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Evaluation of the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program

Office of Development Effectiveness

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Cover photograph: Bountheng is a whiz at maths. He is getting an education through Komar Pikar, an organisation that supports children with disabilities and their families. Occupational therapist Emma Glenn helped Komar Pikar to develop an intake and assessment process for the children who use its services.

Photograph courtesy of Tiet Ho, Australian Red Cross.

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The evaluation was undertaken from August 2012 to September 2013. It was completed before the announcement of the integration of AusAID with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Implementation of the report's recommendations may be affected by the changes resulting from this integration and will need to be taken into account going forward. In particular, references to AusAID in the report should be read as referring to the new amalgamated DFAT.

The evaluation team would like to thank the DFAT staff in the Volunteers Section, Canberra, and in Cambodia, Vietnam and the Solomon Islands; the host organisations and their Australian volunteers; and the core partners of the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program: Australian Volunteers International, Austraining International and Australian Red Cross.

Acronyms and abbreviations

ABV	Australian Business Volunteers
AGVP	Australian Government Volunteer Program
AI	Austraining International
APO	Australian partner organisation
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
AVID	Australian Volunteers for International Development (program)
AVIDs	participants in the AVID program
AYAD	Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development
AYADs	participants in the AYAD program
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
KPI	key performance indicator
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
NGO	non-government organisation
Post	AusAID office in-country

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Executive summary

Australian Volunteers for International Development

Since the 1960s, the Australian Government has, through its aid program, supported Australians to undertake voluntary work in developing countries. International volunteering promotes cultural understanding through people-to-people linkages and is a means of promoting both public diplomacy and development outcomes.

Over the years, the Australian Government has supported a variety of volunteer programs, the most recent being the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program. Launched in May 2011, AVID was designed to unite a variety of 'streams' into one major program. AVID was set the goal of mobilising, by 2013, 1000 Australian volunteers each year to work overseas. Although AVID is one of the most visible elements of Australia's overseas aid effort, it comes at a modest cost relative to the annual aid budget. In 2011–12, it represented around one per cent of Australian aid, or $63.1 million. However, Australian Government support for volunteer programs is long-running and is likely to continue for years to come. Over time, spending on volunteers can be a substantial amount.

AVID is funded and managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and delivered by three core partners: Australian Volunteers International, Australian Red Cross and Austraining International. Austraining International delivers the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYAD) stream (a subcomponent of AVID) and also manages a consortium that includes Australian Business Volunteers (ABV).

In 2011–12, 1585 AVIDs (920 of them new) were assigned to 1173 host organisations in 42 developing countries.[1] Almost half of all volunteers were AYADS (44 per cent). Most AVIDs (57 per cent) were on assignments lasting between 6 and 12 months, with others completing shorter and longer-term assignments. The volunteers worked with a diverse range of organisations, including local non-government organisations (NGOs) (38 per cent), government departments (21 per cent) and other agencies, including United Nations and private sector agencies, educational institutions, humanitarian organisations and international NGOs (41 per cent). The majority (84 per cent) of volunteers are placed in East Asia and the Pacific.[2] Volunteering is a major source of relevant training for individuals planning a career in international development. One-third (31 per cent) of returned volunteers are now working in international development.

This evaluation aimed to enhance the effectiveness of the AVID program and the contributions of volunteers to development efforts. Its objectives were to:

› assess the contribution of volunteers to Australia's development efforts

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1 AusAID, *AVID annual statistics report 2011–12*, AusAID Volunteers Section, Canberra, 2012.

2 AusAID, *AVID annual statistics report 2011–12*

- identify factors that support or constrain the effectiveness and efficiency of the program
- recommend improvements to the design and management of the program.

The evaluation drew on existing program data, research literature and a survey of returned volunteers (1361 respondents). The evaluation conducted fieldwork in three countries: Cambodia, Vietnam and the Solomon Islands. Fieldwork included a survey of all 192 host organisations in these countries (49 per cent response rate) and 123 interviews with a representative sample of host organisations, volunteers and DFAT staff. Data were also collected through a media analysis of Australian news media.

The evaluation confirmed that AVID is making an effective contribution to Australian and partner government development objectives. It is also an effective public diplomacy mechanism. Volunteers benefit from their experience and bring expertise and professionalism that host organisations value highly; they are often compared favourably to volunteers from other countries or paid technical advisers. Volunteers contribute to the capacity of host organisations, develop people-to-people links and generate goodwill for domestic and foreign diplomacy.

However, the program's operation and outcomes can be improved through developments to the design and management of the program, which are detailed below.

Program design, policies and administration

AVID is managed centrally by DFAT's Volunteers Section in Canberra to supply a fixed annual quota of volunteers within a defined budget. The AVID budget sits outside individual country program budgets negotiated between Australia and partner governments. It is thus often seen as being 'additional' to country aid allocations with comparably less ownership by either the host government or the relevant DFAT Post. A cap on the number of volunteers is decided in Canberra rather than representing the 'demand' for volunteers as expressed by DFAT Posts or host organisations. The total number of AVID volunteers is currently driven by the Australian Government's commitment to place 1000 new volunteers annually.

AVID's development effectiveness would be enhanced if DFAT Posts were more involved in determining volunteer numbers and identifying local host organisations. Posts that see special value in the program may also want to consider 'topping up' volunteer numbers by using their bilateral country program funds.

DFAT and its core partners have made substantial progress in developing a governance framework (shared standards), and the continued refinement of the standards is a strength of the partnership. However, as a relatively new brand, AVID does not yet have a fully integrated, single-program vision and it lacks an agreed single statement of program objectives and program logic. The AYAD stream has its own set of objectives. AVID's design document should be updated to confirm the overall program objectives and program logic.

Successful volunteers[3] share the same characteristics across the program's streams. Outcomes for volunteers, in relation to their contribution to development efforts and for public diplomacy are largely by-products of the shared objectives of all AVIDs, and are not stream-specific. There does not appear to be any rationale or evidence for maintaining separate streams within AVID or for the current practice of placing 44 per cent of all volunteers in the AYAD stream each year.

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3 The most common adjectives used by host organisations to describe the attributes of successful volunteers in order of the frequency with which they were given were flexibility, adaptability, patience, proactivity, openness and open-mindedness, and enthusiasm.

The relevance of volunteers' experience, their attitudes and the duration of their assignments were the most important volunteer-driven determinants of host organisation capacity development, not whether they are an AYAD or general AVID.

Maintaining two volunteer streams (AYAD and AVID) leads to confusion and does not support the single-program, single-brand approach that AVID was intended to establish. The situation is complicated by the fact that the core partners have long-established brands of their own. DFAT should consider consolidating AYAD and AVIDs into one stream of AVID volunteers.

The efficiency of the current partnership model can be improved. Although there continues to be a strong emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region, the Australian Government has, over time, expanded its aid to other countries and regions. As a result, the number of countries where volunteers are placed has grown from 28 to 42 countries over the past 5 years. However, 20 countries have 10 or fewer volunteers in 2012–13. In countries where there are small numbers of volunteers, there are often two or three core partners providing largely the same services. This leads to duplication of services and potential administrative inefficiencies. DFAT should reconsider its options for managing and contracting for service provision and the number of countries involved in the AVID program.

Australian volunteers

Australian volunteers are most commonly female (65 per cent), aged 26–35 (58 per cent) and university educated. Overall, AVID over-represents females and young people and under-represents older people and males.[4]

Research shows that older people are less likely to volunteer, but when they do, the benefits for the volunteer and the host organisation can be substantial.[5] The evaluation also found that older volunteers were significantly more satisfied with their volunteering work than younger volunteers.[6]

As noted above, there was low demographic diversity within the 2011–12 volunteer cohort. Ensuring there is demographic diversity in the volunteer profile is a key principle in the AVID shared standards. There is an expectation that a wider segment of Australian society should be able to engage with the program and therefore broaden its public diplomacy impact. DFAT should require core partners to collect and report additional demographic data on volunteers to monitor the diversity of recruitment and placements, including volunteers' socioeconomic status and cultural background.

Most volunteers were very satisfied with recruitment, pre-departure training and in-country orientation provided by the core partners. Fewer were satisfied with in-country support or their host organisation. Volunteers were least satisfied when placed in unprepared, inefficient or unmotivated host organisations, or when their role turned out to have a focus on helping host organisations secure grants and funding or, very occasionally, when they perceived corruption. Volunteers also criticised the lack of networking or access to development expertise from their in-country manager or other potential sources. Volunteer complaints and suggestions for program improvement should be more systematically addressed through a strengthened approach to the monitoring and evaluation of AVID.

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4 The proportion of people aged 66 years and older in the Australian population is 13 per cent, compared with 7 per cent in the AVID cohort. Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian demographic statistics report*, cat. no. 3101.0, ABS, Canberra, 2012.

5 D Haski-Leventhal, Elderly volunteering and wellbeing: a cross-European comparison based on SHARE data. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Non-Profit Organisations* 20(4):388–404, 2009.

6 Satisfaction with volunteering work was highest among volunteers aged 60–69 years (92 per cent satisfied) and 70–79 years (96 per cent satisfied).

AVID volunteers are almost universally highly regarded by host organisations for their professionalism, experience, flexibility, adaptability, fresh ideas, approachability and ability to work as part of a team. Given the relatively low cost of volunteers, DFAT's Volunteers Section could do more to promote to DFAT Posts how volunteers can provide an effective, low-cost form of capacity development.

People who intend to use volunteering as a stepping stone to a career in international development report better career results after volunteering.[7] As noted above, the returned volunteer survey showed that one-third (31 per cent) of returned volunteers were now working in international development.[8] Volunteering exposes individuals to development issues and can better prepare them for further work in this field. In interviews, volunteers also said volunteering improved their ability to solve difficult problems, widened their skill set beyond a narrow profession or specialisation, enhanced their appreciation of organisational effectiveness and improved their cultural understanding.

Impact of volunteering on host organisation capacity development

Helping to develop the capacity of host organisations is the major outcome sought by aid-funded volunteer programs. This central purpose underpins other objectives such as enhanced public diplomacy results for Australia abroad and the personal development objectives of volunteers. Most (88 per cent) host organisations were satisfied with their volunteer; two-thirds (65 per cent) were very satisfied. Satisfaction was related to the ability of the volunteer to complete specific tasks by working as part of a team to deliver programs and meet goals, while transferring skills to local staff and raising the profile of the organisation. Dissatisfaction was related to the length of time it took for a volunteer to arrive and the lack of any long-term commitment to providing volunteers.

With regard to the AYAD stream, it is a common misconception that AYADs are young and inexperienced, and primarily agents for public diplomacy and personal development rather than capacity development. The overwhelming majority of AYADs interviewed for the evaluation had significant professional experience required by their host organisation.

Volunteers contribute capacity mainly by sharing their knowledge and skills with staff of host organisations. Although host organisations are confident they will retain this capacity once the volunteer leaves, the volunteers themselves are often less certain of this. However, host organisation satisfaction was not positively associated with long-term capacity development. Most host organisations were more focused on immediate capacity concerns than on longer-term development. This was true even for organisations that had hosted multiple volunteers.

There would be benefits in shifting the focus from supplying a fixed number of annual volunteers to a more demand-driven approach that supports long-term capacity development of host organisations and takes DFAT Post needs into account. This would require core partners to work with host organisations to develop long-term plans that involve sequenced support from volunteers and balance immediate capacity needs with long-term objectives. Even though long-term sequenced volunteer placements will constitute the majority of placements, one-off placements should be retained, where appropriate, to maintain program flexibility and test the organisation's ability to benefit from more sustained support.

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7 A McBride, B Lough and M Sherraden, *Perceived impacts of international service on volunteers: interim results from a quasi experimental study*, St Louis: Brookings, Centre for Social Development, Washington University, 2010.

8 AusAID, *Survey of returned volunteers*, prepared by ORIMA Research, AusAID, Canberra, 2012.

Volunteer assignment planners should not assume that a volunteer counterpart role is the most effective way to meet the host organisation's needs. In future, team mentoring should be considered as an alternative approach.

Most volunteers interviewed in Cambodia, Vietnam and the Solomon Islands felt socially connected, but a substantial number felt professionally isolated. Greater support for networking between current volunteers, volunteer alumni, expatriates or nationals with development expertise could address this.

Host organisations' lack of knowledge about how to effectively host a volunteer is a key cause of assignment failure and volunteer dissatisfaction. New host organisations would benefit from linking with successful host organisations before and during a volunteer assignment.

Alignment

All aid activities are guided by their relevant country strategy, which should in turn be aligned with the partner government's development priorities. The evaluation found that just under two-thirds (63 per cent) of assignments in the case study countries were aligned with DFAT's country strategies. Overall, approximately only one-quarter (28 per cent) of all assignments in the three fieldwork study countries were aligned with a high priority of the relevant country strategy.

AVID is well aligned with DFAT's Civil Society Engagement Framework. More volunteers are being mobilised to assist with the capacity development of civil society organisations than with any other type of organisation. However, AVID is not well aligned with the recently launched Private Sector Development Strategy—only 3 per cent of volunteers are sent to private sector entities.

At a deeper level, in countries visited by the evaluation there was little evidence that DFAT Posts direct the size and scope of volunteer operations or that volunteers are used strategically with other capacity development initiatives (e.g. scholarships, fellowships or paid technical assistance). DFAT Posts' role in managing the AVID program is generally limited to approving host organisations put forward by core partners during the annual planning process and monitoring the volunteers' security and welfare. Volunteers' contributions could be better aligned with broader aid efforts by increasing involvement of Posts in discussions about the number of volunteers that are appropriate for each country strategy, and by actively identifying host organisations linked to country strategy objectives.

Volunteering and public diplomacy

AVID is a new brand and is still not well recognised overseas. Host organisations rarely identify their volunteer with AVID, associating them instead with either a specific stream or core partner. AVID is both an umbrella term for the program, as well as a stream within it.

However, most host organisations in the case study countries recognise AVID as being funded by the Australian Government. Core partner organisations have a longer history than the AVID brand and have their own strong branding, which is also recognised as Australian.

A branding expert could advise on the most effective way of marketing the AVID program to different stakeholder groups so the program continues to attract a range of skilled volunteers across age groups.

The media's portrayal of AVID is overwhelmingly positive, and AVID volunteers may influence domestic policy through their attitudes expressed to family, friends and media. Despite this, there has been no in-depth consideration of the contribution volunteers make to foreign policy or domestic policy objectives. The evaluation makes suggestions for further exploring this issue.

Monitoring and evaluation

The current approach to monitoring and evaluation is weak, fragmented and unexplained. Core partners use different formats for end-of-assignment reports completed by volunteers and host organisations. This results in varying levels of completeness and quality.

Monitoring needs to be streamlined and consolidated, with one agreed process implemented by the three core partners. Data need to be collected and used to inform decision-making about the program at both the implementation (i.e. in a specific country or region) and program level.

DFAT should focus on providing clear advice about performance monitoring and evaluation, and should hold core partners accountable for monitoring performance and conducting evaluations, and use this information to drive program improvements.

Conclusions

AVID is making an effective contribution to the Australian Government's development objectives and has demonstrated its ability to meet the commitment of deploying 1000 volunteers annually by 2013. Volunteers are a cost-effective form of development assistance and contribute to the capacity needs of host organisations, providing their staff with new knowledge and skills and developing people-to-people links.

The evaluation has made seven recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the program. The AVID program would be improved if volunteer streams were consolidated to promote AVID as a single program with a single brand. Even though AVID is a centrally managed program with a discrete and separate budget, there would be benefits in shifting the focus from supplying a fixed number of volunteers each year to taking a more demand-driven approach that takes account of DFAT Post needs and supports the long-term capacity development of host organisations. This would require core partners to develop long-term plans with host organisations that balance immediate capacity needs with long-term capacity development objectives. This shift would ensure Posts have greater ownership of the program. It would also require more strategic performance monitoring and evaluation.

DFAT should reconsider its options for managing and contracting service providers and the number of countries in the program, simplify branding, and strengthen support networks and monitoring and evaluation. Achieving these changes will lead to better outcomes for volunteers, for host organisations and for domestic and foreign diplomacy.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

DFAT should fully consolidate AVID into a single program by:

- agreeing on a single statement of objectives and a program logic, including a revised design document
- further consolidating the youth volunteer stream (AYAD) into one stream of volunteers (AVID).

Recommendation 2

DFAT should explore options for greater administrative efficiencies in the program by:

- exploring other options for managing and contracting for service provision

- consolidating the number of countries involved in the program.

Recommendation 3

DFAT Posts should become more involved in:

- discussing the numbers of volunteers appropriate to the country strategy (considering but not limited to the number funded centrally); for Posts that see a need for more volunteers, this may involve Posts 'topping up' centrally funded volunteer numbers using their bilateral funds
- actively identifying host organisations linked to country strategy objectives
- determining the resources required to actively manage the AVID program
- integrating AVID with other capacity development initiatives (e.g. Australia Awards and paid technical assistance).

Recommendation 4

DFAT and core partners should implement formal support networks for both volunteers and host organisations, including:

- supporting volunteers during their in-country placement by ensuring they have easy access to other volunteers and alumni for both social and professional support
- encouraging more experienced host organisations to participate in networks with new and potential host organisations to maximise the use and contribution of volunteers.

Recommendation 5

DFAT should refocus the AVID program on developing the long-term capacity of host organisations by:

- developing and implementing long-term (three-year) capacity development plans with selected host organisations that focus on providing a sequence of volunteers for varied lengths of time
- retaining 'one-off placements' with host organisations, where appropriate, to maintain the flexibility of the program
- ensuring volunteers have an assignment and a role in the organisation that will support the long-term plan for the host organisation
- broadening the approach to capacity development in volunteering beyond the counterpart model (e.g. mentoring a team) by developing and implementing guidelines on different approaches to capacity development.

Recommendation 6

DFAT and core partners should seek expert advice and work together to market and promote the single AVID program.

Recommendation 7

DFAT and core partners should develop and implement a simplified and effective performance-monitoring system for the AVID program. This should include:

- establishing minimum reporting requirements that cover host organisation and volunteer satisfaction
- agreeing on roles and responsibilities for collecting and using monitoring data

- DFAT monitoring core partner compliance with the reporting requirements and data collection
- DFAT monitoring whether core partners are using performance monitoring data (including complaints and suggestions for improvement) and evaluations to drive and implement program improvements.

Management response

The management response to the specific recommendations made in the report are listed below. The response will form the basis of an implementation plan to address the recommendations.

Recommendations	Response	Comment
Recommendation 1 DFAT should fully consolidate AVID into a single program by: › agreeing on a single statement of objectives and a program logic, including a revised design document › further consolidating the youth volunteer stream (Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development - AYAD) into one stream of volunteers (AVID).	Agree	DFAT will undertake a process to clarify and refine the objectives of the AVID program, in consultation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The AYAD brand will be retired. More will be done to promote the volunteers program as a single brand. Youth will continue to be given the opportunity to volunteer overseas. We will expand the availability of volunteering to those from regional and rural areas, Indigenous Australians and youth from the younger age range (18 to 24 years of age compared to AYAD's 18 to 30 years of age).
Recommendation 2 DFAT should explore options for greater administrative efficiencies in the program by: › exploring other options for managing and contracting for service provision › consolidating the number of countries involved in the program.	Agree	Cost-efficiencies are a key consideration of the AVID program. DFAT will consolidate the program in the Asia-Pacific/Indian Ocean region by 30 June 2015. As part of geographic consolidation, we will reduce the number of core partners operating in selected countries. This will reduce duplication of services and lead to significant cost savings. Where the requirements of the volunteer program justify more than one in-country core partner, we will look for opportunities to consolidate administration overheads—for example, through co-location of offices and sharing staff and other resources.
Recommendation 3 DFAT Posts should become more involved in: › discussing the numbers of volunteers appropriate to the country strategy (considering but not limited to the number funded centrally); for Posts that see a need for more volunteers, this may involve Posts 'topping up' centrally funded volunteer numbers using their bilateral funds › actively identifying host organisations linked to country strategy objectives › determining the resources required to actively manage the AVID program › integrating AVID with other capacity development initiatives (e.g. Australia Awards and paid technical assistance).	Agree	To ensure Posts are more involved in discussing the numbers of volunteers appropriate to their country strategy, the Canberra-based DFAT volunteer program will improve the annual volunteer planning process. The numbers of new volunteers allocated per country are generally agreed between DFAT Posts and the Canberra volunteer program managers. Posts currently lead an annual planning process with relevant core partners in their country. During this process, Posts ensure volunteers are broadly aligned with the development priorities of country programs. Posts will be encouraged to be more involved in identifying host organisations, especially those host organisations that are already partners in the implementation of the Australian foreign aid program in country. Should country program areas require a number of volunteers above their globally funded allocation, we will encourage supplementation utilising bilateral or regional program funding. We will introduce a system to facilitate this process and reduce the workload for Posts. Integrating AVID assignments with other capacity development initiatives such as scholarships and paid technical assistance will be considered when

Recommendations	Response	Comment
		developing long-term capacity development plans with host organisations (see Recommendation 5).
Recommendation 4 DFAT and core partners should implement formal support networks for both volunteers and host organisations, including: › supporting volunteers during their in-country placement by ensuring they have easy access to other volunteers and alumni for both social and professional support › encouraging more experienced host organisations to participate in networks with new and potential host organisations to maximise the use and contribution of volunteers.	Agree	Consolidating the AVID global footprint will provide greater opportunities for core partners to implement formal support networks for volunteers and host organisations, building on successful activities in individual countries and extending them globally. Currently, some Posts (for example Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Cambodia) organise annual workshops to bring together all volunteers for networking and sharing lessons learned. Consideration will be given to extending this model to other countries. The need for formal support networks varies markedly between countries and between different types of volunteers. DFAT recognises that less experienced and younger volunteers need more support during their assignment. One of the core partners is piloting a new method of linking volunteers in country using web-based and mobile technology. If successful, this model can be broadened to cover the other core partners. Organisations seeking to host volunteers undertake an assessment, in conjunction with core partners, to determine whether the capacity of the organisation will benefit from the volunteer assignment and whether the organisation can manage the volunteer and provide appropriate work facilities. Moving the AVID program towards developing more long-term capacity development plans with host organisations (see Recommendation 5) will involve improved linkages with these organisations. Assisting organisations to better utilise and manage Australian volunteers is likely to maximise positive outcomes. Working more closely with Australian partner organisations, including by developing their role as mentors/advisors to host organisations and volunteers, will strengthen networks and facilitate more successful volunteer assignments.
Recommendation 5 DFAT should refocus the AVID program on developing the long-term capacity of host organisations by: › developing and implementing long-term (three-year) capacity development plans with selected host organisations that focus on providing a sequence of volunteers for varied lengths of time › retaining 'one-off placements' with host organisations, where appropriate, to maintain the flexibility of the program › ensuring volunteers have an assignment and a role in the organisation that will support the long-term plan for the host organisation › broadening the approach to capacity development in volunteering beyond the counterpart model (e.g mentoring a team) by developing and implementing guidelines on different approaches to capacity development.	Agree	The three AVID core partners have long-standing relationships with many host organisations. Not all of these relationships are currently codified in long-term capacity development plans. DFAT will seek the formalisation of these existing relationships between core partners and host organisations in formal capacity development plans, where they align with country program priorities. DFAT will also better target the number and scope of relationships through the annual country program planning process. Planning allows Posts to identify the key host organisations within the country that the volunteer program should engage with—for example, an organisation that is operating in a priority sector and is receiving other Australian development support. After any further required due diligence, a long-term capacity development plan can be negotiated and volunteer inputs sequenced and agreed, in order to consolidate Australian aid investments, maximise the returns on investment for Australian aid and increase development impact. DFAT agrees that the flexibility of the volunteer program needs to be retained. One of the strengths of the program is its ability to respond to new priorities. Maintaining flexibility also allows the program to work in sectors that may fall outside the Australian Government's country aid program priorities but may implement broader Australian government public or economic diplomacy priorities.

Recommendations	Response	Comment
		DFAT will better define what capacity development means for the volunteer program, ensuring different approaches may be utilised by core partners. In line with the priorities of the aid program, the AVID program will increase the number of volunteers undertaking assignments aimed at promoting private sector development. The volunteers will work with local businesses and communities to ultimately increase incomes and opportunities for people in developing countries.
Recommendation 6 DFAT should seek expert advice to market and promote the single AVID program.	Agree	A single name and unified branding will promote stronger and more coherent presentation of the Australian Government's overseas volunteers program in Australia and overseas. DFAT will seek expert advice on options for better promoting and marketing the volunteers program and undertake appropriate consultations with the Minister.
Recommendation 7 DFAT and core partners should develop and implement a simplified and effective performance monitoring system for the AVID program. This should include: › establishing minimum reporting requirements that cover host organisation and volunteer satisfaction › agreeing on roles and responsibilities for collecting and using monitoring data › DFAT monitoring core partner compliance with the reporting requirements and data collection › DFAT monitoring whether core partners are using performance monitoring data (including complaints and suggestions for improvement) and evaluations to drive and implement program improvements.	Agree	DFAT will redesign the performance monitoring system for the AVID program, including an improved comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework, establish benchmarks, minimum reporting requirements, establish agreed roles and responsibilities for collecting and using monitoring data, monitor core partner compliance with reporting requirements and the use of data to improve and better target volunteers and assignments under the program. This process will build on recent achievements in improving the gathering and analysis of program information, including: › delivering an AVID program database that allows improved analysis of volunteer demographics, assignments and host organisations › improved core partner annual performance reporting › the success of the 2012 Survey of Returned Volunteers in understanding volunteer's satisfaction with the program › DFAT will undertake similar surveys in future years. The redesign of the AVID monitoring and evaluation framework in 2013–14 will ensure that performance data drives continuous improvement in program implementation, and takes into account information obtained from complaints, suggestions for improvement, as well as outcomes of ongoing monitoring activities and evaluations.

1 Introduction

This chapter provides background information about the development of the Australian volunteer program, and the current evaluation of the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program.

1.1 Historical overview

International volunteering has a long history in Australia, originating in the 1950s as a means of fostering cultural understanding between Australian and Indonesian students through the Volunteer Graduate Scheme to Indonesia. Cultural exchange has always been—and remains—an important aim of volunteer programs. Between the 1960s and 1996 the Australian aid program provided core funding to selected Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) for their volunteer programs.

In 1997, the Australian Government designed the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYAD) volunteer program and following a two year pilot tendered it on the open market, selecting Austraining International as the service provider in 2001.

In 2005, to increase development effectiveness and cost-effectiveness, the government decided to procure services for all volunteer programs through a competitive tender process. The successful tenderers under the Australian Government Volunteer Program (AGVP) were:

- Australian Volunteers International (AVI)
- Australian Business Volunteers (ABV)
- Austraining International (who created the Volunteers for International Development from Australia [VIDA] program for this tender).

These three volunteer service providers received Australian Government funding to deliver their own volunteer programs. Each had different recruitment processes, management styles, volunteer allowances and public branding. Including the AYAD program, there were four distinct volunteer programs funded by Australia.

In 2009, a review of the AGVP recommended designing a new volunteer program that would be streamlined, including rationalising program management and unifying branding. In late 2009, AusAID called for tenders from service providers to assist in the design and delivery of the new volunteer program. The successful tenderers for the new program were:

- Austraining International
- Australian Red Cross
- Australian Volunteers International.
- On 30 June 2010, ABV's contract with AusAID concluded and ABV was incorporated as an 'associate' under Austraining International's contract with AusAID. This consortium arrangement remains in place, with ABV mobilising volunteers with specific business skills for short-term placements.

In December 2010, AusAID entered into partnership agreements with the three core partners, formalising the government's new partnership approach to delivering the overseas volunteers program.

On 26 May 2011, the AVID program was launched publicly. The AVID program aimed to bring the four separate volunteer programs and different brands together into one program and under one brand, with consistent recruitment, management and allowances across the three service providers. The AYAD program was retained as the AVID program's youth stream, which is delivered by Austraining International.

