



Australia Awards

Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility

Alumni Case Study—
outcomes and impact of
globally mobile alumni

December 2020



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Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ALA	Australian Leadership Awards
ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
COVID-19	2019 Novel Coronavirus
CQIRP	Central Queensland Innovation and Research Precinct
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DAA	Diaspora Action Australia
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
GAFSP	Global Agriculture and Food Security Program
GCF	Global Climate Fund
GBP	British Pound Sterling
GP	General Practitioner (Doctor)
EMEA	Europe Middle East and Africa
EY	Ernst and Young
IFC	International Finance Corporation

IOM	International Organisation for Migration
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MIT	Master of Information Technology
MPDF	Mekong Project Development Facility
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PASS	Peer Assisted Study Success
PNG	Papua New Guinea
SCB	Scholarships and Alumni Branch (DFAT)
STEM	Science Technology Engineering Mathematics
UoM	University of Melbourne
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USD	United States Dollar
USP	University of the South Pacific
UTS	University of Technology Sydney

Executive Summary

This case study by the Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility (GTF) explores the contributions and outcomes of alumni of Australian development scholarships who move away from their home countries after completing their award. Analysis of 10 in-depth interviews and over 400 survey responses from mobile alumni are used to explore the journeys, connections and contributions of alumni who have moved from their country of origin. These ‘mobile alumni’ comprise a small minority of all alumni of Australian development scholarships. However, beyond anecdotal evidence, relatively little is known about this group—particularly in relation to the extent they are able to continue to contribute to the long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards.

Understanding pathways and motivations

Numerous case studies conducted by the GTF over the past five years have shown that alumni of the Australia Awards and other Australian development scholarships are highly qualified and motivated individuals who are often successful leaders in their fields. As such, their skills and experiences are widely sought after by employers across the globe. For some alumni, about seven per cent according to GTF surveys, leaving their country of origin.

Based on research using GTF Global Surveys, it is estimated that about seven per cent of alumni of development scholarships or fellowships from Australia eventually move from their country of origin. This report explores this group, showing that alumni move countries after their award for a range of reasons. The journeys of the alumni interviewed here shed light on not only the motivations and choices alumni have made, but also on the lack of choice in some situations that have resulted in them living away from their home country. Based on this research, the impetus for alumni to move is categorised into three overarching themes:

- moving for work
- moving because of political disruption
- moving for family.

Other important findings of this case study are outlined here based on the four long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards.

Outcome 1: ‘Alumni are using their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to sustainable development’

Alumni in this case study have used the skills and knowledge developed in Australia to make contributions in their country of origin, in their new country of residence and across a range of other countries and regions through their work.

Contributions in country of origin detailed in this report include:

- development of training and mentoring projects to improve local skills and leadership capacity in areas including finance, journalism, medicine and migration law
- policy impact through large scale initiatives relating to food security, people trafficking and recognition of the needs of marginalised groups.

Contributions alumni are making in other countries identified through the interviews in this report include:

- influencing policies relating to climate change, risk management, cyber security, migrant labour, and food security and regulation
- positive impacts through work in hospitals, scientific research, civil engineering projects, financial management and journalism

For alumni in this case study, Australia Awards long-term Outcome 1—contributions to development—is being achieved.

Outcomes 2 & 3: ‘Alumni are contributing to cooperation and partnerships between Australia and partner countries’

Alumni developed strong professional and personal relationships while on award in Australia. These included:

- **professional relationships**—many alumni were able to build ongoing professional connections while on award through internships, mentoring, conferences and seminars
- **academic friendships**—all alumni developed ongoing friendships with academic staff, international and local students they met while on award
- **community links**—many alumni remain connected with members of the Australian community through links facilitated through host families, religious and cultural groups (local diaspora)
- **Australia Awards engagement and networks**—alumni remain connected with Australia through formal and informal alumni groups and activities post award.

For alumni in this case study, Australia Awards Long-term Outcome 2—cooperation with Australia—and Outcome 3—partnerships with Australia—are being **achieved**.

Outcome 4: ‘Alumni view Australia, Australians, and Australian expertise positively’

Alumni in this case study hold enduring, positive views of Australia. Key elements in the building of these positive views are:

- **high regard by employers for Australian qualifications** leading to increased opportunities at home and internationally
- **satisfaction with the high standard of teaching and learning**
- insight into **cultural diversity** and inclusion while living in Australia which has improved intercultural competencies and the ability to adapt to new environments.

Of the 10 alumni interviewed, six alumni have made Australia their permanent home and feel part of the Australia’s rich multicultural identity. Overall, for the alumni in this case study, Australia Awards long-term Outcome 4—positive views of Australia—is being **achieved**.

The findings provided in this research is important because they helps to illustrate that Australia Awards alumni who no longer live in their country of origin have made, and continue to make strong contributions towards the achievement of the long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards. This report therefore helps in dispelling any myths that those who move from their country after their award are no longer able to achieve the aims of their scholarships, and highlights the utility in maintaining engagement with these alumni in order to further their ability to contribute to sustainable development and connect their countries or origin with Australia.



Australia Awards

Global Tracer Facility



Mobile Alumni: Australia Awards Alumni Abroad

Alumni of the Australia Awards who are no longer living in their country of origin – ‘mobile alumni’ – have contributed to development across the world. Their contributions have been made in their country of origin and in the countries where they now live.

Contributions to country of origin



Development of training and mentoring



Policy impact through large scale initiatives

Contributions globally



Policy development and change



Impact through work in a range of fields.

Australia Awards outcomes

Alumni provided strong examples of development contributions



“Some of the policies that I advocated were made into policy. In Saudi Arabia now, they set up a national task force on counter trafficking...and I was proud to be part of that process.”



Alumni are contributing to cooperation and partnerships with Australia



“I cemented my close relationship with the Lowy Institute. If they have any questions on Samoa, or if my reporters at the Observer need expert analysis on the economy, I just connect them to my colleagues at the Lowy Institute.”



Alumni view Australia and Australian expertise positively



“We’ve been exposed to so many cultures, so many ways of doing the same thing that we have a broader understanding of the world, and we’re very non-judgemental. So, having the chance to live in Australia has made us more aware that there’s no rigid right or wrong in the way we do things. It’s been good.”

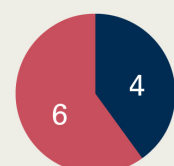


Participants



This case study involved interviews with 'mobile alumni' – that is those alumni who, since completing their scholarship, have moved from their country of origin to another country for work. Of the ten alumni interviewed, six now live in Australia, and four live in another country.

Case study participants:



■ female alumni
■ male alumni

1. Introduction

This case study by the Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility (GTF) explores the journeys, connections and contributions of alumni of Australian development scholarships who have moved from their country of origin following the completion of their award. These ‘mobile alumni’ comprise a small minority of all alumni of Australian development scholarships. Nonetheless, they are an important group to understand in the context of research into the long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards, not least because it is sometimes assumed that once an alumni has left their country of origin they may no longer be contributing to these long-term outcomes.

The discussion and findings of the factors leading to mobility and contributions to the long-term outcomes in this report are based on interviews with 10 alumni who no longer live in their country of origin, as well as analysis of survey responses of more than 400 mobile alumni. Interviews with alumni for this case study were conducted in October and November 2020.

1.1 Objectives

The focus of the GTF is to collect and analyse information from alumni to assist the Scholarships and Alumni Branch (SCB) of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to better understand the long-term outcomes of Australian development scholarship alumni. As noted above, alumni who are no longer living in their country of origin are a small, but important group. However, beyond anecdotal evidence, relatively little is known about this group—particularly in relation to the extent they are able to achieve the long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards. This study has been undertaken in order to increase the evidence and knowledge about these alumni. Three overarching aims of this case study are:

- a) to articulate the variety of factors that influence the pathways of mobile alumni post-award.
- b) to explore the extent to which mobile alumni are able to continue to make contributions to sustainable development (this is linked to Australia Awards long-term Outcome 1).
- c) to understand the way in which connections and networks developed while on award have been maintained and facilitated contributions of mobile alumni since graduation (this is linked to Australia Awards long-term Outcomes 2 and 3).

In addition to these overarching aims, research by the GTF is intended to provide insight and evidence into the overall objective of Australia Awards: to help ‘partner countries progress their development goals and have positive relationships with Australia that advance mutual interests’, as well as the four long-term outcomes outlined in the *Australia Awards Global Strategy*¹ and *Australia Awards Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework*². These long-term outcomes are:

Outcome 1: Alumni are using their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to sustainable development.

Outcome 2: Alumni are contributing to cooperation between Australia and partner countries.

Outcome 3: Effective, mutually advantageous partnerships between institutions and businesses in Australia and partner countries.

Outcome 4: Alumni view Australia, Australians, and Australian expertise positively.

1.2 Scope

The research of the GTF focuses on alumni of DFAT’s Australia Awards and previous Australian Government-funded scholarships and awards (these include programs dating back to the Colombo Plan, which commence in the 1950s). For each case study undertaken by the GTF, this focus is further refined to a specific cohort of alumni.

This case study focuses on ‘mobile alumni’, that is alumni who for a variety of reasons have moved from their country of origin and are now living and working abroad. The in-depth interviews in this case study involved 10 mobile alumni. Six of these alumni currently live and work in Australia, and four live and work in a third country. Further insight into the characteristics and outcomes of mobile alumni for this report has been included based on analysis of responses to three Global Tracer Surveys undertaken by the GTF between 2016/17 and 2018/19. These surveys collected data from more than 6000 alumni of Australian development scholarships across the globe, including just over 400 mobile alumni.

¹ For further information: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/australia-awards-global-strategy.pdf>

² For further information: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/australia-awards-global-monitoring-evaluation-framework.pdf>

1.3 Alumni interview participants

The 10 alumni whose mobility and alumni experiences are explored in this case study are introduced briefly below. Further detail relating to each of these participants can be found in the 'Alumni profiles' section later in the report.



Ms Aminath Hussain—The Maldives

Australia Awards, Australian Leadership Awards.

Master of Food Science, University of Melbourne.

Regulatory Specialist, Kerry Group, Global Technology and Innovation Centre; Ireland.



Ms Eryn Gayle Echavez-de Leon—The Philippines

Australia Awards, Australian Leadership Awards.

Master of Climate Change, Australian National University.

Associate, Division of Mitigation and Adaption, Green Climate Fund (GCF); South Korea

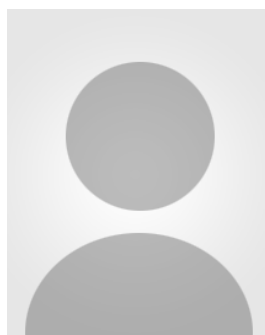


Ms Fitriana (Ana) Nur—Indonesia

Australia Awards, Australian Leadership Awards.

Master of Public Policy and Management, University of Melbourne.

Unit Head of Migration Management of International Organisation for Migration (IOM); Juba, South Sudan.

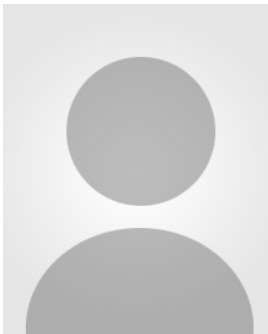


Mr Abhineet Gupta—Fiji

Australian Development Scholarship.

Bachelor of Forensic Biology in Biomedical Science, University of Technology Sydney.

Cybersecurity Consultant, Ernst and Young; Australia.



Alum A—Sub-Sahara Africa*

Australia Awards Scholarship.
Master of Engineering Management.
Civil Engineer; Australia.



**Mr Alexander Rheeney—
Papua New Guinea (PNG)**

Australia Awards, Australian
Leadership Awards.
Master of Crosscultural
Communication, University of Sydney.
Co-editor, Samoa Observer
Newspaper Group; Samoa.



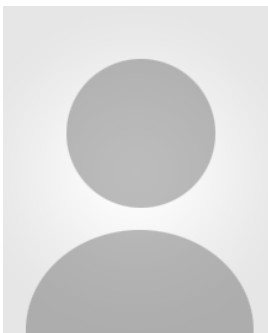
Dr Khoa Ho-Le (Ken)—Vietnam

Colombo Plan Scholarship.
Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering,
Monash University.
Retired (former Research Scientist
at the CSIRO and small business
owner); Australia.



Dr Yadav Sharma Bajagai—Nepal)

Australia Awards, Australian
Leadership Awards.
Master of Animal Studies,
University of Queensland.
Post-doctoral Research Officer,
School of Health, Medical and Applied
Sciences, Central Queensland
Innovation and Research Precinct
(CQIRP); Australia.



Dr Siew-Hoon Cheah—Malaysia

Colombo Plan Scholarship.
Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of
Surgery (MBBS), Monash University.
Retired (former Medical Doctor);
Australia.



Ms Thu Ngo—Vietnam

Australian Development Scholarship.
Master of Applied Finance, University
of Melbourne.
Private Banker—Leading Specialist,
Westpac Banking Corporation;
Australia.

*Details withheld on request of the alumna

2. Mobile Alumni—Pathways and Motivations

Alumni move countries after their award for a range of reasons. Based on the evidence collected in this case study, motivations of alumni for moving country can be categorised into three overarching themes: moving for work; moving because of political disruption; and moving for family reasons.

