

Youth Exchange Programmes in Africa

Impact Assessment and Recommended
Practices Guide

Key findings from the African youth exchange impact assessment implemented by In On Africa (IOA) on behalf of the African Union Commission (AUC) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH between September-November 2017.

A collaborative research study
on African youth exchange
programmes by:



The African-German Youth Initiative (AGYI) was established by Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ - Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development) and the African Union Commission (AUC) in order to strengthen relations between Germany and the continent and promote the exchange of African and German youth.

The AGYI commissioned Africa-focused research consulting firm In On Africa (IOA) to conduct an impact analysis of youth exchange programmes in Africa to inform future strategies for youth development. This publication has been compiled by IOA for public release by the AUC, and presents a summary of the key findings from this research.

The research and impact analysis was conducted through correspondence with various organisations, participants, alumni and other key informants. While IOA, the AGYI and the AUC believe that the information and opinions contained herein are reliable, they do not make any warranties, express or implied, and assume no liability for reliance on or use of the information or opinions contained herein.



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Following the 50th Anniversary of the foundation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), African Union Member States, through Agenda 2063, set ambitious, yet realistic goals for the next 50 years. Agenda 2063 encapsulates the vision and hopes for the Africa We Want. One of the most important points of this Agenda, is the strengthening of Africa's place as a global player, within the context of mutually beneficial partnerships.

Together with the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), we are exploring opportunities for stronger cooperation particularly in ways that mutually benefit our young people. One of the outcomes of these conversations is the African German Youth Initiative (AGYI). Launched in 2016, the AGYI presents an opportunity to provide and increase prospects for our young people to, through exchange programmes, collaborate much more efficiently to address challenges and harness opportunities to improve their individual lives and our mutual challenges.

At the African Union Commission, we believe that the Africa We Want will not only be driven collaboratively with citizens, it will be driven by and grounded in evidence. Our goal is to ensure that we are able to provide appropriate support to organisations and institutions that are able to develop and scale up sustainable practices. Our approach towards implementing the AGYI is ensuring we build on already existing approaches and practices. Through the AGYI, therefore, we will examine promising practices for scale up, provide opportunities for collaboration, as well as resources and support to strengthen structures that power youth exchange.

This study is a first step towards exploring the potential value of exchange programmes to individuals, communities and institutions. Given our competing priorities, understanding the impact of investments in youth exchange and volunteer services is critical to ensuring that our resources are efficiently utilised. It will also point us towards possible opportunities for collaboration in key impact areas.

We are mindful of the fact that this study is only a start of the discussion within an emerging conversation on evolving models for partnerships and for skills development. It is envisaged that this will lead to further exploration of the key areas of impact, particularly harnessing resources within our various institutions on the African continent towards meeting our mutual goals.

It is important to mention that this study benefitted from consultations with a number of institutions and individuals. I am immensely grateful for the support of everyone who participated in this study and hope that we will continue to apply our learnings towards improving prospects for our young people.



H.E Professor Sarah Anyang Agbor
Commissioner, Human Resources Science and
Technology,
African Union Commission

OBJECTIVE

An improved framework is in place that enables African partners and young people to play an equal role in designing African-German youth exchange programmes and volunteer services that will support sustainable development.

THE CHALLENGE

Africa is the youngest continent in the world - around 70% of the population in sub-Saharan Africa is under the age of 30. Young people play a key role in shaping sustainable political, social, economic and environmental development on the African continent. However, a large proportion of young men and women do not yet have access to high-quality, skills-oriented (vocational) education, or to employment opportunities that provide them with a secure livelihood. They are therefore excluded from social and economic participation.

Educationally sound youth exchange programmes and volunteer services can enable young people to expand their personal horizons and acquire life and employment skills. Furthermore, youth exchanges in the context of education for sustainable development are linked to the goal of promoting social engagement of young people in order to give them the opportunity to participate in sustainable development processes. However, exchange between young people from Africa and Germany has often taken place against a background of structural and economic inequality

Dialogue forums and strategies for inclusive youth exchange programmes and volunteer services that enhance skills are still underdeveloped on the African continent.

APPROACH

The African-German Youth Initiative (AGYI) is being implemented in Germany and African countries. Engagement Global is coordinating

the establishment of the initiative, which is designed to support partnership-oriented interactions between young people in African countries and Germany. On behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), GIZ is strengthening the resources, skills and capacity of the partner structures. Headquartered in Addis Ababa, the pan-African initiative is initially working in three partner countries (Benin, South Africa and Tanzania), and is aligned with the AU's Agenda 2063, the African Youth Charter (2006), the African Youth Decade 2009–2018 Plan of Action and the pilot countries' own national youth strategies.

AGYI IS WORKING IN THREE INTERRELATED FIELDS OF ACTIVITY:

1. Expanding the availability of pan-African volunteer services and youth exchange programmes that focus on skills development;
2. Strengthening professional skills as well as planning and management capacities in implementing organisations in the three pilot countries. The aim is to support skills-enhancing African-German (as well as trilateral and multilateral) volunteer services and youth exchanges, and to promote participation and networking;
3. Encouraging networking among African and German partners involved in volunteer services and youth exchange programmes.

Another focus is set on the promotion of innovative ideas and approaches in the field of exchange, voluntary service and social engagement. To this end, an innovation fund will be set up to give alumni, the sending organization and other stakeholders the opportunity to implement innovative approaches. Finally, the most successful learning experiences should be shared and disseminated on the pan-African level.

INTRODUCTION

Youth volunteering and exchange programmes are gaining currency as a means of supporting African development goals, including addressing youth unemployment, contributing to economic and social development, building human capacity and strengthening regional identity. As such, there has been increased interest from international agencies, the African Union, development actors and civil society organisations in promoting volunteering and youth exchange in African countries.¹

The act of service and volunteering has always been part of African culture, preceding even colonialism. As noted by Patel *et al*: “Pre-colonial African societies relied on mutual aid, kinship, and community support to meet human needs. Traditional cultural beliefs and practices encouraged collective responsibility, solidarity and reciprocity.”²

Ubuntu, derived from the Bantu culture, infers historical origins of mutual aid and support in fostering humanness. For the *BaTswana* people, numerous terms such as *boithaopo* and *tirelo* are used to describe the concept of volunteering.³ One can argue that volunteering has its origins in early African associational life, which has a strong moral and normative basis.⁴

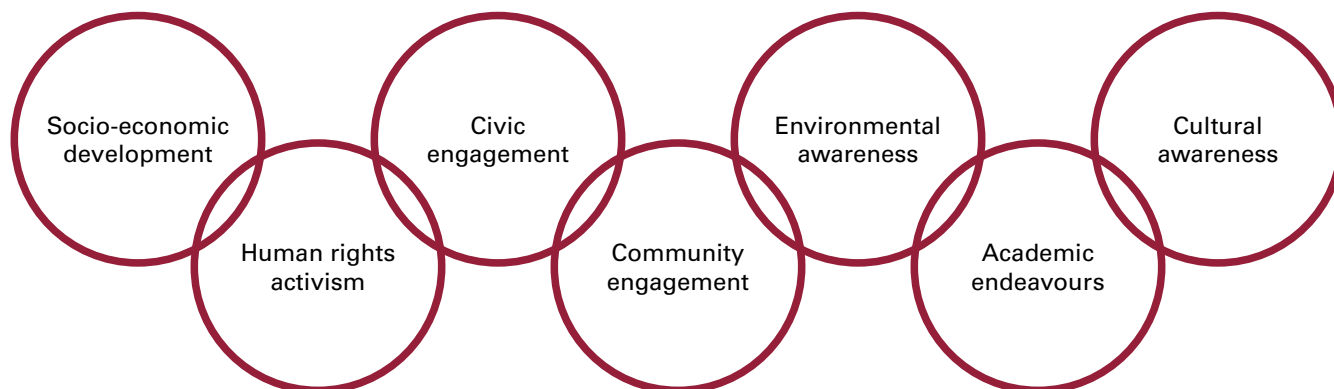
OBJECTIVES OF YOUTH EXCHANGE

As with volunteering more broadly, youth exchange has a wide array of goals and these all hinge on community and personal development. These are the overarching objectives of international and intra-African youth exchange programmes operating in Africa:

- ✓ **Empower** both the community and individual by strengthening civil society
- ✓ **Engage** citizens in development efforts to encourage growth at a local level
- ✓ **Establish** connections across borders and grow personal networks
- ✓ **Promote** cross-cultural and interpersonal experience
- ✓ **Provide** knowledge, skills and career development
- ✓ **Strengthen** inter-cultural understanding and global citizenship

These objectives are achieved through a variety of programme focus areas and related initiatives.

Youth exchange programmes generally have foci incorporating one or more of the following:



1 Graham, L., Patel, L., Ulriksen, M., Moodley, J. and Mavungu, E.M. 2013. Volunteering in Africa: An overview of volunteer effort in Africa and its potential to contribute to development.

2 Patel, L., Perold, H., Mohamed, S.E and Carapinha, R. 2007. Five-Country Study on Service and Volunteering in Southern Africa. *Center for Social Development (CSD)*, 7, 19.

3 Rankopo, M, Osei-Hweddi, K, and Moroka, T.M. 2007. Issues in service and volunteerism in Botswana.

4 Fairley, C.M & Gallagher, B. M. 2006. Five-Country Study on Service and Volunteering in Southern Africa. Malawi Country Report. Volunteering and Service Enquiry Southern Africa (VOSESA).

YOUTH MOBILITY PROGRAMMES IN AFRICA

There are many different types of youth mobility programmes operating in Africa – international and intra-African - and these can be categorised as follows:

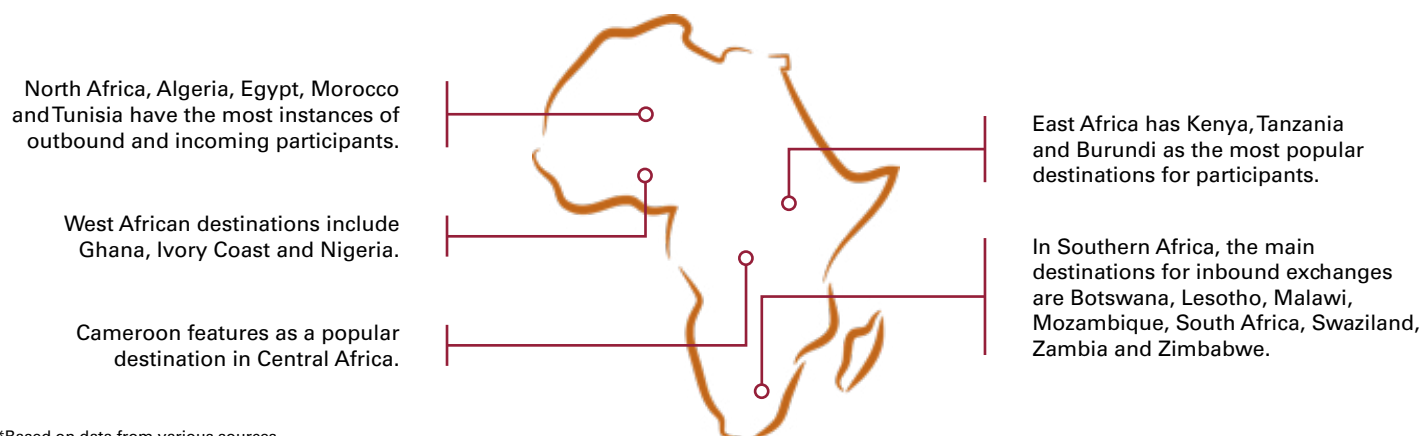


ROLE-PLAYERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

There are a wide array of role-players and stakeholders in youth exchange programmes in Africa. For the purpose of our research study, they were categorised as follows:

	Participants	Individuals who are currently taking part in a youth exchange programme, or previously did so (alumni).
	Organisers	Individuals who facilitate or aid in the running of these programmes. They include host organisations, programme managers, receiving organisations and programme staff.
	Partners	Individuals who are involved in the exchange programme in a more limited capacity, such as host families, local volunteers, local and international partner organisations, community members, government and policy makers.

KEY AFRICAN DESTINATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL AND INTRA-AFRICA EXCHANGE



*Based on data from various sources

"It was definitely new that I had to go work in a completely different country, and a different way of working, it taught me to adapt quickly. I also learned teamwork skills because [...] methods of communication between us and between youth from Germany are different because of the cultures. My time there showed me a different perspective than what I'm used to."

Grant Bellairs
Alumni, ASA-Program



BACKGROUND

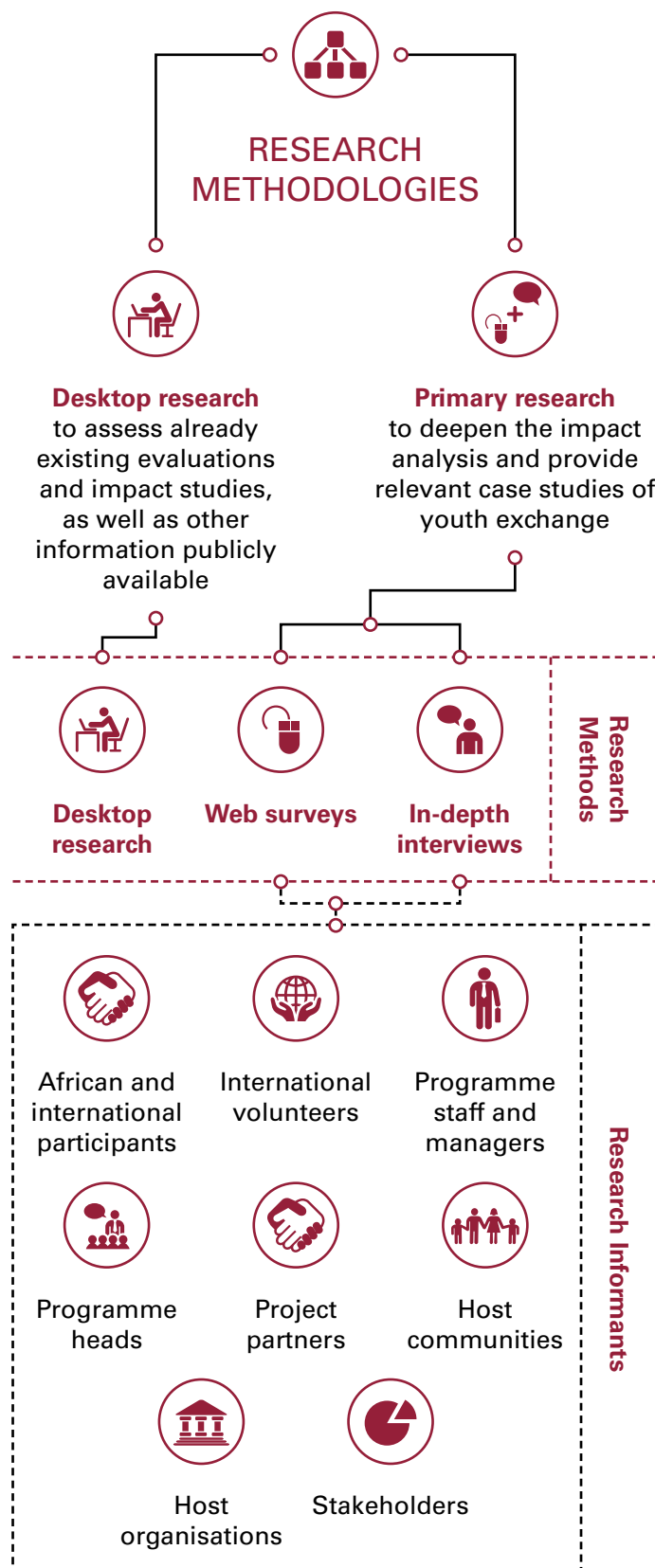
Africa has an expanding youth population with unlimited potential and the African-German Youth Initiative (AGYI) is a collaboration between the German Government and the AUC that aims to:

