

OF MICE AND MODEMS

AN EVALUATION OF THE VSO-ACACIA-SCHOOLNET INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This evaluation report owes a debt of gratitude to all the organizational stakeholder representatives involved in the program for giving of their time in responding to the research requirements. These include representatives from SchoolNet South Africa and its Provincial School Networks, the IDRC Acacia Program and VSO Canada. A special thanks is due to all the volunteers and local interns who spoke honestly and passionately about their experiences with the VASIP. We appreciate their support for the research and their understanding that despite the difficulties faced in the program, it had successes on which future initiatives can build.

We also acknowledge the constructive contribution by Noor Nieftagodien who worked with the reference team for this evaluation, in conceptualizing the study, conducting the field work and for writing the bulk of the research report.

Thanks also to Stephanie Steward from VSO Canada who worked with Noor on this evaluation project from conceptual stage to the assisting with writing the report. Her insights certainly added value to the final outcome of the study.

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IDRC Acacia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The research for the evaluation was conducted by Stephanie Stewart (of VSO) and Noor Nieftagodien (an independent consultant). The main findings of the research may be summarised as follows:

- The objectives of the programme were clearly articulated from the outset in the documents and pronouncements of the stakeholders.
- However, the aims and objectives seemed not to have been as clearly communicated to all participants. As a result role-players sometimes emphasised different aspects of these objectives, thereby lending varying interpretations to the objectives. Thus some volunteers believed they were establishing tele-centres in South Africa. There was also differing views among Provincial School Net (PSN) participants about the objectives.
- The conceptualisation of the programme went well but there was a perception among South African stakeholders that they were not sufficiently included in this crucial process. Thus the concept of the VSO/ Acacia SchoolNet Internship Program (VASIP) being a partnership between Canadian and South African stakeholders was undermined. This added to the concern, articulated by various South African participants, that there was not adequate local input in the programme.
- The selection of volunteers and interns was relatively successful. The criteria and procedures used in the selection of the volunteers were especially effective, as they were based on long-standing practices. However, too little attention was given to the managerial and communicative (or perhaps social) skills of the volunteers, which created problems further down the line during the twinning process.
- The preparation and training of volunteers in Canada were effective. The volunteers felt, in retrospect, that too little attention was given in the training programme to familiarising them with conditions in South Africa. As a result they were often ill-prepared for the conditions under which they were expected to function, especially those who worked in the remote provinces.
- The main host organisation, SchoolNet did not have the requisite capacity to handle the programme effectively. It was found wanting in a number of important respects, including lack of personnel dedicated to the programme, lack of funding, absence of expertise to manage the programme and non-existent support systems. SchoolNet acknowledged these shortcomings and efforts were made to redress them. It took some time, however, for the appropriate systems to be put in place, resulting in various avoidable problems arising during the course of implementation.
- There were wide disparities between the PSN (access to transport, proper accommodation, social life and general facilities required for skills development)

which determined the success of the programme. Those in PSNs located in the main urban centres registered important success whereas those in the remote, rural-based provinces experienced much greater difficulties.

- Therefore the twinning process in the urban centres often worked well and most of the objectives of the programme were met. Interns received training, ICT hubs in participating schools were serviced and managed, volunteers engaged communities and learnt about their hosts lifestyles and cultures. Success in these areas was clearly demonstrated and measurable. In the other areas, the twinning process ranged from non-existent to problem-ridden relations between the local participants, rendering the exercise futile in some instances.
- The VASIP therefore had mixed successes. Its success depended fundamentally on whether SchoolNet and the PSN had managed to put in place the necessary systems to make the programme work. Relations between different participants, especially volunteers and PSN representatives, were also crucial in determining the outcome of the programme. Notwithstanding the often divergent views about the practical implementation of the programme, there was unanimous enthusiasm about it and a strong desire was expressed about the necessity to continue and replicate it.
- The model of enskilling, at the core of which was the twinning of Canadian volunteers and South African interns, was effective where the appropriate support mechanisms were in place.

Chapter One

Introduction

The VSO-Acacia-SchoolNet Internship Programme (VASIP) was a pilot project initiated by various Canadian (IDRC/Acacia, Netcorps, VSO Canada) and South African (SchoolNet South Africa) stakeholders. The pilot programme was conceived in 1998, planned in 1999 and implemented in 2000.

This is an evaluation of the project during the twelve month period of its implementation. The evaluation is intended to inform stakeholders of the viability of such a programme in order to inform future initiatives at building Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills among youth in Africa, and South Africa in particular.¹

This evaluation report is accompanied by an 11 minutes video, entitled *Of Mice and Modems*.

1.1 Background

The programme was conceived in the context of increasing globalisation, a salient feature of which has been the technological revolution. Reflecting on the character of the modern world economy, Manuel Castells has argued that 'the entire planet is organised around telecommunicated networks of computers at the heart of information systems and communication processes. The entire realm of human activity depends on the power of information, in a sequence of technological information that accelerates its pace by month.'²

The emergence of a new 'knowledge-based' economy has been transformative but has also widened the existing chasm between the advanced and the developing/under-developed economies. The 'digital divide', which is characterised by the lack of access to information and the dearth of technical skills in poorer countries, reflects the historical socio-economic disparities in the world. According to Castells ICT can play a crucial role in stimulating development, but that it is a 'two-edged sword'. Those countries that are able to modernise their production systems can leapfrog stages of economic growth. But, he warns, 'for those economies that are unable to adapt to the new technological system, their retardation becomes cumulative. Furthermore, the ability to move into the Information Age depends on the capacity of the whole society to be educated, and to be able to assimilate and process complex information. This starts with the education system, from the bottom up, from the primary school to the university...'³

Among the technologically marginalised regions of the world, Africa is evidently the most disadvantaged. Castells has described Africa's deprived status as a 'technological

apartheid'.⁴ The technological revolution that has transformed the functioning of modern society has to a large extent bypassed the majority of Africans. Pervasive poverty and dire lack of education and skills among the continent's population have compounded this problem. In Sub-Saharan Africa only 5,05 out of 1000 people have personal computers, compared to 195,37 in the OECD (46,10 in East Asia).⁵ The table below graphically illustrates the extent of the global digital divide.

Differences in ICT access, 1998⁶
(Internet hosts per 10 000 people, all others per 1000 people)

	Mobile phones	Personal Computers	Telephone mainlines	Internet hosts
United Kingdom	252	263	557	270.6
Czech Republic	94	97.3	364	85.58
United States	256	458.6	661	1 508.77
Canada	176	330	634	422.97
Malaysia	99	58.6	198	23.53
South Africa	56	47.4	115	33.36
Nigeria	0	5.7	4	0
Senegal	2	11.4	16	0.28
Namibia	12	18.6	69	11.73
Tanzania	1	1.6	4	0.05

Youth are especially affected by this malaise, but they also represent the possibility of Africa becoming part of the global technological revolution. Over 50% of Africa's population is under the age of 25 years. By drawing African youth into the global ICT network it becomes possible to halt and even to reverse the continent's technological 'retardation'.

Development agencies and other international institutions have recognised these realities and have made various efforts to bridge the digital divide. Thus Kofi Anan, the United Nations General Secretary, has exhorted the advanced countries to send an ICT Peace Corps to Africa to assist the continent's people. There is a growing consensus among these organisations that education and training - 'from the bottom up' - constitute the principal strategies to challenge and overcome Africa's technological lag. It was in this context, for example, that IDRC launched Acacia in 1997 'to promote community empowerment through the use of ICTs in Africa.'⁷

Another key aspect in this strategy has been the use of volunteers from the developed countries to assist in the skills development youth in developing countries. The concept of voluntarism of course precedes the current efforts to use volunteers in ICT skills development. In fact, the seeds for the idea of a programme like VASIP were sown several years ago, even prior to the advent of the Acacia programme. According to an IDRC interviewee:

The IDRC has been involved in promoting "volunteerism" and "internships" - both Canadian and from Developing countries and both within Canada and within developing regions, essentially since its inception in 1970. It has an in-house unit within Ottawa that is and has been, involved in all areas of fellowships, awards, and other related training and internships. IDRC has been part of the Canadian international development community which has been promoting exchanges and "twinning" of young people from Canada and around the world through linkages with Canadian and International NGOs, the Canadian Government, and the Canadian private sector. So it is not new to the concepts or objectives of youth programmes or internship/volunteer programmes.⁸

A central feature of IDRC's volunteer programme has been the twinning of Canadian volunteers and interns from the host countries. Originally volunteers were drafted on the basis of their demonstrating a commitment to a broad developmental project. Such (classic) volunteers were often not paid for their services. Although support for the objectives of development remains a pre-requisite for volunteering, there is now also at least equal emphasis placed on the volunteers' technical skills. Their ability to transfer ICT skills to youth in Africa and elsewhere has assumed critical importance. Unlike previous volunteers despatched to developing countries, the current volunteers are paid for their services.

1.2 The Origins of VASIP

VASIP was conceived as a response to the call urgently to redress Africa's ICT skills deficit. The twin impulses that gave birth to the programme have their origins in the Canadian ICT skills development and volunteer agency networks and the South African schools skills development programme. VASIP is a project initiated and supported by Industry Canada and IDRCs Acacia programme. The pilot project involved sending 18 young Canadian IT experts to work alongside 9 African youth to exchange ICT skill and cultural experience. The twinning of the Canadian and African youth occurred at schools that are linked to SchoolNet South Africa.

VSO Canada has been a member of the NetCorps Coalition since the inception of the programme in 1998. To date, VSO Canada has sent close to 50 interns overseas through numerous partnerships. The NetCorps programme pilot in 1997-8 placed a total of 14 interns (VSO Canada sent two of those interns to South Africa in partnership with SchoolNet South Africa and funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). At that time the NetCorps coalition consisted of 6 development NGO's (Alternatives, Canada World Youth, CUSO, Oxfam-Quebec, VSO Canada and WUSC).

In 1999 Industry Canada's Information Highway Branch assumed funding for the programme through Human Resources and Development Canada's (HRDC) Youth Employment Strategy (YES) programme. The programme - NetCorps Canada International (NCI) was contracted to place 255 interns during each of the subsequent two Fiscal Years. VSO Canada's commitment was to send 25 of those 255 interns. Due to this significant rise in internships, the coalition recruited three new agencies. At the

beginning of that year Canadian Crossroads International, Human Rights Internet and the Canadian Society for International Health joined the coalition.

1.3 Overview of Canadian Perspective of Programme

The partnership between the IDRC and VSO Canada presented both organizations with an opportunity to collaborate on a programme that had the potential to impact positively on the lives of Canadian and South African youth. The programmatic objectives of the IDRC's Acacia and VSO Canada's NetCorps programme overlapped in such a way that even those objectives that differed could be met through the collaboration.

From VSO's perspective, as the number of VSO internships grew from two (during the 1998 NetCorps pilot) to 25, it was practical to enter into a partnership that enabled VSO to place the majority of its volunteers with one Partner Organization. This allowed VSO to focus its attention and resources on one country and to build a strong new partnership.

VSO Canada's objectives when entering into this partnership were largely driven by the Industry Canada and Human Resources and Development Canada (HRDC) objectives for NetCorps Canada International. As a YES programme, one of NetCorps' principal goals is youth employment.

The Youth Employment Strategy is the Government of Canada's action plan to boost the employability of Canadian youth. Its main aim is to ensure young people get the skills, knowledge, experience and opportunity they need to participate in the world of work. And the success of YES programmes is a good example of the commitment of the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada to our country's youth.⁹

NCI Objectives

NetCorps Canada International:

- responds to young people's needs for work and career development;
- supports developing countries' efforts to enhance their Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) capacity;
- supports developmental objectives of partners to improve their ICT capacity abroad in fields such as health, education and agriculture;
- profiles leadership in the use of information technology for social and economic development; and
- helps promote a connected Canada to the world.

These objectives accords with those of the VASIP. The objectives for both focus on increasing the employability and job prospects of youth. At its heart NetCorps Canada International is a development programme designed to strengthen the ICT infrastructure in the host countries where member organizations work. This too was a shared programme objective. VSO Canada came to the partnership with IDRC and VASIP with the above programme objectives in mind. But at the core of any VSO programme or initiatives are its mission, values and objectives. VSO enables men and women to work alongside people in poorer countries in order to share skills, build capabilities and promote international understanding and action, in the pursuit of a more equitable world.

VSO Values

VSO:

- values the individual and believes in the equal right of all to realize their potential;
- believes in countering disadvantage by practical action, people to people;
- values action motivated by and responding to the needs of others, both through their work abroad and through voluntary activity by supporters at home;
- values and respects diversity of culture;
- values two-way partnership which openly shares costs and benefits; and
- values the learning and friendship which results from people living and working alongside each other, in pursuit of shared goals.

In practice VSO's overseas work seeks:

- to improve levels of education and health;
- to improve income or employment opportunities
- to increase participation of marginalized people in society;
- to promote sustainable use and conservation of the environment; and
- to reduce vulnerability to social, economic and environmental risks.

The first three objectives are particularly in line with this programme. It is these objectives that informed VSO's motivation and enabled it to see the potential of this programme.

1.4 Overview of South African perspective of the programme

SchoolNet South Africa was the main partner from South Africa in the programme. It was launched in 1997, with the support of the national Department of Education, to tackle the severe shortage of computers and ICT skills in schools. According to Denis Brandjes, the Executive Director of SchoolNet South Africa at the time, "The environment that SchoolNet finds itself in is one where racial relationships are fractured as a result of South Africa's history... As part of our mission, SchoolNet SA has chosen to focus on the use of ICTs to redress some of these injustices of the past, in order to bring about equitable distribution of resources and knowledge."¹⁰

In the first three years of its existence, SchoolNet performed impressively. It established partnerships with a host of organisations from the private sectors, NGOs and the government. According to a report on its activities the organisations had made a huge impact on schools:

“ Of South Africa's 28,000 schools, almost 3,000 are already involved in SchoolNet SA, and at least as many more are involved in various ICT initiatives throughout the country. The organization has trained more than 3,000 teachers and is currently developing an education content "portal" for use by teachers and students.”¹¹

The possibility of establishing a long-term skills exchange programme for youth, which would involve Canadian-based organisations and SchoolNet SA was first tested during 1998 when two Canadian volunteers were stationed in Johannesburg (the one worked in Soweto while the other was based at the SchoolNet office). It is important to note that at this stage SchoolNet had not yet moved to the IDRC offices in Johannesburg. That only occurred in June 1998. This initial, short-term volunteer exchange formed part of the existing IDRC/Acacia initiative to utilise skilled Canadian youth in a programme to develop ICT skills among youth in Africa. For Denis Brandjes of SchoolNet the experience with the two volunteers was an ‘eye-opener’ which revealed the ‘value and worth of having these volunteers’. As a result of this positive experience IDRC/Acacia and SchoolNet decided to expand the volunteer programme in South Africa. By this stage SchoolNet had become part of IDRC. In July 2000 SchoolNet linked up with the IDRC through its Acacia programme because it recognised strong overlaps in the vision and objectives between the organisations.

1.5 The specific objectives of VASIP

The specific objectives of the volunteer program included:

- To develop ICT knowledge and capacity in Africa which can lead to greater opportunities for future investments and human resources development in Africa;
- To enhance future employability of youth in Africa and Canada through relevant job experiences, competence in the use of the latest communication technologies, and international work credentials;
- To promote cross-cultural understanding and cooperation between Canadian and African youth;
- To use the internship as a means of providing support for capacity-building and technical assistance in other Centre funded projects;
- To provide employment and valuable work experiences for Canadian and African youth in fields related to information and communication technology, business and entrepreneurship development, education and/or sustainable development;
- To evaluate the impact of such a programme in facilitating human resources development and knowledge transfer, especially among the young population.

1.6 Responsibilities

VASIP was jointly funded by IDRC and Industry Canada. IDRC-Acacia, Netcorp, VSO and SchoolNet South Africa were the main implementing agencies and partners in the programme. According to the agreement signed between these parties, their responsibilities included:

IDRC-Acacia

- To provide in-country personal support as maybe required – including two site visits by Acacia programme officers in the course of the volunteership programme
- To mediate between the volunteers and their host agencies in the unlikely event that difficulties arise which cannot be resolved between them
- To identify suitable and safe accommodation and to cover the cost of accommodation over the 12 month volunteership
- To cover the costs associated with the accommodation and travel of African interns

VSO Canada

- To recruit Canadian volunteers with appropriate skills and character for minimum assignments of twelve months
- To pay the volunteers' monthly living allowance for 12 months
- To provide full medical and life insurance cover for the interns

SchoolNet South Africa

- To meet 18 Canadian volunteers on their arrival in South Africa
- To organise an orientation programme for the volunteers
- To place the 18 volunteers as well as the 9 African interns in a working environment that maximises the benefit of their skills to the community and their ability to gain a world class experience
- To access 9 South African interns and pair one intern with two Canadian volunteers
- To participate in the monitoring and evaluation of the programme

1.7 Study Objective

The overall aim was to evaluate the pilot project of the internship programme. The evaluation therefore measured the objectives set out by the main partners against the outcomes of the programme. The stakeholders are interested to continue this programme and are thus concerned about the viability of the project based on the experiences of the pilot programme. The primary question that framed the evaluation has been: *How was the Netcorp-Acacia Internship Programme implemented and what are the lessons to be learned from this experience?* The evaluation comprised a chronological analysis of the programme, so as to scrutinise the strengths and weaknesses of each step of its conceptualisation and implementation. The evaluation assesses the extent to which the

stakeholders carried out their responsibilities. It also assesses the viability of the particular skills-transfer model adopted by the stakeholders.

Chapter Two

Context

2.1 Canadian Context

The underpinning of the Canadian context of the VASIP related to youth employment. Funding for the NetCorps Canada International Programme was administered by Industry Canada, but originated with HRDC's YES programme.

Youth employment is a high national priority. The Government of Canada strives to create job opportunities for young Canadians in partnership with governments, employers and community-based organizations. (*Government of Canada website*)

This HRDC programme provides funding to organizations that set up work experiences and opportunities for learning for unemployed or underemployed Canadian youth. Some of the Canadian youth that participated in the programme were unemployed, but the majority was under-employed because of a need for more experienced technical workers in Canada at that time. The High Tech industry in Canada has grown exponentially over that last three or four years thereby driving the requirements for entry level applicants to have skills far higher than many new graduates possess. As a result these graduates have ended up in positions that require far less skill than they bring.

2.2 African and South African Context

"The knowledge-based transformation of many of the world's societies as a result of the increased flow of information [is] made possible by ever-improving global communications technologies. The world is in the throes of a revolution..."

"The political transition in South Africa has projected us into the global arena, exposing us to the pressures and challenges that require innovative and flexible responses to a rapidly changing global environment."¹²

South Africa and other African countries have for some time recognised the critical importance of ICTs. However, their ability to face these challenges has been hamstrung by the serious under-development of the continent. This is most evident in the field of technology: the global ICT revolution has mostly bypassed Africa. Structural backwardness, such as the lack of electricity supply and telephone connections, makes it nearly impossible for most Africans to link up with their counterparts in the rest of the world. The low level of education generally and of technical skills in particular tend to aggravate these difficulties. If the continent is to rescue itself (as is the aim of the New

Africa Initiative and the African Union), it rapidly needs to bridge the technological chasm that separates it from the rest of the world. Political leaders across the continent acknowledge the enormity and urgency of this task. The South African government has attempted to locate its strategy for effecting sustainable development within the context of the globalised world economy.

South Africa is the most technologically advanced country on the continent: it has the best electricity grid, the most computers per capita, the highest density of internet connectedness and the highest proportion of technologically skilled people. But the country's top technological status conceals huge internal disparities. In fact, the majority of blacks in South Africa have been left on the sidewalks of the information highway, much like their counterparts on the rest of the continent.

The burden of the country's past continues to weigh heavily on the present and acts as a brake on the country's ability to accelerate the implementation of its development strategy. Apartheid left the country with numerous structural problems that now threatens to derail its efforts to join the global technological revolution. And, most role-players recognise the necessity for South Africa to get onto the information highway if it is not to be left even further behind. The youth are clearly in the best position to lead this process. But the majority of black youth still face numerous obstacles. Foremost among these are the inter-related (and mutually reinforcing) high levels of unemployment and low levels of skills and education.

Unemployment remains a stubborn and serious structural problem. Depending on how one defines unemployment, the percentage of joblessness in the country ranges between 23% and 40%. The people most affected by unemployment are blacks, youth and women. African people are the most severely affected by the scourge of unemployment. However, the rate of unemployment among youth (16-24 year olds) is especially alarmingly high. The government has estimated that up to 64% of economically active youth are jobless, which it concedes has contributed "to a sense of despair among the nation's young people." Women are especially affected, with nearly 55% being unemployed. They generally have fewer skills and continue to be discriminated against in the labour market. Young rural African women are the most vulnerable group in virtually every respect.¹³

The local economy's inability to create sufficient new jobs for young people entering the labour market obviously contributes significantly to the high levels of unemployment. However, the situation is aggravated by the parlous state of education for blacks. A recent assessment undertaken by the Department of Education found that the "physical environment of many schools is not conducive to quality teaching and learning". Twenty five percent of primary and combined schools do not have access to water and the majority of schools (52%) do not have electricity. It noted that the "Lack of electricity also prevents the use of modern teaching and learning aids and equipment."

Computers and internet connections are consequently available only in a minority of schools. A survey conducted by the Education Policy Unity of the University of the Western Cape found that a high percentage of schools in South Africa do indeed have

computers. However, there are also significant discrepancies between schools, especially between those in townships and suburbs. A further discrepancy linked to the former is that which exists between the provinces: thus the highly urbanised provinces (Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu Natal) have on average many more computers than the more rural provinces. For example, fifty percent of Gauteng schools have 30 or more computers compared to only twenty eight percent in the North-West.¹⁴

The challenges facing South Africa in its quest to be integrated in the world of ICT and in the process to achieve sustainable are multi-faceted. However, the empowerment of black youth by, among others, providing them with the requisite ICT skills to become connected and to compete as equals on the world stage should be a primary objective. The South African government has recognised the long-term value of such a strategy. The internship programme being evaluated also represents a strategic intervention by its partners in this process.

Chapter Three

Conceptual Framework

3.1 Introduction

The model of skills development adopted by the VASIP is premised on some of the following principal notions;

- The 'digital divide' can be bridged by transferring skills from the technologically advanced North to the developing South
- Such a transfer of skills would contribute to the broader challenge of overcoming Africa's under-development
- African youth should be the main targets or recipients of this knowledge transfer as they represent the best prospect of a new skills base that would allow the continent to participate in the growing knowledge-based global economy
- More specifically, that skills transfer is best effected by means of a mentoring programme in which Canadian volunteers are paired or twinned with South African interns
- This twinning process to be based at schools located in previously disadvantaged areas
- Schools were selected as the main sites for the programme because many of them have access to ICTs (although there are huge discrepancies in this regard between schools) and can thus serve as a base for skilling out of school youth and educators. It also builds on SchoolNet's model of using schools as a base for skills development in townships.

The model adopted in the programme had its origins in the long-standing practice of sending volunteers from the developed countries to less-developed parts of the world to assist in the enskilling of the disadvantaged populations. This was combined with SchoolNet's programme of skills development in schools in South Africa. By having a schools-based project, the stakeholders therefore endorsed the view that schools could serve as a viable modality for access to ICTs and serve as a base for skilling educators as well as out of school youth. In this regard it builds on a tradition to use schools as sites of extra-curriculum learning for the broader township community.

3.2 The three components of the conceptual model

1. sending Canadian volunteers;
2. twinning local South African interns to volunteers; and
3. skill sharing.

Volunteer sending

VSO Canada is a national partner of VSO, the world's largest independent international development agency working through volunteers. Since 1958, more than 29,000 men and women have participated in VSO by sharing their skills alongside people in developing countries, working with them to realize their true potential.

VSO began over 40 years ago by sending its first volunteers overseas from England. In that time the organization has continued to evolve and adapt in response to the changing needs of our partners in the developing world. VSO Canada has been sending Canadians since 1992 and is now part of an international network that links with VSO UK, VSO Netherlands, and a South-South initiative with VSO Kenya and VSO Philippines.

VSO's experience is volunteer sending, and this was VSO's principal role within the partnership. VSO Canada would recruit, select and train 18 Canadian volunteers with the appropriate IT skills. These volunteers would then be matched to technical placements of up to 12 months in length identified by SchoolNet South Africa. Similar to VSO's other volunteer programmes, NetCorps volunteers would have specific terms and conditions for their service. And in keeping with the objectives of the NetCorps programme, the identified placements would be those that would assist host agencies in South Africa in enhancing their IT capacity. Again, like VSO's other programmes, NetCorps volunteers would be placed with Provincial School Networks (PSNs) as their hosts and the PSNs would support the volunteer while in country. Prior to their departure from Canada and after their return, VSO Canada would support the volunteer.

Twinning

Once the Canadian volunteers had been identified, SchoolNet South Africa would pair or 'twin' each two Canadian volunteers with a local African intern. The intern and the volunteers would work alongside each other sharing their technical skills and cultural perspectives in an effort to meet the practical objectives of their placements.

This twinning process would have two potential outcomes:

1. Both interns and volunteers would benefit from the opportunity to work closely with young people from another culture. This would allow the volunteer to learn from first-hand accounts about what it is like to be a young person in South Africa while at the same time giving the intern some insight into life in Canada.
2. The skill sharing that would result from this process would enable the local intern to continue on in the placement after the departure of the volunteer, thereby contributing to the placement's sustainability. At the same time, the volunteer gains international work experience. Both the interns and the volunteers would benefit from either this first work experience or added work experience.

Twinning also has more practical benefits. As newcomers to South Africa, the Canadian volunteers learn much about day to day living from the local interns. The volunteers take their cues about health, security, the political context, etc., from their local counterparts.

It is a form of informal orientation. The local interns reinforce the information disseminated in the volunteer arrival orientation.

Interns and volunteers also act as sources of personal as well as professional support for each other. This takes some of the onus for that support off of the PSNs and SchoolNet. There are many underlying benefits to this part of the programme.

Skill Sharing

The principle of the twinning process was formal and informal skill sharing. By working together, the volunteers share the skills that they had acquired through their study and/or practical experience. The interns bring their knowledge of the local cultural context to share with the volunteers. Together these programme participants' work to accomplish the technical objectives set out by the PSNs and to enhance the employability of both sets of participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The evaluation is primarily concerned with measuring the outcomes of the pilot project against its stated aims and objectives. It interrogates the effectiveness and the viability of the particular model adopted by the stakeholders.