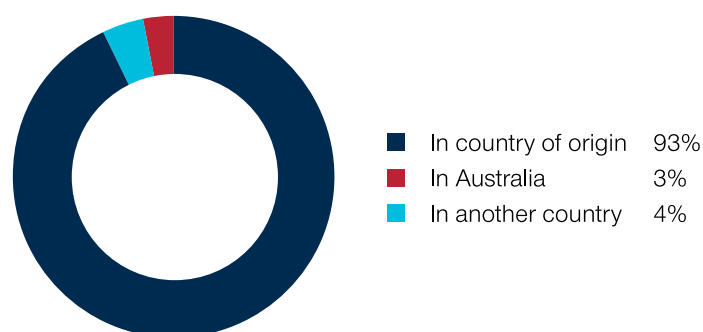
2.1 Introduction

This chapter offers insight into the characteristics and pathways of alumni who are no longer living in their country of origin. It begins with a ‘big picture’ overview of what is known about this group, based on large-scale survey data collection by the GTF. This is followed by more in-depth insight into the journeys of mobile alumni, examined through the responses of the 10 alumni interviewed for this case study.

2.2 The big picture: characteristics of the mobile alumni group

Based on survey responses collected by the GTF between 2016 and 2019, it is estimated that approximately seven per cent of Australian development award alumni do not live in their country of origin (Figure 1). Of this group of mobile alumni, the GTF survey data suggest that about 43 per cent now reside in Australia, and about 57 per cent in a third country (Edwards, Doyle, Haddow & Radloff, 2020).

Figure 1: Residential location of alumni (n=6,365)



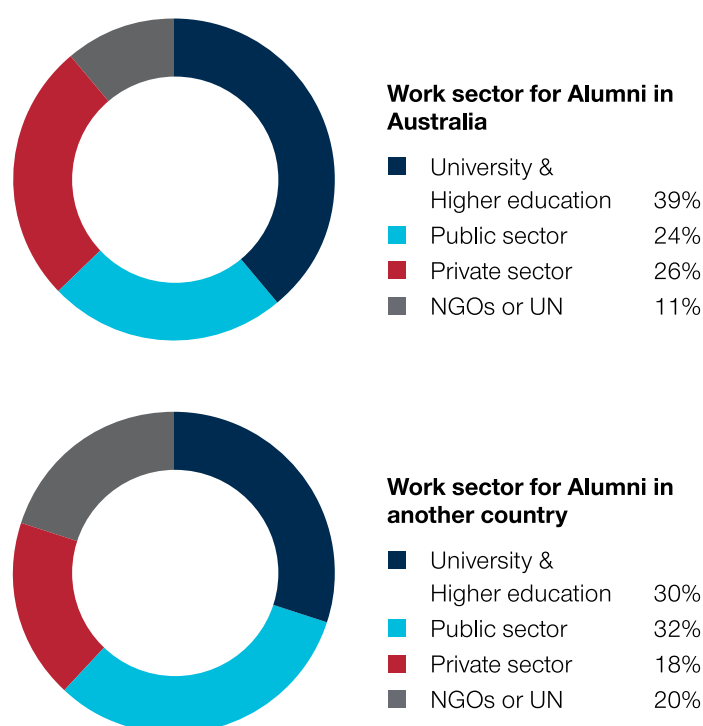
[Source: GTF Global Tracer Surveys 2016/17–2018/19]

The GTF survey data show that neither gender nor the field of education studied on award are predictors of an alumni being mobile; the distribution of both these characteristics is similar among those alumni who have remained in their country of origin and those who have moved to another country. However, there were differences in the likelihood of being mobile by age and region. Mobile alumni make up a larger proportion of alumni aged in their 20s (11 per cent) and in their 30s (8 per cent) than those in older age groups, and overall, more than half of all mobile alumni (58 per cent) are aged in their 30s. By region, alumni originally from Latin America and the Caribbean are more likely to be living in another country (19 per cent) than alumni from other regions, with those from Papua New Guinea being the least likely to live elsewhere (2.6 per cent).

Most mobile alumni are working in their adopted country. The GTF survey data suggest that about 60 per cent of alumni now living in Australia, and three quarters of mobile alumni living in a third country are employed. About one in five of alumni in Australia are studying, while this figure is slightly lower (12 per cent) for those living elsewhere. A small minority of mobile alumni indicated they are not employed and about 2 per cent are retired.

Mobile alumni work across a variety of sectors. Compared with alumni who live in their country of origin, the main difference among the mobile alumni group is that they are less likely to be working in the public sector (see Edwards et al., 2020, p.54). As shown in Figure 2, there are also some differences in the spread across sectors among alumni who now live in Australia and those living in a third country. In particular, alumni in Australia are more likely to be working in the higher education sector or the private sector, while those living in another country are more commonly in a non-government organisation (NGO) or in a public sector position compared with those in Australia. It is worth noting that for the mobile alumni who are working in public sector positions, there are different patterns between those in Australia and those in a third country. The Australian-based alumni in public service positions tend to be in either Australian or state government departments or government authorities (including healthcare), whereas many of those living in another country and working in the public sector occupy diplomatic or trade postings.

Figure 2: Sector of work of employed mobile alumni, by location of residence (n=193)



[Source GTF Global Tracer Surveys, 2017/18 & 2018/19]

Keeping in mind the overall characteristics of the mobile alumni group, in identifying alumni for interviewing in this case study, efforts were made to speak with a broad range of mobile alumni. Particular alumni were chosen to participate with an aim of collecting the in-depth insights of alumni from a broad range

of regions, working in different sectors and fields, to obtain a balance of those now in Australia and those in a third country, and to understand outcomes from both a female and male perspective. Table 1 offers a ‘matrix’ view of the spread and characteristics of the 10 alumni interviewed for this case study.

Table 1: Interviewed alumni—selected characteristics

Region of origin	Current residential location	
	In Australia	In a 3rd Country
South & West Asia	Dr Bajagai Field: Science Origin country: Nepal Gender: Male	Ms Hussain Field: Agriculture Origin country: Maldives Resident country: Ireland Gender: Female
East Asia	Dr Ho-Le Field: Engineering Origin country: Vietnam Gender: Male	Ms Echavez-de Leon Field: Environment Origin country: Philippines Resident country: South Korea Gender: Female
	Ms Ngo Field: Finance Origin country: Vietnam Gender: Female	Ms Nur Field: Public policy Origin country: Indonesia Resident country: South Sudan Gender: Female
	Dr S. Cheah Field: Medicine Origin country: Malaysia Gender: Female	
Africa	Alum A Field: Engineering Origin country: Sub-Saharan Africa Gender: Female	
Pacific/PNG	Mr Gupta Field: Science Origin country: Fiji Gender: Male	Mr Rheeney Field: Journalism Origin country: PNG Resident country: Samoa Gender: Male

2.3 Alumni journeys—understanding mobility

Alumni move countries after their award for a range of reasons. The interviews in this case study help in providing insight into a range of pathways that alumni have followed, their motivations and choices, which have resulted in their mobility. These journeys are the focus of the discussion below.

While recognising that each 'journey' continues beyond the point at which these interviews took place, the structure of the discussion of pathways below is intended to provide a typology of the journeys of these alumni to date. Our typology is ordered into three overarching themes:

- moving for work
- moving because of political disruption
- moving for family.

Each theme has nuances which are illustrated through the examples of the journeys of the 10 alumni who were interviewed for this case study.

2.3.1 Moving for work

Over the past four years the GTF has conducted 20 case studies which have consistently found alumni of the Australia Awards and previous Australian development scholarships are highly qualified and motivated individuals who are often successful leaders in their fields. As such, their skills and experiences are widely sought after, and the qualification gained through their award can make them highly attractive to employers across the globe. In addition, there are sectors that alumni work in which have expectations of high levels of mobility and value international experience, or opportunities for professional development and training are not available locally. For four of the alumni in this case study, these two elements were identified in the 'moving for work' aspect of their mobility.

Sector expects international mobility for career progression

Two of the alumni in this case study work on international issues within the United Nations (UN) and international non-government organisation (NGO) sector. Both alumnae are committed to their sector, and in order to pursue their careers and contribute to their field, have needed to be mobile for work. Put simply, one alum noted: 'in the development field, you have to move around a lot'.

Ms Fitriana Nur, an Indonesian alumna is currently based in Juba, South Sudan, where she is Head of Migration Management at the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM). Working in a field which is fundamentally about the movement of people, Ms Nur herself has had to be mobile to make the contributions she has achieved. Tackling issues related to human trafficking, slavery, labour, migrant rights and internally displaced populations has involved living in or nearby some of the key 'hubs' worldwide for movement of people who are vulnerable to these issues. As such, Ms Nur has worked in Indonesia, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and now South Sudan, pursuing her passion and advocating for the rights of migrant communities.

Ms Nur's career pathway was well underway before her Australian development scholarship, having worked with IOM in response to the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami in Aceh province. Of her career development, Ms Nur reflected 'anything related to migration has been my passion since the day I took the job with IOM'.



Ms Nur and colleagues in Iraq. Ms Nur training staff on a community policing approach in addressing vulnerability of women and girls to gender based violence. Photo: Ms Fitriana Nur

Ms Eryn Gayle Echavez-de Leon, an alumna from the Philippines, works for the Green Climate Fund, based in Songdo, South Korea. A specialist in climate change, Ms Echavez-de Leon completed a Master of Climate Change as part of an Australia Awards scholarship at the Australian National University in 2014. She returned to the Philippines and worked as a climate change consultant for the World Bank, as well as in the British High Commission in Manila on climate-related projects funded by the UK's Prosperity Fund—having a particular role involving financial oversight of projects. However, in 2018, the opportunity to work for the Green Climate Fund in South Korea presented Ms Echavez-de Leon a natural step to take in her career to work with 'the financial vehicle for climate change work. So, if there was a place that I should work in as a climate change graduate, I feel it should be this.' In her position now, Ms Echavez-de Leon is making an impact globally—managing and allocating significant amounts of money towards projects designed to mitigate climate change across various regions and countries including Costa Rica and Indonesia.

Seeking professional opportunities

For two alumni, opportunities to utilise knowledge and skills, or to further develop these are limited in their country of origin, and prospects elsewhere have been important steppingstones in their careers. In the examples below, alumni have moved to Australia to pursue opportunities after living and working in their own countries following completion of their award.

Dr Yadav Sharma Bajagai, currently lives in Rockhampton, working in a post-doctoral position at Central Queensland University. After completing a Master of Animal Studies in 2011 at the University of Queensland under an Australia Awards scholarship, Dr Bajagai returned to Nepal to resume his work in the Ministry of Agriculture. In this role he was responsible for securing significant funding for food security initiatives in Nepal and promoted to the country's Senior Veterinary Officer. Looking for opportunities to further his expertise, Dr Bajagai returned to Australia to pursue a PhD, funded by an Endeavour Scholarship, provided by the Australian Department of Education. His networks and research led to his current post-doctoral work, which commenced in 2018.

Another alum, **Mr Abhineet Gupta**, also found educational and career opportunities led him back to Australia years after he completed his Australian Development Scholarship. With a background as an Indian-Fijian, whose family moved to Fiji when he was a young boy, Mr Gupta had first-hand experience of being globally mobile. Studying a Bachelor of Forensic Biology in Biomedical Science at the University of Technology, Sydney between 2010 and 2012, Mr Gupta returned to Fiji to find demand for his new skills were scarce. Deciding to re-orient his career, Mr Gupta undertook a subsequent Bachelor qualification, this time in Fiji at the University of the South Pacific, where he moved into computer science and engineering fields, and then pursued work in his home country. In 2016 Mr Gupta returned to Australia, enrolling at the University of Melbourne in a Master of Information Technology. He was subsequently offered a graduate position with Ernst & Young—an opportunity that enables him to utilise and further develop his specialist skills in offensive cyber security.

Reflecting on the decision to move countries for work opportunities, Dr Bajagai highlighted the difficulties many alumni face in decisions to move to pursue work, noting the issue of 'brain drain from developing countries among people with high-level international qualifications:

Moving could be a good thing for individuals, because they get a prospect to work in a better place, better organised, but sometimes it might cause a brain drain...But in another sense, I am aware that we are working for the global good, so our contribution in the work we do can be anywhere in the world. In that sense, it's still making a difference.

2.3.2 Moving due to political disruption

There are events and issues beyond the control of alumni that can circumvent plans and leave alumni with little choice in the decision to settle away from what was their home country when they commenced their award. Two of the alumni in this case study were not able to return to their country of birth following their award and subsequently have settled in Australia. One alum in this case study found that changing political circumstances in their home country had a serious impact on the career options available to them and as such, explored opportunities abroad.

Seeking asylum

For **Dr Khoa (Ken) Ho-Le**, a Colombo Plan scholar undertaking a degree in mechanical engineering at Monash University in the mid-1970s, the end of the Vietnam War coincided with his time in Australia:

I was supposed to go back at the end of 1977— that was the plan. But I came from Saigon, South Vietnam, and in 1975 the communists took over, so all the Vietnamese students were stranded in Australia. There was a period of time when we didn't know what would happen to us. It was a time of worry.

Dr Ho-Le and other Vietnamese students in similar situations were eventually able to remain in Australia permanently. Over the four decades since, Dr Ho-Le has completed further studies, worked in the public and private sectors, built his own business, and in the mid-2010s, sold the business and retired. Reflecting on the circumstances that led to him staying in Australia, Dr Ho-Le felt fortunate compared with some of his peers from Saigon who experienced extreme hardship: 'The war, the economic difficulties...[for them] it was hard. I was extremely lucky to get out here. [The Colombo Plan scholarship] was life changing for me and changing for the better.'

