Australia Awards

Baseline
Perception Survey
2016

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List of Acronyms

AAS	Australia Awards Scholarships
CA	Coordinating Authority
DAP	Direct Aid Programme
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
HOM	Heads of Mission
LES	Locally Engaged Staff
MC	Managing Contractor
PDB	Pre - Departure Briefings
SCA	Short Course Awards
WPR	Work Plan on Return

Definition of Terms

Term	Meaning
Alumna	Singular for female graduate program recipient
Alumnus	Singular for male graduate program recipient
Alumni	Refers to plural for both female and male graduate program recipients
Coordinating Authority	African country's government representative – contact person for all bilateral relations with the program
Links	Refers to personal, professional and/or institutional/organisational level relationships established by Alumni
Scholarships:	Long term awards opportunities this includes Masters and PhDs. Scholarships in this report mostly refers to Masters awards
Short Course Awards	Short term training courses, some of the courses are delivered in Africa and Australia with some now entirely delivered in Africa.
Outcomes	This relates to program objectives or expected program results for the Australia Awards – Africa program these outcomes are: 1. Alumni are using awards, skills, knowledge and networks in key sectors relevant to their training to contribute to sustainable development in their workplace and/ community; 2. Targeted countries in Africa view Australia as a valued partner; and 3. Alumni have positive ongoing links with Australia.

1. Executive Summary

The Australia Awards – Africa program goal is for development of targeted African countries to be enhanced by Australia Awards Alumni contributions and positive relationships with Australia. Over 5,000 Alumni from 51 African countries have benefited from the current and predecessor programs since 1960. The new phase of the Australia Awards – Africa program commenced in April 2016 to promote and support Australian development and economic diplomacy objectives in Sub-Saharan Africa.

A mixed-methods baseline survey was conducted by Palladium and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Africa Desk staff to understand key stakeholder perceptions and attitudes around the program's outcomes and assess the validity of program logic assumptions. Key stakeholders include: DFAT Heads of Mission (HOM), DFAT Post staff, Coordinating Authorities (CA), Short Course Awards (SCA) providers, Awardees, Alumni and their supervisors. Stakeholders participated through a combination of face to face interviews, telephone interviews, focus group discussion and an online survey.

In general, all stakeholders agree that the Australia Awards contributes to development in targeted African Countries, and the objectives are realistic:

- Alumni are using awards acquired skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to sustainable development;
- Alumni have positive ongoing links with Australia; and
- Targeted countries in Africa view Australia as a valued partner.

DFAT Posts tend to view the Awards program favourably and have received positive feedback about the program across many different countries. The prestige of the Awards benefits Alumni in their career and helps improve influence, which in turn has a positive effect on the status of Australia as a valued partner in African development. Further, whilst the Awards program is useful for public diplomacy, it is not essential. Posts noted that the program generates goodwill .

The recognition of Australia, and its status as a valued partner, is affected by a range of factors including: the size of the partner country; the level of support from other donors; the number of Alumni in country; the mix of Australia Awards Scholarships (AAS) and Short Course Awards (SCA); the effort applied at Post to maintain Alumni networks; and, importantly, other DFAT activities in country.

Generally, CAs believed that Australia Awards is highly effective in supporting development priorities in their countries. Development priorities tend to be defined by human capital skills needs, and in some cases CAs requested the inclusion of additional priority areas to accommodate these needs. Most CAs noted that Australia Awards – Africa is managed extremely well and the level of scholarship support provided by the program is not matched by other development partners. CAs tend to have limited contact with Alumni upon return and could not specifically identify development contributions of Alumni in their home countries. Most CAs expressed a desire to know more about what Alumni are doing.

The sample of employers was not representative due to unavailability of some targeted employers, and results cannot be generalised to represent the employers of the Awards recipients. The program has a stronger resonance with public sector employers over those in the private sector, with most having only known of the program through their employee.

Employers could identify how the Alumni have benefited through their work within the organisations. Few could project the Alumni's impacts outside of the organisation. Importantly, the ability to attract private sector Awardees presents some challenges. Alumni may not retain their job, and if they do reintegration may be difficult. Some employers, mostly for the private sector have limited ability to offer Alumni a breadth of practical experience and/or a diversity of projects to work on when they returned.

Alumni feel duty-bound to apply the skills that they learned and promote the image of Australia as a valued development partner. The Work Plan on Return (WPR) is an effective mechanism for reflecting on, and progressing, development activity on return however it can be difficult to implement practically. The key enablers identified for influencing development on Alumni's return were personal motivation and the professional environment to which they return. Barriers include a lack of support from supervisors; problems in readjusting; change in workplace context; being placed in a role where skills are not needed; lack of resources, or not having a job to go back to. Despite these obstacles, Alumni have successfully transferred some of the skills learned.

Links between Alumni and Australia are poor. Most links are maintained informally on a social level or through in-country Alumni Association networks only. Alumni generally feel that maintaining links with people met on award is important but distance could make this difficult.

Most Awardees have an aspirational view of their award experience and tend to focus on how they might contribute to their workplaces on return. Awardees that were spoken to during the PDBs, demonstrate an understanding of what is expected of them on award and on return. They intend to take full advantage of networking opportunities whilst on award and maintain these contacts and promote Australia as a valued development when they return.

All stakeholder groups believed the economic diplomacy, public diplomacy, and development outcomes can be achieved with varying degrees of success. The definition of these concepts varied by stakeholder groups, especially in terms of economic and public diplomacy. Posts noted that contributions to economic diplomacy are muted at best. The expectation that Alumni will be able to improve trade with Australia is unrealistic as most Alumni work in the public sector.

The definition of development outcomes was consistent across all stakeholder groups although the perceived contribution to sustainable development differed by stakeholder group. Alumni have been able to make significant contributions to development using award acquired skills. Employers are positive about the way the Alumni have contributed to the organisation upon return.

Australia is, to a large extent, viewed as a valuable partner in Africa. Engagements with partner governments are polite and positive, and Governments note that no other donor gives this type of scholarship with the level of funding and support.

The program has made significant advancements through the incorporation of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI). Program activities are inclusive and demonstrate inclusive practices towards women and differently abled people, although some felt more could be done to include the socially disadvantaged. Alumni willingness and action, including from male Alumni, to support gender equality and/or social inclusion is increasing.

Barriers that are faced in implementing GESI vary from country to country and are mostly cultural due to traditional beliefs. Alumni also experience barriers to implementing inclusion on return through restrictive policies in their organisations, particularly for the disabled.

Recommendations

The analysis of perceptions has resulted in the following recommendations:

1. Awards processes, particularly leading up to mobilisation, need to be further cognisant of the country's operating context. The efficacy of online processes for example - application and promotion need to also be considered for women, marginalised groups rural and remote applicants. In addition, the program can continue to assess the inclusion of additional priority areas, that recognise Australia's expertise, that align to country development plans through Country Profiles.

2. The program should place more emphasis on WPR development throughout the award cycle:

    a. There must be support and engagement from employers;

    b. WPRs need to consider required and available resources to implement activities within the WPR and should include estimated budgets that are agreed with employers pre-departure; and

    c. Alumni should be encouraged and supported, though WPR preparation, to raise their profile on return and effectively communicate their own development contributions.

3. The program should use the updated Alumni database and/or the global Alumni portal to assist Alumni in identifying organisations where there are a critical mass of Alumni and identify forms of support to leverage these groups as coalitions of change.

4. The program needs to review how assessment methodologies of Alumni's role in contributing to wider societal impact changes. Attribution of Alumni's contribution needs to consider the Alumni's role and level of engagement in, for example effecting national policies, and influence in policy changes and how such policy contributes to wider societal impact changes. One approach may be to case study specific policy changes that arise from an Alumnus or group of Alumni to evaluate that policy reform.

5. The program must assess how it monitors and communicates the contribution of Public Sector Alumni to economic diplomacy through their influence in creating an enabling environment for trade opportunities for Australia. The program's Outcomes Study and Alumni Review Workshops can support in assessing and promoting such outcomes.

