

IVCO 2017 SUB-THEME PAPER INNOVATION

FK NORWAY
VOLUNTEER
GIDEON SAMWEL IS
A COFFEE EXPERT
FROM TANZANIA.
HE STARTED
LEARNING FROM
HIS GRANDFATHER
AT THE AGE
OF EIGHT, AND
SHARED HIS
KNOWLEDGE
WHILE AT
EXCHANGE IN
NORWAY, HOSTED
BY FRIENDS FAIR
TRADE NORWAY.

By Liz Palm,
FK Norway



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Foreword

This paper has been produced for IVCO 2017 and is one of a series of papers exploring this year's conference theme *Implementation of the SDGs through transformative partnership in volunteering*.

The paper focuses on the sub-theme innovation and what this means for international volunteering for development/volunteering for development and its role in implementation of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. Separate papers consider the sub-themes *measurement* and *enabling environment*.

Note on terminology: the framing and sub-theme papers variably use the terms *volunteer involving organisations* (VIOs) and *international volunteer cooperation organisations* (IVCOs). IVCOs should be understood as a specific group or type of VIO.

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Introduction

This paper embraces the main conference theme, focusing on innovation with particular reference to transformative partnerships and innovative funding. Our overall view is that innovation is a critical issue to be addressed and that if international volunteer cooperation organisations (IVCOs) do not evolve as the world around them changes, the contribution to Agenda 2030 and the fulfilment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) objectives will be less than their aspirations. We seek to open up not only a discussion about the nature of volunteer models, but also the connection to resourcing and partnerships which carries significant implications and opportunities for IVCOs going forward.¹ We ask the key question – do IVCOs have mature or outdated models that need to be refreshed?

A starting point for innovation – what IVCOs do now and will this still be a key requirement in the future?

What IVCOs ‘produce’ is not simply defined. It might, for instance, embrace any or all of the following:

- A volunteering experience that meets the aspirations of volunteers to contribute in different ways and for different reasons in community or national environments
- A volunteering intervention that meets the aspirations of the public policy, people, communities and organisations through people to people development
- A volunteering offer that someone is willing to resource or contract for (whether volunteers themselves, hosts or donors) such as government-funded, self-funded or private sector models
- A volunteering offer that meets the aspirations of the people, communities and organisations from where volunteers are *sourced*, which would include leadership development programs or developing regional identities

Within any IVCO, these different organisational offers might also apply in different ways and in varying significance. And this balance can change over time, e.g. as donor preferences change or host community interests alter or volunteer motivations change.

¹ The paper draws in part on a new survey of Forum members on transformative partnerships, innovation and resourcing conducted in June 2017, in which 11 IVCOs participated. We would like to thank those who participated for sharing information and their insights. References in this paper to ‘the survey’ should be taken to refer to this survey.

Drivers for innovation are important here. They may be large-scale contextual factors with long-term implications, such as changes in the global world order alongside emergent nationalist movements and the balance of internal and external focus. Or sector-specific changes which have changed the landscape of volunteering, such as transportation improvements, technological access between potential volunteers and partners through the Internet, or online booking opportunities and online volunteering.

Supply-side factors may also be important as population age balance changes. For example, a key driver for the radical change in the FK Norway program was to move away from sending the same generation of Norwegian volunteers, decade upon decade, and develop a model that engaged new stakeholders. Also, demand-side factors, such as changing interests of donors or the requirements of host communities and organisations, may be significant.

However, drivers for innovation over the recent past have been met in different ways. Challenges of funding sources have been met by adjustment in stakeholder partners and modified program models, e.g. the recent engagement of WUSC/CECI with private sector partners, which is also linked to SDG scaling up. Changes in donor policy have seen radical repositioning of IVCOs to deliver a different volunteer product, e.g. the UK-based IVCOs with the introduction of International Citizen Service. This ability to adapt is arguably linked to the flexible nature of the ‘product’ of IVCOs, where historically the interests of different stakeholders can be accommodated by incremental change.

The challenge of the SDGs can easily exploit that ambivalence. On one hand, the direct program-focused SDGs relate to a traditionally understood development objective; while other SDGs, for example on partnership, open up the opportunity to engage in the special contribution of volunteering. So, the SDGs represent both an opportunity and a pressure to focus on the nature of what IVCOs deliver. Is it really plausible to carry on in the same business models to deliver an effective contribution to the SDGs or do IVCOs now need to innovate and evolve?

What are the options for innovation?

