Canada World Youth Impact Assessment
Executive Summary

December 2006
Acronyms

CCD  Community Development Department – Ministry of Interior, Thailand
CCI  Canadian Crossroads International
CIDA  Canadian International Development Agency
CWY  Canada World Youth
EAD  Educational Activity Day
IDRC  International Development Research Center
ISP  Institute of Higher Education – Ministry of Education, Cuba
ICT  Information and Communication Technologies
MINED  Ministry of Education of the Republic of Cuba
NGO  Non-Governmental Organization
NUOA  National University of Ostroh Academy, Ukraine
SAS²  Social Analysis Systems
SHE  South House Exchange
YEP  Youth Exchange Program (former name of CWY’s core program)
This year Canada World Youth took the time to step back and carry out an impact assessment of the program during what was already a very busy year. Although the project involved a great deal of work, it was also inspiring; it isn’t every day that we put such effort into reflecting upon the benefits of our programs! But it was clearly something that needed to be done so that we could gain a deeper understanding of what participants learn during the program and what they get out of it several years afterwards. This assessment also allowed us to better understand the ways in which the program contributes to building a more just, harmonious, and sustainable world. Testimonials given by past participants and host community members from Canada, Benin, Thailand, Ukraine, and Cuba describe the program as a remarkable personal and collective experience. Clearly, CWY transforms people’s lives in a positive way.

This study was conducted in close collaboration with South House Exchange (SHE) and CWY’s overseas partners, without whom it would not have been such a success. It was an ambitious study, covering five countries and involving more than 400 people. Special thanks are due to Kate McLaren and Paul Turcot from SHE as well as to all the team of professionals for their support and expertise. This evaluation has not only taught us more about our own organization, it has also allowed us to become familiar with SAS² (Social Analysis Systems) techniques. The approach used was an innovative one, with a focus on critical assessment and reflection. For a learning organization such as CWY, SAS² techniques provide stimulating challenges and enriching opportunities.

As well as being the year of the impact assessment, 2006-2007 is a year of transition for the organization. With 35 years under its belt, CWY is reassessing its organizational practices, looking at new ways to provide young people who have specific needs and realities with access to its strong educational programs, and striving to maximize interactions with host communities. Questions raised in this report concerning “active community involvement” are therefore echoes of discussions already underway within the organization. At CWY, it has often been said that the world is our school and host communities our classrooms. There is much to be gained by forging closer relationships with host communities, formal and informal education institutions, and youth groups, and by getting the public more actively involved in our mission.

Thank you once again to all who contributed to the 2006 impact assessment. We hope you enjoy the report.

Don Johnston
President
Acknowledgements

Designing and implementing this assessment has been intense and very rewarding. It was clear from the beginning that this evaluation was an opportunity to do something innovative and fully participatory. Each step of the process, from the earliest concept to the final details of the report, has been a collaboration between South House Exchange and Canada World Youth.

The four partner institutions in Benin, Cuba, Thailand, and Ukraine have invested staff time and physical resources to support the process. Partner representatives participated in the design workshop in March 2006, hosted and facilitated the workshops in their countries, consolidated the workshop data, and validated country findings. Many thanks for their contribution to: Sourou Philippe Agbomenou (Benin), Ada Amelia Acosta (Cuba), Siriporn Ratana (Thailand), and Eduard Balashov (Ukraine); and to the other team members in each country for their contributions.

CWY staff have been most generous with their time, resources, technical expertise and support at all stages of this project. They managed the Canadian portion of the evaluation, organized the pilot workshop in February 2006, the design workshop, the Canadian evaluation workshops in May and June, and the final stakeholder workshop in November in Montreal. They shared fully in preparation of materials, including the Evaluation Facilitators’ Manual. Rachel Benoit wrote the Canadian Evaluation Report. Much appreciation for their coordination, facilitation and participation throughout: Julie Rocheleau, Rachel Benoit and Diane Trahan.

The external evaluation team brought together years of experience with evaluation, participatory processes, international volunteer programming, program management, international development, and a commitment to innovation. Thanks to Helen Patterson for her work in Benin and overall contribution and support, to Daniel Buckles, a SAS2 associate, for design ideas, and to Marielle Gallant for documents analysis. Special thanks to Jacques Chevalier and the extraordinary SAS² techniques he has been developing and testing around the world. His generosity in bringing his expertise to this project has helped to create a core of CWY staff and partners who are trained to use some of these exceptional diagnostic techniques.