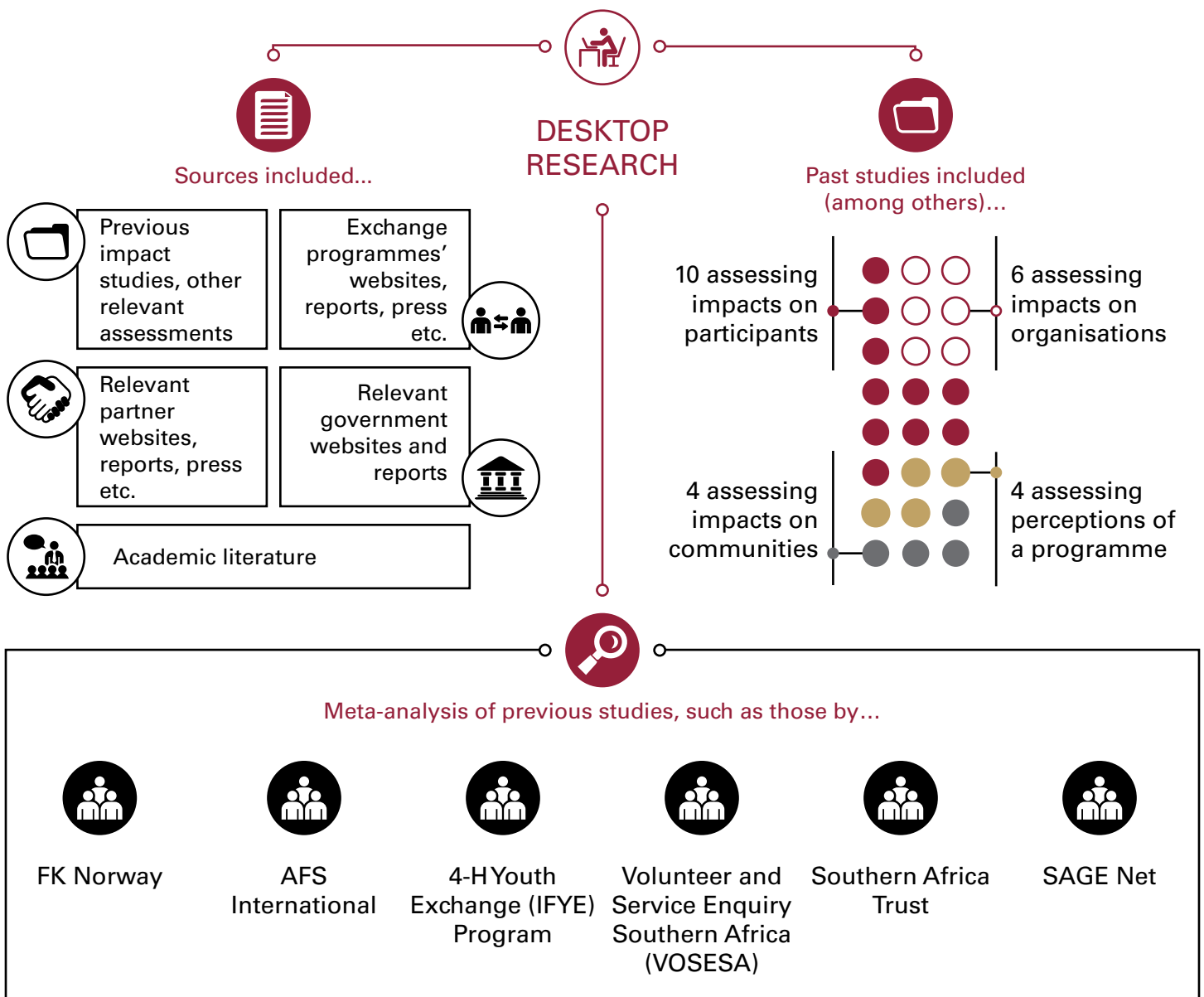
-  **Expanding** the offer of pan-African skill-promoting voluntary services and youth exchange.
-  **Improving** capacities in pilot countries to improve preparation, support and follow up.
-  **Strengthening** networking for voluntary and exchange services.

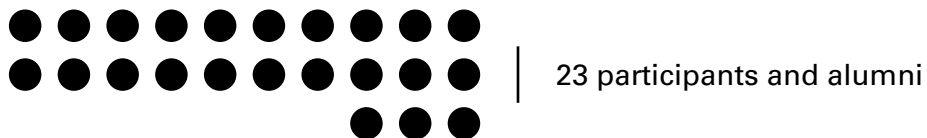
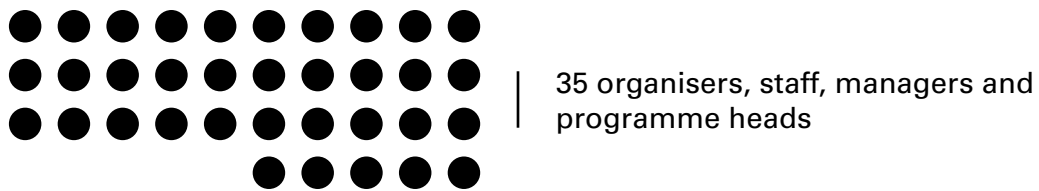
It is within this context that the AGYI partnered with Africa-focused research and consulting firm, In On Africa (IOA), to conduct an in-depth impact analysis of youth exchange programmes across the African continent to inform future strategies for youth development.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1 What African, German and international exchange programmes are out there?
- 2 Do the programmes provide informative documentation, such as strategy documents?
- 3 Is there any existing literature assessing the impact of exchange programmes on the youth's development?
- 4 What are the impacts of the case-study programmes on the participant's personal development and employability?
- 5 Which exchange programmes would provide useful insights as in-depth case studies?
- 6 What are the pertinent good practices of all the researched exchange programmes?







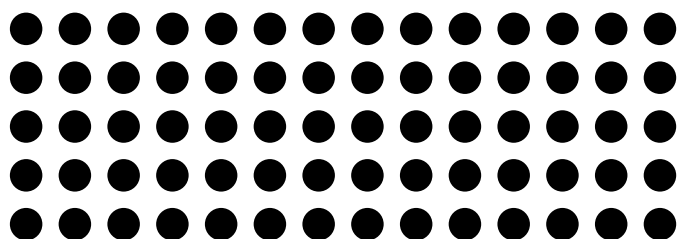
66 interviews...



IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS



Time statistics



2,100 minutes
Total combined talking time (approx. 35 hours)

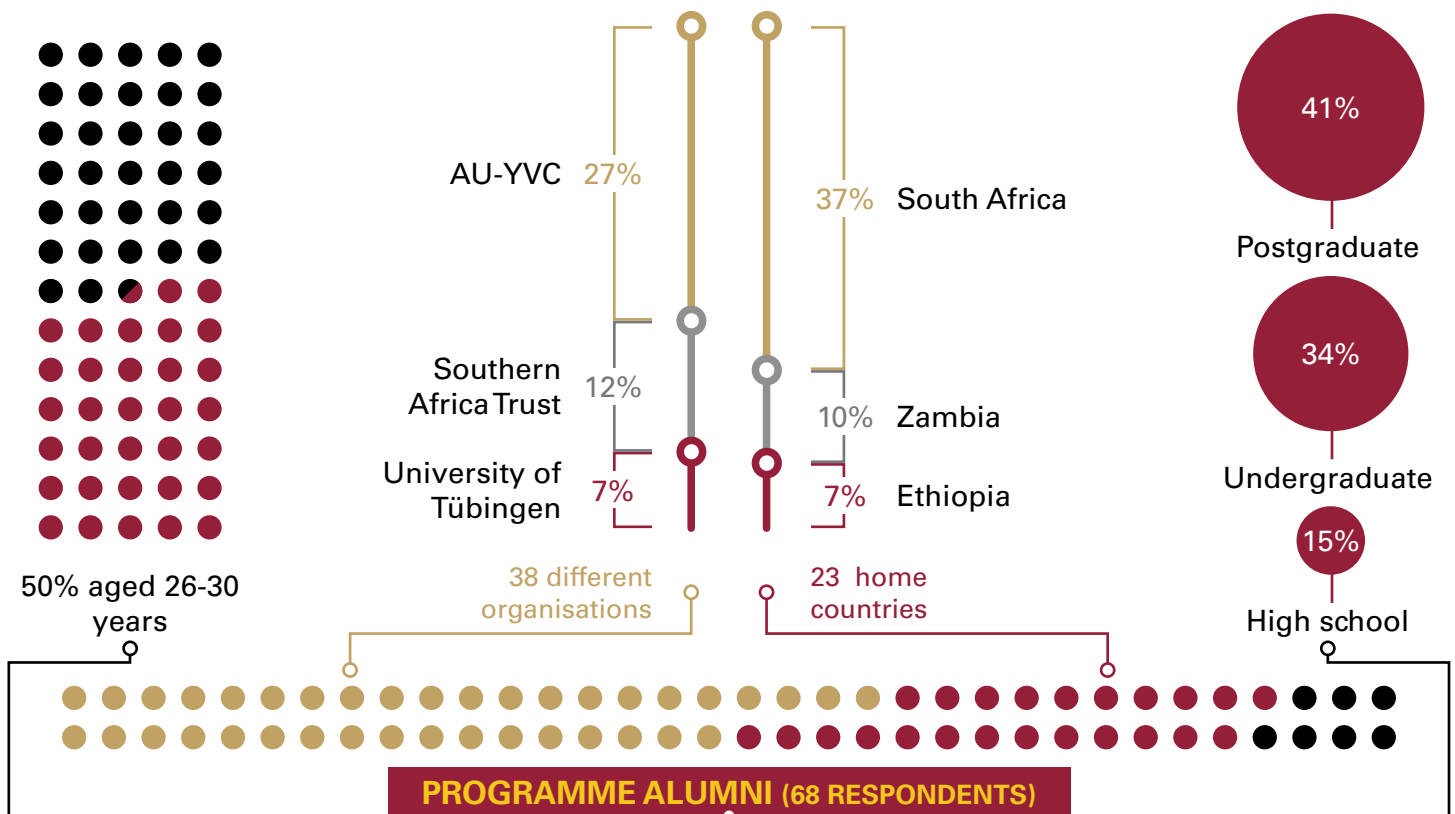


90 minutes
Longest interview

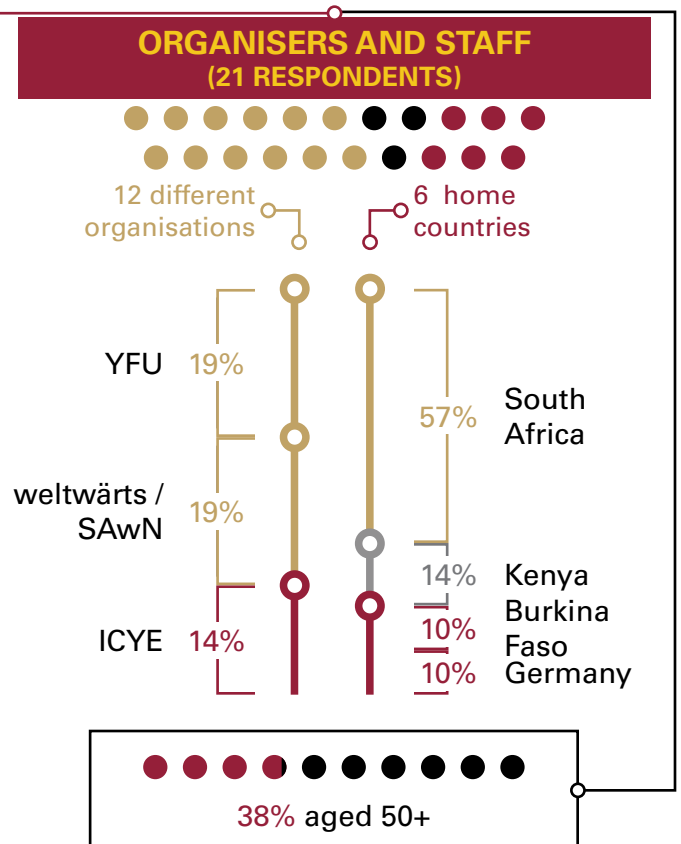
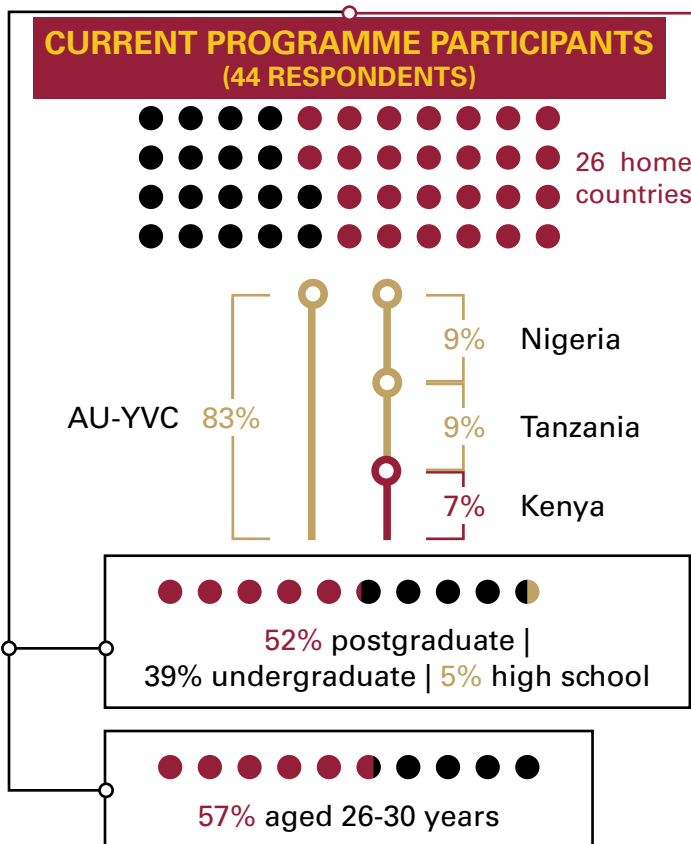


35 minutes
Average interview length

● = 30 minutes



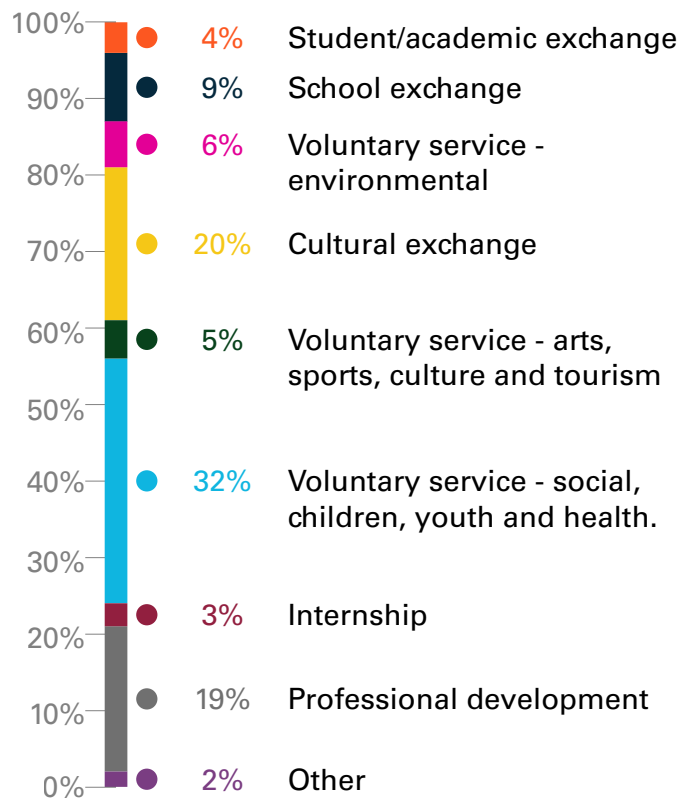
3 WEB SURVEYS



Most participants from non-AUC programmes were alumni and not current participants.