1.2 Overview of the AVID program

AVID operates in complex environments in approximately 42 developing countries. The program has the challenging task of mobilising and placing AVID volunteers in host organisations in these countries to achieve development outcomes, and at the same time ensuring the safety and welfare of volunteers.

Over the past 10 years, funding for volunteer programs has grown substantially: in 2011–12, the Australian Government spent $63.1 million to support 1585 Australian volunteers in 1173 host organisations. The expenditure of the program is modest in the context of the aid budget (about 1 per cent), but represents a highly visible contribution to Australia's overseas aid effort. More than half of all volunteers (57 per cent) were on assignments of 6–12 months.[9] Volunteers were assigned to a diverse group of organisations, most commonly placed in local NGOs (40 per cent) and government organisations (21 per cent). The vast majority (84 per cent) volunteered in East Asia and the Pacific. [10]

AusAID is responsible for managing AVID, developing the policy framework and guidelines for the program, and overseeing its implementation. AusAID has partnership agreements with the three service providers who deliver the program (Austraining International, Australian Red Cross and AVI), who are known as core partners.

Core partners are responsible for selecting, recruiting and mobilising volunteers, for providing pre-departure briefings to volunteers and for supporting the volunteers once they are deployed. Core partners also source host organisations, develop the terms of reference for volunteer placements with the host organisations, and monitor volunteer and host organisation satisfaction with the placements. Responsibility for addressing volunteer or host organisation dissatisfaction with the volunteer placement is with the relevant service provider. It should be noted that AVID is both the umbrella term for the program as administered by the three core partners and a volunteer stream.

As stated above, Austraining's consortium arrangement with ABV is to mobilise volunteers with specific business skills for shorter durations. ABV is not a separate stream within the AVID program, and all core partners mobilise professionals on short-term business volunteer assignments. Austraining also delivers the AYAD—the youth stream under the AVID program. Figure 1 summarises AVID's current operating structure.

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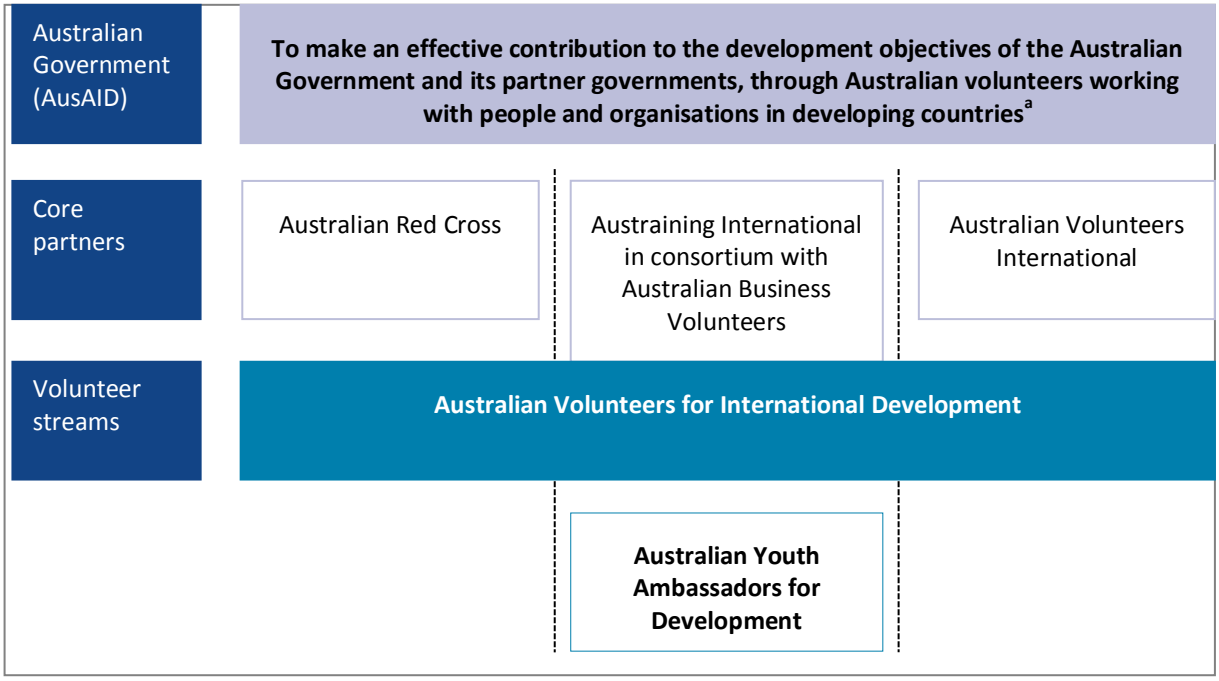
9 AusAID, *AVID annual statistics report 2011–12*
10 AusAID, *AVID annual statistics report 2011–12*

Figure 1 Structure of the Australian Volunteers for International Development program



a AVID program objective as described in partnership agreements between the Australian Government (AusAID) and the core partners.

AVID's core partners operate under identical partnership agreement terms; agreements were signed in December 2010 and are due to expire on 31 December 2015. At AusAID's discretion, the agreements can be extended for further two or three-year periods up to 31 December 2020. Austraining International's contract to manage the AYAD program was subsumed under the AVID partnership agreement in January 2012. The total funding disbursed to the three core partners under the AVID program in 2011–12 and 2012–13 was:[11]

- Austraining International (includes AYAD)—$81.4 million
- Australian Red Cross—$17.8 million
- Australian Volunteers International—$39.6 million.

The AVID program partners deliver diversity through offering different approaches to volunteering and access to a broad range of host organisations, while adhering to a consistent set of shared standards (see Chapter 2).

1.3 The current evaluation

The purpose of the current evaluation aimed to enhance the effectiveness of the AVID program and the contribution that volunteers make to development efforts. The objectives of the evaluation were to:

- assess the contribution of volunteers to Australia's development efforts
- identify external and internal factors that have supported or constrained the effectiveness and efficiency of the volunteer program

11 Data from AusAID Volunteers Section

- formulate recommendations, if necessary, for improvements to the design and management of the volunteer program.

Key evaluation questions fell into four broad categories (the evaluation questions and location in the report where they are answered are listed in full in Appendix 1):

- **Alignment:** Is there a clear and coherent strategy for using volunteers in Australia's aid program and maximising the contribution volunteers make to the program objectives?
- **Policy and administration:** Are the policies supporting the implementation of AVID coherent, and do they support the program to achieve its objectives?
- **Performance management:** Is the performance of AVID appropriately monitored and managed by AusAID and its service providers?
- **Impact:** What contribution do volunteers make to Australia's development efforts?

Method

The evaluation used a mix of methods to collect a broad range of existing and new evidence to answer the key evaluation questions. Methods included a literature review, a volunteer assignment-mapping exercise, analysis of end-of-assignment reports, in-country fieldwork, a media analysis, analysis of volunteer recruitment data, analysis of the returned volunteer survey (commissioned by AusAID and undertaken by ORIMA Research), a host organisation survey and consultation with core partners.

In-country fieldwork was conducted in three countries: the Solomon Islands, Cambodia and Vietnam. These three countries were sampled purposively to be indicative—but not representative—of the program in all 42 countries to which Australian volunteers are sent. The approach to sampling considered the Australian Government's focus on the Asia-Pacific region, the sizeable cluster of volunteers in the Mekong Delta, a mix of low and middle-income countries, the presence of core partners in the countries, and the feasibility of doing fieldwork within the evaluation timeframe. The evaluation methods are summarised in Table 1 and detailed in Appendix 2. Detailed data tables relating to host organisation experiences of the program from fieldwork and the host organisation survey are provided in Appendix 3.

Table 1 Summary of methods used in the evaluation and strength of the evidence

Method	Data source or participants	Analysis	Strength of evidence[a]
Literature review	› AusAID policy documents › Academic literature › Publications from major international institutions involved in volunteering	› Non-systematic review, including 54 references › Focus on describing approaches to volunteering in other jurisdictions; understanding success factors for and impacts of volunteering on volunteers, host organisations and public diplomacy; approaches to monitoring and evaluation	***Good*** › Review was not systematic, but key articles about other major international volunteer programs are included
Volunteer assignment mapping	› *AVID annual statistics report 2011–12* › *Australia's strategic approach to aid in Cambodia 2010–15* (December 2010) › *Australia's strategic approach to aid in Vietnam 2010–15* (December 2010) › *Solomon Islands – Australia Partnership for Development agreement* (signed January 2009)	› Assignments in Cambodia, Vietnam and Solomon Islands coded to 3-digit DAC using the *Common definitions and DAC sector of destination guidebook* › Development priorities identified in AusAID country strategies coded to 5-digit DAC by one ARTD team member, with review and approval by AusAID	***Satisfactory*** › Unable to code assignments to same level of detail as country priorities › Country strategies include codes to specific geographic locations or priorities, geographic locations; DACs do not › Where matches were difficult, the evaluation erred towards alignment, so analysis may

Method	Data source or participants	Analysis	Strength of evidence[a]
		Volunteers Section › Primary coding by ARTD team, with review and approval by AusAID Volunteers Section › Alignment calculated as the proportion of volunteer assignments in country priorities	overestimate alignment
End-of-assignment analysis	› All core partners requested to supply reports for 2011–12 (*n* = 102 assignments) › Each report includes up to 3 component reports (host organisation, volunteer and in-country manager) › Analysis done on matched reports (those with volunteer and at least one of the host organisation/in-country manager reports (*n* = 55 assignments)	› Qualitative and quantitative data extracted from reports and coded by three ARTD team members according to an ARTD framework › Inter-rater reliability check on 12 core variables in random sample (*n* = 4) of reports established satisfactory overall agreement between coders (77%)	***Poor*** › Low overall match rate (54%): most matched reports from AVI (*n* = 41, 74%); 26% matched reports from AI (*n* = 14); no matched reports from ARC[b] › Wide differences in report templates used by core partners (different data items and format), so it was difficult to make comparisons › High degree of missing data: more than half (57%) of the data items included in reports were rated as low/medium completeness and half the reports (55%) were rated by coding team as 'ambiguous'
Media analysis	› Media summaries compiled by AusAID Volunteers Section (1 May 2011 to 5 December 2012) used for coverage analysis › All media articles for 1 January 2011 to 5 December 2012 retrieved from Factiva database (*n* = 104 articles after duplicates removed)	› Coverage analysis: frequencies by volunteer stream and location to identify how widely AVID is discussed › Content analysis: articles coded by two ARTD team members according to a framework developed by ARTD	***Good*** › Includes all media articles for the period of interest
In-country fieldwork	› Three case study countries: Cambodia, Vietnam, Solomon Islands › Semi-structured interviews (face to face) with volunteers, host organisations (selected using a stratified random sample), in-country managers and relevant staff from core partners, AusAID Post and ambassadors or high commissioners (*n* = 123)	› Summaries of volunteer and host organisation interview pairs analysed against qualitative coding framework, including assessment of extent of capacity development using 5-point scale (very low to very high)	***Excellent*** › Wide coverage of host organisations in three case study countries › Poor coverage of ABV (none were in-country during fieldwork) and ARC volunteers (1 volunteer–host organisation pair in Cambodia)
Survey of returned volunteers	› AusAID contracted ORIMA Research to do an online survey of all AusAID-funded volunteers who completed an assignment in 2006–11 › Final sample: *n* = 1361 (response rate 38%)	› ORIMA analysed qualitative and quantitative survey data, and gave de-identified raw survey dataset to ARTD › ARTD did additional analyses, including restricting survey sample to case study countries	***Satisfactory*** › Satisfactory response rate (38%)[c] › Potential for recall bias (volunteers asked to reflect on assignments up to 6 years in the past)
Host organisation survey	› Online survey of all host organisations currently registered with core partners (*n* = 192) in case study countries › Survey translated into Khmer (Cambodia) and Vietnamese (Vietnam)	› Frequency analysis of all quantitative variables; thematic analysis of all qualitative variables › Factor and multiple regression analyses to identify elements of capacity development and relation to	***Satisfactory*** › Satisfactory response rate (49%) › Surveyed host organisations appear representative of all host organisations in the three case study countries in terms of the core provider

Method	Data source or participants	Analysis	Strength of evidence[a]
	› Final sample: *n* = 94	satisfaction	they work with and the type of volunteers they host (see Appendix 2 for discussion) › Potential issues with reliability due to need to translate instrument into Khmer and Vietnamese (rating scale was numeric to minimise language effects)
Recruitment data analysis	› Recruitment activity data from each core partner (*n* = 1372 planned or actual assignments)	› Different data available from each core partner › Categorisation of assignments into 'easy to fill' and 'hard to fill' and comparisons by occupation type and country	***Good***
Core partner consultation	› Formal (semi-structured interviews) and informal consultation (planning and progress meetings) with core partner staff	› Thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews against key evaluation questions	***Excellent***
AVID management AusAID Canberra consultation	› Informal consultation and periodic briefings on emerging findings › Requests for clarification of policies	› Document review	***Satisfactory***

AI = Austraining International; ABV = Australian Business Volunteers; ARC = Australian Red Cross; ARTD = ARTD Consultants; AVI = Australian Volunteers International; AVID = Australian Volunteers for International Development; DAC = development assistance code

a Uses National Health and Medical Research Council levels of evidence: excellent (evidence can be used to guide practice); good (evidence can be used to guide practice in most situations); satisfactory (evidence provides some support for recommendations, but care should be taken in its application); poor (evidence is weak and recommendation must be applied with caution).

b It is important to note that the ARC had mobilised 94 volunteers in the 2011–12 financial year, and of those only 11 had returned from their assignment as of 30 June 2012. It is for this reason that data samples for the ARC are smaller than those of the other core partners. It is also for this reason that only one host organisation and volunteer were a matched pair during in-country fieldwork. The ARC also does not mobilise volunteers in all countries where the in-country evaluation fieldwork took place, in which case some of the data may not necessarily apply to the ARC.

c The survey was a social research survey undertaken by ORIMA Research. The executive summary of the report on survey results states that a survey response with a 38 per cent uptake rate is 'a strong result' for a survey of this kind.

Confidence in the findings

The methods were implemented as planned. Overall, the findings from the different methods were consistent and provide strong evidence to fulfil the purpose and objectives of the evaluation.

The evaluation's strongest source of detailed information about how the program operates is based on fieldwork the evaluation team completed in three carefully chosen countries (see Method, above). The findings in these countries are drawn from interviews with host organisations (*n* = 45), volunteers (*n* = 55) and other key stakeholders (*n* = 23). All interviewees were selected randomly, using a stratified sampling framework that considered both the core partner and AVID volunteer stream.

The evaluation was limited to three countries. As described above, these countries were chosen purposively. Although it is possible that findings may not apply in all other countries where AVID operates, the similarity in data from the three countries, the reasons they were chosen and the fact that in many cases data was validated as representative of the overall program through interviews with stakeholders who have oversight of AVID more broadly provide confidence in the applicability of the findings to the program as a whole. The recommendations of this evaluation are conscious of its limitations and seek only to recommend what is reasonably certain will improve the overall effectiveness of the AVID program and the contribution that volunteers make to development efforts.

Some existing data sources that the evaluation drew on were compromised by poor data quality and completeness, such as end-of-assignment reports. There were wide differences in the reporting templates

used by the three core partners: the reports asked different questions, in different formats (qualitative or quantitative) and used different response scales. Data completeness was also poor. Although each end-of-assignment report should include a contribution from both the volunteer and host organisation, only around half of these (54 per cent) included contributions from both sources. More than half (57 per cent) of the data items included in reports were rated as 'low completeness' or 'medium completeness'. The evaluation team rated more than half the reports (55 per cent) as having 'ambiguous' data (i.e. comments that were unclear or inconsistent).

However, the evaluation findings and conclusions are strong because they are based on evidence drawn from a mix of methods involving in-depth analysis and synthesis across methods.

2 Program design, policies and administration

This chapter examines the current program objectives and how well the achievement of these objectives is supported through program policy and management of volunteer placements and host organisations.

2.1 AVID goal and objectives

AusAID developed the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program in response to the recommendations of the Australian Government Volunteer Program (AGVP) review in 2009.[12] This evaluation by the Office of Development Effectiveness assessed the adequacy of the AVID program design and supporting policies and administration, drawing on findings from interviews with AusAID and core partner staff (in Australia and in the Solomon Islands, Cambodia and Vietnam), a review of the international literature, and AVID program and policy documents.

The 2009 review had noted that the previous AGVP program arrangements included disparate volunteer service providers, each with their own branding, and inconsistent—and sometimes conflicting—objectives.[13] AVID was to overcome the structural problems of the previous program arrangements by being more streamlined and having service providers deliver the program collaboratively within a clear set of objectives, guidelines and a three-year funding cycle.

Clarity of program objectives

Despite the original aim of bringing together the service providers under a single clear set of objectives, there are some inconsistencies in how the program goals and objectives are stated in AVID program documentation. Although stakeholders give consistent verbal descriptions of the goal, objectives and expected outcomes of AVID, these are inconsistently stated in various documents as the program evolves.

Stakeholders generally consider that AVID's primary outcome is developing the capacity of host organisations (through sending volunteers) to a point at which it is sustainable and can be further developed after volunteer placements end. They see this capacity development objective as underpinning the program's other public diplomacy and volunteer personal development objectives.

The Volunteer Program 2010–2015: final design document says:

> The overall goal of the program is to make a positive contribution to international development through Australian volunteers working with communities, organisations and governments in developing countries and building valuable people-to-people links.

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12 L Kwitko L and D McDonald, *Australian Government Volunteer Program (AGVP) review: final report*, AusAID, Canberra, 2009.
13 Kwitko and McDonald

The design document also lists four objectives that are more descriptive of program aims than the agreements, and 'five interlocking elements'.

The AVID design document was reviewed as part of the evaluation because it provides information on the context of the AVID program; however, it has been superseded by the partnership agreements between AusAID and the core partners.[14]

The partnership agreements describe the AVID goal as being:

> To make an effective contribution to the development objectives of the Australian Government and its partner governments, through Australian volunteers working with people and organisations in developing countries.

This is similar to the goal in the partnership agreements, but does not include people–people links. These agreements also list seven objectives for the program—although many of these appear to be processes for quality assurance rather than objectives for the program to achieve.

In the early stages of the evaluation, the evaluation team drafted an AVID program logic diagram, based on program documentation and discussions with AusAID staff, to create a common understanding to guide the evaluation (Figure 2).

The diagram retains the objective as stated in partnership agreements, but adds two program outcomes, four indicators and five strategies. The logic brings together the goal, objectives and intended outcomes and shows a relatively straightforward theory of change for the program.[15] AVID provides a 'service or resource' (the volunteer) to its 'client' (the host organisation), with the assumption this will influence the host organisation's performance and contribute to its ongoing capacity, which will ultimately contribute to the host country's development. The crux of the logic is making appropriate volunteer placements (the immediate outcome of the program), which are successful in contributing to development (the intermediate or long-term outcome). Successful volunteer placements contribute to development outcomes and generate public and political support for the aid program, both in the recipient countries and within Australia. At the same time, volunteers benefit from the placement.

The program logic was a tool for the evaluation and has not been endorsed by AusAID or the core partners, but some stakeholders interviewed as part of the evaluation agree that it represents how the program works and its intended outcomes.

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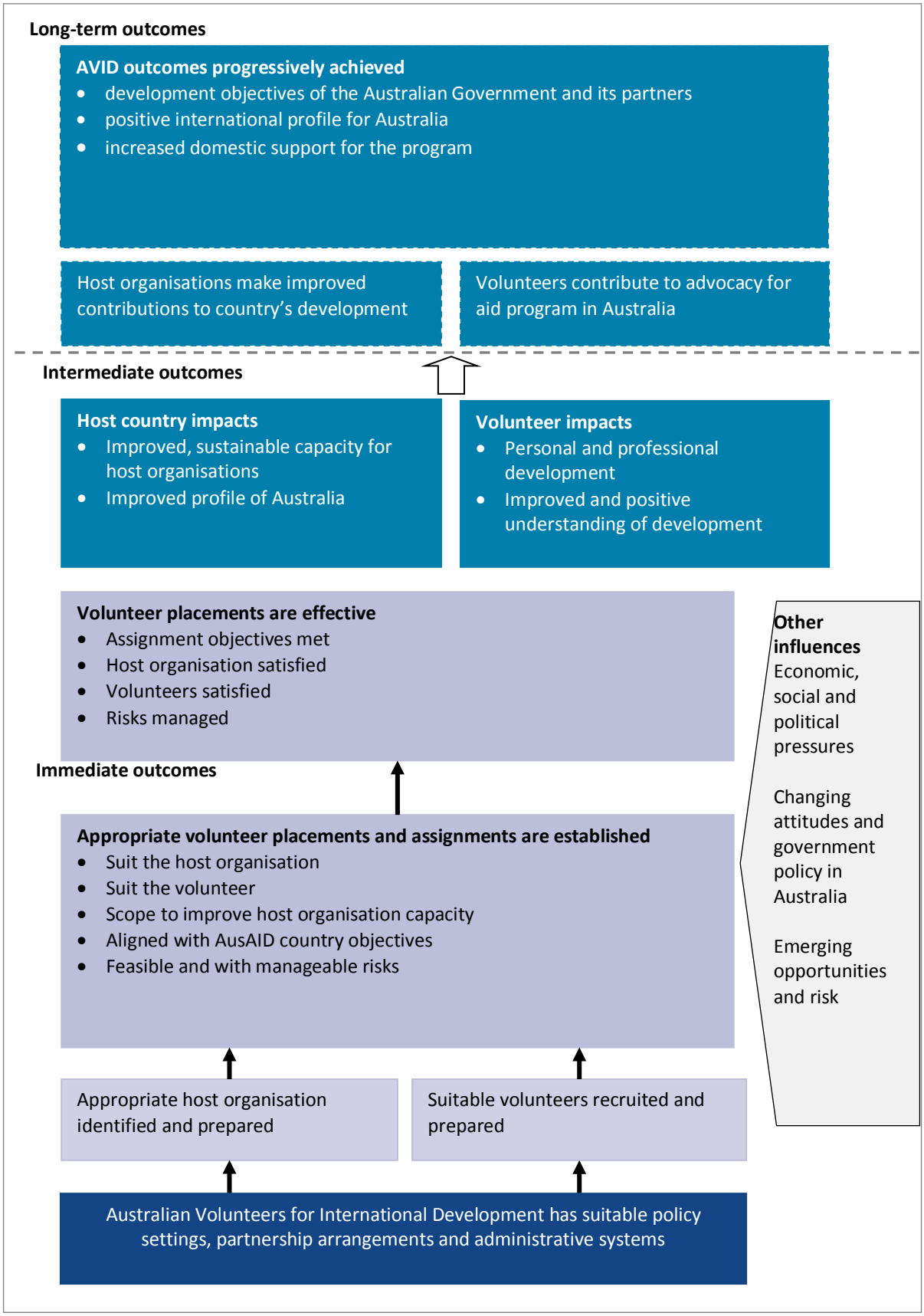
[14] Source: AusAID Volunteers Section

[15] There are various sets of strategies for change: information, provision of a product or service, 'carrots and sticks', case management and community capacity building. AVID clearly uses provision of a product or service as its strategy. One example referred to for this evaluation was SC Funnell and PJ Rogers (2011). *Purposeful program theory—effective use of theories of change and logic models*, Jossey Bass Wiley.

Figure 2 Draft program logic for the Australian Volunteers for International Development program



Achieving a single-program vision

The intention for a consolidated AVID program is to bring the three core partners and the different volunteering streams under one umbrella program. The AVID program has retained two streams of volunteers (as shown in Figure 1): AVIDs and Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYADs). In many senses, though, the differences between the volunteer streams are more in name than in substance. The similarity of AVID and AYAD volunteer demographics, aims and characteristics of success are discussed in Chapter 3. The similarity in outcomes achieved for host organisations is discussed in Chapter 4. The confusion over the AVID brand, which is both an umbrella term (describing the overall volunteer program) and a specific term (describing the non-AYAD and longer-term business volunteers), is described in Chapter 5.

Although a number of AusAID Post and core partner staff in the case study countries view AYAD as a program for enthusiastic but inexperienced young Australians, neither the data nor evidence from fieldwork support this. Interviews with volunteers in the case study countries clearly show the breadth and depth of professional experience AYADs bring to their assignments. A small number of AusAID Post and core partner staff suggested that AYADs require more intensive in-country management than other volunteers, but incident data from 2011–12 shows there is a relatively similar rate of non-health incidents among AYADs and AVIDs.[16]

AusAID's program data for 2011–12 indicate that AYADs and AVIDs cluster around the 26–35-year-old age group. There is an age limit for AYADs of 30 years, and most (86 per cent) are aged between 26 and 30 years; AVIDs do not have age limits, but more than half (52 per cent) are aged between 26 and 35 years (see Chapter 3). Further, data obtained from Austraining International show that the average age of AYAD applicants is increasing.[17] The evaluation found that the relevance of volunteers' experience, their attitudes and the duration of their assignment are the most important volunteer-driven determinants of host organisation capacity development, not volunteers' age or whether they are an AYAD or general AVID (see Chapter 4).

The evaluation obtained limited data about volunteers mobilised through the Australian Business Volunteers (ABV) – Austraining consortia arrangement. The available data show differences between volunteers mobilised through this arrangement and other volunteers. Interviews and AVID program statistics[18] indicate that many volunteers mobilised through the ABV–Austraining consortia are at retirement age or have recently retired—almost half (48 per cent) of the 2011–12 volunteer cohort were aged 66 years or older. Also, these assignments are mostly short term. Under the previous AGVP, the ABV program allowed volunteers on short-term assignments to be selected from a pre-approved pool. As discussed in Chapter 4, in *some* situations this approach may be appropriate for decreasing mobilisation times without substantially risking the successful recruitment practices that currently empower host organisations.

Maintaining two volunteer streams (AVID and AYAD) leads to confusion and does not support the single-program, single-brand approach AVID was intended to establish. The characteristics of successful volunteers are the same across streams. Outcomes for volunteers and outcomes for public diplomacy are largely by-products of the shared objectives of all AVIDs, and are not stream-specific.

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16 In 2011–12, the non–health related incident rate for AYADs was 0.04 (n = 17 incidents for 400 volunteers), compared with an incident rate of 0.03 for AVIDs (n = 22 incidents for 600 volunteers) (AVID program statistics provided by the AusAID Volunteers Section).

17 Austraining collects data for all AYAD assignments, including volunteer age, background and gender. Data for 2006–07 to 2011–12 were provided for the evaluation.

18 AusAID, *AVID annual statistics report 2011–12*

Although it may be appropriate to set quotas for volunteers based on age, gender and diversity to support domestic public diplomacy or public policy goals around social inclusion, there does not appear to be any rationale or evidence for maintaining separate streams within AVID or for the current practice of placing 44 per cent of all volunteers in the AYAD stream each year.