6. There is a reputational risk to scaling the Program up and down inconsistently. DFAT posts emphasised that it is important to have consistency in funding to stabilise expectations from partner governments.

7. There is need for enhanced public diplomacy to support raising Australia's profile in Africa, including scaling up communication of the program's reach and coverage in African countries, particularly around "other" development work (and not just capacity building) by the Australian government. This can be achieved through enhanced profiling of Alumni and dissemination of Alumni success stories - including small grants projects.

8. The inclusion of more private sector awardees may assist in strengthening the reputation of Australia to Africa commerce. Non-public sector awardees would

benefit from increased opportunities to forge business to business or civil society organisation relationships whilst on award.

9. Australia Awards – Africa should conduct a thematic review to examine the extent to which types of links, particularly those to Australia, have enabled Alumni to contribute to program outcomes. Options to effectively catalyse these links should be investigated, for example, through the Alumni small grants scheme.

10. The extent to which SCAs recipients can deliver effective links with Australia, particularly for Short Courses that are delivered solely in Africa could be assessed by considering the sometimes-competing nature of development impact and diplomatic relationships in country.

2. Introduction

Background

Scholarships have been fundamental for the Australian Government's development aid in Africa. The scholarship program has existed since the 1960s, with over 5 000 Alumni from 51 African countries. The program now referred to as the Australia Awards – Africa has evolved in the last years with a change in focus and scope. Since 2011, 3,918 Africans have benefited from the program. The new phase of the Australia Awards – Africa (2016-2020) started in April 2016. The program will promote and support Australian development and economic diplomacy objectives in Sub Saharan Africa.

The goal and expected outcomes of the current program are;

Goal: The development of targeted African countries is enhanced by Australia Awards Alumni contributions and positive relationships with Australia.

Outcome 1: Alumni are using awards skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to sustainable development;

Outcome 2: Alumni have positive ongoing links with Australia; and

Outcome 3: Targeted countries in Africa view Australia as a valued partner.

The extent to which these outcomes are relevant, and are currently perceived have been assessed through a baseline survey of attitudes and perceptions of the key program stakeholders. The survey has also supported the collation of the Australia Awards – Africa (2016-2020) baseline data on outcomes as required in the Statement of Requirements[1].

Purpose and Scope of Survey

The baseline perception survey aimed to gather stakeholder perceptions and attitudes towards the program's main outcomes, examining which program logic assumptions have held, or are holding, true.

Specific objectives of the survey were to;

- Gain an understanding of the level of awareness and support by stakeholders on the program outcomes;
- Assess the stakeholders' perception and attitude towards the program's main outcomes; and
- Examine which program logic assumptions have an evidence base and document these.

The survey targeted key Australia Awards - Africa stakeholders, identified as: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Heads of Mission, DFAT Post staff (that work with Australia Awards), Coordinating Authorities (CA), Short Course Award (SCA) providers, Awardees (prior to departure and in Australia), Alumni and supervisors of Alumni (Employers). The survey team comprised of Palladium and DFAT Africa Desk staff who prepared the methodology, data collection tools, arranged logistics for field work and conducted all data collection, analysis and reporting.

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[1] Australia Awards in Africa Statement of Requirements – Contract 72360.

3. Methodology and Approach

The survey employed a mixed methodology. Qualitative data was gathered from in-depth face to face and telephone interviews with respondents as well as focus group discussions with 2017 Awardees who were attending Pre - Departure Briefings (PDBs). Further, an online survey was distributed via survey monkey to Alumni and Awardees. Data collection occurred through teams that applied the field manual (Annex 1) to ensure consistency in data collection. The field manual provided: an outline on how to conduct interviews and focus groups; templates of consent forms for CAs; in-depth interview protocols for each stakeholder group; and a standardised reporting template with a summary record for interview notes.

Data collection teams visited Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe to conduct face to face interviews. The in-depth interview protocols were piloted in South Africa and Kenya during the first week of data collection, revisions were subsequently made to the final survey tools. Each interview was conducted by at least two people, with one serving as the note taker and the other as the interviewer. Some interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the interviewee and the recording was used to finalise the summary notes. Leximancer, a qualitative analysis software package, was used to identify emerging themes from the data. The package supports with the identification of key themes which were used to draw up conclusions for each stakeholder group.

Sampling and Response Rate

Six Africa DFAT Posts[2] with eligible countries for the Awards were included in the sampling frame. Within the DFAT stakeholder group, sub-groups were identified as: Heads of Mission (HOM), Locally Engaged Staff (LES) and Australia-Based (A-based) officers. In total five (5) HOMs, nine (9) LES, three (3) A-Based officers and eight (8) CAs participated. Additionally, all five (5) SCA providers were included in the sample, and all participated.

A random sample using excel random number generation was identified for Awardees and Alumni who had received the Award since 2011. The sample size was calculated using an online sample size calculator[3] with a sample size of 337 Awardees and Alumni. Of these, selected Alumni in cities where the data collection teams visited were interviewed face to face, six (6) of these were able to get their supervisors to participate. The 2017 Awardees were included in the Focus Group Discussion during the PDB and all other Alumni and Awardees received an online survey. The Alumni and Awardee response rates are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample and Response Rates

		Response Rate		
Citizenship	**Sample**	**Face – Face Interviews**	**Online Survey**	**Focus Group Discussion**
Botswana	14	0	2	11
Cameroon	10	0	6	0
Côte d'Ivoire	2	0	0	0

		Response Rate		
Citizenship	Sample	Face – Face Interviews	Online Survey	Focus Group Discussion
Ethiopia	21	0	3	0
Ghana	16	2	2	12
Kenya	36	4	6	22
Madagascar	4	0	1	5
Malawi	26	0	5	11
Mauritius	8	0	0	5
Mozambique	13	0	3	8
Namibia	6	0	0	0
Nigeria	30	0	14	8
Rwanda	15	0	2	0
Senegal	4	0	1	0
Seychelles	8	0	1	0
South Africa	14	2	2	7
South Sudan	2	0	1	0
Tanzania	49	0	8	17
Uganda	28	0	4	0
Zambia	26	3	7	17
Zimbabwe	5	1	0	0
Grand Total	**337**	**12**	**68**	**126**
Response Rate	**61%**			

Limitations and Bias

The survey team noted the following limitations and bias that could impact data collection, analysis and reporting:

- The online survey was self-administered and could potentially attract those with a positive opinion to respond to the survey. Those with negative experiences may be less inclined to respond and as such responses may be positively skewed.

- Efforts were made to include the supervisors of all Alumni that had face to face interviews, however some Alumni did not provide a supervisor contact as they had changed employment and the current supervisor was not familiar with their work and/ program. Further, some supervisors were not available to participate due to conflicting commitments at the time the research team was in country. The number of employers (six) is therefore not representative of the 3 918 Alumni and Awardees that have benefited from the program since 2011 and as such employer responses are anecdotal.

- Poor means of communication affected some telephone interviews and in some cases nuance was lost, making it difficult to establish rapport with the respondent. Interviewers noted that telephone interview responses were significantly shorter/more brief than face to face interviews, and may influence the reliability of the information.

- The survey did not seek to establish a counterfactual[4] and as such development contributions cannot be fully attributed to the to the Australia Awards scholarship only. Further, the achievement of program outcomes is also influenced by the knowledge, skills, working experience and networks that Alumni brought to their award experience. At best evidence pointing to the achievement of outcomes should be seen as having been affected/influenced by the award experience, but not fully attributed to it.

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[4] The counterfactual represents the situation that would have occurred in the absence of the development intervention, it usually forms part of quasi-experimental design through the use of a control group that is individuals that have not benefited from the intervention. This is not a practical approach for surveying Alumni.