Alumna A, from Sub-Saharan Africa, represents a different generation of refugees in Australia. During her Australia Awards scholarship she received support to successfully apply for asylum and bring her young family to live in Australia. Through her skills and motivation, as well as supported employment programs and help from Engineers Australia, Alumna A found work in her field as a civil engineer and now works on large civil engineering projects. During her interview, she emphasised the enormity of her journey: 'When I tell the story to my friends— where I came from, how I have grown up...it is hard for them to believe I'm from that kind of situation, and then I'm here.'



Ms Hussain receiving a National Training Award. Photo: Ms Aminath Hussain

Changes in power

Other alumni in this case study found that changing circumstances in their countries after returning from their award negatively impacted on career and life opportunities, eventually deciding that to further their lives and to best utilise their skills required moving to another country.

Ms Aminath Hussain, an alumna from the Maldives, recently became a permanent resident of Ireland, where she has been working since 2016. Ms Hussain returned to the Maldives in January 2012 after graduating from her Australia Awards scholarship which coincided with a change in government following months of political unrest and protests. A public servant before going on award to gain her Master of Food Science at the University of Melbourne, Ms Hussain found herself without a job. Eventually, nine months after returning, Ms Hussain regained her previous role with assistance from the Australian Consulate in the Maldives. However, Ms Hussain found that with changes in management and priorities, her Australian skills no longer matched. She recalls thinking, 'this is not what I studied'.

Through networks made in Australia and her work, Ms Hussain gained a job with the international food-testing and nutrition company, Kerry where she was able to directly use her new skills and knowledge. This involved moving to the regional office in Malaysia, where Ms Hussain lived and worked for three years from mid-2013. Following a promotion, she moved to the international headquarters in Ireland where she is a Regulatory Specialist responsible for food quality and safety. Reflecting on her current work, Ms Hussain noted that she is able to 'use knowledge from all the modules [in my degree in Australia] every day.'

Born in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and currently working in Samoa, **Mr Alexander Rheeney** has had a decorated career in journalism both before and after his Australian development scholarship. As an experienced journalist in PNG, Mr Rheeney successfully applied for the Australia Awards and undertook a Master of Crosscultural Communication at the University of Sydney, followed by an internship at the Lowy Institute. Returning home in mid-2012, Mr Rheeney became Editor of PNG's largest daily newspaper, the Post Courier. However, over four years, political and economic challenges in PNG affected Mr Rheeney's opportunities in the media and journalism sector. In mid-2018, Mr Rheeney moved to Apia to work for the Samoa Observer Newspaper as Co-Editor and recently agreed to stay on in Apia for another two years. After that time, he plans to return to PNG with his family.

2.3.3 Moving for family

Alumni live and make choices within a vast network that often involves family and friends. Invariably, life decisions are made on the basis of being with family, and for two alumnae in this case study, this meant leaving their country of birth to pursue careers alongside family who had already settled in Australia. These alumni journeys, and the discussion in the following chapter, show the return to Australia came after making significant contributions to their home country in the years immediately following return from award.

Dr Siew-Hoon Cheah's journey story is intertwined with that of her twin sister. Both were recipients of Colombo Plan scholarships and travelled from Malaysia to studied medicine together at Monash University from 1964 to 1969. On returning to Malaysia, Dr S. Cheah interned at Penang General Hospital, where her Australian training and skills were highly regarded. In her early career, she worked in several rural locations in Malaysia (Kuantan and Seremban), before working at a private hospital in Kuala Lumpur for three years.

In 1976, Dr S. Cheah and her young family moved to Eildon in rural Victoria to work at the Eildon district hospital where her sister was based. Both her sister and their husbands worked at the hospital as doctors, helping to reduce a shortage of medical professionals in the region and contributing to the community for several years. Moving back to Australia came at a pivotal time in Australian multicultural policies: 'when Gough [Whitlam] changed the White Australia Policy...we thought, well it's time we made plans to come back'. After working in Eildon for two years, Dr S. Cheah moved to Melbourne, where she set up a private medical practice with her husband in Melbourne's outer south-east.

Ms Thu Ngo, a Vietnamese alumna, has been living and working in Melbourne since 2006. After completing a Master of Applied Finance at the University of Melbourne in 2001 under an Australian Development Scholarship, Ms Ngo returned to Vietnam with her husband (who had also studied in Australia and was working Vietnam as an engineer at the time) and returned to her former position at ANZ Vietnam where she contributed to developing the private banking sector. In this time, Ms Ngo and her husband also began building their family, having their first child. However, Ms Ngo's husband was unable to find suitable engineering work in Vietnam and eventually returned to Australia to pursue opportunities available there, which precipitated a significant life change for Ms Ngo. Reflecting on this time, she noted, 'having a distance relationship and having a young child didn't work out. That's when I decided to migrate, and my husband moved from Sydney to Melbourne for us to start our new life here.'



Ms Thu Ngo at a Westpac function in Sydney. Photo: Ms Thu Ngo

Essentially starting her career again, Ms Ngo secured an entry-level position at Westpac Business Banking, and in the years that followed, moved from customer support into credit analysis and risk management and is now a lending specialist in private wealth for the bank. Overcoming the challenge of migrating to Australia and raising a family here stands out as one of Ms Ngo's proudest achievements 'I'm most proud to have my children educated here and become a citizen of Australia'.

Future aspirations

Some of the alumni in this case study indicated their intention to return to their country of origin at some stage to live and work. While for many this option is simply not feasible, the aspirations of those who specifically mentioned this plan are worth noting as this aspect is an important part of the future journeys of these alumni.

As noted in the section above, Mr Rheeney recently signed a two-year contract to remain in Apia as co-editor of the Samoa Observer. However, following this contract, he intends to return to PNG, with an aspiration to continue to build the profession of journalism in his country: 'I have this thing for training the next generation of reporters...I really enjoy the experience of mentoring and helping people just to appreciate journalism as a profession and standing up for the truth.'

Ms Nur's career to date has been characterised by her own mobility, as much as it has been centred on helping those who are most vulnerable when it comes to migration. At several points in her career to date, she has returned to her home country, Indonesia, to pursue interests, such as setting up mentoring programs (further discussed in the following chapter). Her passion for this project and potential to continue to contribute is indication of her ongoing connection with her home country.

In reflecting on the future, Ms Echavez-de Leon sees an opportunity to move globally, including back to the Philippines, if changes in her sector continue. She highlighted the growing relevance of the private sector in climate change mitigation policy and funding, suggesting that the current status quo might 'be outdated in 20 to 30 years, so I think moving to corporate sustainability or something like that might be a better fit' in the future.

Mr Gupta also sees the potential at some stage in the future to return to Fiji:

I have at the back of my mind that I would like to go up to Fiji and improve things in my professional area where possible. I grew up in that place, I have a certain attachment to it...and once I feel I am in a position where I can make some sort of change, I will most likely end up back there.

3. Using Skills and Knowledge for Development

This case study demonstrates that mobile alumni make ongoing contributions to sustainable development, both to their country of origin and in other countries across the globe.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter details the development impact of mobile alumni, through the focus of the Australia Awards long-term Outcome 1: 'Alumni are using their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to sustainable development'.

The alumni interviewed in this case study have made contributions to development in the years following their award. In some cases, key development contributions have been made in their country of origin, and in others, the contributions have been made elsewhere. The examples here are segmented in this chapter between contributions in country of origin, and contributions in other countries. The range of activities and outcomes of alumni in this case study span training and development, policy impact and impact through practice. Alumni here have made these contributions across a vast range of fields and sectors, including climate change, civil engineering, food security, migration, data and IT security, journalism, finance, and health.

The examples discussed in this chapter help to show that for this group of mobile alumni, long-term Outcome 1 of the Australia Awards is being achieved.

3.2 Skills developed on award

The contributions made by alumni in their work and community are often accomplished using the skills and knowledge developed as part of their scholarship and are implicit in the exploration of examples of contributions in the sections below. However, it is important to also highlight the skills mentioned by alumni as being an integral part of the benefit of their award. Key skills identified through interviews in this case study are listed below, they illustrate the breadth of knowledge gained through the scholarships.

'Soft'/interpersonal skills include:

- intercultural competency
- teamwork
- leadership and mentoring
- communication (verbal and written)
- organisational skills.

'Hard'/technical skills include:

- project management
- English language (verbal and written)
- research design
- risk management
- strategic communication
- discipline-specific skills relating to field (e.g.: medicine, finance, engineering, science).

3.3 Alumni contributions

GTF Global Tracer Survey data exploring the mobile alumni group shows that alumni who are not in their country of origin, overwhelmingly indicate that they have been able to share their new skills and knowledge with others (95 per cent) and have been able to improve practices and introduce innovations in their workplace following their award (95 per cent). This survey

data, from more than 400 mobile alumni across the world is corroborated in the in-depth stories gathered from the 10 alumni interviewed for this case study. Regardless of the country in which they now live, alumni are invariably making a difference through their work, using the skills and experiences from their award to make these contributions.

In summary, the types of contributions made by alumni interviewed in this case study are summarised below.

Training and development	Policy impact	Practical implementation of initiatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> development of mentoring programs training and equipping younger colleagues with new skills and approaches to work sharing technical knowledge and skills in the workplace building and delivering training programs to improve broader understanding across work sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gaining funding for large scale food security and climate change initiatives raising awareness of marginalised and exploited communities heightening awareness of risk management and security in finance and information technology. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> health practice and research initiatives development of software and information technology security practice design of large-scale civil engineering projects promoting best practice in journalism.

The examples that relate to Australia Awards long-term Outcome 1 are further explained in the sections below. The first section explores alumni contributions in their country of origin. The second focuses on contributions in other countries, including their current country of residence.

Alumni who now live in Australia: multiple avenues for contribution

In relation to achieving the outcomes of the Australia Awards, it is important to note that the contributions of alumni who are now living in Australia (six of those involved in this case study) are scattered throughout the different sections below. While there may be questions about the extent to which these particular alumni are able to contribute to long-term development outcomes, the insight provided in this report works towards dispelling any myths around the issue of contributions by alumni who return to Australia. Among those alumni who now live in Australia, the evidence below shows that:

1. they have often contributed to their country following their award, and prior to moving to Australia;
2. their links to their country of origin continue despite not living there and in many cases they continue to contribute to the development of that country; and
3. in a number of cases, they now play strong support roles for migrants from their country or region who have migrated to Australia and form an important part of this diaspora.

3.3.1 Making a difference in country of origin

Training and development

Six of the alumni in this case study have been part of training, mentoring or other activities that have helped in developing skills of others in their country of origin. In a formal sense, both Ms Ngo and Ms Nur have implemented specific programs. When Ms Ngo returned to Vietnam following the completion of her Master of Applied Finance, she first returned to her role at ANZ Vietnam before taking a position with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) on a project known as the Mekong Project Development Facility (MPDF), which 'assisted the private sector in Vietnam to develop businesses, supporting small to medium enterprises'. One of Ms Ngo's key tasks was helping to upskill the burgeoning private banking sector. She was involved in 'training in soft skills, technical skills, transferring knowledge' and helped 'set up the bank training centre'. She was able to combine her experience in the sector in Vietnam with the skills learned on award in Australia in the development of the training centre, noting 'I used the knowledge that I had, the language that I learned, the terminologies, to transfer the knowledge to the students and relate to the real experience that I had when I was working in Vietnam in that environment.'



Ms Ngo (top right) as part of an ANZ Vietnam delegation 1998.
Photo: Ms Thu Ngo



Ms Nur (front row, second from the right) providing training at the Prosecutors' Training Centre of Indonesian Attorney General. With IOM's Chief of Mission, Australian Embassy Staff, and the Head of Training Centre, 2017. Photo: Ms Fitriana Nur

Ms Nur records as one of her proudest moments the 'mentoring program I designed when in Jakarta that is now being used and continuously funded.' The program works within the Indonesian public service and is designed to help young people in the area of migration better understand the legal obligations and avenues for prevention of people traffickers, 'I created this mentoring programme to make sure that the new prosecutors would understand how to prosecute traffickers.' For this program, Ms Nur drew on the experience she had as part of her Australian Leadership Award, where she learned the terms 'mentoring' and 'coaching' and recognised a way to harness the power of these programs in her work.

Additionally, Alumna A, Dr S. Cheah, Mr Rheeney and Dr Ho-Le also provided examples of informal training and skills development in their home country as part of their work. For Alumna A, this comes through conversing on the phone, email and social media with her former colleagues in African engineering firms, offering technical advice. Dr S. Cheah built skills of others through her work in hospitals in Malaysia, where she often demonstrated best practice techniques to her peers. As a senior journalist in PNG, Mr Rheeney notes 'I made it my business to try and improve working conditions for the new graduates... doing training programmes.' He explained the enjoyment he gains from 'the experience of dealing with these young ones and showing them what journalism means'. For Dr Ho-Le, his contribution to Vietnam from his new home in Australia was to involve Vietnamese programming graduates in the development of software for his small business—'it was good because it introduced [them] to some new technology'.



Mr Rheeney receiving an award as the PNG Post-Courier Chief Editor from the United Nations in PNG December 2016 for Editorial Leadership in covering HIV/AIDS in PNG. Photo: Mr Alexander Rheeney

Policy impact

Three alumni in this case study have also made notable contributions to their home countries through implementation or development of policy, or policy related programs.