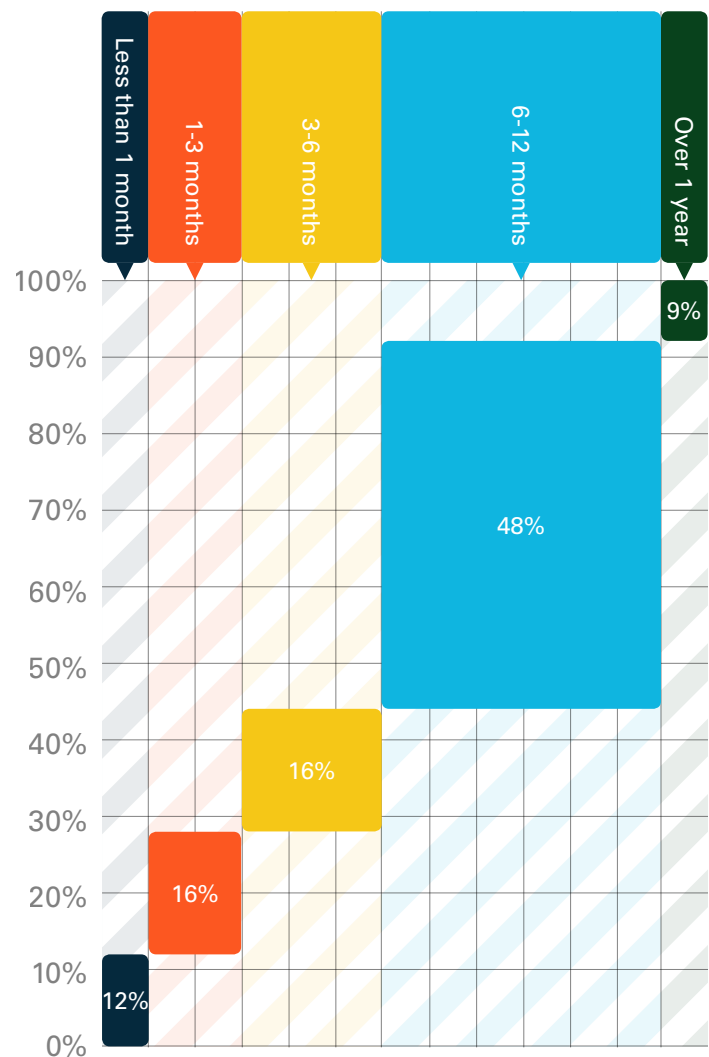
PROGAMME FOCUS

Community focused voluntary service was found to be the most popular focus of youth exchange programmes, making up nearly a third (32%) of total survey responses. Cultural exchanges and those that focus on professional development were also popular (around 1/5).



PROGAMME DURATION

The most popular duration of youth exchange programmes was 6-12 months (48% of respondents). It was found that longer periods allow a participant to settle and establish themselves and ultimately have a greater impact, while shorter periods are better suited to training programmes and youth-camps.

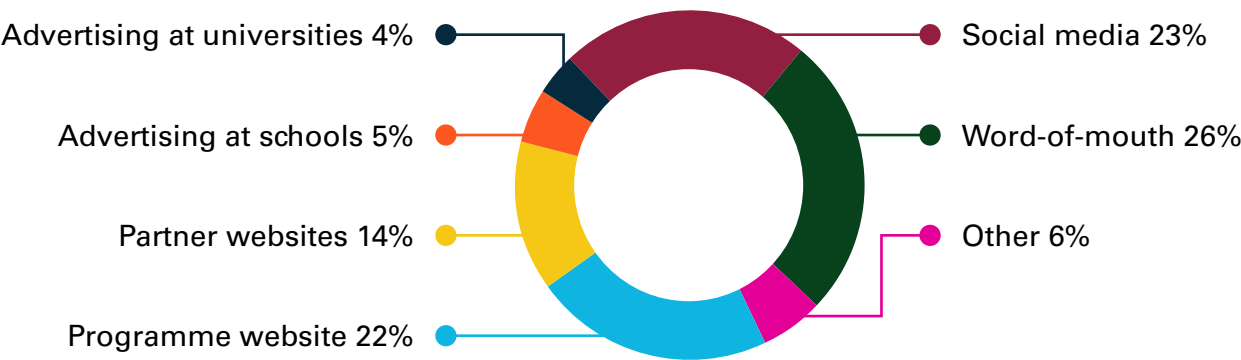


RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

When asked how they found information on the youth exchange programme, many alumni and participants noted personal networks – through word-of-mouth and social media. Other popular methods were through visiting programme websites and, to lesser extents, partner websites and advertising at schools and universities.

Source of information pertaining to exchange programmes

A popular method emerging is through the use of blogs or dedicated pages on social media websites, where past, present and aspiring volunteers can interact and be kept abreast of opportunities.



Turnaround time for feedback on programme applications

For the most part, respondents across the groups noted that it generally takes between two weeks and two months to receive feedback on applications.



“I chose this programme because it promotes the integration of young people in the professional environment because today... young people often encounter problems after their university training... they are asked to have a professional experience to be recruited. So, this grass-roots programme has been created for that and I am proud to be part of the family of young volunteers of the African Union.”

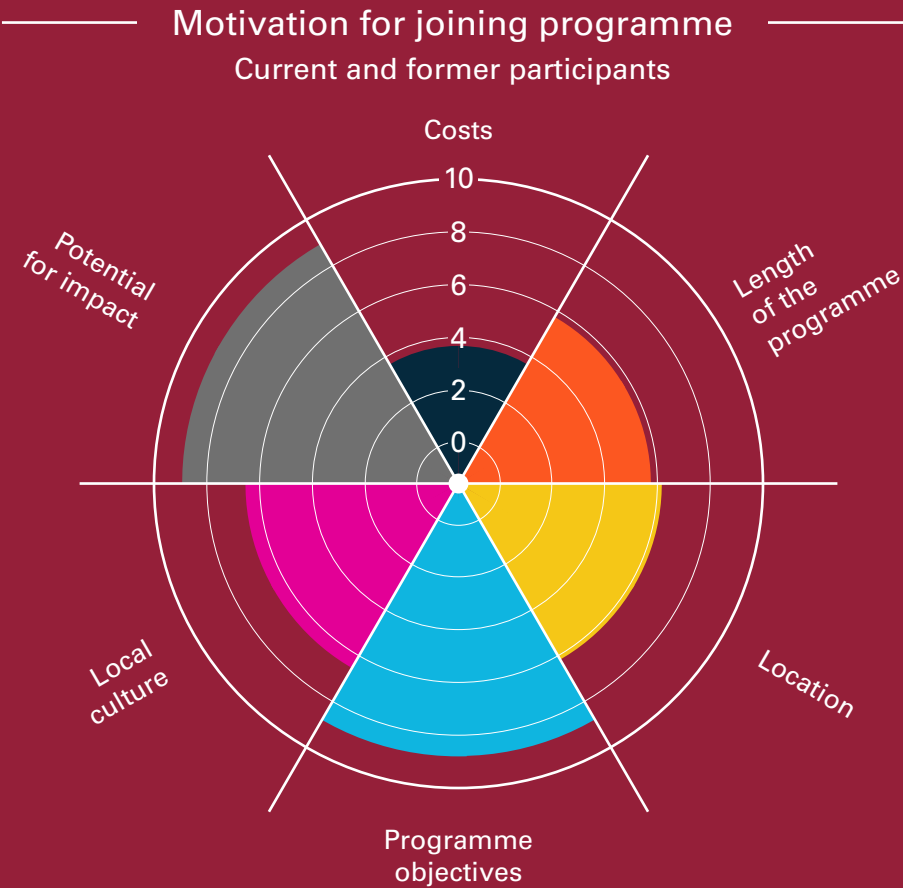


Web Survey
AU-YVC Participant

DRIVERS OF PROGRAMME CHOICE

The survey sample of 112 alumni and participants were asked why they chose the programme that they did. Almost half (45%) of their open-ended responses related to skills development to help them in their future careers.

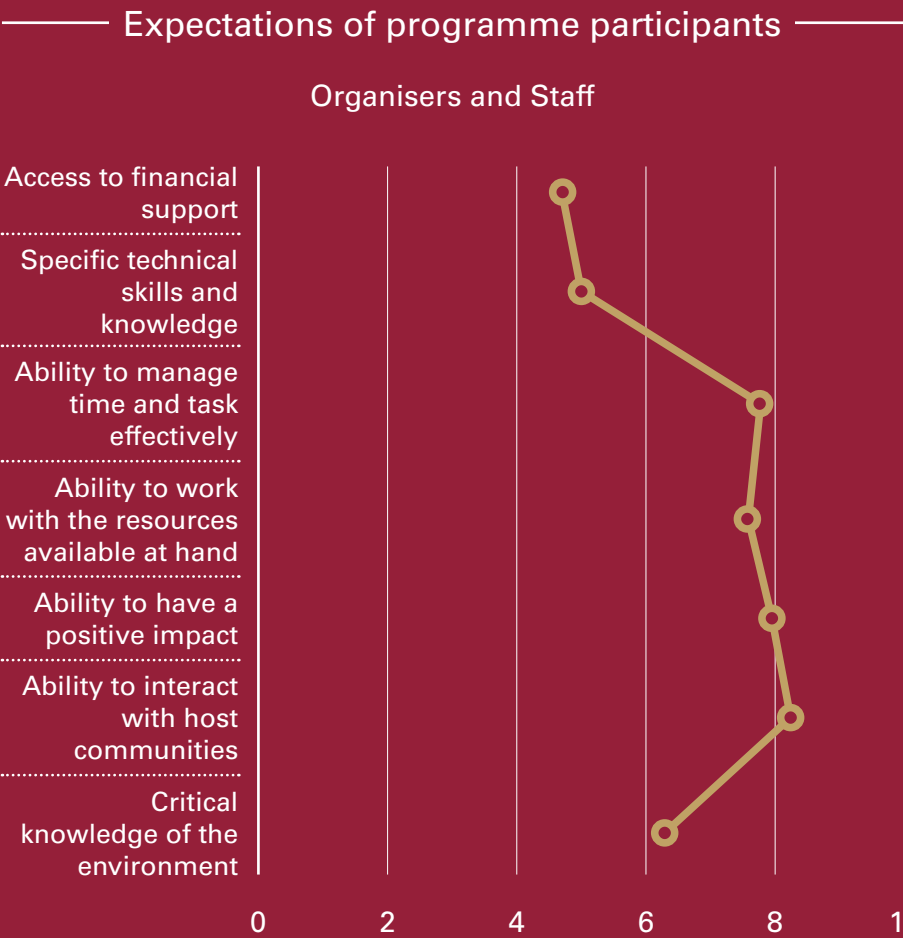
When provided specific options as key motivators for joining a programme, both alumni and participants rated the potential for impact the highest. Similarly, the programme objectives were equally important to both alumni and participants, followed by local culture and location.



EXPECTATIONS

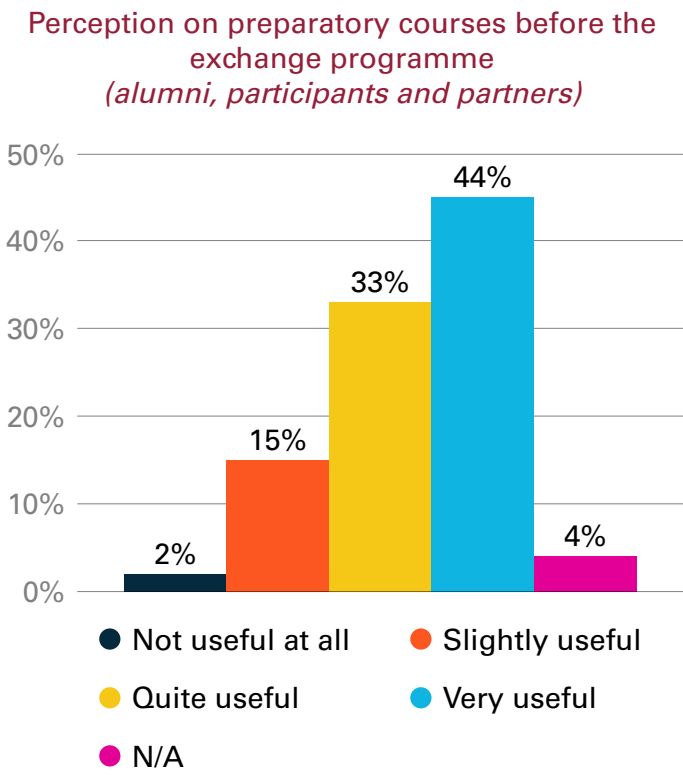
Organisers and staff feel that the ability to interact with host communities is critical, as is the ability to have a positive impact and to work with the resources at hand. The ability to access financial support and specific technical skills were, on the other hand, viewed as less critical by both audiences.

It is often assumed by host organisations that participants will be adequately skilled and capable of carrying out required tasks. However, this is sometimes not the case, and the discrepancy can create a stressful working environment and feelings of a wasted opportunity.



PREPARATION

When asked “How would you rate the preparatory courses for the exchange programme?”, more than three quarters of participants, alumni and partners responded “quite useful” or “very useful”. This reinforces our findings in the desktop research of the importance of these preparatory sessions.



That said, some participants felt that their preparatory courses did not do enough to prepare them for possible negative situations they may face.

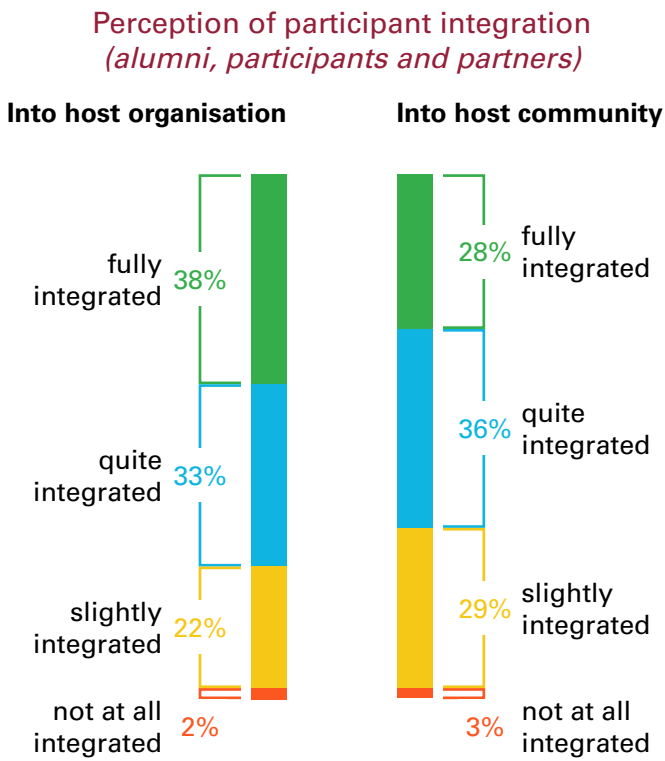
“... the person who told us about the exchange, he was also the one who prepared us. He shared about the history of the city we’d be living in, he told us some interesting facts, things we should look out for and cultural things. It would have been a culture shock if we weren’t prepared for it.”

Grant Bellairs
Alumni, ASA-Program

INTEGRATION

Integration at both the professional level and community level is important for participants. The degree to which volunteers feel integrated into a community is a critical factor for the satisfaction of both the individual and the host organisation.

Survey respondents were asked how they perceived their integration into the host organisation and community. The perception of participants’ full integration stood at 28%-38%, which indicates far more can be done in this regard.