Recommendation 1

DFAT should fully consolidate AVID into a single program by:

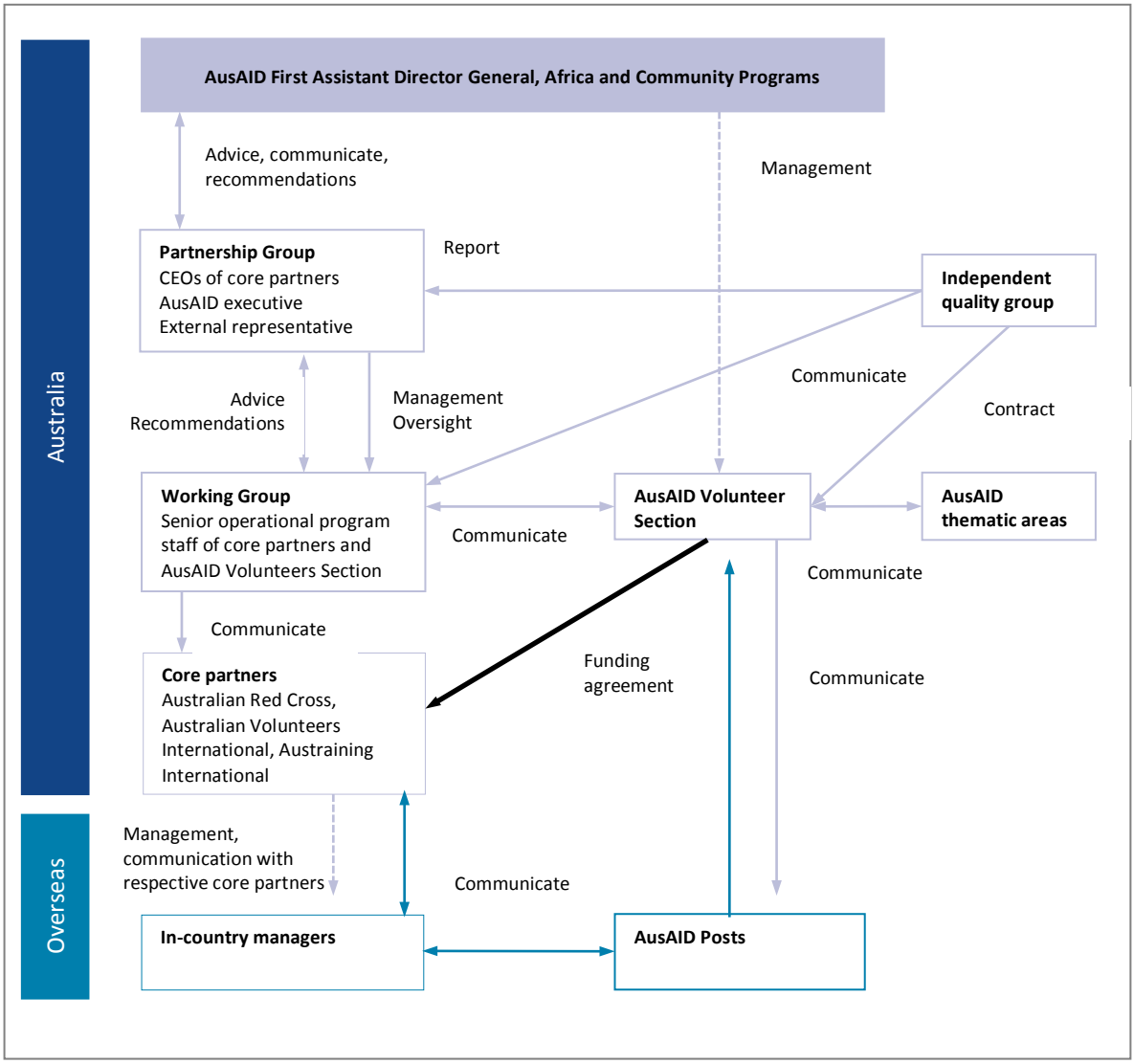
- agreeing on a single statement of objectives and a program logic, including a revised design document
- further consolidating the youth volunteer stream (AYAD) into one stream (AVID).

2.2 Governance arrangements

The AusAID partnership approach to delivering AVID offers AusAID several advantages. First, it draws on the substantial experience of the core partners in managing international volunteer programs. Second, it allows AusAID to meet its public policy outcomes without being involved in operational issues. Third, it broadens the reach of the volunteering program, because each core partner has specific experience and expertise in deploying volunteers, and in-country connections within particular sectors (e.g. the Australian Red Cross is positioned to work within the health sector). Each core partner has access to different networks of potential host organisations.

There are two governance structures supporting AVID program delivery: a Partnership Group and a Working Group. The composition of these groups is given in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Australian Volunteers for International Development governance arrangements



Source: AusAID, in collaboration with Austraining International, Australian Red Cross and Australian Volunteers International, *Volunteer program 2010–2015: final design document*, AusAID, Canberra, 2010.

Processes for developing and administering the shared standards

In addition to the partnership agreements between AusAID and the core partners, the core partners are also responsible for adhering to 10 'shared standards', which define critical program procedures and operations such as volunteer security and in-country planning processes. These standards were developed collaboratively between AusAID and the core partners. AusAID defined the minimum requirements and assigned responsibility for developing each individual standard to one of the three core partners. The core partners then presented the standards to AusAID and the AVID Working and Partnership groups for approval.

Overall, core partners were satisfied with this approach, and with the shared standards. Some core partners were, however, concerned that AusAID takes too long to approve and/or update the shared standards. Others were confused about whether shared standards in 'draft' format are enforceable. The standards supplied to the evaluation did not consistently refer to their version or status as being under development or in force. AusAID should address these concerns with high priority.

As the Australian Government agency that funds AVID, AusAID sets the policy directions for AVID, manages contractual obligations with core partners and defines minimum standards for performance. The

development of operational standards should continue to recognise the pre-existing knowledge and skills of the partners in delivery of a volunteer program. It is appropriate for core partners to work with AusAID to influence and shape the standards before they are approved.

Shared standard describing annual planning process is poorly understood

Figure 4 Summary of Australian Volunteers for International Development country planning process

Core partner head office	AusAID Volunteers Section	AusAID Post	Core partner in-country managers
	Cable initiating country planning process, including indicative numbers →		
		Cable describing country planning process, including indicative numbers →	
			← Draft AVID country strategy
		← Review and finalise country strategy	
	← Receive country strategy, forward to core partners		
Use country strategy to complete volunteer matrix →			
	← Test affordability of proposed allocations. Consider indicative allocations		
Activity proposals outlining how allocation will be delivered →			
	Grant orders issued		

Source: AusAID, AVID program: shared standard 1, version 2, AusAID, Canberra, 2012.

AVID is a global program administered by the Volunteers Section in Canberra. The final decision on how many volunteers will be deployed in each country and region, and by which core partner, is made by AusAID's First Assistant Director General (FADG), Africa and Community Programs, and is, as specified in shared standard 1, based on four factors: ministerial direction; AusAID country, regional and thematic priorities; performance information from the AVID monitoring and evaluation framework; and funding availability.

To plan for and achieve long-term strategic development outcomes, it is important for AusAID's Volunteers Section to communicate clearly with Posts and core partners about how volunteer numbers are determined. Despite the documentation that exists, AusAID Posts and core partner in-country managers in the case study countries were unsure how volunteer numbers are set, and many felt their requests to be involved in discussions about volunteer numbers or for clarification of numbers received were not addressed. AusAID Posts and in-country managers were unable to specify how numbers were decided and surmised they were based on historical allocations and security concerns.

As stated above, final number allocations are determined by the FADG, Africa and Community Programs. This ensures numbers fit within the overall funding envelopes. However, AusAID Posts should be involved in discussions about the numbers, the capacity of the core partners to mobilise volunteers in particular locations, and the minimum number of placements required to support the viability of operations, because AusAID relies on these partners to deliver the program.

Efficiency of current administrative arrangements

Although there continues to be a strong emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region, the Australian Government has expanded its aid to other countries and regions. Consequently, the number of countries to which volunteers are placed has expanded from 28 to 42 over the past 5 years. In 2013, volunteers are currently placed in 42 countries (from the complete 2012–13 dataset)[19] and there are a reasonable number of countries where there are very small numbers of volunteers, particularly in Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America. Five years ago, volunteers were placed in 28 countries in the the Asia-Pacific region, the Middle East and a smaller number of African countries.[20]

Current program arrangements may result in inefficiencies, including duplication of administrative arrangements and costs. In every country where volunteers are located there is at least one service provider, even when only a small number of volunteers are being deployed to that country. Based on the number of new AVID's mobilised in 2012–13, there are three countries where all three core partners are in operation, each providing an in-country manager to administer the AVID program. There are a further 13 countries where there are two core partners operating.[21] Twenty countries have fewer than 10 volunteers in each country. All of these countries have one core partner in an in-country manager role and another two countries, Botswana and Ethiopia, have two core partners present.

Small numbers of volunteers with multiple service providers in a given country add to inefficient operations and high administrative costs. AusAID may wish to revisit the number of countries involved in the program as a way of promoting greater efficiencies.

Additionally, as described in Chapter 6, there is no systematic data source to inform assessments of the outcomes achieved by each of the core partners, either overall or in each country in which they operate.

In the longer term, AusAID could consider exploring other options for managing and contracting for service provision to increase the efficiency of the program.

Recommendation 2

DFAT should explore options for greater administrative efficiencies in the program by:

- exploring other options for managing and contracting for service provision
- consolidating the number of countries involved in the program.

Comparison of the volunteers management model with AusAID's scholarships model

Another approach to managing global programs is AusAID's Australia Award Scholarships (AAS) model, which is managed and administered differently to the AVID program. The majority of the yearly AAS allocations are funded bilaterally by each country program (rather than centrally, like AVID). The remaining AAS allocations are from budget measure funding and each country program needs to bid for additional placements through AusAID's Australia Awards Office. Country programs possibly have a more vested interest in the provision of scholarship allocations, given that funding is largely derived from their own bilateral funds.

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19 Table A4.1 in Appendix 4 provides a list of the 41 countries where volunteers were placed in 2012–13 (there were no new placements in the 42nd country, the People's Republic of China, in 2012–13).

20 AusAID, *AusAID 2007–08 annual report*, AusAID, Canberra, 2008, 129.

21 Data provided by AusAID Volunteers Section, based on 'Number of new AVID Volunteers mobilised in 2012–13'.

In comparison to the Australia Awards program, AVID and AYAD volunteers can be understood as a free resource for country Posts because the program is funded and administered by the AusAID Volunteers Section and not from bilateral funds (unless country programs decide to 'top up' volunteer numbers).

Another element of the AAS model is that Posts are responsible for managing contractors and clearly defining lines of responsibility that also extends to subcontractors.[22] AusAID's Australia Awards Office retains oversight for guidance, policies and standards for in-country management. In this model, each country has one managing contractor that the Post is responsible for. This contrasts with the AVID model, whereby Posts have no direct managing responsibility of the core partners in-country.

AusAID should further explore the different operating models of the AAS and the short-term fellowships program to help make decisions about enhancing efficient management arrangements into the future.

Collaboration between core partners around annual planning processes

Shared standard 1[23] states that in-country managers will identify a *lead* to carry forward the planning tasks where appropriate. The AVID design document[24] is more specific than shared standard 1: it states that the Working Group will nominate an in-country focal point (ICFP) to coordinate communication between the core partners, the Australian Government (AusAID and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) and partner governments on operational and strategic issues.

The ICFP position has not been implemented in any of the case study countries visited. The lead agency approach was adopted during the 2010–11 country planning process; however, in at least one case study country, it resulted in disruptions in both the planning process and relationships between providers. AusAID Posts in this country and the other case study countries commented that subsequent years' planning processes have been better managed. Given the lack of coordination and difficulties of the annual planning process, AusAID should consider implementing the ICFP position. This will require serious consideration of how the ICFP could be, as the design document suggests, '*employed or contracted by a core partner or their network or consortium members'* but not *'staff directly affiliated with host organisations.*[25] Given that the nature of the relationships between core partners is at times competitive, it would seem unlikely that one core partner could represent the others to AusAID.

2.3 Managing volunteer supply and demand

Supply and demand at the strategic level

As stated previously, the AVID program is funded and managed centrally by AusAID's Volunteers Section in Canberra to supply a fixed annual quota of volunteers within a defined budget. At this level, the volunteer program is supply driven. A cap on the number of volunteers is decided in Canberra rather than representing the 'demand' for volunteers as expressed by AusAID Posts or host organisations.

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22 AusAID, *Australia awards scholarship policy handbook,* AusAID, Canberra, 2013, 4.

23 AusAID, *AVID program: shared standard 1,* version 2, AusAID, Canberra, 2012.

24 AusAID, Austraining International, Australian Red Cross and Australian Volunteers International, *Volunteer program 2010–2015: final design document*, AusAID, Canberra, 2010, 15.

25 AusAID, Austraining International, Australian Red Cross and Australian Volunteers International

The total number of AVID volunteers is driven by the Australian Government's commitment to place 1000 new volunteers annually by 2013.[26] The allocation to a country or region is based on recommendations from the Volunteers Section. The strict annual quotas for core partners makes it difficult for them to manage the realities of volunteer allocations and to develop long-term strategies for the placement of volunteers in host organisations. Unintended outcomes of centralisation are reflected in the currently low levels of alignment of host organisations with the highest priority areas of AusAID country strategies. It is also reflected in the experience of some volunteers who found their host organisation was unprepared or unsuitable for hosting a volunteer (see Chapter 3). The absence of long-term plans with host organisations (see Chapter 4) is symptomatic of how central planning and a lack of Post engagement in determining numbers of volunteers and identifying host organisations is limiting the contributions that volunteers can make to development objectives.

Alignment of volunteer assignments with AusAID country strategies

Each AusAID Post is working towards the achievement of a country strategy. This is an agreement between the governments of Australia and the relevant country about the focus and scope of Australian aid. The strategies include a hierarchy of priority areas for Australian aid. The organisations recruited to host AVIDs should be working in sectors consistent with the country strategy objectives. However, in reality, core partners generally select host organisations from within their existing networks or are approached by organisations interested in hosting a volunteer. Occasionally, an Australian ambassador or AusAID Post staff may recommend potential host organisations to core partners. Regardless of the method of identifying host organisations, core partners in the case study countries present potential host organisations and assignments to AusAID Posts for approval during the annual planning process.

The evaluation found just under two-thirds (63 per cent) of assignments in the case study countries aligned with the country strategies, with some variation by country (Solomon Islands 77 per cent alignment, Vietnam 65 per cent alignment, Cambodia 61 per cent alignment).[27] The level of alignment was, however, lower (43 per cent) when only the highest priority areas (priority one or two) were considered. Overall, approximately only one-quarter (28 per cent) of all assignments in the three countries were aligned with a priority one or two area of a country strategy. In relation to the geographic location for the assignments, it was suggested by some stakeholders that volunteer placements were more typically in capital cities or other major cities because of the increasing focus on volunteer security. However, there are some notable exceptions, such as the large cluster of volunteers in the Mekong region. In the three case study countries, four in five volunteers (79 per cent) were assigned to capital cities or major tourist locations.[28] This suggests volunteers may be being deployed to locations where it is easiest to manage them, rather than where country strategies suggest they are most needed or 'in demand'—for example, in the rural development sector.

It is unclear whether the number of volunteers allocated to a country should have any relation to the overall amount of assistance provided to that country. The evaluation considered alignment of volunteer allocation with the geographical focus of the aid program by plotting the total overseas development assistance (ODA) expenditure for a country against the number of volunteers (Figure 5). This can be

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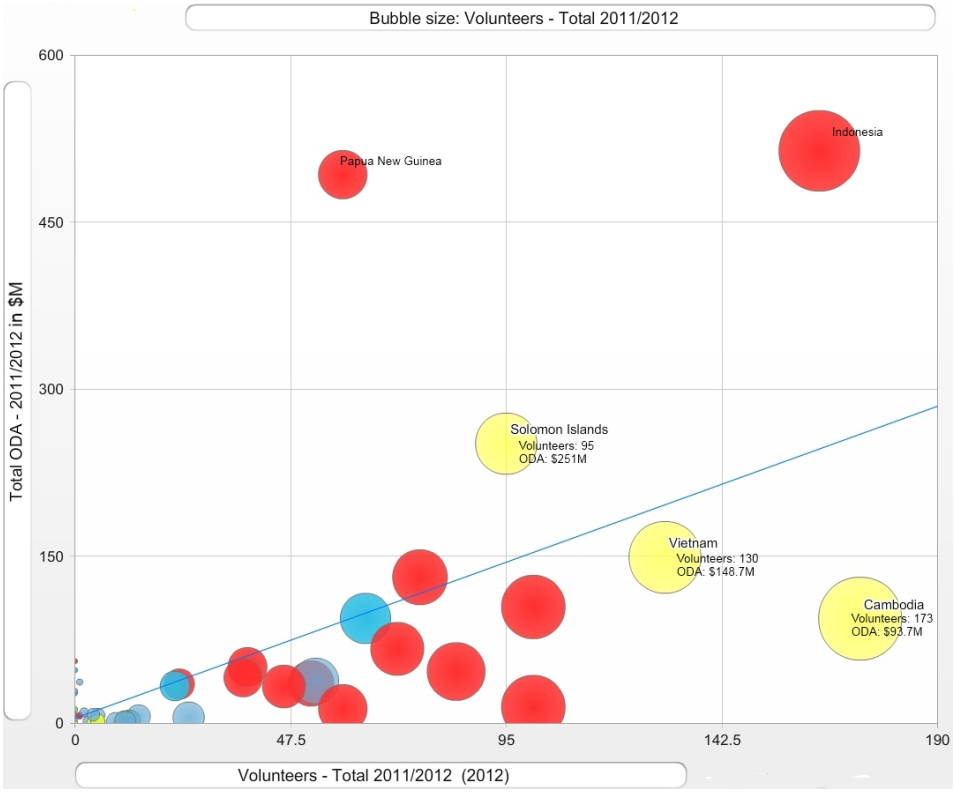
26 http://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2011/kr_mr_110526.html

27 The evaluation translated the country strategy for each of the case study countries—the Solomon Islands, Cambodia and Vietnam—into the development assistance codes (DACs) relevant to each strategy. These assessments were checked by AusAID's Volunteers Section, and then the proportion of assignment DACs that matched the country strategy DACs was calculated.

28 Solomon Islands: Honiara (73%), rest of country (27%) (note that there was a high proportion of missing data for Solomon Islands); Cambodia: Phnom Penh (66%), Siam Reap (16%), rest of country (18%); Vietnam: Hanoi (62%), Ho Chi Minh City (16%), rest of country (22%).

expressed as a regression equation (y = 1.5x+4.5), or $1.5 million in ODA expenditure for every volunteer sent. Overall, as ODA expenditure increases so do volunteer numbers, but there are some outliers. For example, there are relatively few volunteers in Papua New Guinea for the proportion of ODA expenditure.

Figure 5 Alignment between total overseas development assistance (ODA) expenditure and number of volunteers, by country, 2011–12



Alignment of AVID with AusAID's civil society framework and private sector development strategy

The AusAID Civil Society Engagement Framework (June 2012) sets out how Australia will work more effectively with civil society organisations to increase the impact of aid for the world's poorest people. AVID annual statistics show that more volunteers (38 per cent) are hosted by civil society organisations (local non-government organisations [NGOs] or community-based organisation) than any other type of organisation. The types of organisations with the next largest intake are government (21 per cent) and international NGOs (16 per cent).

The AusAID Private Sector Development Strategy (launched 21 August 2012) outlines the Australian aid program's broad approach to the development of the private sector in partner countries. It refers the need to facilitate dialogue with business and the applicability of volunteers to the strategy. Currently, only 3 per cent of volunteers are placed in the private sector, yet a substantial number—about 25 per cent—of host organisations have a relationship with an Australian partner organisation (APO), some of which are private sector businesses (see Chapter 4 for a discussion of APOs in AVID).

Recruiting host organisations and managing the supply of volunteers

Core partner volunteer recruitment data are not consistent in terms of quality or completeness, but illustrates a general trend that volunteer positions in law and justice (for all but one core partner), media or communications are the easiest for core partners to fill. Architecture, engineering, construction, plumbing and water-supply trades, information technology, health (nursing, medicine, dentistry and public health)

and education (teaching, with the exception of English as a second language) are the hardest to fill. It is easiest for core partners to recruit volunteers to South-East Asia, excluding Bhutan, and hardest to recruit to Africa (South Africa, Swaziland and Ethiopia) and the South Pacific (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Marshall Islands).

In-country managers in the case study countries found it difficult to manage the supply of volunteers to host organisations with fixed annual quotas. Their experience is that they need to over-recruit volunteers and under-recruit host organisations to ensure that there are sufficient volunteer numbers to meet host organisations' needs, accounting for attrition between volunteers' expression of interest and actual mobilisation. The current inflexibility raises the likelihood of allocation of volunteers to organisations because they are easy to place, rather than because they should get volunteers (because they are in areas of strategic interest) or because they benefit from volunteers (because they know how to make use of a volunteer).

In-country managers must also manage a yearly quota of 'volunteer months', which relates to volunteer assignment length. Managers must estimate when volunteers will arrive in-country and how long they will stay—both of which are difficult to predict in advance and limit managers' ability to extend assignments that may be on the verge of a capacity development 'tipping-point'. In-country managers suggested that a yearly volunteer target, with a fixed quota of volunteers and volunteer months over a three-year period, would give them flexibility to manage uncertainties, rather than under-using or exceeding rigid yearly quotas.

2.4 Conclusion

AusAID and the core partners have made substantial progress but have not yet achieved a fully integrated, single-program vision for AVID. The development of the shared standards and their continued refinement is a particular strength of the partnership.

Articulating a single set of objectives for AVID has not occurred, but there is widespread consensus among AVID stakeholders about broad program objectives. It is important for the integrity of the program that one set of clearly defined objectives are documented and communicated to all AVID stakeholders. The program logic developed for the evaluation provides a simple description of these objectives and intended outcomes.

There is a strong case for a more detailed design document to be developed at this time. This would overcome the shortcomings of the earlier design, reflect the maturing of the partnership itself, build on achievements to date and position the program to better meet the government's current and likely future aid program priorities, including alignment with the 2012 comprehensive aid policy framework and other key policy commitments, such as the Civil Society engagement Framework (2012) and the Business Engagement Strategy (2012).

AVID appears to be relatively well aligned to the country strategies in the three case study countries. The program also appears to be well aligned with the Civil Society Engagement Framework; however, the evaluation fieldwork found that there are relatively few volunteers placed in the private sector.

AVID could become more demand-driven without affecting program-level commitments for the total number of volunteers if AusAID Posts were encouraged to 'top up' the numbers above the allocated ceiling provided by the Volunteer's Section with bilateral funds. AVID should also consider establishing a yearly volunteer target with a fixed quota of volunteers and volunteer months over a three-year period to provide increased flexibility to manage uncertainties, rather than under-using or exceeding rigid yearly quotas.

The evaluation found that the AusAID Volunteers Section should continue its responsibilities for AVID policy and design, including funding and placing 1000 new volunteers each year, achieving public diplomacy

objectives and quality assurance standards. Core partners should continue to implement the program. AusAID Posts should take a much more active role, as described above. AusAID's Volunteers Section already promotes Post involvement in discussions about the numbers of volunteers; however, in the Posts visited, this was not clearly understood. The extent of involvement will depend on the resources at each Post. Individual Posts should decide how this would best be achieved (whether an A-based or O-based officer).

Recommendation 3

DFAT Posts should become more involved in:

- discussing the numbers of volunteers appropriate to the country strategy (considering but not limited to the number funded centrally; for Posts that see a need for more volunteers, this may involve Posts 'topping up' centrally funded volunteer numbers using their bilateral funds
- actively identifying host organisations linked to country strategy objectives
- determining the resources required to actively manage the AVID program
- integrating AVID with other capacity development initiatives (e.g. scholarships, fellowships and paid technical assistance).

3 Australian volunteers

The goal of Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) is:

> To make an effective contribution to the development objectives of the Australian Government and its partner governments, through Australian volunteers working with people and organisations in developing countries.[29]

In the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYAD) stream, this goal—described in the AVID program logic guiding this evaluation (see Figure 2)—is to be achieved while contributing to the volunteers' own personal and professional development.

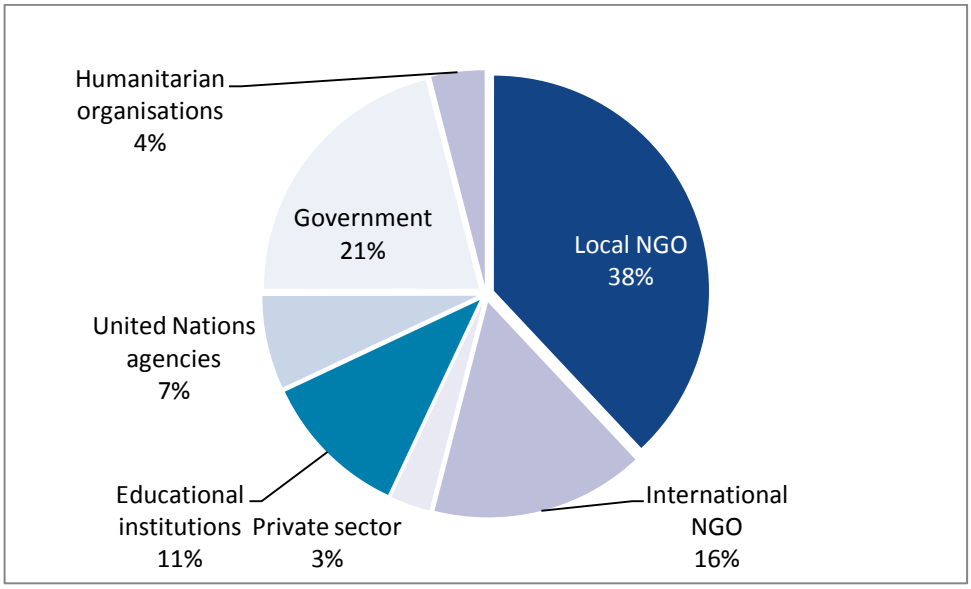
This chapter describes the characteristics of Australians who volunteered overseas in 2011–12, and the impact of volunteering on volunteers' personal and professional development. It also describes the personal characteristics that contribute to or reduce volunteers' effectiveness.

3.1 Profile of Australian Volunteers for International Development

In 2011–12, 1585 AVIDs were assigned to 1173 host organisations in developing countries; 920 of these were new.[30] Almost half of the volunteers were AYADs (44 per cent). The majority of AVIDs (57 per cent) were on assignments of 6–12 months duration, with others completing shorter and longer-term assignments. These volunteers were assigned to diverse organisations, including local non-government organisations (NGOs) (38 per cent) and governments (21 per cent). A breakdown of the types of host organisations where volunteers were placed is provided in Figure 6. The vast majority (84 per cent) of volunteers were placed in East Asia and the Pacific.[31]

29 AusAID Partnership Agreement with Core Partners (amendment number 1)
30 AusAID, *AVID annual statistics report 2011–12*
31 AusAID, *AVID annual statistics report 2011–12*

Figure 6 Type of host organisation where volunteers were placed, 2011–12



NGO = non-government organisation

Volunteer demographic diversity

AVIDs are typically female (65 per cent) and aged 26–35 years (58 per cent) (Table 2). Overall, AVID over-represents females and young people and under-represents older people and males.[32] Although volunteers aged 66 and over make up 7 per cent of all volunteers, they make up only 2 per cent of volunteers when Australian's consortium partner Australian Business Volunteers (ABV) is excluded.

Research shows that older people are less likely to volunteer, but when they do, the benefits for them can be substantial.[33] Volunteering can play a role in healthy ageing by contributing to higher activity levels and better integration and inclusion in society.[34] This sentiment was evident among older volunteers interviewed during fieldwork. As one older volunteer said, *'At home, in [my town], I am invisible because of my age. Here, I am respected*.' The evaluation also found that older volunteers were significantly more satisfied with their volunteering work than younger volunteers.[35] It also found that volunteers mobilised through Australian's consortium partner ABV are likely to be older and more experienced, and significantly more satisfied than other AVIDs or AYADs.

It is a common misconception that AYADs are young and inexperienced, and primarily agents for public diplomacy and personal development rather than capacity development. Although the age limit for AYADs is set at 30 years, 86 per cent of current AYADs are aged 26 or older. AYADs, like other AVIDs, are selected on the basis of being the best person for the advertised assignment. The overwhelming majority of AYADs interviewed for the evaluation had significant professional experience required by their host organisation. The common aims, similar ages and small differences in outcomes achieved by AYADs compared with AVIDs is a recurring theme of the evaluation.

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32 The proportion of people aged 66 years and older in the Australian population is 13 per cent, compared with 7 per cent in the AVID cohort. Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian demographic statistics report*

33 D Haski-Leventhal

34 G Naegele and E Schnabel, *Measures for social inclusion of the elderly: the case for volunteering,* Eurofound, Dublin, 2010.

35 Satisfaction with volunteering work was highest among volunteers aged 60–69 years (92 per cent satisfied) and 70–79 years (96 per cent satisfied).