For example, on his return to Nepal, Dr Bajagai was able to immediately begin using the skills gained from his Master of Animal Studies to improve practices in the Ministry of Agriculture. He used his new skills to help develop a proposal for funding and support for Nepal and was able to successfully win a USD58 million grant from the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), a Financial Intermediary Fund hosted within the World Bank Group with an objective to 'enhance food and nutrition security of the marginalised community in Nepal'³. This achievement was widely recognised, with Dr Bajagai awarded Outstanding Young Australian Alumni, the 'Mahendra Vidya Bhusan' (The Order of Merit in Education) by then the King of Nepal, and 'Nepal Vidya Bhusan' (Order of Merit) from the President of Nepal. He credits the success in securing this grant funding to the skills he developed on award: 'I would say not only the degree, but the perspective I got [in Australia] helped me win those funds.'

Ms Nur's job on return from award was with the Asia Foundation, working in Indonesia on a project with the Australian Government known as the Knowledge Sector Initiative (KSI). As Ms Nur describes it, KSI aims to 'build the enabling environment for an evidence-based policy making process' in Indonesia. The program involved equipping and supporting think tanks, research institutes and universities to develop sound policy research, and to support advocates and the Government of Indonesia in utilising the research produced by these knowledge groups. For Ms Nur, this work was a great opportunity to immediately implement translational research skills she had learned on award: 'It's basically what I learned [on award] ...I was lucky for that and it was a very good experience.'

Mr Rheeney is proud of his contribution in raising public awareness of the disadvantage faced by sex workers living with HIV in PNG and putting pressure on government to fund access to antiretroviral medication for these women. He recalls, 'sitting down, having a chat with them and getting to know the challenges they face on a day-to-day basis...It just hit me in the face, the challenges that ordinary Papua New Guineans are going through.' As editor of the largest daily newspaper in PNG, Mr Rheeney was able to expose the issue—'we got the stories out there, and we got funding for the supply of antiretroviral therapy.' Mr Rheeney was awarded a journalism prize from the UN for the series of stories he helped publish to bring this issue into the mainstream.

3 For further information on GAFSP: <https://www.gafspfund.org/about>

3.3.2 Making a difference in other countries and regions

The examples in this case study show that in many cases, regardless of their location in the world, alumni continue to make a contribution to sustainable development after moving away from their country of origin. Some of the examples above show how this can continue in their country of origin even after having moved (Dr Ho-Le, Mr Rheeney, and Alumna A), while the examples below highlight the contributions being made in their new country of residence, or in other countries and regions.

Policy impact

Ms Echavez-de Leon's work as an Associate with the Global Climate Fund in South Korea involves the financing of climate advocacy and mitigation policies and programs across the world. An example of projects she has been involved in; Ms Echavez-de Leon highlighted her work on an estimated USD100 million project in Indonesia to reduce deforestation of rainforests while supporting sustainable practices in the timber industry. Ms Echavez-de Leon finds the knowledge she gained on award as being directly relevant to the work she now undertakes, 'I think the basic skills I did learn from Australia in terms of climate change...is actually highly useful,' and highlighting, 'for my Masters I took individual study to really learn about the hazards, climate hazards. So that part is essentially what I do now'.

Similarly, Ms Hussain as a Regulatory Specialist with the Kerry Group in Ireland is able to contribute to ensuring the food and nutrition standards across numerous countries and regions — 'we produce and test a diverse portfolio of food products globally and therefore our products need to be safe and need to meet the regulatory requirements.' The products that Ms Hussain is responsible for are distributed around the world, 'we supply globally... [our products go to] Asia, China, Australia, into North America, South America and so on.' Like many of the other alumni in this case study, Ms Hussain finds that she is using the knowledge she developed through her Australian degree on a regular basis in her work:

The modules I've taken at the University of Melbourne covered a lot ...Therefore, I am able to pick up any regulation and I'm able to integrate it into my own.



Ms Echavez-de Leon on mission for the Global Climate Fund. Photo: Ms Echavez-de Leon

Another alumna making significant contributions outside of her home country is Ms Nur. Currently based in South Sudan for her work with the IOM, as noted earlier, Ms Nur has worked in a role advocating for the rights of migrant workers across various regions. In the policy space, Ms Nur has helped to raise awareness and then change policies and law in relation to vulnerable migrant populations:

Some of the policies that I advocated were made into policy. In Saudi Arabia now, they set up a national task force on counter trafficking...and I was proud to be part of that process. I was proud that the Jordanian Government, that the Saudi Arabian Government, Lebanese Government, Iraqi Government, have seen the importance of protections of migrant workers in their policy, and I was proud to be part of that engagement.

Over the years, the contributions to this field that Ms Nur has made are globally significant and justice cannot be done to them in a short case study. Today she holds a broad role, 'my issue has expanded beyond just labour migration, it's expanded to migration management.' Of all her skills, Ms Nur particularly credits 'the skills of strategic communication that I learned in Australia,' for example, she highlighted the use in one context and applied 'strategic communication in my delivery with the Jordanian Government. It took time...but I did get their buy-in, and they were very happy to work with me.'

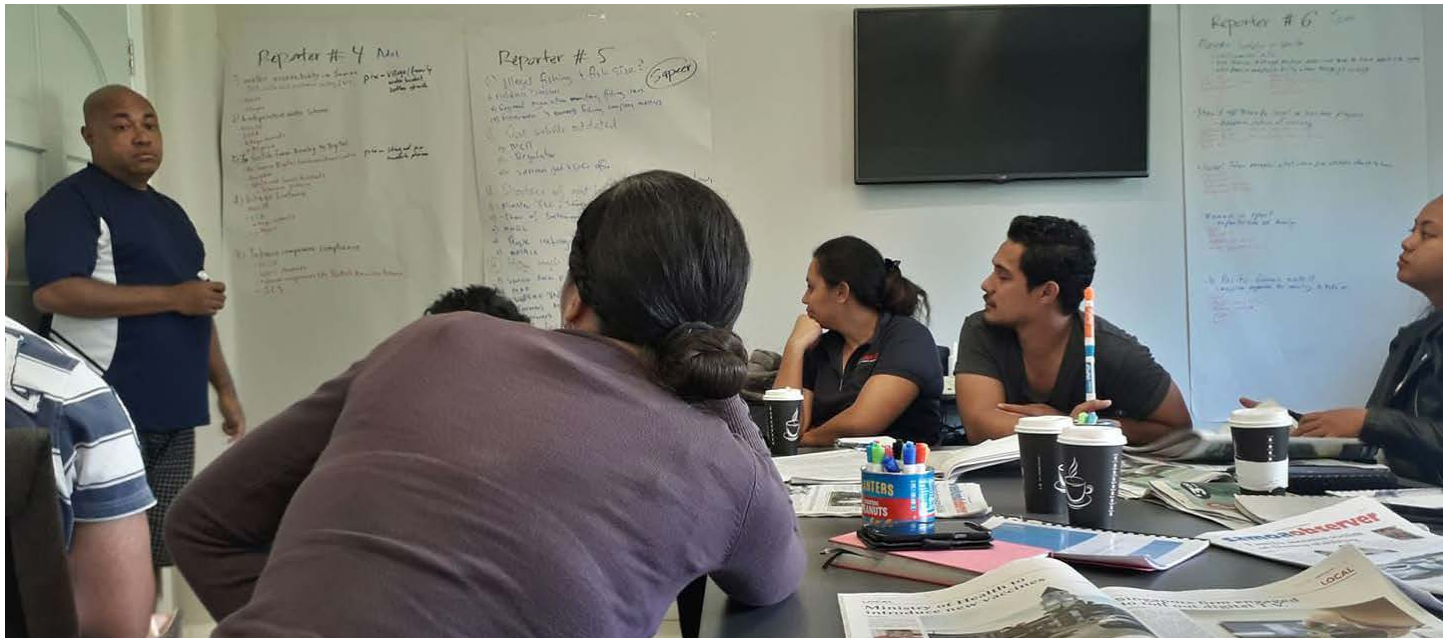


Ms Nur (second from the left) meeting with the technical task force into counter trafficking and smuggling of migrants in South Sudan, 2019.
Photo: Ms Fitriana Nur

Making a difference through practice

Each of the alumni in this case study is a specialist in their field. The examples above have shown the diversity of contributions made in many contexts across the world. This final section exploring contributions focuses on the practical implementation of knowledge and skills and how five alumni are making a difference in their country of residence.

As detailed earlier in this report, Alumna A was not able to return to her country of birth following her award, instead applying for asylum in her adopted country of Australia. A key pathway that has enabled her transition to life in a different country has been her ability to demonstrate and use her knowledge and skills to contribute to projects in her sector in Australia. In her interview, Alumna A spoke about how she is able to combine her prior experience in civil engineering in Sub-Saharan Africa with the new skills developed on award while completing her Master of Engineering Management. She currently works on large scale infrastructure projects and over the past few years has rapidly progressed in responsibility, 'I started out as a graduate, even though I had five years' experience back home. I'm at the professional level now, all within three years. That's big progress for me.' Working on structural capacity assessments of bridges, and more recently in the design of significant transport infrastructure in Australia, Alumna A's contributions have been recognised with an award from her employer for technical expertise. With this award, and the support of her workplace, Alumna A feels she is making a strong contribution, 'No matter when you deliver a project in Australia, you get appreciation from your client based on your technical expertise.'



Mr Rheeney running a monthly training program for newsroom staff in Apia in Samoa, 2019. Photo: Mr Alexander Rheeney

Dr S. Cheah has made substantial contributions to the Victorian health system since returning to Australia in 1976. The core 'vehicle' that facilitated her migration to Australia was the need for expertise in country hospitals. Between Dr S. Cheah, her husband, her twin sister and her husband, the family was able to 'man the Eildon Hospital' for two years in a time of significant shortage of doctors in the area. On moving to Melbourne, Dr S. Cheah and her husband set up a general practice in the outer south east and served their community there for four decades. Now retired, Dr S. Cheah is a volunteer with a community support service in her local area.

Similarly, Ms Ngo and Dr Bajagai have utilised their skills and knowledge to support migrant communities in Australia. Joining Westpac after moving to Melbourne, Ms Ngo became an important conduit for Vietnamese migrants negotiating banking and finance in Australia: 'At the time, they were looking for someone to assist the Vietnamese-speaking relationship manager, because they had a lot of Vietnamese-speaking customers.' Dr Bajagai has worked in his new community of Rockhampton to support its Nepalese community. He is currently president of the local Nepalese community association where he helps to organise cultural and cultural events.

Mr Rheeney, who is living in a third country, Samoa, describes his role as Co-Editor of the Observer Newspaper Group as mentoring and supporting Samoan journalists to develop into strong independent professionals. Working in this role has been satisfying for Mr Rheeney, 'the whole interaction, the experience of dealing with these young ones and showing them what journalism means...I totally enjoy it.' In making these contributions in Samoa, Mr Rheeney highlighted the relevance of his Master of Crosscultural Communication, and the transferrable skills gained adapting to life in Australia.

3.4 Factors influencing these outcomes

In making the impact that they have through their work and community activities, the alumni in this case study have faced challenges, and have had experiences which have helped them make these contributions. The summary below highlights the enabling and challenging factors identified through the interviews with alumni in this case study. These factors are broadly sorted to align with the different stages of the Australia Awards scholarship cycle as a way of showing where these factors can be encouraged (in the case of the enablers) or mitigated (in the case of the challenges). The discussion that follows, provides further explanation around these factors.



3.4.1 Enabling factors

Skills developed on award

In every case in this study, alumni were able to refer to a skill that they formed as part of their degree that they continue to be able to use in the context of their current work. Throughout the discussion in this chapter, the link between contributions and the skills and knowledge developed in the scholarship has been emphasised by the alumni. Typical among the comments from alumni, Ms Ngo stated: 'All the knowledge that I learned from university...it still applies to today's work...I have the knowledge from the course and apply it in real life.'

Motivation to make a difference

The motivation to make a difference within a field of work and across their communities is a characteristic that the GTF has found across 20 case studies over the past five years. Dr Ho-Le's attitude towards applying for his scholarship is indicative of the comments in the 10 interviews across this case study:

I was very concerned about the state of Vietnam because it was a poor country, people around me were mostly poor and life was extremely hard for almost everybody. I had a strong desire to contribute for something good. So, I thought an education overseas was an excellent way to help solve those problems, contribute to Vietnam. I had a very strong motivation to do that.

Work experience prior to award

For most of the alumni in this case study, particularly Ms Nur, Dr Bajagai, Ms Echavez-de Leon, Mr Rheeney, Ms Ngo, Ms Hussain and Alumna A, their relevant work experience prior to going to Australia made several elements of their award experience more effective. Three particular benefits of prior work experience were identified by these alumni, these include:

- prior work experience as an important foundation in identifying an appropriate degree in Australia that build on existing skills
- during time studying in Australia, experience from previous work enabled alumni to recognise how their new knowledge could be applied in their local contexts
- in most cases, having prior work experience helped in transitioning back into the workplace and make an impact on return.

Attaining a globally recognised qualification

The fact that Australian qualifications are widely recognised and respected across the globe was mentioned by some alumni as a factor that helped them in gaining work and being able to contribute following their award (above and beyond the skills that the qualifications offered). The influence of this aspect, both in terms of the respect Australian qualifications have and the quality seen in the qualifications, are discussed in detail in the chapter Views of Australia and Australian expertise.

