteers have appropriate support to use their time effectively.

Although relatively unskilled, some ICS volunteers do possess relevant professional skills and experience. Potential exists to explore how such volunteers can either be concentrated in particular interventions or used in more supportive roles to wider teams of ICS volunteers working in a community on a specific thematic area. ICS volunteers demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm, commitment, a cando attitude and were widely praised for bringing new ideas and inspiration to host organisations. These are valuable attributes and can be powerful forces for change when matched with suitable host organisations and roles.

The importance of relationships was an overriding theme that emerged in many of the findings. Programme supervisors play a vital role in managing a number of these relationships such as those with partners, host homes and volunteers and often mediate between them. A key relationship was also visible between volunteers and the local community – a relationship that was enhanced through the use of host homes. Other significant relationships exist between volunteers and host organisations and in the form of volunteer-tovolunteer relationships that are crucial to facilitating cross-cultural learning. The research found that understanding cultural contexts in relation to how people view volunteering was also important to building relationships and understanding between volunteers.

In summary the ICS programme in Kilifi provides an opportunity for young people from the UK and Kenya to develop personally and professionally and, in some cases, where partners and roles are well planned and managed, contribute to local development. The use of host homes and the activities undertaken by programme supervisors act to lessen the limitations of the ICS programme's short placement duration and use of relatively unskilled volunteers. However, opportunities exist to further increase developmental impacts through the promotion of participatory approaches and community engagement, and greater organisational integration with the wider work of VSO Jitolee.

# 9. Recommendations

#### 1. Improving the volunteer community induction process. Delivery partners should develop volunteer community induction programmes such as that initiated by the *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research. The community inquiry and orientation exercise trialled by this research models a way or working that prioritises active fieldwork and community engagement which immerses volunteers and encourages them to focus on the needs and dynamics of host communities from the outset. The approach adds significant value over purely classroom-based exercises and is inherently flexible and transferable to other settings.

2. Integrating ICS into wider and longer-term interventions. The efforts of ICS volunteers need to be linked into wider interventions and maintained across cycles in order to increase their development impact. The research found that ICS in Kilifi is treated as an isolated intervention, which significantly limits its effectiveness. ICS as a model of volunteering faces challenges in terms of using relatively unskilled volunteers on short-term placements, which lessens its potential to bring about sustainable change. However, ICS does have the potential to play a valuable role when integrated with other interventions (such as the activities of longer-term volunteers) and used, not as a short-term intervention, but as a succession of cycles in a longer-term process of change.

**3. Learning from programme supervisors.** The value of programme supervisors needs to be appreciated in relation to how they help to overcome the challenges of ICS as a volunteering model (such as short placement with low-skilled volunteers). Learning should also be used to inform the use of team leaders in the ICS programme. In Kilifi, programme supervisors ensured vital sustainability and continuity across multiple ICS cycles. They achieved this by building lasting relationships with local partners and host homes, providing an effective volunteer-to-host home/organisation matching process, ensuring partner needs were met and their expectations were realistic, making the best use of volunteers in placements and sensitively mediating local disputes. All of this nurtured a better environment in which local development impacts could occur.

4. The use of host homes. The ICS use of host homes could be further explored as a potentially effective means of enabling significant volunteer cultural immersion in a short period of time. Furthermore, the use of host homes has potential wider application to other volunteering interventions, and volunteering-fordevelopment organisations are urged to investigate opportunities for using them more widely. Using host homes allows volunteers to build relationships and trust with the community; it creates a two-way process in which local people can see and engage with volunteers first-hand and volunteers gain direct experience of what it means to live in the community. Paying allowances to host homes is also more likely to inject resources more directly into the community than using hostels or hotels. **5.** The vital and complex role of host organisations/partners. ICS delivery partners need to develop their understanding and approach to partners, realising that a combination of factors often need to align in order for volunteer placements to be effective. As such, not only do suitable partners have to be selected, appropriate roles need to be available to volunteers that either allow for achievements within cycles or are fluid enough to be smoothly handed over to volunteers in subsequent cycles. Partners need to be worked with in order to assess their needs and ensure that all local staff/volunteers interacting with ICS have appropriate and realistic expectations of the volunteers and what they can achieve within the remit of a 10–12-week placement. Volunteers also need to be given effective support within their placements to make the best use of their time. The issue of partners is therefore not just one of initial selection but of maintaining and developing proactive working relationships.

**6.** Better utilising ICS volunteers with professional skills. ICS delivery partners should explore possibilities for better utilising those ICS volunteers with professional skills. Although the majority of ICS volunteers are relatively unskilled and some of those with skills undertake ICS specifically to do something different, there are those keen to use their skills within the ICS framework. Potential approaches could involve using volunteers with relevant skills in more specific interventions or using specialist ICS volunteers to strategically support wider ICS teams working in their relevant field of expertise.

7. Understanding differing country contexts on volunteering.

ICS delivery partners need to be aware of how perceptions of volunteering vary across countries and how this can impact upon opportunities for cross-cultural learning and exchange. Ensuring robust context analysis of national dynamics is conducted is therefore important. In Kilifi, the research found that differing perspectives of volunteering affected how UK and Kenyan volunteers used their allowances, which, in turn, created tensions and led to some volunteers not participating in joint activities promoting cross-cultural exchange.

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# **11. Appendices**

# Appendix A: The ICS Community Inquiry Discussion Guide

### Discussion guidelines

**REMEMBER:** Write as much down as you can in people's own words. Use "quotes" to tell their story and ask if it is ok to take notes.