First, what would a radically changed model look like? In the 1990s, divisions about the meaning of volunteering, reflecting the changing landscape of volunteering for development, led to some IVCOs redefining their purpose, for example as consultancies and/or moving out of volunteering. Early examples include SNV and MS, and more recently, the absorption of DED into the German government development structure. It is interesting that nearly 15 years after FK Norway decided to completely rethink its model from volunteer sending to partnership based frameworks, some still see this as innovative.²

² “Regrettably, both South to North volunteering as well as South-South are still to some extent innovative, more than 15 years after FK introduced such programmes.” Survey respondent. This does not mean this view is held universally. For example, it has been observed that in Asia the position may be different. See for example Brassard et al. (2010) for an Asian perspective, in particular pages 57, 58 & 22 (<http://forum-ids.org/2010/10/forum-research-paper/>)

Secondly, there is the focus of innovation on incremental change of existing models. For instance, this could be through differentiating the nature of the volunteers provided, such as focusing on youth volunteering or the balance of international to national volunteers. Some IVCOs concerned with providing international volunteers, with their associated costs of allowances, travel, accommodation, etc., have recognised this may not only be a more expensive option than national or community volunteers, but one that may be less appropriate. However, the movement of some IVCOs into using national volunteers at scale arguably lags behind international organisations such as the Red Cross. A survey in 2016 showed the placement of national volunteers at just over 14 per cent of total volunteers placed by IVCOs, and nearly three quarters of these were from one organisation.³

Thirdly, conceptualising volunteering for development as an agent of change in monitoring progress towards SDGs enables a model where volunteering is aligned with social movements, a particular variant of active citizenship, which recognises the achievement of the SDGs as a political rather than a technical process. This is an example of where the role of the volunteer in the development process has been defined in new and different ways. At an earlier stage, the transition of volunteer from service delivery to capacity building was a significant innovation in defining the role of the volunteer. It opens up a further discussion about how volunteers play an important role in innovation in partner organisations.

The survey of Forum members illustrates both the opportunities and barriers to innovation and change. When asked “What do you think your organisation will be doing differently in five years’ time?” the answers indicated little change in organisations’ perceived business models. Institutional barriers appeared significant, as in the example where government practice was to use the number of international volunteers as a proxy for national employment.⁴ Where change was identified, this related mainly to program models, with some focus on income diversification, though not necessarily linked together.

I see my organisation using different channels and methods to recruit volunteers (as we will have difficulties in keeping the volunteer applicants as high as now due to decreasing number of young population in general), having more solid relationship with national volunteer organisations.

and

Programmes with a focus on mobility, related aspects such as causes, information, support services, etc. are growing and will continue to grow in the coming years.

³ See Euler et al. (2016), p.17. The Forum survey (2017) also provided examples where IVCOs saw this trend as likely in the future: “Methodology is changing in terms of how we work with developing countries - more national volunteers, more south/south volunteering.”

⁴ Forum member survey, June 2017: “In my country, the number of international volunteers tends to be incorporated into the proxy measure of national employment. And that causes our organisation to care more about the volunteer numbers and employment rate of returned volunteers instead of worrying about the results on development.”

and

We are also trying to better integrate and align our main volunteering program with other projects in which volunteering is a relatively small component vs other project components.

The survey of Forum members indicates some examples of engagement with innovative approaches. The Cuso International Innovation Fund is a model that encourages Country Office staff to think about new ways of working and the scale of response is striking.⁵ But it remains to be seen how this might apply as an organisation-wide innovation. The Uniterra Program “is planning to reach scale in terms of beneficiaries. By focusing and facilitating market change as well as individual partner capacity building, we are ambitiously seeking impact at scale.”

Questions for consideration

- Do IVCOs have a product that will deliver what our stakeholders want and make an effective contribution to the SDGs?
- In what ways are IVCOs currently meeting the aspirations and transformational change their ‘customers’ seek?
- In what ways should IVCOs take innovation? Do IVCOs, together with their partners and stakeholders, need to focus on a radically different model or is incremental innovation sufficient?

Barriers to innovation

In the Forum survey, members were asked to indicate the three main barriers to innovation. The most common reply was resourcing, which took mainly two forms: lack of flexibility on budgets (a shared experience by both governmental and NGO IVCOs) and lack of staff.

There is a lack of staff who are dedicated to R&D on volunteer programme as most staffs (even the senior ones) are more consumed in doing day to day management with little time to think about the big picture, even though we never lack funding for the volunteer programme as the fund comes from the government, but the funds are exclusively for running the programme or for allowances for volunteers etc, not for quality improvement or for hiring more staffs who could be here to actually dedicate himself/herself in working on transformative partnership, innovation etc.

⁵ More detail on the CUSO International Innovation Fund can be found in Case Study 1 in the Appendix.

A lack of alignment between funders and IVCOs was also cited, with donors/budget controllers seen as having a lack of interest in research and development and an unwillingness to fund it.