Table 2 Australian Volunteers for International Development, 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012

Characteristic	AYAD		AVID (stream)		AVID (total)		Australian population
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*%*
Core partner							
Australian Red Cross	0	0%	98	11%	98	6%	–
Austraining International	699	100%	455	51%	1154	73%	–
Australian Volunteers International	0	0%	333	38%	333	21%	–
Gender							
Male	181	26%	370	42%	551	35%	50%
Female	518	74%	516	58%	1,034	65%	50%
Background							
Disability	1	<1%	1	<1%	2	0.1%	19%[a]
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3%
Age							
<18 years	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	23%
18–25 years	99	14%	15	2%	114	7%	11%
26–35 years	600	86%	305	34%	905	57%	14%
36–45 years	0	0%	150	17%	150	9%	14%
46–55 years	0	0%	135	15%	135	9%	14%
56–65 years	0	0%	174	20%	174	11%	11%
66 years and older	0	0%	107	12%	107	7%	13%
Total	***699***	***100%***	***886***	***100%***	***1585***	***100%***	***100%***

– = not available; AVID = Australian Volunteers for International Development; AYAD = Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development; NA = not applicable

a Measurement of disability in work force profile data is notoriously difficult, and different definitions and methods result in very different measures, Disability is defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics ABS as 'any limitation, restriction or impairment that restricts everyday activities and has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least six months' (see Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Disability*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2009.

Source: Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program statistics 2011–12, provided by AusAID Volunteers Section.

In 2011–12, no volunteers self-identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and only two volunteers self-identified as having a disability. This contrasts with 3 per cent of the Australian population identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and up to 19 per cent who self-report a disability. AusAID recently committed funding of $2 million over three years to increase the number of volunteers with a disability.[36]

In 2012–13, AusAID and the core partners are focusing on recruiting volunteers in regional areas, which have been underserviced in past recruitment processes.[37] Recruiting from wider geographical areas may increase the diversity of the volunteer profile. The effects of the requirements of the AusAID Disability Policy and the focus on recruiting from regional areas on the volume and type of volunteer expressions of interest should be monitored in the future. An increased focus should be placed on recruiting volunteers from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds to promote commitments made in AusAID's Reconciliation Action Plan. This would also comply with a key principle in the AVID shared standards that states that core partners will ensure recruitment and selection of the best available candidates and

36 AusAID, *Development for all: towards a disability inclusive Australian aid program 2009–2014,* AusAID, Canberra, 2008.

37 AusAID, *AVID 2012–13 marketing communications plan,* AusAID, Canberra, 2012.

provide support that ensures inclusiveness, subject to safety and risk management, to the diversity of Australian population groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people with disabilities and of all relationship types.

Other governments are considering approaches to diversify their international volunteer cohorts. For example, some countries are assessing the contribution diaspora volunteering (when volunteers have current or distant roots in another country) can make to development or reducing poverty in their countries of origin.[38] Diaspora volunteering has potential for countries like Australia with large expatriate communities—one-quarter of Australians were born overseas and approximately one-fifth speak a language other than English at home.[39]

The United Kingdom Department for International Development recently trialled a means test for all applicants to its International Citizen Services to ensure the program attracted volunteers from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds.[40] (The test will be applied differently in the future, because it led to a disproportionate number of volunteers from the lowest socioeconomic backgrounds.) AusAID does not collect data on volunteers' cultural background or the language they speak at home, nor information on their socioeconomic background; however, if they did, this could inform decisions about the suitability of current recruitment and alternative volunteer models for attracting a more diverse range of volunteers. In the 2013 independent review of the Australian Centre for International and Agricultural Research (ACIAR), it was noted that there are opportunities to link the volunteer program to support ACIAR research projects.[41]

3.2 Selecting, preparing and supporting volunteers

Adequate pre-departure training has been shown to be a strong determinant of volunteer outcomes, particularly among young volunteers.[42] Most (81 per cent) of the volunteers who responded to AusAID's recent survey were satisfied with the help they received before departure.[43] Current AVIDs in the three case study countries were also satisfied: all those interviewed said that their pre-departure training and in-country orientation were excellent and relevant to their placement. The most common feedback was that the training helped the volunteer understand that it would take time to develop relationships and build trust with colleagues. However, because core partners are responsible for delivering volunteer pre-departure training to the volunteers they recruit and mobilise, many AVIDs (with the exception of AYADs) do not meet other volunteers who will be in country with them. The importance of networks for connecting volunteers is discussed in Chapter 4.

3.3 Volunteer satisfaction

The international literature consistently demonstrates that volunteers are overwhelmingly positive about their experiences in at least three respects: personal development, improved cultural awareness and

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38 K Newland and E Patrick, *Beyond remittances: the role of diaspora in poverty reduction in their countries of origin,* Migration Policy Institute for the Department of International Development, Washington, 2004.

39 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of population and housing*, ABS, Canberra, 2012.

40 United Kingdom Department for International Development, *Final mid-term review: evaluation of DFID's International Citizen Service*, UK DFID, London, 2011.

41 Australian Government, *Independent Review of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR)*, prepared by B Farmer, R Duncan, T Enright and W Jarvie, Australian Government, Canberra, 2013.

42 A Hawkins, E Versteg and T Flood, *Volunteering for international development: approaches and impact,* AusAID, Canberra, 2013.

43 The returned volunteer survey, conducted by ORIMA Research, included AGVP and AVID volunteers.

greater civic engagement on their return home[44]. Impact studies in this literature typically rely on volunteer self-report data, such as returned volunteer surveys, which are subject to bias.[45] This evaluation drew on AusAID's recent survey of returned volunteers by ORIMA Research, as well as interviews with volunteers and their host organisations in three case study countries.

AVID volunteers are generally very positive about their overall experience as a volunteer. The survey of returned volunteers found most (85 per cent) volunteers were, overall, satisfied with their most recent assignment, and most (89 per cent) thought it had a positive impact on their life. The majority (92 per cent) said they would recommend AVID to their family and friends. Volunteers' satisfaction with their host organisations was more moderate: approximately three-quarters (73 per cent) were satisfied. About one in 10 (14 per cent) surveyed volunteers were dissatisfied with their host organisation, which is consistent with the fieldwork findings. When interviewed, dissatisfied volunteers said their host organisation was unsustainable, preoccupied with attracting funding or not adequately prepared to host a volunteer.

The survey of returned volunteers indicates that 70 per cent of volunteers were satisfied with the support received from their in-country manager. The themes identified in free-text responses to the survey and in interviews were that many in-country mangers were often good at providing pastoral care (although did not always meet volunteer expectation about the extent of assistance, such as with relocating accommodation), even if they were not always proactive in checking on volunteer welfare. The biggest issues for volunteers related to the inability of obtaining useful advice on how to be most effective in their assignment. The survey of returned volunteers found that 23 per cent of volunteer assignments had been shortened. This issue is discussed in the context of inadequate assignment descriptions and the potential benefits of volunteer networks later in this chapter. Volunteer concerns could be more systematically addressed through a strengthened approach to monitoring and evaluation of AVID.

3.4 Characteristics of successful volunteers

There was a remarkable consistency in the views of host organisations about the characteristics of a successful volunteer. Host organisations believe volunteers need qualifications or expertise specific to their assignment, and agree core partners are recruiting adequately skilled and 'professional' volunteers. Almost without exception, host organisations in the three case study countries said successful volunteers must be proficient in English. The most common adjectives used to describe the attributes of successful volunteers, in order of the frequency with which they were given, were: flexibility, adaptability, patience, proactivity, openness and open-mindedness, and enthusiasm. Most host organisations interviewed in the case study countries said their most recent AVID volunteer also had personal qualities that contributed to their success. One host organisation's comment typifies the general view:

> Volunteers are different to consultants because you weed out the people who are in it for the money and (who) may not have the mindset of learning about the country rather than providing advice … We don't need narrow expertise but open-mindedness and a more strategic outlook. [Host organisation, Solomon Islands]

In many instances, it was the new ideas, approaches and morale boost volunteers brought to the host organisation as much as their technical skills that host organisations valued (Box 1). Volunteer characteristics were clearly a major factor in the success of assignments, three (out of seven) of all the

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44 Hawkins, Verstege and Flood

45 B Armstrong, E White and R Saracci, *Principles of exposure measurement in epidemiology: collecting, evaluating, and improving measures of disease risk factors,* Oxford University Press, London, 2008.

enabling factors identified in end-of-assignment reports (completed by host organisations and volunteers) related to volunteer attributes, particularly their knowledge, skills and personal traits.

Box 1 Solomon Islands Water (SIWA) case study

AusAID was working with the Solomon Islands Water Authority (SIWA) on a rapid recovery action plan to solve the organisation's financial problems. SIWA needed electrical and mechanical engineering expertise to keep providing the island with water. The AVID in-country manager suggested SIWA could use a volunteer, rather than hire technical advisers. Although initially reluctant, SIWA's general manager agreed because of his organisation's limited budget, and chose a suitable candidate from a shortlist of volunteer applicants.

The young Australian electrical engineer realised he could not do any capacity-building work until he was busy solving SIWA's practical problems. He was soon busy checking pumping stations and working with local operators to ensure the water kept flowing. As he worked, new issues outside his expertise became evident. The engineer drew on his undergraduate training and his co-workers' knowledge to solve mechanical problems. SIWA noted that an adviser being paid for electrical engineering expertise would probably have been less flexible and willing to work outside their position description than the volunteer. For his part, the volunteer was pleased to learn some new skills beyond his qualification and training.

Over time, the volunteer learned the local pidgin language and some local customs, helping him build effective relationships with SIWA employees. Local staff were less intimidated by the young, friendly volunteer than they were by previous technical advisers, and asked him lots of questions. Both the general manager and volunteer agreed it was most effective for him to support a team of local workers because it spread new knowledge further and helped more workers gain confidence. The local staff were also impressed by the volunteer's altruistic motivations.

SIWA is now in a more stable financial position, but volunteers will remain an important part of its ongoing capacity-building strategy. The volunteer is hoping to extend his assignment to help ensure his work is sustainable. He also plans to develop training materials and procedures for staff to use once he leaves.

Source: Interview with volunteer and host organisation.

Most host organisations interviewed spoke highly of their volunteer's professionalism and expertise. Some organisations had previously hosted volunteers from other countries and had also used technical advisers; these organisations commented that Australian volunteers are more professional than volunteers from other countries and, in some instances, more professional than paid technical advisers. Some host organisations consider volunteers more attractive than paid technical advisers because they cost less.

Reflecting on the use of technical assistance in the Timor-Leste aid program, Timor-Leste President Jose Ramos-Horte observed in 2011 that, 'Some of our best advisers including Australians have been volunteers'.'[46]

46 J Ramos-Horte, Focusing aid brings forward the day we can do without it, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 July 2011.

Cost of mobilising a volunteer

The evaluation team had insufficient data to conduct a cost-effectiveness analysis of volunteers and paid technical advisers; however, some comparative cost data were made available to the evaluation. The average overall annual cost of mobilising and placing a volunteer in 2012–13 is estimated at approximately $69 000 per full-time equivalent, or approximately $5750 per month.[47] This amount *includes* the cost of volunteers' living, accommodation, training and dependent-support allowances. It also includes overhead costs such as pre-departure training, airfares, health and medivac insurances, in-country support services and significant measures relating to volunteer security.

This average overall annual cost is indicative, and it is important to note that there is a wide variation to this cost in different countries. Although volunteer allowances per country are standardised across core partners, actual allowances and costs, such as accommodation expenses, are tied to the cost of living in a particular country. Similarly, fixed costs such as insurances and core partner staffing and office overheads are tied to the cost of doing business in each region and country. AusAID places a very high emphasis on core partners providing appropriate safety, security and health services to volunteers ,and this demand can also have an impact on cost comparisons. For example, the cost of a volunteer in Papua New Guinea at $114 480.00 in 2012–13 is high relative to the rest of the Pacific. In Tonga, the cost of a volunteer is $52 818.

Table 3 shows an estimated average volunteer cost per region in 2012–13, based on an AVID-wide average cost for a 12-month assignment (full-time equivalent) across all program delivery partners.

Table 3 Average volunteer cost per region, 2012–13

Regions	Average cost per full-time equivalent (AU$)
Pacific (includes Papua New Guinea)	$72 870
Asia	$61 054
Middle East	$77 421
Africa	$76 938
Latin America / Caribbean	$87 766

The evaluation did not have access to the years of relevant work experience of volunteers and therefore it was not possible to make a like-for-like comparison of costs of volunteers and technical advisers, or to calculate averages based on data from each volunteer assignment. However, using the AusAID Advisor Remuneration Framework 'market reference point', the evaluation calculated that the average cost of a technical adviser is $12 338 a month.[48] (This *excludes* a mobility allowance; adviser support costs for accommodation, transport and insurances; and management fees). Volunteers, if they were paid an advisory fee, could fall into levels similar to thosepaid for technical advisers at levels 2 and 3 in the Adviser Remuneration Framework for disciplines B,C and D (those that best approximated the types of work that volunteers do).

Most AVID stakeholders in the three case study countries—but not all—agreed that volunteers are an effective capacity development resource. Another view is that AVIDs are not sufficiently skilled to achieve capacity development outcomes, nor can they be mobilised quickly enough for development purposes (or

47 Data from AusAID

48 This was an average of data for long-term engagements in disciplines B, C and D at job levels 2 and 3. This method was chosen on the basis that most volunteers, if paid, would fall into these categories and levels.

terminated as is possible with paid technical advisers). Host organisations were also concerned about the lengthy volunteer recruitment and deployment process. On occasion, the behaviour of AYADs may be seen to jeopardise Australia's diplomatic position and the safety of AYADs, although AusAID data suggest an equivalent incidence rate between AYADs and the broader AVID population. In 2011–12, the non–health related incident rate was 0.04 for AYADs and 0.03 for other AVIDs.[49] Iit may be less risky and more advantageous for volunteers to be hosted in small NGOs where they can exercise their entrepreneurial spirit, although the evaluation results show that volunteers are equally effective in government agencies and NGOs (see Chapter 4). Overall though, the view by Australian diplomats of volunteers' contribution to public diplomacy is positive.

Reflecting their appreciation of volunteers' skills, some host organisations chose not to use the term 'volunteer' because they felt it demeaned their volunteer's professionalism. This is consistent with the trend in some countries to replace the term 'volunteer' with 'development worker'.[50] Other host organisations gave their volunteer a specific job title, which not only recognised the volunteer's experience, skills and professionalism, but also indicated that the volunteer was a member of the organisation rather than an external adviser. On the other hand, some host organisations preferred the term 'volunteer', arguing it describes someone motivated by altruism over personal gain.

Host organisations said the most effective volunteers are those who are enthusiastic and proactive with a respect for the cultural context of their assignment. One of the enabling factors host organisations identified in end-of-assignment reports was volunteer acculturation. This theme was also evident during interviews, in which host organisations said it was important for volunteers to accept local culture—for example, by eating with the staff, trying new foods or learning the language. Often, volunteers who were less successful did not have the same expectations as their host organisation. In these situations, host organisations typically wanted their volunteer to work in an in-line position rather than with a counterpart, or they wanted the volunteer to undertake activities inconsistent with the original assignment description that the volunteer was unwilling to perform. The issues of inaccurate assignment descriptions, and working with counterparts to achieve capacity development are addressed in Chapter 4.

Impact of volunteering on volunteers

There is only modest evidence in the literature showing that volunteering leads to enhanced employability;[51] however, just over half (59 per cent) of volunteers who responded to AusAID's survey of returned volunteers agreed their assignment helped their career.[52] Volunteering was more useful to the careers of volunteers under 40 years of age (73 per cent agreed their assignment helped their career), although there were no significant additional career benefits between volunteer streams, or between older and younger AYADs.

People who use volunteering as a stepping stone to a career in international development typically report higher career impacts after volunteering.[53] The returned volunteer survey showed that one-third (31 per cent) of returned volunteers were now working in international development.[54] In interviews, volunteers

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49 Incident report data 2011–12, AusAID Volunteers Section.

50 Canadian International Development Agency, *The power of volunteering: a review of the Canadian volunteer cooperation program,* CIDA, Gatineau, Quebec, 2005.

51 E Unterhalter, J McDonald, J Swain, P Mitchell and M Young, *Time in: the impact of VSO placement on professional development, commitment and retention of UK teachers,* Institute of Education, London, 2002.

52 AusAID, *Survey of returned volunteers*

53 A McBride, B Lough and M Sherraden

54 AusAID, *Survey of returned volunteers*

also said volunteering improved their ability to solve difficult problems, widened their skillset beyond a narrow profession or specialisation, enhanced their appreciation of organisational effectiveness and improved their cultural understanding.

Factors affecting volunteer effectiveness

Few studies of the effect of volunteering seek the perspectives of host organisations: those that do report wide differences between the perspectives of volunteers and host organisations.[55] This evaluation repeated three questions from AusAID's survey of returned volunteers in the survey of host organisations in the case study countries.[56] Analysis of these data show that volunteers *underestimate* their impact on improving their host organisation's ability to deliver its programs and improving its profile, while *overestimating* their importance to the host organisation (over and above what local staff can achieve) (Table 4).

There was a similar pattern in the case study countries: it was common to hear the host organisations valued the volunteer's contribution much more than the volunteer understood. However, a very small number of host organisations (and some volunteers) detected a tendency for volunteers to be overly directive towards host organisation staff. It was apparent that many volunteers were highly educated and motivated individuals. Some volunteers and host organisations commented it can take time for volunteers to adapt to the norms of professional behaviour in their organisation. Host organisations sometimes remarked that successful volunteers remember that they are just one part of the organisation and are able to respect the professionalism of their colleagues.

Table 4 Proportion of host organisations and volunteers who agreed with statements about capacity and capacity development

Statement	Volunteers (% positive)	Host organisations (% positive)
Hosting Australian volunteers over the last year helped our organisation to deliver programs and meet goals (capacity)	75	82
Hosting Australian volunteers over the last year helped our organisation enhance its profile in the community (capacity development)	56	65
The work our most recent Australian volunteer did could have been more effectively done by a local staff member[a] (capacity)	16	26

a The difference in attitudes between volunteers returning from the three fieldwork countries and all other countries is small (d = 0.15) but statistically significant ($P < 0.05$, $t = 2.417$, degrees of freedom = 1284).

Note: Data from AusAID returned volunteer survey is restricted to respondents whose assignment was in Cambodia, Vietnam or the Solomon Islands.

Source: AusAID returned volunteer survey and host organisation survey.

Volunteers interviewed in the case study countries often said that the most challenging aspect of their assignment was balancing the host organisation's need for immediate capacity (i.e. asking or expecting the volunteer to do things *for* the organisation) with the imperative to support the host organisation's learning (i.e. asking or expecting the host organisation to let the volunteer 'do *with*' them). This balance is one of the most substantial tensions in the AVID program logic—for example, what if host organisations

55 T Vian, *Measuring the impact of international corporate volunteering: lessons learned from the Global Health Fellows Program of the Pfizer Corporation,* Centre for International Health, Boston University School of Public Health, Boston, 2007.

56 These were modified slightly to make sense to host organisations—for example, 'our volunteer …' rather than 'my host organisation …'. The evaluation was unable to pose new questions to volunteers, because the survey of returned volunteers was done before this evaluation.

simply want an extra set of hands (*capacity*) and not support to develop skills within their organisation (*capacity development*)? This issue is discussed further in Chapter 4, together with recommendations for reducing the tension by using long-term capacity development plans.

3.5 Conclusion

Core partners are using effective recruitment processes and providing adequate pre-departure training and in-country orientation. Most volunteers are satisfied with their assignment and overall experience and the support from their in-country manager. Volunteer dissatisfaction is mostly related to an inability to be effective in developing capacity of their host organisations, mainly because their organisation was poorly functioning, inadequately prepared to host a volunteer or had different expectations of the volunteer's role in their organisation.

AVID volunteers are almost universally highly regarded by host organisations for their professionalism, experience, flexibility, adaptability, fresh ideas, approachability and ability to work as part of a team. Australian volunteers are often contrasted favourably with volunteers from other countries and with paid technical advisers. Volunteers may be more effective than they perceive, but may also overestimate their own importance to an organisation.

Further longitudinal research on career pathways for returned volunteers may provide further evidence about how returned volunteers are benefiting from their experience. These data could be used to modify the program and may also be useful in promoting the program to potential recruits and prospective employers of returned volunteers.

The effectiveness of the program as a tool of Australian public diplomacy will depend on the extent that volunteers represent the Australian community. There was little demographic diversity within the 2011–12 volunteer cohort. AusAID should require core partners to systematically collect and report additional demographic data on volunteers to monitor the diversity of recruitment and placements, including volunteers' socioeconomic status (professional qualifications, education, employment experience) and cultural background (non-English speaking / culturally and linguistically diverse background). AusAID should also consult with other Australian Government departments about how to align AVID's objectives with the domestic public policy agenda around social inclusion and health ageing.

AusAID should consider the feasibility and utility of targeting diaspora populations as a potentially powerful way of sending volunteers with language and cultural skills appropriate to their host organisation. Greater attention could also be placed on volunteers learning the language of their host country to support Australian Government objectives about Australia in the Asian century.[57]

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57 Australian Government, *Australia in the Asian century: white paper*, Australian Government Printing Unit, Canberra, 2012.

4 The impact of volunteering on host organisation capacity development

Increasing capacity among individuals, organisations and communities in developing countries is one of the central objectives of Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID).[58] AusAID defines capacity development as the process of developing competencies and capabilities in individuals, groups, organisations, sectors or countries that will lead to sustained and self-generating performance improvement.[59]

This evaluation separated the definition into three measurable parts that are consistently described in the international literature and the AVID design document:

- **Capacity** is provided when a volunteer helps their host organisation to perform its role and meet its objectives.[60]
- **Sustainable capacity** is achieved when a host organisation is able to maintain the new capacity after a volunteer leaves.[61]
- **Capacity development** is achieved when a host organisation is able to leverage the work of a volunteer to generate new forms of capacity from within the organisation without long-term dependence on the volunteer.[62]

There is very little in the international literature to indicate which factors facilitate or limit host organisation achievements.[63] This evaluation sought evidence of the impact of volunteering on capacity development through interviews with volunteers and host organisations in three case study countries, and from a survey of host organisations. This chapter presents evidence on host organisation satisfaction with volunteers and volunteers' contributions to capacity development. It also includes an analysis of assignment-level factors that support or constrain the effectiveness of volunteers. Volunteer characteristics that are important to success are discussed in Chapter 3.

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58 AusAID Partnership Agreement with Core Partners (amendment number 1), Partnership Principles, Clause 2.1

59 AusAID, *Volunteers and Australian development cooperation: Australian program volunteer policy,* AusAID, Canberra, 2004.

60 AusAID, Austraining International, Australian Red Cross and Australian Volunteers International, Sections 2.10–2.11.

61 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *The challenge of capacity development: working towards good development,* OECD, Paris, 2006.

62 D Watson, *Monitoring and evaluation of capacity and capacity development,*European Centre for Development Policy Management, Maastricht, the Netherlands, 2006.

63 Hawkins, Verstege and Flood

4.1 Host organisation satisfaction

There was a high level of satisfaction with Australian volunteers in the case study countries (Table 5). Most host organisation survey respondents (87 per cent) were *satisfied* with their recent volunteer; two-thirds (65 per cent) were *very satisfied*.[64] Similarly, most host organisations (86 per cent) were *satisfied* with the core partner that sent their volunteer; two-thirds were *very satisfied*.[65] There were no significant differences in host organisations' overall satisfaction with their most recent Australian volunteer or core partner by country, type of volunteer (AVID or Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development [AYAD]) most recently hosted or core partner responsible for the volunteer.[66]

Table 5 Host organisations' overall satisfaction with their most recent Australian Volunteer for International Development

Item	*n*	Very dissatisfied 1	2	3	4	Very satisfied 5	Total positive
Overall, how satisfied are you with your most recent Australian volunteer?	93	3%	3%	6%	23%	65%	87%
Overall, how satisfied are you with the assistance you receive from this organisation (core partner)?	91	1%	3%	10%	19%	67%	86%

Source: Host organisation survey (*n* = 93); response rate 47 per cent.

There was widespread agreement among host organisations interviewed in the case study countries that they were actively and appropriately involved in defining the work their volunteer would do (Table 6). Host organisations routinely said they worked collaboratively with the in-country manager to develop the assignment description. Three-quarters (76 per cent) of host organisations surveyed said they chose their most recent volunteer, while one-tenth (12 per cent) strongly disagreed they chose their most recent volunteer.[67] Although most host organisations were satisfied if the core partner provided them with a single, preferred candidate (appreciating that recruitment is a time-consuming process), some organisations—that appeared to have higher capacity—said they wanted the choice of more than one candidate to interview.

64 Host organisation survey—host organisations (*n* = 93; response rate 47 per cent) rated their 'overall satisfaction with the most recent volunteer placement' on a scale from 'very dissatisfied' to 'very satisfied'. Overall satisfaction (88 per cent) includes respondents who were 'satisfied' (23 per cent) and very satisfied (65 per cent).

65 Host organisation survey—host organisations (*n* = 91; response rate 47 per cent) rated their 'overall satisfaction with core partners on a scale from 'very dissatisfied' to 'very satisfied'. Overall satisfaction (86 per cent) includes respondents who were 'satisfied' (19 per cent) and 'very satisfied' (67 per cent).

66 The only statistically significant difference by organisation type was that local NGOs were more satisfied than international NGOs with the support they received from core partners; the differences were moderate in size and statistically significant ($d = 0.61$, $P < 0.5$). The sample sizes for comparisons of other organisation types were too small to provide enough statistical power for a comparison.

67 Host organisation survey—host organisations (*n* = 83) rated their agreement with the statement 'Our organisation was asked to choose our most recent Australian volunteer' on a scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Overall agreement (76 per cent) includes respondents who agreed (17 per cent) and strongly agreed (59 per cent).

Table 6 Host organisations' satisfaction with the recruitment processes for their most recent Australian volunteer

Item	*n*	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly agree 5	Total positive
Our organisation decides what work our volunteers do while they are on their assignment at our organisation	86	2%	2%	12%	30%	53%	84%
From the start, our most recent Australian volunteer had the same expectations about their assignment that we did	91	3%	1%	14%	36%	45%	81%
Our organisation was asked to choose our most recent Australian volunteer	83	12%	1%	11%	17%	59%	76%

Source: Host organisation survey (*n* = 93); response rate 47 per cent.

Host organisations' most common complaint with the current recruitment process was that it took too long to receive a volunteer. Most host organisations were willing to wait up to 12 months to receive a volunteer, but many organisations in the three countries visited said they had waited for longer. The most dissatisfied organisations preferred the former Australian Government Volunteer Program (AGVP) model, which allowed host organisations to identify a volunteer and then nominate the candidate to a volunteer provider, who then recruited them. This sentiment was particularly strong among organisations working with Australian partner organisations (see Chapter 5). The other problem that host organisations said they face is being unsure if they will receive more volunteers in future; host organisations said they could not plan ahead without knowing for sure whether volunteers could help their organisation in future. This appears to undermine the intention of AVID to support long-term relationships by sending a series of volunteers to an organisation over a number of years.[68]

Impact of volunteers on host organisation capacity

Host organisation survey questions were grouped into items about capacity, sustainable capacity and capacity development (Table 7). [69] Host organisations agreed that their most recent Australian volunteer helped their organisation to develop its capacity by helping the organisation meet its goals or deliver its programs (82 per cent agreed) or by helping their staff learn new skills (81 per cent).

There were only two significant differences by country in the questions about capacity and capacity development. The first was that host organisations in Cambodia were more likely to say the work could have been done more effectively by a local staff member—50 per cent of the host organisations reported this in Cambodia, compared with 10 per cent in Vietnam and 4 per cent in the Solomon Islands.[70] Data from fieldwork also suggest there were no significant differences between host organisations in Cambodia and the other countries on our ratings of overall capacity development, support from the core partner or

68 AusAID, in collaboration with Austraining International, Australian Red Cross and Australian Volunteers International, Section 2.5

69 This was done based on the intention of the item (face validity). More sophisticated analysis on the factor structure of the survey is described below and in Appendix 2.