The principal research method consisted of interviews with the main participants in the programme. Interviews for each of the main constituencies – organisational stakeholders, volunteers, interns and PSNs - were developed. The interviews were designed to ascertain the following:

- the participants' knowledge of the aims and objectives of the programme
- the processes of conceptualisation, planning and implementation of the programme in both participating countries
- the nature of the various participants' involvement in these processes or their responsibility in these processes
- the processes of selection (including the criteria utilised in the process), orientation and training of Canadian volunteers and South African interns
- the readiness of the host organisations to undertake the programme
- the implementation of the internship or twinning between volunteers and interns at the various provincial sites
- the effects of the programme

Interviews were used as the principal tool of evaluation because they allowed the researchers to interrogate how the stakeholders and participants operated and effected the objectives of the programme. The interviews successfully illuminated the varying perceptions about the objectives, processes and roles of the different participants. They were especially useful in highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the programme at each stage of its implementation.

Site visits were conducted to investigate the conditions under which the internship operated and to inquire from the community at the site (educators and learners) whether the programme was beneficial to them.

This core method of research was supplemented by a study of the relevant documents and correspondence related to the programme (which were made available to the researchers by Acacia). The research also required some analyses of current international and national debates on issues pertaining to the 'digital divide' in an increasingly globalised

world economy, Africa's status in this process and responses to these by various governmental and non-governmental agencies.

4.2 The Evaluation Framework and Plan

The evaluation framework was developed prior to the commencement of the research. Below are the main extracts from the evaluation framework document:

The evaluation will consist of the following sections:

1. Consultation with stakeholders
2. Document Review
3. Interviews
4. Site visits

Consultation with stakeholders

The main stakeholders will be consulted on what should be the key issues of the evaluation. The aim is to ensure that their opinions and concerns are included in framing the evaluation. A memorandum outlining the pertinent of issues to be raised in the evaluation will be circulated to the institutional stakeholders and partners in the project. These are:

- VSO-Canada
- IDRC (Acacia)
- Netcorp
- SchoolNet South Africa
- Provincial School Network
- Canadian Volunteers
- South African Interns

Document Review

The document review serves multiple purposes. Firstly, it will allow the researchers to acquire the requisite background information of the main parties involved in the programme and the reasons behind the decision to launch the programme. Secondly, and following from this, such a review will provide insight to the aims and rationale underpinning the programme. Thirdly, the documents contain information about the way in which the programme was established. The factual information contained therein will obviate lengthy research on the initial processes in establishing the programme. Finally, a review of documents produced during the course of and after the programme will be undertaken.

It is anticipated that most of the document to be reviewed will emanate from the main participating organisations and not from the participants, namely, the volunteers and interns.

The documents to be reviewed include:

- Memorandum of Grant Conditions
- VSO Canada Conditions of Service for Interns participating in Netcorp Canada International
- VSO Volunteer Handbook for South Africa
- Netcorps-VSO-Acacia-Schoolnet Internship Program
- An Evaluation of Acacia-supported School Networking Projects in sub-Saharan Africa
- Performance and Evaluation Framework for Netcorps Canada International

Interviews

The interviews will comprise the main component of the evaluation. Stakeholders and participants will constitute the primary sources in this regard. The aim is to ascertain first hand the views and experiences of the key role-players in the programme. Two methods will be employed in the process: in-depth interviews with a range of role-players and focus group discussions, which will probably occur at the sites. Focus group discussions will be held with teachers and learners at the sites where the project was located. Interviewees from the stakeholder organisations will be selected on the basis of their knowledge of the programme. Volunteers and interns will be selected to ensure that participants from each of the sites in South Africa are interviewed. Six sites will be visited and telephonic interviews will be conducted with participants from the remaining three sites. In the case of the latter it will of course not be possible to conduct focus group discussions. Most of the volunteers have returned to Canada and will be interviewed there. Different questionnaires will be used to interview the various stakeholders and participants. Although the same broad issues will be covered in the interviews (as above), the varied roles and responsibilities of the parties need to be accommodated in designing the interviews.

A) Informants from stakeholder organisations

IDRC/Acacia

Shafika Isaacs
Ronald Archer

SchoolNet SA

Denis Brandjes
Kantha Singh
Stephen Marquard

Timothy Tsagane

PSNs

Western Cape: Penny Busetto, Quentin Spies, Jenny

KwaZulu/Natal: Janet Thompson

Northern Cape: Moss Mthembu

North West Province: Ann Mabale

Gauteng: Johan Guldenfennig and Timothy

VSO

Mary Stuart

Stephanie Stewart

Tracy Foster

Chris Smart

Netcorp

Justine

B/ Volunteers and interns

Interns

Bethuel Setshotlo (JHB, Braamfontein)

Charles Mbele (JHB, Braamfontein)

Daniel Peterson (Northern Cape, Kimberley)

Khoro Makhado (KZN, Pietermaritzburg)

Pelo Tshabalala (Western Cape, Claremont)

Robert Muthelo (Northern Province, Thohoyandou)

Samuel Bankoes (North West, Mmabatho)

Vhutshilo Ramulifho (Northern Province, Vuwane)

Volunteers

Jason Spencer

Ryan Slimmon

Robert Glascow

Richard Birt

Dalton Cody

Chris Dorazio

Kimberley Doyle

Scott Harper

Jennifer Morris

Eddie Ramirez

Rachel Rattray

Drew Wesley

Katia Wigmore

Tim Yull

Site visits

Six provincial sites in South Africa will be visited. Stephanie Stewart will visit the Western Cape, KwaZulu Natal and Northern Cape. Noor Nieftagodien will visit Gauteng (Kathleen), Mpumalanga and North West Province. The Eastern Cape, Northern Province and Orange Free State will not be visited to a combination of time constraints and absence of participants in those provinces. However, the selected provinces do represent a reasonable sample of the project.

The aims of the site visits are to determine the effects or impact of the presence of the volunteers and to evaluate the conditions under which the work was conducted. The work of the volunteers will be measured against the objectives of the project. In particular the skills development of the local interns and the teachers/learners at the sites during the internship will be evaluated. Furthermore, the role of the volunteer in providing technical assistance at the sites will be assessed. The site visits will also aim to acquire knowledge of the places (the localities, environment and building) where the internship programme was based, the local host organisations and personalities involved in the programme. The readiness and suitability of these sites to host the programme and the benefits they might have gained from the programme will be evaluated.

In-depth interviews with the local host organisation and interns will be conducted. Focus group discussions with teachers and learners will also be held. The organisation of the latter will be left to the host organisation because the researchers do not know these participants and will therefore not be able, in the time available, make selections on any reasonable basis. They will, however, conduct the group discussions.

Shortcomings of the research

The research process was characterized by some limitations which impacted on the findings. It is important to recognize that whilst the study employed an independent consultant to conduct the evaluation, the consultant worked in partnership with a representative from VSO who assisted with the field work. For some interviewees, VSO's active involvement in the evaluation would influence the impartiality and objectiveness with which the interviews were conducted and interpreted. Perhaps in retrospect the project should have allowed for the independent consultant to conduct the study alone albeit in partnership and with the active participation of the stakeholders such as VSO. Also, not all the participants were interviewed. Most people on the list were contacted but for various reasons attempts to interview them were not successful.

Chapter Five

Research findings and recommendations

In 1999 IDRC approached VSO Canada about its Acacia: Communities and the Information Society in Africa project. Acacia's objectives are:

1. to demonstrate how ICTs can enable communities to solve development problems in ways that build upon local goals, cultures, strengths and processes; and
2. to build a validated body of knowledge, and a networked dissemination process, around the policies, technologies, methodologies and approaches that prove to be effective.

As indicated above, IDRC was not new to internship programmes. Two similar programmes preceded it. In 1996 The Centre for Community & Enterprise Networking (C/CEN) at the University College of Cape Breton (UCCB) hired and trained two Cape Breton youth to provide critical technical support for an existing non-profit computer network in Angola (ANGONET) and to establish a Geographic Information Systems facility. Then in 1998 as part of the NetCorps pilot programme funded by CIDA, VSO Canada sent two technical interns to South Africa where they worked with SchoolNet.

IDRC's objective to develop a cadre of youth both Canadian and African who have a solid knowledge of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Africa seemed compatible with those of NetCorps and so the partnership was born. This new programme was one over 200 projects in four years which was attempting to prove or disprove the hypothesis that ICTs can positively impact social and economic development and empower communities in sub-Saharan Africa.

In the following months there were numerous meetings between VSO and IDRC representatives in Canada. The meetings detailed the roles and responsibilities of each partner, Industry Canada requirements and the overall logistics of the programme. Communication between VSO Canada and IDRC in South Africa began only with programme implementation. IDRC supplied VSO with a detailed general description of the programme to be included in VSO's project submission to the NetCorps Selection Committee. Once the submission was approved (May 1999) the implementation of the programme began.

From the above it is obvious that the Canadian-based organisations played the primary role in the conceptualisation of the pilot programme. There were numerous advantages to this situation: the Canadian organisations brought into the programme extensive experience and facilitated its launch by the existence of established and effective practices and methodologies. There was, however, one area of concern surrounding the level of participation by SchoolNet. Although SchoolNet was a key player in the

programme, the nature of its participation in the conceptualisation thereof was determined by its legal status within IDRC. In brief, SchoolNet was not an autonomous legal entity and therefore its interactions with the Canadian consortium were often mediated through the structures of IDRC/Acacia. This formal/legal reality however also had the effect of creating the perception that SchoolNet, which was the main implementing agency in South Africa, was not sufficiently involved in the critical discussions around the conceptualisation and planning of the programme. According to Denis Brandjes there were gaps in the conceptualisation phase, which especially affected the planning of the programme because there was a lack of planning between the main participants.

A further difficulty that arose during this phase of the programme was the change of personnel responsible for the programme in the various agencies. Thus people who later became pivotal in the implementation phases were not involved in its conceptualisation. Kantha Singh and Shafika Isaacs fall into this category. As a result there were sometimes breakdowns in the communication between the different agencies and especially between the two countries. This does not seem to have been a very serious or long-term problem because of the existence of relatively efficient communication systems between the organisations. The related difficulties in communication and SchoolNet's perception of marginalisation reflected possible shortcomings in the *modus operandi* of the main stakeholders at a particular conjuncture, which was largely dictated by the urgency imposed on the process by Industry Canada, rather than any deliberate attempt to exclude SchoolNet.

Notwithstanding these difficulties a consensus on the conceptualisation of the programme emerged relatively quickly. This was reflected in the similarly uncomplicated way in which agreement was reached on the objectives of the programme. However, it was in the planning and implementation (which will be discussed later) where more serious difficulties arose. In particular, Industry Canada was working to a tight deadline to complete its programme, which placed significant pressure on the Canadian organisations especially during the initial phase of the programme.

5.1 Objectives

All the stakeholders were committed from the outset to the principal objective of utilising ICTs in the development of Africa, especially its youth. Acacia has, for example, endeavoured to demonstrate the "enabling power of ICT's to alleviate poverty and inequality".

The stakeholders determined that the overall objective of the programme would be to "develop a *cadre* of youth – both Canadian and African – who have a solid knowledge of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Africa."¹⁵

Within this broad consensus there were sometimes varying emphases, which reflected organisational mandates and to some extent personal interpretations of the objectives. (See for example Ronald Archer's explanation of the various organisational interests). One volunteer applied to join the programme because he thought it was about creating telecentres in the developing world. – move this to objectives. These in turn affected perceptions and practices of priorities during the implementation of the programme. Thus some Canadian project officers emphasised the primacy of training for young Canadians. According to Denis Brandjes the programme was intended to 'look for skilled youth to develop SchoolNet. The volunteers would be based at the PSNs where they would be involved in capacity building'. However, these differences of interpretation and emphasis were easily accommodated in the overall objectives stated above. That there was agreement on this issue is reflected in the universal agreement by participants that the objectives were correct and realistic. One criticism that has been raised about the programme's objectives from the outset is the absence of efforts to prioritise the involvement of young African women. This oversight is especially problematic because this sector of the South African population is the most marginalised and unskilled.

5.2 Delivery and Implementation

Between September 1999 and November 2000, 16 Canadian volunteers were recruited, assessed and trained by VSO Canada under the Terms and Conditions of VSO Canada's NetCorps Internship Programme.

Recruitment

The NetCorps volunteers were recruited using traditional mediums. Advertisements were placed in general daily newspapers as well as specialty newspapers, journals and magazines. Targeted Internet adverts were also prepared and the VSO Canada website was used. The ads asked for young people with an educational background or proven skills in IT. The applicants needed to be available to depart within the next couple of months for six-month placements in South Africa. It was not until later that the recruitment message changed to indicate that placements could last up to 12 months.

Assessment Criteria

VSO NetCorps volunteers were evaluated using the following seven dimensions – *Positive & Realistic Commitment; Commitment to Learning; Flexibility & Adaptability; Practical Problem Solving Ability; Self-Assurance; Sensitivity to the Needs of Others and Working with Others.*

Combinations of strengths and weaknesses in these seven areas were the basis on which a candidate was selected or not. Where the combination was not in balance, (i.e. an individual who is very strong on self-assurance, but very weak on commitment to learning) the candidate was not selected.

Process

Candidates first underwent a preliminary screening through which it is determined that their professional skills and/or experience were acceptable in relation to available placements. They were then invited to an Assessment Day (8:30am – 3:30pm). Three Selectors (1 VSO staff member and two trained volunteers from the local community) assess six candidates on each day. The day was composed of four group activities and an hour long individual interview. This structure allowed the Selectors to evaluate each candidate on a combination of observed (the group activities) and reported (individual interview) behaviour.

There was some discussion within VSO over whether the method and criteria used in the selection process should be amended for this particular programme. In particular, the age of the volunteers was debated. Some concern was expressed over the maturity of the volunteers. However, it was agreed that in terms of the objectives of the programme the existing selection framework was probably adequate.

VSO had to work according to a particular set of criteria in the selection process. The most salient of these were that candidates had to be between the ages of 19-30, they had to be either unemployed or under-employed, and they had to have ICT skills. From the perspectives of Industry Canada and YES the priority was to empower Canadian youth with the requisite skills and work experience in order to gain full-time employment. In fact, most candidates applied for the posts in order to improve their employability. However, some members in the Canadian coalition were equally interested to stress the importance of skills sharing and meeting the developmental objectives of the programme. They were also concerned that younger volunteers might not be committed or interested in the developmental aspects of the project.

It was recognised early in the programme that the emphasis on ICT skills of the volunteers was insufficient. Volunteers were expected to be partners in a skills exchange programme. Therefore, they were expected to work closely with their South African peers and interact with a local community. Having ICT knowledge was one thing, imparting that knowledge to people from disadvantaged backgrounds in unfamiliar socio-political and cultural contexts was an entirely different matter. In these circumstances, having ICT skills was not a sufficient requirement for success. It became clear that in addition to technical skills, the volunteers would also have to be independent and self-motivated. In the words of a number of PSN representatives, the volunteers also needed 'people skills'. These lessons were learnt only after the first batch of volunteers had been dispatched to South Africa. The consequences thereof are considered later in the report.

The lack of direct involvement by SchoolNet in the selection process created some difficulties. SchoolNet's main contributions to this phase of the programme were to advise on the job descriptions for volunteers and to scrutinise the CV's of those volunteers selected by VSO. The PSNs were even less involved in this process and were only consulted about the volunteer sent to the respective provinces. Thus there was no consideration of the local peculiarities that volunteers would confront on their arrival in

the host country. To a large extent VSO was unaware of the vast differences that existed between the provinces and centres where the PSNs were located. In essence, the South African targets for skills development was homogenised under the rubric of 'disadvantaged youth, from disadvantaged communities'. An awareness and sensitivity to the vast social, economic and cultural differences between, for example, youth in Katlehong compared to those in Mafikeng, seems to have been missing from the screening process. These difficulties became apparent after the volunteers had been allocated to the various PSNs. SchoolNet was able to comment on the suitability of the volunteers prior to their arrival, albeit only on the basis of their CVs.

Pre-Departure Training

Pre departure training was a compulsory component of the NetCorps programme. All NetCorps volunteers were required to attend NetCorps Secretariat training and if time permitted VSO's Preparing for Change course. The first group of volunteers who went overseas in the winter of 1999, did not attend Preparing for Change.

NetCorps Secretariat Training was a five day course designed and implemented by the Secretariat (the coalition-created organisation that disseminates all of the common services). The training focus here is on cultural orientation; some basic training skills and skills focused training (i.e. computer troubleshooting techniques for resource-limited countries).

VSO Canada's *Preparing for Change* training course was designed to address some of the more common personal and professional issues that volunteers encounter overseas. Volunteers had the opportunity to discuss some of their concerns and expectations of living and working in the developing world. Throughout the course, the volunteers were able to explore these issues with other NetCorps and Volunteer Programme volunteers, as well as returned volunteers and members of the VSO staff.

Host Country Orientation

All 16 volunteers did not arrive in South Africa at the same time. Some received extensive in-country orientation, while others were sent directly to their placements without an orientation.

The Host Country Orientation was three days long and developed and implemented by Acacia, with some guidance from VSO South Africa. The orientation was to expand on the pre-departure orientation with more specific information about the local context.

The orientation discussed Programmeme objectives, volunteer expectations and the roles of Acacia, SchoolNet and IDRC. It gave an historical perspective of education in South Africa; discussed the implications of being a volunteer in South Africa (this session was facilitated by VSO South Africa) and examined the political climate of the country, cultural sensitivities, security, health and other practicalities. The orientation concluded with visits to Soweto, Alexandra and Sandton.

The Canadian organisations were not involved in this programme, although VSO South Africa assisted after requests from SchoolNet. The purpose of the orientation in South Africa was to sensitise the volunteers to the local socio-political and cultural conditions. Lectures on South African history and the education system were arranged. These were necessarily general and were intended merely as an introduction for the volunteers. A number of specific issues were also discussed, the most important of which were Aids, transport and security. Trips to townships and affluent suburbs were organised to reveal to the volunteers the stark contrasts that exist in the country. There was perhaps an over-emphasis on the difficulties of the country. The problem of crime and supposed dangers associated with using local taxis were exaggerated to an extent that might have contributed to negative perceptions being inculcated in the volunteers from the outset.

This was the first time that SchoolNet was involved in an orientation programme for overseas volunteers. Its personnel were inexperienced in this field and it did not have the necessary infrastructure to run an effective programme. As a result the assistance of VSO South African and Acacia was sought to ensure the orientation programme would meet its main objectives. These difficulties also meant that the programme remained very general and gave the volunteers little information on the dynamics of the areas where they were to be located. Subsequent orientation programmes were more sensitive to these issues.

Local interns did not receive training.

Matching and Placement

The following steps outline the process through which NetCorps volunteers were matched and posted to their placements.

1. SchoolNet South Africa identified all placements in collaboration with SchoolNet Hosts.
2. SchoolNet then requested that the CV's of newly selected volunteers be sent to them so that they could forward them on to the hosts and determine whether there was a match.
3. VSO provided SchoolNet with its standard placement summary template so that each placement contained the information that was needed to enable the prospective volunteer to make an informed decision.
4. VSO rarely received placement summaries, and instead used a general description of the job responsibilities that did not include any specific information about the placement location, etc. It was this information that was shown to prospective volunteers.
5. VSO matched selected volunteers to South Africa, based on the technical requirements it knew were needed for the placements.
6. Based on the CV's of those volunteers VSO selected, SchoolNet and the hosts matched the volunteers to specific placements.

7. The volunteer accepted the placement.
8. VSO and SchoolNet negotiated to set arrival dates.
9. VSO made the final preparations for the volunteer's departure (Visa – often a delaying factor and travel arrangements).

Selection of interns

The process of the selection of local interns was less structured than for the selection of volunteers. The PSNs were primarily responsible for the selection process. Unlike their Canadian partners, however, the local host organisations had very little experience in these matters. Generally there were no structures or procedures in place to guide PSN officers in the selection process. The PSN officers invariably had to develop guidelines and procedures during the actual selection process. SchoolNet and the PSN had however agreed on the main criteria to be used in selecting interns, which were:

- The interns had to be youth from local disadvantaged communities.
- Interns had to have some basic ICT skills, preferably formal skills or qualifications.
- Interns had to demonstrate a commitment to work in a skills exchange programme and to use their newly acquired skills to develop the local community, especially at schools.
- Interns had to be motivated, enthusiastic and committed.

The selection of interns enjoyed mixed success. Different procedures were followed in the selection of the interns. Sometimes interviews were conducted with prospective candidates, but often PSN officers simply appointed the interns. Where SchoolNet had an established infrastructure and committed personnel, as in the larger urban areas, the selection of interns went very well. Phelo Tshabalala, the intern from Khayelitsha in Cape Town, heard about the programme from Sibongile, who knew about his computer qualifications. Penny from PSN interviewed Phelo before he was appointed. The intern from the Northern Cape, Daniel Peterson, was not interviewed. He was 'discovered' by Moss Mthembu who asked him to join the internship programme. The selection process in the North-West Province was perhaps the most problematic and required the intervention of Shafika Isaacs and Stephanie Stewart to resolve. Initially the teachers from Mmabatho High School were responsible for finding an intern. They seemed to have followed the correct procedure: the post was widely advertised, CVs were collected, a shortlist was compiled and interviews were prepared. However, they were instructed to halt this process and the selection of the intern was handed over to the Anne Mabale, a provincial government official. She appointed Sam Bankoes, who had previously applied unsuccessfully for work in the Department. In Mpumalanga there was no local intern.

Support for volunteers and interns

SchoolNet and the PSNs were responsible for providing the volunteers and interns with support. The Canadian organisations do not provide support for volunteers. In practice, their responsibilities to the volunteers end once they arrive in the host country. Moreover, VSO believed it would have been unfair for them to interfere in matters related to the volunteers while they were in South Africa. Apart from the protocol involved, the Canadian organisations were unfamiliar with the local situation and could not be expected to solve problems from a distance. After discussion, VSO South Africa agreed to provide volunteers with emergency support only.

SchoolNet and the PSN were inadequately prepared to host the volunteers. This problem was manifested at a number of levels. SchoolNet's inexperience meant it did not know what was required to host such a programme. In the absence of a plan the approach taken was to delegate the hosting responsibilities to the PSNs. This was of course not a solution to problem; it merely transferred the difficulties to PSNs, which were equally inexperienced and, in many cases, ill-prepared to host the volunteers or supervise the internship programme. It appears that SchoolNet based its approach on the ability of strong centres such as Cape Town and Johannesburg to cope with these challenges. But the majority of PSNs were simply not able to cope with the demands of the internship programme.

These difficulties were exacerbated by the lack of funding, personnel and infrastructure in SchoolNet and the PSNs. It was only once the programme had commenced that the host organisations begun to realise what support mechanisms were required. To illustrate the extent of the problem it is worthwhile to focus on a few salient issues:

- SchoolNet did not have an officer dedicated to the programme from the outset. Kantha Singh added the programme to her already loaded portfolio and was unable to cope with its ever-increasing demands. Her work was made especially difficult by the lack of a specific budget for the programme. This had an adverse effect on SchoolNet's ability to provide support mechanisms and to intervene expeditiously when crises occurred. Zodwa was eventually employed to take responsibility for the programme.
- There was confusion about communications and problem-solving procedures. SchoolNet did not have the capacity to handle these important aspects from the head-office and the PSNs were expected to deal with them. As a result communications and the monitoring of the internship programme largely occurred on an ad hoc basis. Interventions happened when there were crises. PSN officers were informed that volunteers had to deal directly with them. However, when problems arose volunteers often communicated with the organisations in Canada or SchoolNet. The lines of accountability seemed unclear. The situation in some areas became so serious that VSO Canada and IDRC were forced to intervene. Stephanie Stewart and Shafika Isaacs had to visit sites to settle disputes.

- Various difficulties existed at the local level. Perhaps the most common and serious of these were transport and accommodation. Volunteers and interns generally did not have access to transport, which made it difficult for them to work in the communities. The situation in Pietermaritzburg is a case in point. The volunteer was based in the town and was expected to work with school in Mphophomeni. In the absence of private transport combined with the volunteer's fear of using local taxis, the volunteer rarely visited the township. The problem of accommodation was especially serious in the North-West, where the volunteers were initially placed in a most rudimentary students' hostel. These problems were most evident in the rural areas, whereas the developed centres were able to provide these services without too many hassles.

5.3 Twinning and Training

The twinning of volunteers and local interns was at the centre of the project: it is here that the exchange of ICT knowledge, through training and mentoring, was meant to occur. The effects and outcomes of the twinning exercise were extremely uneven and were affected by a host of factors, some of which have been alluded to earlier. The readiness of the local host organisations, the timing of the appointment of interns, the presence or not of infrastructural support, the existence of a plan of work and the relationship between the various participants at the local sites all contributed to the success or failure of the twinning exercise. The following were among the most important issues that shaped the project at the local sites.

Appointment of interns

Local interns were often appointed late in the programme. As a result most of the twinning lasted only a few months, instead of the intended 6 – 12 months. Even at the most successful sites, such as in Cape Town and Katlehong, the volunteers worked without a local intern for protracted periods. In the North-West the intern was appointed a month before the departure of the last volunteer (the first volunteer was not paired with an intern). In Mpumalanga there was no intern.

Volunteers' time at local sites

A number of volunteers did not remain at the sites where they were initially stationed. This occurred for various reasons, including interventions by VSO and IDRC to rescue the local programmes. In other instances volunteers were needed at other sites. This tended to compound the problem of inadequate time for the twinning process to work (stability).

Infrastructure

The state of PSNs varied considerably. Those in Cape Town and Johannesburg were at a distinct advantage in terms of local staff experience and access to facilities (especially accommodation and transport). Consequently, they were better prepared and capable of dealing with problems as they arose. Other centres were less fortunate. The varying degrees of inexperienced local hosts and the lack of access to facilities made it extremely difficult properly to implement and manage the programme.

Plans

This issue is closely related to the former. Generally the local hosts did not have clearly formulated plans about what to do in the programme. However, the sites in Cape Town and Johannesburg had established networks and programmes and were thus able quickly to develop relatively effective plans. In other centres the programme invariably operated on an *ad hoc* basis. For example, in Mpumalanga there was no PSN plan. The educator at Penryn College involved the volunteer in setting up the college's computer lab. To a large extent the local hosts were left to develop their own plans but many of them simply did not have the experience, time or commitment to formulate plans to implement the objectives of the programme.