Some responses looked more deeply at the challenges. Some saw these as external and posing restrictions:

Our members are affected by a double crisis: the lack of resources and the generational gap. The increasing scarcity of resources available at public and private hands since at least 10 years is having a major impact on the capacity of organizations to function effectively. On the human resource side, most members were founded in the 70s and their base is aging while new generations, while interested and involved in different capacities, are not showing significant interests in becoming full “owners” of the organizations they are involved. The renewing capacity of governing bodies is low. The third challenge is the political environment both in Europe and in the recipient Countries is growing more and more hostile to civil society organization and laws are enacted to limit space while promoting a business approach to the handling of social issues and welfare.

However, others focused on more radical change within the system:

Most international development challenges would benefit from having space and resources within their existing program to innovate and creatively think about development challenges. One major challenge is that current funding structures specific to international development do not support innovation and risk taking. To truly support breakthrough innovation, a fundamental shift in the way we fund development intervention and innovation is required. Flexibility and investment in relatively unproven and potentially risky concepts, and continued support to proven projects is required.

One suggested barrier to innovation that emerges from the survey is the possible reluctance of IVCOs to change how they do things. This may be because some areas of change are not within defined authorised areas or perhaps because IVCOs are comfortable with the current model and do not see any reason to change.

The general barrier to innovation is of course the drive for self-preservation, both on organisational and individual levels. There is a fundamental human need for safety and continuity. Of course this may in the short term look like a comfortable bubble, but in the long term lack of innovation will undermine the very existence of any organisation. Innovation requires an open and encouraging attitude by the leadership.

Institutionalised ways of working play some part, as is discussed below. But understanding what our ‘customers’ want – and are going to want – and how we must change to meet *their* aspirations arguably lies at the heart of transformational change. If we do not deeply believe that what we are doing and how we are doing it meets the aspirations of our stakeholders, then we are at risk of being increasingly less relevant.⁶

Work from Cass Business School London has also shown that *predictable* income streams are critical if charities are going to think about the impact they create, and not just focus on survival alone. We need to reflect on what financial innovations can be used (such as social investment) to achieve this.

Reflections on internal systems and ways of working

The traditional model of international volunteering and its systems and processes, while having some variations across agencies, has essential similarities, e.g. pre-departure preparation, physical travel and placement, professional and pastoral support, and post-placement review. Many IVCOs tend to operate with a model of Head Office based in their ‘home’ country, with volunteers supported by local offices in host countries in triangulation with partner organisations. Internal systems and processes reflect that organisational hierarchy.⁷ It is worth asking how these organisational models have changed in a period of global communication. Some respondents realised the significance of the change and could cite examples of what that would mean:

Technology is changing the landscape. With greater access to technology, more people are aware of volunteering opportunities globally, and volunteering can also be done digitally (e.g. some of the face-to-face follow-up coaching sessions for transferring know-how can be done through Skype calls).

However, what can be learnt from other sectors is that with all forms of production, at some point transformational change is likely to take place, either as a result of a fundamental change in what is produced or by innovations that make processes inefficient or uncompetitive. There is no reason why this would not apply to volunteer knowledge exchange. Are IVCOs looking at either in a serious way?

⁶ Note this is not just about what we do but how we do it. For example, as one feedback comment stated, “not only are IVCOs at risk of being increasingly less relevant, some, depending on their consultation/collaboration-styles, are also at risk of being paternalistic.”

⁷ This model would be typical across the Global North to such an extent that IVCOs can be routinely identified in terms of their sourcing country.

Consider these two statements on social media:

1. The nature of social media tends to be a distraction for volunteers who are operating in a different environment. As an organisation we need to manage volunteer access to social media.
2. The nature of social media means that modes of communication have changed so much that traditional organisational hierarchies are no longer effective so we have changed our organisational structure and ways of working.

Then consider that the AKLHUE survey (2016) found that online volunteering practiced by just one IVCO accounted for 18 per cent of all volunteer numbers in the survey.

Questions for consideration

- Are IVCO strategies and systems fit for purpose and meeting the current requirements and future aspirations of our customers?⁸
- If IVCOs designed systems and processes in line with contemporary contexts, what would they look like?
- Do IVCOs put such initiatives as e-learning and social media and other technological developments at the heart of the volunteer systems, reimagining how things are done and for what purpose?
- How do IVCOs keep aware of technology changes and related opportunities, and/or partnerships with companies utilising new technologies?
- Can IVCOs find more creative options for sustainable development than 'sending' or 'virtual' volunteers?
- Is the future one where international volunteers are 'sent' at all?

⁸ The term 'customers' is used here to refer to external customers, typically host partners, communities, potential and serving volunteers and donors/contractors.

Reflections on partnerships

Many IVCOs have delivery partners at national or local level. However, partnerships aimed at effecting significant change to address the SDGs are not primarily ones that might be termed contractual but more transformational. The idea that if IVCOs do not evolve and innovate they will not meet their aspirations in contributing to Agenda 2030 and the SDGs has some currency. In so far as transformative partnerships can make a difference, they have two potential sources. Firstly, quantitative, where partnerships can be established that enable scale of delivery to better meet those objectives than organisations working on their own. Examples in this area include building consortia with other IVCOs or development actors; or inter-governmental partnerships to deliver to scale.