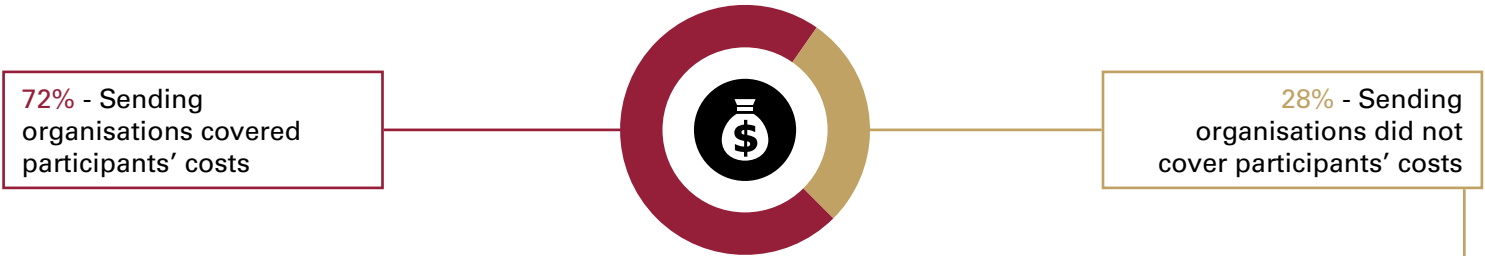


Organisations that have an inclusive management approach have higher satisfaction ratings, for both the organisation and volunteers. For this to be a reality, it is crucial that structures and processes are in place to allow communication between organisational staff and volunteers.

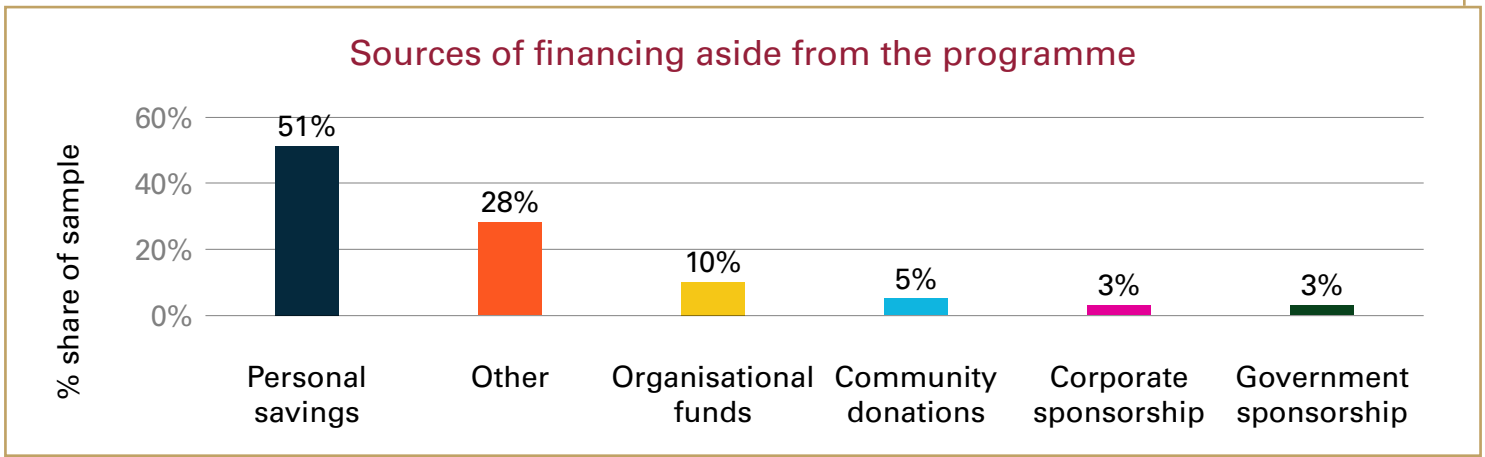
Staff meetings are a prime example, where volunteers can be actively involved in giving suggestions and offering their opinions. Volunteers should also have a designated go-to person with whom they can discuss ideas and gain information.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

For the most part, participants indicated that the sending organisation was able to pay for their programme costs.



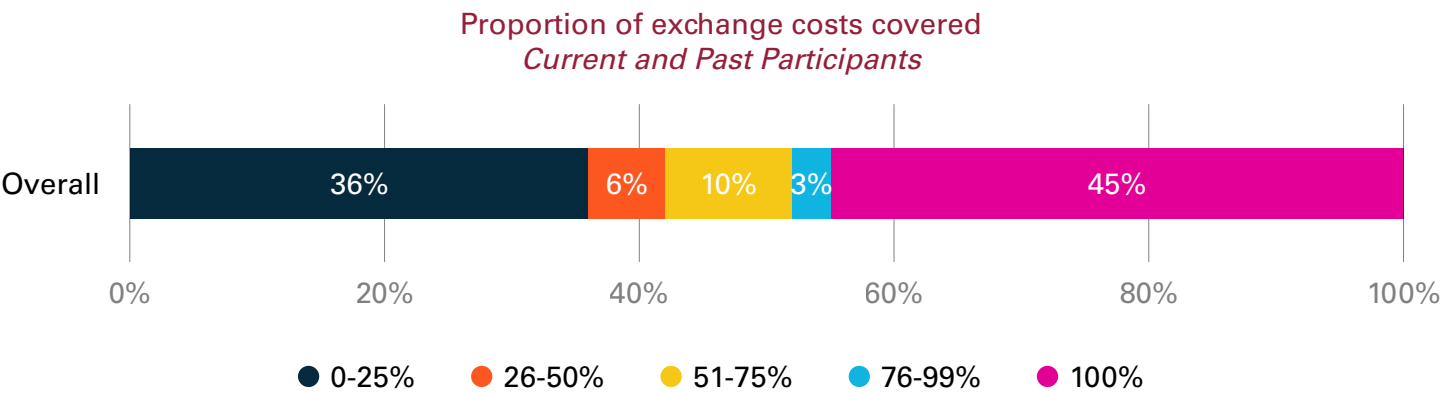
For those participants who were not able to secure financing for the exchange programme, over half (51%) indicated that they tapped into personal savings to finance the exchange.



"As long as the basics were covered then I could ensure that I had at least a basic decent life there. Anything else, like shopping and leisure, would all be on me.

Itumeleng Mphure
Alumni, sayXchange

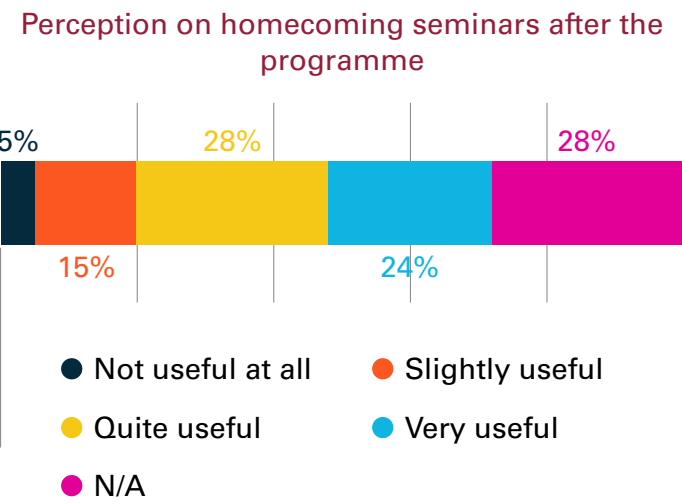
In terms of the proportional costs that current and past participants had to cover themselves, two extremes exist, with participants of youth exchange programmes in Africa dominantly having to either cover up to just a quarter of the full costs (36% of respondents) or cover the full cost entirely (45%).



POST-PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES

Homecoming seminars

Alumni were asked how they perceived the homecoming seminars they took part in following the completion of the programme. These sessions did not score as highly as preparatory courses, but were generally reported on positively. However, there is certainly a lot of room for improvement in post-programme debriefing strategies.



Follow-up & Post-Project Work

Participants can benefit more on a personal level when the organisation has a plan in place to utilise their skills post their exchange programme. It is quite promising that many of the organisations interviewed have already recognised the importance of them having a plan in place to capture and incorporate new knowledge or skills returning participants acquire during the programme.

The scope of the follow-up work differs by programme. For example, Youth For Understanding (YFU), Youth For Exchange and Understanding [YEU], AIESEC and ICYE actually encourage their alumni to take on core roles within the organisation structures.

“We try to involve as many people as possible understanding the change we want to create, like if we see that people dedicate themselves in mobility we try to put them within our structures to give them more opportunities but also represent this quality that they have developed within their mobility.”

Panagiotis Chatzmichael, Policy Officer
Youth for Exchange and Understanding (YEU)

Where a participant has been away on a long-term exchange, they have experienced and become accustomed to an entirely different culture and society, thus re-entering their communities and societies may not be as easy for them and may lead to them feeling disconnected.

Organisations that use follow-up work as a way to train other employees and members, report higher satisfaction ratings in their own results and capacity development. In addition, keeping returned participants in or around the organisation after the completion of the programme is also a large contributor to long-term sustainable results in the organisation.

“We give them platforms, in terms of getting all the exchange students together, they learn from each other, over the experiences, talk about their past experiences what it was like, the problems that they experienced, the highs and the lows they experienced and that sort of helps reintegrate them into their family lives and back into the schools.”

Terry Cannon
Youth Exchange Chairperson,
Rotary South Africa

CHALLENGES

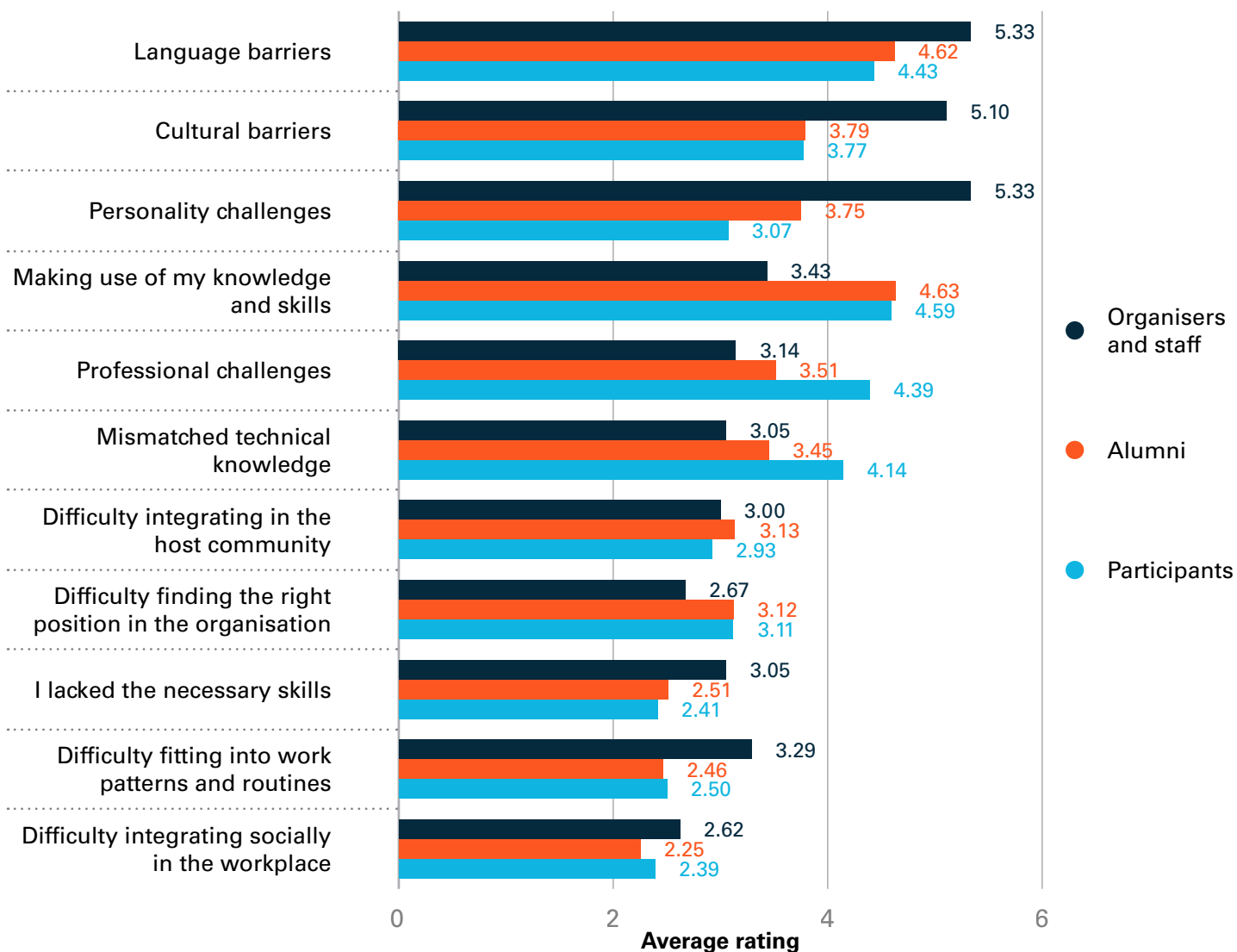
Challenges faced by participants

Youth exchange participants face a number of challenges, with some being more prevalent than others.

Respondent groups were asked to rate on a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being “Never” and 10 being “All the time”) the challenges that participants face during youth exchange. Overall, language barriers were rated highest.

Participants and alumni were also in agreement that making use of their knowledge and skills is a big challenge – a point that was reiterated throughout this research.

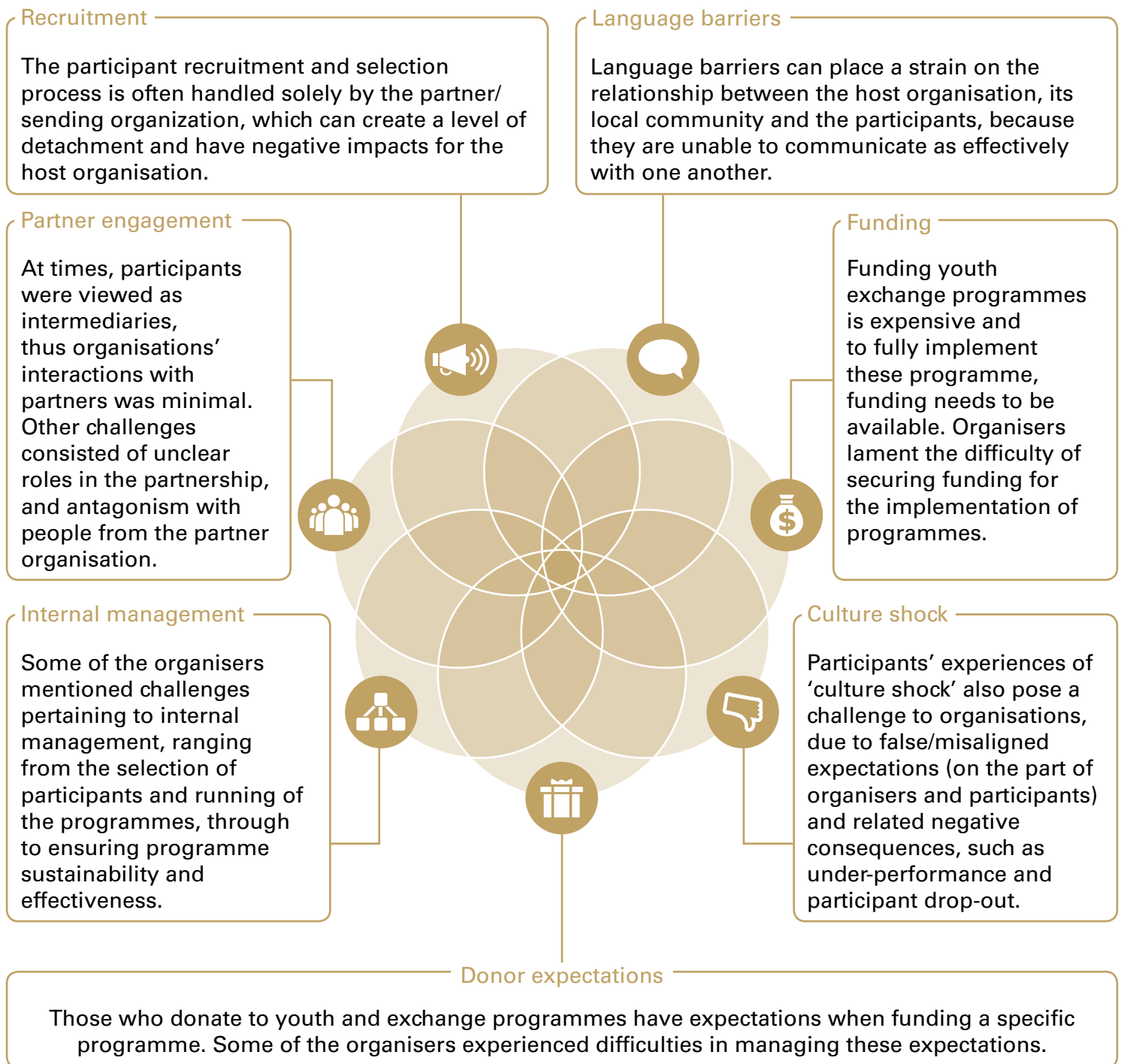
The results also revealed interesting differences between organiser ratings versus participant/alumni ratings. For example, cultural barriers and difficulty fitting into work patterns are rated far lower (and potentially underestimated) by participants/alumni.