4. Findings

4.1 Stakeholder Group Responses[5]

4.1.1. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

DFAT Posts engage with Australia Awards daily, providing oversight, preparing country profiles, coordinating events, and general support across the Award cycle. An important task at Post is to engage with Alumni at events organised by the Embassy/High Commission. HOMs engage strategically with the Australia Awards – Africa program throughout the awards cycle. Key forms of engagement occur primarily through the hosting of Awardee and Alumni functions. Meeting Alumni whilst travelling is beneficial and important.

DFAT Posts interpret the Australia Awards – Africa outcomes as building capacity and human resources in targeted African countries so that Alumni contribute meaningfully in their home countries. Alumni play a key role in what the program is trying to achieve through improving private sector growth, human development and trade. Through increased collaboration with Australia, Alumni are creating ongoing links between partner governments and Australia. Some Posts identified that it is particularly important for Alumni to support Australia as a valued partner and, through the creation of positive linkages, Alumni will likely enhance the reputation of Australia in those countries. At Posts, it is perceived that there are strong links with individual Alumni that are powerful for creating bilateral relationships.

> *"It's about skills for development, bilateral engagement and the people and relationships they keep and how they talk about Australia when they return from their Award that matters."*

Respondents acknowledged that the stated program outcomes seem realistic and reasonable, although measurement of education, reputation and development outcomes is difficult. Australia Awards program outcomes from Masters awards and SCAs are different. There is stronger resonance in countries that have been the recipients of Masters scholarships over a long period as well as where there are large numbers of Alumni working in the government or with civil society. SCA Alumni are less likely to participate in Alumni activities and with Posts as their personal connection to Australia is not as strong.

DFAT posts noted that Alumni have been able to positively contribute to development outcomes. Importantly, individual social, financial and professional status is improved because of Australia Awards. This leads to more influential contacts which translates into increased influence for the individual. Posts noted that the expectation for Alumni to make policy contributions may be unrealistic due to strict systems and structures to effect policy changes with responsibilities for policy being spread among several stakeholders (not Alumni alone). Section 4.3.1 below provides examples of Alumni development contributions provided by Posts.

HOMs commented that they meet many people across multiple countries who acknowledge that their award was a seminal experience and that they have generally been able to progress as a result. The recognition and support that Alumni receive from senior leadership within their workplaces allow them access to greater opportunities and more responsibility. The

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[5] Please note: All stakeholders provided suggestions on how the Program may be improved – these are document in tabular format at Annex 2.

ability to achieve improved employment outcomes, for example promotion, is also related to partner country politics, including systems of patronage and networks.

Posts commented that there is an expectation that Alumni contribute to the development of their home country or region, and some can access Direct Aid Programme (DAP) funding, or other funding, to initiate projects. This needs to be counterbalanced by a limited access to funds for projects (from donor and/or employer sources) as well as other challenges that may be encountered, for such as jealousy from supervisors who may feel challenged.

Posts noted that Australia Awards Alumni engagement requires additional effort, at Post, to form and build relationships so that Alumni can catalyse change over time. Whilst there are people to people linkages across a range of actors and sectors, it is time consuming for Post to find people, contact them and work with them. Posts also suggested that expectations from DFAT and Australia Awards Alumni engagement are realistic about how much to 'expect' from contacts and the effort that may be required to support them. In commenting on the four main global objectives for the Australia Awards Alumni engagement, Posts noted:

- **Strengthening diplomatic access and influence** works best where there are large cohorts of Alumni. DFAT has often used Alumni to access partner government officials and influential individuals. Some Posts engage actively through Alumni Associations, whereas others rely on individual relationships with Alumni. HOM engagement is essential in 'tapping' into Alumni networks.

- Posts did not believe that it is reasonable to expect a **growth in trade investment and business linkages** from Alumni as most Alumni are from the public sector, and not from business or the private sector. Whilst there is a role for the public sector, and an increasing number of private sector Alumni, to support increased trade investment and business by influencing policy frameworks and enabling environments that encourage economic growth, few posts could observe this happening directly as a result of the Australia Awards program.

- Posts viewed the program as important in **promoting education, science research[6] and innovation** noting that Alumni are ambassadors of the world class education from Australia. Alumni promote the program and reach people that the Post may not be able to reach, especially in rural areas, which is very important. Most respondents noted that there are many privately sponsored people, and high level officials, studying in Australia and attribute the popularity of Australia as an education destination, in part, to Australia Awards.

- Alumni are viewed as important in **showcasing Australia as a contemporary, innovative open society** as Alumni from different backgrounds will showcase Australia in different ways and across different platforms. In some locations, Posts observed that people do not talk much about Australia until and unless a person goes for an award. Further, there can be challenges to showcasing a contemporary, innovative open society when organisations are not ready for new ideas.

4.1.2. Coordinating Authorities

The CAs identify as the focal point for different in-country stakeholders who consult frequently with the Australian Embassy/High Commission on human resource priorities. CAs generally engage across the whole program cycle – identifying skills, supporting applications,

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[6] Some respondents perceived that contributions to science research were less evident from Masters Awards and SCA's, implying that expertise in science research may be showcased predominantly through Australia Awards Fellowships.

overseeing interviews, verification of candidate employment, involvement in PDB and on-award support (from home).

Most CAs felt that the Australia Awards program has been very effective in responding to the development priorities of their countries, mainly through Alumni who return to positions in which they can make a positive impact because of the skills gained. Most are earmarked for positions where the skills that they have learned are lacking. At least five CAs noted differences between the Australia Awards priority sectors and the needs of their countries. CAs recommended that the program considers other key emerging sectors, such as education, health, ocean economy, climate change and tourism. Whilst the program already considers emerging sectors through the country profiles, few CA's (only two) were aware of the programs foundational imperative to align Australia's expertise in key sectors with the development needs of a country. Section 5 provides more information on stakeholder recommendations on program considerations.

"The support that is given to us, is not given to us by any other partners"

Respondents surmised that key enablers for Alumni to use their award acquired skills and knowledge to contribute to program outcomes relate, in part, to the Alumni's personal drive and motivation, and to the working environment that the Alumni returns to. Alumni return with much excitement and enthusiasm about their new skills and knowledge and this motivates them to apply the energy and knowledge to worthwhile initiatives. Alumni who are recognised and supported by their organisations tend to contribute more favourably. Several Alumni, for example, have come back to receptions where high-ranking officials are present and acknowledge the Alumni. This recognition empowers Alumni to make contacts with people in the ideal position to make a difference. The ability for ministries to identify, and then take advantage of new skills and knowledge, is a major enabler of success.

Respondents noted that a lack of enablers can create significant challenges for Alumni to apply the skills that they have acquired. Alumni may find the pace of the working environment much slower and struggle to readjust to the workplace. Some Alumni, particularly those from the private sector, find they do not have a job to return to, or that the structure of the organisation has changed and they are no longer familiar with the organisational context. This sometimes results in a misalignment of skills and knowledge to job function. The hierarchical structure of most governments can be a major barrier for Alumni to implement their skills and knowledge in the public sector, with supervisors being identified as both major enablers and disablers of progress. A lack of adequate financial resources may be a challenge when it comes to implementing some of the activities in the Alumni WPRs.

Whilst some CAs noted Australia's support for other development projects in Africa, both within and outside of the Australia Awards program, the majority related Australia's contributions as access to education and increased human capital, rather than the resulting development outcomes.

Most of the respondents 88% (seven out of the eight) noted that the Australian Awards scholarship program is managed very well in comparison to others that are available, stating that the transparency of the awards process sets it apart. Australia Awards are viewed as prestigious, well run and very thorough. Program communications are good and logistics for the program are handled very well. A significant difference between this program and other scholarships programs is that applicants can apply for an Australia Award even after earlier unsuccessful applications. CA's were appreciative that applicants have an opportunity to improve their professional circumstances and refine their applications rather than being excluded indefinitely.

4.1.3. Short Course Awards Providers

SCA providers see their role as driving the success of the program, ensuring that short-courses comply with and achieve the overall program outcomes. They monitor the progress of the Alumni for six months after the course is completed to ensure Alumni implementation of their WPRs.