Secondly, qualitative, where a partnership enables the development of an approach that is beyond the scope of an IVCO and enhances what is being delivered. Examples here would include partnerships with INGOs, the private sector or governments which add qualitative change to the volunteer program; or building relationships with organisations outside the IVCO sector to develop new products and/or new ways of working.⁹

Such approaches are fairly well known amongst IVCOs. But to what extent are they seen as central to what IVCOs do, as against something that would be nice to do? To what extent do IVCOs seek to develop such partnerships because it will better meet volunteer and development objectives? Or is it more to do with donor requirements (cf. EC and DfID) or resource needs?

When asked whether IVCOs considered any current partnerships as transformational in character, the answers are sometimes conceptual and focus on programs – at some level volunteering for development (V4D) is essentially transformational in character. But what might be termed transformational at organisational level? There are some examples of innovative practice:

JICA has enhanced partnerships not only with other volunteer organizations but also with domestic partners including local governments, private sectors and universities to improve the quality of the programs to maximize the effects of cooperation by flexibly dealing with diversifying development challenges.

And when asked about challenges and opportunities in pursuing Agenda 2030, the responses of the IVCOs surveyed tended to focus on conceptual or large-scale perspectives. Few offered a perspective based on practical experience, but one example was apparent:

⁹ It is important to note that such opportunities are open to small organisations as well as large ones. Repositioning and partnership building may be an effective response to funding challenges. See Case Study 3 on Latitude Global Volunteering in the Appendix.

We have a new and growing partnership with local government, voluntary sector, police, NHS, Universities etc in York UK around the Global Goals implementation. The SDGs give us a great opportunity for high impact transformative partnerships and bringing the global and local together.¹⁰

It is instructive to look outside the sector. The cross-sector partnership set out in Case Study 5 illustrates a radical approach where a new business model is at the centre of the work, resulting in a scaled up model on waste and sanitation addressing needs that would not otherwise be met.

Innovation and resourcing – how will IVCOs resource what they do?

There are two big areas of resourcing considered in this paper which pose questions when considering IVCOs' contribution to the SDGs: volunteers and finance.

Volunteers

Euler et al. looked at various parameters of what IVCOs were doing currently in terms of the profile of volunteers, including age, gender, length of placement and skills. This opens up a discussion as to whether the demand side of meeting the SDGs meets the supply side of volunteers. But it also poses questions about the role of IVCOs. Put simply, if the starting point is Agenda 2030, then the required question (assuming volunteers have a role in this) is what volunteer program models are most appropriate? IVCOs may be tempted to start with a different question: how can we demonstrate what we do in V4D will meet the aspirations of Agenda 2030?

In other words, IVCOs are not neutral in this process and have institutional interests along with other stakeholders. So, perhaps a different set of questions is worth asking.

Questions for consideration

- How far are IVCOs prepared to change their V4D model to meet the aspirations of the SDGs?
- What are the changes IVCOs would like (or be prepared) to make, if any?

¹⁰ The trailblazer project is detailed in Case Study 4 in the Appendix.

- What are the barriers, if any, that would prevent change from happening?
- Are IVCOs being open about challenges to those who fund them, or just chasing the money?

Financial resourcing and utilisation

It is worth noting the outcomes of the Euler et al. (2016) survey on sources of finance for IVCOs. This showed the sector is predominantly dependent on government funding, whether national or local government. While various attempts have been made to seek out other kinds of resourcing, these are small in scale and significance.

What is interesting is the parallel growth in commercial volunteering, where the volunteer pays for the experience; or the social purpose holiday opportunities, which offer a volunteering holiday. Development-focused IVCOs have either not looked in this direction – or have looked and not liked much of what they have seen. But self-funded volunteering has grown significantly in the 21st century but generally outside of the IVCOs. In contrast, IVCOs, notably for their international volunteers, still tend to operate a model of stipends, which might even call into question whether this can be called volunteering.

Does this reflect a deep-seated reluctance to change? Are some changes more acceptable than others? The Euler et al. survey provides some important insights. National government funding is a significant source of funding for IVCO programs, providing more than half the funding for three quarters of all IVCO programs.¹¹ Effectively this means that not just the state-based IVCOs but also those that are INGOs are dependent on state funding to a significant extent.