When asked how organisations could better support participants, 28% of the 112 alumni and participant respondents expressed a need for improved volunteer support services.

Challenges faced by organisations

Challenges faced by organisations varied, but mainly revolved around the following:



"We have financial partners who are looking for results on an annual basis, so it takes time to see what kind of impact it is having on youth development itself, the shifting generation..."

Daniel Adugna
Programme Officer, AU-YVC



Through the desktop research, in-depth interviews and web surveys, we identified four overarching impact areas:

-  Knowledge and skills development
-  Education and career development
-  Personal network development
-  Perceptions, attitudes and values

"These programmes expose youth to different cultures and raises awareness on issues that don't directly affect them in their home countries"



Horacio Bonny

National Correspondent, AJUDE Mozambique

PARTICIPANT IMPACT

During the web surveys, participants and alumni were asked to rate several statements on a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being "Not at all" and 10 being "Absolutely") relating to how they perceive themselves in relation to their youth exchange experience. The statement rated highest overall related to the increased appreciation of other cultures (8.9/10), confirming similar desktop research and interview findings from this study.

Also highly rated were improvement of communication skills, work motivation, problem-solving, leadership and viewing oneself as an "agent of change"

Alumni and participant rating of impact



Knowledge and skills development

Roles within youth exchange organisations and local communities present an opportunity for volunteers to gain practical experience, knowledge, and develop a range of skillsets they may otherwise lack. This is largely due to the relatively lenient recruitment criteria of youth exchange programmes (compared to the criteria for a professional position), coupled with the array of work and life experience to be gained from participation.

When asked: "What would you say are the key skills that you were able to acquire while being part of the exchange programme?", the interview responses revolved mainly around four broad themes:



Participants learn to listen to one another, be patient and find ways of communicating with people who speak a different language to their own. They acquired the ability to be patient and learnt how to adapt to various situations as they were outside of their comfort zone.

"For me it was about how I wanted to grow and be more confident with people, be more outgoing, because obviously you're in an environment that's very strange to you and you have to get out of your comfort zone during that time. I had to step out of my comfort zone and introduce myself to people I have never met before.

You suddenly arrive in the dining hall and you are surrounded by 600 people that you have no clue who they are, and you have to go and sit at a table and start chatting to them and engaging with them, so I really enjoyed that, and it was a great personal skill for me to learn and it's something I will carry for the rest of my life."

Matthew Kiln
Exchange Programme Alumni,
Michaelhouse



Education and career development

Participants are exposed to different working environments and workplace cultures. The exchange programme also opens participants' minds to a variety of career options they may not have previously considered.

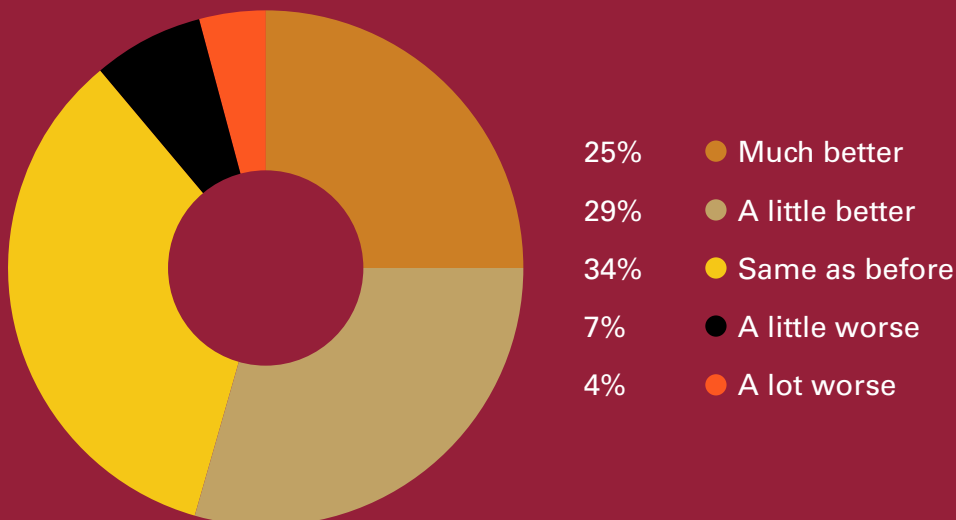
"All of them come thinking 'Oh I want to go and do this once I finish my programme here', but by the time they're done some of them have changed, like my daughter... Before she left she was all set for going to medical school. But when she was done she wanted to do fashion design, which she is doing now."

Nyaribo Kerubo
Director, ICYE Kenya



More than half (55%) of alumni reported that they had secured a better job upon returning from their programme, indicating a positive effect on career prospects of participants.

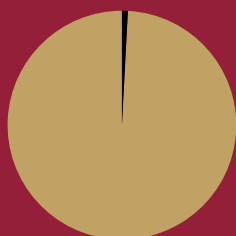
Ability to secure a better job after returning home from the exchange programme



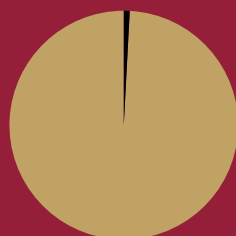
Personal network development

Respondents agreed almost unanimously that programme participation leads to expanded personal interests. This is in keeping with our findings from the desktop research. Additionally, alumni overwhelmingly indicated that they were also able to gain more personal friends and expanded networks as a result of the programme.

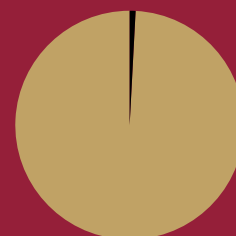
Ability to expand interest as a result of the programme



Ability to gain new friends as a result of the programme



Still communicate with people from the programme



1% ● No
99% ● Yes

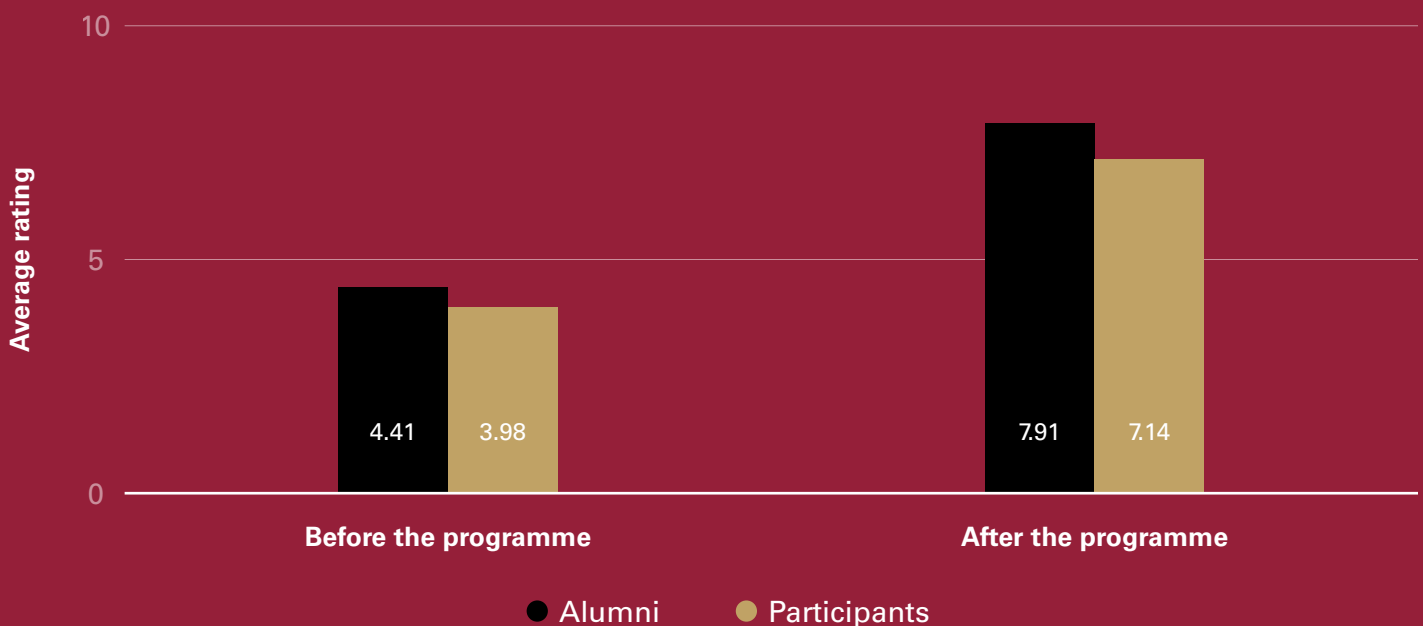
Perceptions, attitudes and values

For many, the perception that showed the greatest change amongst participants was the knowledge of their host country and an increased awareness and significance of world issues. Participants' perceptions of other countries tend to become more positive as a result of their participation in an exchange programme.

On a scale of 1–10, participants and alumni were asked about their familiarity with the context of the country before they joined the programme versus currently. Unsurprisingly, both audiences rated their knowledge of host country considerably higher currently than before.

Participants reported that their time spent in their host country had increased their knowledge of the country's socio-economic challenges, as well as the problems faced by their own home countries.

Familiarity with host country culture (before and after the programme)



Volunteers developed a greater appreciation as well as an objective view of their home countries. This included both positive and negative aspects. They reported a greater sense of pride in their country, despite their awareness of its shortcomings. Therefore, youth exchange programmes are a good instrument for stimulating growth in the minds of participants, and creating active citizens in the future.

"I've met a large number of foreign exchange students at UCT (the University of Cape Town) and have attempted to incorporate them into day-to-day South African life and to give them a little bit authentic experience of South Africa and I think that stems too - well the reason for that is because of the hospitality I received when I was that side and I've always felt I need to give back a bit more on this side, show people beautiful parts of our country."

Dorian van Raalte

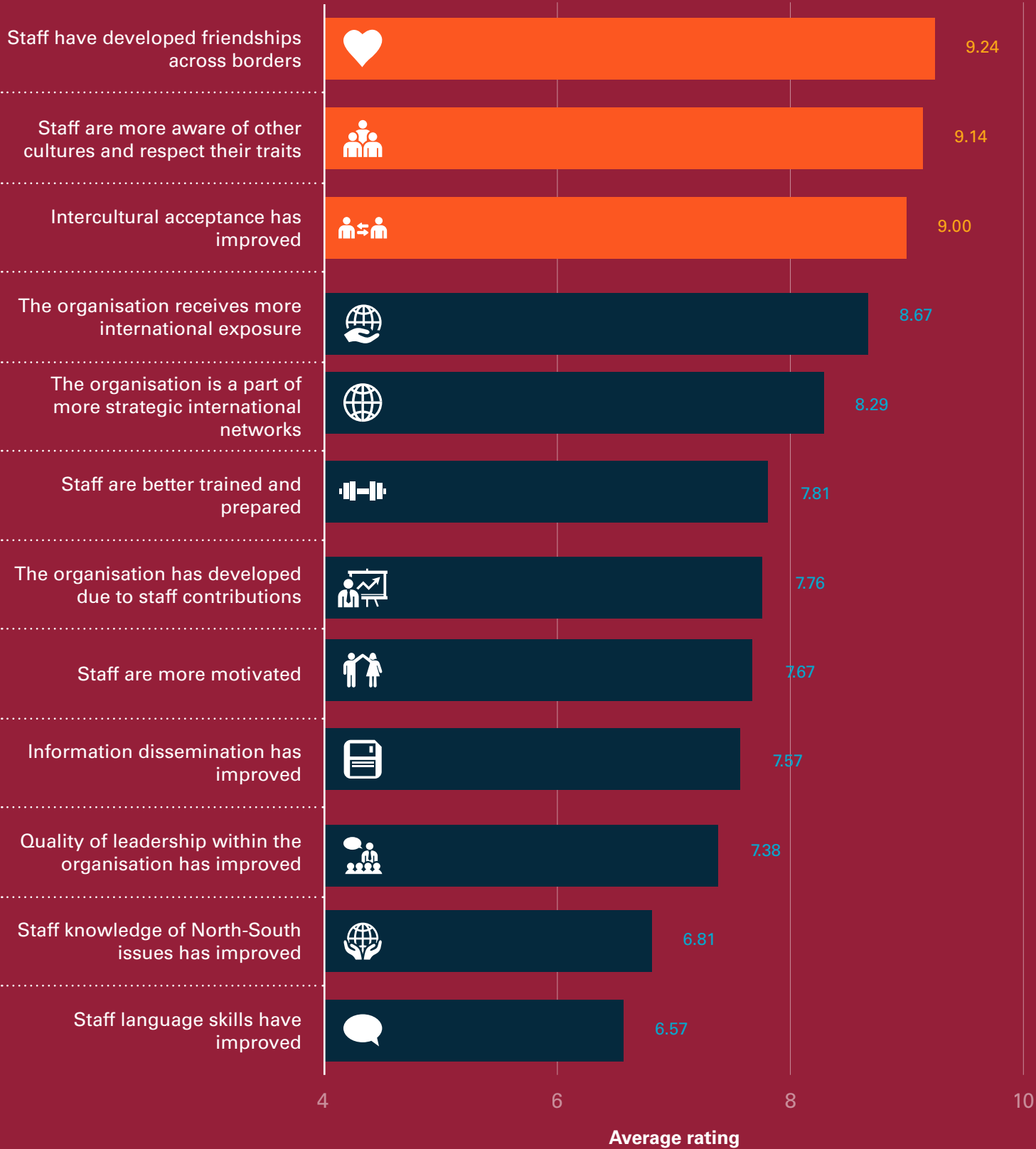
Youth Exchange Alumni, Hilton College



ORGANISATION IMPACT

Impact of the organisation on staff

Organisers and staff were also asked to rate their organisation on a scale of 1-10 on a variety of impact-related statements. The three highest rated statements related to culture – specifically, cross-cultural awareness, acceptance and friendships. This again emphasises the importance of interacting with people from other countries.



The impact of funding challenges

Organisers lament the difficulty of securing funding for the implementation of programmes. As such, they are forced to abandon many programmes. This also limits their reach in Africa and applications for programme placements are unfortunately declining due to financial constraints.

At present, many programmes are susceptible to the whims of donors or membership fees since otherwise the cost falls on the participants themselves (which is often not viable). Due to these constraints, there has been more of a recognition that programmes can benefit from working together.

“Another thing is to create more partnerships with projects that are well established. Why is that? Well, when these projects take up the volunteers, then they reduce the costs that are borne by the exchange organisation. The only problem is that we have not created a forum where we can come together and see what kind of activities can be jointly undertaken to reduce operational costs. [...] I think if we worked together because we do almost similar programmes then we can consolidate some of these costs.”