Relationships between participants at the local sites

As with the issues above the relationship between volunteers, interns and the local host organisations varied immensely, ranging from constructive and productive relations to being plainly adversarial. There has been no shortage of complaints from various parties about the (mis)behaviour of others. It would unhelpful for the evaluation to dwell on the intricacies of all these difficulties. They might usefully be perceived as symptoms of the more important structural problems dealt with previously. Nonetheless, there was a perception among some of the local participants that volunteers were arrogant, unco-operative and insensitive to local socio-cultural dynamics. The volunteers, for their part, found some of the local hosts unhelpful and devoid of plans about what to do with programme. Not all relations were afflicted by such negativism. In Mpumalanga the absence of a PSN network and an intern did not prevent the volunteer and educator at Penryn from developing a highly constructive relationship. In Cape Town and Johannesburg volunteers and interns worked well together and they received good support from the local hosts.

The effectiveness of the programme is best evaluated by reference to the experiences at the local sites.

Katlehong

The programme worked effectively in Katlehong. This was due to a combination of favourable factors. Its proximity to Johannesburg and the SchoolNet headquarters meant better infrastructural support and access to facilities such as transport and accommodation. The computer centre in Katlehong was well-equipped and in great demand from the local community. Add to these the positive and enthusiastic approach of the volunteer and one had a recipe for success. By all accounts the volunteer was pro-active and rapidly established good relations with the local hosts and community. He interviewed candidates and employed two trainees. The appointment of the interns was delayed initially, which was a disappointment to the volunteer who recognised the problem in losing time on this 'essential element' in the project.

The volunteer effectively ran the computer centre (installed programmes and maintained the computers) and assisted in the management of the centre. He was also responsible for training interns, which was successful even though it commenced later than expected. The centre was very popular in the community, which meant that there was a constant demand for training. Although there was not a formal programme of cultural interaction and exchange, the volunteer learned a lot about the community because he wanted to and was able to because of being in regular contact with the community.

Cape Town

Phelo Tshabalala, the intern from Khayelitsha in Cape Town, believes he learned a lot from the volunteer. Despite the short period of their twinning (three months) he learned how to install net cards, software and to use databases. For him "It was a miracle ... to open up a PC and then to put it back together again." From the perspective of the local intern the programme achieved tangible results. He was able to measure the improvements in his ICT skills. This success was possible because of the existence of an enabling environment. The volunteer's patience and commitment to assist in the development of an intern contributed significantly to the constructive relationship with the intern and the positive outcomes enumerated by the intern.

Phelo is unclear whether Rachel learnt anything from him. She learnt some Xhosa from him. It is likely this internship would have been more productive if it had lasted for longer than three months. Instead, the volunteer's first five months in the programme consisted primarily of administrative work.

The twinning exercise was not the only success in Cape Town. Volunteers also did considerable work in maintaining computers and training educators at various schools. Thus the volunteers regularly visited Nomlingamiselo Primary School over a period of two months to set up the computer centre. Once the computers were installed, educators were trained on the computers. At the end of the course the educators were able to use the computers for class schedules, lists and letters. Prior to this the educators had not used computers. The volunteers also trained educators at Thabane Secondary School.

North-West

In contrast to the above experiences, the twinning exercise in the North-West proved to be very difficult. This was the one instance where errors and shortcoming pervaded the entire project. The virtual absence of infrastructural support, the late and controversial appointment of the intern and questionable selection of the volunteer for the province all conspired to render the programme ineffective. There volunteers passed through the Mafikeng/Mmabatho but their collective impact on the communities they were meant to serve was minimal. Their task was not assisted by the late appointment of the intern, the strained relations between the partners in the PSN and the *ad hoc* manner in which they were supported. The early experience of the volunteer in Mafikeng reflects the state of disorganisation: "They were dropped off in a location, given no instructions, no aims, no goals. First couple of weeks they just walked around for someone to tell them what to do." This set the trend for the rest of the programme and it required the intervention of VSO and IDRC to prevent a complete collapse.

Even after the intern had been appointed, there was very little contact between him and the volunteers. The intern found the volunteer unwilling to teach him, the volunteer thought the intern was unsuitable. The volunteer thought the intern did not have the necessary skills to be in the position and believe "he was hired because he was a member of the provincial representative's church." This kind of mutual mistrust prevented the development of a constructive relationship.

Mmabatho High School represented an opportunity to make the local programme reasonably successful. There were two well-equipped computer labs, a number of enthusiastic teachers who were willing to participate actively in the programme and established networks of computer training with the community. However, the squabble over the appointment of the intern effectively alienated the school. The volunteer who visited the school hardly interacted with the teachers, preferring to busy himself with maintaining the computers linked to the World (?). These teachers also did not endear themselves to the volunteers when they could only secure very inadequate accommodation for them.

The intern believes he has acquired new knowledge, but this did not occur within the programme. Rather he improved his skills by attending computer courses under the auspices of the programme. He is now using these skills to assist schools in the area.

Mpumalanga

In the absence of an intern the volunteer's work was suppose to focus on the maintenance of computers and training of educators. However, the volunteer was mostly confined to Penryn College because he did not have a driver's licence and therefore had difficulty in visiting other schools. As a result the volunteer mainly worked in the computer labs of the college, assisting with installation and maintenance. The local host believes that with

more initiative and better personal skills the volunteer could have visited schools in the townships and interacted with the local communities.

Kwa-Zulu Natal

The computer centre in the township of Mphopomeni has 20 computers, which are used daily by 10 groups from the community. Learners from surrounding schools also utilise the facilities. The existence of a functioning and well-equipped centre provided a solid basis and great opportunity for the programme. However, the strained relations between the volunteers and the local host, as well as the volunteers' reluctance to travel to the township (let alone live there) prevented these excellent opportunities to be utilised. The two volunteers only visited the centre five times between them. The manager of the centre, who was enthusiastic about the possibility of being assisted by the volunteers, was disappointed by the failure of the programme.

Volunteer Assessment

The volunteers have given the programme a mixed report. Their experiences in South Africa varied immensely and, as a result, their perceptions of the value of the programme to themselves and about whether it met its objectives differed considerably. The following excerpts from the interviews with volunteers provide valuable insights into their assessments:

Eddie (North-West) :

Did not benefit from a work experience point of view. However, "It was a great experience culturally, socially – a great overview of an African developing country."

Scott (KwaZulu-Natal):

"I was depressed during my time in KwaZulu-Natal...By the end of six months I was tired and did not want to struggle anymore. My name was dragged through the mud in KZN." "The objectives were clear, but they were not implemented. There was no twinning."

Ryan (Free State):

"I have gained so much experience. I was forced to become a project manager. Also in the time my hands were tied I set up servers from scratch, worked on networks, many programmes. My people skills have greatly improved as well as I have the confidence to deal with powerful people. I have dealt with high up managers, owners of companies, elected officials."

Drew (Kathleen):

"I learned a lot about South African community, life, political and social situation." His attitude suggests and active interests in learning about the host country: "You need to do this in order to work in a new country."

Kimberley (Northern Cape):

“In the first part I did absolutely nothing (two months).” “This is an excellent programme and South Africa really needs it, but without SchoolNet... Overall I had a great time. I did some good work and taught a lot of people.”

According to the final reports completed by the volunteers, few felt that their placements made use of their IT skills. Instead, the placements were largely administrative. There was one or two placements which volunteers felt met their expectations. These placements can be characterized by the following:

1. the volunteer received orientation upon arrival in country and at their actual placement;
2. the placement drew heavily on the volunteer's educational background and/or practical experience;
3. a local intern was identified by the host, or the volunteer early enough to enable skill sharing to occur;
4. professional and personal support was available for both the volunteer and the intern either through the host, SchoolNet, or other colleagues;
5. the local intern remained at the placement after the volunteer's departure; and
6. a degree of placement evaluation and/or exit-interview was conducted prior to the volunteer's departure.

Intern Assessments

Most interns believed they benefited from the programme and that they are now not only more employable but also able use their skills in the development of their communities. These positive results were not always a product of the twinning relationship. In some instances the internship provided interns with the opportunity to attend computer classes, etc.

Sam Bankoes (North-West):

“It offered training. Finance was made available for other courses. I gained exposure in terms of experience. I now know the situation in terms of IT at the schools.” Learnt about web-page designing from computer course.

In this case the learning did not occur within the programme but through courses outside the programme.

Daniel Peterson (Northern Cape):

From a training perspective, he has learned how to work out a day-to-day schedule and programme for training purposes. How to train someone from scratch on how to use computers. Time management skills. Developed to such an extent that he could give training. He was marketed to many people. Appreciation from the hundreds of teachers he has trained.

Khoro Makhado (KwaZulu Natal):

The programme was effective. He did not know anything about the inside of a computer. When he came back he was not afraid of touching the computer. He was expecting to gain more knowledge on the technical side of computers, fixing things and improving skills on what he already knows.

Phelo Tshabalala (Cape Town)

Learned how to install net cards, software and to use databases.

Chapter Six

Lessons and Recommendations

6.1 Conceptualisation and Planning

- The knowledge and experience of the Canadian stakeholders were invaluable in shaping the concept and planning of the pilot project. The existing frameworks utilised by these organisations laid a relatively solid foundation for the project.
- Notwithstanding these advantages the project still suffered from having to operate in a constrained time frame, which hampered even the experienced Canadian stakeholders from being able to plan properly.
- There was too little direct involvement by the South African stakeholders, especially SchoolNet, in the initial phase of the project. As a result the conceptualisation of the project was not sufficiently attuned to the dynamics and requirements in the host country. (Thus the decision to send volunteers to nearly all the provinces was based on the assumption of the readiness of the local host organisations, which proved incorrect.)

Recommendations:

- While being cognisant of the particular dynamics that caused the pressure to implement the project quickly at the time, it is apparent that more time should be allocated for conceptualisation and planning.
- It is imperative that the local host organisation be intimately involved in these processes. The advantages to doing this are numerous. SchoolNet would learn from the interaction of its more experienced Canadian partners and introduce a South African perspective in the processes. In this way the requirements and capacity of the local hosts could be considered from the outset. Importantly, such an approach would promote a sense of joint ownership of the project between Canadian and South African organisations.

6.2 Objectives

The objectives were clear, appropriate and realistic.

Various stakeholders and participants emphasised different objectives, which reflected their differing interests.

Not everyone was familiar with the objectives of the programme. Although there was a general understanding of the objectives, there was a degree of uncertainty about the programme's main aims.

The objectives were not sufficiently specific about its main target groups in South Africa. The category 'disadvantaged youth' should be disaggregated to ensure that the programme benefits the most marginalised sections of South Africa society.

Cultural exchange seems to have been added to the list of objectives as an afterthought to assuage concerns that the transfer of skill would be a one way process.

Recommendations

- All participants, from the national stakeholders to the educators in a township school, should be made fully aware of the programme's objectives to ensure unity of purpose.
- The leading stakeholders should aim to achieve by active engagement with the participants and not only by disseminating material to the localities.
- Young black women should be made a central focus of the programme's objectives. A critical measure of the success of any skills development project should be the number of young black females that are empowered.
- If cultural exchange is to be an objective then the concept should be given real meaning and substance.

6.3 Selection of volunteers

- The process of selecting the volunteers was highly professional and efficient, despite the time constraints imposed on the process.
- The criteria for selection placed too much emphasis on technical skills at the expense of personal and management considerations.
- The virtual absence of participation from South African organisations meant that the criteria were not sensitive to the specific requirement of local host organisations and communities.

Recommendations

- SchoolNet should be involved in the selection of the volunteers. At a minimum it should participate in VSOs assessment day for volunteers. Here again SchoolNet would gain invaluable experience while assisting in the selecting volunteers who would be appropriate for South Africa.
- The criteria of selection should place more emphasis on the personal and management skills of the volunteers. This might mean that more mature (older) volunteers should be selected. In addition volunteers should demonstrate some commitment to a developmentalist project.

6.4 Training and Orientation of volunteers

- The training provided in Canada, especially by VSO, was good and generally effective.
- However, volunteers were not properly prepared for the 'reality' of the specific locations where they being sent. There was an expectation that the local host organisations would deal with this aspect during the orientation programme.
- But the orientation programme held under the auspices of SchoolNet (with the assistance of the local chapters of VSO and Acacia) was too general. It gave the volunteers a better sense of the history and broad socio-economic realities of the country, but also did not prepare them for the 'reality' in the sites.
- The orientation tended to become a guide on how to survive in South Africa. While the intentions behind this were to make volunteers wary of crime, its effects were probably negative and instilled unnecessary in the volunteers.
- SchoolNet did not have the capacity or experience to run such an orientation programme. The assistance from VSO and Acacia provided a temporary solution to this lack of capacity.

Recommendations

- The training in Canada and orientation in South Africa should foreground a programme of familiarising volunteers with the host country and, as far as possible, with the local sites.
- The orientation programme in South Africa should include local interns. Not only would the partners in the twinning exercise get to know one another early in the

programme, but the volunteers would be able to learn about the local realities. Such a workshop would be ideal to ensure understanding and agreement on the objectives of the programme from the key participants.

6.5 Selection of interns

- The criteria for the selection of the local interns were appropriate and clear.
- Although the selection process should ideally be managed at a local level, the lack of capacity at many of these centres resulted in shortcomings and problems.
- Little effort seems to have been made to recruit female youth as interns.

Recommendations

- SchoolNet should be more pro-active in the selection of the local interns to ensure that appropriate candidates are selected timeously.
- At least fifty percent of the local interns should be female.

Needs
Selection

Do Not agree

6.6 Support and infrastructure

- PSNs, interns and volunteers generally felt the support provided by the stakeholders, especially SchoolNet, was inadequate.
- The absence of proper communication channels between stakeholders and the participants, especially to deal with grievances, was a serious shortcoming. SchoolNet was clearly inexperienced (and under-resourced) in this field and delegated responsibilities to the PSNs.
- The absence of plans and strategies for the effective implementation of the plan resulted in uncertainty among participants about what they were supposed to do. This gap was only partially filled by some *ad hoc* planning.
- Most PSNs did not have the capacity successfully to host the programme. This was particularly evident in the smaller centres.
- This lack of capacity affected many aspects of the programme, but was particularly evident in the problems associated with transport and accommodation.

Recommendations

- SchoolNet should appoint a dedicated officer to manage the programme before planning phase so that she/he could be involved in every aspect of the programme's development.
- Such a manager should be the liaison between the local participants and the main stakeholders. She/he should have the authority to intervene in disputes.
- SchoolNet should have the necessary financial and other material resources properly to manage the programme and to assist PSNs.
- SchoolNet and the PSNs (possibly with the involvement of the Canadian stakeholders) should develop a plan for the implementation of the programme prior to the arrival of the volunteers. Such a plan should contain clear programmes of work for volunteers and interns.
- Only those PSNs with plans and demonstrated capacity should be involved in the programme. Among the issues to be considered are commitment of the hosts and the ability to provide adequate accommodation and transport.
- There should be constant monitoring of the programme, which should include regular contact between SchoolNet and the local participants (preferably on a weekly basis) as well as routine visits to all the sites.

6.7 Conclusion

The model adopted by VASIP, namely, of twinning volunteers and interns in a skills transfer exercise proved effective and viable. The location of this exercise at schools in townships was mainly beneficial. Notwithstanding the difficulties affecting the programme, this is workable model that should be replicated.

However, the success of this model depends fundamentally on the availability and proper functioning of support systems. In this respect the organisational readiness of the host organisations is absolutely critical. It was at this level that many of the difficulties arose. It is important that in future endeavours of this sort that the host organisations be prepared *prior* to the commencement of the programme. Unless the requisite systems are in place when the volunteers arrive many of the problems highlighted in this report will be repeated. SchoolNet and the PSNs have reflected on the pilot project and their own shortcomings. They are more aware now of what is required to make such a project succeed.

Finally, future programmes should set in place monitoring and evaluation systems at the outset that would track the progress of the twinning programme as well as the progress of the interns once they have left the programme. In this way there could be an ongoing evaluation of the impact and value of the programme.

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A. Stakeholder Interviews

Mary Stuart, VSO Canada Director
Tracey Foster, NetCorps Program Co-manager
Wendy Street, NetCorps Program Officer
Chris Smart, IDRC

Mary Stuart – Director, VSO Canada June 6 2001

Conceptualisation

1. The conceptualisation was already underway before she came. From what she understands VSO was involved early on – how could we use IT skills. We had a close link with IDRC. The Acacia project was suggested to us as a very good match to VSO. It utilized our recruiting / training/placement skills of volunteers and interns. It was quite an interesting new program. SchoolNet had been quite successful in Canada. But when we actually became involved was before her time.
2. N/A
3. The program is attempting to increase resources/knowledge available to schools and communities in South Africa. Particularly rural areas and townships because they do not have the same opportunities to use technology to pull information off the Internet that they can use in communities and schools. Also to share information and to build knowledge. To give people the access to the resources that are out there on the Internet.
4. We have a couple of objectives. To provide opportunities to young Canadians to learn and provide service. And for the program to have a developmental impact in the communities within South Africa as a whole.
5. Yes. In any development program you undertake you must recognize its long-term and a learning process. The basic concepts were valid and continue to be valid. We've learned a lot about what we need to do better to make the program better and we'll continue to learn.
6. N/A
7. Utilize our experience in recruitment and training in order to make our contribution to the program. The other (unintentional) piece was to work with SchoolNet and Acacia to help them learn how to effectively utilize volunteers as well as how to support them.
8. VSO/IDRC/Acacia – had face-to-face sessions around who would do what. I don't know at what point SchoolNet became involved.
9. We focused very clearly on recruiting volunteers, training and supplying them. We also played a role in helping SchoolNet learn how to place volunteers and support them. We also provide support to the volunteers in the field and helped SchoolNet deal with issues.
10. Well – VSO being clear about the recruitment / orientation piece and how interns could be used.
Improvements? – We needed to find a way to nail down what volunteers in the field, might need, and who would provide it. SchoolNet thought they could. We also need to look at our ability to engage VSO UK. We really have nowhere to go but up.

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Program Implementation

- 11a. Quite a bit of involvement in the criteria we used to recruit. We had to do some learning in terms of the difference in the program. We never felt that anyone was trying to tell us anyone was unsuitable to go.
- 11b. I don't remember that we were consulted at all.
12. I think they were, but we needed to do some learning. Younger people, shorter overseas stint. There were two quite different focuses between Industry Canada objectives and the coalition members. The Industry Canada focus was more on employment for youth. Coalition members focus was more on developmental issues / skills sharing.
13. A. It's hard. We had to learn how to interpret the dimensions recognizing the interns will not have as much life experience. They may not be as interested in development, which did not mean they would not do a good job. We also had some difficulty with positive and realistic commitment. Again, it was their youth and lack of experience that made them a different group than the mainstream.
B. Criteria that would really show us their willingness to stick with the whole program and and to share the skills they've learned with others after they're done to replicate the process.
14. A. Volunteers – we selected them
B. Interns – no role as far as I know
15. A. We used our standard dimensions. We advertised specifically for people with IT skills and/or experience in IT.
B. N/A
16. The Selection process is a good one. It works well.
17. N/A
18. No. Not in the first two years of the program. The timeframe was very short, much shorter than you would usually have. It was much better last year, though still tight. The whole cycle – advertising –to training is not a short process and the program funder has not adequately recognized that. Also SchoolNet possibly does not recognize it when they were not sending us useful placement descriptions.
19. Volunteers – PFC weekend and Secretariat Training. There is some overlap here and we have made suggestions to the Secretariat to alter their training.
20. We hoped VSO South Africa would include the volunteers in their in country training. Problems – the timing of the arrival of the NetCorps volunteers. Initially VSO South Africa did not buy into the program. But they still did help in the provision of some guidance. This is not the same level of support that is given for the mainstream program however.
21. A real struggle (lack of support from VSO SA). In the end they agreed to provide emergency support only. SchoolNet took on the in house support, but we were frequently called to provide support to SchoolNet or called directly by the volunteers.
What went well? –
- Program Manager was able to visit SA to sort out some things.
 - PM and team available by email and phone to deal with problems – not ideal, but we did what we could.
- Improved?
- We weren't there
 - SchoolNet did not know what was needed
 - VSO South Africa knew, but would not assist

D. N/A

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29. All – quite well prepared in some ways and not in others.
 VSO – this is what we do, we were ready for it.
 Acacia – don't think they were
 SchoolNet – they had little idea how to use volunteers therefore their expectations of us were unrealistic.
 VSO – we overestimated the enthusiasm with which the rest of VSO would take on this program. We were not prepared for the amount of resistance we encountered from the rest of VSO.
30. N/A
31. N/A – to SchoolNet
 From VSO – would have been when it came through SchoolNet for various volunteers.
 Accommodation issues if needed
32. A lot
- They need to be worked with like VSO works with any potential employers
 - Placements need to be adequate
 - Accommodation must be checked
 - Sit with them with a checklist of responsibilities of each party to ensure clarity
 - A process for dealing with issues – intern is working for them and if that does not work – how to escalate.
33. The fact that the NetCorps volunteers had IT access meant in some ways that communication was better than with other volunteers. They could and did email us directly.
 Between volunteer/Provincial School Networks and SchoolNet SA – I don't know, but Shafika had a really good handle on what was going on.
34. Not very effective.
 Improvements – Regular phone or email conversations that brought SchoolNet into the loop. That piece of communication did not seem to work that well. I don't know about the PSN's. Overall communication should be less ad hoc and more scheduled.
35. The concept is very interesting – there is a real lack of access to these resources in South Africa. This is a serious and growing gap. A tool that is enormously useful is not getting used. While here we have a lot of young people with IT skills. It therefore fills the youth employment need and gives them an opportunity to share their skills and leave those skills behind. Also, it gives the volunteers a better understanding of what the world is like. Sharing their skills enables people in South Africa and uses their skills in a very positive way.
36. As with any new partnership, there was a lot to learn. We all made unwarranted assumptions. We needed to learn about SchoolNet, they needed to learn about us. They had to get the South African internship part working. We had to develop a strategy for getting the rest of VSO on board. We still need to convince Industry Canada that the timeframe they set up is not realistic.
37. 1. Lack of VSO support overseas and to teach them what was needed.
 2. There are difficulties in any new partnership. It takes time to get to know each other.
38. We needed to work with VSO UK to help them understand the objectives in terms of VSO's objectives. We needed to be clear on what we needed from the Program Offices.
 Trying to persuade them that if the Program Offices are going to provide what NetCorps needs, their work needs to be recognized. NetCorps volunteers need to be counted in each country's overall numbers.
 Acacia / SchoolNet relationship – ongoing visits are very important.

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39. A lot more preparatory work with SchoolNet to ensure that placements are clear (and that they existed). SchoolNet needs to be prepared to provide ongoing support to the volunteers. We would not send volunteers if there were no interns selected yet.
40. Not completely. This is not surprising though. There were a lot of teething problems. It is evident that many volunteer's thought they were not utilized for IT.
41. Yes, we would like to participate in this kind of program again. We would need to involve our Program Offices from day one though. If not, we would have to look hard at whether we would want to do the program in that country. We would have to have all the responsibilities laid out clearly from the beginning.

Tracey Foster, NetCorps Program Co-manager June 6 2001

1. I don't know how it came about. We were initially approached about the internships and we needed to figure out where they would go and somehow IDRC South Africa happened. I'm not sure how much it grew out of the original two internships (the NetCorps pilot) and how much was separate.
2. I would hope a bit of back and forth. Working with the objectives from Acacia and SchoolNet and seeing if they meshed with the wider VSO ideals. I'm not sure though.
3. It was something to do with telecentres, increasing IT skills of both Canadian and South African youth. The telecentres would provide support to interns and teachers in a rural settings thus enabling connectivity.
4. Strictly from VSO's perspective – the NC objectives notion of it being a YES (Youth Employment Strategy) program and giving young people the opportunity to increase their employability while having a valid overseas experience.
5. Mostly, but based on the feedback from the volunteers, there was a problem with some of the matching of volunteers and South African interns. I think this objective was realistic, but there was some sort of problem realizing it.
6. N/A
7. The placement of volunteers was basically a way to realise some of the objectives. Planning around recruitment.
8. I'm not sure. There are some agreements for some things; therefore there were a set of discussions that led to the Memorandum of Grant Conditions. VSO South Africa must have been involved in the earlier discussions but they did not want to play a role.
9. VSO's role was limited to recruitment and placement – supplying Canadian volunteers and some kind of distance support of the program, but that was not a huge part. Support of the Canadian volunteers when things from their perspective were not going well. We were expected to intervene. Also debriefing.
10. N/A
11. A. There wasn't a lot of play. The Assessment Day was adapted to meet the needs of this program. Had a conversation with SchoolNet around problems with selection that makes me wonder how collaborative the process was.
11. B. At that point of my involvement, not at all.
12. N/A
13. A. The ones we have work. I wonder whether or not we need to look more carefully at matching process sometimes they were very isolated.
- B. Depends on the start that program might have in South Africa. Who is the receiver of the information versus the giver. For example, if the Canadian role was to transfer skills, do we need to look at certain dimensions more in the end they probably need the 7 dimensions but I wouldn't know how much play there was there.
14. A. We did it the way volunteers are selected.
- B. None

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15. A. N/A
B. It might be a partnership, but I don't know that.
 16. Looking at matching. Limitation of documentation we received from SchoolNet. We rarely got information until it was too late – if we'd been able to involve them earlier, it would have made for happier volunteers.
 17. N/A
 18. Sometimes yes, sometimes no. Dependant upon where they fit into the overall NetCorps schedule. Sometimes nicely placed, sometimes not.
 19. Preparing for change and Secretariat training. Pretty much everyone received that, timing was the determining factor.
 20. I'm not sure. I was told versions of what they received. VSO South Africa had minimal involvement.
 21. Zodwa at one point. Aside from that no formal mechanisms and this seemed to be a real source of irritation for Canadian volunteers
 - 22/23. There needs to be a designated person. Without one it can be really difficult for the volunteers to get what they need – the need varies, but if this is one individuals job they know who to go to when they need it.
Went well – Zodwa was helpful. They were frustrated that she did not have the authority that she / they needed.
Support of each other was a very strong feature. They had a good support network between each other.
- D.N/A
- E. VSO – difficult pre departure with lack of information. That was the place where we were ill prepared.
SNSA – ill prepared for the realities of working with Canadian volunteers. Sometimes I think they were just plain irritates.
PSN'S – Not as prepared as they could have been. Because we did not have enough information, we did not do the greatest job preparing the Canadian volunteers.
 30. N/A
 31. We had very little contact with anyone from the host agencies.
 32. Hard to know without knowing how they were prepared. Classic stuff – figuring out if climate is right – is there interest in the program? There needs to be someone who will take responsibility for the initiative. We used to send information to SchoolNet and never to the host agencies; maybe the hosts had more information about the Canadian volunteers that would have helped. Putting hosts in contact with the volunteer prior to their arrival is really nice.
 33. Email contact in terms of sending them information about prospective volunteers. If there were problems, we were in contact. It was relatively easy to phone and get in contact with Kantha.
 34. Just by having a designated support person. If there had been we would have gotten contacted less by the volunteers. There would have been less need for VSO to contact SchoolNet to step in. Where there were problems we were kept in the loop very well.
 35. When it works, it works really well. It is a chance for Canadian volunteers and South African interns to gain valuable professional experience. Some volunteers felt there was good developmental impact.
 36. Its newness as a program. Like anything it would get better with time. I look at how unable I was to answer background questions – maybe I should have been better briefed / or taken more time to understand the program at a deeper level. This taps into the larger issue of not enough information for the Canadian volunteers – where they were going, etc. There were many staff changes at VSO also which did not help things.