Going outside an allocated government budget or subvention, including contracts, is virtually non-existent for Forum members when focusing on the key funding of IVCO programs. The AKLHUE survey found that in 54 programs surveyed, corporate funding was never the largest funder; foundations were the largest funder in just two programs and individuals in four programs.¹²

Does this mean the prevailing resourcing model meets stakeholder aspirations? The Forum survey of IVCOs in 2017 identified how they thought their resourcing model would

¹¹ Euler et al. (2016) p.32. While studies indicate the importance of government funding for civil society organisations, IVCOs arguably appear to be relatively unusual in generating a low level of service fee income. (Our thanks to Jean Tan for this observation drawn from Lester Salamon, *Global Civil Society*, Vol 2).

¹² This is evidenced in the 2017 survey. “Some of our members have made successful attempts at joint programming with private companies either Italian Companies aiming to expand abroad or local enterprises interested to combine a business and a social model. However, these experiences are still only few but can provide inspiration, also to inspire policies.”

change and why. Their responses indicated concern at the current model, but were less clear on what would change in the future.

When asked if the model would change in the next five years, responses ranged from no change – “In the short term we do not foresee a significant change in our approach” – to aspiration – “We would like to diversify our sources of funding and revenues” – to expectation of change – “We are working on some ideas, which if successful will move us toward direct income from individuals purchasing good/services, rather than our current reliance on government funding.”

The overall nature of the answers did not encourage expectation of significant changes in resourcing approaches on the part of any of the survey participants.

What could be different? In Case Study 6, the example of Lendwithcare is explained, using a model of loans for entrepreneurs that are sourced essentially on crowdfunding. Those seeking funds have been validated and people wishing to make loans can identify which entrepreneur/business they want to support. This kind of model could be extended to volunteering. A crowdfunding model could support individual volunteer initiatives or local partners who seek support for volunteers to be placed there. The IVCO would have a role in quality, verification and ongoing support for both partner and volunteer.

Questions for consideration

- How do we explain the inertia of funding diversification? Is this an institutional or legal requirement? Or an aspect of dependency? What forces are in play?
- To what extent are IVCOs prepared to change what they do, and how, in order to access and diversify funding sources?
- What is the current level of financial security of IVCOs? Are they using reserves to survive, rather than addressing potentially outdated business models?

Innovation in funding could focus on either *diversifying sources* of funding or on *utilising* funds. Examples of innovative diversification to resource mainstream work can be identified.¹³ Recent research in the UK charity sector suggests that while charities still see grants and donations as the primary sources of funds, *all* charities see their funding mix moving.¹⁴ Social investment, for example, is a tool which enables charities to use more

¹³ For example, see Appendix, Case Study 2 on Mercy Corps links with Tripadvisor, where innovative approaches for funding align with core program activity.

¹⁴ Salway (2017), pp.56-57

commercial style investment tools to help develop social value, through the application of technology, for example. It is expected that the demand for social investment and borrowing will increase by over 10 per cent in the next five years, growing to more than 10 per cent of the sector income mix.

Yet when asked what would be the purpose of using social investment, the same organisations stated they would not borrow for cash flow, fundraising, property, or in many cases, to start a new program or project.¹⁵ The conclusion reached by the authors suggested there is a lack of strategic thinking about the utilisation of funds, with borrowing seen as a mechanism to meet funding gaps rather than focusing on using funds for innovation and growth. Innovative ways of raising funds may simply be used to do what has always been done – core program activities.

Approaches that are aimed at supporting funded investment in partner organisations are well known in international development, but not ones that are aimed at the INGO (or IVCO).

Questions for consideration

- How do IVCOs approach using funds for business development, innovation or repositioning for growing to scale – as against using them for program delivery?
- How do IVCOs that are NGOs engage with the potential of social investment? If they do engage, is this for strategic purposes or filling funding gaps?
- How can IVCOs become more entrepreneurial, e.g. develop as a social enterprise (generating income from services they provide to be ploughed back into V4D)?

Concluding comments

Our reflections on the survey responses are that IVCOs are looking at developing, amplifying and modifying existing V4D programs in many creative ways. But at the same time, the concepts of what volunteering may look like in the future tend to remain quite similar overall. This is essentially improving the current mode of working rather than radically rethinking what it might look like in the future. Within this context, it is less surprising that models of funding remain quite similar and with a few ideas which tend to be on the margin of core funding. There are risks in this approach, as the IVCO 2017 sub-theme paper on enabling environment identifies:

¹⁵ Salway (2017), pp. 86-87

[Donor] trend[s] may threaten VIOs' emphasis on deep understanding of local contexts to enable systemic, transformative change, and lead to partnerships based on infrastructure rather than shared values, linear pre-designed outcomes that do not consider complex local systems or collaboration and the programmatic flexibility and innovation needed to navigate these effectively, and failure to build on and learn from past projects within existing networks.¹⁶

Yet the experience of globalisation arguably challenges the separation of the V4D experience from other forms of social activity, such as ethical tourism; while IVCOs seek to sustain traditional sources of funding, alongside the expansion of international volunteering in new forms undertaken by the private sector.