Australian Leadership Awards and alumni outcomes

Five of the alumni interviewed in this case study were recipients of an Australian Leadership Awards (ALA) scholarship. The ALA is leadership-focussed program that supplements the overall degree program that Australia Awards scholarship recipients undertake. The alumni of ALA in this case study mentioned a number of the unique aspects of this program that they found particularly helpful in enabling their future contributions and connections. The key elements seen as useful by these alumni from the ALA are:

- **Internships.** These were built into the ALA and generally undertaken by recipients in the six months following completion of their Australian qualification. Internships facilitated future job opportunities and ongoing relationships with Australians and Australian organisations.
- **Leadership training.** Undertaken by alumni in parallel with their degree qualification and involving other ALA recipients from across the world. Alumni noted that this training was influential in learning new approaches to leadership, training and facilitating change, and that elements of the training were used in their own contexts following award. For example, Ms Nur set up a mentoring program in Indonesia modelled on elements of her Australian course.
- **Conference and study funding.** ALA recipients highlighted that a bursary for conference travel or study-related expenses attached to their scholarship enabled them to participate in activities that otherwise would not have been possible. Two examples of the use of these funds had a direct and lasting benefit on the career and contributions of the alumni: Ms Hussain met representatives from her current employment at a seminar in Melbourne, and Ms Nur was able to travel to Egypt where she undertook an internship with the IOM, an organisation she has since worked with across the Middle East region.

3.4.2 Challenging factors

Lack of work in specialist fields

For one alum, there was a mismatch in their Australian degree and local job market demand which motivated their mobility (as mentioned earlier in the report) Mr Gupta, in particular, found that when he returned to Fiji, there were very limited opportunities in forensic science: 'Upon return I tried to do my research and reach out to organisations to explore possible employment in related areas. To my surprise, the sorts of roles I was looking for were not present.' Mr Gupta subsequently enrolled in a new area, computer science, at the University of the South Pacific and has successfully built his career in this area. For Ms Hussain, while she was eventually able to regain her position in the public service in the Maldives, the role did not utilise the skills she had developed on award.

Leaving family to study abroad

Alumni A highlighted that a particular challenge she faced in undertaking her award was that she had to leave her six-month-old baby at home with her family: 'That was a very big challenge for me. Thanks to my family, who supported me, especially my Mum, who looked after the baby while I was there [in Australia].'

Political change and instability

As discussed in detail in the previous chapter, political change and instability was a key reason for some alumni settling in another country. In terms of contributions to development, this is a major challenge for these alumni. With their mobility, their ability to contribute to the development of their country when they could not return (as was the case for Dr Ho-Le and Alumni A), or because the situation was not conducive to being able to contribute fully in their chosen careers (in the case of Ms Hussain and Mr Rheeney).

Guilt relating to leaving home country

A number of the alumni in this case study spoke about the difficult decision they had made to move away from the country they grew up in, and the guilt they felt that they may not be able to contribute to its development in the way they had originally envisaged. All alumni in this case study who were able to return home served the bond time that was mandated as a condition of their scholarship,⁴ but they nonetheless articulated regret at what they saw as not being able to do more. For such high achieving people with intrinsic motivations to give back, these feelings are understandable. However, it is important to highlight that overwhelmingly, the evidence gathered in this case study suggests that the guilt associated with mobility is misplaced because as demonstrated in the examples above, these alumni have made significant contributions both within their country of origin and in their new home countries.

⁴ Australian scholarships for development have usually had a condition attached to them requiring recipients to remain in their country of origin for a certain period of time following their award. The exact conditions of such bonds differ by country, cohort, sector of work etc., although about two years is a typical length/requirement.

4. Public Diplomacy Outcomes

Alumni in this case study are contributing to Outcome 2—cooperation with Australia and partner countries, and Outcome 3—partnerships with Australian organisations, through strong personal and professional links forged while on award.

4.1 Introduction

Alumni in this case study have maintained strong personal and professional links with friends, fellow students, academics and industry professionals who they have met while on award. These connections have led to collaboration on research projects, employment opportunities and ongoing industry engagement.

The case study provides strong evidence of alumni facilitating partnerships and research collaboration with Australian organisations as result of connections made while on award. These networks were facilitated through a range on award activities including internships and industry engagement, mentoring, leadership training, conferences and seminars.

This chapter explores the extent to which alumni are contributing to two Australia Awards long-term outcomes. It demonstrates that mobile alumni are contributing to:

- Outcome 2: ‘Cooperation between Australia and partner countries’, and;
- Outcome 3: ‘Effective, mutually advantageous partnerships between institutions and businesses in Australia and partner countries.’

The Australia Awards Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (the Framework) describes Outcome 2—cooperation—as being the connections and networks between alumni and Australia which represent the people-to-people links such as alumni associations, friendships, or professional connections with former lecturers. Outcome 3—partnerships—has a different emphasis, and ‘looks beyond the individual links’. By doing this, Outcome 3 ‘articulates Australia’s intention to see organisational links’ occur as formal partnerships (DFAT, 2017).

The ‘seeds’ for these outcomes are intended to have been developed on award. It is anticipated that alumni engagement then assists as a post-award mechanism to maintain alumni’s relationships with Australia.

This chapter explores the extent to which alumni in this case study have been able to develop and maintain connections and professional networks with people and organisations based on their time on award in Australia. The findings from this group of mobile alumni suggest that both Outcome 2—cooperation and Outcome 3—partnerships, are being **achieved** for the group of focus in this case study.

4.2 Networks and links developed on award

All 10 alumni in this case study described building ongoing relationships while on award. These range from close personal and professional ties with Australian academics to informal friendships with fellow Australia Awards recipients, Australian and international students, community groups (diaspora) and host families. The five alumni who also undertook an ALA cite formal links to industry, facilitated through internship placements, mentoring and conference funding which broadened their engagement with Australia and Australia businesses in their fields.

As expected, the six alumni in the case study who made Australia their home have built upon friendships and professional links made on award. Data collected through the combined GTF Global Tracer Surveys further supports this, indicating mobile alumni living in and working in Australia have stronger ongoing links to Australian friends from award (61.3 per cent often have contact with this group) and with their host institution (40.7 per cent) compared to those alumni living in a third country (37.9 per cent and 13.6 per cent respectively) or in their country of origin.

4.2.1 Professional links

Three alumni were able to build strong professional connections while on award with university academics and Australian organisations linked to their fields of expertise. Dr Bajagai was able to use his connections at the University of Queensland to pursue a doctoral degree there, which then led to the opportunity to work as a postdoctoral researcher at Central Queensland University.

Mr Rheeney undertook a six-month internship at the Lowy Institute and made ongoing connections through his work there on the Melanesia Program (now the Pacific Islands Program) throughout Australia, the Pacific and PNG. He was involved in the first Papua New Guinea-Australia Emerging Leaders Dialogue program and states that the program was designed to ‘build relationships’ and ‘address all the development challenges’ between Australia and PNG. He remains connected with the Lowy Institute and has recently supported research exchange while working in Samoa.

I cemented my close relationship with the Institute. In fact, just last year, we had two of their research staff fly over to Samoa, they wanted to network with me as soon as they found out that I was here, so we caught up. If they have any questions on Samoa, or if my reporters at the Observer need expert analysis on the economy, I just connect them to my colleagues at the Lowy Institute.

Through her work with IOM, Ms Nur has collaborated with Australian organisations including the Walk Free Foundation, the Diaspora Action Australia (DAA) and Western Sydney University to improve migrant worker’s rights and working conditions.

As a head of unit, I am responsible for ensuring better border management, ensuring this migration and development through remittances and diasporas’ engagement...I work with an Australian organisation, Diaspora Action Australia and I also work with the Western Sydney University. We’re working with them right now to produce a policy research on diasporas’ engagement and remittances.

4.2.2 Academic friendships made on award

All 10 alumni have ongoing links with university academics, fellow students, and Australia Awards alumni met while on award. Most of the alumni state that these links have a mix of personal and professional purposes and involve cooperation through knowledge sharing. Highlights of examples from the alumni are detailed below:

Socially, it was great. I found a really good network of friends. I lived with an Indonesian girl, and, to this day, we are really good friends... And the thing is, we are both from two different countries; we met in Australia. I visited her in Indonesia; she visited me in the Maldives. We met up in Malaysia. And I think it was 2019, we met up in the Netherlands, so three different continents, and we keep in touch whenever we can.—Ms Hussain

The big part of my student life here was to get to know the alumni. So, we made good friends at the time we studied in Hanoi for the departure course. And for a lot of us, it was the time when we started our families, getting married, having children and being established in Australia. So, I do still keep in touch with a lot of alumni. Here in Melbourne, it’s a growing community.—Ms Ngo

One of my lecturers in Melbourne University was actually from Northern Ireland. He moved back to Australia, I suppose, 50 to 60 years ago, and he visited Ireland and we met up. I gave him a tour of our building, and I think he was really impressed with the facility, the technologies we have and everything.— Ms Hussain

I still maintain a good relationship with my first manager [of a peer mentoring program at UTS] under whom I worked six months into my scholarship and time in Australia. I think because of the nature of the job and she oversaw my work for nearly two and a half years, we built a strong relationship and she saw the development in me.—Mr Gupta

4.2.3 Community links

Alumni also identified ongoing connections to the Australian community and local diaspora made on award. As noted earlier, Dr Bajagai is active in the local Nepalese community in Rockhampton, while Ms Ngo and Dr Ho-Le remain connected with alumni within the Vietnamese community who live in Australia. Ms Nur, through her work with IOM has forged connections with the South Sudanese community in Sydney through Diaspora Action Australia (DAA).

For those who sort asylum in Australia, support from their local community was essential in creating a new life. Alumna A joined a local church and was supported by the Australian Red Cross to find employment as a civil engineer.

I was an asylum seeker... The Red Cross was helping me, and then one day they had a program; they call it an employment programme. I attended that programme and then I met one guy, an architect, and I told him my background, my experience, what I was looking for. And then finally, once we finished the program, we just sat, I chatted to him and then we caught up for coffee. And then, because he was an architect, he was not really familiar with civil engineering work, he had a colleague who worked for civil engineering companies. That's how I got my job.

Dr Ho-Le built a lasting relationship with an Australian host family, which has lasted over 45 years.

Monash University was running [a host family program] at the time, and they took me in and I had a really good relationship with them. I've been keeping in touch with them over the years, and I still see them regularly, like my host mother, she's now in a nursing home, and I come to visit her every couple of weeks or so. And the host sisters, I would meet them once every three months or so. They taught me a lot about the Australian culture, so I appreciate their help.

4.2.4 Australia Awards alumni engagement and networks

Most alumni in this case study have remained connected, to varying extents, with alumni associations since their award, either through their Australian university's association, Australia Awards alumni chapter, or via diplomatic posts. Notably, Dr Bajagai was the secretary of the Australian Alumni Association in Nepal prior to moving to Australia and Mr Rheeney took part in Australia Awards promotions and orientation programs in PNG.

I was the secretary of the Australian Alumni Association in Nepal... I had a good relationship with the Embassy at that time, and our then Australian Ambassador. When I went back, I worked for the government, I worked for the alumni association, and at the same time, I was awarded an Outstanding Young Alumni Award for my work from the Australian Trade Commission.—Dr Bajagai

The Australian-PNG Students Association came under the auspices of the Australia Awards back in PNG. So, they always used me for their programmes. I did a lot of promos for them. Sometimes, I go and do speeches and all that stuff. I'm part of the orientation program. Every year, while I was the Post Courier editor, I think for four years in a row, I was part of the orientation program, and it was all because I was a member of the association.—Mr Rheeney

4.3 Factors influencing these outcomes

Alumni identified several factors that enabled them to develop professional and personal connections while on award. Alumni have been able to maintain and cultivate these networks over time through social media and ongoing communication.

The summary below highlights the enabling and challenging factors identified through the interviews of alumni in this case study. The discussion that follows, provides further explanation around these factors.



4.3.1 Enabling factors

All 10 of the alumni in this case study mentioned factors which assisted them in building or maintaining their networks on and post award. Three key factors are outlined below.

On award: leadership training and industry engagement

As noted earlier in this report, five of the alumni interviewed for this case study undertook a concurrent ALA scholarship. In particular, the leadership training component of this on-award experience provided links to industry through internships, mentoring and funding for conferences and seminars. This additional support helped facilitate connections and strengthen leadership opportunities for the ALA recipients. For two alumni in this case study, their ALA experiences led to professional opportunities post award.

Ms Nur was able to use ALA funding to travel to Cairo and undertake a six-month internship. This led to valuable work experience, connections and ultimately a job offer in Jordan. Since that time, Ms Nur has worked on policy and migrant workers' rights across the Middle East and Africa for IOM.

[As part of the ALA] We were given a bit of funding—it was AUD5,000—that aspiring leaders needed to use to improve their leadership skills. ...I was accepted to work in IOM as a research assistant in Cairo...So, I flew there, and IOM paid for my accommodation, and I used [the ALA] money to pay for my return ticket. I think it was the best \$5,000 I spent.

Links to industry forged through an ALA funded seminar led to a job offer at Kerry for Ms Hussain, who has since worked for the company in Malaysia and Ireland. Ms Hussain recalled:

I found out about a company called Kerry, which is the organisation I'm working for now in Australia in Melbourne, because they have a manufacturing plant in Melbourne, and they were the sponsors of one of the safety seminars [I attended as part of my ALA].

Post award: social media and online communication

For most alumni, social media and email have enabled them to remain connected with friends, mentors and networks made in Australia. Many belong to informal groups and share ideas, experiences, and personal reflections with friends and academic connections.

