AUSTRALIA AWARDS-AFRICA PROGRAM

Review of development contributions of Alumni in six African countries

REPORT

Stephen Morrow, Ty Morrissey
9 May 2014

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Acknowledgements

The review team acknowledges the contributions of a wide range of people. The GRM M&E team arranged interview appointments and coordinated arrangements across six countries and a legion of individuals. This work is very much appreciated. Two of the GRM staff were also members of the review team conducting fieldwork, a dual role that carried particular responsibilities and challenges.

DFAT Pretoria provided valuable information and insights into the program as it navigates a transition to a new phase. A DFAT staff member was also a member of the review team conducting fieldwork, again managing a dual role with specific challenges and responsibilities. National Coordinating Authorities in the five countries visited provided useful perspectives on their role, the program, and development challenges.

Alumni and their associates at work places provided valuable information, insights and views on their experiences of the Australia Awards-Africa program. They also highlighted the development challenges and contributions they have been able to make in their own countries. They did so with clarity, openness, often with humour, and a constructive approach that was much appreciated.

DOCUMENT DATA	
DOCUMENT:	Australia Awards-Africa Program: Review of development contributions of Alumni in six African countries.
DATE:	9 May 2014
CLIENT:	GRM-International (GRM)
GRM TASK MANAGER:	Adriana Abreu-Combs
GRM-APPOINTED CONSULTANTS:	Stephen Morrow (Team Leader) & Ty Morrissey
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Executive summary

Introduction and program background

Scholarships have been part of the Australian Government's development programs in Africa since the 1960s and there are over 5,000 Alumni. GRM-International (GRM) manages the current Australia Awards-Africa program. It provides scholarship (long-term) and fellowship (short-term) awards to individuals working in government, non-government and private sector organisations for studies in a range of sectors. The program objectives and expected outcomes are as follows:

- **Goal:** To build the capacity and leadership skills of Africans so that they can more effectively contribute to the achievement of the MDGs in Africa while promoting Australia as an active partner in African development.
- **Objective 1:** To provide African professionals with access to Australian-standard educational, training or professional development opportunities to better equip them to lead or support the development and application of sound policy and practice.
- **Objective 2:** To improve recognition of Australia as an active partner in African development.
- **Expected Outcome 1:** Alumni use Award-acquired skills and knowledge to contribute to development outcomes.
- **Expected Outcome 2:** Positive recognition (by African partners) of the Australian Government's engagement in African development.

This review

The **purpose** of the review is to provide illustrations and/or evidence of the program's contributions to African development through the work of Alumni. The **review team,** two independent consultants, two GRM staff, and a DFAT staff member, consulted with 78 Alumni and 70 other stakeholders working in governance, health, mining and agriculture sectors in South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Kenya, Ghana and Madagascar over the period 10 March - 4 April 2014. They sought to understand the results of the program **from the perspective of those most closely associated with it**, Alumni, their supervisors and associates, and then to clarify outcomes achieved at the individual, organisational, and societal levels.

Summary of findings

Overwhelmingly Alumni are very positive about the award and outcomes achieved. The program has realised an extensive set of defined outcomes at the individual level, and a reasonable and smaller range of results at the organisational and societal level. A number of general findings emerged. These include:
- Almost all Alumni affirmed increased confidence in their knowledge and professional skills as a result of their studies in the program.
- There is strong indication of adoption and adaptation of relevant Australian practices to local contexts - most evident in conservation agriculture (Kenya), post-harvest production (Ghana and Kenya), public health strategies and policies (Zambia and Botswana) and project and personnel management (all countries).
- The Workplan on Return (WPR) is a significant factor in ensuring an Alumni's smooth transition back into the employing organisation.
- Project management, leadership, change management and other 'soft skills' were perceived as significant benefits of the award studies.