If IVCOs are primarily committed to Agenda 2030, perhaps it is now time to ask what kinds of volunteering we need to do this and what transformative and innovative approaches to partnerships and resourcing will be required. As the IVCO 2017 framing paper on transformative partnerships recognises:

To achieve the transformation required at global, national and local levels, IVCOs are well placed to respond because of their work across boundaries, cultures and geographies.¹⁷

16 O'Brien et al. (2017)

17 Devereux and Learmonth (2017)

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Appendix – Case studies

Case Study 1: The Cuso International Innovation Fund¹⁸

Cuso International is currently implementing an internal Innovation Fund. As part of our Volunteer for International Cooperation and Empowerment (VOICE) project (funded by GAC Volunteer Cooperation Program), we designed a fund with the overall objective of creating a process and space for going beyond the ‘business as usual’ and to support new ways of addressing development challenges in the areas of economic development and health.

Our fund is structured similar to other innovation funding models where we developed a two-stage approach. We first asked Country Program Offices (CPOs) within the Cuso global network to submit a short two-page concept note describing their idea and how it addresses a development challenge in a new way. No preliminary data was required.

In total, we received 44 ideas from 17 different countries. A selection committee, composed of three staff and a member of our Board of Directors, shortlisted seven of the top ideas. Each of the seven finalists were asked to develop detailed proposal packages (proposal, detailed implementation plans, and budgets). The finalists were connected to an innovation expert from an innovation firm in London UK called Two Igloos to help them think through their piloting and scaling strategies.

Due to the scope of our fund (\$300,000 for up to three projects with a 30-months implementation period), we made a distinction between the different types of innovation. Our fund is focused on incremental innovation but finalists were asked to describe the transformational potential of their idea.

The top three ideas were identified by our selection committee and Cuso International volunteer alumni on May 12th:

- **Feeding Lima from Within (Peru):** Urban agriculture has been proven as a successful survival strategy for poor households. In Lima, periurban smallholders are resisting pressure on the last available agricultural land, and community organizations are transforming abandoned spaces into productive gardens, with an increasing number of poor households growing produce on their patios. Building on these experiences, and on ground breaking Cuso International work in Peru that has led to the creation of the Urban Agriculture Multi-Stakeholder Platform, the Peru team will develop a

¹⁸ This case study was contained in the Forum (2017) survey responses.

comprehensive Urban Agriculture Certification System that will increase income generation for smallholders, through improved market access and consumer trust for sustainable local organic produce.

- **Building up Climate Resilience of Women Farmers in Cameroon:** A Pilot Model Village (Cameroon): The project aims to narrow the existing gap between male and female farmers through a package of technology and technical assistance delivered through a pilot model village. Small holder farmers (80% of women and 20% of men) will be supported to pilot adapted agriculture technologies and access relevant information on changing weather patterns to become more resilient to the effects of climate change and improve food security and sovereignty. The project will also build a network between farmers, research centers, sectorial administration, Cuso local partner NGOs (Center for Environment and Development and Cameroon-Ecology) to demonstrate better coordination of climate resilient action in a specific agro ecological area.
- **Building Resilience & Adaptability through Volunteer Organizations (Bravo) (Philippines):** The BRAVO project will test a new model for Cuso International in which we will expand our volunteerism mandate into the realms of climate resilience – specifically Disaster Risk Reduction and post-disaster recovery in the Philippines. It is precisely this human instinct of compassion that is the foundation of Cuso International; and on this BRAVO will help build the social infrastructure to convert individual empathy into effective collective action. A package of training modules will be developed and delivered to address the underlying issues of low volunteer retention focused on improved training, collaborative management styles and better communication systems. With a blend of e-Volunteers, short-term and long-term volunteers, we will research, adapt and implement training modules on volunteer development, tailored according to the needs of each local response agency, repositioning Cuso International with major humanitarian actors and improving local capacity to respond to humanitarian crises.

In order to support the design, development and implementation of these projects, Cuso International has developed a 4-step ‘Approach to Innovation’ which includes: Research & Proof of Concept, Testing & Prototyping, Piloting & Planning to Scale and Learning & Evaluating. These steps are not meant to be linear but rather cyclical (a feedback loop), as the projects will continuously create, test, prototype and assess.

In addition, volunteering will be integrated into all three projects and this has led to innovative approaches for volunteering that are being leveraged to support implementation. For example, the ‘Feeding Lima from Within’ project has developed a partnership with the University of Ottawa where an entire university class will be providing ongoing support from afar for a semester. Furthermore, the BRAVO project will be working to improve the retention of volunteers in local communities of the Philippines to deliver first response when disasters strike.

With regards to monitoring and evaluation, each project will also be developing an M&E Framework that will aim to not only measure project outcomes but also measure the innovation process itself. As such, indicators around prototyping and stakeholder engagement are being used to demonstrate how the approach is implemented and support the telling of the innovation story throughout each of these projects.