Ronald Mobisa
Chairman – ICYE, Kenya



What factors impact efficiency and effectiveness?

Programme area alignment between partners plays an important role in explaining the impact on effectiveness of exchange programmes.

Staff involvement

Staff must be involved in the placement of participants within the organisation, and should be seen as a key part of the functioning of the organisation.

Sustainable improvements

Organisational staff need to be able to implement and sustain any improvements that have been made by participants.

Productive relationships

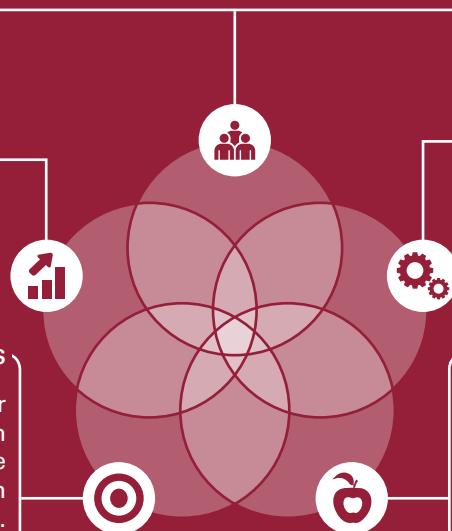
Staff and participants working relationships need to be productive.

Well-defined targets

Well-defined targets must be set for participants against which their work can be assessed. As such, the impact of the exchange programme is dependent on how clear the institution's goals are.

Participant learners

International participants should see themselves as learners within the organisation, rather than having a notion of superiority to the staff.



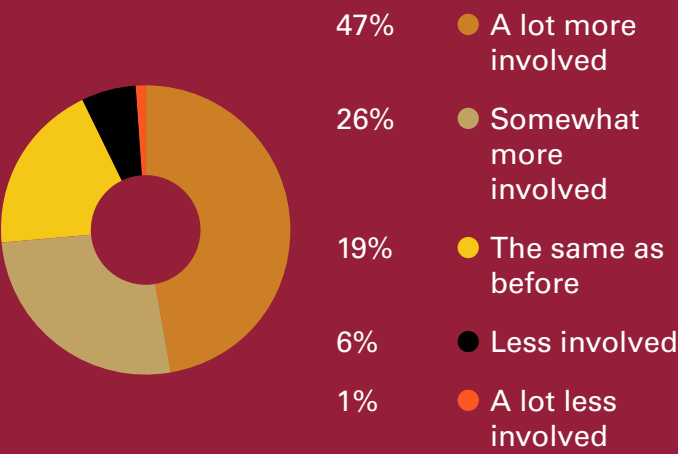
COMMUNITY IMPACT

Continuance of civic activism in the home country

Youth exchange has long-lasting impacts not only on the participants and organisations involved, but also on communities within the host and sending countries. While the direct impact on the communities where the host organisations are based is an expected (yet still very positive) outcome of such programmes, the results of our research also emphasise the impact on other communities, post-exchange.

Upon returning home, volunteers tend to have a greater interest in joining local groups, charity projects, volunteer clubs or even founding their own programmes which enable them to make a positive difference in their communities.

Involvement in civil society activity post exchange programme



“The other big challenge is the issue of sustainability of that programme; at least if it is two years, someone who is participating can contribute more and make an impact.”

Naamaala Brighton Samson
Youth Exchange Alumni, TYCEN

Skills and technology transfer

When volunteers are well integrated into their host organisations and communities, they are able to work well with staff and local communities. A positive result of these relationships is the transfer of skills.

Volunteers entering these communities have knowledge of and access to tools like computers and cellphones, and are able to share this knowledge with local communities in order to improve their digital skills and proficiency. This also extends to “soft-skills”, as volunteers impact communities through social education and awareness.

Some participants had the opportunity to work on programmes which were directly aimed at addressing pressing social challenges within the community.

“I was also part of a study group that was formed by the Ministry of Chiefs, and Traditional Affairs, in partnership with UNICEF. They wanted to do a new study on child marriage unfortunately for me I was in the beginning stages of the study group, and so when they started the implementation I had left. One thing that I’m proud of, was the fact that I was part of that study group, and now like, the fight against child marriage, in the entire continent, is a big thing.”

Itumeleng Mphure
Exchange Programme Alumni, sayXchange

Curbing anti-social behaviour amongst youths

Volunteering is a social activity which has the potential to contribute to the reduction in anti-social behaviour amongst youths. It presents an excellent opportunity to engage unemployed youths in something productive as opposed to them becoming involved in crime.

"We have a lot of useful youth who are idle, yet they could volunteer and be busy. They loiter in the street, and some of them become delinquent. If some or all of the countries, if they come and actually push, and keep pushing for more volunteerism then the crime rate would just go down drastically. Because a lot of the crime is committed by youths, who are not really bad people, just people who are looking for some excitement or just trying to make ends meet. And once they start volunteering they even have experience, because some here in Kenya even finished university and nobody is employing them..."

Nyaribo Kerubo
Director, ICYE, Kenya



Financial impacts of volunteering

Some host families reported the financial benefit of hosting as an important impact. In a low income home, even a meagre stipend adds to their own income and enables the host family to better support their families whilst hosting the volunteer(s). However, some host families also report feeling burdened by the costs associated with hosting a participant.

The structure of the programme will play a role in the level of burden placed on the host family (or, alternatively, the benefit to the family). If the organisation structures do not clearly determine who is responsible for the associated costs, the burden is likely to fall on the hosts.

"The youths will come from a foreign land and they will pay for their own airfare and when they get here, they are almost expecting their host family to pay for their every other expense, which is not actually how the programme was designed. How the programme was designed is that the hosts would organise activities and in consultation with the student, or youth, to make sure it was affordable for them [...] So, the expectation on the parent, or the host family, is meant to be that they only provide a safe and healthy environment for them to live."

Andrew Palmer
**Multiple District 410 Chairman,
Lion's Exchange International**



CONTRIBUTING TO DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Furthering the goals and aims of the community

When asked during the in-depth interviews, “How do you think exchange programmes can respond to both national goals as well as the goals of communities?”, some organisers indicated that the participants’ experience in another country may encourage them to think about ways in which they can tackle pressing social issues in their own countries.

The exchange experience can be an ideal starting point for young people to consider the concepts and values that they admire in their host country, and how they can implement these in their own communities later on, whilst also becoming conscious of the structural barriers that may hinder development.

“What we saw in Germany, how can we possibly relate it to our own community? What programmes can we have in our immediate community that can possibly work as effectively? I think it’s always going to be a conversation that’s ongoing about ‘what can we do in our own community that we take back from what we did internationally?’ And obviously there are a lot of structural barriers that prevent us from doing things exactly as they are done in Germany, but I think there’s just that conversation that needs to start of: ‘exchange happened, this is what you experienced, but what did you take away?’”

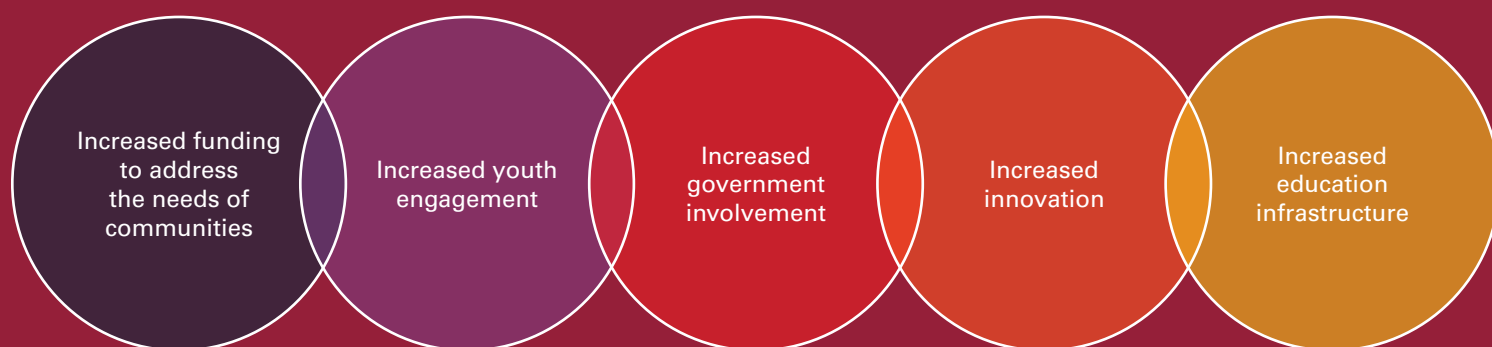
Stephanie Süllwald

**Exchange Programme Alumni,
Tübingen -South Africa Program**



Programmes enable community engagement by collaborating with community members to implement projects and achieve goals, thus creating a shared sense of ownership for the community.

Other means for achieving development goals were:



While some programmes do not specifically align themselves with official development goals, it is promising to see that there are some organisations that are cognisant of the importance of these goals.

Youth exchange organisations have the potential to proactively contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the AU's Agenda 2063 and national development goals, as has been noted by respondents during our research. This is primarily being done through poverty alleviation efforts, work with women and children, and education and skills development.

The Co-founder and Communication Director of the African Network of Young Policy Experts (AfriNYPE) also spoke about the development goals:

"We try to empower young people to participate in the global conferences to participate and promote UN Sustainable Development Goals and AU Agenda 2063 and African Youth Charter. We need funds that can promote youth programmes."

Seleman Kitenge
Co-founder and community director, African Network of Young Policy Experts (AfriNYPE)



Another organisation that aligns itself with development goals is AIESEC. The organisation specifically aligns itself with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations. The following was said by the President Elect of the organisation's South African branch:

"...what we try and do is we align ourselves with the SDG goals of the United Nations. So, what you'll find is most NGOs are actually tackling one of the goals...what we try and do is alert them to the Sustainable Development Goals and how they are actually working to achieve those without even knowing it. Our portal tells us that a certain NGO is working towards a certain goal. So the relationship we have more locally here is to try and find out what are they doing, what's the need they are trying to solve, and then we try aid them in solving that need."

David Canham
President Elect, AIESEC, South Africa



A senior representative from the African Union Youth Volunteer Corps (AU-YVC) spoke about the organisation's development goals. He spoke about the importance of having an African context in mind when developing these goals and when thinking of how to achieve them. He expressed the following:

"We have the Agenda 2063, and its own development trajectories which are overall aligned or similar to SDGs because even with the SDGs...there is an African position. [...] I think when it comes to our continent, the most important fact is that currently, the young population is the largest of our demographics. Under the age of 35, is 65 percent of our population. [...] The question is how does the continent take advantage of the demographic structure of the continent to achieve the development that it needs? And then to focus on the youth and youth development from that and involve Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals."

Daniel Adugna
Programme Officer, AU-YVC



CASE STUDY 1 – AIESEC

AIESEC is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation. It facilitates cross-cultural, cross-border global internships, entrepreneurship and volunteer exchanges for youths from around the world.

DATE ESTABLISHED
1948



AGE OF PARTICIPANTS
18-30



PROGRAMME DURATION
6 weeks - 18 months



KEY PARTNERS



Universities
Corporations
NGOS



OBJECTIVES

To promote peace and enable youths to realise and fulfil their civic capabilities.

To create opportunities for cross-cultural exchanges.

To facilitate the mobility of talented young professionals in global working environments.

To provide a platform for entrepreneurial youths to realise their ideas' potential.

KEY IMPACT AREAS

1.

Being immersed in an environment which was foreign to them, encouraged participants to develop their confidence and self-awareness...

"When I joined AIESEC I was an introvert, being quiet and shy - I wasn't really engaging. [...] one of the foremost things that everybody in AIESEC are believed to develop is their sense of self-awareness which is key especially looking at the youth of today."

Wincate Muthini

Communications and Public Relations Officer, AIESEC

2.

The Global Entrepreneurship programme helps prepare participants for future careers and enables them to achieve key professional competencies...

"I would say leadership qualities, leadership skills, some are small skills in terms of a small team to a national level where I am leading multiple teams; [...] the other thing would be being able to understand the different cultures and working amongst different cultural organisations and being able to drive the ideas forward."

Wincate Muthini

Communications and Public Relations Officer, AIESEC

3.

In its host family selection process, AIESEC also selects non-traditional host families such as homosexual couples. This enables participants to confront certain societally influenced stigmas...

"Participants were hosted by a gay couple, by the end of the 6 weeks they understood and perceived them differently."

David Canham,

Monash President Elect, AIESEC

For more information, visit: <https://aiesec.org/>

CASE STUDY 2 - SAVWA



The South African Volunteer Work Camp (SAVWA) is a youth volunteer organisation which implements development programmes in South African communities through volunteer projects, open to local and international volunteers.

OBJECTIVES

DATE ESTABLISHED
2012



AGE OF PARTICIPANTS
18+



PROGRAMME DURATION
2-3 weeks



KEY PARTNERS



Voluntary-based organisations in
Africa
Europe
Asia

To conduct volunteer youth camps and community driven development projects at all levels.

To establish a sustainable youth orientated volunteer work camp site providing youth with capacity building training and skills development.

To enable youths from around the world to partake in exchange camps and developmental programme activities.

KEY IMPACT AREAS

1.

Participants gained a variety of skills such as cooking, learning to create sustainable vegetable gardens, and improving their communications skills through interactions with volunteers from countries where English is not a first language...

"I find myself communicating with someone who has limited English fluency, so my communication skills have improved. [...] and emotional intelligence because I have different characters on a daily basis I have learnt to be patient and very adaptable in the situations that I come across. [...] I find myself interacting with a lot of community members and it helps me communicate with people on different levels to learn from their perspective."

Ntombifuthi Masemola
Local Volunteer, SAVWA

2.

Although the organisation did not have an official alumni network, local participants remained in contact with the international participants after the programme...

"For international volunteers that we volunteered with, we [are] still in contact. We plan on meeting up and some of them come back and are planning to come back. It is a good relationship; we also share our different problems from a different perspective that has actually helped me a lot as well."

Ntombifuthi Masemola
Local Volunteer, SAVWA

3.

The gardening project that participants were involved in had a significant impact on the community. It provided a source of food for them in light of the poverty the community members experience...

"The focus that we are doing with SAVWA, it has a strong impact on these communities, whenever we do the activity they [the community] are willing to participate and contribute in any way, because they see it's so useful."

Dorcas Pedze
Volunteer Coordinator, SAVWA

For more information, visit: <http://savwa.org.za/>

CASE STUDY 3 - TYCEN

Tanzania Youth Cultural Exchange Network (TYCEN) is a non-governmental youth development organisation based in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. It facilitates volunteer and skills development projects within Tanzanian and also enables Tanzanian youths to take part in mobility experiences in Europe.

DATE ESTABLISHED

2009



AGE OF PARTICIPANTS

18-30



PROGRAMME DURATION

Various programmes (7-21 days, 2-weeks, 1-6 months, 1 year)



KEY PARTNERS

The European Union and Erasmus+
Youth in Action
Green Grant funds
Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA)



OBJECTIVES

To increase the instances of volunteering service and educate youths about its impact on volunteers and various communities.

To assist youth in tackling issues related to civic and community activism.

To promote pride in cultural heritage and cultural awareness through interaction and immersive experiences.

KEY IMPACT AREAS

1.

Participants revealed that their public speaking was enhanced and this in turn boosted their self-confidence...

"I can talk and present anywhere anytime even if it's for an hour or a minute. Secondly my presentation skills are really sharpened and I can say that I really listen well; I can listen and speak out."

Anna Chris Jomalema
Exchange Participant, TYCEN

2.

During the programme, participants were motivated to confront their own challenges, to assign less blame to others and take responsibility for their own lives...