Some challenges and constraints faced by Alumni included:
- Short or unclear timeframes between key dates in the scholarship and fellowship awards cycle e.g. due date of applications, notification of award, mobilisation, departure from Australia post-studies.
- Scholarship Alumni, tended to have some difficulty in reintegrating back into Ministries, often due to their younger age, relatively junior roles in the employing organisation, and duration away from work. This was not generally the case with fellowship Alumni who were often older, more senior in the workplace and away from it for a relatively short period.

Employing organisations, particularly government organisations and NGOs, that derived more significant benefits from the program often had common characteristics including:
- Supervisors who took a strong interest in the participant's 'journey'.
- Work units that had clear priorities, work plans and programs.

Informants provided their perspectives on how they had contributed to development in their own country; the capacity of their employing organisation; and maintaining links with Australia. The review team used an assessment framework to aggregate and moderate these perspectives into a summary assessment for the six countries.

TABLE A
Overall assessment summary for six countries

Dimension A Contribution to development of home country/region.	Orange	Dimension B Contribution to the capacity of their organisations (in the development of their home \country/region)	Orange	Dimension C Contribution to maintaining links with Australia & other Awardees, and subsequent results.	Orange
Indicators					
1) Alumni working in organisations aligned with MDG goals.	Orange	1) Effective Work Plan on Return (WPR)	Orange	1) Alumni maintaining links with country Alumni and Australians.	Red
2) Examples of organisational policy, practice or other achievements with Alumni involvement.	Green	2) Supportive work environment on return of Alumni.	Orange	2) Employing organisation establishing or maintaining links with Australian organisations.	Red
		3) Alumni using award acquired knowledge & skills in various types of work.	Green	3) Results of links maintained by Alumni or organisation.	Orange
		4) Alumni transferring award acquired knowledge and skills to others.	Green	4) Links with other country professional peers met on award.	Green

TABLE LEGEND

G	Significant progress and results	**O**	Sound progress and evidence of results	**R**	Limited evidence of results

The broad benefits and outcomes achieved through awards were further articulated at the individual, organisational and societal levels. Table 3 in section 4.2 of the report signposts 11 significant positive examples of individual Alumni contributions at each of these levels in each of the five countries visited.

RECOMMENDATION

The MC should follow-up the Alumni identified in Table 3 and where feasible, visit their work location to undertake an in-depth review of the Alumni's work, verification of the short and medium-term outcomes, and if appropriate write them up as Success Stories.

These examples of Alumni contributions at the organisational and societal level indicate changes achieved in systems addressing the MDGs as outlined in Table B below:

TABLE B
Examples of results of Alumni contributions at a systems level.

KENYA	• Adaptation of new agricultural technologies at the district level based on practical experience and observation in Australia. • Introduction of new agricultural policies and strategies at the national and County level - i.e. customs form, veterinary regulatory framework.
BOTSWANA	• Establishment of a national immunisation framework for children under 1 year old - taking coverage rate from 92% to 97%. • Introduction of two new vaccines within a 12-month period. • Establishment of a national M&E framework for child and adolescent health.
ZAMBIA	• Improved population health indicators at district level due to new approaches to public health leadership. Evidence-based research leading to reduced rate of childhood morbidity and mortality at district-level, and contributing to the introduction of rotavirus vaccine into national EPI scheme. • Drafting of national legislation on aviation, water and sanitation, tourism and recently the Extractive Industries Bill. Membership of the Technical Committee revising the national Constitution.
GHANA	• Introduction of new approaches to agricultural extension at district level resulting in 50% reduction on post-harvest losses; minimal tillage techniques resulting in a second crop; increased food security indicators.

Issues for consideration

These results of the program's contributions to development are positive and in alignment with the program goal. A number of issues merit further consideration particularly as a new phase of the program is being designed. These issues, and associated recommendations include:

a) The program design did not initially include a Theory of Change or a Logic Model that clarified short, medium and longer-term outcomes thus creating a shared picture of 'development outcomes'. The MC has wisely sought to rectify this.