> *"We feel the pressure and responsibility that courses should be rich and well run and that the Awardees have a great experience of Australia from when they land to course completion and departure."*

SCA providers define the Australia Award program outcomes as creating links between Australia and Africa to contribute to the economic and political development of African countries through leadership, good governance, gender equality and social inclusion. This is accomplished through the transfer of skills and knowledge, technical training, leadership training, critical planning on Awardee/Alumni WPRs and building links with Australia.

SCA providers felt that the program objectives are ambitious. Awardees do gain skills and increase their knowledge however the results of this may be difficult to quantify and will require long-term measurement.

Post-course follow-up is critical to enabling greater contributions to be made as it provides some accountability to the educators, allows the Alumni to convert a certificate of attendance to a certificate of achievement, and importantly provides a mechanism to troubleshoot and problem solve. The ability for Alumni to keep engaging with the provider and the willingness of academics to maintain links is a significant enabler of Alumni contributing to program outcomes. Post-course follow up is well received and makes the impact more profound. In some cases this follow up can contribute to public diplomacy objectives. Some SCA providers felt that changes in post course visits procedures[7] result in a reduced ability for post course visits which hamper their ability to ensure positive outcomes and to monitor results. The distance between Australia and African countries also makes it difficult to follow up with Alumni. The assessment of the WPR implementation is difficult as implementation and completion times vary. It is important for employers to sign off on the Alumni's WPR. It was suggested that Australia Awards assess the Alumni in their place of work to see how well they have implemented their WPR.

> *"The participants seemed to genuinely engage and learn, and I was able to provide a learning experience that I consider to be of high quality – because of the resourcing to be able to host field visits and the like."*

Some Awardees are strongly driven by the need to give back to their communities. The SCA providers felt that the main intrinsic motivation for Awardees to apply for an award was a desire to contribute to the development of their home countries. Initial motivations also included international travel, however most Awardees develop a higher purpose whilst on award. Other intrinsic motivations include a good work ethic, a sense of patriotism and pride in themselves and the work they do. The SCA providers felt that the main extrinsic motivations for Awardees were learning how to work well and being appreciated by the SCA provider, their employers, family, and colleagues.

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[7] Procedural changes require that post-course visits are approved by the program so that in-country visits can be optimised and ensure value for money. Whilst SCA respondents perceived that the absence of post course visits might hamper progress against end of program outcomes, it should be noted that where post course visits are planned with other program activities these can be funded and remain part of the SCA delivery modality.

Generally, the providers were positive about the current scale and scope of the new program. They noted that when considering the geographical representation of SCA cohorts , there can be a dichotomy between the values of diffusion (across multiple geographies) and a tighter group of regionally similar individuals. The grouping of SCA awardees into regions more efficiently supports language needs, cultural considerations and context differences in home countries that allow for the development of a cadre of Alumni to work together to address and issues (for example an East African group working on infrastructure in the region could collectively increase the realistic development impact). Conversely, geographic diversity within the course does help establish links across the continent, which brings a diversity of experiences, but it may not be beneficial for implementation on return. Planning becomes easier if Awardees are from a reduced number of countries.

4.1.4. Employers

Some employers were familiar with the Australia Awards program because they knew people who had participated in the program. Others only found out about the program when their direct report started engaging with the program. Employers were generally unaware of the intended objectives of the program. Whilst most could identify individual and organisational benefits accruing to and from Alumni most assumed that notionally the overarching program goal was to help African countries to develop by providing education that supports sustainable development.

As expected, most employer responses directed their responses more to the individual Alumni, rather than at a programmatic level. For this reason, it is difficult to generalise findings from employers. Although the sample size was small, it was evident that public sector employers were more familiar with Australia Awards, whereas non-public sector employers were less aware and not as interested in the program.

When introduced to the current Australia Awards – Africa program objectives, all employers agreed that objectives of the program were both measurable and achievable. Some noted that they could see evidence of their employees contributing to these objectives as Alumni. The consensus was that the Alumni could contribute on many new levels due to the award acquired knowledge and skills. The Alumni come back motivated, with energy and a lot of useful information. They also have improved social links that they can draw on for assistance when necessary. Many Alumni have been given more responsibility and supervisors have noted that most participants have come back a lot more confident, willing and able to do more.

Generally, and correlating responses from other stakeholder groups, attracting more Awardees from the private sector will have some challenges, particularly around the ability for private sector employers to hold an Awardee's job whilst on award. In cases where the employer does retain the job for the Awardee, on return it is likely that organisation has 'moved on'; that is colleagues have formed working relationship with the Awardees' replacement, making it difficult for the Alumni to reintegrate into the workplace. Another challenge identified by the private sector is that there are limited opportunities to go beyond job function both in terms of exercising the breadth of skills gained on award, and being able to gain practical experience in all award areas.

All employers identified that a lack of resources is the main barrier to implementing WPR projects. Some argued that Alumni could be more innovative in using the skills they have gained. Alumni are required to 'sell' themselves and the benefits of what they have learned or they may face limited opportunities. Employers identified key enablers of success for Alumni are:

i)   Solid support structure (and recognition) from senior management;

ii)   Enabling working environment that is receptive to the uptake of new skills and knowledge;

iii)   Supportive supervisors;

iv)   Rewarding outstanding performance; and

v)   Receptive team of colleagues.

4.1.5. Alumni

Most Alumni interpreted the aims of Australia Awards as assisting Awardees/Alumni to become 'positive agents for change' in their home countries through the acquisition of new skills; to promote GESI; and to strengthen ties between Australia and their home countries. Most Alumni were more familiar with the benefits to themselves as individuals and benefits arising from Alumni interaction.

Alumni believe that the Australia Awards- Africa objectives are realistic. Most have been able to progress and apply their skills proactively on their return home and note that they have been able to engage at much higher levels within the organisation. Alumni have noted that their superiors and colleagues have been supportive of initiatives that they wished to implement on return. Alumni feel that they are expected to effect change in their home environments on their return and that they have a duty to pass on the knowledge that they have acquired. They are passionate about empowering others both in formal and informal settings.

> *"With education comes empowerment, had I not received the Australia Awards, I may not have been where I am, I have become versatile and develop the team I work with"*

Alumni acknowledged that their WPR is a valuable mechanism though which to apply the acquired knowledge. Many however find implementing their WPRs difficult. In some cases, Alumni have had to re-align their WPR to be more appropriate to their home country needs, and in other cases they have implemented the aspects of the plan that they could. Key enablers of successful WPRs were identified as having organisational support and adequate resources on return. One of the Alumnus from the private sector noted that having a job to come back to was crucial to participation in the program, and the resulting achievement of program outcomes.

Alumni noted that the ongoing support and encouragement from other Alumni and Alumni Associations are a major enabler of motivation and progress. They identified a lack of financial resources as the main barriers to implementing WPRs and therefore achieving the program objectives. This consistent finding implies that WPRs need to consider the required and available resources to implement activities within the WPR and could for example, include estimated budgets that are agreed with supervisors pre-departure.. Additionally, some Alumni found that reintegration has been difficult as they do not always return to a job that requires the use of skills that they learned. They have experienced that, whilst their attitudes have changed, attitudes in their home countries are not as easy to change. Some find resistance to new ideas or ways of working and, in a few cases, have not been possible to get the support of leadership. Alumni noted that the hierarchical nature of workplaces could inhibit progress, but that superiors can be either major enablers or barriers when it comes to the successful application of Award acquired skills.

> *"The Award has given me the initial push in creating a curiosity to want to do more, and then to attain the knowledge to do this. Having been exposed to the scholarship I think more globally and go beyond what I see at face value."*

Most Alumni cited distance as being a major problem in maintaining the positive links that they had made whilst in Australia. Those Alumni that had managed to maintain links, credit it as very important, especially when they need to collaborate on difficult concepts.