 Introduce yourself (and others with you) and the research – give your name, the organisation you work/volunteer with. Ask for their name. You can use your own words but here is an example of what you could say:

"We are volunteers with ICS (International Citizen Service) which is supported by VSO (Voluntary Services Overseas). You may have come across some ICS volunteers here in Kilifi in the past. We're just starting our 3-month placements and are doing a short piece of research to better understand the issues, people and culture of Kilifi. We want to work together with local people and address the issues that most matter to them".

[If people ask for money or "appreciation", you can say that the research, and work it will inform, will hopefully benefit the community].

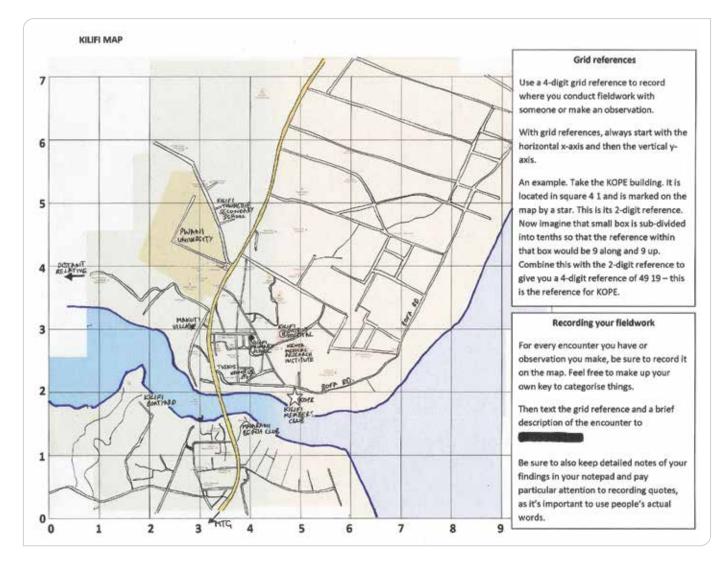
- 2. Ask them if they could give you a few minutes to discuss their views on volunteering. Explain that their views will only be used for the research and their identity can be kept anonymous if they choose.
- 3. If they agree, ask if it is ok to take some notes you can say that it will help to remember important points. If they seem comfortable you could ask to take their photo.
- 4. At the end ask for their permission to use any quotes, their contact details and if they can recommend anyone else who may be good to speak to.

### General questions to ask

- 1. Tell me a bit about yourself and your community.
- 2. Have you come into contact with ICS volunteers before? If so, what Hdid you think of them? What was the relationship like?
- 3. Have you ever volunteered yourself or been a member of a voluntary organisation? Would you want to? If so, are there any barriers you face in volunteering?
- 4. To what degree does your local community have the capacity to deal with issues and challenges? What makes it strong? What makes it weak?
- 5. What are the challenges or issues that Kilifi faces? What challenges do you face in your daily life? Do you feel you personally have the power to change things? Please explain.
- 6. Is there action happening on these issues? Is it being successful? If not, why not?
- 7. What is standing in the way of action happening on these issues? What would need to change to enable action to happen?
- 8. Tell me a story about a community effort in Kilifi. What happened? Did things improve or get worse?

**REMEMBER:** You can use other methods such as drawing pictures, maps, story-boards.

### Appendix B: Fieldwork map of Kilifi town



## Appendix C: ICS community consultation and orientation workshop feedback form

### Example template taken from workshop conducted in February 2014

Name:	Host Org:	Nationality:

Please indicate your level of feeling on the topics below before and after the training took place (0=low, 5=high):

	Knowledge/skill level <b>before</b> the training				Knowledge/skill level <b>after</b> the training							
	0	1	2	3	4	5	0	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding of local issues and challenges												
Personal confidence in engaging with people in local communities												
Understanding of participation in development												
Understanding of how you might go about your placement activities												

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
The training was valuable to me.	0	0	0	0	0
I will be able to apply the knowledge learned.	0	0	0	0	0
Class participation and interaction were encouraged in the training	0	0	0	0	0
The training will make me more effective as an ICS volunteer	0	0	0	0	0

Please indicate why you feel this training will impact on your effectiveness as an ICS volunteer How do you rate the training overall?

Very poor	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
0	$\bigcirc$	0	0	0

### Open questions

- 1. What does volunteering mean to you?
- 2. Why did you choose to volunteer with ICS?
- What were your motivations?
- 3. What do you hope to achieve and what impacts do you hope to have through your placement? Think personal and professional.
- 4. What do you think will be the biggest challenges for you in your ICS placement? Think personal and professional.
- 5. How could the training be improved?

Valuing Volunteering was a two year (2012 – 2014) global action research project, conducted by VSO and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) to understand how, where and when volunteering affects poverty and contributes to sustainable development. This case study is part of a series of inquiries conducted in the Philippines, Kenya, Mozambique and Nepal which explore the role of volunteering across different development contexts and systems. Using Participatory Systemic Action Research it asks local partners, communities and volunteers to reflect on how and where volunteering can contribute to positive, sustainable change.

# For more information about the global *Valuing Volunteering* study please contact: enquiry@vso.org.uk

Dr Simon Lewis is a social researcher and strategist with over a decade's experience in various policy-related fields from international development to national, regional and local government. He has particular passions for social innovation, complexity, and participatory approaches that put people at the heart of decision-making processes. Simon was the lead researcher and project manager in Kenya for the *Valuing Volunteering* action-research project. After completing the research, Simon was a core part of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) team commissioned to review the work of Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) in the fields of participation and governance. He currently works for VSO developing the evidence base for volunteerism's role in reducing poverty and devising approaches for more effectively utilising volunteers in development interventions. Prior to this research Simon worked in policy and strategy in UK local and regional government, provided policy advice to a UK Member of Parliament and held a teaching post at Durham University. He holds a PhD in applied social sciences from Durham University and has an undergraduate degree in geography.



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