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37. Lack of information. Not enough of a sense of what it would be like when they arrive. This is the same for the VSO Volunteer program, but we know that there is a process in place and strict criteria to assess placements.
38. We discussed that more information was needed with SchoolNet South Africa, but we never got it.
39. Be much clearer about what we were getting in to.
 - What support would be available – this would help us figure out our role in relation to the Canadian volunteers / when do we get involved?
 - Be a bit more hard-nosed about the need for information (placement etc.)
When we look for at other NetCorps placements we place them in relation to specific jobs. SNSA is the only partner that gave us a generic placement summary and did the matching when the volunteers arrived.
40. I think in a broad sense it did. It's more about the fine details than the general objectives.

Wendy Street, NetCorps Program Officer June 4 2001
(Wendy responded to the questions by email)

Background

1. How was your organisation involved in the conceptualisation of the programme?

VSO Canada has been involved in this program since 1997 when NetCorps was a CIDA funded program. VSO Canada was part of the original 6 coalition members who, I believe, helped to determine/conceptualize how the program would be structured so that each member could incorporate NetCorps into its existing programming objectives. VSO was able to help decide the fact that each coalition member could participate in the program using slightly different methods so that no member had to change their current policies of volunteer-sending.

2. What part did your organisation play in determining the objectives of the programme?

VSO Canada worked as part of a Coalition of 6 member organizations to determine how the program would work for each of us. VSO was able to help determine methods of reporting, recruitment and the flow of financial information. VSO Canada drew on it's long history of volunteer-sending to ensure that the objectives of this program met both the objectives of VSO Canada and the strategic planning of our overseas offices. In this way VSO was able to ensure that the internships would be beneficial not just to the interns, but to the overseas partner agency as well.

3. Please describe the objectives of the programme.

The primary objective of the NetCorps program is to provide young Canadians (19-30) with an overseas employment opportunity in the field of information technology. It is also an opportunity for overseas partners to benefit from the intern and improve their own capacities through ongoing training and implementation of new ideas and skills.

4. From your organisations perspective, what are the most important objectives?

From our organizations perspective, the most important objectives are to promote skill-sharing in developing countries to help move towards a more equitable world, and to provide Canadian youth with an opportunity to get their "foot in the door" of an IT career while expanding their

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own world view and learning about the realities of development. It is also important to build and maintain partnerships with overseas organizations that will benefit from the program.

5. Based on your experience of the programme, are these objectives realistic?

I believe they are.

6. If they were not realistic, how would you change them?

N/A

7. What plans were made by your organisation to achieve the objectives of the programme?

? We plan to continue working with the NetCorps program and continue to learn from it and improve upon it in the future

8. What discussions occurred prior to program implementation among the key stakeholders (above) regarding the role each would play?

I am not aware of what was said in these discussions.

9. What was your organization's role within the programme?

10. What went well in the conceptualisation stage? What could be improved?

Not applicable to my experience.

Program Implementation

Selection of volunteers and local interns

11a. What, if any, involvement did you / your organisation have in determining the criteria and process by which the Canadian volunteers were selected?

The criteria of selection has been developed over the last 40 years of volunteer sending through VSO UK, and assisted in the last 10 years through VSO Canada. Through experience and history, we have developed a daylong Assessment of each candidate to determine their suitability to volunteer overseas.

11b. The local (South African) interns?

We had no part in the criteria of selection of the local interns.

12. Were the criteria adequate? Explain.

Yes, in terms of providing evidence of their commitment, motivation, sensitivity etc, the criteria are adequate.

The dimensions that are observed and graded on the Assessment day are: commitment to learning, positive and realistic commitment, self-assurance, flexibility and adaptability, practical problem solving, sensitivity to the needs of others and working with others. The final grading is agreed upon by a group of selectors, not just one person, and the candidate needs to have proven abilities in these dimensions in order to be selected to take part in the program. No one person is strong in all of these areas, and some areas may be weaker than others, but overall a candidate must have a passing grade on the Assessment day in order to be selected.

13a. What criteria do you think should be used in selecting volunteers?

discuss dimensions motivation, concept of development

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I think that the current criteria should continue to be used. It is much more effective than a one or two hour interview since it gives the Selectors the opportunity to observe candidates doing practical tasks and discussing issues of development, not just discussing their employment and education credentials. It is also less biased than many other types of interviews because there are 3 people making the decision based on observed evidence, not just one person. I do believe that if time permitted, it would be better if we could find volunteers who were committed to the concept of development as well as I.T. skill sharing, but since it is a youth employment strategy the majority of applicants are focused on the employment aspect more than the development. For this reason all volunteers take part in the VSO pre-departure training where issues of development are discussed.

13b. The Interns?

Similar to the volunteers, the criteria for selecting S.A. interns should rest on their motivation to learn and to be part of the program, as well as their ability to teach others the skills that they themselves will develop. The 7 dimensions used by VSO Canada to determine suitability are all important elements that could be applied to the selection of local interns.

14a. What role did your organization play in the selection of the Canadian volunteers?

VSO Canada played a critical role in the selection of the volunteers. VSO Canada was solely responsible for determining which interns, based on their resumes, would be invited to Assessment day. VSO Canada staff and trained volunteer selectors determined which candidates were selected after their Assessment days.

14b. The local interns?

We had no part of the selection of the local interns

15a. How and by who were the criteria determined for the volunteers?

Please refer to question 11a.

15b. For the interns?

Not applicable

16. How might the selection of program participants be improved?

Perhaps selection could be improved by focusing recruitment efforts more towards social sciences graduates who have some I.T. skills and a stronger interest and knowledge of development, as opposed to focusing on IT graduates who don't usually have an awareness of developmental issues. The difficulty with that is that we would run the risk of not finding candidates with enough I.T. qualifications to be successful in their placements. Alternately, we could attempt to include more focused sessions on development, the challenges that will be faced in developing countries specifically by I.T. professionals, and the role of ITC in developing countries.

17. Were these communicated to the other program stakeholders?

No.

Training and orientation of volunteers

18. Did your organisation have sufficient time to prepare for the departure (Canadian stakeholders) or arrival (South African stakeholders) of the volunteers? Please explain.

In most cases there was adequate time to prepare for the departure of the volunteers. On average it is a 2-3 month process from the time of application to the time of departure for the

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Canadian volunteers. Occasionally though, if someone drops out of the program towards departure day, we will have less time to prepare a replacement volunteers. However, all the volunteers must have enough time to do the mandatory Secretariat training and finish their medical examinations and inoculations. The quickest that this can be done is approximately one months time.

When there was less time to recruit a volunteer it has happened that the full Assessment day is not conducted, but rather a phone interview, with the questions based on the dimensions from the Assessment day, and a decision will be made among two staff members.

19. Describe the training and/or orientation that the volunteers received prior to their departure for South Africa.

All volunteers must take part in the 5-day Industry Canada funded Secretariat training. The objectives of this orientation are to promote knowledge sharing, learn about adult education techniques and discuss the various methods of technical knowledge transfer.

Depending on time restrictions, most volunteers also take part in the VSO Canada Preparing for Change Training Weekend. The aims of the course are the exploration of a range of issues involved in moving to a new environment overseas and to help volunteers understand their. The course helps volunteers to prepare for going overseas; to adjust to anew environment; and to be effective overseas. It also includes a health briefing by VSO Canada's Medical Advisor.

20. Describe the training and/or orientation the volunteers received upon their arrival in South Africa.

My understanding, based on volunteer reports, is that in some cases there was an in-country orientation provided by SchoolNet in Johannesburg, other volunteers have reported that there was none.

21. Describe the mechanisms that were put in place to support volunteers while overseas?

The volunteers had constant email access to a NetCorps staff member in Canada and were encouraged to use it only after they had tried to resolve the issues with their overseas employer. The VSO program office in South Africa was available for emergencies, and according to one volunteers report, VSO South Africa had taken part in the in-country training session to explain their supportive role. Volunteers are also given an emergency pager number which will get them in touch with a VSO staff member 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in case of emergency. I am not familiar with the support mechanisms put into place by counterparts or the partner organization.

Please comment on their overall effectiveness.

The interns did not hesitate to contact VSO Canada, and so that can be measured as a successful mechanism.

22. What went well? What could be improved?

What went well: The interns did not hesitate to contact VSO Canada.

What could be improved: VSO South Africa should be more consistent in their involvement with the volunteers. Also, it should be re-emphasized to interns before their departure that they should be in touch with VSO Canada only after all other avenues have been exhausted.

In-country orientation from the partner agency should be more consistent, as should in-country support. It was reported to us that a number of issues, such as transportation and

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security, were not being addressed by the partner agency when they were brought up by volunteers, and in fact steps were taken only after VSO Canada got involved.

23. How would you improve these mechanisms?

- 1) Ensure that the in-country VSO program office is involved whenever possible.
- 2) Have the partner agency send us a schedule of their in-country training.
- 3) Have the partner agency provide us with their reports of the effectiveness of each placement so that we can follow up where appropriate.
- 4) Ensure that there is a mechanism for grievances to be heard and acted upon by host organizations and the partner agency.

Training and orientation of local interns

N/A

The Programme

24. To what extent was each stakeholder prepared for the implementation of this programme?

I am not aware of how the stakeholders in S.A. were prepared for this program.

25. What was done to prepare host organisations (the PSN's)?

I am not aware of what was done to prepare the PSNs.

26. What was the nature of the support they received from the national (and international) institutions, during the course of the programme? Provide details.

Before departure, volunteers received support in the form of training, ongoing contact with VSO Canada to help them in their preparations. While overseas VSO Canada supported volunteers through email contact when necessary (Please refer to question #21 for details). Upon return to Canada, support is given by way of a resettlement pack which includes information about settling back at home; ongoing involvement with VSO; and about translating their overseas experiences for Canadian employers.

Volunteers are also invited to sign up for a debriefing weekend in Montreal at the Secretariat, where issues of re-integration and job-search techniques are discussed.

27. In future, what should be done to prepare host organizations for such a programme?

Host organizations should be made fully aware of the objectives of the program through contact with VSO Canada and literature that they can refer to, so that they can have realistic expectations of the roles of volunteers. It would also be very beneficial to provide host organizations with a requisition for work that they can complete which would show the duties that the volunteer would be performing, the timelines that would be expected and indicators to measure their success. It would also be helpful for all host agencies to include on this requisition form the type of computer software that is used, an idea of the accommodation, and information about what transportation will be available for the volunteer. This information could be given to the volunteer before their departure so that they can better prepare themselves.

28. What communication systems were in place to facilitate ongoing or regular contact between local participants (PSN, volunteers and local interns), national stakeholders and international stakeholders (a la VSO Canada)?

The volunteers have regular contact with VSO Canada through both a mid-term and a final report that they are required to send to us. They are also aware that they can be in touch with us via

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email or phone if there is an emergency that has not been dealt with in country. There was no contact between host agencies and VSO Canada.

29. How effective were these systems, and what would you do to improve them?

The reporting systems were effective. Since the end of service grant hinges on their submitting a final report, all of the interns are motivated to do so.

My suggestion on improvement would be opening the communication between host agencies and partner organizations to develop the requisition form mentioned in question 31. This could be sent to VSO Canada, and if there were questions or concerns, it could be relayed back to the host agency with enough time to address the issues before the volunteers arrived.

30. What were the main strengths of the programme?

The main strength of the program are is skill transfer between volunteers, intern and host agencies and the effect that these skills will have on the livelihood and lifestyles of the children at the schools where SchoolNet is being implemented. Other strengths are the opportunity for volunteers and local interns to interact with each other and share their cultures with each other and learn from that. Also, the opportunity for youth to work overseas, improving their skills in environments that may make them work more creatively than they may have in Canada.

31. What were its main weaknesses?

The main weaknesses were the lack of in-country support for the volunteers who were not at the Schoolnet office in Johannesburg. There seemed to be some ongoing concerns about transportation and security that were not addressed. Better communication between VSO Canada and the partner organization about the roles and responsibilities of each. Also, the occasional report from interns that there was no work to be done in some placements, or that the work was not I.T. related needs to be improved.

32. What were the biggest challenges to the programme implementation for your organisation?

Our biggest challenge, from my perspective, was the lack of information about the individual placements. This made recruitment difficult because I was never able to be specific about where in South Africa they would be sent and where they would work and what sort of equipment they would be working on. Detailed descriptions and work requisition forms from each host agency would be extremely useful in implementing the program effectively and giving volunteers realistic expectations.

Another big challenge for VSO Canada was the fact that we had difficulty determining how complaints could be dealt with from so far away. For example, the issue of lack of local transportation and lack of in-country security for the volunteers came up on a few occasions, but from Canada there seemed to be little we could do except refer the interns to the partner organization for their follow up. At that point it was also difficult for us to monitor if the complaints were followed up on.

33. How were these dealt with?

The placement description issue was not dealt with because we did not receive another request for interns this year. The difficulty about complaints was dealt with by forwarding the issues to the partner organizations for follow up.

34. If given the opportunity to do this programme again, what would your organisation do differently?

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We would ask the partner organization to provide us with documentation from each partner organization that would show that the host agency was prepared for a volunteer (see question 31). This would alleviate a lot of the problems encountered because it would give each host organization an opportunity to carefully plan for a volunteer, and it would give the volunteers a realistic picture of what to expect in their placement. We would also be more specific and send more detailed information to the partner agency about our respective roles and responsibilities.

35. From your perspective (as a representative of your organisation), did the programme meet its objectives as they were set out in the beginning? Why? Why not?

From my perspective, some of the objectives were met, but they were inconsistent from volunteer to volunteer. The objective to provide young Canadians (19-30) with an overseas employment opportunity in the field of information technology was met by all volunteers by being overseas, although some volunteers (mainly in the larger cities) reported that there was plenty of IT work to do, and they gained a lot of experience both personally and professionally while other volunteers reported that they had gained a lot personally, but professionally the program did not work due to the fact that there seemed to be little to do in some areas and that they felt they were not needed. In all cases though, volunteers have expanded their worldviews and learned about the realities of development.

The objective of 'overseas partners gaining from the arrival of a volunteer to improve their organizational capacities through ongoing training and implementation of new ideas and skills' seems to have been met in the host agencies where training took place.

Chris Smart, IDRC Ottawa June 6 2001

1. He knew of the plan to develop the NetCorps program. He'd heard there was a desire to set it up inside of Industry Canada. The director of WUSC (another NetCorps coalition member) and Chris persuaded Industry Canada to call on the expertise of the Volunteer Sending Organizations. Chris was the person who made the connection in house. He is not sure how Acacia made the connection with SchoolNet. Frank Tulus (Research Officer for Acacia) came to him with a capacity building idea. He (Chris) directed him to VSO. The circumstances were that NetCorps was under development and Acacia was coming up quickly. They did a pre evaluation of SchoolNet Canada knowing there was already an incipient SchoolNet in South Africa.
2. SchoolNet South Africa was there and knew what they wanted to do. We played a kind of consultation role (collegial, responsive, collaborating with) – worked with Denis and his team to frame it. He doubts very much that they went in with their objectives and try to get them accepted.
3. N/A. As a facilitator. He knew his colleagues were looking for technical assistance and happened to know that VSO was part of the NetCorps consortium. He thought VSO would be perfect because they had a Program Office in South Africa.

None of the other sections are applicable to the role played by Chris Smart. Please see his following general comments.

Contractual Relationships

- IDRC needed to look at how the benefits and liabilities balanced
- We knew we would benefit enormously from having these volunteers go overseas.

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- But we very quickly asked the question, “Who is responsible?” VSO? IDRC? Hosts?
- What agreements were signed with the various parties to cover everything?
- Thought it was a standard volunteer sending program, and it was to some extent, but there were people playing variations on different roles.
- The program is worth an evaluation in itself just in terms of how to set up the contractual agreements.

Lack of VSO South Africa Support

We should highlight the lack of support from VSO South Africa and the difficulties that led to for VSO Canada.

VSO UK was behind the times – they hoped this program would just go away – although the idea was coming from one of their new member partners. They also had a culture that would not let them impose a management system on the South African Program Office. As a result, the NetCorps interns were not considered part of VSO International in the field. But, if someone dies, and VSO’s name is on it, someone needs to be responsible. This program needs to be managed at the same level of experience that is normative to VSO’s program.

This is a changing world and VSO UK has to handle these changes. They need to provide the same culture of management for new initiatives. They cannot have this compartmentalization.

Kantha Singh, Manager SchoolNet South Africa

Background

1. How was your organisation involved in the conceptualisation of the programme?

Prior to my arrival unsure who was responsibly but probably Dennis.

3. Please describe the objectives of the programme.

To build ICT capacity around the country through a training process. There had to be an exchange of skills. The volunteer had to impart technical skills. The intern had to involve the volunteer in local cultural interaction.

4. From your organisations perspective, what are the most important objectives?

Transfer of technical skills.

5. Based on your experience of the programme, are these objectives realistic?

Yes

6. If they were not realistic, how would you change them?

7. What plans were made by your organisation to achieve the objectives of the programme?

SchoolNet did not make any plans. Certainly they were not adequate. This was the first time that SchoolNet was involved in such a programme and it was not prepared. Unless there is internal planning by SchoolNet the programme will not work. This is therefore a crucial component that was absent during the pilot project. One of the principal problems was that SchoolNet did not even have a budget for this programme.

8. What discussions occurred prior to program implementation among the key stakeholders (above) regarding the role each would play?

Not prior. It was not clear at the beginning.

Program Implementation

Selection of volunteers and local interns

11a. What, if any, involvement did you / your organisation have in determining the criteria and process by which the Canadian volunteers were selected?

To some extent. It is important for SchoolNet to be directly involved in the selection process for the volunteers. CVs were sent from Canada and from here they were sent to the provinces. The main criterion, if not the only one, was technical skills. We learned through the process. After the first two batches arrived we began to change the criteria. Most importantly we included the necessity for volunteers to have life skills. In other words they also needed to have social skills. I would say that among the important criteria should be the volunteer's age (the person has to be older), should have had experience in the 3rd world, should have some work experience and have a level of maturity.

11b. The local (South African) interns?

The interns were appointed later and the criteria for their selection were clearly spelled out. There is a document which set out these criteria. Most of the selection of the interns occurred on the basis of the criteria.

13. Were the criteria adequate? Explain.

No. Yes for the interns.

13a. What criteria do you think should be used in selecting volunteers?

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13b. The Interns?

14a. What role did your organisation play in the selection of the Canadian volunteers?

They were 100% responsible based on the CV.

14b. The local interns?

15a. How and by who were the criteria determined for the volunteers?

15b. For the interns?

SchoolNet and Acacia. KZN and Western Cape, PSN

16. How might the selection of program participants be improved?

The selection of local interns to be left to the Provincial SchoolNet. It was not really a problem. As far as the volunteers are concerned the criteria need to be further developed and SchoolNet should be more centrally involved.

17. Were these communicated to the other program stakeholders?

Training and orientation of volunteers (not applicable to all stakeholders)

36. Did your organisation have sufficient time to prepare for the departure (Canadian stakeholders) or arrival (South African stakeholders) of the volunteers? Please explain.

There was enough time. However, the programme was not adequate. There was not enough experience and knowledge about this kind of orientation. VSO ran the orientation programme and it was successful. There should be greater collaboration with VSO on the orientation programme and it should be a budget item.

37. Describe the training and/or orientation that the volunteers received prior to their departure for South Africa.

38. Describe the training and/or orientation the volunteers received upon their arrival in South Africa.

There was a briefing with the programme manager. VSO discussed issues such as Aids with them. The VSO workshop covered matters such as transport, security and issues related to living

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in South Africa. The volunteers were made aware of the country's cultural diversity. They were made aware of the security precautions required by them.

The first four volunteers had the most effective orientation programme and they reacted positively to it. Subsequent volunteers declined the orientation programme. There were also budgetary problems. As a result the orientation programme became more basic. SchoolNet was now primarily responsible for the orientation. For all these reasons the orientation programme was not as good as it might otherwise have been.

39. Describe the mechanisms that were put in place to support volunteers while overseas?

Very little because of the limited resources. No.

For example, the KwaZulu Natal offices were in Pietermaritzburg but the schools that were serviced by the programme were all over the place. However, there was no budget for transport and this became a major issue of contention. Thus the volunteers were often office-bound, which became a source of frustration for them.

It developed during the programme. In the North West we did not act quickly enough. Mechanisms were not in place before the commencement of the programme.

Medical attention also became an issue. Reimbursements did not occur as planned and the volunteers were unhappy. One should consider introducing a basic insurance scheme for the volunteers.

The volunteers were very nervous about security. One should handle this aspect of the orientation more sensitively. The aims should not be to terrify the volunteers, especially not on their arrival.

40. Please comment on their overall effectiveness.

41. What went well? What could be improved?

Proper budget. Involve the provincial organisations to provide equipment. They should be educated about their part in the programme.

SchoolNet would insist on the organisation of a central orientation programme that would include volunteers and interns

42. How would you improve these mechanisms?

Training and orientation of local interns (not applicable to all stakeholders)

43. Who was involved in the development of the training and orientation program for the local interns?

None

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44. Describe the training and orientation the local interns received prior to beginning the program?

Late appointment

45. How might this training programme be improved?

46. Describe the mechanisms that were put in place to support the interns in their placements.

PSN were supported. They must have a sense of ownership.

The Programme

47. To what extent was each stakeholder prepared for the implementation of this programme?

Not at all. There was not enough planning. There was a lack of awareness of the requirements and there was not sufficient time to manage the programme from the outset. We were very reactive. I think the co-ordination of the project is a full-time job. The programme should be managed from SchoolNet and someone should spend at least three days a week on the programme. One of the responsibilities of such a co-ordinator should be to visit the schools on a regular basis.

30. What was done to prepare host organisations (the PSN's)?

The documents were sent to them, but not much else. PSN should be invited to participate in the central orientation programme, which would then familiarise the key role-players with the objective of the programme and with each other.

31. What was the nature of the support they received from the national (and international) institutions, during the course of the programme? Provide details.

. It improved during the course of the programme. It was an incredible learning curve for everyone.

PSN should be involved with the day to day management of the programme with the assistance of a national co-ordinator. The national co-ordinator should be responsible for the strategic management of the project. There should be regular follow-up and monitoring. It would also be useful for there to be monthly reports.

35. What were the main strengths of the programme?

The Gauteng experience is instructive. There one had an older volunteer with some previous experience of working in a 3rd world country. He worked in Katlehong at the Katlehong Resource Centre, which was also well organised. He worked very closely with the management of the centre as well as with the community. The programme worked very well at that centre until the computers were stolen.

The candidates should be matched to the plans.

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The programme was most successful in the urban areas. I would argue that a different set of criteria should be used in selecting the volunteers for the rural areas.

There are also some cultural issues one needs to deal with. South Africans are not confrontational. Thus when they were confronted with assertive volunteers they were unable to deal with them.

Shafika Isaacs, Senior Programme Officer, Acacia

Background

1. How was your organisation involved in the conceptualisation of the programme?

My colleagues in Ottawa and Dakar, working for the Acacia Program of the IDRC as well as colleagues working for IDRC's Partnership and Business Development Organisation (PBDO) were involved in conceptualising this project at a time before I joined the IDRC in August 1999. Acacia colleagues held a series of discussions with representatives of Netcorp in planning and conceptualising this project. This process took place over a number of weeks.

2. What part did your organisation play in determining the objectives of the programme?

Acacia played a significant role in determining the objectives of the project to ensure that it was in keeping with the broad strategy of the Acacia program, which includes human resource development and youth as key focus areas. Acacia should have emphasised its gender-based cross-cutting theme in this program as well.

3. Please describe the objectives of the programme.

I understand the objectives of the programme to be based essentially on encouraging the development of technical skills in information and communication technology among youth in Canada and South Africa, particularly the latter. After a period of 12 months, South African youth would have acquired requisite skills in ICTs which would render them employable in a growing knowledge-based economy.

Importantly too, this process also involves an exchange of cultural experiences and learning between youth in Canada and South Africa.

4. From your organisations perspective, what are the most important objectives?

As stated above, the most important objective is to transfer requisite technical skills to black youth in SA which will allow them to assist IT projects and organisations in SA and which will make them employable in SA.

5. Based on your experience of the programme, are these objectives realistic?

Yes, I think these objectives are realistic, provided the time frame for meeting them are adequate and the host organisation has the capacity to manage foreign and local youth on an internship basis.

I do feel quite strongly however that the project was gender blind in its conceptualisation and should have factored in the need to encourage young women to apply as well.

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6. If they were not realistic, how would you change them?

7. What plans were made by your organisation to achieve the objectives of the programme?

Acacia's role was to provide assistance in project management. In this sense, Acacia assisted with planning the orientation program and monitored progress with this project on a regular basis as well as developed the evaluation framework for this project.

8. What discussions occurred prior to program implementation among the key stakeholders (above) regarding the role each would play?

Firstly, discussions were held with VSO in Canada. In SA, Acacia engaged in discussion albeit to a limited extent, with SchoolNet South Africa who eventually decided where to place the volunteers. Acacia planned an orientation program in consultation with SNSA, prior to the arrival of the volunteers.

9. What was your organization's role within the programme?

To assist with project management, to monitor progress and to conduct an evaluation of the project.

10. What went well in the conceptualisation stage? What could be improved?

Not able to answer this because I was not personally involved in this process. However, I think it would have been important for the conceptualisation process to have included SNSA management more proactively, as well as the local host managers in the provinces as well. In this way, all relevant stakeholders would have been aware of the objectives and what they could implement given their respective capacities.