For South House Exchange

Kate McLaren and Paul Turcot
CWY has played a formative role in the lives of youth and communities for 35 years, and has continuously adapted its youth programming to the needs of participants and community partners. In 1993, CWY undertook a major assessment of the impact of CWY exchange programs on participants and host community members, in conjunction with Canadian Crossroads International (CCI). The current impact assessment of CWY’s core program (previously called the Youth Exchange Program, or YEP) is the first major study since 1993.

The purpose of this assessment is to:

- Measure the impact of CWY’s core program, not only on its participants, but also on society at large;
- Produce an impact assessment report that can be shared with funders and other stakeholders: educational institutions, potential participants and their networks—i.e. families, friends, etc.—current and potential exchange country partners, other volunteer-sending NGOs and, possibly, Canadian taxpayers as a whole;
- Make the results of the impact assessment available in a format that will help the organization with future programming decisions.

The 1993 study focused mainly on the program’s impact on participants in all youth programming. This time, CWY is measuring the degree to which participants in the core program become involved citizens after the program and assessing the types of choices they make. Enabling higher levels of community engagement is central to CWY’s vision of a world of active, engaged global citizens. The assessment aims to display how and to what degree the organization is pursuing its mission and meeting its organizational goals:

- To foster the acquisition of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary for active community involvement;
- To create a network of people of different backgrounds and cultures;
- To establish partnerships with countries, organizations, communities, groups, and individuals that will serve as a basis for effective action.

The 2006 evaluation has assessed the main impacts of the program on past participants and host community members from 1993 to 2003. It has provided more detailed information on the program’s impact on past participants’ knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and personal gains, and the impact of the experience on the nature and extent of their current civic and community engagement.
Participating Country Programs

In the 2006-2007 programming year, 1,300 young people were involved in 99 programs in Canada and 27 countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. Each year, as many as 50 communities in Canada, and just as many in countries around the world, host CWY programs and participants. Four countries were selected as the sample for this assessment (Benin, Cuba, Thailand, and Ukraine) as well as three regions in Canada where CWY supervises programs Québec (Montréal), Ontario (Toronto, Ottawa) and Alberta (Edmonton). In each country there were well established institutional partnerships with government departments or universities, and staff available to support the evaluation.

Methodology

The primary approach was one of participatory action research using the quantitative and qualitative tools of “Social Analysis Systems” (SAS²). These techniques are compatible with the core principles of CWY: namely, participation, collaboration, experiential learning and shared ownership of results. The impact assessment was an opportunity to introduce SAS² techniques to CWY staff and partners, and to train CWY and partner facilitators in their use. Thus the impact assessment has combined both participatory action research and capacity-building. For more information on the philosophy, background and application of SAS² techniques go to www.sas-pm.com.

The design of this evaluation revolved around the development of a series of five SAS² techniques for use in workshops with past participants and host community members in each country. The techniques were based on the information that CWY collected in previous research, as well as in its current surveys and questionnaires, and were designed to create opportunities for workshop participants to contribute their own list of impacts, variables for measurement, and interpretation of results. In addition to the impact assessment workshops, the external evaluation team conducted semi-structured interviews with representatives of each institutional partner in the four exchange countries.

Process in 2006

- Pilot workshop with five past participants from Ottawa, Gatineau and Montreal to test the first version of the techniques (February 2006)
- Design and training workshop with one representative from each overseas partner institution and from each of the three CWY regions in Canada (March)
- 17 workshops with past participants and 7 workshops with host community members (April – June)
- Interviews with partner institution representatives (April – June)
- Supplementary online survey of Canadian past participants (July)
- Wrap-up workshop with cross-section of Canadian-based CWY stakeholders, to deepen the analysis and interpretation of key results (mid-November)
- Five full country reports (August–October), and Synthesis Report (November–December)
The evaluation was developed and implemented by a joint internal – external evaluation team, comprised of two CWY staff from the Research and Programming department and four external evaluators affiliated with a consulting firm based in Ottawa/Gatineau: South House Exchange. One of the external evaluators, Jacques Chevalier, is the founder and primary developer of the SAS2 techniques, and the coordinator of SAS2 international programs based at Carleton University.