We don't have a formal association, but we have a forum, a Yahoo group kind of thing where we can exchange ideas and we meet. All the Colombo Plan students in Melbourne, I meet them quite often. We play tennis together. We go to birthday parties of each other's children and weddings and so on. We do have a really good bond with the Vietnamese Colombo Plan students. Within my year group, the 1973 class, every five years we have a reunion.—Dr Ho-Le

I think that was the time [2010 to 2011] when Facebook and Instagram and WhatsApp and all of these came up, so I think you're always connected.—Ms Hussain

Post award: networks made on award

Mr Rheeney has also used close ties developed on award with ALA alumni from Samoa to integrate into the local culture and understand the nuances of Samoan politics in his role as Co-Editor on the Observer.

[A month after arriving in Samoa] I was taken for lunch by all the Australia Awards scholarship recipients, because they were in the same batch in 2011... I was really thankful for that because I was just a new kid in town, didn't know anyone... we've been in touch ever since I started on this job. And it was all thanks to the ALA program.

4.3.2 Challenges

The main challenges identified by alumni in this case study were loss of links over time, limited networking opportunities, or inclination to engage with an official alumni association due to mobility and a difficulty for some in making ongoing connections with Australian students.

Losing links over time

For those who studied in Australia prior to email and social media, maintaining connections post award was challenging as they returned home to busy jobs, started families, and lost connections overtime. Dr S. Cheah, lamented losing touch with friends and took time reconnecting with them when she immigrated to Australia in the late 1970s. She also noted that she never received any correspondence from the Australian Government post award. 'Not a single letter from the Colombo Plan people. No follow-up'.

I lost track of everyone in Australia. And then when I got back, I slowly contacted some of the girls from the uni, but it took me a long time, until my children grew up, before I could establish a university social circle.

There are many former Colombo Plan alumni living in Australia who were never contacted post award. These alumni still maintain networks overseas with friends made on award and could provide rich stories and links to a large network of older alumni. Over 20,000 alumni studied through the Colombo Plan from the 1950s to the 1980s. There is an opportunity for DFAT to reach out and re-establish ties with this group through a tailored social media campaign in conjunction with Australian university alumni associations.

Disconnection with alumni associations

Several alumni in this case study noted that living abroad has meant that they have had infrequent or limited opportunities to stay connected with alumni activities in their home countries. Moving countries or travelling for work has led to decreased engagement, especially over time.

I think I am a member of Australian Alumni in the Maldives, but I have never been able to attend any of them because physically, I don't live there.—Ms Hussain

I still get the emails from the alumni, the formal group, even though a lot of activities were for things in Vietnam and I couldn't join, but I still keep my eye open for those, to see what people are doing there.—Ms Ngo

Others mentioned being too busy or less inclined to network at formal alumni events. One alum noted 'I'm sure that it appeals to other people. It just doesn't appeal to me.'

Difficulty making friends with Australian students

Developing connections with Australian students was also seen as a challenge for two alumni (Ms Echavez-de Leon and Mr Gupta). For example, Ms Echavez-de Leon recalls she developed closer connections with other international students through her course and living on campus in international student accommodation.

It's actually quite difficult to get into Australian culture and have Australian friends, because one set of people who we go with would be other internationals, and obviously the Aussie ones, they already had a set of friends there.

5. Views of Australia

Alumni in the case study hold enduring positive views of the high standard of teaching and learning they experienced in Australia and see Australia as a relaxed and inclusive society. Six of the 10 alumni featured, have made Australia their home.

5.1 Introduction

The aim of Outcome 4 of the Australia Awards is that ‘alumni view Australia, Australians, and Australian expertise positively’. To achieve Outcome 4, the Australia Awards Monitoring and Evaluation program logic (DFAT, 2017) identifies three key components for building positive views of Australia:

- alumni were able to establish links within Australia
- alumni had positive experiences on award in Australia, through both living and studying in Australia
- alumni continue to have positive experiences in their interactions with Australia and Australians post award.

This outcome recognises that long-lasting positive personal and professional attitudes towards Australia are ‘fundamental to alumni contributing to cooperation between Australia and their home countries, and more broadly to the bilateral relationship’ (DFAT, 2016). As is apparent through this quote, this outcome is also a significant basis for the achievement of Outcome 2, cooperation, discussed in the previous chapter.

The Australia Awards long-term Outcome 4, that ‘Alumni view Australia, Australians and Australian expertise positively’ has been achieved based on the evidence provided by alumni in this case study.

5.2 Examples of positive views of Australia, Australians, and Australian expertise

Among the alumni interviewed in this case study, all were highly positive in their views of Australia, regardless of where they are living now. Alumni cited the strong global reputation of Australian qualifications and the standard of teaching and learning as providing them with highly sought-after technical knowledge and critical thinking skills which increased their confidence and employability.

The data from the GTF’s Global Tracer Surveys also shows that the scholarship experience positively influences the views of Australia for the vast majority of alumni, although there is an interesting difference depending on alumni’s current residence. Among survey respondents, alumni who now live in Australia and alumni who live in their country of origin were extremely likely to say that their time on award led them to become more positive about their perception of Australian people (95 per cent and 94 per cent respectively). While those alumni living in a third country were slightly less likely to be positive (85 per cent), although still a large positive outcome. The discussion below focuses on the responses of the alumni interviewed for this case study to examine the influences of these views.

5.2.1 High regard for Australian qualifications

All alumni in this case study indicated that they had benefited from the strong global reputation of Australian qualifications and expertise. As noted in an earlier chapter, for mobile alumni working in global organisations (Ms Hussain, Ms Nur and Ms Echavez-de Leon) the high regard for Australian qualifications has made them competitive within their fields and led to employment abroad. Other alumni also highlighted the value of Australian qualifications:

To tell you the truth, I think having this in my CV, having the Australia Awards scholarship recipient and the Australian Leadership Awards recipient always enhances my ability to go for a job.—Mr Rheeney

An education in Australia was very highly prized in Vietnam.—Dr Ho-Le

After seeking asylum in Australia post award, Alumna A and Dr Ho-Le found their Australian qualifications increased their employability and they were able to pursue professional roles soon after completing their studies.

People think that if you study in Australia and then if you have an Australian qualification, they think that you know much better than others because they trust Australian universities. I think that made it a bit easier for me—Alumna A

5.2.2 High quality of teaching and learning in Australia

Consistent with earlier GTF findings, alumni who participated in this case study expressed positive views about the quality of teaching and learning they experienced in Australia. Alumni recalled their lecturers and tutors as ‘supportive,’ ‘relaxed’ and ‘inclusive.’ Many alumni found teaching and learning in

Australia vastly different to what they had experienced in their home countries and recalled being encouraged to research and form their own opinions which opened them up to new ways of thinking and seeing the world.

[Academically] things are less structured, in that students are expected to manage their own academic lives a lot more than back home.—Mr Gupta

The fact that you're given confidence to read through the material, see what you think, it gives you the confidence to actually have a formed opinion—Ms Echavez-de Leon

In terms of the course content, it's similar, but the way they deliver [in Australia] is different. You've got a lot of resources, and there you've got a lot of support, and also the way they do the assessment, that's completely different ... practical [rather] than theoretical that will help you more in the real world, instead of reading and answering the question.— Alumna A

5.2.3 Experiences in Australia

All alumni cite having fond and enduring memories of their time in Australia. Ms Nur 'developed a new culture of having brunches with friends' and enjoyed going on 'road trips'. Mr Rheeney found Australian society 'open' and inclusive. He recalled 'totally enjoying' two Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras with fellow international students, and State of Origin Rugby with his lecturers. Ms Ngo best sums up the sentiment of many of the Australian-based alumni below.

Australia is a very multicultural country and I feel accepted. I feel, working for Westpac, I do feel valued. My cultural background, my language, the experience that I have in Vietnam, they were all accepted here.—Ms Ngo

5.3 Factors influencing views of Australia

Alumni have maintained a positive perception of Australia through their rich experiences on award which allowed them the opportunity to view the world through a different lens and develop intercultural competencies.

The summary below highlights the enabling and challenging factors identified through the interviews of alumni in this case study. The discussion that follows, provides further explanation around these factors.



5.3.1 Enabling factors

Developing intercultural competencies

Several alumni highlighted that living in a multicultural country like Australia, and mixing with a diverse range of international students, helped to ‘enrich’ their learning experience, and taught them ‘inclusion’ and ‘tolerance.’ These intercultural competencies have helped alumni to adapt to living and working in new countries, and with colleagues from diverse backgrounds.

I think, in terms of inclusion, it was really on different races, I think. It was just so broad, all the people that you meet. I don't think it was conscious in a sense that I had racial biases before and then they were changed. I don't think it was like that. But it was more of just creating friendships, I guess, from their friend's countries.—Ms Echavez-de Leon

Dr S. Cheah found that her exposure ‘to so many cultures’ while on award and while living in Australia ‘broaden[ed] her understanding of the world.’ Dr Ho-Le similarly stated ‘The learning [was] not only the technical skills, but the way of life, the culture’ which was an ‘eye opener’ for him. He reflected that studying in Australia altered the way he perceived the world.

By being in different cultures, you can see that whatever the truth is in one culture is not the truth in another, and then so you start questioning it for yourself.

Ms Hussain found that joining the global team at Kerry was like re-joining the comradery and ‘cultural diversity’ she experienced during her ALA leadership training sessions. She stated that she was able to adapt easily because of the intercultural competencies she developed on award.

Academic and welfare support

Alumni identified academic and welfare support supplied through their Australian university as enabling them to cope with challenging circumstances during their studies. For example, Mr Rheeney recalls the academic and personal support he received when his father passed away as having a positive impact on his views of Australia.

In the first semester of my studies when my father passed on, I had to fly back to PNG in April of 2011 to bury my dad and [perform] the cultural stuff that's connected with burial and all that stuff of a family member. But the systems and processes at the University of Sydney, it's at that stage where they will always look after you and they will always help people to catch up after you get back from a situation like that.

5.3.2 Challenging factors

Three alumni identified challenges that impacted their views of Australia post award. As noted in the chapter above, the lack of ‘follow up’ and engagement by the Australian Government with Colombo Plan alumni and the White Australia Policy (1901–1975) acted as a disincentive to stay connected with Australia.

When we had to go back to Malaysia because of the White Australia Policy, I actually dropped contact with virtually everybody in Australia because I was starting a family, I was so busy working, bringing up my children, I really had no time to socialise.—Dr S. Cheah

As mentioned in the previous chapter, engagement with local Australian students was also seen as a challenge to experiencing Australia culture and making friends. Ms Echavez-de Leon found she was more able to make friends with other international students due to her course and living arrangements, and notes that most Australian students already had established networks at university.

6. Conclusion

This case study explores the journeys, experiences, connections and contributions of alumni of Australian development scholarships who have moved from their country of origin following the completion of their award. These ‘mobile alumni’ contributions provide insight into the long-term impact of this small but unique cohort, both in their home countries and internationally.

The research found that alumni move countries post award for a range of reasons, which can be categorised into three overarching themes: moving for work, moving because of political disruption and change, and moving for family reasons.

The research was able to highlight that alumni who move from their country of origin have not only made contributions prior to moving, but have continued to use skills and knowledge gained on award in Australia to contribute to their country of origin and in many cases to development in their adopted countries.

Alumni contributions include training and capacity building towards sustainable development; impact on policy design and implementation in areas such as food security, climate change, human trafficking and migrant workers’ rights. Their practical implementations of initiatives include health practice and research, software design and cybersecurity, large-scale civil engineering projects and promoting best practice in journalism. As a result, this case study shows strong achievement of Australia Awards long-term Outcome 1—contributions to development.

This case study also found that alumni developed strong professional and personal relationships while on award with Australian academics, mentors, other Australia Awards scholars, classmates, friends and community groups. Alumni use social media and email to stay connected both to Australia and their former home countries. Five of the 10 alumni featured in the case study undertook Australian Leadership Awards and developed specialised leadership skills, as well as ongoing links to industry through internships, mentoring and funding for conferences and seminars which would ultimately lead to work in Australia and abroad post award. Several alumni based overseas continue to collaborate with Australian organisations as part of their work in areas such as policy development in human trafficking and migrant worker rights, journalism and Pacific affairs, and food security. In addition, six alumni now based in Australia continue to share expertise with colleagues in their former home countries through ongoing professional connections. For alumni in this case study, Australia Awards long-term Outcome 2—cooperation with Australia—and Outcome 3—partnerships are being achieved.

Australia Awards alumni also demonstrated enduring positive views of Australia. All alumni interviewed highlighted Australia’s inclusive multicultural society, the high standard of teaching and learning within the university sector, and Australia’s global reputation for high quality education as important factors in shaping these views. For alumni in this case study, Australia Awards long-term Outcome 4—positive views of Australia is being achieved.

This case study has shown that mobile alumni, as far back as the Colombo Plan, are using the expertise developed on award to improve sustainable development in their countries of origin as well as globally. These findings are important because they help to show that Australia Awards alumni who no longer live in their country of origin have made, and continue to make strong contributions towards the achievement of the Australia Awards long-term outcomes. This report therefore helps in dispelling any myths that those who move from their country after their award are no longer able to achieve the aims of their scholarships, and highlights the utility in maintaining engagement with these alumni in order to further their ability to contribute to sustainable development and connect their home countries with Australia.

7. Alumni Profiles



Ms Aminath Hussain

I think I'm most proud just to be able to move from one country to another. I suppose I could say I was just at the right place at the right time.

Scholarship

Australia Awards scholarship,
Australian Leadership Awards

Years

2010 to 2011

Degree

Master of Food Science

University

University of Melbourne

Country of origin

Maldives

Country of residence

Ireland

Current position

Regulatory Specialist, Kerry Group, Global Technology and Innovation Centre, Ireland

Brief biography

With 10 years' experience as a food regulatory specialist, Ms Aminath Hussain has had a truly global career. While working as a Scientific Officer in the Maldives Food and Drug Authority she received an Australian Development Scholarship and Australian Leadership Awards (ALA). She undertook a Master of Food Science at the University of Melbourne in 2010 to 2011 and a six-month internship with Dairy Victoria (as part of her ALA).