Program Implementation

Selection of volunteers and local interns

11a. What, if any, involvement did you / your organisation have in determining the criteria and process by which the Canadian volunteers were selected?

As far as I know, no involvement.

11b. The local (South African) interns?

Acacia assisted with drafting the criteria for selecting the interns

12. Were the criteria adequate? Explain.

Yes, I think the criteria were adequate. However, I would have argued that stronger encouragement to include young black women in the program should have been an important criteria.

13a. What criteria do you think should be used in selecting volunteers?

I think the existing criteria were fine but should have encouraged young Canadian women to participate in the program as well.

13b. The Interns?

See 12 above.

14a. What role did your organisation play in the selection of the Canadian volunteers?

NONE

14b. The local interns?

NONE

15a. How and by who were the criteria determined for the volunteers?

By VSO and Netcorp

15b. For the interns?

SchoolNet SA in collaboration with Acacia

16. How might the selection of program participants be improved?

I think in addition to the importance of having adequate criteria, I think the recruitment and selection process should also be clearly spelt out. Here I think the interns were recruited very randomly, on the basis largely of youth that were known to SchoolNet staff.

17. Were these communicated to the other program stakeholders?

Not able to answer this question because I was not personally involved in this.

Training and orientation of volunteers (not applicable to all stakeholders)

18. Did your organisation have sufficient time to prepare for the departure (Canadian stakeholders) or arrival (South African stakeholders) of the volunteers? Please explain.

Yes we had sufficient time to prepare a weeklong orientation program for volunteers arriving in SA. This was also because their arrival was constantly postponed.

19. Describe the training and/or orientation that the volunteers received prior to their departure for South Africa.

20. Describe the training and/or orientation the volunteers received upon their arrival in South Africa.

During the orientation, the volunteers were given an explanation of the roles of the different role players, input on the education system in SA and the history of SA, they were taken on trips to townships and affluent areas to get a sense of the contrasts and starkness of the inequalities in SA society and discussions on administration and security were held during the program. Role plays of potential difficult situations were included in the program. These role plays provoked discussion on the best way to deal with problematic situations.

21. Describe the mechanisms that were put in place to support volunteers while overseas?

The Programme

29. To what extent was each stakeholder prepared for the implementation of this programme?

To a very limited extent. For instance, only after the first phase of the project was implemented was a co-ordinator recruited.

30. What was done to prepare host organisations (the PSN's)?

After an monitoring site visit by a VSO representative who's responsibility was to assess the progress of the first four volunteer placements, I worked with her to develop a set of guidelines for PSNs before arrival of the volunteers. We had not checked however whether these guidelines

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were being followed because we assumed that SNSA would take on this responsibility.

31. What was the nature of the support they received from the national (and international) institutions, during the course of the programme? Provide details.

Acacia encouraged SNSA to hire a co-ordinator since this was not thought of before... showing inadequacies in the conceptualisation of the program. The co-ordinator was hired eventually and she provided regular support to volunteers by way of responding to their requests and monitoring their performance.

32. In future, what should be done to prepare host organisations for such a programme?

I think host organisations should be made aware of what to expect of a project that was scaled up from 2 volunteers to 18, particularly with respect to the drain on the organisation's human resources. This was not considered carefully. I also think effective monitoring systems need to be established and clarity on how to respond to potential crises should also be stated unambiguously. I also think that the host organisation should recruit a co-ordinator in advance of program implementation and the co-ordinator should be involved with planning and conceptualising the implementation of the program.

33. What communication systems were in place to facilitate ongoing or regular contact between local participants (PSN, volunteers and local interns), stakeholders and international stakeholders (a la VSO Canada)?

There were no structured communication system in place in the first place.

34. How effective were these systems, and what would you do to improve them?

Not effective and I would insist on putting one in place prior to the commencement of the program.

35. What were the main strengths of the programme?

That it involved the skilling of local youth albeit on a limited scale and that it raised awareness among Canadian youth of the conditions in South Africa.

36. What were its main weaknesses?

Lack of systematic organisation, planning, support and implementation mechanisms.

37. What were the biggest challenges to the programme implementation for your organisation?

To ensure that maximum effort was placed on recruiting and skilling local youth.

38. How were these dealt with?

To a limited extent, SNSA managed to recruit youth in time for them to work alongside the Canadian youth although it should be said that this did not work out as it should because only about 3 out of the 9 local youth were twinned with a Canadian counterpart.

39. If given the opportunity to do this programme again, what would your organisation do differently?

Conceptualise a clear plan in collaboration with local hosts.

Ensure that the host organisation has adequate resources and capacity to meet the needs of the placement process.

Pilot a project of this nature on a much smaller scale.... Instead of 18 Canadians, I would have chosen 6 and six local youth instead of one local youth per two Canadians.

Have a clearer follow up program with local youth post-internship.

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Develop an evaluation and learning system at the outset of the program instead of towards the end of the program. In this way, learning is made continuous and is integrated as the program implementation evolves.

40. From your perspective (as a representative of your organisation), did the programme meet its objectives as they were set out in the beginning?

Yes, because despite all the difficulties, SNSA did manage to host all 18 youth with some hitches and they accessed local youth and had some of them twinned with Canadian youth. In the cases of all local youth, their skills were developed and this made a difference to their lives and the work of SNSA as well.

The Canadian youth also did outstanding work in some cases. One of them trained 200 teachers in Venda in basic ICT skills for instance.

No because everything did not go according to plan. Not all the local youth were twinned with Canadian youth which meant that most of the Canadians worked by themselves without a dedicated local partner.

As stated earlier, limitations in planning, organisation, systems for communication and support and implementation raised a number of unanticipated problems which an overstretched and fast-growing organisation like SNSA had to confront on a crisis management basis.

41. Any other comments?

I think from a research perspective, this project represented one modality for skills development in ICTs among African youth. I think it would be worthwhile to consider by demonstration although on a small scale, other models such as sending local youth to Canada for a period of six to nine months. I also think encouraging learnerships in firms based in Africa should be another area for research consideration. Where these models work or don't work, have serious labour market and human resource policy implications.

Dennis Brandjes, Executive Director, SchoolNet South Africa

Background

1. How was your organisation involved in the conceptualisation of the programme?

We were intensely involved in the conceptualisation from the outset. The first two volunteers (Kevin and Brendan. They were not part of the pilot programme) arrived here in 1998. One was based in Soweto and the other at SchoolNet's office. These were pre-IDRC days as we only moved to the IDRC offices in June 1998. The experience with these volunteers was an eye-opener. I worked mostly with Brendan and that experience assisted me to clarify the value and worth of having these volunteers. I worked very closely with him and could therefore monitor and continuously evaluate his work. I found that the level of close interaction extremely important. And this was perhaps a weakness with the programme, namely, that there was not the same level of monitoring. There were more people involved, so it was perceived as a programme, and the close interaction got lost.

On the basis of this initial project we considered how it might be expanded. At this stage we interacted with other institutions, especially IDRC Canada and Industry Canada. From the outset there were two key issues that concerned me. First, was the rate of remuneration for the

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volunteers. In my opinion, they had to be at an acceptable level and there should not be a significant disparity between their remuneration and the earnings of local interns. Second, there should be a strong local component. Here the principal question that had to be addressed was how to fill the gap in local expertise.

IN September 1999 we put the final touches to the programme and the first volunteers arrived in January 2000.

2. What part did your organisation play in determining the objectives of the programme?

We played a significant role.

3. Please describe the objectives of the programme?

We looked for skilled youth to develop SchoolNet. The volunteers were to be based at the PSNs where they would be involved in capacity building. The project aimed to attract locals who could benefit from an exchanging of skills. The development of capacity at the PSN was important. The development of PSN in Johannesburg and Cape Town occurred through the commitment of volunteers, but the same capacity did not exist in other areas. The volunteer project was seen as a support mechanism to achieve this objective.

There was a greater need for monitoring. There were gaps at the PSN level that we did not anticipate.

5. Based on your experience of the programme, are these objectives realistic?

They were realistic. The mode of implementation was sometimes problematic. There is definitely value in the programme and it can be implemented.

7. What plans were made by your organisation to achieve the objectives of the programme?

We were the implementing agency. We developed the job description for volunteers and assisted in their placement. We reviewed the CVs. Some people were not accepted. We developed a consensus about who should be accepted.

8. What discussions occurred prior to the programme implementation among the key stakeholders?

The planning occurred mainly between IDRC (Ottawa) and SchoolNet. IDRC negotiated on behalf with Netcorps and the other Canadian role players. There were therefore gaps in the communication as we did not directly negotiate with the other parties. Also, two or three people worked on the project in Canada so it was not always clear who we had to deal with. Some requests did not reach the people they were intended for. There was not sufficient planning between the main role players. Trilateral discussion between the main agencies would have assisted tremendously.

11. What, if any, involvement did your organisation have in determining the criteria and process by which the Canadian volunteers were selected?

We were especially involved in the selection of the volunteers. We drew up the job descriptions, over which there was a broad consensus.

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The main criterion was the skills level of the volunteer. We were also concerned that the volunteers would be able to cope. They also needed to be self-motivated and independent. The initial process of filtering in Canada seems not to have been clearly defined. This improved during the course of the programme. SchoolNet should be more centrally involved in the initial interviews of the prospective volunteers.

We were less involved in the selection of the local interns. That was left mostly in the hands of the PSNs. However, there was agreement that interns needed to show an aptitude for the work involved and a willingness to learn. In some cases the interns had some association with the PSNs and showed themselves to be capable.

13. Were the criteria adequate? Explain.

The entire project was uncharted territory. We now have more experience and would change a few things. More emphasis should be placed on volunteers being self-starters. They must demonstrate a willingness to make things happen. It would be preferable if they had previous work experience and were more mature. Drew Wesley, who was in Grahamstown, was possible the model volunteer. But we also have to be aware of the regional specificities that require different personalities.

20. Describe the training and/or orientation that the volunteers received upon their arrival in South Africa.

The primary orientation occurred in Canada. When they arrived there was a week long orientation programme that was jointly run with IDRC. I was not directly involved in the orientation programme. The orientation was vitally important. Perhaps there is a need for continuous orientation. Kantha was far more involved in this part of the programme.

29. To what extent was each stakeholder prepared for the implementation of this programme?

By and large not ready enough. We did not know what to expect. From the point of view of SchoolNet we expected that the volunteers would become the responsibility of our partners in the provinces, namely, the PSNs. So we underestimated the workload involved in managing the programme. There was clearly a lack of supervision and weaknesses in the different areas. It became apparent that there was a need for local co-ordination to ensure that the potential of the programme, and its individual components, was maximised.

35. What were the main strengths of the programme?

A lot of good work was done in many areas that would otherwise not have been achieved. There was some training, which was beneficial. The programme was great for the interns. The mentoring programme works well, although the transfer of knowledge could have been more effective. There are also aspects which cannot easily be measured. For example, the communities where the volunteers were based viewed the programme positively and appreciated that an outsider was willing to train people in the community.

39. If given the opportunity to do this programme again, what would your organisation do differently?

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SchoolNet should be more directly involved in the selection process. A human resource person should be dedicated to monitor the programme. The responsibilities of each role player should be clearly defined. Finally, the transfer skills programme should be refined.

40. From your perspective did the programme meets its objectives?

To a large degree. I would definitely pass it. It was not a raving success, but certainly not a dismal failure.

41. Any other comments.

The question of cost effectiveness should be addressed. I was concerned about the amount of money spent on the volunteers and wondered whether the money could not be spent more productively on training willing and able locals to conduct the training programmes. The budget was often a problem. For example, Kantha had to spend an increasing amount of her time on this programme, without that being budgeted for separately.

Ronald Archer (See separate file at end of appendices)

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B. Interviews with Host Organisations

Conducted by Stephanie Stewart

Stephen Marquard, Director, Western Cape Schools Network
Quentin Spies, Technical Support Manager, SchoolNet Africa
Moss Mthembu, Deputy Chief Education Specialist & Education Manager Information Specialist,
Northern Cape Education Department
Janet Thompson, Deputy Chief Education Specialist, Kwa Zulu Natal

Western Cape

Stephen Marquard, Program Director, Western Cape Schools Network, May 10, 2001

Section A

1. Does not know. Thinks from Christopher Geerds in early days. They wrote a document about a year before the first volunteers came through. IDRC contacted WSN as a kind of recipient program. They became actively involved when CV's started to come through.
2. Doesn't remember. Already familiar with it because of the two previous interns who had come out.
3.
 - Organization – to provide additional capacity.
 - South African interns – develop local capacity – some degree of skill sharing.
 - Canadian volunteers – giving people work experience, developing country experience. Fairly structured from Canadian side. Finding people who are not formerly employed in IT sector – and unconventional experience for them.
 - There would be advantages for all sides
4. All objectives were attainable – not all were achieved. Alignment of intern and volunteer program did not work – did not have them at the same time or in the same place or there was not a good match between personality and skills. All volunteers would have gained some valuable experience. Lent a lot of capacity to what we were doing – was not efficient in terms of how they were used – got 50% of the benefit we could have derived from them.

Section B

5. Already had some type of relationship with them. They knew Pelo already and knew that he had potential. Provided an opportunity to work with these people on a more structured basis.
6. Looked at different options around what kinds of people were needed. Criteria: needed an intern strong in IT, potential but not much work experience. Someone who would benefit from a year of work experience. Someone from a disadvantaged background.
7. N/a
8. Yes, there was a three-way discussion.
9. Not really.
10. Sent the profiles – 2 or 3 page standard CV. Aware VSO undertook a Selection Day – they were screened for personality types, technical skills were identified. When Stephanie from VSO Canada was here we spoke about selection and identified some of the problems / limitations of selection process. Don't think that we really did much to change things though. Not a criticism, we just did not change anything. We lacked time and the capacity to do so. One starts out on a more optimistic basis – one thinks that

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volunteers are general technical capacity and that they can be slotted into anything, but they had specific interests. We could not just move them around.

11. Flexibility – being open to different types of experiences. Learn from whatever thrown into. Generalists – act with initiative. Work effectively in any situation. Part of the reason people were underused was that they weren't carefully matched to placements. No strong management. But you may not have those things in a developing country or under resourced center. On the skill side, some were quite limited in terms of the types of things they could / would do.
One does not always have specialized positions. One needs people who can do different things.

Section C

12. Volunteers – did a lot of showing them around. How to get around, introduced them to everybody. There was no specific skills' training. General approach was learning on the job. Shadowing of others for first few weeks.
Interns – Quentin and Jenny did this. May have been like how you orient a new employee?
13. N/a
14. Quite detailed discussion about what they could do and what they were interested in.
 15. No structured plan as to what they would do while here – did not know how long they would be here – 6, 9 or 12 months. Used them in a variety of activities. They were not always happy with what they were given to do. Slightly ad-hoc basis.
 16. Spent a lot of time showing them around. Touristy – social things. Got accurate picture from that. Stayed in hostel for students close to here. They got a lot about culture from that.

Section D

17. 2 to 6 weeks. Was not an issue.
18. Set up office space, PC's, similar to dealing with a new staff member.
 19. Not very much – there was a document that subsequently came out. That document was detailed at some level – accommodation and who was responsible, but not much detail on what issues or complications might be like – management problems.
We had a volunteer previously, so knew some things but still quite a learning curve. Particularly in the areas that differ from employing someone. Areas like:
 - If you employ someone, they are paid to do a specific job.
 - They therefore operate at that level.
 - Volunteers require a degree of good will on both sides. In some cases the volunteers did not want to do what they were doing.
 - It was difficult to figure out the middle ground between volunteering and employing them that balances out their needs and the needs of the organization.
 - Volunteers take time.
20. Team organizational context. Reasonably established office therefore they were with a group of other people. Therefore slotted with particular functions. Similar to what employees would get. Personally – did find it difficult being here from a social perspective. Difficult to get around because of transport issue. Host organizations need to be more proactive around creating social networks for volunteers.
21. See 20.
22. Fairly well.
 23. Difficulty around what they were doing. Felt bored or frustrated – felt job was administrative. From the perspective of the organization, that is what was necessary.

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From experience point of view it was good work experience to gain. Was never quite sure exactly what they wanted. Katia seemed to what to do things at the frontline – immediate societal reward – solving the world's problems on a day-to-day basis. They did not get that from this. Also some sense of lack of communication between Penny and Katia.

Katia felt that she was not being listened to.

How it was dealt with? Katia got upset and moved to another placement. There was a general re-arrangement that seemed to solve the immediate problem.

24. Chris Dorazio – there were a wide range of problems on his work ethic, performance.

Working relationships and basis of trust broke down. There were also allegations of drug abuse. There was enough to dismiss someone had he been an employee.

Katia moved because she was unhappy with her job.

25. How it could have been improved. – It was not actively managed. What made program less effective was the level of management. Cannot say it was much worse dealing with volunteer than with other people because of the size and management experience that existed within the organization. There was limited time to do anything. The organization was always changing and evolving and the demands changed quite often. The volunteers probably found this very frustrating. Noone had defined goals; progress was not measured month by month. But if we had that organizational stability, maybe we would not have needed volunteers. There was never an effective system of monthly reporting, never put into practice. Created slackness of what they could/couldn't do. Organization started off with slightly naïve perspective.

The other paradox was expectations: they came thinking that they were going to be teaching, but where they work best is within an organization. It could have been that they had no formal training experience and there was a language barrier (would rather use local trainers). So their personal motivations were pitted against what was actually useful for the organization.

26. Cannot really.

Section E

Answered already.

27. Not that he's aware of. Not sure what happened in Johannesburg. No exit interview occurred in WSN, there were leaving functions though.

Section F

28. Partially.

It did a lot of useful things. Supported projects and programs in a useful way. Did not work in the way that was envisaged though.

- Intern Program has created opportunities, built capacity.
- Volunteer program – most would have gained valuable experience from the time they spent here. Cannot think of many cases where they would think that there time here was wasted. Experience may not have been what they were after, but still a good learning experience.

29. Benefit – brought a lot of additional technical capacity to the organization.

Weakness – Volunteers were not appropriately placed or managed. It was a hit and miss situation.

30. Already covered.

31. Same

32. Yes. Would use them differently and select them more carefully. Not work with such a large number at one time.

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There was not enough organizational capacity to support the number of volunteers who were here.

There was not any stage when we looked at our ability to deal with it. The program was slotted into an already packed schedule.

FOR VSO – it would be important to look carefully at management capacity of the host and partner organizations.

FOR HOSTS – If organization is under resourced, probably better not to put volunteers there until the organization is ready. The number of volunteers should match the capacity of the organization.

Over the period that the volunteers were here, SchoolNet expanded quite a bit. The volunteer program was particularly vulnerable because of this.

Quentin Spies, Technical Support Manager, SNSA May 10, 2001 (interview conducted at his office at Western Cape Schools Network)

1. He was informed about the program when he first started.
2. No, but he was given a briefing by Stephen Marquard about what the program was about and he chatted to volunteers as well.
3. To get younger people to have a better understanding of what is happening in South Africa. To give them a sense of self-fulfillment. To give them an idea of what the education system is like here, how things function on the ground and to give them an idea of what SchoolNet is about.
4. Yes. Had some good volunteers who have added value. Some volunteers had their share of problems, but as a whole the volunteers did add value and most of the goals were reached. It is not possible to cater to every need of each volunteer – there simply isn't the capacity. But I believe it was a success.
5. Word of mouth. Being so close to a teacher's centre.
6. Background or involvement in IT because they did not have the capacity to train anyone from the basics. They needed somebody with some kind of experience and with the courage to ask for help if they needed it.
7. From previous experience of employing people. Everybody is snowed under here so he would not be shadowed 8 hours a day.
8. Used same criteria for interviewing an intern as is used for hiring an employee.
9. No
10. A fair amount. Qualifications were looked at, there was an age criteria. They were not able to choose where they get sent. They are remunerated monthly.
11. SchoolNet's biggest need is technical support. Most get used in support and training. We tried to stay away from using them for administrative tasks.
12. The intern had in house training. He was taken through the process of who we are and what we do here. He was asked where he saw himself going over the next year. What would you like to do? They're using the training component to send him on training to help the position and his career.
Volunteers had in house training only.
13. Yes.
14. Interns – yes, I personally discussed it with them
Volunteers – no, I did not, but others probably did.
15. Interns – getting them out to schools, speaking with them on a weekly basis, keeping in touch with them all the time.
16. Was not really involved. I think there was a short briefing on what to/not to do. I did sit down with some of the volunteers to discuss dos/don'ts.

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17. , 18, 19 – n/a
20. Open door policy- treated the volunteers the same as staff. Anything we could do to make their lives easier we did for them. They had a difficult getting in touch with Johannesburg. We also made time to socialize with them.
21. Was not involved but it might be good to get their expectations on the table beforehand in order to avoid disappointment. A briefing document to give them a clear picture of where this was all going. Some of the volunteers had expectations that weren't met. Difficult to see them go back to their dormitories every night. Staff would try and take them out.
22. Volunteers – settled in quite well as a whole
Intern – very shy and quiet person therefore it is difficult to get to know what makes him tick.
23. Personality clashes- tried to sort it out by allowing the volunteer to report to somebody else not as stringent. Keeping lines of communication open.
Transportation – not what they expected.
Workload – many were doing admin work instead of technical. I tried to change that at a later stage in the program.
One of the volunteers commented that, “this looks like a corporate office”, but it needs to look that way in order to present a professional image.
- 24 and 25 n/a
26. Volunteers spent only a month or two with the intern. The relationship looked fine.
27. Yes. But not on a 24hour a day basis. The end objective was supervised but it did not seem necessary to go to schools with them. Day to day activities were not supervised.
28. No. Did not see it as necessary here.
29. Yes, overall it did.
30. Strongest point – to enable an organization like this to do what we would not ordinarily be able to do. It enables us to reach more people and to give more support than we would have been able to give without the volunteers.
Weakest point – a clearer picture needs to be formed in the volunteers' heads about what SchoolNet is trying to achieve through its objectives and what SchoolNet is capable of doing.
31. Answered previously
32. Want to have a look at the interview of the volunteers to get a better idea of their expectations prior to their arrival. Were they promised something we cannot fulfill? Get a better idea of the interview process. Why are they doing this? What do they hope to achieve? We weren't able to do that really.
33. From my point of view yes. Good thing on both sides. Excellent and wonderful idea.

Penny Busetto–Manager, Western Cape Schools Network, May 10, 2001

Section A

1. At SchoolNet Board of Governor's meeting. Denis Brandjes mentioned that volunteers were coming out from Canada some time before they actually came.
2. No background. It was a small item on the agenda.
3. Provide work experience for young Canadians, transfer skills to young South Africans from disadvantaged backgrounds. Provide capacity for SchoolNet.
4. Understood by SchoolNet to be capacity and only in that light. Simply putting volunteers into a place is never a solution without a well-defined plan. You're asking for trouble.
5. (And 9) Very vague. Tried to spread the work through teachers and educational bodies but got little response. Not really sure how it should have been done. There was no time or capacity to define a procedure – too much to do at WCSN –it was just too much – a

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- kind of nightmare. She felt that WCSN was moving in a more technical direction, but she thought education was the key. She wanted people who could train others.
6. (And 8) Had discussions with Shafika about focusing on people with an education bent, but those people did not meet some other criteria – technical interest or experience.
 10. Not very much. Saw CV's and that's about it. Had some experience with recruitment and felt that quite a few of the people were not suitable, that they would have difficulty adjusting. Does not know whether everyone was taken who applied or what.
 11.
 - Need to be flexible and mature. Be able to deal with unusual circumstances
 - The emphasis should be on education and not technical people
 - Not sure beyond these two areas.
 - Might have been good to have a meeting with the people who were going to employ them and then draw up a job description. Things would have worked out better if this had been done.
 - But they did have two wonderful girls, but gave them a clerical schedule that they did not like – not what they expected to be doing and this created quite a few problems. If we had agreed on a job description we would have been better off.
 12. Volunteers were given technical training but not very much. They were taken to visit schools and shown the nature of the work. Put on to telephones (help desk) but they did not know enough about the local technology. They needed something more structured. It was easier to give them clerical work. They developed from there.
 13. Went through a week's induction in Johannesburg, but not immediately. Went to Cape Town first and then back.
 14. Yes, aims of WCSN. Discussed what they wanted to get out of it.
 15. The initial plan was to get them totally involved in technical installations and training but they were not ready for that. By the end they were doing both.
 16. Part of the initial briefing. Took them to town and tried to explain how Cape Town works – suburbs, townships. Explaining some of the dangers without trying to alarm them. Nothing formal, but maybe that should have been done. Volunteers stayed in a hostel therefore they were quite protected, but they were still exposed to some situations of violence.
 17. Very little time to prepare.
 18. Arranged accommodation, office space. Computers were not ready until a week after they arrived. Drew up job descriptions for them. Various members of staff spoke to them. This did not happen very well – don't know why. Sibongile was asked to take care of them but she was overwhelmed by it all. Never seemed to be a bonding between them (Sibongile and the volunteers). May have had something to do with the fact that Sibongile's job was never secure and she might have felt threatened.
 - Wrote to them before they came out about what to bring, etc. Katia asked a lot of questions
 - Did not know what they knew already.
 19. No guidance.
 20. (And 21) If a plan has been made with processes of how to do things rather than having someone coming from Johannesburg. If processes had been in place before they arrived. If we had been forced by SchoolNet to strategize about this, things would have worked better.
 22. Settled in well. Apart from not knowing enough to get involved in technical issues. She would take them out with her. Not sure if WCSN was inefficient or whether it was understaffed.