RECOMMENDATION

The design of the next phase of the awards program could include a robust theory of change, tested amongst key stakeholders, and a program logic model that explicitly articulates expected 'development outcomes' in the short, medium and longer-term.

b) The program is not designed to foster 'clusters'. There was no apparent synergy between the Alumni consulted, nothing to suggest that any of the 'clusters' were a critical mass working towards a shared set of objectives. In this context there was no multiplier effect of a cluster. If the program re-design seeks to be more strategic, it could identify organisations aligned with Australian and partner government priorities, assess their organisational capacity, and then develop clusters of awardees in certain sectors, and these should be linked to agreed organisational outcomes in the medium to longer term.

RECOMMENDATION

The next phase of the program could consider working more closely with employing organisations to require stronger match of award and organisational needs over and above sign off for staff to go on award. This could for example mean that applicants include their organisation's annual workplan as part of their application, and that their WPR was explicitly linked to the organisational plan.

RECOMMENDATION

The awards program could be more strategic, identifying organisations that are centrally aligned with Australian and partner government priorities, conducting a light touch organisational capacity assessment, and then targeting awards that can potentially be utilised by the organisation as well as the individual. In these circumstances, clusters of awardees may be fostered in certain sectors and institutions, and these should be linked to agreed organisational outcomes in the medium to longer term.

c) Almost all Alumni asserted a direct link between award-acquired knowledge and skills and outcomes achieved on return to their country. A number of factors potentially affect the links between these award acquired traits and outcomes in the short and medium term. They include: scholarship or fellowship awards; location of the Alumni at a district, regional or national level; and the quality of the WPR, particularly with regard to alignment with the employing organisation's workplan. These issues point to the an opportunity for more strategic targeting of long and short-term awards, so they are consistent with the Theory of Change (ToC) and the Logic Model that has articulated the expected individual and organisational outcomes for development.

d) Alumni links with Australia are generally weak. Alumni associations within country can be supported to take advantage of significant Alumni interest in working with others. A key issue is to identify the incentives for participation, which may include access to professional journals and resources on-line; presentations/workshops and other events by guest speakers; and conducting in-country graduation ceremonies at which Alumni could receive their degrees or formal qualifications.

RECOMMENDATION

The current and next phase of the awards program could consider reviewing the approach to Alumni association support so that it is targeted and responds to circumstances in each country e.g. some of the countries in this review identified access to a range of professional speakers, to professional journals and resources, and participation in in-country 'graduation' and awards ceremonies as key interests and incentives for participation.

e) The absence of a ToC and a Logic Model in the initial program design has meant that assessment of medium and longer-term outcomes is challenging. There is an opportunity to develop a longer-term structure and approach to M&E in the next phase. DFAT could consider a separate evaluation framework to serve its broad intent over an extended period, to assess medium and longer-term outcomes, separate from the 3-5 year period of the next phase and the next MC engaged to deliver and monitor outputs and short-term outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION

Evaluation of the awards program should be considered at the outset of the next phase, and be clearly based on the ToC and the Logic Model.

DFAT could consider a separate evaluation framework that could serve its broad intent and goals over an extended period, to assess medium and longer- term outcomes. This could be separate from the 3-5 year period of the next phase of the program and the next MC engaged to deliver outputs i.e. recruitment, awards delivery, and Alumni engagement, and to monitor outputs and short-term outcomes.

These and other issues are addressed throughout the report. A set of recommendations is provided to highlight current examples of Alumni contributions to development, to support DFAT, the MC and other stakeholder to clarify the program logic, to develop a shared picture of expected outcomes, and hence more readily assess program progress.

List of acronyms

Since it was 're-branded' in mid-2013, acronyms are generally not used in the Australia Awards-Africa program. However some acronyms appeared in program documents and in discussion, so they and others are listed here for reference.