Alumni agreed for the most part that they had been able to transfer their award acquired knowledge and skills to the organisation that they worked for. They recognise an increased efficiency in the workplace and greater confidence to engage laterally with peers and vertically with leadership. Many are being viewed as trusted advisors and role models for other members of staff. Alumni tend to transfer technical skills and knowledge; analytical and critical thinking skills.

"Every good thing I am doing, I am doing because of Australia"

4.1.6. Awardees

Awardee responses tend to be aspirational; this is indicative of focus group discussions occurring during PDBs where Awardees are naturally reflective of the on-award experience. Most Awardees tend to focus their prospective Alumni experience on their relationship with their employer on return. They understand that the program goals will help them develop their careers and build a foundation on which they would be able to apply what they will have learned. They further believe that the goal is to assist countries in achieving their long-term development agenda by building human capital and fostering long-term relationships that are of mutual benefit to both countries.

Awardees feel that their role is to act as agents of positive change in their home countries by facilitating and establishing professional business, social linkages and cultural exchange to upgrade and support skills development in Africa for sustainable growth. Awardees perceive that Australia's support for the program is to support bilateral relations with African governments. They define development outcomes as a sustainable inclusive transformation that occurs in a country by achieving specific development goals such as poverty reduction, disease reduction, increasing employment (for young people), social inclusion and gender equality.

Awardees agreed that the current DFAT definitions for public diplomacy, economic diplomacy and development outcomes are relevant to assess program effectiveness in that results show that Australia Awards has impact through cultural change and skills transfer. They commented, however, that economic and public diplomacy and development outcomes are not mutually exclusive and should be viewed holistically. Awardees want to promote better coherence between different stakeholders (specifically between the public and private sectors) and support each country to achieve their national development goals.

Awardees felt that a lot is expected of them, both whilst on award and when back at home. They intend to make use of available networking opportunities whilst in Australia to maximise their learning experience and to form lasting relationships that they can continue when they return home. Awardees believe that they are acting as ambassadors for their home countries and will act accordingly in Australia. They agreed that they will make the most of their experience in Australia to be able to make a real contribution on their return home. The Awardees also mentioned that they, as Alumni, will be obliged to showcase Australia as a valuable development partner to African countries.

Awardees believe that the main objectives of the program are measurable and achievable through their WPRs. The collective impact of the contributions made by each Alumni will contribute to the overall development of their home countries and most believe that a structured support system on their return will help them implement their WPRs. They also

acknowledged that they have an obligation to teach others what they have learned when they return home.

4.2 Stakeholder Interpretation of Key Concepts

Most respondents referenced public diplomacy, economic diplomacy and development outcomes as being achieved to some extent by the program. Different stakeholder groups did however define these concepts differently. DFAT respondents tended to reflect on these higher-level objectives from the point of view of Australia and its benefit from bilateral relationships with other countries. CAs viewed economic and public diplomacy as concepts within their own economies, not tied to bilateral incentives for Australia, and were generally more focussed on the acquisition of skills over diplomacy.

Some respondents have heard varying definitions for the terms public and economic diplomacy and seen them used interchangeably – this was reinforced by some stakeholder groups providing the same definition for public diplomacy as others had given for economic diplomacy. Many respondents also commented that public diplomacy, economic diplomacy and the achievement of development outcomes are not separate concepts, instead they all relate to each other, nonetheless definitions for each concept, as presented by respondents are included below.

Stakeholders were asked of their perception of what they view as the program objective and their interpretation of key program terms. Stakeholder perception was coded to present the extent to which stakeholders felt the program was achieving public, economic and development outcomes. Table 2 below presents the summary of stakeholder interpretation of key program terms and their perception on how the program is contributing to these, where:

- Red: Not much has been done and there is little evidence to support that the program is contributing to the outcome.

- Orange: The program has supported the achievement of this outcome to some extent but more could still be done. There is some evidence that the program is contributing to the outcome.

- Green: The program is on track in attaining this outcome. Stakeholders are of the opinion that the program is contributing to the outcome to a large extent.

Table 2: Stakeholder Interpretation of Program Key Terms

Overall program outcome	Building capacity and human resources in targeted African countries. Access to education and increased human capital	
Public Diplomacy	Australia building relationships with partner countries for institutional collaboration, partnerships and engagement through awareness of each other's activities.	■ (Orange)
Economic Diplomacy	Promotion of Australian investment in Africa and contributing to economic return to Australia	■ (Red)
Development Outcome	i) *DFAT:* application of skills and knowledge by Alumni ii) *CA:* contributing skills and knowledge in areas of human resource deficiency iii) *Awardees/Alumni:* application of skills and knowledge in workplace to improve their respective organisations	■ (Green)

4.2.1. Public Diplomacy

The Australian view on public diplomacy relates to Australia building relationships with partner countries at multiple levels including for institutional collaboration, partnerships and engagement through awareness of each other's activities. Public diplomacy is perceived as 'more hearts and minds' in enhancing Australia's reputation and reflecting the national views of Australia to develop links that build Australia's interests.

The view from African respondents is that public diplomacy is about understanding different cultures and norms. It is also perceived as advocacy for governance issues and public perception of governance structures. Some respondents also defined public diplomacy as bilateral diplomacy – that is to facilitate bilateral agreements between countries .

The ability to leverage Australia Awards for public diplomacy is contingent upon a range of other factors including:

i)   Size of the partner country,

ii)   Level of support from other donors,

iii)   Number of Alumni,

iv)   Mix of Scholarship and SCA Alumni,

v)   Effort applied at Post to maintain Alumni networks, and

vi)   Other DFAT activities in country.

DFAT respondents, particularly those in East Africa, noted that the Alumni are very useful for diplomatic access and Alumni events are useful in promoting Australia in country. However whilst the program is useful in this regard, it is not essential. In some countries, Alumni networks support the identification and building of relationships with useful organisations and individuals, and in some cases Alumni themselves are senior ranking decision makers who are receptive to Australia and Australians in progressing activities of mutual interest.

4.2.2. Economic Diplomacy

Stakeholders had mixed views on the definition of economic diplomacy, some interpreted this as building a local government's economy (including development); others defined economic diplomacy as promotion of Australian investment in Africa, links created by Australian businesses with Africa businesses and vice versa. Some respondents interpreted economic diplomacy as facilitating links between Australia and other countries in trade, investment and commercial opportunities to the benefit of both countries.

Whilst the Australian view of economic diplomacy is focussed more on economic return to Australia (through resources, returns and trade), African respondents tend to focus more on Africa profiting from reaching goals through economic development, investment (including foreign direct investment) so that the developing world is made equal to the developed world. Respondents suggested that economic diplomacy is influenced by several other factors, however it requires a targeted level of engagement of businesses and entities that will promote Australia's national interests to be effective.

The program has limited ability to effect economic diplomacy as Australia Awards is offered mainly to the public sector. Alumni are expected to play an important role in supporting trade, investment and business linkages but there is generally little evidence of this occurring - only one country could identify examples of Alumni growing trade and investment. This may change if there is a greater inclusion of private sector Awardees and if on award experience is also calibrated to maximising the establishment of useful networks, relationships and

opportunities. Further the program needs to assess how it monitors and communicates the contribution of public sector Alumni contributions to economic diplomacy through their influence in creating an enabling environment for trade opportunities for Australia.

4.2.3. Development Outcomes

Development outcomes are achieved by aligning to national (long term) development plans to effect sustainable inclusive transformation, measured through the economic growth of a country and the physical well-being of its citizens. All respondents understood development outcomes as they are defined within the Australia Awards program logic. All could identify direct links between national (country level) development and the Awards program, although the way these are achieved differed slightly between stakeholder groups:

- DFAT and Alumni identified that the application of skills and knowledge by Alumni in influential positions can transform organisations to be more effective in recognising, planning and implementing change processes that support development of a country. Alumni engagement was also seen as a significant enabler of development outcomes.

- CAs defined development outcomes from a human capital perspective. CAs view the program as contributing skills and knowledge in areas of human resource deficiency. Development outcomes are realised when these skills gaps are met.