70 The survey item had been translated into Khmer; local staff at the AusAID Post were contacted and confirmed that the translation was correct.

voice in the selection process.[71] But there was a statistically significant difference in our ratings of organisational sustainability[72] in Cambodia compared with Vietnam and the Solomon Islands. Although ratings were based on limited time with volunteers and host organisations, we felt confident that host organisations involved in fieldwork in Cambodia were sustainable in only 67 per cent of cases, whereas in the Solomon Islands 86 per cent appeared sustainable, and in Vietnam 100 per cent appeared sustainable. In Cambodia, unsustainable host organisations were often focused on securing funds to maintain the existence of the organisation rather than focused on undertaking activities in which the volunteer felt they should have been involved. Undertaking activities is a source of volunteer satisfaction and it may be that these host organisations thought a local staff member may be more inclined to undertake this role, even though this was a key reason for requesting a volunteer.

Many host organisations were confident their organisation would be able to sustain its capacity gains once the volunteer left. Most (83 per cent) saw their organisation as continuing to benefit from their most recent volunteer, and three-quarters (73 per cent) of host organisations said they remain in contact with their Australian volunteer. In many of the fieldwork interviews, volunteers said the knowledge or skills they transferred to staff would remain as long as the staff remained; most (81 per cent) host organisations agreed that their staff had learned new skills (Table 7). Other volunteers said the policies and procedures they developed—either with or for the organisation—would remain, although many were sceptical that the staff would use the policies or procedures, or that new staff would know to follow them.

More than two-thirds of host organisations agreed that their Australian volunteer contributed to their organisation's ability to develop their own capacity, including helping them to think about how their work could be more effective (78 per cent) or to clarify their objectives and strategies to manage their own affairs better (67 per cent). Host organisations that had most recently hosted an AVID (compared to an AYAD) were more likely to agree that the volunteer had helped them clarify their organisational objectives and strategies.

Table 7 Host organisations' agreement with statements about the work Australian volunteers did to improve capacity, provide sustainable capacity and contribute to capacity development

Item	*n*	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly agree 5	Total positive
Capacity							
Our most recent Australian volunteer works well with our team	93	3%	4%	4%	20%	68%	88%
Hosting volunteers in the last year helped our organisation to deliver programs and meet goals	87	2%	2%	14%	32%	49%	82%
The work our most recent Australian volunteer did could have been more effectively performed by a local staff member	93	49%	19%	5%	13%	13%	26%

71 Further data analysis of the survey, including looking at average factor scores by country, did not provide any indication that Cambodia was different to both Vietnam and the Solomon Islands on any other key issue identified in the survey.

72 Chi square $P = 0.033$.

Item	*n*	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly agree 5	Total positive
Sustained capacity							
We continue to benefit from the work of our Australian volunteers after their assignments end	82	1%	2%	13%	32%	51%	83%
Hosting Australian volunteers over the last year helped our staff learn new skills	86	1%	2%	15%	33%	49%	81%
We continue to hear from our Australian volunteers when they go home	77	4%	6%	17%	29%	44%	73%
Capacity development							
Hosting volunteers in the last year helped us think about how our work could be more effective	86	1%	2%	19%	36%	42%	78%
We have a long-term strategy for the use of volunteers in our organisation	86	1%	8%	19%	30%	42%	72%
Hosting volunteers in the last year helped our organisation better manage our own affairs	85	1%	11%	18%	39%	32%	71%
Hosting volunteers in the last year helped our organisation clarify its objectives and strategies	85	1%	7%	25%	38%	29%	67%
Hosting volunteers in the last year helped our organisation to enhance its profile in the community	83	2%	8%	24%	33%	33%	65%
Hosting volunteers in the last year helped us understand the experience of people who use our service	80	1%	5%	33%	29%	33%	61%

Source: Host organisation survey (*n* = 93); response rate 47 per cent.

Factors associated with host organisation satisfaction and capacity development

Multiple regression, correlation and factor analysis of the host organisation survey data suggest three patterns, which are supported by fieldwork data (Table 8; see Appendix 2 for discussion of the methods of analysis). In particular:

- host organisations' satisfaction was not associated with activities affecting capacity
- some organisations use consecutive volunteers as an addition to capacity, without developing sustained and sustainable internal capacity
- the role of volunteers in raising the organisation's profile met both the wants and needs of the organisation.

Host organisations are most satisfied when volunteers are willing to work as part of a team, provide assistance to the host organisation to deliver its programs and reach its goals, transfer skills to the host organisation staff, and raise the organisation's profile.[73]

The factors most associated with satisfaction relate to immediate improvements in organisational capacity and the development of individual staff members' skills rather than organisational capacity development. With the exception of raising the organisation's profile, host organisations' satisfaction was not significantly associated with any activities affecting the capacity of the host organisation as an entity. The factors associated with capacity development—helping the organisation to reflect on its future, doing research and clarifying objectives—were *negatively* associated with satisfaction. This finding highlights the inherent tension of AVID's public diplomacy and capacity development objectives. To satisfy host organisations, volunteers must do tasks that fulfil immediate needs and transfer skills to individuals in the host organisation. Although this approach is immediately satisfying for host organisations and no doubt a positive public diplomacy outcome, it is a limiting proposition for capacity development.

In addition, in many cases volunteers were used either because there were no sufficiently skilled workers in the local labour market or because the host organisation could not afford to hire sufficiently skilled workers. The latter situation may contribute to displacement of local workers or host organisation dependence on volunteers.

There was no link between the number of volunteers hosted by an organisation and the extent to which they were using volunteers for organisational capacity development rather than more immediate capacity. During fieldwork, the evaluation team encountered some organisations that had hosted several volunteers consecutively, with no apparent progress towards sustainability. This occurred in a range of sectors and assignment types, but seemed to occur more frequently with volunteers in marketing and communications roles and in international non-governmnet organisations (NGOs).[74] In these situations, volunteers did not appear to be contributing to sustainable capacity development, but supporting reliance on the program. This suggests that many host organisations had not been able to consolidate the work done by volunteers into sustained organisational capacity. This is consistent with fieldwork evidence and program statistics that suggest most volunteers were essentially 'one-off' assignments rather than part of a long-term strategy for the host organisation.[75] Ultimately, AVID should aim to support host organisations to reach a level of maturity at which capacity development—capacity generated from within the host organisation—is possible.[76]

If volunteer assignments are developed in consultation with host organisations—and they uniformly were—it is more likely there will be sustainable outcomes. The evaluation team saw evidence of volunteers sustaining gains made—for example, volunteers facilitating contact between their host organisation and other networks. Connections to networks are a recognised means of developing sustainable capacity[77]

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73 The survey did not ask host organisations about specific tasks they valued—such as writing funding proposals or teaching host organisation staff English—but fieldwork interviews suggest these contribute greatly to a host organisation's satisfaction. (The volunteer attributes that host organisations perceive as most effective are described in Chapter 3.). These items all exhibited statistically significant positive correlations ($P < 0.05$, $r \geq 0.5$) with overall volunteer satisfaction.

74 There were at least two clear examples where international NGOs were using a volunteer to perform a communications role that had previously been filled by an AVID; in both cases the volunteer was an AYAD. It is important to note that almost one-third of volunteers we interviewed were working in in-line positions rather than with a counterpart or mentor and were more likely to be undertaking activities at the lower end of the capacity development spectrum.

75 *AVID annual statistics report 2011–12* shows 47 per cent of all assignments were with organisations hosting volunteers for the first time.

76 Watson

77 World Bank Institute, *Intermediate capacity outcomes: capacity development resource for program design and monitoring and evaluation of change processes*, World Bank Institute, http://wbi.worldbank.org/wbi/document/intermediate-capacity-outcomes.

and are discussed in more detail later in this chapter. The potential value of sequencing volunteers was identified by volunteers, who greatly benefited from the opportunity to speak with previous volunteers in their organisation, when this was possible.

The one factor related to host organisation satisfaction and all three components of organisational capacity (capacity, sustainable capacity and capacity development) was the extent to which volunteers lift the profile of the host organisation. This is an important finding and is consistent with the fieldwork. This was the one factor that met both the wants and needs of the organisation. Host organisations enjoyed the prestige they obtained from having a volunteer from Australia, and this contributed to raising their profile. Host organisations also recognised that one of the important things volunteers could do to increase the capacity of their organisation was to help them access networks of similar organisations—the implication of this for the need to support host organisation networking is discussed later in this chapter.

Table 8 Factors that predict host organisation satisfaction and capacity development outcomes

Predictor	Satisfaction	Capacity	Sustainable capacity	Capacity development
Shared expectations		✓		
Assistance with delivering programs	✓		✓	
Volunteer's ability to work as part of a team	✓			
Skills transfer	*		✓	
Raising the host organisation profile	✓	*	✓	✓
Helping host organisation reflect on future		✓		✓
Research by the host organisation				✓
Assisting host organisation to clarify objectives		✓		✓

✓ = variable predicted by all analyses (regression, correlation and factor analysis); * = variable predicted by some, but not all analyses (regression, correlation and factor analysis)

Source: Host organisation survey (*n* = 93); response rate 47 per cent.

Influence of volunteer stream and host organisation type on volunteers' impact

Data from host organisations interviewed in the three case study countries were paired with the relevant volunteer interview data to create a single record. Each assignment was rated—using a scale from very low to very high—on the extent of capacity development that occurred.[78] AVID assignments were rated somewhat higher than AYAD assignments—the AVID average was 3.2 and the AYAD average was 2.7[79] (Table 9). There are insufficient data to determine if this is related to the quality of the volunteer or the duration of the assignment. It is hard to draw broader conclusions because the sample size was small, but available data show that the highest levels of capacity development were associated with very experienced

78 Capacity development was rated as very low (1)—organisation not benefiting from volunteer or is likely to be worse off when volunteer leaves; low (2)—organisation benefiting from work of volunteer but not in a sustainable manner; medium (3)—organisation staff are *learning* new skills as a result of the volunteer and/or the organisation is *learning* new processes and systems to improve its function; high (4)—organisation realises volunteers are no substitute for their own capacity, staff are *using* new skills as a result of the volunteer and/or organisation is *using* new processes and systems to improve its function; very high (5)—organisation is transforming ability to manage their own affairs due to the work of volunteer. This scale was based on the review of the literature and is not validated, and the interview data varied in length and comprehensiveness, so the analysis should be considered indicative only.

79 We do not have sufficient sample size to control for the fact that AVID assignments typically run longer and use a more experienced volunteer. These findings do not imply that one stream was more effective than another. The differences between AVID and AYAD assignments approach statistical significance ($P = 0.078$) and would show a moderate effect size if representative of all AVID and AYAD assignments ($d = 0.503$), but when assignments that had not been in place for at least three months are excluded there is no difference ($P = 0.396$).

volunteers (in all of the four assignments) and assignments with a planned length of 24 months (3 out of 4 assignments).

Table 9 Volunteers' average capacity development ratings, by volunteer stream and host organisation type

Stream / host organisation	Volunteers (n)	Average capacity development rating[a]	
		All assignments	*All assignments ≥ 3 months duration[b]*
Volunteer stream			
AYAD	26	2.7	2.9
AVID	29	3.2	3.3
Host organisation			
Government	*17*	2.9	3.4
International NGO	*10*	2.8	2.6
Local NGO	*14*	2.8	3.1

NGO = non-government organisation

a 'Average capacity development rating' is the average score that was assigned by ARTD Consultants. The scores range from 1 to 5 for capacity development and come from the scale described in Appendix 2 *In-country fieldwork*.

b We only included assignments in this table that had been running for at least three months when we conducted the interview. This was to add some control for the fact that little capacity would have been developed in most assignments in this period.

Source: Fieldwork interviews with volunteers and host organisations in Cambodia, Vietnam and the Solomon Islands. Host organisation types limited to types with at least 10 current volunteers.

Previous studies—and some stakeholders in this evaluation—have indicated that volunteers may not be able to increase the capacity of large professional organisations and that volunteers in these circumstances are effectively doing a work experience placement or the work of an intern. Assignments to government agencies and multilateral NGOs did, however, receive a high capacity development rating (although differences by organisation type were not statistically significant), particularly those that were of at least three months duration at the time of the interview (Table 9). Many volunteers in government or multilateral organisations were contributing by working with teams of local staff. Other highly experienced volunteers were effective in high-level policy development work for government agencies (see Box 2)

Box 2 Vietnamese Department of Education and Training case study

Vietnam is currently implementing the Ministry of Education and Training's National Language Project to 2020, which aims to help more Vietnamese people to speak English proficiently. The project is being implemented provincially, and the Hue Department of Education and Training (DOET) is leading the project in Vietnam's Central Province. However, the Hue DOET could not implement the project without help. They needed more expertise to restructure the primary and secondary curricula to make it consistent with the project's goals and objectives. They also needed help to improve the Vietnamese teachers' own English proficiency.

The Director of DOET approached an Australian volunteer—who was completing her second two-year volunteer assignment at the Hue University of Foreign Languages—to help. DOET's director said the volunteer's professional qualifications and experience made her perfect for the role: she is a respected Australian educationalist with experience developing and implementing curriculum and teacher training. She also has a deep appreciation of Vietnamese society and how to work within its constraints. For example, she understood how strongly the Vietnamese value education and respect teachers, so she knew her assignment would be a delicate balance between respecting teachers' vocation and knowledge, and recognising and dealing with their limited English skills. The volunteer was keenly aware how important it was to build relationships in Vietnam. She said that 'achieving outcomes in Vietnam is based on personal relationships and networks' and she took time to build trust with her colleagues. For example, she wrote the phonetic spelling of her colleagues' names in a

notebook to ensure she got them right.

Only six months into the assignment, the volunteer has already made a difference. Her biggest achievement to date has been designing new training workshops for primary school teachers, which supported them to critically appraise the current English language curriculum and resources, and identify improvements. Both the volunteer and the DOET recognised that developing the capacity of the education system in Vietnam is a long-term prospect. The volunteer said, 'It will take a long time to build English language capacity' because there is 'a huge gap between what the Ministry of Education expects, and what the departments can deliver.'

Source: Interviews with the volunteer and host organisation.

Assignment-level factors that influence host organisation capacity development

Working in counterpart relationships

An understanding carried over from AGVP program guidelines and described in the AVID design document[80] is the assumption that volunteers will usually develop capacity within host organisations by transferring knowledge and skills to a counterpart in the host organisation.[81] The evaluation found that, although counterpart relationships can be effective, they rarely occur (9 per cent of all assignments in the case study countries) (Table 10).[82] The evaluation found that the most effective role a volunteer could play was as a mentor to a group of staff.[83] The differences between roles were statistically significant for all assignments and also when restricted to assignments that had only been in the field for more than three months.[84] Interviews with the core partners confirmed that various approaches to capacity development are already being used. Table 10 provides more detail.

Table 10 Volunteers' average capacity development ratings, by volunteer role

Role	Volunteers (*n*)	Average capacity development rating	
		All assignments	*All assignments ≥ 3 months duration*
Counterpart	5 (9%)	3.4	3.3
Team mentor	16 (27)%	3.6	4.0
Technical adviser	17 (29%)	2.7	2.9
In-line position	20 (33%)	2.5	2.5
Total	*59 (100%)*	*2.9*	*3.1*

Source: Fieldwork interviews with volunteers and host organisations in Cambodia, Vietnam and the Solomon Islands.

80 AusAID, in collaboration with Austraining International, Australian Red Cross and Australian Volunteers International

81 AusAID, in collaboration with Austraining International, Australian Red Cross and Australian Volunteers International

82 When a volunteer is performing the role of a counterpart, they are essentially mentoring a person in the host organisation who is performing a function that the volunteer has experience doing—for example, a volunteer with experience in media working alongside a host organisation's media officer.

83 The remainder of the volunteers interviewed were in relationships similar to that of a counterpart—this evaluation uses the term technical adviser (33 per cent) because they dispensed advice to senior staff and did some specific task—and working in an in-line position (35 per cent) or acting as a mentor to a group of staff (22 per cent).

84 ANOVA statistical analysis showed the role of the volunteer was a significant ($P = 0.016$) factor in ratings of capacity development for all assignments and in the smaller sample of assignments of three-months or longer ($P = 0.046$)

Some volunteers and host organisations interviewed in the case study countries suggested the risks of counterpart relationships can outweigh the benefits. Many volunteers who provided an opinion had a negative experience with their actual or intended counterpart, including:

- the volunteer's intended counterpart left the host organisation before the volunteer arrived
- the host organisation had not recruited the volunteer's intended counterpart by the time the volunteer arrived and, in some cases, had no intention of doing so
- the counterpart benefited from the volunteer, but then left the organisation in pursuit of a better job, leading to a net *decrease* in the host organisation's capacity
- the counterpart was not motivated to continue doing the role once the 'more experienced' volunteer arrived
- the counterpart was very busy and had limited time to work with the volunteer, leaving the volunteer underutilised.

These issues are also discussed in contemporary international volunteering literature.[85] In particular, a recent study commissioned by AusAID on capacity development achieved by technical advisers in Papua New Guinea found that 'counterpart relationships … seemed to be much better at improving individual competencies than they were at developing collective capacities, especially on a more sustainable basis.'[86] This study, which may be applicable to other regions, suggests that teamwork may be a more culturally appropriate way of working in Papua New Guinea.

Focus on predefined assignments

It was very common for volunteers in the three case study countries to discuss how different the work they were doing was from their assignment position description. This was also evident in AusAID's survey of returned volunteers, in which only 56 per cent of volunteers agreed (and only 16 per cent strongly agreed) that their position description matched the work their host organisation expected them to do.[87] Even though many host organisations interviewed agreed that the advertised positions were not the same as the work volunteers do, almost all (81 per cent) respondents to the host organisation survey agreed that 'from the start, our most recent Australian volunteer had the same expectations about their assignment that we did.' Volunteers frequently agreed that their pre-departure training prepared them for any mismatch between position description and reality.[88] Regardless of the mismatch, four out of five (79 per cent) volunteers still found their work interesting and meaningful.[89]

The main reason that the work volunteers do is different from the advertised assignment is because host organisations' needs evolve in the 6 to 12 months it can take core partners to recruit, brief and deploy appropriately skilled volunteers. More concerning, although far less common, was the small number of host organisations interviewed who wrote assignments to attract a volunteer but had no intention of having the volunteer do the described work. These organisations were focused on acquiring capacity they could not attract—or, in some cases, afford—in the local labour market. These organisations typically wanted to leverage the volunteer's English language skills to raise their profile or to prepare funding applications.

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85 AusAID, in collaboration with Austraining International, Australian Red Cross and Australian Volunteers International

86 P Morgan, *Improving counterpart relationships in Papua New Guinea: a study for the governments of Papua New Guinea and Australia,* AusAID, Canberra, 2008.

87 AusAID, *Survey of returned volunteers*

88 AusAID, *Survey of returned volunteers*

89 AusAID, *Survey of returned volunteers*

This was the case in at least one assignment where the volunteer had a monitoring and evaluation role. In a number of organisations, it was clear to the evaluation team that the host organisation had no intention of using the volunteer as a counterpart or to mentor a team, but relied on the current and future volunteers to perform the task for the organisation; this occurred most often with media and communications roles.

For the majority of assignments, the difference between advertised and actual assignments slowed the volunteer's progress. Many volunteers expressed feeling lost for a substantial period of time (usually at least three months), partly because it took time to develop rapport within the organisation, but also because the reality of their assignment was different to their expectations, which made it hard for them to understand their role or where they fitted into the organisation.

Host organisation factors that influence capacity development

During interviews, volunteers in the case study countries identified a range of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats within and external to their host organisation that increased or limited their effectiveness as an agent of capacity development (Table 11). Volunteers felt they were most effective when they were welcomed as part of the organisation and had a positive functional relationship with a small team of staff who were motivated to improve and who were genuinely interested in learning from and supporting the volunteer:

> The host organisation was fantastic. They made me feel welcome, took interest in my health, security and wellbeing, worked closely with me and were open to my suggestions and advice. [Returned volunteer][90]

Analysis of end-of-assignment reports (completed by host organisations and volunteers) shows similar results. The most common enabling factor (identified in 58 per cent of assignments) was a supportive host organisation, and a common barrier (identified in 24 per cent of assignments) was an unsupportive host organisation. Some volunteers suggested during interviews that host organisations that had previously hosted volunteers were better prepared to support them, but there is no additional evidence to support this claim. The main constraints volunteers identified during fieldwork were host organisations communicating poorly with them and lacking strategic thinking or planning; a far smaller number of volunteers interviewed said their host organisation was unmotivated or that there were insufficient physical resources, such as internet connection or office space, to support their assignment.

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90 AusAID, *Survey of returned volunteers*

Table 11 Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that facilitate or limit successful volunteer assignments

Strengths (within host organisation)	Weaknesses (within host organisation)
› A small and stable team of professional or dedicated staff who are motivated to improve and will interact with the volunteer › Providing support to the volunteer: » making time to discuss their work » including them in meetings (regardless of whether or not they need to attend the meetings for their assignment) » including them in activities (staff lunches or field visits) › Previous experience hosting a volunteer	› Organisations where all the decisions are made by one or two senior staff, leading to long delays in decision-making › Poor communication among staff and with the volunteer about how the organisation is operating › Lack of strategic thinking or planning leading to 'last minute' organisation or just a general lack of efficiency › Lack of basic resources (e.g. quality internet connection or regular electricity), although all workplaces the evaluation visited appeared in good order with electricity and running water › Poor history of paying staff or paying a low wage so staff have additional jobs to supplement their income or simply do not turn up to work, ultimately leading to low morale in the workplace › Low motivation or understanding of the need for the volunteer to build capacity that is sustained and developed rather than providing another 'set of hands'
Opportunities (outside host organisation)	**Threats (outside host organisation)**
› Access to professional networks or other avenues to provide support to the host organisation and/or the volunteer	› Lack of access to funding › Changes to policies or legislation controlling the way foreign non-government organisations can operate

Source: Interviews with volunteers and host organisations in Cambodia, Solomon Islands and Vietnam.

This response pattern is similar to AusAID's returned volunteer survey: approximately two-thirds to three-quarters of respondents said they had sufficient access to resources.[91] More than half of volunteer end-of-assignment reports (55 per cent) cite lack of host organisation resources as the main barrier, while one-quarter (24 per cent) of volunteers cited the availability of resources as an enabler.

Although frequently encountered, language barriers appear unrelated to assignment outcomes. About two-fifths (42 per cent) of returned volunteers surveyed said they encountered major language difficulties; one-fifth (20 per cent) of these volunteers said this had a moderate or high negative impact on their assignment. More than one-quarter (26 per cent) of the end-of-assignment reports listed language as the main barrier, but none listed it as an enabler. Interviews in the case study countries suggest most volunteers and host organisations can work through language barriers.

A number of volunteers raised issues related to the allocation of funds to learn their local language. The evaluation heard reports that the language allowance is paid to all volunteers in advance of them doing the course, leading to a high dropout rate. The allowance was also insufficient for those who wish to do more than basic language training.

The most common external threats to successful assignments—and to host organisations themselves—cited during interviews with volunteers and host organisations, and in end-of-assignment reports, were lack of funding and the external political environment. This was a particular concern in Vietnam and Cambodia, where changes to legislation restricting the operation of foreign-owned civil society organisations is being

91 AusAID, *Survey of returned volunteers*. The survey shows 74 per cent of returned volunteers had access to enough physical resources to fulfil their assignment, 67 per cent had access to enough human resources to fulfil their assignment and 62 per cent had access to enough financial resources to fulfil their assignment.

considered.[92] Only 5 per cent of volunteers mentioned the external political environment as a barrier on the end-of-assignment report, but 10 per cent said it facilitated their success. In end-of-assignment reports, 4 per cent of volunteers indicated lack of support from their in-country manager was a barrier, while 10 per cent said a supportive in-country manager facilitated their success.

Program-level factors that influence host organisation capacity development

Length of assignment

Whereas the international literature describes a trend towards short-term volunteer placements,[93] the evidence collected in this evaluation suggests longer-term assignments are more likely to be successful. One of the reasons for the difference between the evaluation findings and the literature may be that the AVID program focuses more than other programs on achieving host organisation capacity development. The fieldwork found instances where capacity development had been achieved; these were always at the end of a two-year assignment, with a particularly talented volunteer in a reasonably sustainable organisation.

AVID host organisations and volunteers interviewed for the evaluation were satisfied with the planned duration of their assignments (usually between 12 and 24 months). Although as discussed in Chapter 2, in-country managers wanted greater flexibility to extend promising assignments. Some volunteers and host organisations also expressed the need for this greater flexibility to extend their assignment because they could see how much more could be achieved with more time.

Long-term assignments may not always be the most appropriate. Some host organisations and volunteers were reluctant to commit to longer-term assignments (24 months or more) without testing the relationship. In-country managers also said that longer-term assignments may not be appropriate for host organisations taking on their first volunteer; these managers often wanted to use shorter assignments of around six months duration to 'test out' the organisation. Ultimately, the length of a volunteer assignment should reflect the needs of a particular organisation and their stage of capacity development.

Volunteer networks

A major factor limiting the volunteers' experience is the lack of formal support networks. Volunteer social supports are limited when they are not aware of volunteers placed in different assignments or by other core partners.

Most volunteers in Cambodia, Vietnam and the Solomon Islands felt socially connected, but a substantial number felt professionally isolated. They often knew the volunteers they were deployed with, but not other volunteers in their region or deployed by other core partners—unless they met them accidently.

It is widely recognised in the international literature that capacity development is not easy;[94] most volunteers interviewed were doing their first international volunteering assignment. Volunteers said that although they were briefed before deployment about the importance of capacity development work, when they arrived in country and faced specific situations they were unsure how to tackle the challenge.

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92 The Cambodian Government is developing a draft Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations; the Vietnamese Government changed laws governing foreign NGOs in June 2012.

93 Hawkins, Verstege and Flood; International volunteer programs promoting short-term assignments tend to focus on the volunteer's development (such as the United Kingdom's International Citizen Service) or provide a consulting model, in which skilled professionals volunteer their time for around a week (such as the United States' Financial Services Volunteer Corps or the Canadian Executive Services Organization).

94 Hawkin, Verstege and Flood

Although volunteers said their in-country managers gave good advice on 'day-to-day' issues, they could not provide the support volunteers wanted on the specific work of capacity development. Volunteers identified three main groups of people who could provide the support they were seeking:

- returned volunteers with experience in the host country or region
- Australian expatriates currently living in the host country
- former scholarship holders from the host country or region.

Volunteers commented that having access to other agencies and networks made their own assignment more straightforward and effective. For example, volunteers in large international NGOs reported how they received useful advice and support from the organisation's head office. Although in-country managers provided pastoral support, they did not provide the professional support that many volunteers felt they needed to meet their objectives. This could be addressed by supporting networking between current volunteers, volunteer alumni, expatriates or nationals with development expertise.

Host organisation networks

Host organisation networks can foster self-help and mutual assistance. Networks could benefit host organisations by connecting:

- new or prospective host organisations with current host organisations
- current host organisations with volunters from other host organisations
- current host organisations with other similar or important organisations in their region, country and the world.

Many volunteers felt their host organisation could have been better prepared to host a volunteer, and that being involved in a network of successful past or present host organisations from which they could seek advice may have helped them maximise the use of their volunteer.

Some volunteers said networks could provide a mechanism to allow a single host organisation to draw on the expertise of more than one volunteer. Volunteers sometimes noted that while they were on their assignment there were a large numbers of volunteers operating in the country who had different skills they could use in their own host organisation. They suggested that volunteers might be able to 'consult' with other volunteers or their host organisations. For example, one volunteer said there were many volunteers working in communication roles who could help develop websites for other volunteers' host organisations. Volunteers felt this was a feasible approach because of the substantial periods of downtime most volunteers experience; however, it may risk the volunteer being pulled in too many directions. It could also put at risk long-term capacity development within an organisation by 'doing for' at the expense of 'doing with' an organisation—that is, they could end up providing rather than developing capacity. A more moderate sharing approach could allow host organisations that have 'graduated' from AVID to access volunteer networks in exchange for mentoring other host organisations.