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23. Social difficulties. Fortunate that they were in a hostel, but the students living there were younger than the volunteers. They spent a lot of their evenings sitting in the hostel. There was no transport and that was a big issue. Difficulty within the organization around what they were able to do.
 - There was also the whole issue around expectations – they wanted to do something that would really make a difference. Something where they could say, “that’s my contribution”.
 - They actually did contribute enormously, but they did not see it that way.
 - To counter this, she told them to finish with the project work so that they could go into the townships.
24. Did not terminate early. One came from KZN.
25. N/a
26. We expect people to work contrary to the nature of the culture they come from. Expecting that people would immediately be comfortable. In a lot of the situations the interns felt intimidated. If they came on a personal growth course first, they would be able to work on a more equal footing with the volunteers. We are expecting something beyond the technical level. A course where they are able to express their emotions, otherwise they get walked all over. Possibly not enough sensitivity around culture. It’s not easy to jump over cultural gaps.
- 27.
28. Volunteers, Clerical – Penny; Technical – Jenny
Intern, Quentin and Jenny
There was no official evaluation. Were I to go back I would have conducted monthly sessions.
29. The volunteer’s objectives were met. They improved their people, organization and their skills around responsibility in particular. They also developed training skills.
30. Interns- did receive something in the way of capacity building, but were skills transferred to them? This is the area that needs to be explored further. Really would like to see something of this nature for volunteers and interns.
- 31 & 32 Volunteers always place a strain on a hosting organization. It is not always a straightforward, easy process. If the process is already in place things can work well, but if an organization is already under stress, then it is not a good idea to place a volunteer there. In some of the provinces, there was no capacity to take on a volunteer. We went through hard times but I feel that it was positive, except the relationship with the intern.
My priority was to develop local capacity, not to provide a place for Canadian volunteers to come. I strongly recommend that more time is spent on developing the interns. Perhaps if they were to take a course in personal growth that allows them to develop more self-confidence.
33. N/a

Kimberly, Northern Cape

Mr. Moss Mthembu, Deputy Chief Education Specialist, Education Manager Information Specialist, The Northern Cape Education Department May 15, 2001

1. Communication direct with SchoolNet through letters. They said there was the possibility that they may have people come. We needed to determine if we needed this type of assistance.
2. Yes. Documents about the entire program. They said how it works and who was involved. They were familiar with VSO Canada through these documents.

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3. The program is there to develop the skills of local people through the interaction of interns and volunteers so that by the time the volunteers leave there would be certain gains here. Things would go on after the volunteers left.
4. Yes, they are realistic. The present local intern could be linked with people here with no IT background. He could transfer skills to those people and they in turn, can do the same.
5. Moss was the contact person for the internship program. It was he who found Daniel (the local intern). It was not formally advertised. We have local SchoolNet people involved with projects. Daniel had potential, so they nominated him.
6. The person needed to be committed to working closely with the learners and educators at the schools. They needed to be available and able to conduct classes after hours. They needed strong motivation to move to different heights. They also needed someone they could direct to do things.
- 7/8 Looked at SchoolNet criteria and adapted it to what we thought was applicable.
9. N/a
10. Not very much. We knew they were from different backgrounds, and we had seen their CV's so we knew their skills.
11. The most important thing was that they needed to have skills they were able to transfer. Committed to developing the skills of others.
12. Volunteers – Took some time to orient them to the scenario around here. They met with people in order to understand things. They needed to be briefed on the fact that they were working inside of a government organization and that things needed to be done a certain way. Intern – he was already involved in some of the activities that we did. We brought him into some meetings that we held to give him a broader understanding of what we do here.
13. SchoolNet did their own preparation in Johannesburg. Here we just ensured that what SchoolNet was saying, happened.
14. Sat down and worked out a plan with them. Though, because of delays not all things in the plan were achieved.
15. As above.
16. They engaged in a number of things. Other people in the department took them to get involved in different initiatives – like those concerning HIV/AIDs
17. About 3 weeks. But when they were here we were still trying to sort out some other matters. Most difficult thing was to find a place for them to live. They ended up staying at the first place they were given in the end. With time they adjusted.
18. Office space, getting email addresses, connected to the Internet.
19. From meetings at the national level we discussed interns. Also through communicating with other people in charge of interns.
20. Moss was their source of personal and professional support. Any problems or difficulties and they would come to him. He had some assistance in supporting them professionally. There was a Finnish consultant who worked closely with them also.
21. Maybe if there had been one more extra person to give special attention. A broader base to support the volunteers would have helped.
22. Well.
23. While trying to get them organized there was only one computer for both of them, but eventually they got another PC.
24. Kimberly went to the North West Province to assist them there. She decided there was more than she could actually work on there. There were lots of schools in another SchoolNet Program battling in terms of networking, therefore there was much more to do there, so Kimberly and Katia moved there.
26. The relationship was not formalized between the intern and the volunteers. David had not formally taken up the internship yet. This was difficult.

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27. Moss supervised them, but other people also did that in his absence.
28. Yes. Had a chance to sit down with them and they transferred some of the work they were busy with. Indicated what could be done in terms of the work.
29. Yes. Main thing was to transfer skills and empower people. It did do that – powerful training sessions where people benefited from them. With local intern – quite impressive what he has been able to do.
30. Strength – very difficult to affect a generation of young people without some assistance from somebody at their same level who has more experience and more to share. A role model in the sense that - they had girls and girls are not usually interested in computers or technical areas. To have girls in charge and assisting their own kind. It makes them think that maybe we can achieve quite a bit.

For the volunteers themselves – they are developing their interaction with people. People must also have had an impact on their lives- another culture, way of doing things – broaden their perspective. You realize things are not always the way you imagined. It was good that the program was able to take care of the volunteer's needs. They did not have too much to spend, but enough to take care of their personal needs – there was no pressure to look for other means of survival.

Weakness – couldn't think of any

31. Improve program – to have a chance to rotate some of the volunteers. They could move and do some tasks elsewhere, then come back to their main base. To have them do short special projects. Using the varied skills of the volunteers in different places.
32. Moss might have been able to benefit much more but there were some organizational problems on their side. We were in transition. Dismantling one program and re-establishing another. The volunteers didn't understand this. Our needs changed very quickly. If I could do anything differently I would say that one of these girls should not have come then, but maybe later on. Needs changed so fast because of development on the ground. There was a time when schools only had one PC, now they have labs.
33. Yes
34. For myself, I enjoyed working with these young people. There can be some real challenges but by and large I did enjoy working with them. The transition that the organization was experiencing made it difficult but otherwise I could have gained much more. They've done a great deal to help.

Peitermaritzburg, Kwa Zulu Natal

Janet Thompson, Deputy Chief Education Specialist, Kwa Zulu Natal

1. At a Board of Governor's meeting it (SchoolNet) was mentioned. She then got an email about the program. She did know about the fact that the program was happening long before she got that email. She reviewed the CV's that came in.
2. No, only given CV of the volunteer.
3. Had the idea that the objectives were to be about a sharing of skills. Volunteers would come to help mainly disadvantaged or previously disadvantaged youth with technical skills. She did not expect them to know much about education. Expected it to be a two way – the volunteers would learn about the culture they were coming into and the interns would develop computer skills. She thought this because the previous volunteer they had was there on a cultural exchange.

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4. Objectives were realistic, but they were not practically possible in certain circumstances.
5. Janet told them. Kantha asked her to identify people. They then submitted their CV's to Kantha.
6. This was confusing. First she thought it should be people who had skills already, but then she was told it was a capacity building program and that the candidates should be previously disadvantaged and that they did not necessarily have to have previous computer skills.
7. They decided to appoint someone from a previously disadvantaged background who had no technical skills because they were going to be supposedly building capacity. They luckily had his technical training donated. She believes they would have been wrong to select people with technical skills already. If, in future, they had to select people without skills then the technical training should be sponsored. If they hadn't known about the sponsorship, they would have gone for someone with technical skills.
8. Yes.
9. No. There was a problem with establishing the criteria. She had applications from a number of people who she would not have asked for had she known the criteria ahead of time.
10. She was supposed to look at CV's but she did not have a lot of choice. She did write back to VSO about Scott because he was so military. She expected that the volunteers would have some sense of social responsibility, but they didn't. She thinks that she (Zodwa) did not have responsibility; it was the people in charge of the program – more like Shafika and Kantha. It was more like a courtesy than her having any real involvement in the program.
11. The volunteers should display some interest; they should have some social conscience; some desire to help other people. Their technical skills should be proven, some had a lot of qualifications, but little experience. She would rather have someone with more experience because on a CV you cannot tell what kind of experience he or she may have. On a CV it is difficult to tell. They should have a certain level of educational background – not a Bachelor's degree, but a certain level of academic achievement.
12. Volunteers – none. She expected they'd been in Johannesburg and they had training in Canada. We expected that most training had happened before they arrived. She spent a day with Chris D. talking about the expectations of the job. With Scott, she spent a couple of hours and agreed with him that Chris would tell him everything. In hindsight she feels that this was not a good idea. She had a meeting with Scott a couple of weeks later as he said he did not want to get the information second hand.
Interns – He had been working with them on and off for a while. They wrote up a job description with Karo (the intern's) input.
13. Intern – sent job description to Zodwa.
Volunteers – Felt as though we were being told what to do. They went to Johannesburg to report back. They didn't seem to report to her.
14. Intern – Yes, during job description discussion
Volunteers – Scott says that he just wanted to learn about Novell Networks, so there were major discussions then. Janet told him that she thought that he came there to do a two-way cultural exchange but your obviously not interested in that.
15. That's another problem. The understanding she had was that they were being sent volunteers (all people working for SNKZN were volunteers). The understanding was that SNSA would pay the costs associated with having the volunteers there. When we started to make plans there was no provision made for transportation. As soon as SNKZN tried to address this, they found out that they had a completely different understanding from SNSA. Her understanding was that SNKZN would incur no costs. When Scott arrived

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she made some inquiries with Kantha and Kantha said categorically that they were to pay for their own transportation, that they had enough money to do this.

Also, Janet arranged for Chris to have accommodation on campus and Chris said that he didn't want to stay there. He'd emailed prior to arrival to say that he did not want to stay there. As a result, they were using their allowance for accommodation that they chose and the transportation that they needed to get to that accommodation. She mentioned to Scott that if he wanted to live separately, he could. This was the root of a lot of the problems. There was a gap in the transport. Planning was inadequate in terms of transportation that caused a great clash. It cost a lot of money to get them to work and home again everyday.

16. Told that had been done in Johannesburg, but Chris came to stay at her house for a week and during that time they talked about issues from this perspective. They had a difference of opinion that wasn't the cause of any great problems. She was surprised at the lack of altruism on the part of the volunteers, which she would have thought necessary. She made the mistake of deciding that Chris would do a lot of Scott's orientation because he had already been there for two months. Subsequently she did have a couple of long talks with Scott.
17. Janet did not have time for anything. This was a voluntary job that she was doing for SNSA. SchoolNet did not employ her. Her colleague was off sick so she was doing several jobs.
They were given a lot of notice about the arrival of the volunteers. By the time Scott arrived she had the names of three other people who never arrived.
18. She has arranged housing on campus for Chris. Before Scott arrived Chris said that he could stay with him. She told the schools that they would be getting volunteers.
Financially, they did not expect to make any preparations because they expected things to be covered by IDRC. They even bought Chris a cell phone, although nobody else at the organization had one.
19. Janet said that they were told that they needed to sort out accommodation and that the volunteers would be expected to perform whatever duties were needed to run SNKZN. The most guidance she got from anyone was from VSO. Before Stephanie came last March, Janet was feeling quite shell shocked.
20. Support – lent Chris money; Chris stayed at her house; bought him a cell phone; loaned him her car; gave him help on how to give a presentation.
But their skills were very different. They knew nothing about the others' field. There was very little overlap.
21. If volunteers were matched to job descriptions and circumstances. More research needs to be done on the requirements of each job to select the appropriate people.
22. Chris could settle anywhere. Scott probably couldn't. They had no problems with the idea of work or objectives. They did not settle in terms of the country, or social interactions. They were uncomfortable with people of other races. They preferred to be in comfortable surroundings (the office, private cabs, ordering in food).
23. Biggest problem was transportation. That had not been thought through. Their expectations of their lifestyle were also not realistic. They wanted a lot of money. This led to a clash between Janet's expectations and those of the volunteers.
How problem was dealt with – she spoke to them; had Dennis Brandjes speak to them. It didn't make a difference. They denied things they'd done. But if the transport issue had been worked out, things would have been better.
24. Scott- more of a problem than anything. Unwilling to assist schools.
Chris – could not be trusted anymore. She could not leave him in the office with a checkbook. If she hadn't met Stephanie, she could have really ended up with a bad

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impression of Canadians. She'd asked several times for the interns to be placed in another location. She was told that, "if she couldn't deal with them, nobody could. Chris was never confrontational, but Scott was quite morose.

25. N/A

26. N/A. The volunteers had left already.

The intern has been wonderful. She can really see the value in this part of the program. She can see the capacity that has been built in Khoro.

27. Intern – Janet

Volunteers – Janet. She had really wanted people who were self motivated, but she'd have to write a list of things to do for them in the morning and by the afternoon, they'd be asking her what to do again. They did not focus on what they had to be doing.

28. Chris' situation when he left. Shafika, Kantha and Zodwa came to Peitermaritzburg and interviewed everyone. Shafika decided they were not allowed to speak to Janet again because they wanted to fire questions at her. It was most unpleasant, but Shafika was unbelievable wonderful – very calm and kept Chris calm. Shafika handled it brilliantly.

29. The intention of the program was for local interns to learn from volunteers, but that did not happen in KZN because the volunteers left before the intern started. But the intern did achieve many of the objectives. But again, had there not been technical training this may not have been the case.

The volunteer's program did not achieve the objectives, but it may not have been completely their fault. It was more to do with transportation and their expectations of why they were there.

30. Strengths – the wonderful way Shafika organized it in the end (her ability to handle a crisis).

Khoro – the impact that one person can have on a large number of schools (right person, right support structure).

Weaknesses – The planning of the day-to-day operational implementation (i.e. transportation).

32. a. Cover costs of transportation

b. Pay local intern's technical training costs

c. Screen volunteers and interns to make sure their "hearts are in the right place".

33. Yes, definitely, because of the wonderful effect they can have on teaching and learning in schools.

Interview with Simon Hurry

Penryn College, Mpumalanga

The interviewee made some preliminary remarks before the interview commenced:

SchoolNet South Africa does not exist in Mpumalanga. Penryn College is purely an administrative centre, rather than a functional one. I also have extreme time constraints. Dennis and Kantha were the primary contacts between the province and the centre. However, this is the forgotten province. There was no local intern and the volunteer was Robert Glasgow. There was problem of finding a local intern.

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The culture of the school should be taken into account. We are very flexible. The school is Christian-based. It has its own outreach programme. The volunteer could possibly be offended by this culture. The aim is of course not to subscribe to the volunteer but the person should be comfortable with the school's ethos.

Background and Introduction

1. When and how were you informed about the programme?

Dennis informed me and I was in contact mainly with Kantha.

2. Have you read any of the background documents related to the programme?

I did some basic reading of these documents.

3. Have you had any discussions about the objectives of the programme?

No

4. Do you think these objectives were realistic?

Generally the objectives are good and they coincide with our school's aim of outreach. I am not too clear on the specific objectives.

Hosting volunteers

18. How much time did you have to prepare for the hosting of the volunteers?

3-4 weeks. This was adequate. He was in Barberton first. Finding accommodation in Nelspruit was a major headache. There was no transport, which added a further dimension to the problems. Lifts had to be arranged from Nelspruit to the school. The volunteer did not have a driver's licence, which also made it difficult.

19. Were you consulted about the selection of volunteers?

NO. I only saw his CV. It seems as if the volunteers were first allocated to other provinces.

20. Do you think you should be consulted?

Yes. South Africa is very diverse. Cape Town is very different from Nelspruit. There is a local culture that one needs to be sensitive to. The person who comes to Nelspruit cannot be a party animal because there is nothing here to satisfy such needs. One needs a country person. Conditions are much harsher in the rural areas.

21. What criteria do you think should be used to select volunteers?

The volunteer has to be independent, a self-starter. He should first have people skills and then office skills.

22. What systems were set in place to host the volunteer?

Telephone, accommodation and office. We worked on a daily plan.

23. Was your organisation ready to host the volunteer?

We were as ready as we could be under the circumstances. There were some infrastructural difficulties because the school is undergoing serious expansion.

24. What did you do to prepare yourself for the programme?

I know very little about IDRC. I have a very young family and did not have the time to give serious attention to the programme. My lack of knowledge of the programme was a source of increasing frustration.

26. Did the national institutions assist in the preparation process? Specify.

We got nothing from SchoolNet. Basically the volunteer worked for me. He stayed at Barberton for a month after his arrival in the province. He arrived at the school at the beginning of the school term. There was no project for him to be involved with.

Robert and I were very frustrated with SchoolNet. He left because he had enough.

32. Did the volunteer successfully settle into the local organisation?

Robert was a bit weird and strange. I do not think there was a high amount of screening. At other levels he was a fantastic human being and was good to work with. I suppose his computer abilities were the main criterion for his selection. He was twenty nine but acted as if he was only twenty one. He certainly lacked people skills. The best way to describe him is to say he was a computer nerd. He needed attention. He was weak at gaining information but had excellent technical skills. He also took initiative to find out about the country and to enjoy himself; he went river-rafting and bungee jumping.

**Anne Mabale
North-West Province**

1. I heard about the programme through SchoolNet. The National Department of Education informed us then we liaised directly with SchoolNet. We were informed that the programme aimed to mentor local interns from previously disadvantaged communities for training.
2. I received some documents about the internship and the CVs of the volunteers. I spoke to Dennis and Philemon. The aims were clear to me.
3. No. Not as such.
4. Yes
5. The time was very short. They were very good.
6. The intern had to be previously disadvantaged and had to be less than 35 years old. Also, the intern had to have some basic computer literacy and those with qualifications were given preference. I think the standards set were too high. It is a contradiction. There are very few people from the disadvantaged community who have the money for courses. On the other hand, sometimes people are very keen and knowledgeable but they do not have the necessary qualifications. The solution might be to have two people, one with qualifications and the other without.
7. From document
8. I discussed the problem about the high standards with Philemon.
9. The teachers at Mmabatho advertised at the high school and university for these posts. There were some applications. But there was a problem. The teachers from Mmbatho thought they could go ahead and handled the applications. They were stopped by SchoolNetwork. We were then asked to find an intern and were pressed for time. People from my department applied for the job and we selected one.
11. No
12. According to his CV he met the criteria that were set out.
13. There was no induction programme but we did prepare a job description.
15. He understood the objectives.
17. Schedules were prepared. We drew up a training plan and a list of things he wanted training on.

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The first two volunteers here were Eddie and Chris. They left early. Eddie went to Johannesburg and Chris went back home. They were here for only three to four months. After that Tim arrived, from July to December 2000. Kim was also here between September and October.

18. We knew for a few months, so there was enough time to prepare.

19. No

20. Not really. SchoolNet is an authentic institution. I trust them to make a good judgement.

21. They must obviously have technical skills. But they must also managerial skills. For example, they should be able to run a technology centre.

22. Mmabatho was prepared to host the volunteer. The accommodation was arranged at the school hostel. There were also meals there. The Department of Education did not have funds for accommodation so it had to be done at the school.

23. There were problems at Mmabatho High. Things were not done according to plan. For example, the accommodation was not right. However, the laboratory was ready.

25. SchoolNet should take responsibility for accommodation. In an area like ours transport is required. The lack of these caused delays. For example, when transport was needed we (the Department of Education) had to provide it and take from our budget.

26. It was left to the local organisations to prepare.

27. Accommodation and transport.

28. Abie, a teacher from Mmabatho took them around.

29. Fortunately he is a good person, otherwise it would not have worked so well. The volunteers were taken to the launch of the world-links laboratory where they were introduced to the educators.

30. Accommodation and transport.

31. SchoolNet should be involved. It is good for them to experience adventures.

32. They all did. Eddie and Tim loved the place. They helped others.

33. Yes.

34. Yes and No. One of the main challenges was that there was not enough time. They gave some training and fixed computers. I think that the schools require a trouble-shooting manual and CD.

35. Personalities and attitude. Sometimes they wanted people to dance to their music. They would arrive late if they did not want to go to particular schools. There was also a reluctance to train the local intern. Sam wanted training on website designing but I do not think that happened. But they trained other organisations for a fee, such as the church and even some businesses.

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36. We spoke about the problems and made appeals to them. SchooNet once spoke to them about the problem of going to Johannesburg without consulting us here. The problem was eventually solved, I think. Things went better with the second group.

38. There was not any serious evaluation.

42. Partly. Challenge of training the local intern, which was a problem. They helped at the schools with technical problems.

43. The problem that occurred with Eddie was that one day I had organised transport for him to go to a particular school but he left before I arrive. He had spoken to Kantha and went to Johannesburg without telling me. Kantha realised that she had made a mistake. But Eddie was angry. The tone of his correspondence was not good. He was condescending towards the Department of Education. He was then reprimanded. He was unruly. It was agreed he should be replaced because he was too negative about the province.

Chris could not cope with South African conditions and requested to go home early.

Tim was wonderful until Kim arrived. Kim came here on a visit and then requested to stay. She claimed there was not much to do in the Northern Cape.

47. The School benefited.

48. The main weakness was their personalities.

49 Difficult.

General: The evaluation should have happened sooner.

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C. Canadian Volunteer Interviews

Jason Spencer, Braamfontein
Eddie Ramirez, Northern Province & Guateng
Drew Wesley, Guateng
Scott Harper, Kwa Zulu Natal
Katia Wigmore, Western Cape
Rachel Rattray, Western Cape
Ryan Slimmon, Free State
Mark Niemy and Tana Wells, Northern Province
Kimberly Doyle, Northern Cape and Northern Province

Guateng Province

1. Jason Spenser – Net Day, Braamfontein

2. 21
3. male
4. Manitoba
5. 1 year college course – A+ certified
6. Internet training course in 1997.
7. 6 week on the job training – Network Administration, did troubleshooting.
8. Over the Internet –wanted to travel. Looking for work in another country. Went to a site that had a list of volunteer organizations. Went to VSO site and emailed Wendy (NetCorps Program Officer)
9. Yes. Has a book about his duties here – sent to him from VSO. 4 page document about the SchoolNet program.
10. There were communities that needed IT help to become more advanced.
11. Not here in South Africa. They are advanced and not as poor as you may think. Haven't been using me much for computers. SA has been a waste of time. SA doesn't need – or maybe its SchoolNet that doesn't need it.
12. By email, then by phone – phone interview.
13. Because he was willing to go to another country. Had qualifications.
14. NetCorps in Montreal / computer tech – how to get help from the Internet. Health briefing.
15. Nothing
16. More installations around schools, work with the intern. There is an intern here, but he is doing his own thing. More computer work in general. Work for a company that needed me/needed volunteer assistance.
17. Yes. He expressed the fact that he was moving boxes to SchoolNet. They said 'this is a developing country and you won't be doing many installs.' No there was no chance to sit down and talk about expectations. He got a brochure from VSO that said what he was going to be doing, but he's only done that a couple of times.
18. He's willing to do the computer tech stuff, but they don't want him there doing it. He was told that he had an accent and people would not understand what he was saying. SchoolNet that if he didn't start doing installs, that he would leave.
19. For him – the experience will look good on his CV. So the experience for him is the only benefit. The fact that it will look good on a CV.
20. Getting to do the work he was supposed to do when he got here.
21. Yes, on what is expected of this whole program it said he would be working with an intern.

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22. Bethwell – he knows his stuff. He was supposed to share his skills with him. Its pointless, Bethwell is more educated than I am. It's frustrating, but makes sense that he should be on his own.
23. Refurbishing computers. Did some installations in Mpumalanga. Cleaning, building tables, moving boxes.
24. He wasn't. He was just told that this is what is going on.
25. Nothing. I learned about townships a bit. But the majority of time he stayed in Braamfontein. He expected to spend much more time in the townships.
28. Professionally – Kantha good about Net Day recently. But he doesn't feel very supported. He's nervous to go to her. First meeting he had with her she had an outburst. Said she had the power to kick him out of the country. She hated the program. Confusion around whether Net Day is part of SchoolNet. Personally – no. does his own thing.
29. Before volunteers come here SchoolNet and VSO should be honest and say that the majority of work is crap. You are told that you are going to be helping schools then you get here and you are moving boxes. SchoolNet needs to be clearer about what they do.
30. No. Not the objectives told to him. This has been a waste of time. He's staying for his own reasons. If he quits, it will look bad on his resume.
31. Looking for work in London or Australia.

1. **Eddie Ramirez – Mafikeng School, Northern Province and SNSA office, Johannesburg, Gauteng**

2. 28
3. male
4. Toronto
5. Advertising from Seneca College
6. IT courses, programming courses, hardware and informal also.
7. 3 to 4 years of full time experience in web development. He also has his own company (Amulette).
8. National Graduate Registry – 2 months before he left – January 2000.
9. It was very blurry. When he got to Montreal training he still didn't know where he was going. Common to most of the interns at training. Only found out about SA a couple of weeks prior to leaving.
10. Didn't know them. Was referred to a couple of websites. Thought it was about telecentres in the developing world. This is what got him interested.
11. Still doesn't understand the objectives to this day. They changed so many times. At first it was telecentres, then Mafekeng School, then 9th floor of a corporate building doing websites for an organization. Each scenario has different objectives.
12. Assessment day at VSO Canada. Very well organized – went through lots of things – personal, not just professional.
13. At first: because he had the skills (prof/social) required for such a scenario. Later (when he came to SA) he realized anybody who wanted to come was selected. Some people had no social skills, no education etc. Very shocked. Thought it was a real process. Very disappointed after that point.
14. Training – week in Montreal – amazing trainer from Eastern Canada. The type of training I got also told me the objectives of the program – being trained to train adults made me think that was what I was going to do. In SA – a week in Johannesburg, shown around to different areas of the city, given an idea of different socio-eco levels of the country. Who's who in SNSA. Role of IDRC. But nothing specific to the job they were there to do. When arrived at placements – nothing. They were dropped off in a location, given no instructions, no aims,

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no goals. First couple of weeks they just walked around hoping for someone to tell them what to do. It took four weeks to hear back from SchoolNet.