- Awardees focussed more on the application of skills and knowledge in the public-sector workplace (particularly those with a critical mass of Alumni) to improve their respective organisations which in turn leads to improved development outcomes and potentially economic growth, either through changed policies, improved governance or coordinated action.

- Employers defined development primarily from the view of their organisation; that is the development outcomes would relate to the development of the employing organisation.

- SCA providers focussed mainly on the WPR as supporting development outcomes.

The achievement of development outcomes is discussed in the following sections.

4.3 Contribution to Program Outcomes

Stakeholder responses were reviewed to assess the extent to which:

- Alumni were contributing to development outcomes in Africa;
- The program had influenced and supported GESI issues in Africa;
- Australia is being perceived as a valued partner in Africa; and
- Links were being created with Australia because of the Australia Awards – Africa program.

Data from each stakeholder group was analysed separately to identify the group's perception of the outcome. Where possible, indicators to explain the outcomes were identified and an overview of the responses were aggregated with a traffic light rating system used to summarise the perception of each group per outcome. Where the survey did not gather stakeholder's perception on an outcome, this is not colour coded.

Characteristics to explain the traffic light ratings include:

- **Green:** The group perceives that there are positive contributions by Alumni to achieve the program outcome. Alumni have to a larger extent contributed to the achievement of the outcomes. For challenges and enablers, green shows that there is a conducive environment for Alumni to apply GESI.

- **Orange:** Stakeholders perceive Alumni are to some extent contributing to the program outcomes. Alumni may have faced some challenges to make use of the award acquired skills to be able to fully contribute to the program's outcome. Alumni have faced some challenges and there are limited opportunities available for Alumni to apply GESI.

- **Red:** Alumni have not been able to contribute to the program outcomes; there are significant challenges that may have affected Alumni's ability to contribute such as disconnect between employment and award. Stakeholders may not be familiar with what the Alumni have done to contribute to the development outcomes, thus poor /lack of communication between the stakeholder and Alumni.

Table 3: Perception of Alumni's Contribution to Program Outcomes by Stakeholder Groups

Contribution to Sustainable Development	Supervisors, SCA Providers, DFAT	Alumni, CAs

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion		
Program's Role in GESI	CAs	Alumni, SCA Providers, DFAT	Supervisor
GESI Challenges	Alumni, CAs, DFAT	Supervisor, SCA Provider
GESI Enablers	Alumni, CAs, DFAT	Supervisor, SCA Provider

Links with Australia	Alumni, SCA Providers, DFAT	Supervisor, CAs

Australia Status as a valued partner	Alumni, CAs	Supervisors, DFAT	SCA Providers

4.3.1. Contribution to Sustainable Development

Generally, Alumni are using the Award acquired skills in their work. Majority of the Alumni are employed in the public sector. DFAT Posts perceive that Alumni are making development contributions in their home countries, examples of contributions by Alumni provided were in agriculture, public policy and extractives. For example, upon return, a Nigerian Alumna who studied an Engineering course made valuable contribution in building a rail transport system meant to provide alternative transport from road mobility. Also, an Alumni from Madagascar who worked on an environmental assessment project, the first of its kind in the petroleum and mining sector.

CAs had mixed responses about the extent to which Alumni are using award acquired skills and knowledge to contribute to development in their home countries. Some CAs were positive about the role of Alumni in contributing to sustainable development. In Ghana, there are a number of Alumni from the Ministry of Food and Agriculture contributing to the Fisheries Commission department and other departments within the ministry.

Several CAs noted limited interaction with Alumni (post award) and limited resources to conduct post award follow-ups as a barrier to accessing information on how Alumni are using their awards acquired skills and knowledge. One CA also suggested that Alumni have an

obligation to raise their profile on return and communicate their own development contributions. Some CAs reported that they have generally received positive feedback from both the public and private sectors on Alumni progress through:

i) Observations of how people work (for example, the development of critical policy documents by Alumni);

ii) Informal discussions around the usefulness of Australian expertise and education;

iii) Increase in confidence of Alumni; and

iv) Stories of progression.

The CAs observed that the WPR is important in ensuring that awards acquired skills are used. There are definite benefits in terms of those who work in policy, where they adeptly apply the Award acquired skills and knowledge to their policy work – implementation and development.

SCA providers were optimistic on the role of Alumni in sustainable development contributions. Of the five providers that participated in the survey, three had been involved in the program for a long period while for the other two, their cohorts were still on award and did not have specific examples on what Alumni were doing. The three providers were positive that Alumni were making significant contributions to development while the other two providers had not had an opportunity to monitor the Alumni's progress in contributing to development outcomes, providers were hopeful that Alumni will likely make positive contributions.

All 36 (100%) Alumni that responded to the online survey are using the Awards acquired skills and knowledge to contribute to the development of their home country. Thirty-three (92%) provided specific examples of their contributions including: i) using the Award acquired skills in their daily work; ii) introducing new initiatives; and iii) transferring skills to colleagues. Common challenges in applying Awards acquired skills and knowledge and WPR activities include a lack of resources, organisational bureaucracy and resistance to change from employers and colleagues. Despite the challenges, Alumni have made significant contributions using Award acquired skills to introduce successful initiatives in the workplace or at national level[8].

Employers reported that Award acquired skills have benefited the organisations in different ways. Alumni have performed tasks that they will not have been able to execute prior to the Award. Only one supervisor could not comment on how the Alumna had used the skills since he had not engaged with the Alumna prior to study.

Based on the stakeholder feedback, Alumni are to a larger extent contributing to development outcomes and as noted the contribution depends on a number of factors and these include ; i) an enabling environment to be able to use the Awards acquired skills and knowledge; ii) Alumni's position and influence. Below are examples of some contributions by Alumni

Table 3: Examples of Alumni Development Contribution

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[8] Initiatives by Alumni were triangulated with supervisor responses.

- A **Kenyan Alumna** collaborating with other colleagues (non-Alumni) in the agricultural sector to conduct a health survey. She is also working with the Ministry of Health to conduct independent research on a Ministry of Health initiative – this has been recognised by the county health office.

- **Alumnus from Zimbabwe:** Alumnus' WPR focused on Employee Engagement Improvement. At the start of his course, he conducted an employee engagement survey at the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) and it stood at 46%, his aim after the course was to bring this to beyond 50%. ZIMRA has implemented some of his recommendations such as non-monetary rewards, continuous engagement and proactive implementation of change. The employee engagement survey results post-Award in 2013 stood at 53.6%, 2014 was 60% and 2015 saw a drop to 51% though there are factors outside the organisation that pushed it down. They are looking into the push-pull factors that brought it down. The Alumnus was also to implement a vehicle financing scheme for supervisors at ZIMRA that required USD 1.8m. The response from his superiors was negative, as they could not justify the cost. Alumnus looked for a partner and found a bank to fully fund the project, monthly payments are remitted directly to the bank from staff salaries. His superiors accepted the plan and asked him to assist other institutions to negotiate similar plans. This project is among the pioneers in Zimbabwe, as offering 0% deposit vehicle loans by banks is not common.

- **Alumnus from Kenya:** Skills and knowledge have been applied by the way the Alumnus engages, especially in the use of mining, explosives and the disputes that arise from this. Skills gained on award assist in giving direction and advice on how these can be mediated. The Alumnus is advising mining and quarry operators on the best way to mine, quarry and exercising good environmental care.

- **A Kenyan Alumnus** was seconded to the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development to support with the reviewing of the curriculum. Curriculum in Kenya has not been reviewed in 11 years. Alumnus is also on the National Steering Committee for Curriculum Change, performing a needs assessment. Further, the Alumnus retained links with Australia and has invited David Holst, Chairman of the Kardinya Community Committee and Chairman of the Intellectual Disability Association South Australia, introduced him to staff at the Australian High Commission in Nairobi to talk about what he does and how they could do the same in Kenya. Mr Holst will help support disabled children in Kenya.