Many volunteers undertaking successful assignments said their host organisations were already involved in professional networks when they arrived (see Table 11); others said that their host organisation specifically wanted the volunteer to help them access local or international networks. Host organisations told us that volunteers helped them to obtain advice from other similar—but more advanced—organisations, and to develop connections with organisations in Australia or the international community. The implications are clear: volunteers should pay substantial attention to linking their organisation with other similar organisations or those inhabiting the organisation's policy context. Another form of networking includes Australian partner organisations (see below).

Host organisations' lack of knowledge of how to host a volunteer is a key cause of assignment failure and volunteer dissatisfaction; new host organisations that are uncertain about how to make the most use of their volunteer would likely benefit from advice from successful host organisations before and during a volunteer assignment.

Recommendation 4

DFAT and core partners should implement formal support networks for both volunteers and host organisations, including:

- supporting volunteers during their in-country placement by ensuring they have easy access to other volunteers and alumni for both social and professional support
- encouraging more experienced host organisations to participate in networks with new and potential host organisations to maximise the use and contribution of volunteers.

Australian partner organisations

Australian partner organisations (APOs) are 'Australian-based organisations that provide financial resources, technical expertise, professional networks, research, or other forms of support, either directly or indirectly, to specific volunteer assignments or the program generally.'[95] The evaluation found between one-quarter (25 per cent) and one-third (33 per cent) of host organisations are working with an APO.[96] These connections appear to develop spontaneously and there no clear trends in the types of organisations that have APOs. The host organisation survey found slightly more Cambodian host organisations had an APO (39 per cent of host organisations surveyed), and slightly fewer government host organisations across countries had an APO (22 per cent of host organisations surveyed).

In the returned volunteer survey, 62 per cent of volunteers with an APO agreed they received valuable guidance and 52 per cent agreed that their host organisations received valuable guidance from their APO. The ORIMA survey reports that at least one volunteer felt their APO wrote their assignment description and, in line with the discussion above, commented that 'orientation for host organisations would be good, making clearer some of the responsibilities and opportunities which a volunteer can offer'.[97]

In the survey of host organisations, more than half (57 per cent) who had an APO rated themselves as 'very satisfied' with the APO; none provided a score suggesting they were dissatisfied.[98] Some host organisations wrote comments on the host organisation survey about their APO. On the positive side, some host organisations received strategic planning and staff development support and, in some cases, a source of volunteers. Some host organisations said their APO provided financial assistance or helped them find donors. More ambivalent (but not dissatisfied) host organisations felt their APO was in name only, did not provide much funding or assistance, and seemed motivated more by the benefit of being associated with the host organisation than providing assistance.

Box 3 gives an example of the benefits of a long-standing APO relationship with a Cambodian organisation.

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95 AusAID, *AVID program: shared standard 6*, AusAID, Canberra, 2012.

96 AusAID's survey of returned volunteers (conducted by ORIMA Research) shows that 25 per cent of host organisations had a partner organisation in Australia. The host organisation survey shows 33 per cent of host organisations had a partner organisation in Australia. Host organisation interviews (in the Solomon Islands, Cambodia and Vietnam) show that 33 per cent of host organisations had a partner organisation in Australia.

97 The survey included AGVP and AVID volunteers, AusAID, *Survey of returned volunteers*, 44.

98 Host organisation survey (n = 93); response rate 47 per cent.

Box 3 Long-term relationship between the Cambodian Arbitration Council Foundation and its Australian partner organisation

The Cambodian Arbitration Council Foundation (ACF) is an independent national institution that was established in 2003. Its main role is to support resolution of labour disputes, and it has played a significant role in the ongoing push for good governance and strengthening the rule of law in Cambodia. It is currently funded by the Demand for Good Governance Project, a joint initiative of the World Bank and donor countries, including Australia. This project focuses on ensuring more equitable access to a legal system that is more responsive and more accountable.

ACF has a long history with Australia and the Australian volunteering program, which began when former Fair Work Australia (FWA) Commissioner, Michael Gay, took a short-term assignment with the organisation through Australian Business Volunteers in 2004. Australian volunteers have given the ACF access to technical expertise and perspectives not available in Cambodia. Over the years, a range of Australian volunteers—many of whom are employees of FWA or its associated agencies—have worked with the ACF to bring its systems and processes up to international standards.

Australian volunteers helped the ACF design and implement a case registry system so that they can track all cases and associated files. They also worked with ACF staff to develop a legal bench book, which judges use to guide their legal procedures when hearing a case. FWA uses both tools.

Cambodia is a country of young people and the ACF has a relatively young staff. Apart from their expertise in law and justice, Australian volunteers bring unique perspectives and are personal and professional role models for the ACF staff. Many of the previous Australian volunteers are still connected to ACF; one of the ACF's senior legal officers is an Australian-born Cambodian woman who first came to ACF as a Volunteer for International Development Australia.

As the organisation's internal systems and processes strengthen, their productivity and success is also increasing. In 2011, the ACF took on its highest ever case load, and experienced the lowest number of worker strikes, suggesting that their labour dispute mechanisms are effective. Their success rate is now 73 per cent. The ACF is now in a position to share its knowledge with others: the organisation recognises that lack of knowledge of labour laws is a key obstacle to good industrial relations, and delivers a schedule of training workshops to a wide range of stakeholders: trainee lawyers; judges and prosecutors; employee and employer representatives; conciliators, inspectors and labour officers in the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training; and union representatives.

ACF views volunteering as a medium-term strategy to build its capacity, and plans to transition away from volunteer support as their internal capacity grows. It is currently developing a sustainability plan to ensure that it can meet its mandate without relying on donor support.

Source: Interviews with the volunteer and host organisation.

Research conducted by Austraining International[99] claims that APOs:

- leverage networks of organisations to source new host organisations
- help host organisations develop more strategic assignments
- widen the net of potential volunteer applicants (increasing the percentage of assignments that are filled)

[99] Austraining International, *Partnerships and volunteering*, provided by Austraining to the evaluation, undated.

- provide mentoring support to volunteers
- provide financial support to host organisations (amounts unreported) or the program (at an average of around $100 per assignment)
- provide domestic public diplomacy benefits by promoting the program at APO events.

As discussed above (see *Host organisation satisfaction*), some host organisations were dissatisfied with the AVID program requirements that mean they cannot recruit a particular volunteer to work with, as all positions must be advertised. Some core partner staff suggested this might also lead to less engagement between host organisations and their APOs. There is too little data to support this claim; however, Austraining data showthat the total contributions made by APOs reduced by 41 per cent after the change from AGVP to AVID.[100]

There were two significant differences between host organisations with and without an APO in our survey of host organisations. Those with an APO were much more likely to say they had a long-term strategy for the use of volunteers in their organisation (55 per cent compared with 35 per cent strongly agreed)[101] and that their organisation was asked to choose their most recent volunteer (68 per cent compared with 54 per cent strongly agreed).[102] However, having an APO was not significantly associated with host organisation satisfaction.

4.2 Opportunities to improve impact on host organisation capacity development

Viewing AVID as a resource to meet bilateral aid objectives

As discussed previously, volunteers can be a cost-effective source of technical advice and capacity development assistance. However, AusAID's current strategy of centralising management of AVID to the AusAID Volunteers Section in Canberra and focusing on achieving an annual volunteer commitment does not maximise the contribution volunteers could make to capacity development. In the case study countries, AusAID Post involvement was limited to the annual process of approving host organisations put forward by core partners. Some Posts have more capacity to be actively involved in AVID's operation. This is already evident in the most recent annual program performance reports (2011), where the three case study countries documented different emphases on the volunteering program (see Chapter 2 for a discussion of the need for greater Post involvement with the AVID program).

As one host organisation capacity development tool, there is potential for the volunteering program to be more tightly integrated with other capacity development tools, such as the scholarships and fellowships programs. There was a shift evident among senior AusAID staff in some of the case study countries towards viewing the program as one resource—in addition to other program and technical assistance—to achieve bilateral aid objectives. This evaluation encourages that shift.

Using long-term capacity development plans for host organisations

The evaluation confirmed the validity of the statement in the AVID design document that building host organisation capacity, and developing and then sustaining it are long-term propositions that are difficult to achieve with individual host organisations in single assignments rather than through a series of

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[100] Austraining International, *Partnerships and volunteering*
[101] Cohen's $d = 0.63$, $P < 0.05$
[102] Cohen's $d = 0.44$, $P < 0.05$

volunteers.[103] Despite AVID's objective to contributing to capacity development,[104] there are few examples from the case study countries to suggest that the program has focused on developing long-term strategies for host organisations. In fact, AVID annual statistics reveal that 47 per cent of all host organisations in 2011–12 were hosting a volunteer for the first time.[105] Box 4 documents an example of volunteers being used over an extended timeframe to achieve host organisation capacity development.

Box 4 Long-term use of volunteers by the Solomon Islands National Pharmacological Services, Ministry of Health and Medical Services

A large number of Australian volunteers have filled roles in the Solomon Islands National Pharmacological Services at the Ministry of Health and Medical Services since 2002, including in the regulatory office, pharmacy stores and clinical services. The service, however, has become highly independent in recent years, with a local staff member effectively taking over the role of chief pharmacist. Effective work practices have also been put in place to ensure efficient stock and distribution of medicine in the Solomon Islands.

An important factor in this development was the effective use of Australian volunteers in conjunction with Commonwealth scholarships. Australian Volunteers International (AVI) Solomon Islands developed a strong relationship with the service and established development goals to guide the progress of the service towards independence.

In 2007, an employee of the service was awarded a Solomon Islands Government Scholarship to complete her Bachelor of Pharmacy in Australia, with the understanding that she would take the role of chief pharmacist when she completed her education. In 2008, the AVI in-country manager used the resources of experienced volunteers working in the service to review the organisation's management and the human resources that would help it develop during the time the employee was studying and after she returned. AVI then developed a plan or development continuum that would help sequence the roles of Australian volunteers working with them.

Due to the difficulty in ensuring that volunteers with specific skills would be available at certain times, it was not possible for the plan to offer an exact sequence of volunteers. Instead, AVI set up a general plan that was reviewed towards the end of each volunteer's assignment, using the end-of-assignment report framework, based on assessed current needs and availability of volunteers. Jennifer Wiggins from AVI explained that strong support from the Ministry of Health was important because it allowed them to coordinate the funding of new permanent roles for local staff that replaced volunteers.

During the time the employee was studying in Australia, volunteers commonly filled important supervisory and clinical roles and helped to instil best-practice principles. Since the employee's return and commencement of work as chief pharmacist, Australian volunteers have not been needed in such roles and have taken up more training-focused roles. Volunteers reported that most of the effective practices are still in use and the employee has noted that the development of the service has helped substantially to increase its capacity; the service now holds 92 per cent of required medicine and uses a proper stock control and distribution system.

Source: Interviews with the volunteer and host organisation.

103 AusAID, in collaboration with Austraining International, Australian Red Cross and Australian Volunteers International, Section 2.5

104 AusAID Partnership Agreement with Core Partners (amendment number 1), Partnership Principles, Clause 2.1

105 Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program statistics 2011–12, provided by AusAID Volunteers Section

A draft framework has been developed and proposed for AVID (Figure 7) to inform discussion about the future direction of the program and to achieve the objective stated in the design document relating to a sequence of volunteers and sustainable capacity development.[106] This includes how a host organisation's long-term plans for capacity development may sequence different types of volunteers for different durations in an organisation. The framework is based on the findings of the literature review around capacity development and the factors supporting or limiting success identified by volunteers, host organisations and in-country partners. The framework recognises that capacity development is not linear—there will be occasions where a host organisation's capacity is reduced because of internal weaknesses (e.g. skilled staff leaving) or external threats (e.g. legislative reform changing the organisation's operating context). It also recognises that the assistance must have an ultimate goal whereby the organisation no longer requires volunteers. As one host organisation said, 'if you don't have an exit strategy you're not doing development, you're doing welfare'.

The framework recognises that it would be impractical to shift the entire program away from the flexibility and relatively low administrative effort required of one-off assignments; the framework accommodates the current 'one-off' as well as future 'strategic' assignments derived from a host organisation's long-term plans for capacity development.

The framework (Figure 7) describes four distinct stages to provide host organisations with capacity that can be sustained and developed:

1. Increasing the *capacity* of an organisation to deliver its core functions by enhancing staff skills through team-based approaches while leveraging the presence of a foreigner to increase the profile of an organisation. This may mean a period where the volunteer is 'doing for' their organisations (such as assisting with funding proposals) but also developing relationships and trust to support host organisations' engagement with the capacity development objectives of the program while 'doing with' the organisation to ensure knowledge and skills transfer.
2. Increasing the *sustainability* of that capacity by developing a team of dedicated and skilled staff who can agree on consistent policies and procedures so the organisation can achieve its core objectives. This may involve the volunteer in a counterpart 'doing with' or mentoring role.
3. Increasing the *capacity development* processes within an organisation—including through clarifying objectives and developing abilities to reflect, research, plan and access networks to ensure that long-term benefits are not limited to what the volunteer brought to the organisation, but what the organisation was able to generate itself as a result of hosting a volunteer.
4. Graduating the host organisation and recruiting new host organisations to spread the benefit to more organisations. Graduated organisations may continue to receive limited support from short-term, highly experienced volunteers acting as consultants or mentors. Organisations may revert to lower stages of capacity over time and may need to re-enter the program at a lower stage of development.

The World Bank's concept of 'intermediate capacity outcomes'[107] provides some guidance about moving from stage one to stage four by suggesting the following six capacity outcomes for volunteers to work towards:

› raised awareness by agents of organisational change of the need for change

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106 AusAID, in collaboration with Austraining International, Australian Red Cross and Australian Volunteers International, Sections 2.5, 2.10 and 7.13–7.16

107 World Bank Institute

- enhanced knowledge or skills of agents of organisational change
- improved consensus and teamwork within a functional unit
- strengthened coalitions between functional units in the organisation
- enhanced networks to collaborate outside the organisation
- new implementation know-how arising from a strengthened disposition or ability to act, such as with development and implementation of policies and procedures.

Figure 7 Suggested framework for one-off and strategic assignments

ONE-OFF ASSIGNMENTS		Less-experienced AVIDs → More-experienced AVIDs		
		Short or long term	Long term	Short term
Host organisation needs	Simple need for capacity development	Not applicable	Not applicable	Consult
	Does not need capacity that is sustained and developed (e.g. multilateral organisation)	Do for Volunteer professional development	Do with Volunteer professional development	Not applicable

STRATEGIC LONG-TERM APPROACHES—sequencing different volunteers in different roles depending on the stage of capacity development of the host organisation		Less-experienced AVIDs Short term	→	More-experienced AVIDs Long term	More-experienced AVIDs Short term
Duration of relationship with host organisation ↓	Stage 1 New host organisation needs capacity	Do for Shared with other host organisations	Not applicable	Not applicable	Consult Prepare for longer-term volunteer
	Stage 2 Host organisation demonstrates intention and ability to sustain new capacity once volunteer leaves	Not applicable	Do with	Mentor	Not applicable
	Stage 3 Host organisation has capacity that has been sustained but not yet developed from within	Not applicable	Not applicable	Mentor	Consult
	Stage 4 Host organisation 'graduated' with capacity that has been sustained, and further developed from within, but needs a 'top up' due to new staff, new role or new context. This may mean a return to Stage 1 or 2. Graduated host organisations may continue to participate in host organisation networks or benefit from other forms of capacity development assistance, such as the scholarships program.				

4.3 Conclusion

The evaluation found that host organisations value the AVID program because it provides skilled volunteers who contribute immediate capacity and improve the organisation's profile. Volunteers also transfer skills and knowledge to the host organisation, but there is mixed evidence about whether this capacity can be sustained or developed further once the volunteer leaves, particularly if the volunteer has only worked with one counterpart within the host organisation who subsequently leaves. The transfer of knowledge and skills to individuals appears strong but the most effective role a volunteer can play is as a mentor to a group of staff.

Volunteer efforts that lead to host organisations standing on their own, accessing networks and developing their own capacity to address future challenges—the final stage of a capacity development program—has received relatively little attention in the international volunteering literature or the AVID program design. The AVID program should refocus its attention to developing the capacity of host organisations over the longer term. This will require a shift towards developing long-term strategies for sequencing volunteers in host organisations that are sensitive to the organisation's current stage of capacity development and the role the volunteer will play. One assignment does not allow for enough sustained assistance for an organisation to generate its own capacity. To do so may require careful sequencing of volunteers over time: carefully selecting volunteers with the necessary skills and attitudes to play the right roles within host organisations, sensitive to the organisation's current stage of capacity development.

Focusing on the volunteer's role within the host organisation rather than just an assignment position description is a more realistic approach to capacity development. The default position may be that playing the role of counterpart is both feasible and desirable, but other approaches such as a team mentor should be considered where appropriate. Having long-term plans should clarify the most appropriate capacity development approach.

Having a pre-defined role may reduce unproductive time spent by volunteers and host organisations as they try to work out where the volunteer fits into the organisation. In some cases, time is also wasted because the assignment description is no longer valid. Ensuring volunteers have a role in the organisation may support host organisations to make better use of their volunteers when the assignment is no longer valid. Further, this approach—shifting from a task orientation to a role—aligns more closely with the competency-based approach to recruitment favoured by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.[108] Assignment descriptions, although still useful for recruitment purposes and for providing the volunteer with tangible tasks to attend to at their host organisation, should be formally re-scoped when the volunteer arrives.

The evaluation also suggests that a greater attention to the role of APOs and developing supportive networks of host organisations and volunteers presents an opportunity to promote mutual self-help, so that individuals and organisations can develop capacity without reliance on the volunteer program.

Effective capacity development plans must work towards an agreed exit point, where the host organisation no longer requires volunteers. Volunteer assignments should balance the immediate and short-term needs of the host organisation with their long-term capacity development needs. A longer-term focus will also build volunteer satisfaction and professional development,[109] and support a more strategic use of the volunteer program to generate greater bilateral aid and ultimately public diplomacy objectives both in Australia and overseas.

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108 OECD, *Public servants as partners for growth towards a stronger, leaner and more equitable workforce,* OECD Publishing, 2011.

109 United Kingdom Department for International Development

Long-term strategies could also include integration with other capacity development programs (such as scholarship and fellowships) that are used to achieve country strategies. The program may also require greater attention to volunteers learning the language of their host country to increase effectiveness.

The evaluation suggests that the AVID program focus on more strategic, long-term capacity development work with selected host organisations working in areas of strategic importance. It would be important that core partners and AusAID Posts have the capacity to support this focus. This would include the ability to develop and monitor long-term plans with host organisations and make agreements about access to future volunteers or other capacity development tools. If successful, the approach should be gradually implemented to ensure resourcing issues and any unintended consequences are understood. AusAID may wish to set an aspirational target for the percentage of assignments that are required as part of host organisation's long-term capacity development plan. There will also be implications for monitoring and evaluating progress against these plans, as discussed in Chapter 6.

Ideally, most volunteer assignments should contribute to a host organisation's long-term capacity development plan. This plan should balance the immediate and short-term needs of the host organisation with their long-term capacity development needs. The ultimate aim of long-term capacity development in this context should be to assist host organisations to become independent of the AVID program, which would enable the program to shift volunteer support to new host organisations. It should be noted that assignments will have varied requirements for capacity building. A specific assignment might be at the lower end of providing direct capacity, but, over time, subsequent assignments would be expected to have more focus on organisational capacity building.

Volunteer assignment should not assume that the role of counterpart is the most appropriate to the long-term capacity development needs of an organisation. Host organisations exist in very different operating contexts and are at different stages of capacity development. Although a counterpart may be effective in some circumstances, there are substantial risks. Other approaches, such as a team mentor, should be considered where appropriate. Having long-term plans should clarify the most appropriate capacity development approach.

Recommendation 5

DFAT should refocus the AVID program on developing the long- term capacity of host organisations by:

- developing and implementing long-term (three-year) capacity development plans with selected host organisations that focus on providing a sequence of volunteers for varied lengths of time
- retaining 'one-off placements' with host organisations, where appropriate, to maintain the flexibility of the program
- ensuring volunteers have an assignment and a role in the organisation that will support the long-term plan for the host organisation
- broadening the approach to capacity development in volunteering beyond the counterpart model (e.g. mentoring a team) by developing and implementing guidelines on different approaches to capacity development.

5 Volunteering and public diplomacy

In addition to its objectives for volunteer personal and professional development and host organisation capacity development, the premise of the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program is that sending adequately skilled volunteers will shape the perceptions of individuals and groups in other countries in ways that promote Australia's foreign policy goals.[110] Volunteering is also valued as a vehicle for generating positive opinion toward, and better understanding of, the Australian Government's foreign policy agenda at home.[111] The potential impact of AVID on both overseas and domestic audiences in this regard is articulated in the *AVID marketing communications plan* (2012–13).[112]

This chapter assesses the value of AVID and returned volunteers as vehicles of domestic and foreign diplomacy. It discusses the role that AVID and returned volunteers play in raising awareness about development issues and promoting the importance of aid to address global poverty to the Australian community. It examines how AVID and volunteering is portrayed in the Australian media and how host organisation perceptions of the volunteer may contribute to their communities' attitude toward the Australian Government. It also assesses the role that returned volunteers play in shaping the perceptions of individuals and groups in other countries in ways that promote Australia's foreign policy goals.

5.1 Raising awareness of and support for aid and development issues in Australia

Aid donors typically value volunteering as a means of developing broader and deeper understanding of and support for international development among domestic audiences. Volunteers themselves are potentially a powerful communication tool, and volunteering is an accessible way to communicate with Australians about complex policies and issues.

Volunteers' support for aid and their influence on family and friends

The experience that volunteers gain overseas can change their own understanding of the role aid plays in addressing poverty in developing countries, and returned volunteers may share their new understanding with their family, friends and communities. There is strong evidence that AVID contributes to volunteers' understanding: in AusAID's recent survey almost all (95 per cent) returned volunteers said that their

110 Australian Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Australia's public diplomacy: building our image,* Senate Printing Unit, Canberra, 2007.

111 M Conley Tyler, A Abbasov, N Gibson and F Teo F, *Domestic public policy discussion paper: international experience,* Australian Institute of International Affairs, Canberra, 2012.

112 AusAID's 2012–13 marketing communications plan specifies three objectives for external audiences: increasing awareness and understanding across Australia about the impact of international volunteering, promoting opportunities to participate in AVID to assist with recruitment, and increasing awareness and understanding of the AVID program among international audiences, especially to potential and current host organisations. AusAID, *AVID 2012–13 marketing communications plan*.

assignment increased their knowledge of aid and development issues, and almost all (97 per cent) agreed it improved their understanding of other cultures.[113]

Sometimes, volunteering reduces support for overseas aid as a means for poverty reduction. Just over one-quarter (26 per cent) of returned volunteers felt their assignment had either not changed their knowledge about overseas aid as a means of poverty reduction or had decreased their support for providing overseas aid.[114] Approximately 8 per cent of volunteers who completed the ORIMA returned volunteers survey reported that their assignment decreased their support for overseas aid. The only demographic or regional factor associated with reduced support for overseas aid was age: volunteers aged 30 to 34 years made up 18 per cent of the sample, and 29 per cent of this cohort reported decreased support for overseas aid. This negative and unintended outcome of volunteering is also cited in the literature.[115] A small number of volunteers interviewed in the three case study countries provided some insight about their reduced support for overseas aid; these volunteers were dissatisfied because of the inefficiencies, poor work ethic or corruption that they witnessed.

The returned volunteers' survey showed that most (87 per cent) volunteers' family and friends now know more about development, but there is less evidence about the impact of volunteering on the way the wider Australian community thinks about development issues and foreign aid.[116] Community attitudes to the Australian aid program were last measured in 2009, and the survey did not include specific questions about volunteering. The survey showed that most Australians (82 per cent) approve of giving aid, and that most (82 per cent) agree it contributes to public diplomacy by maintaining and building relationships with neighbouring countries. Most Australians (85 per cent) also agree that aid generates respect for Australia overseas. However, contradictions in the data suggest that Australians have a limited understanding about the overseas aid program. For example, although most Australians (88 per cent) say they know aid is a long-term proposition, more than half (57 per cent) say that aid should be limited to emergency assistance.[117]

Reaching the Australian community

Research from Canada suggests that showcasing the experiences of returned volunteers or individuals from overseas through the media is an effective strategy to build domestic public support for volunteering.[118] AusAID uses a number of mechanisms to extend the reach of volunteers' experiences beyond their immediate friends and family. It holds public 'volunteer story events' in some capital cities and regional centres, which include presentations from recently returned volunteers and video footage of volunteers in the field. These events, including video footage, are later available on AVID's web portal. AusAID and the core partners hold well-publicised information and recruitment sessions in all capital cities and some regional centres. These are aimed at people interested in volunteering, but also contribute to public awareness about AVID and international volunteering. In 2012–13, AusAID and the core partners are focusing on recruitment in regional areas and are planning to hold selected Australian Youth

113 AusAID, *Survey of returned volunteers*
114 AusAID, *Survey of returned volunteers*
115 United Kingdom Department for International Development
116 AusAID, *Survey of returned volunteers*
117 Instinct and Reason, *Community attitudes study—topline report*, prepared for AusAID, June 2009, J1108, 2009.
118 Canadian International Development Agency

Ambassadors for Development (AYAD) pre-departure briefings—which generate substantial media interest—outside major cities.[119]

Representation of AVID in the Australian media

To explore how AVID is portrayed in the Australian media, the evaluation analysed the content and coverage of all Australian news media articles published between May 2011 and December 2012 that related to AVID. The portrayal of AVID in the Australian news is overwhelmingly positive. Only one of the 104 unique articles had a negative focus on volunteering, which was directed at 'volun-tourism', not AVID (the article went on to endorse AVID as a sustainable method of volunteering). More than half (56 per cent) of articles expressed a positive attitude towards sending volunteers for international development. Many included quotes from volunteers, explaining the benefits of volunteering:

> It felt good to be making a difference and doing something meaningful for international development (*Penrith Press*, 2012)

> Volunteering is an essential and incredible thing for people to do. It is a feeling you cannot find in a professional job. (*The Weekly Times*, 2011)

It was common for articles to mention a specific volunteer stream, but not the Australian Government (40 per cent). Of the articles dealing with a specific volunteer stream, AYAD was the most commonly mentioned. More articles about the AYAD stream were positive (71 per cent positive) than articles describing the program generally (56 per cent positive).

Building the program's social media presence

An AVID website portal was developed to provide information about volunteering through a single web-based entry point.[120] The AusAID Volunteers Section has an interactive electronic presence, which includes social media, and aims to promote AVID volunteering and publicise the work of its volunteers. Its main tools are the *AusAID Engage* blog[121] and the AusAID twitter account.[122]

The web portal is a potentially powerful tool of public diplomacy, which is currently being upgraded to integrate with AusAID's social media tools, including the AusAID websites, *Engage* blog, Twitter and YouTube channels. Analysis of AusAID's current social media presence indicates it has relatively little impact. Tweets about volunteering constitute only 2 per cent of AusAID's Twitter account activity, and only two tweets included specific references to AVID.[123] Both AusAID's Twitter account and blog could be further analysed and monitored to measure their impact.

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119 AusAID, *AVID 2012–13 marketing communications plan*

120 http://ausaidvolunteers.gov.au

121 http://ausaid.govspace.au

122 @AusAID

123 Of 801 tweets by @AusAID between April 2010 and March 2013, only 18 (2.2 per cent) included the word volunteer (or a derivate of the word), and only two specifically mentioned AVID. None of the tweets referred to specific volunteer streams or core partners.