Moving forward, we will continue to support the three finalists to implement their ideas, measure their impact, and help them plan to scale. This is the first time that Cuso International is implementing an innovative approach to our programming and it is expected that this will assist the organization in refining our approach, demonstrate our ability to innovate, and provide us with fundamental experience and knowledge around innovation that can be utilized to leverage future funding and position ourselves as key actors in the innovation sphere within Canada.

Case Study 2: Tripadvisor support for the work of Mercy Corps¹⁹

Dear

Thanks to travellers like you, the TripAdvisor community raised more than \$500,000 for refugee crisis relief last December. Today I'm reaching out again because we have another opportunity to make a major impact.

Right now, **65 million refugees – more than half of whom are children – are on a daunting journey.** Forced to leave home, they're searching for safety and shelter, facing greater challenges every day.

TripAdvisor is built on the idea of travellers around the world helping one another. Although refugees aren't traveling by choice, they're part of that global community – and **right now, they need our help.**

Join us as we partner with Mercy Corps, a leading global organisation providing refugees with food, shelter, clean water and more, while helping them regain safety and dignity. **The TripAdvisor Charitable Foundation will match the first \$125,000 in donations** – so if you act now, your support will go twice as far.

Thank you for your continued generosity. We know that no single group or organisation can tackle this crisis alone – but by working together, we can help create a better future.

Sincerely,

Steve Kaufer
CEO and Co-founder

¹⁹ This communication was sent out by Tripadvisor to their email list in April 2017. It illustrates innovative approaches to generating funding to resource existing programs.

Case Study 3: On repositioning and innovative responses: Lattitude Global Volunteering²⁰

Lattitude Global Volunteering, which is primarily a youth based volunteering NGO based in the UK but working worldwide, had developed its programme in Ghana based on the UK International Citizen Service contract. This programme operated with UK youth volunteers alongside volunteers from Ghana and working with local partner organisations.

When, in early 2016, the Lattitude ICS programme in Ghana ended, the organisation faced a challenge as to how to sustain its work. One starting point was through the local ICS volunteers who formed themselves into a locally registered youth Community-based organisation. In parallel, Lattitude secured some funding from trusts who would support youth work to enable international short term volunteering inputs, and worked with a self-funding model to provide longer term volunteers. Lattitude has essentially repositioned its programme and business model, reducing exposure to risk and enhancing programme sustainability.

The outcome has been to move from a model of financial dependence on a single source, with significant accountability and procedure issues to the contractor, to one where the programme content is more driven by local partners and the youth CBO. Within this, international volunteering sourced by self-funding and youth trusts provide different inputs. Financial and volunteer resourcing has been diversified and the risk of losing a single source of resourcing reduced.

It also offers a different meaning of demonstrating contribution to the SDGs, since there is enhanced downward accountability in this model, where the experiences of the volunteers and local partners in terms of the relevance of the work are critical. This gives a different balance on SDG contribution, focusing towards the relevance to local partners and volunteers rather than the requirements of upward accountability.

The key success factors according to Lattitude concern the commitment of the ICS alumni in Ghana and the willingness of the lead country staff to look for innovative solutions. It is also worth noting that the necessary conditions – the immediacy of the end of the ICS contract – were relevant in focusing on how things could change.

²⁰ Thanks to Jo Smithson, CEO of Lattitude Global Volunteering, for sharing the information on this case study.

Case Study 4: The International Service trailblazer in York²¹

The Global Goals for Sustainable Development will shape the world's approach to growth and sustainable development until 2030 and the UK Government is firmly committed to delivering these goals across the UK.

This programme is focused on the effective delivery of the Global Goals in York, building on existing strategies and plans to maximise impact, value for money and community ownership.

Within this programme, we will work together to assess local authorities' existing strategies, their capabilities for measuring and reporting their progress, and assist them in developing the platform they need to deliver against the SDGs. This will improve local democratic accountability and the meaningful participation of local people – including the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups – in the decision-making process. This programme will be underpinned by a city-wide volunteering strategy supporting the development and embedding of social action in communities.

There are four key areas we are focused on developing with local partners including City of York Council, York City of Human Rights Network, NHS, York CVS, YorkCares (local business network). These are:

What do the Global Goals mean for York?



The programme localises the goals and translates them into something meaningful and relevant to York. It is underpinned by a volunteering strategy which brings together existing volunteering and community action into something cohesive and consistent in quality and is focused on overcoming local challenges and developing local solutions.

²¹ Thanks to Jo Baker of International Service for this exposition.

It is in the early stages, but has great traction locally and interest from other UK cities and cities in Europe.