- **Alumna from Ghana:** Since returning, she has been responsible for facilitating programs, representing the Director in meetings, writing speeches for him and selected to attend a lot of programs, meetings which his supervisor or other senior officers would usually attend. She has been given the responsibility of preparing speeches for the regional coordinating director and the supervisor believes the Alumnus has been able to prepare the good speeches because of the confidence she has, which she attributes to the program. She came back to a different role and unit within the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (before she was working with the districts. When she returned, she was transferred at the Regional Unit where she is responsible for M&E. She had no experience with M&E but drew on her exposure through the project management course she undertook while in Australia. The Alumna trains colleagues, farmers and participate in planning, currently the Alumna works in 16 districts.

- **Alumnus from Kenya:** Since return the Alumnus has been using knowledge and skills from Australia to conduct training to prison inmates or agricultural production (from land preparation, harvesting, marketing and livestock production). Products have been used in prison and generated revenue for prison.

4.3.2. Links with Australia

While DFAT posts agree that links are important in ensuring that there is continuous engagement between Australia and Africa, most DFAT posts are unaware of any current links, other than the Alumni Associations. Most Posts reiterated the importance of supporting the Associations to ensure there are ongoing links between Australia and Africa.

There are few Alumni that have maintained some links with Australia. Links are mainly informal social links with students met on award, lecturers and other people they met through social events, for example at church. The survey could not determine the level of engagement through these links, although it did determine that most communication is through email or on social media. No substantial results or activities have occurred through these networks.

SCA providers believed it is too ambitious to expect links to Australia to be formed through short courses. The short nature of SCAs means that the nature of contributions that can be made is limited. Recently, some courses have been entirely delivered in Africa and the only contact Awardees may have with Australia is through the course providers, it is therefore not realistic to expect any meaningful links to be created.

4.3.3. Australia Status as a Valued Partner in Africa

Australia is, to a large extent, viewed as a valuable partner in Africa. In comparing Australia with other donors, the program offers relatively smaller numbers of scholarships, however, all survey participants pointed out that Australia provides support throughout the award cycle including follow up with continued support to Alumni through professional development and constant engagement.

All nine CAs interviewed have a positive view of Australia's role in Africa. There is, however, a need to develop ways to measure the mutual benefit and how they value Australia. Engagements with partner governments are polite and positive. Governments note that no other donor gives this type of scholarship with this level of funding and ongoing support post award.

CAs pointed out to the program structure as being very inclusive and comprehensive.

All Posts consistently commented that generally those countries that receive Australia Awards Scholarships (masters awards) are more responsive than those who receive only SCAs – with a notable change in relationship from those partners who had previously received Masters and now receive only SCAs. Whilst the effects of a reduced scale and scope differed across Posts, most agreed that program objectives will be affected to some extent but not drastically. Perceived uncertainties around annual award numbers affects DFAT Posts' ability to confidently promote the awards which can affect Australia's recognition. However the perception of Australia's status as a valued partner tends to vary from country to country.

The engagement of government partners to determine award priority areas is viewed positively by CAs and in turn positively affects how the partner governments view Australia;

"In COUNTRY the relationship is a very progressive as the COUNTRY government is given the room to define the priority areas", stated the CA.

Australia's role in educational support is highly regarded by CAs, two CAs emphatically stated that Australia was amongst their valued donor agencies.

"The CA confirmed that Australia is in the top five development partners for "COUNTRY" in terms of training which is leading to development outcomes." – CA

"COUNTRY" appreciates what the Australian government is doing there are only two partners that give "COUNTRY" substantial scholarships i.e. Australia Award – Africa and Commonwealth – CA

As expected with Alumni, having benefited from the Award, their perception of Australia is generally positive. Almost all Alumni (96%) that participated in the survey believed Australia was a valued partner in African development, mainly in building human capacity. Alumni felt that Australia's role was likely to be acknowledged by those that have benefited from the program and or their close colleagues - Alumni may not have thought of Australia as a business or trading partner had they not benefited from the award.

Most of the employers had known the program because of the Alumni benefiting from the award. Common sentiments across supervisors was they had only started to know of Australia and its role in Africa because of the Alumni's award. Employers noted that they would benefit from an upfront briefing in the program and WPR formulation prior to departure for Australia.

4.3.4. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

Posts and CAs generally felt that Australia Awards promotes GESI. Most respondents reflected that whilst participation targets are not always met, GESI is demonstrated through equitable and accessible Awards processes. Some felt that more could be done to target inclusion of differently abled people however were unable to make suggestions about how to address inclusion in a different way. There is a growing awareness, willingness and action from Alumni to do more to support gender equality and/or social inclusion. All Posts acknowledged the Women in Leadership Network (WILN) as an important demonstration of the Program's commitment to inclusion. One Post noted that the program has not done much to address the socially disadvantaged although such action is not part of the programs overall objectives.

The Gender Focal Point (at Post) and the HOM's own awareness of inclusion is a major enabler to the application of GESI. The demonstrative effect of Alumni (through changed perception and GESI incorporation) who have benefited from the Australia Awards program also enables other people to relate to their experience and thereby support more inclusive practices.

Barriers to implementing GESI vary from country to country. Barriers are mostly cultural and relate to traditional beliefs about the role of women: in society (perception); in the home(activities); and in the family (role). Perceived challenges in Awards application and selection processes that affect GESI include: i) limited internet access for rural women; ii) the exclusion of sectors that will attract more women (e.g. education and health); and iii) balancing of family commitments and time away from spouse and/or children.

The main barriers to Alumni post award were identified as the policies in their respective organisations not being GESI friendly, particularly when it comes to the disabled. The greatest challenge in applying GESI as noted by the Alumni is to overcome people's preconceptions about gender roles and disabilities and their resistance to change. Preconceived notions about disability and traditional gender roles are particularly difficult to overcome in fields where physical strength is highly prized, for example in the mining sector.

CAs noted that people's perceptions of what inclusion means needs to be addressed. Some CAs felt that, for most, inclusion means getting more women into positions of leadership. However, they would also like to see increased focus on those with disabilities and those with stigmatised diseases such as HIV. CAs stated that the priority areas are male dominated thus affecting the number of applications from women. Some CAs felt that over the years the

program had progressed positively in GESI area, which has influenced African government policies. The inclusion of people living with HIV who were previously ineligible for the Award was highly commendable as Australia's effort to ensure more inclusiveness in the program.

"*The Awards program, through its focus on disability inclusion, also promotes more focus (and action) within government on how best the government can formulate policies that will be inclusive of the disabled (sometimes also acting as a reminder to apply inclusion in areas where it may have been forgotten)",* stated the CA.

SCA providers observed that Awards processes, including the logistics that ensure people with disability are included, are cutting edge. The program has successfully incorporated GESI aspects in short courses. The SCA providers who participated in the survey have incorporated GESI in the courses as a module and visit women led institutions where possible.

Furthermore, Awardees are exposed to women and people from marginalised communities performing in fields not traditionally open to them and this helps to change perceptions. One provider noted that generally about 20% of Awardees at the start of a course think that gender sensitive trade policies are beneficial for their country's development, and about the same number think that this is contrary to their national culture. Sixty percent (60%) consider gender issues irrelevant for trade policy, or an 'Australian or other donor' agenda, or have not thought about it too much. Anonymous feedback from the participants by the end of the course consistently indicates that perceptions of the relevance of gender in national trade policies changes noticeably, with a much higher percentage of the course participants indicating agreement that gender is an important issue for their country's trade policies than at the start of the program.

All Alumni reported a changed perception in how people with disability can be included in workplaces and in society having seen this modelled in Australia. Whilst Alumni/Awardees noted that they were aware of GESI previously, almost all (94%) Awardees/Alumnis' perception of the importance of GESI had been changed to some extent because of the Award. Those Awardees whose perception had not changed already had a stronger view on the importance of GESI prior to the studies. Two alumni commented during face to face interviews that some African countries are better at inclusion than Australia, particularly for representation of women in political structures and leadership and remuneration across gender.