5.2 Building a positive perception of Australia

Volunteering programs stand out as a mechanism of international diplomacy because of their focus on building ties with—and promoting the donor country to—people and governments in recipient countries.[124] The *Australia in the Asian century* white paper noted that 'Australians living abroad have great potential as unofficial ambassadors and, when back in Australia they bring knowledge that enriches society as a whole.'[125] Almost every stakeholder who participated in the evaluation agreed that volunteers make a positive contribution to international development, and see this objective as underpinning the program's public diplomacy objectives. In the three case study countries, AusAID and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade staff at the highest levels (ambassadors and high commissioners) support the AVID program and agreed that volunteers contribute substantially to foreign diplomacy.

Program branding

One of the key criticisms of the previous volunteer program (Australian Government Volunteer Program) was its fragmentation, which was seen as diluting its brand power.[126] By integrating the volunteering streams under a single brand, AusAID wanted to streamline the program's operation and lay the foundation to promote a single brand of volunteering to domestic and foreign audiences. To ensure uniformity, AusAID maintains tight control over how the program is promoted and must approve all core partners' communication with the media. Core partners' obligations for communication and public accountability are laid out in agreed standards, which include direction on how the AVID logo can be used. Core partners support this approach, and were satisfied with the timeliness of AusAID's approval of communications materials.[127]

Evidence across all evaluation sources in the case study countries show that AVID is not well known and that the Australian Government and AusAID are often not associated with it. The Australian Government was cited in fewer than half (47 per cent) of all articles nationwide and one-third (33 per cent) of articles in local or regional newspapers in 2011–12, and only one-fifth (22 per cent) said the Australian Government funds the program. Similarly, only one-fifth (18 per cent) cited AusAID's role in the program. It was most common for articles to mention a specific volunteer stream. A very small proportion of articles (7 per cent) mentioned a government resource, such as the AusAID website.

Some interviewees in the case study countries, including host organisations, volunteers,[128] core partner representatives and AusAID staff thought that AVID brand awareness would improve over time, whereas others were concerned it would not. Some of those who were concerned said the brand is weak because it is both an umbrella term (describing the overall volunteer program) and a specific term (describing the non-AYAD stream). Others said the name is confusing because its abbreviation (AVID) is similar to the abbreviations of individual core partners (e.g. Australian Volunteers International—AVI or Australian Training International—AI) and program streams (e.g. AYAD).

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124 R Bhandri and R Belyavina, *Evaluating and measuring the impact of citizen diplomacy: current status and future directions,* Institute of International Education, New York, 2010.

125 Australian Government:,258.

126 Kwitko and McDonald

127 The only negative feedback the evaluation team heard was from a small number of volunteers who were refused permission to speak on local radio shows during their assignment.

128 A small number of volunteers in marketing and communications positions commented from their professional perspective on the way AVID is branded.

Once the program design and objectives are confirmed, AusAID should engage a branding expert to advise on strengthening the AVID brand, including the most effective way of marketing the program to different stakeholder groups so the program continues to attract a range of skilled volunteers across age groups.

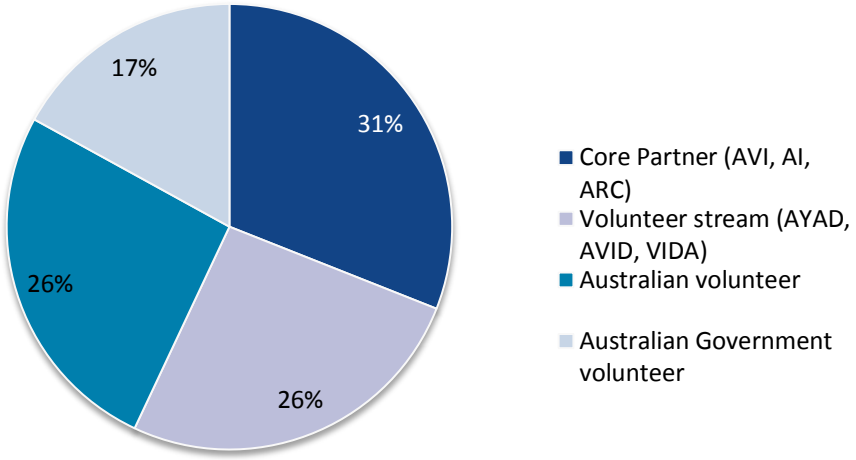
Recommendation 6

DFAT and core partners should seek expert advice and work together to market and promote the single AVID program.

Impact on host organisation perceptions of Australia

To be an effective tool of Australian public diplomacy, volunteers need to be recognised as Australian. Most host organisations in the case study countries recognise AVID as being funded by the Australian Government. When asked to describe where their volunteer comes from, many (43 per cent) host organisations said 'Australia' (26 per cent) or the 'Australian Government' (17 per cent) (Figure 8).[129] However, host organisations are confused about the AVID brand. Almost one-third (31 per cent) identify their volunteer by a core partner brand and one-quarter (26 per cent) identify them by a volunteering stream. Almost half (47 per cent) of the latter group knew their volunteer was an AYAD. It was also common for host organisations to say they were hosting a Volunteering for International Development from Australia volunteer, even though this stream is no longer operating. All these patterns reflect that organisations and volunteer stream have a longer history than the AVID brand and program.

Figure 8 How host organisations identify their volunteer or describe them to others



AI = Austraining International; ARC = Australian Red Cross; AVI= Australian Volunteers International; AVID = Australian Volunteers for International Development; AYAD = Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYAD); VIDA = Volunteering for International Development from Australia

129 Host organisations were asked, 'How do you describe where your volunteer comes from when talking to other people about their work?' The following prompts were used: 'Who sent them?', 'Are they Australian Volunteers, an AVI volunteer, Australians or something else?' Proportions were calculated using 55 matched volunteer – host organisation interviews done in Cambodia, Vietnam and the Solomon Islands. The calculations are made using their first response.

Source: Host organisation interviews (*n* = 55; missing data, *n* = 15)Building people-to-people linkages

In AusAID's recent survey, host organisations in the case study countries described their Australian volunteers very positively, and returned volunteers describe the positive relationships they built within their host organisations.[130] These evaluation findings suggest that AVID is building Australia's profile overseas. Most returned volunteers (90 per cent) felt they had a good relationship with their colleagues and with people in the local community (89 per cent). The available evidence indicates ongoing relationships between volunteers and host organisations vary in strength and sustainability. Two-thirds (68 per cent) of returned volunteers said they remain in contact with their host organisation or a member of the community; slightly more host organisations agreed (73 per cent) that they continue to hear from their volunteer. More than half (58 per cent) of the returned volunteers said they provide ongoing financial assistance to their host organisation, and almost one-fifth (18 per cent) said they provide regular ongoing support to their host organisation. Regular surveys of returned volunteers will contribute to better understanding about the sustainability of person-to-person linkages.

5.3 Conclusion

Foreign diplomacy objectives can be affected by the attitudes of host communities to their volunteer and recognition of who was responsible for providing the volunteer. Although host organisations are generally very satisfied with their volunteers (see Chapters 3 and 4), the AVID brand is poorly understood and the Australian Government and AusAID are often not associated with it. Host organisations recognise individual volunteer streams or core partners more than they do AVID.

AVID volunteers influence domestic policy through their attitudes expressed to family and friends and through media portrayal of volunteering. These are mostly positive. The potential for some volunteers to return with a negative view about international aid underlines the importance of ensuring that volunteers are placed in organisations that have some capacity to benefit from hosting a volunteer. In Australia, although the media is positive, more than half of the print media articles fail to cite the Australian Government or AusAID as the source of funding. This may be a lost opportunity for promoting Australia's positive aid efforts.

Reviews of international volunteer programs show that failure to have a strategy for engaging domestic audiences is a lost opportunity for domestic public diplomacy. These also highlight how important it is to understand what domestic audiences think about volunteering and international aid and how returned volunteers may be most useful, before developing a strategy to leverage the volunteer program for domestic public diplomacy benefit. There has been no in-depth consideration of the contribution Australian volunteers make to domestic or foreign public diplomacy objectives. This was a focus of criticism by the 2007 review of Australia's public diplomacy by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, which commented there was no coordinated way of capturing the benefits of the AYAD program, or communicating those to the Australian public.[131] Similarly, the committee noted its concern about the 'lack of methodological and long-term research into attitudes toward Australia by countries that are of significance to Australia.'[132]

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130 AusAID, *Survey of returned volunteers*

131 Australian Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

132 Australian Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

To improve understanding about volunteers' contribution to domestic or foreign diplomacy objectives, AusAID's community attitudes research should include questions about volunteering as an aid modality. AusAID should continue to monitor volunteer and host organisation perceptions about the strength and sustainability of person-to-person linkages developed during assignments.

6 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) is described in *Reporting, monitoring and evaluation shared standard* and *Program monitoring and evaluation plan.* The purpose of these documents is to 'enable AusAID and the core partners to consistently and accurately monitor and evaluate the contribution by volunteers towards enhancing the capacity of host organisations and development outcomes'.[133] They require core partners to collect data to support the ongoing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the program.

This chapter presents the evaluation findings on the extent to which the standard and plan have been implemented. It assesses core partners' current M&E activities. The key sources of evidence are interviews with people involved in developing and implementing the M&E activities, including AusAID Posts, in-country managers and host organisations, as well as the quality and availability of information required by the *Program monitoring and evaluation plan*.

6.1 Program requirements for monitoring and evaluation

AusAID and core partner representatives in Australia and at Posts agreed that the *Reporting, monitoring and evaluation shared standard* includes appropriate methods for monitoring and evaluating AVID. In the AVID design document, a distinction is made between M&E at the impact or program level (i.e. AVID as a whole), and M&E at the implementation level (i.e. the operation of AVID in a country or region).[134] The standard identifies three levels at which the 'M&E plan will monitor and evaluate AVID':

- evaluation of individual assignments
- evaluation of host organisations' capacity development against three-year plans
- evaluation of the contribution that volunteers make to development outcomes.

What is lacking in these documents is a clearly integrated approach that is feasible to implement. The evaluation found none of these levels of M&E are being completely implemented. Key data sources are unreliable or do not exist. Although the evaluation is limited to three case study countries, interviews with AusAID and core partner program staff in Australia suggest this reflects the experience in most countries where AVID operates. Monitoring activity in the case study countries is focused on risk management and volunteer welfare. Evaluation in the case study countries is not systematically conducted. Evaluation is largely restricted to in-country managers' review of quarterly or end-of-assignment reports, with the purpose of informing their decision to send more volunteers to an individual host organisation. None of the in-country managers included in the evaluation were aware of what happened to end-of-assignment

133 AusAID, *AVID program shared standard 2: reporting, monitoring and evaluation,* AusAID, Canberra, 2012.

134 AusAID, in collaboration with Austraining International, Australian Red Cross and Australian Volunteers International, Sections 6.6 and 6.8

reports submitted to their Australian head office. In isolated instances, core partners produced special reports drawing on end-of-assignment reports; however, there is no evidence that these reports were used as a tool to monitor or evaluate the implementation of the program systematically, or to provide input into regional or country planning activities.

AVID would benefit from greater clarity on the separate but complementary purposes of monitoring and evaluation (see Box 5), and their use for both accountability and learning. As authors of a recent discussion paper identify:

> The government-sponsored Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, and Civil Service Organisation responses to the agreement, highlight the challenge, which consists in striking a meaningful balance between two legitimate expectations: honest and useful learning [emphasis added] from ongoing work, and accounting [emphasis added] for both resources and results to donors and, importantly, to the intended beneficiaries of development.[135]

Box 5 Summary of the purposes of monitoring and evaluation

The purpose of monitoring is often to provide a readily accessible means of tracking performance and identifying issues for further investigation. It may involve collecting qualitative and quantitative data across projects or organisations. Monitoring can be useful for *accountability* to funders by ensuring standardised data are collected by service providers to allow performance measures to be constructed, data aggregated and comparisons made between organisations providing similar services or trends over time. Monitoring can be useful for *learning* by providing service provider managers with a relatively simple means of tracking inputs, outputs and, to an extent, outcomes over time.

Evaluation often helps build understanding of how and if an intervention works and for whom. It is often used to inform decisions to modify the design of an intervention and provide those delivering the information to maximise benefits. Evaluation is often more in depth than monitoring and accordingly is not always conducted in an ongoing manner—although some approaches such as developmental evaluation includes a continuous cycle of asking questions, collecting data, learning, making changes and addressing new questions.[136] Evaluation often draws on monitoring data to identify issues requiring further investigation or as a data source to help understand a program. Evaluation can be useful for *accountability* by identifying whether a program represents value for money and is achieving intended objectives and avoiding unintended consequences. Evaluation can be useful for *learning* about which aspects of the program are working, for whom and in what circumstances, and how to adapt the program to maximise reach and effectiveness.

More information about the many different approaches to monitoring and evaluation can be found at http://betterevaluation.org.

135 D Buckles and J Chevalier, *Assessing the impact of international volunteer cooperation: guiding questions and Canadian experiences,* a discussion paper for IVCO 2012, International Forum on Development Service, Melbourne, 2012.

136 M Quinn Patton, *Developmental evaluation: applying complexity concept to enhance innovation and use,* Guildford Press, London, 2011.

End-of-assignment reports

The key M&E method identified in *Reporting, monitoring and evaluation shared standard* is end-of-assignment reporting. These reports should be provided by both volunteers and host organisations and should include standardised data collection from every assignment. However, this does not occur.

Each core partner uses a different end-of-assignment report template. There are no common data items relating to outcomes, so monitoring and the calculation of key performance indicators (KPIs) across the program is impossible. Only half (54 per cent) of the assignments provided for the evaluation included both volunteer and host organisation reports. Typically, information from the host organisation was missing. Overall, both volunteer and host organisation contributions to the end-of-assignment reports were of poor quality; more than half (57 per cent) of the reports available to the evaluation were assessed as low or medium quality (see Appendix 2). Host organisations have limited incentives to provide high-quality reports as there are no compliance standards, no quality and performance controls, and the data reported are not used in any way. There are no systematic processes to ensure the quality of the reports, nor are they used for any purpose other than the in-country managers' information.

Collecting common quantitative data (5–10 items) about the success of each assignment would allow KPIs to be developed. These may be used to monitor the performance and inform comparisons at the program and implementation levels. The data items in these reports should reflect key outputs and outcomes intended by the program. This may include volunteer and host organisation satisfaction and the quality of volunteer contributions to developing the capacity of their host organisation. The recent returned volunteer and host organisation surveys used in the current evaluation may provide useful items to include in end-of-assignment reports.

End-of-assignment reports may also contain information useful for evaluation. Analysis of changes in KPIs may help frame evaluation questions, but additional items may be required to inform more in-depth evaluations. Table 12 identifies different ways that data from end-of-assignment reports may be used for M&E by different stakeholder groups.

Monitoring data may also be drawn from other existing sources held by AusAID or core partners to provide evidence about program performance. This may include volunteer management databases, which may contain data to monitor the number and demographic characteristics of volunteers deployed, duration between host organisation approval to host a volunteer and volunteer deployment, early returns of volunteers and incidents. It may also include development assistance codes for the organisations receiving volunteers to assess alignment of AVID with country strategies.

Table 12 End-of-assignment reports for monitoring and evaluation

Stakeholder	Approach	
	Monitoring	*Evaluation*
Partnership group	KPIs from end-of-assignment reports at the program and/or implementation levels	KPIs from end-of-assignment reports may suggest program-level issues requiring further investigation PLUS A strategic evaluation plan will guide the approach to program-level evaluations Evaluations at the implementation level may suggest issues requiring further investigation at the program level
AusAID Post	KPIs from end-of-assignment reports at the implementation level Key issues identified by in-country managers in end-of-assignment reports	KPIs and issues identified in end-of-assignment reports may suggest issues requiring further investigation PLUS Other methods, such as in-country reflection workshops, as appropriate to the evaluation questions
In-country managers	Issues raised in end-of-assignment reports PLUS Issues raised in quarterly volunteer assignment reports Methods for assessing volunteer welfare and host organisation satisfaction Progress against three-year host organisation capacity development plans	

KPI = key performance indicator

6.2 Conclusion

Despite the previous reviews of the overseas volunteer program,[137] M&E of the current AVID program at the implementation level has remained limited. The literature on other countries' volunteer programs for international development suggests that AVID is not alone in this regard.[138] The approach to AVID M&E has been poorly implemented and requires clarity on the purposes of data collection. Simple systems for data collection need to be developed that encourage use of the data. Clarity and focus is required to develop a performance monitoring system that balances the need for robust data against the burden that data collection can impose.

Monitoring needs to be streamlined, with one agreed process implemented by the three core partners. Data need to be collected and used to inform decision-making about the program at both the implementation (i.e. in a specific country or region) and program level. The *AusAID private sector development strategy* states that 'Monitoring data on a real-time basis—rather than months or even years after a program has started—can help us learn by doing and make adjustments as needed'.

AusAID's Volunteers Section should provide advice about evaluation at the implementation level and hold core partners accountable for conducting evaluation and acting on the results. Future evaluations may provide information for learning about the impact on volunteer careers, or host community attitude to Australia.

137 Kwitko and McDonald

138 Hawkins, Verstege and Flood

We understand that AusAID Volunteers Section is currently undertaking a review of the M&E framework to ensure that monitoring reports collect data of strategic importance that is reported in a meaningful way.

Recommendation 7

DFAT and core partners should develop and implement a simplified and effective performance-monitoring system for the AVID program. This should include:

- establishing minimum reporting requirements that cover host organisation and volunteer satisfaction
- agreeing on roles and responsibilities for collecting and using monitoring data
- DFAT monitoring core partner compliance with the reporting requirements and data collection
- DFAT monitoring whether core partners are using performance monitoring data (including complaints and suggestions for improvement) and evaluations to drive and implement program improvements.

Appendix 1 Key evaluation questions and sources of evidence

Evaluation summary

The evaluation found that the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program provides high-quality volunteers who make substantial contributions to developing the capacity of host organisations and their staff. Because the evaluation was focused on program improvement, the conclusions and recommendations may appear overly critical given the success of the program. Overall, the evaluation found that a shift in focus from individual volunteer assignments to long-term capacity development of host organisations is required to maximise the contribution of volunteers and better achieve objectives for all intended beneficiaries

Table A1.1 Key evaluation questions and sources of evidence

Key evaluation question		Evidence sources	Document location	Short answer
Alignment: Is there a clear and coherent strategy for using volunteers in Australia's aid program and maximising the contribution volunteers make to the program objectives?				
Q1	To what extent do the volunteer placements in host organisations align with the geographic priorities of the Australian aid program and AusAID's country program strategy?	› Volunteer assignment mapping	Ch 2	63% of 2011–12 assignments were aligned with their country strategy—28% with a priority 1 or 2 strategy.
Q2	Is the identification of volunteer placements in host organisations guided by long-term strategies for host organisations that are developed in consultation with core partners and AusAID?	› Host organisation interviews › Core partner interviews › AusAID interviews	Ch 4	No. Almost half (47%) of 2011–12 host organisations are hosting a volunteer for the first time. No evidence of commitment to host organisations beyond the current assignment. Core partners have not implemented 3-year capacity development plans.

Key evaluation question		Evidence sources	Document location	Short answer
Q3	Are AusAID staff involved in identifying and approving host organisations for volunteers and ensuring alignment with country program priorities? Are AusAID staff influencing where volunteers are placed, based on country strategies?	› Volunteer assignment mapping › AusAID interviews › Comparison with program design documents › Core partner or ICM interviews	Ch 2	AusAID participation limited to annual planning process to vet organisation proposed by in-country managers. See Q1.
Q4	Is the identification of assignments demand rather supply driven? Have risks such as the potential displacement of local workers, erosion of traditions of mutual aid and self-help, and host community dependence been considered and managed effectively?	› Host organisation interviews › Host organisation survey › Core partner or ICM interviews	Ch 2 (supply and demand) Ch 4 (risks)	Supply limited by budget for 1000 volunteers. Host organisation demands mostly met, but concern about time between applications to arrival.
Q5	What is the cost of using volunteers compared with the costs of providing technical assistance? What are the relative merits and weaknesses of using volunteers compared with other sources of technical assistance, and are these routinely considered by AusAID in determining strategies and approaches to using volunteers in the aid program?	› AusAID interviews › Literature review › Volunteer unit cost data (Nexia)	Ch 3 (volunteers vs technical assistance) Ch 2 (consideration by AusAID)	Volunteers cost approximately $5822 per month; technical assistance costs approximately $15 159 per month. Host organisations find volunteers more flexible, adaptable and approachable agents of grassroots capacity development than technical assistance.
Q6	How effective is cooperation between the different volunteer service providers and AusAID in ensuring a coordinated approach to the placement of volunteers within the AVID program?	› Core partner or ICM interviews › AusAID Post interviews	Ch 2 Ch 4 (networks required for coordination)	Volunteers mostly know other volunteers in their core partner cohort or those they accidently meet in country. No networks across core partners or attempts to connect volunteers working in similar areas for professional support.
Q7	Is the AYAD stream appropriately aligned with the AVID program?	› Returned volunteer survey › Core partner or ICM interviews › AusAID interviews › Ambassador or AusAID Post interviews	Ch 3 (age) Ch 4 (outcomes) Ch 5 (branding)	No. No evidence to support a separate AYAD stream as 40% of program. In 2011–12, AYADs were of similar age to all AVID volunteers, and achieved similar host organisation capacity development outcomes.
Policy and administration: Are the policies supporting the implementation of AVID coherent, and do they support the program to achieve its objectives?				
Q8	Are AVID's objectives clear and understood by stakeholders? Are the policy and administrative arrangements of the AVID program sound and do they support the program to achieve its objectives?	› Policy document analysis › Core partner or ICM interviews	Ch 2	Yes
Q9	Are stakeholders satisfied with the shared standards and what are the suggestions for amending them to balance the need for a common standard, with flexibility of approach that leverages the partnerships basis for managing AVID?	› Core partner or ICM interviews › AusAID Post interviews › Monitoring and evaluation standards review	Ch 2 Appendix 4	Yes

Key evaluation question		Evidence sources	Document location	Short answer
Q10	Are there clear policies and procedures explaining how volunteers should be used—individually and collectively—to develop the capacity of host organisations and contribute to development outcomes? Has appropriate consideration been given to the relative merits of different types of assignments, including their length (short or long term) and location (type and sectoral focus of host organisations) and to achieving a good overall balance in the assignments that are supported?	› Core partner or ICM interviews › Volunteer interviews	Ch 4	No. The program focus is limited to individual volunteer assignments rather than explicit strategies for host organisation capacity development through the collective impact of volunteers. Commitment to sequencing volunteers and volunteer networks are required.
Q11	Are linkages between APOs and host organisations effective and sustained over time? What has been the experience of host organisations working with APOs?	› Core partner interviews › Host organisation survey › Returned volunteer survey	Ch 4	Up to one-third have an APO. Many (57%) in the three fieldwork countries have a very positive experience with strategy development and sometimes funding—although some are dissatisfied by lack of assistance from the APO.
Q12	Do selection policies and procedures result in the recruitment of volunteers who have the skills, experience and personal attributes appropriate to their placement, in-country organisation and cultural context? Is suitable recognition given to ensuring diversity in the mix of volunteers, consistent with AusAID's policies on gender, disability inclusive development and reconciliation, and with the broader public relations objectives of the program?	› Host organisation interviews › Host organisation survey › Returned volunteer survey	Ch 3	The recruitment and preparation of volunteers is a strength of the program. The diversity does not reflect the Australian population—there are no Indigenous volunteers. No data are collected on socioeconomic status or ethnic background.
Q13	Is there a strategic and coherent approach to using the volunteers program as a resource for improving Australia's level of understanding and openness to different cultures, world views and perspectives, and public support for international development work?	› Media analysis (including AVID communications strategy) › Ambassador or AusAID Post interviews	Ch 5	The major approach to promoting the program is to recruit additional volunteers. There appears to be little engagement with the broader population. Media coverage is positive or factual but not critical of AVID.
Q14	Is there any evidence AVID will be successful in addressing the main shortcomings of the previous program, and in promoting a single brand, single program approach?	› Media analysis › Core partner or ICM interviews › Host organisation interviews	Ch 2	Consolidation into three partners with shared standards has provided more consistency but there is widespread confusion over the 'AVID' brand.
Performance management: Is the performance of AVID appropriately monitored and managed by AusAID and its service providers?				
Q15	Is there a consistent approach to monitoring and evaluation across the program that supports comparison of the performance of different types of volunteer placements and in the different sectors and regions in which volunteers are deployed?	› Monitoring and evaluation standards review › Planning and monitoring data › Core partner or ICM interviews › Host organisation interviews	Ch 6	No. Monitoring is focused on volunteer welfare and may include AusAID staff. Evaluation limited to decisions by in-country managers about sending additional volunteers to an organisation.

Key evaluation question		Evidence sources	Document location	Short answer
Q16	Is there a sound approach to monitoring and reviewing performance data to identify and address deficiencies and improve performance?	› Monitoring and evaluation standards review › Planning and monitoring data › Core partner or ICM interviews › Host organisation interviews	Ch 6	No. A key weakness of AVID is an unimplemented monitoring and evaluation plan.
Impact: What contribution do volunteers make to Australia's development efforts?				
Q17	Do volunteers contribute to the achievement of developmental outcomes at an individual, organisational and community level? To what extent have volunteers developed the capacity of host organisations? What have been the short and long-term benefits of volunteers to host organisations? Are these sustained after volunteers have completed their assignments?	› Returned volunteers survey › Host organisation survey › Host organisation interviews › Volunteer interviews › End-of-assignment report analysis	Ch 4	Outcomes at an individual level are strong. Outcomes at an organisational level are less certain given lack of focus on long-term plans for host organisation capacity development. Outcomes could often be sustained or threatened by staff turnover and/or insufficient Post assignment support.
Q18	Do volunteers contribute to improved policy and practices in international development through lessons learned and mutual exchange? Do volunteers act as catalysts for development of ongoing sustainable linkages and partnerships between organisations and communities in Australia and partner countries? To what extent have people-to-people linkages been established and maintained?	› Returned volunteers survey › Host organisation survey › Host organisation interviews › Volunteer interviews › End-of-assignment report analysis	Ch 5	Two-thirds (68%) of returned volunteers said they remain in contact with their host organisation or a member of the community; slightly more host organisations (73%) agreed they continue to hear from their volunteer.
Q19	To what extent has AVID contributed to public diplomacy efforts (promoting a positive international citizen profile and positive image of volunteerism?) Has AusAID effectively harnessed their experiences as a vehicle for explaining and promoting the importance of aid and reducing global poverty to the Australian community?	› Media analysis › Volunteers Section market research data analysis › Ambassador and AusAID Post interviews	Ch 5	See Q13.
Q20	Do volunteer assignments contribute to the personal and professional development of the different streams of AVID volunteers?	› Returned volunteer survey (AYAD component) › Volunteer interviews › End-of-assignment report analysis	Ch3	Personal development is stronger than professional development. This occurs across the AVID program. Professional development is lower for older volunteers.

APO = Australian Partner Organisation; AVID = Australian Volunteers for International Development; AYAD = Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development; ICM = in-country manager

Appendix 2 Detailed methods

Volunteer assignment mapping

The evaluation reviewed the level of alignment between the types of assignments completed by Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) volunteers in Vietnam, Cambodia and the Solomon Islands, and AusAID's strategies and priorities for development in those countries, as described in the following documents:

- Australia's strategic approach to aid in Cambodia 2010–2015 (December 2010)
- Australia's strategic approach to aid in Vietnam 2010–2015 (December 2010)
- Solomon Islands–Australia Partnership for Development (signed January 2009).

The *Common definitions and DAC sector of destination* guidebook was used to assign 3-digit-level development assistance codes (DACs) to the development priorities identified in each country's AusAID country strategy, and then asked the AusAID Volunteers Section to review and approve the codes. The *AVID annual statistics report 2011–2012* includes data on the number of volunteer assignments completed in each country by 3-digit-level DAC code. Using these two sources, it was possible to calculate the proportion of assignments in each country that aligned with the country strategy priorities.