23. Improvements to training –
 - A plan
 - Goals
 - Timeframe
 - Expectations
 - Input from volunteers as to whether or not they think these goals can be achieved
 - Keep Montreal as is.
 - An extra day to deal with each person's particulars – a good week but at the end we still didn't know where we were going.
 - Introduce the plan on first day of arrival in SA. Because it gives a feeling of purpose.
16. Expectations – it looked like it was aiming towards what I wanted – community transfer of skills to actual folks within the community who don't have them at all. Only person who had that was Drew. He was with the people dealing with people who wanted to learn. Got to learn about their culture, their society. If I just wanted to work, I would have stayed in Toronto.
17. Repeatedly.
18. He emailed, came to office. His emails were not returned. He emailed VSO trying to see about intervention they could do. But that's not really the role that VSO plays, but it should be. VSO should have some influence on the host organisation.
19. The fact that he was here. Met South African people. Work – wise it was a complete waste of time. He did expect for it to have a certain professional impact, but it was a complete disaster. They treated us like cheap labour all the way.
20. The feeling of helplessness. Shouting for help from everybody, but getting absolutely nothing done.
21. No. Did not know until he got to SA, he believes. A few weeks after arriving to Mafekeng. In Mafekeng possible interns were pointed out/identified. But in between red tape and bureaucracy, those people were never involved because of SchoolNet and the Dept of Education. There were people who were perfect. There was no plan from SchoolNet on how to do things. Min of Ed – the lady running the dept gave it to an acquaintance of hers. I don't know if they were hired or not though. He felt frustrated because he was not transferring skills. SchoolNet were not the "people" we wanted to work with. Drew found an intern in Kathlehong who was keen. Eddie brought in someone and had him sit by his desk so he would be recognized as the intern (Boneme Umbele).
22. No plan, no rules, no anything. He gave Boneme training when he had the time. No time to train was given. No specific objectives were set. It was very informal. Taught him about the office environment and web design. All kinds of different areas. This was the aim in his mind. I was happy to have problems in this areas.
23. Mafekeng – nothing mostly, except teaching Spanish and web design to whoever would come. In Jo'burg he was a Webmaster for SchoolNet.
24. No.
25. Nothing work wise. It was a great experience culturally, socially – a great overview of an African developing country with an incredible mix of people from the 3rd and 1st worlds.
26. From intern – what it takes for a man from the townships to come to the developed world of Jo burg. Learned the difference between township people and middle/upper class people
27. See above
28. Personally – Shafika, at one point Kantha, but later on she fell behind. VSO was for the most part supportive – Jacqueline (the former NetCorps PO) made a fairly good effort to assist.

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29. VSO on the ball in that area. Kantha brought in as a quick thing to do. Zodwa came in later in the process, but she had no authority. We needed someone in Canada and in SA. Needed someone who could negotiate with you for the better of the person, not just the organization. With Kantha always felt that I needed to prove that I needed help.
30. No. Did not achieve objectives in my experience. For the amount of time, effort, money and willingness – very little came out of the program. With the same - so much more could have come out of the program with organization. It was very disorganized, amateur. If some thought had been given to it by the host organization. It felt more like trial/error. Like we were guinea pigs.
- The host organisation did not realize / appreciate the money that is required to get someone from Canada to SA. Nor do they appreciate what the volunteers have done.

This whole project could work – there is so much need. It could be such a good thing. It is unacceptable. People who have donated the money, etc deserve more. The bottom line is not that the program couldn't work if it was implemented professionally.

Once a problem is identified an emergency plan needs to happen.

The program could work if it was implemented properly. If you asked me to go to Uganda tomorrow, I would go.

1. Drew Wesley – Kathelong Hub Site

2. 26
3. Male
4. Toronto
5. Above
6. Bachelor of Commerce degree
7. No
8. A little over a year as a consultant at Deloitte & Touche
9. Through a friend from Canada World Youth in Costa Rica
10. Before he left for SA – wasn't exactly clear what the linkage was. About a month prior to leaving in November 99.
11. No, but had some literature (unclear).
12. Broad objective – enhance through use of computers and Internet – previously disadvantaged people in the black community.
13. Yes, but doesn't know if they were implemented in the best way. Broad objectives to meet.
14. Sent in CV to NetCorps. It was passed around to various agencies. Went to selection days with both WUSC and VSO.
15. Has experience in the area had some traveling prior to developing countries.
16. Secretariat training in Montreal. SA- a bit of an orientation when arrived in Jo burg re: objectives of the program.
17. Canada? Relatively effective but it could have been condensed. People came up from IC to explain objectives – waste of a day. Training for trainers quite good, should be one of the main goals of volunteers going anywhere.

SA – more orientation. Not bad. Gave general overview of the program. Good to have face to face about objectives of program we were going into. Good overview, but nothing specific about objectives.

19. When I initially signed up did not know what to expect. Had interest in int. development, practical work in field of development. Impart knowledge. Important to have a counterpart

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and not to feel like cheap labour or to be taking a job away from a South African – 2 way learning experience.

20. Yes. Had brainstorming sessions about it, but probably thrown by the wayside.
21. The Centre he was at was quite good. Projects explained to them. A nice range of projects. SchoolNet gave good foundation to address objectives. Drew got someone to work with him – conducted interviews and hired 2 people to work with him.
22. Very rewarding. Doing a lot of teacher training. Received with lots of enthusiasm. There were long line-ups for the training sessions. He found it beneficial to be involved in a development project. Helped me decide what I wanted to do. Got my feet wet.
23. Running a computer centre was new to him and to others he had hired.
 - Running the centre in a poor environment.
 - Training people in a poor environment
 - Did not have experience teaching technical side though.
 - Crime in Jo burg – computers stolen, replacing them – dealing with the reality of this.
24. 8 months
- 25.

Training

- Organization of the centre on a day to day basis
 - Getting into the community
 - Procedures of running the centre
26. Had a lot of flexibility. Influenced the decisions that were made. They were broad objectives – but in terms of specifics, they had flexibility.
 27. Learned a lot about these kinds of projects. Learned about the need. Learned a lot about the ineffectiveness – someone needed to be on site to keep computers working. There are occasions when projects were developed without much thought. A lot of good ideas for projects, but some were not managed properly.
 28. Quite fortunate – worked quite closely with Project Manager. Was offered a lot of support personally and professionally. It was very important.
 29. Every case different. – Some did not have a counterpart. Perhaps warning the individual in charge on how to deal with the volunteers. Things seemed to be done very quickly and no proper selection of counterparts or proper prep was done.
 30. Before leaving Canada.
 31. Sought out his own counterparts. If not, he would not have had one. Sat down and came up with objectives and then worked towards those goals.
 32. A lot about SA community, life, political and social situation. You need to do this in order to work in a new country. Learned a lot about the realities of living there.
 33. Stuff about Canada – they were exchanging ideas. Would not say I taught them about managing the centre – we learned together. Technical skills – they had little experience with this before he arrived.
 34. Independent.
 35. Yes. But to what extent is hard to measure – look at getting computers into schools. From his perspective it was definitely a success. Seemed to be a lack of preparation on the IDRC/SchoolNet side

These organizations are new and developing on their own – volunteers can be an added burden. SchoolNet was undergoing a lot of pressure in terms of money. They were undergoing a lot of scrutiny so I think that hindered some of the relationships.

He was surprised they did not have twins set up prior to our arrival because that was the key to the program. A huge disappointment because that was the essential element.

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Kwa Zulu Natal

(Scott was interviewed prior to my trip to South Africa and therefore underwent a slightly different interview. The questions asked precede each response as a result).

1. **Name:** Scott Harper, Peitermaritzburg
2. **Age:** 23
3. **Sex:** Male
4. **Hometown:** Charlottetown, PEI

Introduction to VSO

5. **How did you first hear about the NetCorps Program?** Kim Doyle was in the same class as I was and referred me to the program.
6. **What prompted you to apply?** I was looking for work experience.
7. **Were you looking at other overseas options?** No. Didn't know what an NGO was or even international development.
8. **If you had not gone overseas with VSO, what else might you have done?** Would not have gone anywhere else. Did not know about any other NGOs.

Training

9. **How effective was your pre-departure training program?**
NetCorps Secretariat Wish it had been more country specific. I know its hard, but there is a need. You can't just put everyone in the same room when they are all going to different places. I did not know how things were going to happen.
10. **What would you add to it based on your own experience overseas?** See 9
11. **How would you rate the effectiveness of your in- country training?** We spent 5 days in Johannesburg. I don't quite remember. They were told some stuff during that training, but it was different when they got out to their placements. They were all hyped up at training, given the impression they'd see their "names in lights". But it was a disappointment.

Placement

12. **How accurate was the placement information you received beforehand?** I didn't receive anything ahead of time. There was no job description. I would have wanted some contact from the host ahead of time.
13. **What impact do you feel you made in your placement?** In Peitermaritzburg – there were a number of problems and I was not effective there. There were transportation problems, host problems, and logistical problems. In Cape Town – there was more structured and I knew where I could be utilized.
14. **What was the most satisfying aspect of your placement?** The fact that I managed to salvage something with such a bad start. That I was able to help and promote more technology in the area than if I hadn't been there.
15. **What was the most difficult aspect of your time overseas?** The in fighting with the host in Peitermaritzburg. I had been told some things by Shafika and then different things when he got to his placement.
16. **What were your expectations of your internship? How were they met?** I thought that I was going to help train people, to network computers; to get experience that I would not have gotten in PEI. When I got there I wanted to be shown the ropes. I didn't

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know what was expected of me and I needed a little more direction. Chris was put in the position of interim manager when I got there. I didn't see my host for the first three days I was there.

Overseas Support

17. **What was your lowest point while you were overseas?** I was very depressed during my time in KZN. I was told that Janet was our host because nobody else wanted to do it.
18. **Who were your best supports?** The other Canadians. They understood where I was coming from and they would listen. I probably would have had apprehensions about staying otherwise.
19. **How would you rate the support of the Host Agency (this includes Program Offices)?** SchoolNet South Africa – low; VSO Canada – low; Host- low
20. **How do you think this could be improved?** A proper and in place grievance procedure – if this doesn't work, I go there and then there. If you call Canada, you are on your last leg.

NetCorps Program Objectives

21. **How clear were you about the objectives of the NetCorps Program?** Not very clear. I was more excited, than thinking about objectives.
22. **How clear was your Host Agency?** They mentioned the objectives in the 5-day training. They discussed twinning to ensure sustainability. The twinning would have made some practical areas easier – like transportation. Being a white person in a black country makes you a target. We had to rely on teachers to pick us up. It seemed unrealistic on SchoolNet's part. They always talked about getting South African interns, but I never got one.
23. **Based on your experience, what steps do you think could be taken to further clarify these objectives?** The objectives were clear, but they were not implemented. I.e. The twinning.

Intern Reports

24. N/A

Return Home

24. **What might have influenced you to stay longer?** A really good start. By the end of 6 months I was tired and did not want to struggle anymore. My name was dragged through the mud in KZN. I'd had a fight with Wendy at VSO. We weren't getting the 3 interviews we were promised. I did stay on an extra week for the Millennium Minds Conference though.
25. **If you were to do it all over again, what, if anything, would you do differently?** I would not go it alone. I would listen to Returned Volunteers really intently. The VSO RV said not to take public transportation for example. I would also ask more questions up front.

Western Cape and Kimberly

(Katia was interviewed using the same questions that were used for Scott).

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1. **Katia Wigmore**
2. 28
3. Female
4. Charlottetown, PEI.
5. A friend who was applying through CUSO.
6. I always wanted to work overseas. I wanted to go to Southern Africa, not necessarily South Africa.
7. Originally I went through CUSO, but they kept changing things all of the time, so I switched to VSO.
8. I had just returned from Ecuador because I had an accident there. I would have looked for other options overseas.

Training

9. It was useful for most people, but it did not apply to me because I was placed in a modern city and a lot of the emphasis was on rural life.
10. Send people for pre-departure training once you know exactly where they are going. Tailor the training to the group that is coming.
11. It was good overall. It would have been more helpful at the very beginning when I arrived.
12. No comment

Placement

13. Received the placement information a couple of days before I left.
 14. Difficult to answer.
 15. I provided basic computer training to teachers throughout the country. This involved working with people the way that I thought I was going to. It was more hands on and more satisfying.
 16. Social perspective – I felt that I didn't have much freedom. You really need to be careful of where you go because of the safety issue.
- Work perspective – I was mainly doing administrative work. I did not feel needed there. I didn't feel I needed to go to South Africa to do this kind of work.
17. Looked at it, but did other research.
 18. **Expectations** - Pre – departure training and the research she had been given said that she'd be the only computer literate person in a rural area where the resources would be limited. She saw this as more of a challenge. On her application she'd indicated that she preferred rural. She knew it would be more difficult, but she expected to go to work in the poorer parts of South Africa. It however was not the case. Her placement was in an urban setting.

Overseas Support

19. **Lowest point** - I was supposed to work on a new kind of project, but got more of the same administrative stuff. That's when I decided to transfer.
20. **Biggest support** - Rachel. We became good friends.
21. **Support from Host** - Quite low. I felt like "cheap labour". I didn't feel valued or like I was there for a specific purpose. We were stuck with administrative stuff. It was as if they did not know what to do with us. There were broken promises, no feedback, constant changes.

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22. **What could improve it?** - I don't know, I really don't know. The employer-employee relationship problems could have happened anywhere.

NetCorps Program Objectives

23. **How clear were you on the objectives?** - Canadian government's way of helping youth find employment and helping developing countries.
24. **How clear was your host?** -Not clear at all.
25. **What steps could be taken to further clarify the objectives?** - Conference calls – better communication.

Intern Report

26. **Refer to 2 or 3 key points raised in the volunteer's FINAL report.** Her perfect internship would definitely have had to do with computer work. Anything to do with technical work and helping people obviously in need. This was very important to me. It was really frustrating to see community centres who could have used my help.

Return Home

27. **What would have prompted you to stay longer?** Better work. If I had enjoyed my work I would have stayed an extra six months.
28. **What would you do differently?** I would have tried to stick it out in Cape Town and not ask for a transfer. I feel like I quit, although the time in Kimberly was good for the work.

Additional Comments

Her issues were more with SchoolNet. It's important to let people know that they are valued. It's really good that VSO is calling us on an individual basis. In the end though, if I had the chance to do NetCorps again, I would.

Western Cape

(Rachel submitted her interview answers by email)

1. Name – Rachel Rattray
2. Age - 26
3. Gender - Female
4. Where are you from? – Ontario Canada
5. Where were you placed in South Africa – Cape Town
6. What are your formal qualifications? – MCSE A+
7. What other training have you had? – Library and Info. Technician, 1 year DSW
8. Aside from the internship, what work experience do you have? – Now or then? Then – fixing friends computers – Customer Service Experience, Helpdesk, Office97

B. Introduction to the program?

9. How did you first hear about the NetCorps Program? - Internet
10. When were you introduced to the NetCorps Acacia Program, specifically?- don't remember
11. Did you have any discussions about the aims of the program? – believe so
12. How do you understand the objectives of this program? – helping in disadvantaged areas

13. Based on your experience, were these objectives realistic? - for the most part

C. Selection, Preparation and Training

14. How were you selected to participate in the program? What was the process? – selection day – interview in Ottawa
15. Why do you think you were chosen? – because I wanted to help others and make a difference
16. What kind of training or orientation occurred before the commencement of the program?
In Canada? – a week in Montreal (preparing to change)
In South Africa? (orientation in Jo'burg a month after Katia and I were already there)
17. How effective was it?
In Canada? – I felt it could have been more defined. It was very vague, not country specific.
In South Africa? – I had already been there for a month, so it was a little late to have orientation
18. How would you improve it? – Canada – more specific information on South Africa – When first arriving have orientation (the problem was that they had to wait for another bunch of volunteers to arrive)

D.
Placement

19. What did you expect to achieve from the program? – work experience, cultural experience, helping others less fortunate
20. Did you express these expectations to your host organisation? – YES
21. What was done by you and/or the host organisation to meet these objectives? – I didn't get the work experience I wanted in the beginning but I pushed on and stayed a couple more months and I was able to work in the townships and with the people which I really enjoyed. I really had to push though to get out of the office and not doing administration work all the time
22. What did you find was most beneficial about the program? – working in the townships, training the teachers on basic computer skills, meeting people from all over Africa and living with them
23. What was most challenging or difficult? Trying to work in the townships and get out of the office was a problem I feel because I was a women
24. How long did your placement last? 8 months If it was terminated early, please comment on why.
25. What kinds of activities did you perform on a day-to-day basis? – First ¾ of placement was organizing venues and training sessions, secretary work, went up to George and did a little bit of training and tech support in remote areas etc, last ¼ was setting up networks, working with the teachers, helpdesk, training an intern to work at WCSN
26. How were you involved in the process of identifying those activities? – the administrative tasks were not really a choice, everything else I was involved in
27. What have you learned from your internship? – that depending on where you're situated, there are different levels of support and you make the best of you're situation – and if things are not going well in one aspect, most likely there is something good happening on another level (all the people you meet and make a difference in their lives)
28. What kind of support did you receive from the host organisation? – WCSN was good, I feel there was lack of communication between the Volunteer – WCSN – SchoolNet – VSO
29. How could this support have been improved? – The Channels of communication need to be opened and shared amongst everyone. It sometimes seemed some of the volunteers were being left in the dark

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Local Intern

30. When were you informed about the 'twinning' aspect of the program? (This refers to the placement of a local intern alongside you in your placement). – one month into the placement – didn't happen until after my 6 months of being there, since I stayed on an extra two months I had a chance to work with Pelo
31. If you were twinned, how did the two of you work together? – It was good but he needed more time with someone
32. If applicable, what did you learn from the local intern? Some Xhosa.
33. If applicable, what did the local intern learn from you? Basic tech support, Internet and email support for the helpdesk, how to use a bank machine, networking

E. Post placement

34. What are your plans over the next few months? – I've been back since Mid – December 2000, currently I'm working at Canada Life as a Information Architect. I did reapply to volunteer but then had to turn it down for this year because my grandma is ill
35. In your opinion, did the program achieve its objectives? For the most part yes, or I wouldn't have applied again. I just had a problem with lack of communication amongst all organizations.

Thank you for giving me the time to express any concerns I may have had regarding the placement.

Free State

(Ryan submitted his interview answers by email)

1. **Name Ryan J. Slimmon**
2. **Age 24**
3. **Gender Male**
4. **Where are you from?** Calgary AB
5. **Where were you placed?** in South Africa: Free State
6. **What are your formal qualifications?** MCSE+I C.N.A. MCDBA A+, Currently working on CCA. Certified Cisco Administrator
7. **What other training have you had?** General Business Diploma
8. **Aside from the internship, what work experience do you have?** Owned my own computer business; Graphic Artist; Manager; Etc

Introduction to the program

9. **How did you first hear about the NetCorps Program?** Internet
10. **When were you introduced to the NetCorps Acacia Program, specifically?** Around July 2000
11. **Did you have any discussions about the aims of the program?** NO
12. **How do you understand the objectives of this program?** From what I gather I am to locate, assess, rank, and install 28 computer centers in schools in the Free State. In other words I'm to find potential schools that meet the requirements of the donor as well as meet the political requirements of the MEC. Then I must rank the schools from best to worst, this after repeated calls to the principals of the schools begging them to get there

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paper work in. (The paper work being a simple business proposal on why they should get the computers.) Then rank the schools from best to worst, and then go to the schools to make sure everything is in order. Then install the computers in a network and to the Internet then teach the staff how to use the computers.

13. **Based on your experience, were these objectives realistic?** Based on my education no problem, based on any normal free enterprise system no problem, but it is quite obvious that I will not finish my project.

Selection, Preparation and Training

14. **How were you selected to participate in the program?** I don't know **What was the process?** I put in my resume on line to HRDC then I got a call from VSO. Went to Vancouver for an interview. A week later I was sent 3 jobs to choose from. I picked one, went on 2 courses and away I went to South Africa.
15. **Why do you think you were chosen?** My technical skill as well as my ability to be flexible as well as my ability to work under stress and be an adventurer I'm sure helped. Also I have a feeling that there weren't enough qualified applicants.
16. **What kind of training or orientation occurred before the commencement of the program?**
In Canada? 2 courses on culture shock; what to eat not eat; medical pay, support etc.
In South Africa? none
17. **How effective was it?**
In Canada? I have to admit I did not get much out of it for the simple reason that I had traveled before so I knew the dos and don'ts. It was nice to know who to call if I just could not deal with things, but I had set my mind that the only thing getting me to leave was a death a bomb or a great illness. And if any of that happened I was just going to get on a plane and call you when I landed in Canada.
In South Africa? NA
18. **How would you improve it?** As far as Canada goes it is broad training so it was ok. SA it would have been nice if they told me were I was living and were my office was how to talk to at SchoolNet who was in charge of the project. What I was actually to do, what the aim of the project was. Who the donors were, etc.

Placement

19. **What did you expect to achieve from the program?** I expected to have goals laid down and be able to complete them.
20. **Did you express these expectations to your host organisation?** Yes repeatedly
21. **What did you and/or the host organisation to meet these objectives?** I went to other sources and got as much information as I could. SchoolNet did nothing. To this date I still don't know exactly the goals and the exact numbers.
22. **What did you find was most beneficial about the program?** I have gained so much experience. I was forced to become a project manager. Also in the time my hands were tied I set up servers from scratch; worked on networks PC's Hubs Switches, many programs. My people skills have greatly improved as well as I have the confidence to deal with powerful people. I have dealt with high up managers, owners of companies and elected officials.
23. **What was most challenging or difficult?** Lack of cooperation and red tape. If it were not for that I may have finished the project.
24. **How long did your placement last?** 1 year *-still in his placement*

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25. **What kinds of activities did you perform on a day-to-day basis?** That's a good question - it changed daily. First I see if I can do anything on my project then I see if I can get out to any schools with a computer that may need help; then I see what I can do around the office. Many times all those have come out to nil so I surf for a new job and play solitaire.
26. **How were you involved in the process of identifying those activities?** I'm let loose to do whatever I wish. The people here trust me to work to the best of my ability.
27. **What have you learned from your internship?** As mentioned above, my technical skills have improved as well as my professional skills. I have also matured quite a bit. I know now I can handle anything thrown at me.
28. **What kind of support did you receive from the host organisation?** none
29. **How could this support have been improved?** Any support would be an improvement. A tool kit, a phone number, e-mail, where do I go when I get to the city anything!!!

Local Intern

30. **When were you informed about the 'twinning' aspect of the program? (This refers to the placement of a local intern alongside you in your placement).** Someone from VSO mentioned it to me before I left. (I think it was Wendy)
31. **If you were twinned, how did the two of you work together?** I was not twinned
32. **If applicable, what did you learn from the local intern? Culture, skills, etc.**
33. **If applicable, what did the local intern learn from you? Culture, skills, etc.**

Post placement

34. **What are your plans over the next few months?** To look for another job. Ideally I would like to work for an oil company with my base in Canada, but travel for the company. In reality, I have a better chance of getting a job in NZ so that is where I'll go if I don't hear anything from Canada.
35. **In your opinion, did the program achieve its objectives? Explain why or why not?**
No. Not one computer has been installed.

At this point I wish to make clear VSO did everything in there power to help me. As well I made friends in the free state Education Department which helped me where they could.

Northern Province

(Mark and Tana submitted their answers by email)

1. **Mark Niemy and Tana Wells**
2. 27/21 (at time of placement)
3. Male/Female
4. Kingston ON/Kingston ON
5. Northern Province. Living in a small town of Shayadima. Working in a village called Vauwani and sometimes in the town of Thohoyandou
6. Business Administration-Information Systems (for both of us)
7. In our field, the only training we had before starting our placement was from our education.
8. Outside of our field, we both have experience in customer service and office work.

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A. Introduction to the Program

9. We heard about NetCorps in the Ottawa Citizen in the classifieds.
10. We were introduced to the NetCorps program when we arrived for the screening at VSO.
11. Yes we talked about the aims of the program.
12. We understand the objectives of the program to be:
 - give young Canadians the chance to gain experience in their field
 - share our knowledge with developing parts of the world
 - have interns from the host country share their knowledge with us.
13. These objectives to seem realistic.

B. Selection, Preparation and Training

14. We were selected to participate after attending a one-day selection day at VSO.
15. We believe we were chosen because we had the skills, ambition and desire to help others.
16. Before leaving Canada, we attended a 4-day NetCorps orientation. We then attended a weekend VSO orientation. In South Africa, we received no training and very little orientation.
17. The orientation sessions in Canada were effective in most areas but there were a few areas it was not effective. The very limited orientation we received in South Africa was not effective at all.
18. We would improve the orientation **in Canada**, by including more preparation. This includes: preparing us as to what we can expect in South Africa. This was done to a certain point but we were caught off guard by simple things such as what items we could purchase when we arrived in S.A. We had no idea that we could purchase popular brands of toothpaste and hair products even in the rural area. We stocked up on it before we left not realizing we could buy it there. We also went there with the VSO handbook not realizing many items in it did not apply to us. We were expecting the things listed in the handbook to happen when we arrived in S.A. and none of them did (i.e. Meeting with the VSO office in S.A., getting photo id cards, and periodic visits from VSO on site).

In South Africa, the orientation could have been improved by simply having some. Our orientation consisted of a 1-day tour around Johannesburg (which was 6 hours from where we were placed) and being introduced to the people in the SchoolNet office (people we never spoke with again). We received no orientation when we arrived on site to where we would be living or where we would be working. We received very little detail from SchoolNet as to what was expected of us and what the situation was that we were about to enter.

C. Placement

19. We expected to receive some goals and guidelines so we could accomplish what was expected from us. We were hoping to arrive in South Africa and be able to use our knowledge to help. From this we were expecting to receive some experience in our fields of computers. We were also expecting to learn a new culture and enjoy another part of the world.
20. We definitely expressed our expectations to SchoolNet on more than one occasion. We asked for some clarification as to what was expected from us. We were living 6 hours from the SchoolNet office and once SchoolNet dropped us off at our home we did not hear from them for over a month even when we attempted to reach them several times.

(Unfortunately, they were not able to complete the questionnaire).

Northern Cape and Northern Province

1. Kimberly Doyle
2. 24
3. Female
4. Prince Edward Island
5. Kimberly and Mmabatho
6. College Diploma in IT, major in Networking
7. Training programs for training adults.
8. None, she had just graduated.
9. An email from the director of her technical college.
10. She really didn't hear anything about the Acacia program prior to leaving.
11. She can't really remember. She thinks that she received a job description from SchoolNet.
12. To increase the amount of computer used in schools and the education level of teachers and students.
13. In some parts 'yes'. Some placements did make a difference. In Mmabatho there was some skills transfer. She got to go to schools. But in Kimberly she did not visit any schools and felt there was little in the way of transferring skills.
14. She had a full day interview in Ottawa.
15. She's not really sure. Because she had the skills and was willing to go to another country – She was excited about it. She was single at the time so it would not be a difficult adjustment.
16. Canada – Secretariat pre departure training – there was nothing country specific
South Africa – 3-day orientation - more country specific. Spoke about the security there and where each of us was going to be staying and what we were going to be doing.
17. **Canada** - We got a resource CD that she didn't use. It was handy though. We were hoping to learn more about our country and our placements.
Team working session – it did not really make a difference either way, but it was fun.
South Africa – we really needed it. Security measures, where we were going to live. These sessions brought relief and personalized it.
18. Canada – more country specific stuff, even an hour would have been helpful. To be given people to contact, contacts at the VSO office, even from the Internet. It would have been helpful to have someone there who was from South Africa.
19. There was nobody at the airport when we arrived. The orientation was well done, but Kantha was not there. Shafika was there and she was great.
20. Yes, in our orientation. We all had to do a presentation on who we were and why we were there.
21. Personal - Allowed a lot of leeway to travel. She had some vacation time and it was important to see other places.
Professional – our boss arranged for us to go to various schools to do work.
22. The opportunity to travel. I got to see the entire country. The work component of the internship was not the highlight.
23. Resources. She would go to a school in the middle of nowhere but wouldn't have known before that the computers were not working. What would normally take a day at home would take a week. Interns should be provided with software before they go.
24. 6 months
25. In the first part she did absolutely nothing (2 months). After she was transferred she would visit a school one week and then go back to her home base for one week to work.
 - Serviced computers
 - Conducted training – taught the network administrators how to trouble shoot and to do basic network stuff. She did a Novell Netware course that was 5 days long.