Returning to the Maldives in early 2012, she found she no longer had a civil service position due to political unrest and a change in government. While out of work she decided to use a connection made through her ALA to seek work at Kerry, a global food company. In 2013, Ms Hussain moved to Malaysia and worked for Kerry as a Regulatory Technologist for the Asian Pacific region for three years.

In 2016, Ms Hussain was promoted to a senior regulatory role and moved to Ireland to work at Kerry's Global Technology and Innovation Centre, a hub for regional customers in Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA). In 2017, she became a Regulatory Specialist for the EMEA and is now responsible for a global portfolio of products. Ms Hussain has recently become a permanent resident of Ireland, and maintains close ties with family and friends in the Maldives.



Ms Fitriana (Ana) Nur

I've achieved a lot in the Middle East, changing their perspective on migrant workers, advocating for policy... In Saudi Arabia now, they set up a national task force on counter trafficking, and I was proud to be part of that process. I was proud that the Jordanian Government, that the Saudi Arabian Government, Lebanese Government, Iraqi Government, have seen the importance of protections of migrant workers in their policy, and I was proud to be part of that engagement.

Scholarship

Australia Awards scholarship,
Australian Leadership Awards

Years

2010 to 2011

Degree

Master of Public Policy and Management

University

University of Melbourne

Country of origin

Indonesia

Country of residence

South Sudan

Current position

Unit Head of Migration Management, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), South Sudan

Brief biography

Ms Fitriana (Ana) Nur became passionate about the challenges experienced by internally displaced populations (IDP) and migrant workers while working for the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Aceh, Indonesia, following the 2004 tsunami. After working for IOM for several years, she applied for an Australian Development Scholarship and studied a Master of Public Policy and Management at the University of Melbourne. Using funding from her Australian Leadership Awards (ALA) and connections made through IOM, she undertook an executive internship at IOM's regional office in Cairo, where she worked as a research assistant for the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region.

On her return to Indonesia, she worked briefly for the Asia Foundation, before being headhunted for a role as a Counter Trafficking Project Consultant for IOM in Amman, Jordan, supporting undocumented workers being trafficked in the Middle East. In 2013, she moved to Lebanon and worked as a Regional Protect Manager for IOM, providing policy advocacy and support to exploited migrant workers in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon.

Ms Nur is currently the Unit Head of Migration Management for IOM, in Juba, South Sudan and hopes to publish a book about her experiences in the field in 2021.



Ms Eryn Gayle Echavez de Leon

The achievement I'm most proud of is we were [recently] able to allocate around USD100 million to Indonesia for forestry and deforestation work.

Scholarship

Australia Awards scholarship
Australian Leadership Awards

Years

2013 to 2014

Degree

Master of Climate Change and Graduate Diploma
Environment Management and Development

University

Australian National University

Country of origin

Philippines

Country of residence

South Korea

Current position

Associate, Division of Mitigation and Adaption, Green Climate Fund (GCF), South Korea

Brief biography

Ms Eryn Gayle Echavez de Leon is a Climate Change Specialist based at the Green Climate Fund in Songdo, South Korea. Originally from the Philippines, Ms Echavez de Leon has worked on a range of international climate adaption programs as a researcher, project manager and technical advisor.

Ms Echavez de Leon received an Australian Development Scholarship and Australian Leadership Award (ALA) while working as a consultant for the Asian Development Bank in Manila. She studied a Master of Climate Change at the Australian National University and was awarded the Garnaut Prize for Excellence in 2014. She returned to the Philippines and began working as a consultant for several United Nations (UN) agencies on climate related projects in the Asia Pacific region.

In 2017, she worked as the Climate and Energy Attaché at the British Embassy in Manila and provided policy advice to the Global Program on Future Cities and the Regional Low Carbon Program as part of the GBP1.2 billion United Kingdom Prosperity Fund in the Philippines. In 2018, she moved to South Korea and joined the Division of Mitigation and Adaption at the Green Climate Fund (GCF) in Songdo where she is responsible for the technical design of global climate change plans, programs and projects worth over USD350 million.



Ms Thu Ngo

[On my return from award] there was a huge demand for bank training, training in soft skills, technical skills, transferring the knowledge. I was lucky enough to be part of a project, to set up the bank training centre. I did a lot of translation, converting the training material into a local language, organising workshops in soft skills, banking skills and all other technical courses to train the local bankers.

Scholarship

Australian Development Scholarship

Years

2001

Degree

Master of Applied Finance

University

University of Melbourne

Country of origin

Vietnam

Country of residence

Australia

Current position

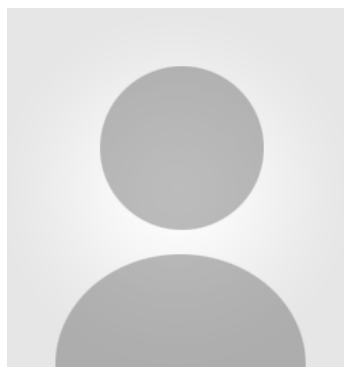
Private Banker- Leading Specialist, Westpac Corporation, Australia

Brief biography

Ms Thu Ngo joined the team at the ANZ Bank in Vietnam in 1996 and became interested in Australia and Australian business culture. In 2001, she received an Australian Development Award and took study leave to undertake a Master of Applied Finance at the University of Melbourne.

On her return to Vietnam, she continued to work for ANZ Bank. This led to an opportunity to work for the International Finance Corporation (IFC) as part of the Mekong Project Development Facility (MPDF). She was involved in the set-up of the Business Banking Centre and provided training to bank employees to support the development of a private banking sector in Vietnam.

While working at the IFC, her husband took a role with a construction company in Australia, and they decided to move to Australia permanently. The couple moved to Melbourne and Ms Ngo joined the Westpac Banking Corporation in 2006. Over the last 14 years Ms Ngo has had a range of roles at Westpac, utilising both her banking expertise, Vietnamese language, and customer relationship skills. Ms Ngo is currently working as a Private Banker-Leading Specialist for Westpac in Melbourne.



Mr Abhineet Gupta

The scholarship experience exposed me to this country's culture and ways of working and a lot of the ideas which [gave me] an advantage compared to most other international students...

Scholarship

Australia Awards Scholarship

Years

2010 to 2012

Degree

Bachelor of Forensic Biology in Biomedical Science

University

University of Technology Sydney

Country of origin

Fiji

Country of residence

Australia

Current position

Cyber Security Consultant, Ernst and Young, Australia

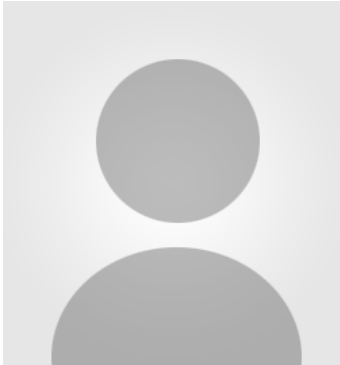
Brief biography

With a passion for science and technology, Mr Abhineet Gupta left high school keen to pursue a career as a forensic scientist. He received an Australian Development Scholarship and studied a Bachelor of Forensic Biology at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS). While at UTS he worked as a student mentor on the Peer Assisted Study Success (PASS) program and won a national award for innovative teaching practices in the field of physics.

Returning to Fiji post award, Mr Gupta found limited job opportunities in his specialist field and decided to re-train. He undertook a Bachelor of Science (Computer Science and Engineering Technology) at the University of the South Pacific (UPS) and began working in Fiji as a Research and Development Lead Technician and IT Administrator.

Keen to build upon his IT knowledge, Mr Gupta returned to Australia in 2016 as a self-funded student and studied a Master of Information Technology (MIT) at the University of Melbourne. While at university he volunteered on several projects aimed at increasing high school student's engagement in STEM based fields including working as a mentor on In2Science.

After completing his MIT in 2018, Mr Gupta took a graduate role in the Advance Security Centre at Ernst and Young (EY). He is currently a Cyber Security Consultant and lives and works in Melbourne.



Alumna A

This scholarship opened a door and then opened my eyes, opened my future.

Scholarship

Australia Awards scholarship

Years*

Degree

Master of Engineering Management

University*

Country of origin

*Sub Saharan Africa

Country of residence

Australia

Current position

Civil Engineer, Australia

Brief biography

Originally from Sub-Saharan Africa, Alumna A was awarded an Australia Awards scholarship and studied a Master of Engineering Management. On completion of her award, Alumna A successfully applied for asylum in Australia. She currently lives in Australia and works as a civil engineer on large infrastructure projects.

*Alum A asked not to be identified



Mr Khoa Ho-Le (Ken)

I think the most important thing to me was that I was able to employ a dozen Vietnamese programmers in Vietnam [as part of software business]. That was my contribution back to Vietnam and I think that they were two [parts of this [...One is monetary because they get paid a decent amount compared to other Vietnamese programmers...but also the knowledge transfer, because I knew how things are going in here, the new technology, the way it should work. So, I think it would rub off some of that knowledge onto them and so I think that's my best achievement.

Scholarship

Colombo Plan Scholarship

Years

1974 to 1977

Degree

Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering

University

Monash University

Country of origin

Vietnam

Country of residence

Australia

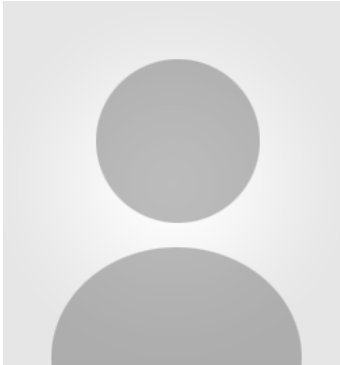
Current position

Retired (former Research Scientist at the CSIRO and small business owner), Australia

Brief biography

Originally from Vietnam, Mr Khoa Ho-Le (Ken) was awarded a Colombo Plan Scholarship and studied a Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering at Monash University. While on award, the South Vietnamese Government fell to the Communists and Dr Ho-Le found himself stranded in Australia and facing an uncertain future. With the support of the Australian Government, he was able to complete his degree and spent a few months undertaking doctoral studies at the University of Melbourne before accepting a job at Telecom (now Telstra) in the research lab as a chemical engineer. He worked for Telecom for five years and completed a Bachelor of Computer Science.

Dr Ho-Le moved to the CSIRO and worked as a research scientist in manufacturing technology and was supported to complete his PhD in Mechanical Engineering at Monash University. After leaving the CSIRO, he worked in the private sector before starting his own business which developed software for medical practices.



Dr Siew Hoon Cheah

I think I've been very blessed in the sense that being a GP, I was in contact with a lot of families, and, as the years have rolled on, you become part of them, and they become part of you... So general practice has been very rewarding because you know you've helped the families and they trust you... It's been a good career. I've loved my work.

Scholarship

Colombo Plan Scholarship

Years

1964 to 1969

Degree

Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery, Honours (MBBS) (Hons)

University

Monash University

Country of origin

Malaysia

Country of residence

Australia

Current position

Retired (former medical doctor), Australia

Brief biography

Growing up with six siblings, Dr Siew Hoon Cheah was always encouraged by her father to do well academically and pursue a scholarship to undertake medical studies. Dr S. Cheah and her twin sister were awarded Colombo Plan Scholarships in 1962 and studied medicine in Australia from 1964 to 1969, both receiving first class honours.

In 1970, Dr S. Cheah returned to Malaysia and interned at Penang General Hospital, where her Australian training and skills were highly regarded. She was able to take on increased responsibilities during her early career due to her training at Monash University and worked in several rural locations in Malaysia (Kuantan and Seremban), before working at a private hospital in Kuala Lumpur for three years.

In 1976, Dr S. Cheah and her young family moved to Eildon in rural Victoria to work at the Eildon district hospital where her sister was based. Both her sister and their husbands worked at the hospital as doctors, contributing to the community for several years. In 1978, Dr S. Cheah moved to Melbourne and started a private practice in Noble Park North with her husband, developing strong community ties over many years working as a local GP.

Now retired, Dr S. Cheah volunteers as a community support worker and is actively involved in her local community in Melbourne.



Mr Alexander Rheeney

After I finished the internship with Lowy, I returned to PNG. Lowy introduced the Papua New Guinea-Australia Emerging Leaders Dialogue Program... I was one of the first ones, part of the 10. There were 10 Australians and there were 10 of us from PNG. So, the whole inspiration behind getting this group together was to build relationships but also to identify how we could use our skills to assist each other, address all the development challenges that we were facing, respectively in Australia and in PNG.

Scholarship

Australia Awards scholarship
Australian Leadership Awards (ALA)

Years

2011 to 2012

Degree

Master of Crosscultural Communication

University

University of Sydney

Country of origin

Papua New Guinea

Country of residence

Samoa

Current position

Co-Editor, Samoa Observer Newspaper Group, Samoa

Brief biography

With a distinguished career as a newspaper journalist in Papua New Guinea, Mr Alexander Rheeney was awarded an Australia Awards scholarship, and studied a Master of Crosscultural Communication at the University in University of Sydney. As part of the Australian Leadership Awards, Mr Rheeney undertook a six-month internship at the Lowy Institute, where he was involved in the Melanesia Program (predecessor of the Pacific Islands Program) and assisted research on PNG and other pacific islands nations. The internship allowed Mr Rheeney to cultivate strong academic connections with the Lowy Institute, and he became one of the first participants of the Institute's Papua New Guinea-Australia Emerging Leaders Dialogue Program.