Evaluate Participants

The evaluation involved a total of 391 people in workshops in all five countries. Of this number, 290 were past participants, with 64 from Canada. There were an additional 187 Canadians who responded to an online survey conducted by the Research and Programming department of CWY. A total of 101 community members from the five countries participated in host community workshops. The participation rates for exchange country past participants ranged from 60% of all participants in Benin, to approximately 25% of all participants in Thailand and Ukraine. Canadian participation rates were much lower given that the number of Canadians involved between 1993 and 2003 was over 5,000.

The past participants who took part in the evaluation were fairly representative of their country programs with respect to gender balance and rural/urban balance. There were one or more representatives from every year under review in all countries although the proportion of representation from each year did not necessarily correspond to the total numbers per year. The majority of exchange country past participants are employed full-time, or self-employed, although the percentage varies greatly from country to country, reflecting a variety of different social, political, and economic contexts. One-third of Canadians in the evaluation workshops are full-time students, with slightly more being employed full-time. Close to half of the evaluation participants are employed in occupations that are generally considered to be part of the social or public sector. Over three-quarters have some kind of cross-cultural component to their occupation and are involved in their communities either through work or as volunteers.
Summary of Findings

The evaluation was designed to collaboratively assess the extent to which CWY’s mission and organizational goals are being achieved. It indicates that CWY’s core program is achieving its three organizational goals with considerable success. The most important impacts for all evaluation participants -- both host community members and past participants -- are emotive (in particular, impacts on values and attitudes) and cognitive (impacts on skills and on knowledge). There were somewhat lower impacts in the behavioural domain (career/studies and local or global action).

Interviews with CWY institutional partners overseas (government departments and universities) suggest that CWY has developed effective and long-term institutional partnerships in each of the four exchange countries under review, and that the program contributes to meeting institutional goals related to youth.

Impact on Past Participants

CWY has developed an integral learning philosophy based on what might be called the “four pillars” of learning: learning to be, learning to know, learning to do, and learning to live together effectively.⁠¹ The exchange program has learning objectives and outcomes in each of these domains, described in the assessment as emotive, cognitive, and behavioural.

¹Canadian Council on Learning, composite learning index, http://www.ccl-cca.ca. “Integral” refers to an integral approach that means "dealing with the body, mind, heart, and soul" at all scales (individual, group, national, global), and for conscious and unconscious dimensions of being. See http://www.itp-life.com/ and work by Ken Wilber among others.

Emotive:
Impact on values and attitudes (the heart in the “P’tit Bonhomme” diagram at the right); and on interpersonal relationships (the right arm).

Cognitive:
Impact on knowledge (head) and skills (left arm: communication, organizational, learning, technical).

Behavioural:
Impact on career and study choices (right leg), and on local/global action (civic and community engagement: left leg).
Main Impacts:
Participants were asked to identify the two most important impacts of the exchange program. The most important impacts for the highest number of past participants were on their values and attitudes—such as open-mindedness, responsibility, and equality (selected 26% of the time). Second was impact on knowledge/learning (23% of selections), including both self-knowledge and knowledge of another country. Skills ranked third on average (16%), with interpersonal relationships fourth (13%), followed by the two behavioural categories: impact on career/studies (13%) and local/global action (10%). Exceptions were Thailand and Canada where impact on career or on studies ranked second. Older cohorts (those who joined the program between 1993 and 1999) in Canada, Cuba, and Ukraine are more likely to select impacts on interpersonal relationships than are the younger cohorts.

Effect of program components:
The success of the program in reinforcing attitudes of openness, cross-cultural communication, and respect was confirmed by the ranking that participants gave to particular program components that support these attitudes, in particular group activities, host families, and educational activities. These three components were more likely to affect the main impacts than were other program components such as the counterpart (4th), the host community (5th), or the work placement (6th). There were several country exceptions: In Canada, the host community was first, while group activities placed sixth. In Ukraine, work placement ranked first.

Impact on knowledge and skills:
Among the four skill areas, the evaluation participants consistently rated communication and organizational skills as being more important with overall average ratings of 4.2 and 4.1 out of 5.0. The least likely to be considered important were technical skills, with an average rating of 3.3 out of 5.0. Communication and organizational skills are universally important social skills that are valued in both interpersonal and professional relationships. They are highly compatible with the aspects of personal development that participants also valued more highly, and they are skills (or capacities) that strengthen effective community engagement. The impact on knowledge (about topics such as sustainable development or the history and culture of another country) came fourth in an exercise to rate knowledge and skills. In Canada, however, knowledge came second.