ADS	Australian Development Scholarships
AES	Australasian Evaluation Society
ANCP	AusAID NGO Cooperation Program
AUD	Australian Dollar
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CA	Coordinating Authority
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government
EPI	Expanded Program of Immunisation
GoA	Government of Australia
HRM	Human Resource Management
MC	Managing Contractor
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Non-government Organisation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
STA	Short-term Adviser
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical, Vocational Education and Training
WPR	Work Plan on Return
ZAAA	Zambia Australia Alumni Association

Names/acronyms changed under the re-branding in mid-2013

OLD	NEW
Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)	Incorporated into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in late 2013
Australia Awards in Africa (AAA)	Australia Awards – Africa
Australian Development Scholarships (ADS)	This was the name of the predecessor program to the Australia Awards – Africa program
Australian Leadership Awards Fellowships (ALAF)	Australia Awards Fellowships
Australian Leadership Awards Scholarships (ALAS)	Australia Awards Leadership Program
Long Term Awards (LTA)	Scholarships
Short Course Awards (SCA)	Africa Fellowships

Glossary

A range of terms has been used to describe award types and concepts. These, and a brief explanation of the current meaning or usage of the term, are listed below.

TERM	MEANING
Africa Fellowships	Short-term training courses in high priority sectors (Mining, Education, Governance/Public Policy, Agriculture, Health). Africa Fellowships are delivered through partnerships between Australian and African institutions involving delivery in-Africa or a combination of in-Africa and in-Australia delivery. They are awarded following a competitive application and selection process managed by GRM.
Australia Awards Fellowships	These are flexible training and/or research activities in areas of mutual interest to Australian host organisations and African fellows. Organisations in Australia partner with organisations in Africa and submit proposals for these courses. They also propose fellows. Proposals are evaluated and selected by Canberra Scholarships office. Australia Awards – Africa does not have any input in content or delivery, it only provides some logistical support for implementation and carries the numbers.
Australia Awards Leadership Program	A supplementary leadership component is offered to high achieving Africans on Masters Awards who have proven leadership potential. African Awardees in this program are Master Awardees who were selected following a competitive application and selection process managed by GRM.
Development outcomes	Actions that lead to the development of a country, directly or indirectly. In the case of Australia Awards alumni, their development contributions could fall in the realm of organisational development, wider development contribution or social/community development contributions (volunteer work beyond workplace).
Links	Previously referred to as linkages. Links relate to personal, professional and/or institutional/organisational level relationships established by alumni between Africa-Australia.
Outcomes	Outcomes in Australia Awards relate to two main aspects: 1) Alumni's contributions to development outcomes linked to the application of Award-gained skills and knowledge; and 2) Positive recognition by African partners of the Australian Government's efforts in engaging in African development.
Scholarships	Long-term study opportunities comprising Master and PhD. PhDs are offered in the Agriculture sector only. Masters scholarships cover a range of sectors, including Mining, Health, Agriculture and Public Policy. They are awarded following a competitive application and selection process managed by GRM.

It is the mark of an instructed mind to rest satisfied with that degree of precision which the nature of the subject admits, and not to seek exactness where only an approximation of the truth is possible.

Aristotle[1]

1. Introduction

1.1. Document purpose

This document reports the process, findings and recommendations of a review of the development contributions of a sample of 78 Alumni of the Australia Awards-Africa program. They are working in the governance, agriculture, mining, and health sectors in six countries: South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Kenya, Ghana and Madagascar.

Summary reports from each cluster i.e. Alumni working in the same sector in the same country, are provided in separate documents at **Attachment E**.

Section 3 of this report draws on summary reports from the individual countries and sectors, to respond to the review questions, to outline findings, to identify issues, and to provide recommendations relevant to the broader program. It also provides recommendations for consideration in the current re-design of the awards program.

1.2. Background: Australia Awards-Africa Program

Scholarships have been integral elements of the Australian Government's development cooperation programs in Africa since the 1960s. They have been managed within a variety of country, regional and continent-wide initiatives with differing goals and objectives. There are over 5,000 Alumni from African countries.

In January 2009, Australia announced at an African Union Executive Council Meeting that '… it would increase by up to ten-fold scholarships and fellowships offered to students from across Africa as part of its commitment to enhance Australia's relationships with the nation states, regional institutions and the continent of Africa.' [2]

In 2009, 98 individuals in 12 African countries received awards.