"I learnt to step out of my comfort zone and from then on I was able to confront my own problems better than running away and looking for someone to blame. So after we were able to accept that we are single mother and we are already facing societal problems in our society, that's when we were able to move on to the next step."

Anna Chris Jomalema
Exchange Participant, TYCEN

3.

Participants were truly inspired by what they had learnt from their exchange programme. They felt they gained a new lease on life and experienced real growth...

"It has had an impact on me because when I went there, it is not the way that I came back and I want to share with everybody in the community. I have lots of ideas I want to run, especially the idea about young women to understand themselves - how powerful they are, how strong they are, how good they are."

Hadija Idini Kaija
Exchange Programme Alumni, TYCEN

For more information, visit: <http://tycentanzania.org/>

CASE STUDY 4 - THE TÜBINGEN-SOUTH AFRICA PROGRAM



The **Tübingen-South Africa Program** is a cultural and language exchange programme aimed at exposing South African university students to Germany's historical, cultural, socio-economic and business environment.

DATE ESTABLISHED
2000



AGE OF PARTICIPANTS
18+



PROGRAMME DURATION
4 weeks



KEY PARTNERS



South African Universities

The State of Baden-Württemberg

The Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts of Baden-Württemberg.

German host families

OBJECTIVES

To enable a short-term international studying experience to South African students who have never travelled overseas before.

To provide South African students with an immersive experience of German culture and way of life.

To foster closer ties between South Africa and Germany.

KEY IMPACT AREAS

1.

Participants constantly had opportunities to gain knowledge of German philosophy, politics, history, culture, language, business and music during the course of their exchange programme...

"We went to a German castle, the chocolate factory, we had tours and we went to a few textile factories [...] we had a lady come in and we had a class and she taught us some traditional German folk dances. We had classes for the cultural aspects of that and 2 of the girls who came on the programme then gave us language classes in the evenings."

Stephanie Süllwald
Alumni, TSAP, 2017

2.

Participants felt that the exchange programme opened their mind to a world of possibilities and exposed them to different cultures and ways of living...

"You see something that's not the norm for you but it's the norm for someone else, so you see something that's different but it's the norm there, and it opens up your mind. So I hope more people can go on programmes like these so they can see stuff from an outside perspective which is always great."

Conrad de Kock
Alumni, TSAP, 2017

3.

The exchange programme was well planned and coordinated, which allowed both participants and host organisations to be prepared for what to expect from each other. Host organisations were even afforded the opportunity to engage with participants prior to their exchange...

"I would say the programme was pretty well organised because it has been running for a while now. It's almost 20 years that the programme is running so the people that are running it more or less know what's going to happen and so on."

Conrad de Kock
Alumni, TSAP, 2017

For more information, visit: <http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/en/international/learning-languages/learn-german/short-term-programs/south-africa-program/programm-2018.html>

CASE STUDY 5 - YEU

Youth for Exchange and Understanding (YEU) is an international non-governmental organisation focused on promoting peace and tolerance amongst youth through mobility programmes. The programmes engage youths from around Europe and North Africa to tackle relevant topics and issues.

DATE ESTABLISHED

1986



AGE OF PARTICIPANTS

18-25



PROGRAMME DURATION

Various programmes
(1 week, 7-10 days, 2-3 weeks, 2-52 weeks)



KEY PARTNERS

The Youth Division of the European Union (EU) and Erasmus+
Council of Europe
European Youth Foundation
African Union Commission (AUC)
Member and partner organisations
Programme sponsors



OBJECTIVES

To promote global civic and social youth engagement through non-formal education activities fostering cooperation, mutual respect and understanding.

To stimulate the creation of peaceful societies by promoting peaceful means for conflict resolution.

To improve relations between youths of different cultures and to enhance their levels of tolerance.

KEY IMPACT AREAS

1.

The activities engaged in enhance participants' confidence levels - this improves their communication skills and, in particular, their public speaking skills...

"I was shy and humble in my school years; public speaking was one of the scariest things for me. YEU events and the supportive environment within them allowed me to challenge myself and to develop from being a participant to being an active participant, and then later an organizer of exchanges and even later – into trainer and facilitator of international events."

Marius Ulozas

Former Vice President, YEU
(quote extracted from YEU website)

2.

The mobility programme provides an environment for participants to freely challenge and interrogate their preconceived ideas or beliefs about certain topics or societal groups, for the better...

"People say, I got to learn about this country, I got to understand that it's not always what you see, but there are more diversities within people, so you build within the personality of the person but also the impact to the society overall."

Panagiotis Chatzmichail
Policy Advisor, YEU

3.

In response to the migrant crisis, YEU implemented a mobility programme in 2014 to address local communities' socio-economic circumstances; while continuing to develop participants' skills through non-formal education techniques...

"As we tackle topics that have to do with personal development and also understanding within communities and societies you bring a person in a person in a short term period to take themselves out of their everyday lives to tackle a topic that affects society."

Panagiotis Chatzmichail
Policy Advisor, YEU

For more information, visit: <http://www.yeu-international.org/>

CASE STUDY 6 - YFU



Youth for Understanding (YFU) is an organisation that provides exchange programmes aimed at promoting cultural awareness and learning, allowing students the opportunity to study abroad or volunteer a year, semester or summer in a foreign country.

DATE ESTABLISHED

1951



AGE OF PARTICIPANTS

15-18



PROGRAMME DURATION

Various programmes (1-3 months, 6 months, 10-12 months)



KEY PARTNERS

Partner countries from around the world

NGOs

Universities

Schools

Private businesses



OBJECTIVES

To enable participants to act as an ambassador for themselves, their communities and their countries.

To understand and challenge current youth perspectives and provide them with a holistic worldview.

To advance intercultural awareness

KEY IMPACT AREAS

1.

Partner organisations expressed their satisfaction with YFU, in that the organisation had a management and support system in place for both volunteers and partner organisations within individual countries...

"The fact that you've got your director in country is also excellent and the fact that there's emergency numbers they support and their offices from their country also support."

Yvonne Mathieson

Volunteer Manager, Durbanville Children's Home (YFU partner)

2.

YFU partner organisations tend to generate revenue through sponsorships and donations. However, these funding mechanisms have been affected by the changing global financial landscape and have thus resulted in diminished funds from their donors and partners...

"I'm having a problem of trying to raise funds[...] The international students always come to our country I've never had a case where we take our local students to go to international countries[...] I think if we can work on that and say "let us work on raising funds to send South African students to international countries."

Koketso Rakhudu Goodwill

Programmes Development and Executive Director for Koketso Rakhudu Foundation and Partner-YFU

3.

The exchange programme had a significant impact on the lives of participants as well as host families. A strong bond developed during the exchange between participants and host families that continued for participants following the exchange programme...

"Almost 9-10 years later I still have contact with, with my family and they are still my "parents" and they once paid, I think for two years, they paid for my varsity fees and every time I need something I know that I am able to consult them, and they act instantly. For me, that is the most important and that is what I hold dear to heart."

Vincent Mohibidu

Alumnus-Participant, YFU

For more information, visit: <https://yfu.org/>

CASE STUDY 7 - WELTWÄRTS

weltwärts is a development-focused volunteer service organisation which primarily sends and receives youth volunteers from Germany and global South countries. The organization was originally established by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

DATE ESTABLISHED

2008



AGE OF PARTICIPANTS

18-28



PROGRAMME DURATION

6-24 months



KEY PARTNERS



The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

Various hosting and sending partners



OBJECTIVES

To place volunteers in specific projects and provide opportunities for them to take ownership and commit to a project goal.

To promote inter-cultural awareness and the exchange of ideas, beliefs and perspectives.

To nurture the youth's interest in the development field from a social and even professional perspective.

KEY IMPACT AREAS

1.

weltwärts volunteers report a change in their perceptions, attitudes and values due to being exposed to different cultures and mindsets.

"Life in a completely different culture and meeting people from around the world have greatly changed my views. I have come to realize that people are somehow all the same, even if they have different habits."

Jessica, Germany

Interview extracted from weltwärts website

2.

weltwärts alumni have also been able to make use of the contacts they made in Germany to put their social capital to use within their local communities once they return home.

"One of them [South African alumni] came back and started his own project... He has his own dance project in Gugulethu here in Cape Town, so he came back and really became an active guy in his community, with very little resources, but because he had connections in Germany and really made use of them while he was there, he's got a lot of support and planning from that side."

Dambisa Dube

Network Coordinator,
Southern African weltwärts
Network (SAwN)

3.

Volunteers reported finding a sense of comfort in the personal networks they built up whilst in Germany.

"Most of the people there are very open. That kind of thing is encouraging and helps you to keep going in difficult moments. The teaching staff, how shall I put it, has become somewhat of a second family, or rather: simply very, very good friends."

Bettina, Cameroon

Interview extracted from weltwärts website

For more information, visit: <https://www.weltwaerts.de/en/>

CASE STUDY 8 – AU-YVC



The African Union Youth Volunteer Corps (AU-YVC) is a development programme for African youths who wish to engage in volunteer work across the African Union's (AU) member states. It actively promotes volunteering to empower young people to be key players in Africa's development.

DATE ESTABLISHED
2010



AGE OF PARTICIPANTS
18-35



PROGRAMME DURATION
12 months



KEY PARTNERS



AU member states
Host organisations
The Youth Division of the African Union Commission
Programme Sponsors

OBJECTIVES

To pave the way for young Africans to act as agents of change, engaging in voluntary service for the betterment of the continent.

To nurture a conducive environment which enables the learning and sharing of hard and soft skills.

To foster a shared sense of unity and values and promote Pan-Africanism amongst African youth.

KEY IMPACT AREAS

1.

The programme boasts high rates of participant retention within their host organisations as well as enhanced employment opportunities for participants who return to their home countries...

"More than half of our volunteers get absorbed after they have finished [their volunteer posting] so this provides a stepping stone into career paths. Many of them [...] will go on to continue working in international organisations because of their exposure and experience they now have at the continental level..."

Daniel Adugna

Programme Officer, AU-YVC

2.

AU-YVC participants reported greater interest in utilising the knowledge and skills they developed during the programme to continue acts of service within their communities...

"I used my experience to create community solutions in farming and agribusiness training for young people. I also used the experience to encourage more people to take part in exchange programs and volunteerism both local and abroad because it expands their world view and ability to solve problems."

Web Survey

AU-YVC, Participant

3.

The AU-YVC prides itself on aligning its programme with the development objectives of the African Union's Agenda 2063 strategy...

"We have the Agenda 2063, and its own development trajectories [...] The young population is the largest of our demographics. The question is how does the continent take advantage of the demographic structure of the continent to achieve the development that it needs? And then to focus on the youth and youth development from that and involve Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals."

Daniel Adugna

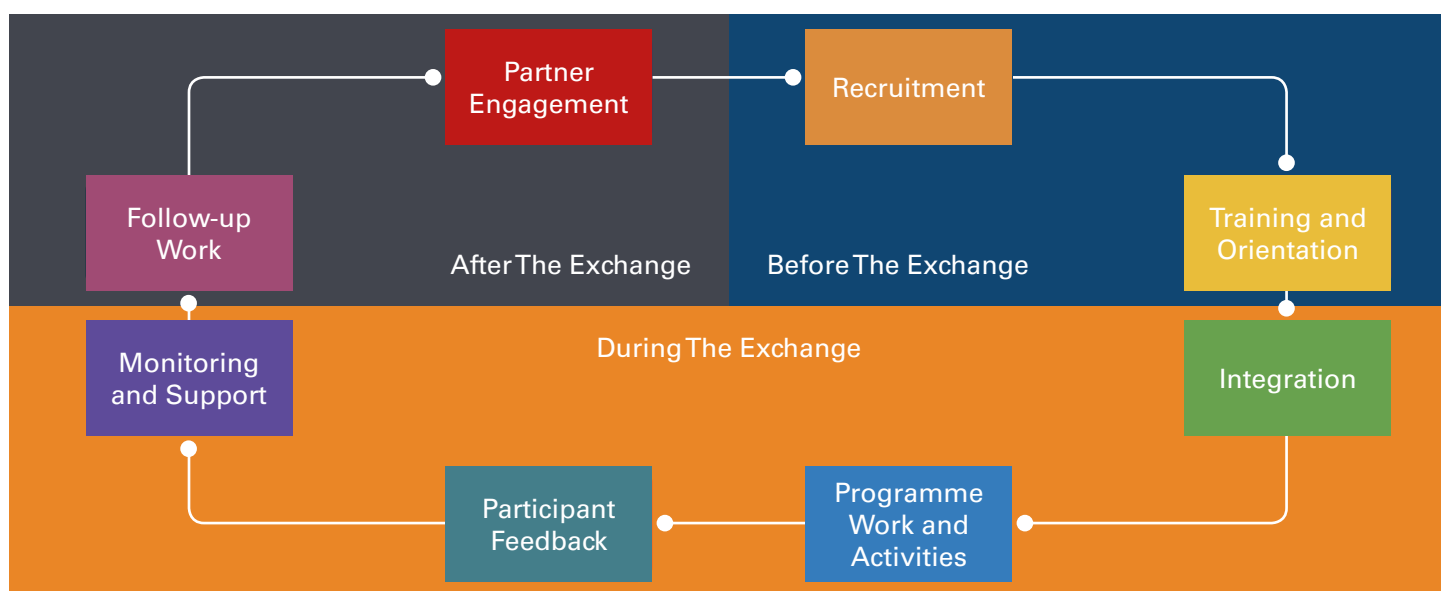
Programme Officer, AU-YVC

For more information, visit: <https://au.int/en/volunteer/african-union-youth-volunteer-corps>

INTRODUCTION

This section proposes a set of ‘best practices’ and recommendations that emerged from the different programmes included in our research. These practices cover all aspects of the youth exchange cycle, spanning programme design and recruitment, through to post-programme activities.

It is key from the outset that the strategic approach to youth exchange in Africa is holistic, since all aspects of the cycle are very closely interconnected and thus interdependent. Design influences recruitment, which in turn influences participant performance, which in turn influences programme impact, and so on.



The Youth Exchange Programme Cycle

At the beginning of the cycle, participants are **recruited** with specific long-term goals and strategies in mind. These are informed by consultation and feedback with partner organisations, participants and community members. Once suitable participants have been recruited, they are adequately prepared for the programme and will undertake **training and orientation**. Ideally, participants design a learning journey for the exchange.

Once on the programme, participants are **integrated** into both the host organisation and community and begin to undertake programme activities. These processes are aided by ongoing **monitoring and support** of participants, as well as reflection and learning. **Feedback** is gathered in the form of insights and perspectives from participants, partner organisations and community members.

Evaluation of this feedback – particularly from participants - should continue throughout the cycle and inform refinement of each aspect of the programme.

Once the programme is concluded, participants should be reintegrated into their home communities and use their new-found knowledge and skills through suitable **follow-up work**. Lastly, **partners engage** to review outcomes and processes through meetings, seminars and workshops. This facilitates knowledge sharing and continuous refinement of exchange programmes.

RECRUITMENT

Diversify recruitment strategies -

According to the surveys, participants listed social media and the programme's website as the most popular source of information. However, organisations that report the most success do not limit their recruitment strategies to a single method, but instead utilise various channels, both internally and across their networks, depending on the target audience.

"If it's international volunteers, it's through our partner organisations. [For] regional [volunteers it] is our partner organisation that recruits. For the local participants it's SAVWA that recruits. We also advertise through Facebook."



Dorcas Jena Pedze, Founding Member

South African Volunteer Work Association (SAVWA)

"[Adequately informing potential volunteers] will cut down on your huge culture shock and your number of volunteers not fulfilling their commitment to the NGOs."

Yvonne Mathieson

Volunteer Manager, Durbanville Children's Home (YFU partner)



Make information packs comprehensive and easily accessible-

Many Africans still lack reliable access to internet, thus an information pack containing relevant programme information should be easily accessible and distributable as an online and offline package (in PDF or image format). By outlining the structure and expectations of the programme, participants already know what is expected of them and are less likely to neglect their responsibilities.