In some cases, the Alumni have been acting as mentors to women and those who are differently abled, and have generally raised awareness of GESI within their organisations, with some effecting human resources policy changes in this regard. One Alumna noted that she was extremely impressed with how her pregnancy was managed while on award. As a result, her perception of the inclusion of pregnant women in the workplace has changed.

Remarkably, several male respondents noted a significantly changed perception of gender, through the observation of women in leadership positions, women in non-traditional roles and generally inclusive principles whilst on award - several these Alumni have initiated WPRs that significantly address gender equality and inclusion. An example of this is the introduction of female training officers to a male prison where initially the inmates and prison management were resistant to change but now herald the program as a success. Another respondent who has a disability responded "*the education allowed me to be who I am and I'm proud of that.*"

> **Key Findings**
> - Alumni have significantly contributed to development in their home countries in agriculture, extractives, public policy and health.
> - Employers appreciate the contributions made by Alumni because of the Awards acquired skills. Alumni have transferred skills to colleagues and in some instances given more job responsibility. Employers have noticed increased confidence by Alumni on return from Award.
> - There are few Alumni with links to Australia. Those that exist tend to be through informal social links with fellow scholars met on Award and the in - country networks through Alumni associations.
> - Australia's status in African development is positively affected by the Awards program, particularly in relation to providing skill and human capital.
> - Australia's role in African development is positively recognised by all counterpart agencies. In comparison to other donors, Australia Awards' scholarships are perceived as being the most sought after.
> - There have been significant improvements by the program in incorporating GESI at all stages of the program. More can still be done to increase representation of women, people with disability and the socially disadvantaged in the program.
> - Alumni's perception on GESI has to some extent positively changed although many had already had an enhanced appreciation of GESI prior to their Award.

5. Conclusion

Generally, all stakeholders are familiar with the program expectations/objectives with most survey participants citing capacity building as the focus of the program. Conversely, almost all Alumni/Awardees and CAs were not aware of the outcome on positive ongoing links to Australia as one of the program objective. This was also evidenced by the lack of links.

Most CAs suggested that offering more scholarships and additional priority sectors, would improve the impact of the Australia Awards. DFAT Posts identified that targeted selection of priority areas and geographic scope was more important that the number of awards on offer; noting that significantly increasing the number of awards could impact negatively on program outcomes. Equipping Alumni to address gaps in leadership and to raise the profile of the program may also establish an awareness and presence in the mind of senior (country) leadership, which in turn would lead to more support for the program and the CA.

Experience in country shows that the program offers direct benefit to ministries, providing a useful tool for engagement, an indicator of effective public diplomacy. The program is helpful but not essential in strengthening diplomatic access and influence. Public diplomacy is especially enhanced when Alumni hold senior office and are in positions of influence (not just in the public sector, but also in business).

Recommendations

These preceding findings lead to recommendations for consideration, these include recommendations provided by stakeholders against each program outcome[9]:   A management response has also been provided against those issues raised by stakeholders that are already being addressed.

Outcome 1: Alumni are using awards skills, knowledge and networks in key sectors relevant to their training to contribute to sustainable development in their workplace and/ community

Stakeholder Recommendations

- Five CA's (63%) were of the opinion that the program could assess the inclusion of additional priority areas that align to country development plans, for example: education, health, ocean economy and tourism.

  Response: Country profiles guide the program on additional priority areas and country needs that are included in the profiles are considered in addition to the program priority areas.

- The program could consider the level of awards offered to countries. Countries that receive SCAs expressed a desire to receive Scholarships. Whilst those that receive Scholarships (Masters) requested that the scope of award be widened to include undergraduate and PhD.

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[9] Please note: In some cases, stakeholders suggested improvements that were unrelated to their earlier responses. All recommendations by stakeholders are documented to provide a full record of responses, and have not been moderated against program policy and direction – it is expected that the Management Response to this document will respond to stakeholder responses.

Response: Country eligibility is reviewed on an annual basis and there is a 10% window available for Masters' Awards to countries that are only eligible for SCAs.

Recommendations from Survey Findings

- The WPR has a positive impact in supporting use of the skills, however, Alumni continue to face challenges in implementing the WPRs. It is recommended that a stronger focus is placed on the WPRs development on award and follow up post award – particularly support from employers and their continuous engagement. Resources available to implement the WPRs should be assessed during the WPR development stage including estimated budgets that can be agreed with employers pre-departure; and

- Currently the Alumni Portal provides an option for Awardees to send their WPR to their supervisor, however few appear to be doing this. Communication during the PDB and on award will need emphasise the importance of on-going communication with employers on award. As part of WPR preparation, Alumni should be encouraged and supported to raise their profile on return and effectively communicate own development contributions.

- The WPR needs to consider different workplace scenarios on return and be flexible enough to accommodate a change in job function, or employer.

- The preparation of WPRs needs to consider available, if any, resourcing requirements for implementation. Alumni may need to be supported with professional development training about how to access resources when available resource are insufficient for their WPRs.

- The program should assist Alumni in identifying critical mass of Alumni working for one department, sector or organisation and offer the groups with tailor made continuous professional development initiatives that are based on the identified challenges to make use of the skills.

- The ability of Alumni to contribute to changes in national policy, and the extent to which this contribution can be assessed, needs to be reconsidered.

Outcome 2: Targeted Countries in Africa view Australia as a valued partner

Stakeholder Recommendations

- A lack of consistency in awards numbers impacts on program participants' ability to "sell" the program, the program should estimate award numbers for the program's duration, rather than on an annual basis.

   Response: The program has articulated total and annual award numbers through the programs design document, and the annual estimates are available. It may be worthwhile for the program to consider how this information is communicated, particularly to partner governments.

- There is a reputational risk to scaling the Program up and down inconsistently, DFAT posts emphasised that it is important to have consistency in funding to stabilise expectations from partner governments.

   Response: This is hugely dependent on the annual budget allocations, guided by the Awards numbers provided in the design document.

- Many respondents commented that Australia should do more to market itself and its contribution to African countries through the Awards program. CAs and Alumni

expressed that Australia offers prestigious scholarship which Alumni are benefiting from, however Australia needs to 'take credit' for its contribution. Enhanced profiling of Alumni and dissemination of Alumni success stories including small grants projects with CAs will support countries to recognise the "other" development work by the Australian government.

Response: A public relations strategy will be developed to assist on how Australia's visibility can be enhanced through the program.

Recommendations from Survey Findings

- The inclusion of more private sector awardees may assist in strengthening the reputation of Australia to African commerce. Non-public sector Awardees should be provided with opportunities to forge business to business or among civil society organisations whilst on award, and leverage these through their WPRs.

Outcome 3: Alumni have positive ongoing links

Recommendations from Survey Findings

- Australia Awards – Africa needs to review the extent to which types of links, particularly those to Australia, have enabled Alumni to contribute to program outcomes. Options to effectively catalyse these links should be investigated, for example, through the Alumni Association small grants scheme.

- Alumni events need to move away from just social gatherings and be facilitated around thematic topics and/or common Alumni projects. Online content for example on Africa Connect and support will need to be aligned to support such interaction.

- The extent to which SCA recipients can deliver effective links with Australia, particularly for Short Courses that are delivered solely in Africa should be re-assessed.

Award Processes and Administration

Stakeholder Recommendations

- Awards processes, particularly applications, should be simplified as they currently require much time, effort and resources to complete. Four of the eight CAs pointed out that the application form was too long. The program could consider re-engaging a quota system for each country to ensure equal representation of Awards across countries.

Recommendations from Survey Findings

- The level of activity associated with the awards processes needs to be revised in accordance to reduced award numbers. Cost savings should be directed to higher number of awards.

- Awards processes, particularly leading up to mobilisation, should be cognisant of the country context. The efficacy of online processes – application and promotion needs to consider women and marginalised groups.