On his return to PNG in 2012, Mr Rheeney became the Editor of the Post Courier Newspaper and began improving conditions for journalists and advocating for autonomy in the media. In 2016, he left the Courier and worked as a broadcast journalist and producer on TV1 before moving to Apia in Samoa in 2018, to take up a role as the Co-Editor of the Samoa Observer Newspaper Group.

An active mentor, Mr Rheeney provides ongoing support and training journalists as part of his role as Co-Editor on the Observer.



Dr Yadav Sharma Bajagai

I was the secretary of the Australian Alumni Association in Nepal. I had a good relationship with the Embassy...I worked for the government, I worked for the alumni association, and at the same time, I was awarded an outstanding young alumni award for my work from the Australian Trade Commission.

Scholarship

Australia Awards scholarship
Australian Leadership Awards

Years

2010 to 2011

Degree

Master of Animal Science and Management

University

The University of Queensland

Country of origin

Nepal

Country of residence

Australia

Current position

Research Officer, School of Health, Medical and Applied Sciences, Central Queensland Innovation and Research Precinct (CQIRP), Australia

Brief biography

Dr Yadav Sharma Bajagai is a Post-Doctoral Research Officer at the School of Health, Medical and Applied Sciences, Central Queensland University. He studied a Bachelor of Veterinary Science at Tribhuvan University before joining the Ministry of Agriculture in Nepal where he specialised in animal and poultry health and management, and food security.

In 2010, he was awarded an Australia Awards scholarship and Australian Leadership Awards to study a Master of Animal Science and Management at the University in Queensland, undertaking a short internship at Biosecurity Australia.

Post award, Dr Bajagai's career advanced quickly within the Ministry and he worked on several large food security initiatives in Nepal. He was instrumental in securing a USD58 million grant from the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), an initiative to improve food security among vulnerable groups in Nepal. This resulted in a promotion to Senior Veterinary Officer (Under-Secretary) within the Ministry of Agriculture.

Close ties with academics at the University of Queensland led to an opportunity to undertake doctoral studies on the impact of probiotics on poultry as part of an Endeavour Award. After graduating in May 2018, Dr Bajagai took up a post-doctoral position at the Central Queensland University where he now specialises in animal gut health, alternatives to antibiotic feed, and microbial ecology.

8. References

DFAT. (2016). *Australia Awards Global Strategy: Investing in the next generation of global leaders for development 2016–2018*. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Retrieved from: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/australia-awards-global-strategy.pdf>

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Annex 1: Methodology

This case study is the 21st undertaken by the GTF. It was designed to better understand the long-term outcomes of Australian Government development scholarship alumni who are no longer living in their country of origin. Collating evidence relating to these ‘mobile alumni’ included analysis of survey data collected by the GTF in its three previous Global Tracer Surveys, as well as in-depth interviews with 10 ‘mobile alumni’. Detail relating to the overall design for the GTF case studies, as well as technical methodologies for the Global Tracer Surveys can be found in previous reports by the GTF here: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/australia-awards/Pages/australia-awards-global-tracer-facility>

Objectives

As discussed in the introduction of this report, this particular study has been undertaken in order to increase the evidence and knowledge about these alumni. Three overarching aims of this case study are:

- a) to articulate the variety of factors that influence the pathways of mobile alumni post-award.
- b) to explore the extent to which mobile alumni are able to continue to make contributions to sustainable development (this is linked to Australia Awards long-term Outcome 1).
- c) to understand the way in which connections and networks developed while on award have been maintained and facilitated contributions of mobile alumni since graduation (this is linked to Australia Awards long-term Outcomes 2 and 3).

Intertwined in this case study aims is the ‘big-picture’ focus of the GTF; to examine the outcomes of alumni in relation to the long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards. These long-term outcomes are detailed in the main body of the report, and the propositions that underpin the analysis of the evidence collected in each case study can be found in Annex 2.

Approach

The data collection method used for the interviews in this case study was through interviews, conducted online using a range of online video-conferencing platforms, essentially tailored to the needs of the individual being interviewed. A set of questions were developed for alumni which closely followed the structure of previous GTF case study alumni interviews, with the only difference being some further probing of alumni in relation to their motivations, successes and challenges involved in moving from their original home country. Questions in the interview are asked consistently for each for alumni and align with the research propositions (located at Annex 2) and long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards. This ensures that data collected directly relate to the key questions the case studies are seeking to answer and that there is consistency across each case study.

As noted above the methodological detail relating to the survey data collection approach is contained in survey reports in Years 1, 2 and 3 of the GTF, accessible via the following link: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/australia-awards/Pages/australia-awards-global-tracer-facility>.

Sample definition and selection

The research of the GTF focuses on alumni of DFAT's Australia Awards and previous Australian Government-funded scholarships and awards (these include programs dating back to the Colombo Plan, which commence in the 1950s). For each case study undertaken by the GTF, this focus is further refined to a specific cohort of alumni.

This case study focuses on 'mobile alumni', meaning alumni who no longer live in their country of origin,⁵ and working in the country they now live in. The in-depth interviews in this case study involved 10 mobile alumni. Six of these alumni currently live and work in Australia, and four live and work in a third country—i.e. not in their country of origin, not in Australia, but somewhere else. Further insight into the characteristics and outcomes of mobile alumni for this report has been included based on analysis of responses to three Global Tracer Surveys undertaken by the GTF between 2016/17 and 2018/19. These surveys collected data from more than 6000 alumni of Australian development scholarships across the globe, including just over 400 mobile alumni.

The focus of the interview sample was to aim for 10 alumni with a to have a balance of characteristics relating to whether in Australia or a third country, region of origin, gender and sector of work/field of education. A matrix table was constructed to guide recruitment.

Interviewed alumni were identified and recruited in two ways. The first involved extracting data from the GTF surveys and contacting selected alumni who had previously participated. The second was through targeted contact with Post and managing contractors in regions where the case study researchers were needing to supplement the sample from the survey to find an alumni to participate based on achieving a balance of different alumni as outlined in the paragraph above.

Details relating to the alumni interview participants are included in the table below.

5 'Country of origin' in this case study is deemed to be the country in which an alum applied for and gained their scholarship to study in Australia.

Table 2: Mobility Case Study alumni participants

Gender	Name	Award Completion Year	Award	Course and University	Current Position
M	Mr Abhineet Gupta	2012	Australian Development Scholarship	Bachelor of Forensic Biology in Biomedical Science, University of Technology Sydney	Cyber Security Consultant, Ernst & Young, Australia
F	Ms Aminath Hussain	2011	Australia Awards, Australian Leadership Awards (ALA)	Master of Food Science, The University of Melbourne	Regulatory Specialist, Kerry Group, Global Technology and Innovation Centre, Ireland
F	Alum A	*	Australia Awards Scholarship	*	Civil Engineer, Australia
F	Ms Thu Ngo	2001	Australian Development scholarship	Master of Applied Finance, University of Melbourne	Private Banker- Leading Specialist, Westpac Corporation
F	Ms Eryn Gayle de Leon	2014	Australia Awards, Australian Leadership Awards (ALA)	Master of Climate Change, Australian National University	Associate, Division and Mitigation and Adaptation, Green Climate Fund, South Korea
F	Ms Fitriana Nur	2011	Australia Awards, Australian Leadership Awards (ALA)	Master of Public Policy and Management, University of Melbourne	Unit Head of Migration Management of International Organisation for Migration (IOM), South Sudan
M	Dr Yadav Sharma Bajagai	2011	Australia Awards, Australian Leadership Awards (ALA)	Master of Animal Studies, University of Queensland	Postdoctoral Research Fellow, School of Health, Medical and Applied Sciences/Central Queensland Innovation and Research Precinct (CQIRP), CQ University, Australia
M	Mr Alexander Rheeney	2012	Australia Awards, Australian Leadership Awards (ALA)	Master in Crosscultural Communication, University of Sydney	Co-Editor, Samoa Observer Newspaper Group, Samoa
M	Dr Khoa Ho-Le	1977	Colombo Plan	Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering, Monash University	Retired (former owner of a software engineering company), Australia
F	Dr Siew-Hoon Cheah	1969	Colombo Plan	Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery, Honours (MBBS, (Hons)), Monash University	Retired (former Medical Doctor), Australia

Data management and reporting

Interviews were voice recorded (with approval granted to do so). In addition, the researchers annotated responses during the interview. A transcription specialist transcribed all interview recordings. After the completion of the interview and transcription process, the researchers consolidated the written and oral recordings into a single near-verbatim transcript (with restarting of sentences and fillers excluded).

Coding and review

Interview scripts were subsequently coded using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, NVivo. This enabled emerging themes to be identified and links to be made between participants that supported or refuted the research propositions, as aligned with the long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards.

Analysis of the case study data involved a strategy that was guided by the theoretical proposition developed under the conceptual framework for the case study and by the techniques identified in the GTF's Case Study Approach document.

Where requested case study participants were sent segments of the report where clarification or review and approval were necessary.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations of this research that were inherent to both the nature of the research and the research process, as discussed below.

Positive response bias

It is probable that alumni who felt that they had a positive experience as an Australian Government scholarship recipient and/or had success in their career following their award are more likely to agree to participate in case studies. In a study by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK (Mawer, 2014), recognition of positive response bias is highlighted:

...there is widespread recognition that a more pressing problem is nonresponse bias in which those who reply to sample surveys are likely to be engaged with alumni associations or tracing (e.g. Day, Stackhouse and Geddes, 2009) and disproportionately represent the 'successful' outcomes of scholarship programmes (p.9).

Accordingly, it is likely that the alumni in this case study had a positive bias towards their experience, outcomes and views of Australia. The GTF has developed interview questions and analyses approaches to reduce the impact of this bias—these are applied consistently across all case studies. Through this approach, leading questions are avoided, and alumni are offered opportunities to reflect on their outcomes at the beginning and at the end of the interview without specific questions to guide their answers.

Nature of the research

Outcome 1 of the Global Strategy is: 'alumni are using the skills, knowledge and networks gained on award to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals.' However, some alumni have shaped development goals rather than contributed to them, and while it may be outside the purview of partner-country development goals that this research is being evaluated against, such contributions are still significant.

Throughout the research conducted, the GTF has consistently experienced difficulty in evaluating Outcome 2 'alumni are contributing to cooperation between Australia and partner countries', and Outcome 3 'effective, mutually advantageous partnerships between institutions and business [have been developed] in Australia and partner countries'. These two outcomes are aligned with the second research question for the case study 'How are Australia Awards contributing to Australia's economic and public diplomacy outcomes?' There is an overlap and difficulty in differentiating 'cooperation' and 'partnerships'. The research team delineated them by determining that Outcome 2 relates to people-to-people links including informal relationships; whereas Outcome 3 specifically relates to institutional links between the partner country and Australia, which alumni have contributed to establishing. For ease of understanding and simplification to align with potential upcoming changes to the Australia Awards Global Strategy, this report generally focuses on exploring Outcome 2 rather than Outcome 3. No issues were encountered by the research team in collecting, collating, coding or analysing data related to Outcome 4 of the Australia Awards—'Alumni view Australia, Australians and Australian expertise positively'.

Research process

The ability to code the interview transcripts effectively is dependent on understanding the partner-country development goals at the time these alumni were awarded their scholarships. Given the fact that participants in this case study were spread across nine different countries, the ability to fully contextualise each alumni contributions to their country of origin's goals was not feasible. This differs from other case studies of the GTF which have been focussed on a country and a sector of work, which has meant more detailed contextualisation of impact can be explored.

Annex 2: Case Study Propositions

Explanatory case studies require the development of propositions that are intricately linked to the original research questions. A proposition is a statement that helps direct attention to something that should be examined in a case study. The researcher has to make a speculation, on the basis of the literature and any other earlier evidence, as to what they expect the findings of the research to be. When a case study proposal includes specific propositions, it increases the likelihood that the researcher can limit the scope of study and complete the project. The researcher can have several propositions to guide the study, but each must have a distinct focus and purpose. The data collection and analysis can then be structured in order to support or refute the research propositions.

For the GTF, propositions were formed using the Global Strategy outcomes as the basis. Sub-propositions were formulated by speculating on the underlying assumption or enabling factors that realise the proposition. In alignment with the methodology, instruments will be designed to collect data that both support and refute the propositions.

1. Alumni use their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals⁶.
 - a. alumni develop skills, knowledge and networks on award that enable and are used to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals
 - b. alumni understand, value and want to contribute to partner-country development goals.
2. Alumni are contributing to cooperation between Australia and partner countries
 - a. alumni possess and are able to leverage their useful networks and relationships.
3. Effective, mutually advantageous partnerships between institutions and business [have been developed] in Australia and partner countries
 - a. alumni possess and are able to leverage their useful networks and relationships
 - b. partnerships that are developed are effective and mutually advantageous to participating countries.
4. Alumni view Australia and Australian expertise positively
 - a. alumni's views are underpinned by their experiences in Australia.
5. The benefits of receiving Australia Awards scholarship are experienced equally by all recipients.
 - a. receiving Australia Awards scholarship positively addresses, rather than reinforces, imbalances that are associated with gender and disability.

⁶ This proposition differs from the Australia Awards Program Logic long-term Outcome 1 in order to link this proposition to the Goal of the Australia Awards Program. The use of the term 'partner-country development goals instead of 'sustainable development' makes the proposition and ensuing questions more relevant and relatable to alumni.