Ensure both host and sending organisations' expectations are clearly expressed-

Host organisations should have greater involvement in the selection, recruitment and orientation of international participants. However, the sending organisation should also benefit from the exchange. With this in mind, they should recruit participants that will not only suit the host organisation but those that will also contribute to their own developmental goals.

"Children that are placed in the children's home are already suffering from abuse, from the lack of trust [...] Placing the wrong volunteers that haven't been prepared, that haven't been screened can really damage a child and put the child at risk [...] There has to be very strict parameters around that."

Yvonne Mathieson

Volunteer Manager, Durbanville Children's Home (YFU partner)



Formulate and utilise suitable selection criteria –

These should be based on what the programme aims to achieve and look to filter out potentially unsuitable participants. Exchange and volunteer programmes can be demanding, with participants often spending an extended period of time away from home in a completely unfamiliar environment. Therefore, selecting individuals with the correct temperament and intentions is vital. Making expectations clear to participants upfront potentially serves as a screening process for individuals who might not be suitable.

TRAINING & ORIENTATION

Provide orientation classes –

Cultural sensitivity training and language orientation is critical to minimising culture-shock on arrival and to ease integration into the local community by enabling communication with locals. It is also important to prepare participants in terms of global learning and developing a learning journey for the experience. This needs to be implemented strategically, by the sending organisation, from a perspective of deep understanding of the host country. Understanding the socio-economic situation of the community in which they will be entering into will reduce unrealistic and idealistic expectations that participants might have of the host community.



“We have to tell you how you behave in other countries - what you are to do, what you’re not supposed to do because again one of the main aims is for you to learn from other cultures, you don’t necessarily have to accept, but you have to learn because one of the reasons why there is so much conflict is because people don’t understand other cultures.”

David Canham

President Elect, AIESEC

“The aim of these orientation programs is to prepare the students on what to expect when they get to their host countries and on the realities they might face when they get there”

Jaymion Hendricks, Chairman

Youth For Understanding (YFU)



Additionally, sending organisations should ensure an onboarding process regarding the host organisation’s expectations and rules, in order to minimise misunderstandings or disagreements that could lead to conflict between participants and staff. The majority of organisations provide information packages and engage in some form of mentoring of participants prior to the exchange.

Where possible, simulate programme environment and activities -

This could involve participants sharing a room or living space with an individual from another country or similar work activities to those on the exchange. In this way, participants learn what is required of them in terms of work, their specific roles, tasks and responsibilities.

Organisations should also provide staff with information about the country that participants are coming from and sensitise them in preparation for potential issues that may arise in the working relationship.

INTEGRATION & PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Carry out a post-arrival orientation –

This should take place to familiarise the volunteers with the structure of the organisation, the staff and working activities as well as the skills and capabilities of the participants. The web surveys indicate that the biggest challenges perceived by participants and alumni was that the organisation failed to effectively make use of their knowledge and skills.

Integrate participants into work routines, social environment and the community -

In order to not feel alienated, participants need to be integrated into the professional routines, as well as the social environment of the organisation. Introductory seminars and meetings held by the host organisation should make up part of the integration process. This allows participants to become familiar with the ins and outs of the organisation and local community from the beginning. It also serves as a way to elucidate the participant's role within the organisation.

"[In] the post-arrival orientation, we discuss cultural shock [sic] , the South African way, the dangers in South Africa, the family set-ups in South Africa, the different ones because there are many, with all the cultures etc. languages, schools, church and so on and so forth. Everything they sort of find, and I'm using a word again, 'weird' compared to what's back home."

Rouet Du Plessis

**Volunteer and Communications Coordinator,
Youth For Understanding (YFU)**

"We get feedback [from participants] and the questions are centred around the administration of the programme and the smooth working during their application, the topics covered in our induction, the quality of our teams and trainers, the quality of content and whether YFU lives up to their expectations, visions and mission. They rate the school and host situation in which they are in, so three of those are done in a year with the biggest one being done at the end of the year."

Jaymion Hendricks, Chairman

Youth For Understanding (YFU)

Carry out assessments regularly -

Participants should be evaluated periodically throughout the programme to assess performance, impact, level of integration and other relevant factors. The benefits of evaluative structures include evaluating the participant's performance and achievement of set goals, judging the participant's evolution, as well as creating an appropriate platform to allow participants to voice their issues, concerns and intentions. Evaluating participants from the beginning of the programme allows their progress and development to be tracked, as well as identify events that have a significant impact, both positive and negative. Regular assessments of the learning process is also critical, particularly to help continually refine the learning journey of participants.

Employ different methods to gather feedback -

These evaluative techniques could be conducted online or even on a mobile website. However, they are also suited to in-depth interviews or focus group discussions. The format in which these evaluations are undertaken will be informed by the subject of the evaluation. Broad and large-scale issues that affect the organisation or community can be approached through a focus group, while personal development issues should be addressed privately.

PROGRAMME WORK & ACTIVITIES

Have clear, well-defined and realistic goals -

There should be unambiguous pathways that illustrate how the goals will be achieved, and the roles that different actors will play. The benefit of a youth exchange programme is directly related to how well the participants are managed and guided, and the impact the organisation and its programme/s have on those participants.

Provide participants with appropriate levels of guidance and supervision -

Organisations must plan the manner in which participants will be used within the organisation through consultation with the staff. The amount of guidance and supervision provided to volunteers should be dependent on their level of experience. When supervising inexperienced volunteers, organisations should find a balance between flexibility and structure: providing them enough guidance to learn and avoid frustration through lack of direction, but also enough freedom and responsibility to allow for learning and the experiencing of self-sufficiency.

Allow the programme focus and objectives to determine the duration -

From an organisation's perspective, shorter programmes allow a higher turnover of participants if the goal is to reach as many individuals as possible. Additionally, a short-term programme is less demanding in terms of the time participants are required to commit, thereby making the programme more accessible to those who cannot attend for an extended period of time.

"It's not about duration. It's about how do you assure quality mobility and quality education with the appropriate methodologies - in our case non-formal education methodologies. You do see cases where people like to be mobile with short term [programmes] because it allows them to be more free with their everyday lives like their studies, their work etc."

Panagiotis Chatzmichael, Policy Officer
Youth for Exchange and Understanding (YEU)

For school exchanges, an ideal time-span is 6-12 months, although there are much shorter school exchanges. This timeframe allows students to attend a school abroad for a semester or full year. For volunteering and service projects, this length of time generally allows participants to settle and begin to have an impact. Shorter programmes can be disruptive not only for the organisation, as they often need to retrain and orientate new team members, but also for those on the receiving end of the service, particularly where vulnerable children are concerned. Safeguards need to be put in place to prevent such situations, although such steps do have financial implications.

"I chose this programme because this programme promotes the integration of young people in the professional environment because today... young people often encounter problems after their university training... they are asked to have a professional experience to be recruited. So, this grass-roots programme has been created for that and I am proud to be part of the family of young volunteers of the African Union."

Web Survey,
AU-YVC Participant

Align soft-skills and career training programmes with industry demands -

Soft skills are often seen as a by-product of volunteering and exchange programmes. Consequently, organisations pursuing youth empowerment and employability programmes can make these more of a priority. Host organisations should work in consultation with the private sector to ascertain the desirable skills.

Provide ongoing, quality support -

Where requested by the participants, be it in a personal or professional capacity, the organisation should endeavour to provide support. Younger participants in particular, should be checked on regularly to ensure they are coping emotionally as they tend to encounter difficulties with spending extended periods of time away from home.

For the duration of the exchange, the participants should be monitored to not only ensure they are meeting their responsibilities but also that they are coping in their new environment. This can take the form of regular meetings with a liaison, who will also serve as a contact point from whom participants can get information or can approach with any issues.

“Throughout the programme we have seminars that we do and [...] check on them and see how they are doing, getting their feedback on culture shock and things like that.”



Rouet Du Plessis

**Volunteer and Communications Coordinator,
Youth For Understanding (YFU)**

“We make sure that we are always up to date with the volunteer activities and we often assess their performance. That requires a weekly debriefing and an overall performance assessment after the programme.”



**Horacio Bonny, National Correspondent
AJUDE Mozambique**

Conduct monitoring and evaluation against pre-set goals -

The web surveys indicated that there can be a disconnect between the perceptions of organisers and participants in terms of success of the programme. It is therefore important to have mechanisms for participants to provide feedback about the various elements of the programme from their point of view. Mid-term meetings with participants allows them the opportunity to reflect on the work they have done and outline what they would still like to do.

FOLLOW-UP WORK

Conduct debriefing seminars and reintegration activities -

Returning volunteers should partake in debriefing seminars and activities. For those who have been away for extended periods of time, this should form part of the reintegration process to deal with “reverse culture-shock” while also leveraging the learning journey. Organisations can arrange social events where returnees can meet with others who have been on exchanges and share experiences.

“In the past we found that some kids went off the rails because they weren’t assisted in reintegrating back into society”



Terry Cannon

Youth Exchange Chairperson, Rotary

“I’ve seen people really changing their capabilities and capacities, so as an organisation that works with and for young people the best thing to do is put them within the network and make them feel a part of the bigger family that YEU is. Even if their capacities are minor to [the] needs of the organisation, there’s space in the organisation that they can contribute. It’s vital that you offer possibilities to these young people to be part [of]. ”



Panagiotis Chatzmichael, Policy Officer

Youth for Exchange and Understanding (YEU)

Promote retention and channel new-found skills -

The organisation benefits from making use of participants’ new-found skills and interests, either within the organisation itself or by facilitating action in his/her local community. Many organisations integrate alumni within their programme which serves to further their development. Other post-programme support may include access to alumni networks, career guidance, and links to jobs.

“Our Chairman is a perfect example, an exchange student that had gone to Germany came back and today he is Chairman of the YFU.”



Nina Voges,

National Coordinator, Youth For Understanding (YFU)

Alumni can be hugely beneficial to an organisation, if managed properly. They can be a source of funding, an advocate for the programme or even go on to be involved in the organisation in some capacity, highlighting the importance of engaging with them wherever possible.

PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

Engage meaningfully to continuously drive improvement -

To maximise the benefit for both parties, there must be sufficient and equitable interface between the sending and host organisations in designing and implementing the programme to reflect the requirements of both parties.

"Some of them ask for the volunteers and then they don't give them enough back. We say the volunteers should work about 35 hours a week. And when they come they are not maybe given enough work that will make their exchange programme meaningful."



Ronald Mobisa, Chairman
ICYE Kenya

"At the end of the year we sit down in meetings and have feedback from the whole year [with our partners]. Our programs run from January until December so this time is mainly meetings and feedback from different organisations. We do the evaluations and take all the feedback, discuss ways forward, what needs to be done or what needs to be changed"



Dorcas Jena Pedze, Founding Member
South African Volunteer Work Association (SAVWA)

Partner organisations must prepare host communities to participate in programmes and lay the groundwork for improved co-operation. In addition, partner investment in the training of both project staff, and the allocation of supervisors with appropriate skills, will help strengthen exchange programmes. In consultation with its partners, the host organisation should work to address any issues that are present. Feedback from participants should be analysed and presented to partners where relevant. The feedback from the involved parties should then be used to jointly plan the next programme cycle.

Use stakeholder meetings to encourage co-ownership of mission -

Stakeholder meetings ensure that all involved parties have a say and are satisfied with the design and running of the programme

Meetings should be held between relevant stakeholders to plan programmes and review feedback from past programme cycles. These meetings can also be used to train partners in their organisation's vision and mission and provide a platform to discuss challenges the organisation faced in previous cycles.

"Another thing is to create more partnerships with projects that are well established. When these projects take the volunteers, they reduce the costs borne by the [smaller] exchange organisation. We have not created a forum where we can come together and see what kind of activities can be jointly undertaken to reduce operational costs. So each exchange organisation works on its own. If we worked together [...] we can [...] create cost effectiveness which would be a saving to these organisations."

Matthew Kiln
Exchange Programme Alumni,
Michaelhouse



Remember: Collaboration, not competition, is key! -

Programmes working with the youth across the continent all have the same overarching objectives at heart – to empower them and address fundamental development issues such as youth unemployment. Therefore, they should not work in isolation, but work together to lower costs and increase impact.

The findings of this study have been overwhelmingly positive - indicating that youth exchange and volunteering in Africa has had significant impacts on participants, organisations and communities. Youths reported valuable personal and professional development, citing benefits such as increased confidence, enhanced social awareness and the ability to view themselves as agents of change. Quite notably, the reported professional growth, skills development and opportunities highlight the immense potential of these programmes as a mechanism to address Africa's alarmingly high rates of youth unemployment.

However, it is clear that youth exchange programmes still have a way to go in order to scale and truly optimise their impact on African youths, as well as contribute meaningfully to community, national and continental development goals.

As such, we wish to highlight the following key conclusions and recommended next steps drawn from the research:



Programmes will greatly benefit from open dialogue between all stakeholders within the youth exchange and volunteering environment. The accessibility of information about best practices, experiences, challenges and successes will enable organisations to make informed decisions regarding the functioning and continuous improvement of their programmes. Such open dialogue will also facilitate better-aligned expectations between host organisations, sending organisations and participants.



This report and similar research that has been conducted in the past contains key data and insights on the needs and experiences of African youths and communities. This provides a strong basis for programmes to understand the needs, perspectives and concerns of the communities in which they operate, and how their programmes can directly address them. These can and should be incorporated into future youth exchange strategies, as well as help guide future research on this topic.



In this vein, programme organisers should explore the establishment and strengthening of networks and partnerships with other organisations with the same goals, visions and objectives. The benefits to be gained from these synergies include pooling of resources, increased access to finances and knowledge sharing. This is a crucial advantage, especially in light of the fact that a lack of funding has been lamented as a significant limitation for both programmes and participants.



Similarly, facilitating involvement of the private sector as sponsors, partners and ambassadors will be key in furthering the objectives of youth exchange programmes in Africa, particularly relating to increasing employment and funding opportunities. Support from corporates through internship programmes and employment opportunities for youth exchange alumni, for example, would be highly beneficial.



Finally, youth exchange stakeholders should proactively and collectively work to increase government support of volunteer and youth exchange programmes – specifically relating to policy and funding. Governments need to be made more aware of the value of volunteerism, exchange programmes and youth training, in achieving key development goals.

This impact analysis would not have been possible without the amazing respondents who took part – especially the 66 individuals who took the time to provide in-depth interviews with the IOA team. It is therefore fitting for this publication to conclude with two final quotes from youth exchange alumni:

“I think often in life, people aren’t that different no matter where you go in the world. People still have the same needs, the same wants... people still struggle with stuff. And I think that is what the point of exchange was, to show the heart of people to other people and show that we are actually not that different although our challenges may come in different forms. Everyone has challenges and everyone has good parts as well.”

Matthew Kiln

**Exchange Programme Alumni,
Michaelhouse**



“The fact that back home I did not sit and wait for things to happen. I continue the role that I have created for myself. I sometimes want to call myself a success story.”

Nancy John Kataraihya

**Exchange Programme Alumni,
TYCEN**



RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

While our research was carefully planned and implemented to ensure well-informed insights, the following limitations should be noted:

- The research aimed to include insights from as many youth exchange programmes as possible - with more than 30 organisations surveyed – but many, many other similar organisations exist across the continent and our results are thus not representative of all programmes.
- Though we conducted extensive in-depth interviews, speaking with 66 key informants, the majority of interviews were conducted with staff, organisers and participants. Only eight of the interviews conducted were with partners and local community members.
- African Union Youth Volunteer Corps (AU-YVC) participants made up more than three-quarters of the survey sample of current participants, thus potentially skewing these results. That said, the alumni web survey was far more evenly distributed.
- Though the online surveys and in-depth interviews generally achieved a good sample spread across the continent, North African programmes were not well represented.

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