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26. They organized them themselves. They were told which schools to visit by the provincial representative and she arranged the travel and accommodations.
27. To get everything in writing before going. Before we went we were told that we would be covered by *health insurance and that we would get an interview when we got home and that didn't work out. She should have done more research before going. She should have taken it on herself.
28. Kimberly – Moss was excellent, but the other supervisor was not.
Mmabatho – there was no support at first, but that got sorted out in the end. The support that we got was from the people at the high school. Politics seemed more important there than here.
29. If people were more patient. Contact people before making decisions. No direct contact – would not find out what was being said about them until later.
30. He started about a month before she finished.
31. He didn't have the skill level to be in the position he was in. He fried the motherboard. It was all politics, he was hired because he was a member of the provincial representatives church.
32. No.
33. A little about web design and Novell networking. He was very eager to learn but he needed to have a basic knowledge of computers before he could be taught windows. There were unrealistic expectations. He wanted to learn something in 2 days, something that took me 2 years!
34. Technical coordinator – PEI Representative on Atlantic Canada Institute. Waitresses on weekends.
35. To some extent but it would have been more effective with better communication and organization. Some placements worked well and some did accomplish what they set out to. Some places were excellent and some weren't. It makes a difference who your boss is – Moss did not know what to do with us. He didn't know the objectives. We would just stand around and do nothing.

Other Comments

Living arrangements

Living with a family is better because you get to learn more about the community. You're exposed to different religions and cultures. It also helps with the transportation problems.

Security

A lot of people ended up getting mugged. There was an email sent to VSO, but we got an email back saying criticizing what we had done. We just did what we could to stay alive. It's a whole different ballgame when you are actually in the situation versus talking about it.

Communication and Organization

The communication between SchoolNet and VSO was not good. The entire 6 months versus a year debate is an example.

Overall

This is an excellent program and South Africa really needs it, but without SchoolNet. They don't have the schools first in their minds. So much more could be done. Everything that we were able to do was because of the province we were in (Northern) and not because of SchoolNet. They would never call us, not even to just find out how we were doing.

Overall I had a great time. I did some good work and taught a lot of people,

*All interns were covered by Health Insurance while they were overseas.

Interview with teachers at Mmbabatho High School

This was not a formal interview. Originally my meeting with the teachers from this school was intended to be a focus group discussion, but this did not materialise. This was also supposed to be a site visit but, as I learned from the teachers, the school was not one of the main sites of the programme due to the difficulties that arose between the institution and the programme. I met the two teachers who were most intimately involved in the World Links Programme and with SchoolNet. The discussion was informal and informative. They raised various pertinent issues about the programme in that area.

1.They found the volunteers unco-operative. For example, when Chris arrived at the school he conducted an inventory check of the world link computers and wrote a report without consulting the teacher who was responsible for these computers. He created the impression that parts were missing from the computers and that the teachers were incompetent. Chris fixed some of the computers but at the end there were less computers working. He thought he was in charge of all the computer labs at the school, when in fact he only had responsibility for the world link computers. His attitude was that he would “fix all the problems of the North West”.

The volunteers seemed to work for the government when they were supposed to work for the World Link schools. It seems Mmabatha High School was only used to get the Canadians accommodation. Once they had other accommodation their operational base also moved.

2.The selection of the local intern was handled incorrectly. There seems to have been some serious misunderstanding. The High School was instructed by Shafika and Stephanie from IDRC to find a local intern. The process of finding a local intern only began weeks after the volunteer had arrived, so it was very late. We advertised widely, mainly at the school and the university, and received numerous replies. After receiving the replies we processed them and drew up a shortlist. At this point, and after having made the effort, we were informed that SchoolNet had their own plans and we were not to proceed with the interviews for the local intern. There was correspondence between us and IDRC over this matter. We were not pleased with the manner in which we were dealt with. Philemon was surprised to hear that we were given the responsibility to find an intern. He told us to stop the process and that all communications about the programme had to occur via Anne Mabale. Some time elapsed and then we enquired from SchoolNet about the intern. We were then informed that Anne had chosen an intern.

3.Mmabatho High School was then sidelined. The intern only began to work with Tim and Kim. Although we were involved from the beginning we now no longer consulted or informed about the programme of the intern. Our school was not visited. Furthermore, the world links computers became a burden and we decided to move them to another school, Letoane High School. Relations between ourselves and SchoolNet was now very strained. We were totally sidelined at the Millenium Minds conference in Pretoria. For example, we had to pay to attend the conference whereas other did not have to. SchoolNet seemed to have cut links with us.

Eddie was supposed to assist with the Web design but he complained about the lack of assistance from SchoolNet. He did not have the computer to do this work. As a result he did not design the website.

We were treated very unfairly.

D. Interview with local interns

Pelo Tshabalala, Western Cape - worked with Canadian volunteer Rachel Rattray
Daniel Patterson, Northern Cape
Khoru Makhado, Kwa Zulu Natal

Western Cape Schools Network

Personal details

1. Pelo Tshabalala
2. 22
3. Male
4. Khayelisha Township
5. Completed course in application development – special project from IBM
6. Did an introduction to computers course
7. No work experience

Introduction to the program

8. Heard about programme from Sibongile – she knew he had the qualifications and told him about it.
9. Did discuss, but not much
10. Understood the programme to be about training disadvantaged people and exposing them to the computer environment.

Selection

11. Penny phoned him and told him to come for an interview. Was called two weeks later and told he was chosen.
12. Believes he was chosen because of his qualifications. According to his qualifications he can do this thing.

Training and Orientation?

13. None
14. Experience? – so far he has gained a lot of experience. When he leaves he thinks he'll be more able to get a job. This exposure to the technology and programming sides of IT will really benefit him, he thinks.
15. Told Quentin that he wanted to gain experience – wanted to know the technical side of computers.
16. Has gained a lot of experience and learned a lot. Also, the money has helped.
17. Problems – when he gets calls from people and he does not know what they are talking about. They do not explain things clearly and he ends up feeling useless because he could not help the person.
18. Was told about the volunteers from Canada and that they would be monitoring him.
19. Yes, Rachel taught him a lot of things. They worked together between October and December. She was very nice and patient. She would make sure that he understood.
20. Answering phone calls from people all over South Africa. Sometimes he would go to schools to do installations and networking.

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21. Learned how to install net cards, software and to use databases. Because at first he had no idea how the inside of a computer worked. It was a miracle to him to open up a PC and then put it back together again.
22. Does not know what Rachel learned from him. She didn't say she learned anything from him.
23. If he has problems, he speaks to the managers Penny and Quentin.
24. It's been enough so far. – Started October 1st.
25. After he hopes to get a job in e commerce or web development.

Northern Cape

1. Daniel Petterson
2. 25
3. Male
4. Galeshewe, Kimberly
5. 1 year Diploma in MS Office and Technical Training, PC Maintenance
6. Did A+ training course through SchoolNet, but failed it.
7. ISAGO Technologies – began in 1998, they deployed him to surrounding schools to do technical support, install PCs and train teachers and learners.
8. Moss Mthembo, he discovered him at the primary school. He was not being paid at the time so Moss asked him to take the internship.
9. Yes
10. An initiative that will be developing the skills of teachers in IT.
11. Yes. Wants to believe we've moved from grassroots level. People are no longer computer illiterate. They are using computers and the Internet. It has really helped throughout the province. They are using the computers now.
12. Chosen not interviewed. But Moss did ask him questions.
13. Moss could see what skills he had. Guys with his skills are pretty scarce. Chose him because he could do the job. Many other companies and people are calling him. He has been involved in many workshops.
14. Not really. Telecom 1000 schools program. Two workshops during, but nothing ahead of him.
15. More orientation in something different than what he has done already.
24. Developing himself, he got that. He has developed to such an extent that he could give training. He could at least now work with other people. He also got to do a course. He was exposed to many people who have given him their trust.
25. Yes. He was looking for a long-term position – permanent. Will they use him continuously? Moss was not able to answer him. Did not see himself as employed during the last year. What will happen to him now?
16. Exposure – he was marketed to many people. People will come to him. Appreciated the money – a small fee, but experience, trust he gained from others. Appreciation from the 100's of teachers he has trained.
17. No difficulties.
18. He did not know about them.
19. Met them, but did not work with them.
34. In most cases, he had these discussions with Mr. Mthembo. At times he was also there to just do the job.
- 36 & 37 N/A did not work with volunteers at all.

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35. From a training perspective, he has learned how to work out a day-to-day schedule and a program for training purposes. How to train someone from scratch on how to use computers. Time management skills.
41. If he had a problem with anything he would pick up the phone and call Moss. Also Janet – he still feels free to call her now.
42. N/A
43. If there could be a support centre or a help desk. He would just pick up a phone and say deliver this to here, and the isolation.
44. Yes. They have been met.
45. Would like to continue working anywhere – training, educating. Would not like to see himself sitting at home again. There are people all over the country who need this kind of training.

Kwa Zulu Natal

1. Khoro Makhado
2. 22
3. Male
4. Mantzburg
5. Diploma in Marketing Principles
6. A+ course, some teacher training.
7. Assistant trainer
8. Gerrald, the former SchoolNet KZN Chairperson. Told him to send in his CV. Janet told him all about it.
9. No. Just got a document saying that he would be working with a volunteer. Running around going to schools – working hand in hand with them. But when he came in, Scott and Chris were already gone so he worked alone.
10. He was already involved. It has something to do with helping the community. Easy for him to understand whole idea of the program. Very little technical support in the area.
11. Yes. For me different at first because he was alone. But he has gained more experience now. There were so many schools that had problems but nobody to help them.
12. Asked if he wanted to change and learn technical stuff. Sent his CV to Kantha and some time later he was told he was selected.
13. Because he believes he learns things very easily. Also working with someone (the volunteer) he would learn quickly and be able to keep doing the stuff after they were gone.
14. A+ course (10 days), no other orientation.
20. Someone sponsored him to take a course for free and paid for his exam as well.
21. It was effective. Did not know anything about the inside of a computer. When he came back he was not afraid of touching the computer. He got other assistance from technical support.
24. Expecting to gain more knowledge on technical side of computers, fixing things. Improving skills on what he already knows.
25. Nobody asked him.
26. Doing it on his own. He's only with Janet here. He must go to schools and find out what they need. Has not had contact with SNSA. Janet supervises him.
27. Discovering new things everyday, learning new skills, new tricks about the computer. Doing it by himself. At first he was nervous about this, but now he can do it by himself.
- 17 & 28 Coming across problems he does not know how to solve. Some things were not covered on the course. But he calls someone for help.
29. Yes he knew that the volunteers were supposed to be with him. He was looking forward to working with them. He was told another volunteer was to come, but nobody came.

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- 33. He does office work – faxing documents, receiving calls from schools, making appointments for school visits, helping on the Internet, technical troubleshooting.
- 34. He wasn't. He was told what he would be doing by Janet.
- 35. Answered already
- 36 & 37. N/A
- 41. When he wrote his exams, SNSA paid for them.
- 42. He could go and write his exams.
- 44. Some have been met, but others were not met because the volunteers were not here. When they drafted the program the volunteers were to be here. More would have been achieved had they been here.
- 45. A school in Asiithuuthuke would like him to come and help them with the running of the computer lab. He's helped them both technically and with training. If nobody were hired here at SchoolNet KZN, he would like to do that part time also.

Sam Bankoes, local intern in the North West Province

1. Samuel Bankoes

31 years, resident of Itsoseng, Mafikeng township

5. Completed a Bsc degree but did not graduate due to financial difficulties. Also has A+ (technical qualification) and MCP (Microsoft Certified Professional, 4 courses)

6. Incus attendance certificate

7. Mostly unemployed. Has been involved in performing part-time services such as a Mmabatho High School.

8. No, not now. I was previously a member of the local youth structure, the ANC Youth League.

9. I am an ordinary member now.

10. Not.

12. I previously applied for a post that was advertised in the Department of Education. Not this one. I was not successful in that application but they kept my name in case other jobs became available. I was then contacted by Anne Mabale and Kevin Abrahams sometime in July 2000 about this new job.

13. Everything was explained to me. They looked at my qualifications and found that I matched the criteria they were looking for.

The main aim of the programme was to enhance the capabilities of people from the disadvantaged communities. I was also told that this was a pilot project.

14. I received some documents from Anne. I wanted to acquire technical skills. She explained what the criteria were.

15. Yes

16. Good. In terms of people who have not had exposure. We need the experience and to get exposure to the work environment. In my opinion it makes a big difference. I am now more confident to implement my skills.

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17. It is important to ensure that there is a person responsible for the province. We need transport seriously.

18. I received a letter about the project and replied to it. After that I was offered the job. There was no interview.

20. No

21 No

24. Not much financial expectation. I was more interested in the exposure, dwelling into technical aspects and learning new things. I was especially interested in learning about how to develop websites.

25. Yes

26. I worked according to a schedule for the schools that was sponsored by SchoolNet. I had to visit the schools.

27. It offered training. Finance was made available for other courses. I gained exposure in terms of experience. I now know the situation in terms of IT at the schools.

28. Relations with the volunteers was not OK. I had no choice but to submit to them because I wanted to learn from them. They were reluctant to assist. When I asked them question their usual response was, "Learn by practising". To give you an example. Tom helped a church here to set up a website but did not help me to learn how to do it. In fact he was unwilling. This was a real problem. They have technical skills. It is necessary to explain to these volunteers how to relate to people. They must understand the situation here in Africa.

Transport was a big problem. One school had to pay for a vehicle if I wanted to visit them. Basically we had to depend on others for transport.

Initially some of the supervisors at the Department of Education were unhappy about my presence there. I did not have an office and there were many arguments about my using the facilities in those offices. I was not treated very well there.

30. From August 2000 to August 2001

31. Tim and Kim. They found it very hard.

32. The mandate was to assist the disadvantaged and to transfer skills to these people.

33. Technical assistance for schools. They had to organise maintenance workshops for teachers and conducted teacher training.

35. Windows NT

36. Web page designing

Site Visits

Penryn College in Mpumalanga

Penryn College has been existence for only a few years. However, it already boasts an impressive infrastructure on large grounds. Learners are mainly from Mpumalanga, but there are also some from neighbouring provinces and Swaziland. It is nestled in the hills between Nelspruit and White River and positions itself as an oasis of intellectual vibrancy in a province beset by a myriad problems. Penryn is a private college with a strong Christian ethic, which has grown exponentially over the past two or three years primarily as a result of successful fundraising among private donors. The expansion of the college is particular evident in the two computer centres, which compare favourably with computer centres at urban private schools. Simon Hurry, the teacher responsible for these computer centres, is also the link person with SchoolNet. A critical facet of the college's operation is its outreach programme. I was informed that various educational institutions and schools utilise the college's premises every weekend. The college seems to have made a special effort to establish ties with schools in the African townships. It is this outreach programme, together with the infectious exuberance of Simon Hurry, that qualified the college as the link for SchoolNet in the province and ultimately as the site for the location of the internship programme.

It's a pity, therefore, that the internship programme did not materialise in this province. The college is obviously ideally suited for such a programme. It is technically well equipped and its outreach programme means there is an existing network of skills exchange between the schools in the area. However, without having been in contact with other schools or organisations it is difficult to pass judgement on the relationship between the college and other role players. Nonetheless, a local intern would have benefited enormously from working there.

North-West Province

The site visit to Mafikeng/Mmbatho proved to be a mixed bag. Due to the various complications in the relations between the main role-players in the province (that is, the volunteers, the intern, the local high school and the provincial education department) there was in effect two sites for the programme. The relationship between these different sites were hardly amicable or constructive, which rendered ineffectual the internship programme and its associated objectives of outreach to disadvantaged schools and communities.

I first visited the offices of the North-West Education Department where Anne Mabale (the officer responsible for IT in the province and also the link with SchoolNet) is based. These offices also became the location of work for the intern and to some extent the volunteers. They were, however, not intended to be the site of the internship programme and are not designed for that purpose. The computers at the offices are for the use of the Department.

Mmabatho High School was originally identified as the site for the internship programme. The school has made tremendous efforts over the past few years to build a modern and functional computer centre. Their success in this regard is a significant achievement, considering the school is located in a township in the North-West Province, where resources are extremely limited. The school is located in the township and on first impression it appears to be a typical township school. However, it is 'racially' mixed and is better equipped than most township schools. In

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particular, the school has a very useful computer centre, where IT classes are taught. I expected this centre to be the location of the internship programme. But I was surprised and disappointed to learn that it was not at all associated with the programme. Instead, another set of computers (from the world programme) was earmarked for this purpose. I was unable to ascertain the state or educational value of these computers because they are no longer at Mmabatho High School. The room where the computers were based is now being used for other purposes. These computers were initially used by the volunteers who serviced and maintained them. But as the report of the interview with the teachers from this school illustrates, the entire internship programme was riddled with problems.

It was therefore not possible to make any reasonable assessment of either sites. Neither was properly used in the internship programme.

Site Visits

Conducted by Stephanie Stewart

Nomlingamiselo Primary School , Western Cape
Redirile Primary School, Northern Cape
Peme Primary School, Northern Cape
Maaiza Primary School, Northern Cape
Thabane Primary School, Northern Cape
Mpopmeni Community Centre, Kwa Zulu Natal

Western Cape

Nomlingamiselo Primary School (Philippi Township) – May 10, 2001

915 learners
20 educators
17 computers

Nomlingamiselo is located in a very poor community. There are almost 100 learners, down from over a 100. There is a small dirt play yard in the middle of the school which they are trying to fix up so that the students can play there safely.

Scott Harper and Rachel Rattray networked all of the computers in the computer lab at this school from scratch. They came twice a week over the period of about 2 months during which time they did all of the computer installations. Louis, one of the teachers who regularly transported the two volunteers to the school says it was a great pleasure having them there.

After the computers were installed there were classes run for the educators twice a week. At the end of this introductory training the educators could use the computers for class schedules, lists and letters to parents. They found this very useful, and used the computers regularly.

The learners have not yet begun to use the computers because the educators are concerned that they will damage them. At this point the learners are only allowed to observe as the computers are being used.

The educators however have not used the computers over the last 6 – 9 months as new electrical wiring was installed in the center and they became unsure of whether or not it was safe to continue using the computers. Also, if anything goes wrong with any of the machines they do not

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know how to fix them, so they simply stop using them. When I arrived the lab was locked up and it became clear that it had not been used for some time.

Prior to the installation of these machines, none of the educators had ever used a computer before. Now they are at least familiar with the basics and one teacher has actually purchased his own home computer which he uses every day. He said that without the volunteers, he would not be able to do what he is doing today on a computer. The principal also has a computer that he uses on a regular basis.

The educators at the school feel that they are in need of more training in order to be able to continue using the computers and in order to help the learners. They feel very insecure when something (even something very simple) goes wrong with a computer. They feel that more training will assist them in raising their comfort level.

WCSN provided the initial training and plans to resume offering training courses for the educators at this school.

Northern Cape Redirile Primary School – May 14, 2001

Interviewed: Jennifer Hashatse and Tbogo Stewart, educators.

580 learners

18 teachers

4/18 teachers are interested in computer training.

Redirile was and is one of the schools regularly visited by Daniel Petterson, the South African intern based at The Northern Cape Education Department

The computers they have at this school first arrived in 1988 and were donated by Old Mutual.

An agreement was made that the Education Department would send trainers to teach the educators basic computer skills.

They do not use the computers on a day-to-day basis because they are quite old and break easily. Most of them are broken now. The lab was closed and locked when I was there and it seemed quite an ordeal to get the lab open so I did not see them during my visit.

At this school it is mostly the learners who use the computers. It is the school's intention to have computer classes integrated into the curriculum. But before that can happen then need new software and they are also awaiting the donation of new computers.

Peme Primary School - May 14, 2001

Interviewed: Lizzie Nodoba, Principal

462 learners

16 educators

Daniel also trains regularly at Peme.

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The principal explained to me that she knows about education, but nothing about technology. When the first computer was donated to the school it arrived sealed in a box. She called one of the other schools in the area for help because she had no idea what to do with them. In the end, she had the software for the computers, but had no idea what to do with it. Daniel came to the school and installed the software and got the computer running.

After that the principal bought an additional 4 computers. She, or any of the other teachers could call Daniel at any time and he would come to the school and assist them. There are now 4 teachers and the school clerk trained on how to use the computers. The school clerk uses a computer the most. She now controls all of the schools data on it. The educators do not use the computers daily because they are still limited in their abilities.

The principal feels that they are now ready for the children to start being trained. They have started small classes for the learners but they are still just playing on them (the computers).

They suffer from frequent burglaries at the school and so when there are no classes, the computer room is locked.

She says that Daniel is a highly skilled and knowledgeable person who knows how to share his skills with others.

Maasiza Primary School – May 14, 2001

(photos)

Interviewed: Polta Madondo, School Clerk and Mildred Batuyashe, Deputy Principal

515 learners

21 educators

11/21 are being trained to use a computer

11 computers (5 new and 6 old IBM computers – the IBM's cannot be used because the software that was donated to the school is not compatible).

Daniel also visits this school regularly.

The educators and the clerk know that if they ever have problems they can call Daniel. None of them had experience with computers prior to Daniel's training. They have now been using them since last year. The school clerk uses Microsoft Word everyday to type letters to parents and organize school programs.

Not all 11 teachers have been trained yet but Daniel plans to go through the entire Microsoft office application with them. Up to now they have just been doing basic word processing. Daniel provides all of the technical support for the school.

The clerk and the educators believe that computers have made their lives much easier. The school is not yet connected to the Internet, but they hope for that soon as a way to expand on the use of computers.

They struggle to get sponsors to provide them with more computers. The principal feels that if they had more computers, the school could attract more learners.

Thabane Secondary School - May 14, 2001

(photos)

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Interviewed: Puleng Motsamia, educator (grade 8 and technology/ computers)

750 learners

24 educators

21 computers in the lab

Jennifer and Kimberly (two of the NetCorps volunteers) assisted in teacher training at this school's computer lab.

Puleng was trained in computers by the Department of Communications. She does all the training at the school, which is quite a lot, so the volunteers assisted her in training a large number of teachers from the region.

They trained the teachers to use the basic MS applications. None of the teachers had used computers before and the two teachers from Thabane who were trained continue to use computers. They were also introduced to using email and to the Internet. They assisted them with typing skills and other basic word processing skills.

She has been running regular computer classes since the beginning of this year.

Puleng also is training the learners in computer use. There are, however, 3 to 4 learners for each computer, which means that many of them do not get to actually use the computers, they just watch. It is difficult to provide them with individual attention and those who are scared to use the computers hide behind the others.

Puleng is quite over loaded and needs more trainers and more computers in order to keep up with the demand. She has approached the provincial government for more computers and needs to find a way to get a rebate on the cost of internet connectivity. It is a poor community and therefore difficult for people to be able to pay for the cost of connecting to the internet.

She feels that even though the computers for the center were donated, they must charge some kind of fee to the community to use them otherwise they will not be able to continue operating. As soon as something goes wrong with the computers, they need to pay for a technician to fix them, but they do not have the money for this. One of the volunteers who assisted her did not agree with the idea of charging people to use the computer lab. This was a point that they did not agree upon.

Daniel does provide some computer maintenance at this school as well.

Kwa Zulu Natal, Peitermaritzburg region Mpopomeni Community Centre, - May 15, 2001

Interviewed: Pam Robertson, teacher from Mpopomeni Secondary School and Sibongile Mshengu, Computer Trainer at the Centre

20 computers

10 groups from the community use the center each day

There are also classes for the learners from the various surrounding schools

1

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The center opened in May of 1999.

Chris Dorazio (NetCorps volunteer) visited this school about 4 times during his placement. He also did some assistance by telephone. Scott Harper (NetCorps volunteer) visited once.

The managers of the center had about a year of computer experience before the volunteer came. They were glad for someone with technical experience and someone who would not charge a lot for it.

One of the problems was that it was not easy for the volunteers to travel to Mpopmeni. They only came when Janet Thompson or Pam were able to drive them. They were not happy to take public transportation.

Originally, the managers at the center wanted Chris to visit once a week. They organized for him to come with teachers from town, but he often did not come. As a result, they did not feel that they got as much from him as they wanted and needed. They had a volunteer before (not through the NetCorps program) but that volunteer lived in the township and therefore could just walk to the center.

Pam emailed Chris a lot and did get prompt and helpful assistance that way. He would send detailed, step-by-step instructions to help them through their difficulties. Pam also asked Chris to help her with spreadsheets. This never got completed and Chris informed her of this only the day before it was due.

Overall, the volunteer did help them a few times when they were stuck and he did provide them with some knowledge that they did not have prior to his arrival. He worked on their website and negotiated with the company who provided their server. He was able to explain things in a simple manner whereas the previous volunteer would get frustrated with their questions.

The kind of assistance they need at the center is around troubleshooting and how to use the Internet more effectively as a teaching tool. The students currently search for things on the internet, but she cannot extrapolate the educational value.

They were frustrated that Chris was not reliable. It would have been very helpful if he had been able to visit once a week. They kept a log of what the problems were, but when he would come the list would be so long that he would not get through it.

Their vision was that the volunteers would go out on a daily basis to schools and train people. But in the end they seemed to spend most of their time in their office at the learning center.

IN future, transportation and accommodation need to be looked at more carefully as these were a big problem. They don't know if they weren't clear about what they should be doing or if the volunteers were not clear. More communication is needed about the goals of the program.

It takes a long time for people to adjust to a new environment and new people. Maybe 6 months is too short for all of this to happen. Maybe someone who came for a longer period of time would settle into a routine more effectively.