Number of people identifying impact on job gains:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>3 out of 61 participants</td>
<td>(5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>10 out of 64 participants</td>
<td>(16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>10 out of 28</td>
<td>(36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>27 out of 62</td>
<td>(43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>33 out of 75</td>
<td>(44%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"I gave a score of 5 as the degree to which my values were changed because my experience with the CWY program made me appreciate the differences in cultures. This led to a different way of thinking about myself and others and to a different attitude. I am now better able to accept others’ differences. It has also led to a better appreciation, pride and love of my own locality."

- Thai participant
  (evaluator’s translation)
Impact on values and attitudes:
The average score for the impact on past participants’ values was 4.0 or above out of 5.0 in all countries except for Canada (3.9 out of 5.0). The highest average rating was Cuba at 4.8. Personal values, (i.e., those oriented to personal behaviour and moral standards) were chosen more often as being most important, as opposed to more “socio-political” or universal values such as gender equality, social justice, or national pride. The value mentioned most often was tolerance or open-mindedness (25% of selections for the top two values). In general, the emotive impacts were in the sphere of “personal growth” rather than on interpersonal relationships and networking.

Impact on personal gains:
The impact on personal gains scored almost equally to the impact on values, at 4.0 or above, in all countries. Canada had the lowest average rating at 4.0 and Cuba the highest at 4.6. The most important gains tended to be those connected with personal growth (54% of the top two most important gains) in areas such as self-confidence, insight, independence, and knowledge (including “studies” for Canadians). Gains in the area of occupation/jobs, skills, and social status (job advancement, team/leadership and organizational skills, another language) were selected slightly less often (47%). There were significant differences among countries, however. For example, Canadians selected personal growth gains more often than skills/occupation/status gains (69% versus 31%). The exact opposite was the case for Thailand, Ukraine, and Benin where a clear majority of participant selections were in the skills/occupation and status category. This can be explained by the fact that a higher portion of the Canadians are full-time or part-time students (33%). The gains in communication and organizational skills, combined with gains in self-confidence, have had a compounding effect on the professional and educational choices and prospects of many past participants.

Impact on civic and community engagement:
For all countries, the impact of the program on past participants’ involvement was moderate to important, with ratings from a low of 2.9 (Canada) to a high of 4.6 (Benin). CWY participants believe very strongly in the importance of civic and community engagement, rating various social service, volunteer, public awareness, and civic activities at an average of 4.4 out of 5.0. Where the impact of the program is lower, as in Canada, there are other factors that affect participation, since 83% of the Canadian participants stated that they are involved in some kind of community activity through their studies or work, or as volunteers. It is also likely that many participants are involved in their communities before they join the exchange, and that institutional partners select them partly for this reason; similarly this may also be why participants are interested in the program. There is also a strong correlation between the impact of CWY and the amount of time participants spend on these activities. The least common activities are those related to global cooperation and global awareness. Many participants in all countries attested to the impact of the experience in Canada in raising their awareness of environmental issues. Of all countries, the Canadians spend the least amount of time in community activities, despite the high importance they accorded them. Beninese spend the most time, with Cubans a close second.

“It is a matter of how the participants integrate, establish emotional relations with the workers, students, families, with joy and the enthusiasm that you get when becoming aware of the importance that this program will have in their lives.”

- Cuban host family member
  (evaluator’s translation)
Impact on Host Communities

Experience with the CWY program has had a profound impact on the host community members involved in the evaluation, with an average impact rating for all countries of 4.4 out of 5.0. The top impacts, as with past participants, were emotive and cognitive, but in this case, interpersonal relationships came first, with values and attitudes a close second, tied with knowledge of another country. Host family members tended to select emotive impacts, and work placement supervisors selected cognitive impacts on skills or knowledge. The least selected “most important impacts” were local/global action.

The views of host community members help to fill out the picture of community impact arising from CWY’s core program as it is currently conceived. Firstly, the program is reported to have an impact on community members that lasts beyond the three months of the programming phase. However, the findings also point to some critical limitations to the current approach, and raise some provocative questions about how CWY might channel and maximize the community impacts during exchanges and after they are over.