In 2010, 207 individuals in 20 countries received awards

In 2011 DFAT initiated the current phase of the Australia Awards-Africa Program and tasked GRM-International, the Managing Contractor (MC), to significantly increase the country coverage and number of awards. The program provides scholarships (Masters or doctorate level degrees) and fellowships (short-course training and professional development) awards to individuals working in government, non-government and private sector organisations.

In 2011, 465 individuals in 36 African countries received awards.

In 2012, over 1,000 individuals in 50 participating countries received Awards.[3]

The review team acknowledges the extraordinary work undertaken by the MC and DFAT to achieve this rapid and significant increase in the size and scope of a very complex

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[1] From a workshop presented by Dr Goldie MacDonald, *Logic Models, a platform for program evaluation*…, Australasian Evaluation Society, 29 August 2011.
[2] DFAT, Australia Awards Draft PDD, 2010
[3] GRM 2013 Award data as at February 2013.

program. They have been working under enormous pressure to secure this remarkable continent-wide achievement for the Australian Government's awards program.

The objectives and expected outcomes[4] of the current program are as follows:

Goal: To build the capacity and leadership skills of Africans so that they can more effectively contribute to the achievement of the MDGs in Africa while promoting Australia as an active partner in African development.

Objective 1: To provide African professionals with access to Australian-standard educational, training or professional development opportunities to better equip them to lead or support the development and application of sound policy and practice.

Objective 2: To improve recognition of Australia as an active partner in African development.

Expected Outcome 1: Alumni use Award-acquired skills and knowledge to contribute to development outcomes.

Expected Outcome 2: Positive recognition (by African partners) of the Australian Government's engagement in African development.

This phase of the program is expected to conclude in June 2015. A DFAT team is currently developing a design for the next phase. The review team provided the design team with interim briefings during the review exercise and this report may provide further information for their work.

1.3. Scope of the review

GRM commissioned this review in February 2014. The Terms of Reference (ToR) are provided as **Attachment A**. The review is one element within a suite of measures the program is using to assess outcomes. The M&E strategy (p 7) describes this review as a 'cluster study', *a qualitative methodology to collect outcome level data, identif(ying) a critical mass of Alumni collaborating on common development areas*. It informs another outcomes assessment measure, *Alumni Success Stories*, in that it identifies Alumni and their contributions to development and recommends the MC investigate these as potential success stories.

Generally this review consulted with Alumni who returned to their countries within the last seven years. However a small number of Alumni from previous phases of Australian awards programs e.g. completing studies in the 1960s, 1970s or the 1980s, participated in consultations.

The review consulted 78 Alumni working in four sectors in six countries, and over 70 other stakeholders, as outlined in section 2.2 below and also in **Attachment D**.

1.4. Review team

The review team comprises two independent short-term advisers (STA), Stephen Morrow and Ty Morrissey. They finalised the review methodology, prepared tools, led fieldwork, analysed data and prepared a range of reports.

Adriana Abreu-Combs and Ngoni Chipato from GRM and Frank Thompson from DFAT developed the Terms of Reference (ToR), initiated the sampling process, managed the

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[4] GRM, *Australia Awards Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Strategy*, Draft November 2013 p 2.

logistics and liaison with stakeholders, participated in fieldwork in several countries and broadly worked with and supported the review team during the course of the work.

2. Methodology

2.1 Review purpose and approach

The **purpose** of the review is to provide illustrations and/or evidence of the Australia Awards-Africa program's contributions to African development through the work of Alumni. The **objectives** are to:
• Identify a critical mass of Alumni collaborating on common development areas in the target countries.
• Gather and analyse such contributions as evidence of the outcomes and impact Australia Awards is helping shape in Africa.
• Explore plausible links between such contributions and Award-gained skills and knowledge.
• Investigate any multiplier effect at the organisation, country and/or regional level.

In response to the key evaluative questions identified in the ToR and also one of the intermediate outcomes highlighted in the program's Theory of Change (ToC)[5] i.e. Alumni maintain links with Australia, a further objective was added by the review team, GRM and DFAT. It tasked the review to:

• Investigate Alumni links with Australia & other Awardees, and subsequent results.