We are working to ensure the model, tools and learning are transferable and adaptable so this work can be upscaled in other places across the world:

We now have a Business Development team which is focused on innovations and foresight thinking – in other words making sure we are fit for the future! The Manager of this team is leading on this. We plan for this work to become self-funding in the mid to longer term.

It is a small % of our work and something we plan to develop and then use in other countries to support SDG implementation at local level.

The Global Goals are of course relevant to all our work and form the framework under which we all now operate globally – so this enhances our core work, creates new partnerships and opportunities, and helps us to share our learning on sustainable development approaches and volunteering at home in the UK.

Case Study 5: Innovation from the world of Water and Sanitation²²

Urban migration is leading to a crisis in cities in developing countries, where millions of people lack access to the most basic of services. Already, nearly 900 million urban residents have no choice but to live in low-income communities – poorly built, often illegal settlements which usually lack even the most basic services like water and sanitation.

Since cities will be the future habitat for many in developing countries, it is critical to invest in basic services and infrastructure. This is the reason why Water & Sanitation for the Urban Poor ([WSUP](#)) was set up in 2005.

WSUP works to transform cities to benefit the millions who lack access to water and sanitation. This is a space where governments either won't commit investment, or do not want to legitimise slum and peri-urban communities. Equally, commercial organisations won't take on the risk to develop new business models, and NGOs are either too small or lack the power to bring an integrated solution into being.

The solution

WSUP set up a membership organisation pulling together different parties from the corporate world (Unilever, Thames Water, Mott MacDonald, Borealis and Brouge) with NGOs (Care International, WaterAid, and formerly WWF) and an academic partner (Cranfield University) to develop scalable and replicable models. They also vitally have real reach into governments and communities.

They focused first on water, where WSUP set up water systems in Africa, which both improved services and reduced the cost of water delivery. They did this using grants. They then proved the financial model to local authorities, and demonstrated that the communities would make a commercial and profitable payment for water; what was actually needed was investment, which the local authorities had statutory funds for. This unlocked the problem and local authorities developed and built water infrastructure.

WSUP then focused on developing capacity in local water companies and government departments to help build their business models and capacity for the poorest. They become excellent at knowledge distribution and measuring the impact and change they delivered, not just in terms of money but also in terms of social value. They also flew other government departments to their projects to help develop knowledge transfer and learning.

²² This case study is provided by Mark Salway.

Since 2005, the charity has delivered the following direct impacts: 2.52m people with improved water services, 1.29m people with improved sanitation services, and 6.59m people with improved hygiene practices. It is held up as both innovative and truly delivering scale and its CEO was awarded a Skoll Foundation prize in 2014.

WSUP is now focusing its efforts in four areas:

- a charity to deliver water pipes in the ground and improved sanitation models and learning from this
- an influencing charity to help develop change within government departments and develop sustainable solutions for the poorest
- an incubator business to develop new water and sanitation companies
- a consultancy to generate revenue to pay for other services (and to be impactful)

IVCO members might want to consider the journey of innovation that WSUP went on, disrupting existing provision of water and sanitation services, and producing new business models for the poorest.

IVCOs may also want to reflect on the development of more commercial services to underpin charitable models, and finally the broadest use of collaboration and partnerships to achieve non-profit aims and objectives.

Case Study 6: Lendwithcare²³

Lendwithcare is a microfinance lending website from the development charity CARE International. Launched in September 2010, it allows individuals and groups in the Global North to make small loans to entrepreneurs in developing countries, and help them work their way out of poverty. It supports entrepreneurs across the world and in countries such as Ecuador, Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), Togo and Zimbabwe through partner microfinance institutions (MFIs).

If the MFI is happy with an entrepreneur's idea or business plan, they approve the proposal and provide the initial loan requested. They also help the entrepreneur construct their profile for the lendwithcare.org website.

Entrepreneurs borrow money from the MFIs and in return receive capacity building support and the ability to grow their business idea. They pay their capital back to the MFI, who in turn returns the loan to the lender.

Lendwithcare was established as a powerful way of not only ensuring capital reaches the most needy, but also that lenders in the UK get to understand the stories and business dreams of the people they are supporting.

On 10 June 2016, Lendwithcare exceeded £10 million lent to poor entrepreneurs around the world. It had reached 30,678 lenders and 37,260 entrepreneurs in under six years.

Lenders can browse the list of entrepreneurs on the website, read about their businesses, see the value of the loan they have requested, the percentage of the loan already provided by other lenders, and then choose an entrepreneur to lend to. It uses a website based platform to innovate.

The use of crowdfunding platforms and peer-to-peer lending is growing, as is community funding. Equally, initiatives such as the **Grow Movement** are allowing volunteers from the Global North to support small businesses with mentoring services in the Global South.

IVCOs may want to reflect on the innovative use of technology in both models here, and the global pattern towards innovation to bring communities together to help each other.

²³ This case study is provided by Mark Salway.