- Is the CWY goal of “active community involvement” being addressed as forcefully and strategically as possible? What community and social development rationale might be used to frame a community engagement strategy? How might this affect the selection of host communities and community partners?

- Are there ways to further strengthen programming components, especially work placements, host communities, and specialized (technical) skills, in order to enhance the impact in the area of community engagement?

- What has to change for the personal learning goals (being, knowing, doing and living together) to be fully integrated with the goal of community and social development?

- How might CWY partnerships be used to leverage community impacts? How might partners work with CWY to support networks of youth involved in community action beyond the six-month exchange?
Analysis of high-impact areas might suggest a continuation of the status quo. Analysis of lower impact areas, however, encourages a change in programming strategies. Participants generally reported lower impacts of the program on:

- their “behavior” (i.e., how the program affects their career/studies, local/global action/civic engagement) as compared to “cognitive” (knowledge) and “emotive” impacts (values/attitudes);
- friendship and networking (interpersonal relationships);
- “socio-political” values as opposed to their “personal/interpersonal” values;
- gains in occupation, skills, and social status as opposed to gains in personal growth;
- “technical skills” as opposed to communication and organization skills.

In all of the exercises that measured the impact of the exchange program in specific areas, the Canadian participants rated the impact below that of other country participants, although the impacts were still moderate or higher. The relatively greater impact of the program on exchange country participants could be due, in part, to the important role of the overseas partners in selecting participants, host communities, and community partners to fit within their larger development agenda. Each institutional partner works in a given sector (education, culture and recreation, etc.), and implements a long-term program. The CWY partners interviewed for the evaluation all indicated that the program helps them to meet their own institutional goals and to identify and support youth community leaders. The youth leaders, in turn, have multiple impacts on the well-being and development of their own communities. This larger sense of social purpose is clearly an important motivation for CWY exchange country participants and partner organizations.

This idea suggests a subtle shift in strategy that has some practical implications. Greater weight might be given to the development agendas of partner institutions and community-based organizations, with work placements, and indeed host community members more broadly, playing a greater role in achieving both the educational and the broader community goals of CWY.
Conclusion

It is very clear from the impact assessment that CWY’s core program is changing the lives of its participants around the world and of the host community members who are most closely associated with the program. In many cases the experience is transformational, affecting core values, attitudes, understanding, capacities and choices for future work, studies, and social involvement. The assessment thus shows that CWY is achieving its first organizational goal: “to foster the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary for active community involvement.” The goal assumes that community-based learning enables future active involvement. And this is borne out for a majority of the evaluation participants, especially overseas. It is less clear how well CWY is achieving its second goal of “creating a network of people from different backgrounds and cultures ...” since “friendships and networking” were not as often identified as a main impact for past participants involved in the evaluation. With respect to the third organizational goal of establishing “effective partnerships as a basis for effective action,” it is clear that CWY has established such partnerships in Benin, Cuba, Thailand, and Ukraine. However, there are no equivalent intermediate institutional partners for the core program in Canada. The impact assessment has found that the impact of the program on “effective action” is perceived to be less important by past participants and host community members. In particular, the impact of CWY exchange programs on the community engagement of Canadian past participants is less than the impact on exchange country participants. Thus, the third organizational goal seems to be only partially achieved. This is hard to assess, however, because of the lack of clarity or specificity about community impact objectives during and after the programs.

These findings, in their totality, provide an opportunity to celebrate success and to embrace a strategic review of the intersection between CWY’s learning objectives and its less well articulated social impact expectations.
Recommendations of the external evaluation team

The external evaluators have analyzed the findings of the impact assessment and put forward a number of observations, provocative questions, and conclusions. The following recommendations summarize the general thrust of our conclusions, namely that:

- CWY grounds its individual learning objectives for past participants in a more intentional community-based strategy that includes consideration of the longer-term impact on host community members and community partners overseas and in Canada;

- CWY seeks to bolster positive impacts on participants’ occupational outcomes by considering the value of relevant technical or professional skills, in addition to communication, learning, and organizational skills, and by reviewing the role of the work placement component of the program;

- CWY complements its ongoing impact surveys of participants with periodic, participatory, culturally sensitive workshops to reflect on their programming goals, strategies, and results. Ideally this would further build on CWY’s capacity to facilitate developmental evaluation and social impact analysis using some of the SAS² techniques employed by this evaluation.