This method has some limitations. First, the DAC codes assigned to country strategy priority areas were not as specific as anticipated: the AVID annual statistics report only codes assignments to the 3-digit level, whereas country strategies could be coded to 5 digits, which gives more detail. Another limitation is that country strategies are sometimes specific to a geographic location (a province or city within a country), whereas DAC codes are not. Where matches were difficult, codes err towards alignment, which may mean the analysis overestimates alignment between the country strategies and volunteer assignments.

End-of-assignment report analysis

Core partners do end-of-assignment reporting to meet Shared standard 2: Monitoring and evaluation. Volunteers, their host organisations and—for some core partners—the in-country manager give input during the reporting process. As such, each assignment can include up to three component reports, but the unit of analysis for this evaluation was an individual assignment. The purpose of our analysis was to identify characteristics of successful and less successful assignments in terms of their impact on volunteers and their host organisations.

Core partners provided a random sample of reports for 102 assignments done in Cambodia, Vietnam and the Solomon Islands between 2010 and 2012. The analysis refers to 'matched' assignments: those assignments that include both host organisation and volunteer perspectives. Only 56 assignments (54 per cent) had matched data. Of the 47 unmatched reports, most (n = 43, 91 per cent) were missing the host organisation perspective. Almost three-quarters (74 per cent) of the

matched assignments were AVID assignments administered by Australian Volunteers International (AVI) (Table A2.1). Because the proportion of matched assignments was so low, our analysis included *all* assignments for all frequencies and did not explore differences between matched and unmatched assignments.

Table A2.1 Distribution of matched end-of-assignment reports, by core partner

Country	AVI	ARC	AI			Total
			AVID	*AYAD*	*AI total*	
Cambodia	13	0	5	0	5	18
Vietnam	13	0	9	0	9	22
Solomon Islands	15	0	1	0	1	16
Total	***41 (73%)***	***0 (0%)a***	***15***	***0***	***15 (27%)***	***56***

AI = Austraining International; ARC = Australian Red Cross; AVI = Australian Volunteers International; AVID = Australian Volunteers for International Development; AYAD = Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development

a Three individual reports have been received, none are matched and two are early returns.

The content of the reports varies between core partners, and the overall completeness and quality of the reports was poor (see *Data quality,* below). Therefore, our analysis focused on maximising the data available, but recognising its limitations.

Three team members from ARTD Consultants reviewed the reports and summarised the qualitative (open-ended) and quantitative (scaled or multiple-choice questions) data they contained into an MS Excel spreadsheet. Then, the coding team assigned a three-point rating scale (high, medium or low) to four variables: how satisfactorily the assignment was completed, level of volunteer personal development, level of host organisation capacity development, volunteer perception of support from the host organisation and volunteer perception of support from the in-country manager. In assigning these ratings, the team used all available data (volunteer and host organisation reports). Inter-rater reliability checks were performed (see *Data quality,* below).

A fourth team member quantified the remaining variables by creating response categories. Where possible, the response categories were chosen to be consistent with the returned volunteer survey. Our coding framework is explained in Table A2.2, together with an indication of data quality (proportion of missing data for each variable).

Table A2.2 Coding framework for end-of-assignment analysis

Variable	Reliability[a]	Coding	Data format
Core partner	Reliable (*n* = 102)	AVI, AI, ARC	Quantitative data in report (rating scale)
Assignment DAC code	Marginal (*n* = 84)	3-digit DAC code	Quantitative data in report (code assigned by AusAID)
Assignment within program focus?	Marginal (*n* = 84)	Yes, no	Volunteer assignment mapping
Country	Reliable (*n* = 102)	Cambodia, Vietnam, Solomon Islands	Quantitative data in report
Volunteer stream[b]	Reliable (*n* = 100)	AVID, AYAD	Quantitative data in report
Length of assignment[b]	Unreliable (*n* = 32)	Months	Quantitative data in report
Date assignment completed	Reliable (*n* = 100)	Date	Quantitative data in report
Context for assignment—HO size	Unreliable (*n* = 48)	Small, medium, large	Quantitative ratings and/ or responses to qualitative questions, verified with Google search

Variable	Reliability[a]	Coding	Data format
Context for assignment—HO type	Marginal (*n* = 70)	NGO, iNGO, multilateral, government, social enterprise, educational institution, private business, other	Quantitative ratings and/ or responses to qualitative questions, verified with Google search
Context for assignment—HO networks	Unreliable (*n* = 17)	Yes, no	Quantitative ratings and/ or responses to qualitative questions, verified with Google search
Context for assignment—HO location	Unreliable (*n* = 5)	Major city, regional town or city, rural setting	Quantitative ratings and/ or responses to qualitative questions
Satisfactory completion assignment	Reliable (*n* = 96)	High, medium, low	Rating scale in report
Personal growth for volunteer—level	Unreliable (*n* = 49)	High, medium, low	Quantitative ratings and/ or responses to qualitative questions
Personal growth for volunteer—type	Unreliable (various, range 13–53)	Knowledge and skills, positive impact on life (self-esteem, etc.), understanding other cultures, knowledge of development issues, relationships and networks	Quantitative ratings and/ or responses to qualitative questions
Capacity development for HO—level	Unreliable (*n* = 40)	High, medium, low	Quantitative ratings and/ or responses to qualitative questions
Capacity development for HO—type	Unreliable (various, range 15–65)	Ability to deliver programs, improved community profile, value of work in HO or community, positive impact on lives of others, improved knowledge or skills	Quantitative ratings and/ or responses to qualitative questions
Established APO link	Marginal (*n* = 68)	Yes, no	Quantitative ratings and/ or responses to qualitative questions
Internal or external constraints	Unreliable (various, range 3–56)	Language barriers; cultural or racial barriers; inappropriate workload; assignment poorly defined; problems with counterpart; lack of HO resources; security or ethical concerns; length of assignment; unsupportive HO; unsupportive ICM or core partner; poor volunteer–HO match; political environment	Quantitative ratings and/ or responses to qualitative questions
Internal or external success factors	Unreliable (various, range 6–59)	Supportive HO, well-resourced HO, external support/volunteer knowledge and skills, volunteer acculturation, volunteer traits, supportive ICM	Quantitative ratings and/ or responses to qualitative questions
Perception of support from the HO	Reliable (*n* = 98)	High, medium, low	Quantitative data in report

Variable	Reliability[a]	Coding	Data format
Perception of support from the core partner	Reliable (*n* = 99)	High, medium, low	Quantitative data in report

AI = Austraining International; APO = Australian partner organisation; ARC = Australian Red Cross; AVI = Australian Volunteers International; AVID = Australian Volunteers for International Development; AYAD = Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development; DAC = development assistance codes; HO = host organisation; ICM = in-country manager; iNGO = international nongovernment organisation

a Reliability rating scale; unreliable (0 to 50 assignments where variable is complete), marginal (51 to 90 assignments where variable is complete), reliable (91 or more assignments where variable is complete).

b Included in inter-coder reliability analysis.

To test the coding framework reliability, three team members from ARTD Consultants coded key variables (volunteer stream and length of assignment in Table A2.2) for the same four randomly selected assignments. We calculated the inter-rater reliability percentage (number of sections the three coders agreed on divided by the total number of sections. The average level of agreement between all three coders was 77 per cent, which is an acceptable level of inter-coder reliability (Table A2.3).[139] This process was repeated for one assignment after all coding was finished, and the agreement rating was 83 per cent, which is a good level of inter-coder reliability.

Each comparison helped the coders to review their understanding of the codes being used. The coders met regularly throughout the process to clarify definitions and resolve issues as they arose. A follow-up test of one assignment after the coding was completed found 83 per cent agreement (10 out of 12 sections).

Table A2.3 Coding agreement (inter-rater reliability) for a random sample of end-of-assignment reports

Assignment	Inter-rater agreement (across 12 variables)	
	n	%
1	11	92%
2	8	67%
3	10	83%
4	8	67%
Overall	***37***	***77%***

Source: End-of-assignment reports.

Data quality

As discussed earlier in this section, the content of the end-of-assignment reports varies between core partners, and the overall completeness and quality of the reports was poor. There are some critical concerns with the data:

- **There is a low match rate.** Matched reports (where the volunteer and host organisation contributed) were only available for 54 per cent (*n* = 55) assignments. Of the 47 unmatched reports, most (*n* = 43; 91 per cent) were missing the host organisation perspective.
- **There are insufficient data from two core partners.** Most (75 per cent) of the matched assignments were administered by AVI; there were no reports (matched or unmatched) for Australian Rec Cross (ARC) volunteers.

139 K Krippendorff K, *Content analysis: an introduction to its methodology*,Sage Publications Ltd, London, 1980.

- **There are wide differences between report templates.** End-of-assignment report templates are not standard between core partners: each report asks different questions (although there is some overlap), in different formats (qualitative or quantitative) and using different rating scales.
- **There is a lot of missing data.** Most reports, particularly those for host organisations, were incompletely filled out or ambiguous. As shown in Table 1 in the main report, more than half of the variables (*n* = 12; 57 per cent) have low or medium levels of completeness. In addition, the ARTD Consultants coding team rated the quality of data for more than half of the assignments (*n* = 56; 55 per cent) as 'incomplete' or 'ambiguous'.

The analysis focused on maximising the data available (drawing from all reports to get the most information possible about each assignment), while recognising its overall weakness. The end-of-assignment reports are an unreliable source of data about host organisation satisfaction. They should be considered supplementary to stronger data sources, particularly the AusAID's recent returned volunteer survey, host organisation survey and in-country fieldwork.

Media analysis

We analysed the way in which AVID and the core partners are portrayed in the media to assess the impact of AVID on the public perception of volunteering for international development. We performed two analyses: a **coverage analysis** and a **content analysis**.

The purpose of the **coverage analysis** was to identify patterns in the types of media and countries in which AVID is covered. The AusAID Volunteers Section provided media summaries for 1 May 2011 to 5 December 2012; the evaluation team counted the locations in which the AVID program was mentioned.

The purpose of the **content analysis** was to explore in depth the way AVID was portrayed in the media. The primary source for the media content was the Factiva database, which provides access to full-text coverage of Australian newspapers, and newspapers and news wires from around the world. All components of the database (excluding the Australian Stock Exchange) were searched for articles appearing from 1 May 2011 to 5 December 2012. Six search strings were used that reflected the different streams of the AVID program and the core partners who administer the program (see Table A2.4). The search strings were developed iteratively: preliminary searches using broader search strings that included 'Australian volunteers', 'AVID' and 'AusAID volunteers' yielded searches with a very high proportion of irrelevant results. The search string used to retrieve articles on the AVID program administered by the ARC needed the most limiters because of the very broad scope of volunteering programs that organisation administers.

The searches identified 135 articles deemed relevant. Of these, 31 were duplicates, and were excluded these. The total sample was 104 mentions.

Table A2.4 Search strings used to retrieve articles for media analysis

Search string	All articles (*n*)	All articles (%)	Relevant articles (*n*)	Relevant articles (%)
Australian Volunteers International	39	29%	35	34%
Australian Volunteers for International Development	34	25%	34	33%
Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development	27	20%	17	16%
Austraining International	18	13%	11	11%
Australian Business Volunteers	10	7%	7	7%
'Red Cross' and 'volunteers' and 'international development'	7	5%	0	0%
Total	***135***	***100%***	***104***	***100%***

Two team members coded the articles using a coding framework (Table A2.5).

Table A2.5 Coding framework used for media analysis

Variable	Coding	Notes
Is the news source a major city newspaper?	Yes, no	
Does the source refer to Australian Volunteers for International Development?	Yes, no	
Does the source refer to AusAID?	Yes, no	
Does the source refer to the Australian Red Cross?	Yes, no	Any reference to the Red Cross
Does the source refer to Australian Volunteers International?	Yes, no	Including references to AVI
Does the source refer to Australian Business Volunteers?	Yes, no	Including references to ABV
Does the source refer to Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development?	Yes, no	Including references to AYAD
How is the Australian Government mentioned?	A prominent agency is named (e.g. AusAID) The Australian Government (or agency) named as funder, any other way, not mentioned	
What attitude does the source take towards sending Australian volunteers for international development?	Positive, neutral, negative	

ABV = Australian Business Volunteers; AVI = Australian Volunteers International; AYAD = Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development

In-country fieldwork

In-country fieldwork was conducted in three countries: the Solomon Islands, Cambodia and Vietnam. These three countries were chosen to be indicative—but not representative—of the program in all 45 countries to which Australian volunteers are mobilised. The choice of countries considered the Australian Government's focus on the Asia-Pacific region, the sizeable cluster of volunteers in the Mekong Delta, a mix of low and middle-income countries, the presence of core partners, and the feasibility of doing fieldwork within the evaluation timeframe. The three countries chosen give a broadly representative view of the AVID program.

The purpose of the in-country fieldwork was to explore in depth the experiences of host organisations and volunteers, and develop case studies of the program's contribution in the selected countries. The methods for in-country fieldwork were pragmatic: to meet challenges of logistics, cultural differences and sensitivities. Interviews in each country were with volunteers, their host organisations, in-country

managers and other staff from the relevant core partners, AusAID Post or staff from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade responsible for the AVID program, and ambassadors or high commissioners (Table A2.6).

Table A2.6 Summary of fieldwork interviews in three case study countries

Country	Host organisations (*n*)	Volunteers (*n*)	Other stakeholdersa (*n*)	Total (*n*)
Cambodia	15	18	11	44
Vietnam	13	15	5	33
Solomon Islands	17	22	7	46
Total	**45**	**55**	**23**	**123**

a Includes ambassadors, AusAID staff and core partner in-country managers

In all but a few instances, interviews were done face to face (a few interviews with host organisations and core partners were done by telephone). The interview teams included staff from ARTD Consultants and the Office of Development Effectiveness. Interviews were done according to a semi-structured interview guide, designed to collect evidence against the key evaluation questions. Interviews with host organisations and volunteers also included a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis. Volunteers were also asked what was the most significant change they had been involved in during their assignment.

Handwritten notes were taken during all interviews, and interviews with Australian volunteers and AusAID staff were recorded. To manage the ethical risk of perceived power imbalance and cultural sensitivities, none of our interviews with non-Australian host organisation staff were recorded. Together, the recordings and notes were used to write summaries of host organisation – volunteer pairs (n = 55).

Thematic analysis was then done for each host organisation – volunteer pair, and each was assigned a rating on a five-point scale of capacity development. These ratings should be considered as relative, not absolute, because we had neither the time nor the expertise to comprehensively assess capacity development. The ratings were:

1. **very low**—organisation not benefitting from volunteer, or is likely to be worse off when the volunteer leaves
2. **low**—organisation is benefitting from volunteer, but not in a sustainable manner
3. **medium**—host organisation staff are learning new skills from the volunteer, and/or the organisation is learning new processes and systems to improve its function
4. **high**—organisation realises volunteers are no substitute for their own capacity; staff are using new skills as a result of the volunteer and/or the organisation is using new processes and systems to improve its function
5. **very high**—organisation is transforming its ability to manage its own affairs due to the volunteers work.

The average capacity development score was calculated by volunteer stream, host organisation type and volunteer role.

Returned volunteers survey

In June 2012 AusAID contracted ORIMA Research to survey returned volunteers who completed an AusAID-funded volunteering assignment between 2006 and 2011 (inclusive). The key objectives of the survey were to establish baseline data for the volunteer profile across the new AVID program, and to establish whether the program has met its objectives. A total of 1361 returned volunteers responded to the survey (response rate 38 per cent).

ORIMA provided the de-identified raw dataset to ARTD Consultants. The evaluation team did some additional analysis to inform responses to specific questions for this evaluation. This included restriction of data to the three fieldwork countries, exploratory factor analysis and additional regression analysis. Only results relevant to this evaluation are reported.

Host organisation survey

A brief survey was designed to assess host organisation satisfaction and capacity development as the result of hosting AVID volunteers. It was informed by the literature on host organisation capacity development. The survey included three questions from the returned volunteer survey to ensure host organisations and volunteer responses could be compared. The survey was made available in English (Solomon Islands), Khmer (Cambodia) and Vietnamese (Vietnam). Invitations to participate in the survey were emailed to all host organisations (n = 192) currently registered with core partners in the three host countries. Two emailed reminders were sent to non-respondents, and core partners sent another reminder.

The survey sample appears to be representative of the population of host organisations in the three countries. In total, there were 94 responses to the host organisation survey, a response rate of 49% (Table A2.7). All surveys with response rates of less than 100 per cent have the potential to introduce bias into a sample. Our confidence that the sample is representative is based on congruence in characteristics of host organisations completing the survey with all host organisations in the three fieldwork countries (Tables A2.8 and A2.9). For example, in Table A2.8 the percentage of all host organisations answering the survey in Cambodia was 44 per cent while the percentage of Cambodian host organisations in the case study countries was 45 per cent. Similarly, in Table A2.9 the percentage of host organisations answering the survey that were aligned with each of the three core partners was similar to the percentage of all host organisations aligned with the three core partners across the three case study countries.

Table A2.7 Response rate to host organisation survey in three case study countries

Country	Surveys sent (*n*)	Surveys received (*n*)	Response rate (%)
Cambodia	82	41	50%
Solomon Islands	52	23	44%
Vietnam	58	30	52%
Total	***192***	***94***	***49%***

Table A2.8 Proportion of host organisations in the survey sample, by country, compared with all host organisations in the three case study countries

Country	% of host organisations answering the survey	% of host organisations in case study countries[a]
Cambodia	44%	45%
Solomon Islands	25%	22%
Vietnam	32%	34%
Total	***100%***	***100%***

a AusAID, *AVID annual statistical report 2011–12*, AusAID Volunteers Section, Canberra, 2012, Table 6a.

Table A2.9 Proportion of host organisations in the survey sample, by core partner and stream, compared with all host organisations in the three case study countries

Core partner and stream	% of host organisations answering the survey	% of host organisations in case study countries[a]
Austraining International	71%	77%
Australian Red Cross	7%	3%
Australian Volunteers International	21%	20%
Total	***100%***	***100%***
Australian Volunteers for International Development	65%	61%
Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development	35%	39%
Total	***100%***	***100%***

a AusAID, *AVID annual statistical report 2011–12*, AusAID Volunteers Section, Canberra, 2012, Table 6a.

Frequency analysis was done by volunteer stream, core partner and country. The statistical significance of any differences by these variables was also calculated. Finally, the data were analysed using a principal component analysis, which converts a set of observations of possibly correlated variables into a set of values of uncorrelated variables. The number of variable groups differs by dataset, but is typically between three and five. The analyst chooses the most appropriate solution on the basis of a statistical constant called an 'eigenvalue' and based on the amount of variation the solution explains. Variation is measured as a percentage, with higher percentages indicating a better solution. Once the solution is chosen, the correlation between the grouped variables and the outcome variable (in this case, capacity development) can be determined.

The principal component analysis, using varimax rotation, supported a five-factor solution that explained 73 per cent of the variance in the 16-item survey. This is considered a strong solution for the dataset. These five factors included:

- capacity development (which appears to include items about 'capacity'—refining some survey items may yield a distinct 'capacity' factor)
- wasted volunteer effort
- host organisation empowerment
- ease of working with the volunteers
- sustainable capacity.

It was difficult to identify a factor purely about providing capacity—instead the five factors were 'capacity and capacity development', which included items about capacity but was defined more by

items about process for developing future capacity, ‘wasted effort’, ‘empowerment’, ‘team work and common expectations’, and ‘sustainable capacity’. When we regressed factor scores against overall satisfaction we found that the strongest associations with satisfaction were with ‘team work and common expectations’ followed by ‘capacity and capacity development’. Similarly, ‘wasted effort’ was negatively associated with satisfaction. Interestingly, neither ‘sustainability’ nor ‘empowerment’ were significantly associated with satisfaction.

Core partner consultation

Core partners were consulted formally and informally throughout the evaluation. During October and November 2012, representatives of each core partner (including the head of the organisation and relevant staff) were interviewed to explore themes identified in the fieldwork, and against the key evaluation questions.

Appendix 3 Detailed data tables

Table A3.1 How host organisations identify their volunteer or describe them to others

Volunteer stream	'Australian volunteer'		'Australian Government volunteer'		Volunteer stream ('AYAD', 'AVID', 'VIDA')		Core partner ('AVI', 'Austraining', 'ARC')		Total	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
AVID	6	33%	1	6%	1	6%	10	56%	18	100%
AYAD	3	18%	5	29%	8	47%	1	6%	17	100%
Total	*9*	*26%*	*9*	*17%*	*9*	*26%*	*11*	*31%*	*35*	*100%*

ARC = Australian Red Cross; AVI = Australian Volunteers International; AVID = Australian Volunteers for International Development; AYAD = Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development; VIDA = Volunteering for International Development from Australia (previous program)

Notes: We did not interview any host organisations hosting an Australian Business Volunteer.

Source: Host organisation interviews.

Table A3.2 Host organisation types associated with the most successful assignments

Type of NGO	% of all host organisations with volunteers	% of all host organisations with a rating ≥ 4
Academic	9%	15%
Business	5%	0%
Government	29%	46%
International NGO	18%	15%
Local NGO	27%	15%
Other (multilateral, peak body)	11%	8%

NGO = nongovernment organisation

Source: Host organisation survey (*n* = 93).

Host organisation survey data

Table A3.3 Host organisation overall satisfaction

Item	*n*	Very dissatisfied 1	2	3	4	Very satisfied 5	Total positive
Overall, how satisfied are you with your most recent Australian volunteer?	93	3%	3%	6%	23%	65%	87%
Overall, how satisfied are you with the assistance you receive from this organisation (core partner)?	91	1%	3%	10%	19%	67%	86%

Source: Host organisation survey (*n* = 93); response rate 47 per cent.

Table A3.4 Volunteer impact on community attitudes (public diplomacy)

Item	*n*	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly agree 5	Total positive
Our Australian volunteers cause negative disruptions in our local community	87	80%	8%	1%	6%	5%	10%

Source: Host organisation survey (*n* = 93).

Table A3.5 Host organisation empowerment

Item	*n*	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly agree 5	Total positive
Our organisation decides what work our volunteers do while they are on their assignment at our organisation	86	2%	2%	12%	30%	53%	84%
From the start, our most recent Australian volunteer had the same expectations about their assignment that we did	91	3%	1%	14%	36%	45%	81%
Our organisation was asked to choose our most recent Australian volunteer	83	12%	1%	11%	17%	59%	76%

Source: Host organisation survey (*n* = 93).

Table A3.6 Host organisations' agreement about the work their Australian volunteer did to contribute to the organisation's capacity

Item	*n*	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly agree 5	Total positive
Our most recent Australian volunteer works well with our team	93	3%	4%	4%	20%	68%	88%
Hosting Australian volunteers over the last year has helped our organisation to deliver programs and meet goals	87	2%	2%	14%	32%	49%	82%
The work our most recent Australian volunteer did could have been more effectively performed by a local staff member	93	49%	19%	5%	13%	13%	26%

Source: Host organisation survey (*n* = 93).

Table A3.7 Host organisations' agreement about the work their Australian volunteer did to contribute to the organisation's capacity that was sustained

Item	*n*	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly agree 5	Total positive
We continue to benefit from the work of our Australian volunteers after their assignments end	82	1%	2%	13%	32%	51%	83%
Hosting Australian volunteers over the last year has helped our staff learn new skills	86	1%	2%	15%	33%	49%	81%
We continue to hear from our Australian volunteers when they go home	77	4%	6%	17%	29%	44%	73%

Source: Host organisation survey (*n* = 93).

Table A3.8 Host organisations' agreement about the work their Australian volunteer did to contribute to the organisation's capacity development

Item	n	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly agree 5	Total positive
Hosting Australian volunteers helped us think about how our work could be more effective	86	1%	2%	19%	36%	42%	78%
We have a long term strategy for the use of volunteers in our organisation	86	1%	8%	19%	30%	42%	72%
Hosting Australian volunteers helped our organisation better manage our own affairs	85	1%	11%	18%	39%	32%	71%
Hosting Australian volunteers helped our organisation clarify its objectives and strategies	85	1%	7%	25%	38%	29%	67%
Hosting Australian volunteers helped our organisation to enhance its profile in the community	83	2%	8%	24%	33%	33%	65%
Hosting Australian volunteers helped us understand the experience of people who use our service	80	1%	5%	33%	29%	33%	61%

Source: Host organisation survey (*n* = 93).

Results of factor analysis

Table A3.9 Results of factor analysis (part A)

Item	Capacity and capacity develop-ment	Wasted effort	Empower-ment	Teamwork—common expectations	Sustain-able capacity
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?					
Our organisation was asked to choose our most recent Australian volunteer	0.040	0.345	0.669	0.284	–0.032

Item	Capacity and capacity develop-ment	Wasted effort	Empower-ment	Teamwork—common expectations	Sustain-able capacity
From the start, our most recent Australian volunteer had the same expectations about their assignment that we did	0.177	–0.215	0.308	0.687	0.280
The work our most recent Australian volunteer did could have been more effectively performed by a local staff member	0.120	0.773	–0.017	–0.008	–0.091
Our most recent Australian volunteer works well with our team	0.192	–0.073	–0.120	0.888	–0.037
We have a long-term strategy for the use of volunteers in our organisation	0.175	–0.012	0.794	–0.164	0.051
We continue to benefit from the work of our Australian volunteers after their assignments end	0.519	–0.372	0.067	0.160	0.549
We continue to hear from our Australian volunteers when they go home	0.081	0.076	0.036	0.027	0.925
Our organisation decides what work our volunteers do while they are on their assignment at our organisation	0.108	–0.223	0.548	0.126	0.491
Our Australian volunteers cause negative disruptions in our local community	–0.115	0.775	0.143	–0.192	0.054
Hosting Australian volunteers over the last year has helped:					
› our organisation to deliver programs and meet goals	0.667	–0.359	0.169	0.276	0.172
› our staff learn new skills	0.678	–0.445	0.259	0.258	0.079
› our organisation clarify its objectives and strategies	0.791	0.211	0.016	0.069	0.126
› us to think about how our work could be more effective	0.859	–0.015	0.256	–0.033	–0.096
› us understand the experience of people who use our service	0.858	0.188	0.041	–0.013	0.139
› our organisation to enhance its profile in the community	0.756	–0.142	–0.014	0.230	0.242
› our organisation to better manage our own affairs	0.809	–0.069	0.036	0.155	–0.029

Note: Extraction method: principal component analysis; rotation method: varimax with Kaiser normalisation; rotation converged in six iterations.

Table A3.10 Results of factor analysis (part B)

Item	B	Std. error	Std. beta	t	Significance
(Constant)[a]	4.328	0.105		41.217	0.000
Capacity and capacity development	0.409	0.106	0.384	3.864	0.000
Wasted effort	–0.430	0.106	–0.404	–4.063	0.000
Empowerment	–0.088	0.106	–0.083	–0.834	0.408
Teamwork and common expectations	0.430	0.106	0.404	4.064	0.000
Sustainability	0.086	0.106	0.081	0.813	0.420

a Dependent variable: overall, how satisfied are you with your most recent Australian volunteer?:

Appendix 4 Numbers of volunteers mobilised in 2012–13

Table A4.1 Volunteers mobilised, 2012–13

Country	Number of volunteers
Indonesia	106
Cambodia	89
Vietnam	75
Timor-Leste	67
Fiji	61
Philippines	60
Solomon Islands	58
Vanuatu	51
Papua New Guinea	46
Kenya	37
Laos	37
Thailand—regional	37
Samoa	34
Bangladesh	33
Mongolia	33
Tonga	23
Ghana	22
Kiribati	20
Nepal	16
Myanmar (including border)	13
South Africa	13
Tanzania	10
Peru	9
Lebanon	8
Bhutan	7
Federated States of Micronesia	7
Jordan	7
Maldives	6
Belize	6
Ethiopia	6
Malawi	6
Marshall Islands	6
Namibia	6
Botswana	5
Dominican Republic	4

Country	Number of volunteers
Lesotho	4
Palau	4
Suriname	4
Swaziland	4
Uganda	4
Dominica	2
Total	***1046***

Notes:

1. Reporting period covers 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013; it includes the number of new volunteers in the field during that period.
2. For 2013, the total number of countries that AVID is operating in is actually 42, and includes China.

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