This review is a **qualitative** exercise. As noted in the M&E Strategy (p 7), it seeks 'to collect outcome-level data, ...to add qualitative depth to quantitative data' collected in regular program reporting. To this end, the review is concerned with the systematic collection, ordering, description and interpretation of textual or narrative data generated[6] from discussions with Alumni and their associates.

The **approach** in this review emphasises 'perspective', a particular way of regarding something or a point of view. The review sought to understand the results of the awards program **from the perspective of those most closely associated with it**[7], Alumni, their supervisors, and associates.

Using an assessment framework outlined in section 2.4 below, the review team aggregated and moderated the perspectives reported by Alumni to gain some sense of outcomes achieved at the individual, organisational, and societal levels. The main methods of inquiry included:
• Document review;
• Key informant interviews were conducted face to face, by telephone and by Skype;

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[5] GRM, *Australia Awards Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Strategy*, Draft November 2013 p 4. The Logic Model format was used to summarise the underlying Theory of Change for Australia Awards. Theories of Change explain how and why the desired change is expected to come about. Logic Models graphically illustrate program outputs, intended outcomes and impacts. It can also include the levels of inputs and activities. For more on how these two relate, refer to http://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco_library/pdf/TOCs_and_Logic_Models_forAEA.pdf - accessed on 6/6/14
[6] Kitto S.C., Chesters J., & Grbich C., 'Quality in Qualitative Research', *Medical Journal of Australia*, Volume 188 Number 4, 18 February 2008, p 243
[7] Nolan, P.G., PhD thesis, *Australian Development Scholarships: returns on investment*. Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne, January 2011, p 8.

- Focus group discussions; and
- Observation.

2.2 Sampling

The review adopted a **purposive sampling** method i.e. non-probability sampling in which decisions about individuals to be included are based upon a variety of criteria. These included location in terms of country and technical sector, knowledge of the research issue i.e. 'development contributions', willingness to participate, and likelihood of contributing appropriate data, both in terms of relevance and depth.[8] The approach targets a specific group to generate a high level of data and information in a cost-effective manner.

This method was selected as it identified individuals linked to specific sectors i.e. health, mining, agriculture and governance, who had self-reported contributions to their career development and work units, and also to development in their country. It also allowed a degree of flexibility in the selection of participants as the review progressed across six countries e.g. replacing potential informants with others as necessary.

Advantages of purposive sampling are that it identifies participants across nominated groups, and it strikes a balance in terms of cost-effectiveness when the program and the potential sample covers 50 countries.

The disadvantages of purposive sampling include limits on generalising findings given the subjective nature of the approach. For example in this review country consultation plans were changed while the review was underway, for cost and other considerations, and this affects results in a way that would not occur in probability-based sampling.

The sampling approach used existing data collected through surveys, professional development events, and alumni meetings. This data was aggregated into an 'outcomes data bank' that, as of December 2013, contained approximately 600 Alumni entries across 48 countries.

This purposive approach made it cost-efficient to select participants and reduced the number of 'non-responsive' or irrelevant responses.

The purposive sampling process involved a number of key steps:
- Review and analysis of the GRM outcomes data bank, which included the results of a 2013 Outcomes Study that consulted 119 randomly selected Alumni who reported on their development contributions in the workplace, the community or in a wider context.[9] This identified 19 potential clusters in five technical sectors i.e. groups of six or more Alumni working in the same sector in a country who reported making contributions.
- Review of these 19 groups, further analysing the reported development contributions to gauge potential connections that might warrant further investigation under a 'cluster review'. This identified up to six potentially substantive groups.
- Discussions with DFAT to take account of changing sectorial and geographic priorities, a reiteration of the process described above, identified eight groups or clusters of Alumni working in four selected sectors in six countries.

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[8] http://srmo.sagepub.com/view/the-sage-dictionary-of-social-research-methods/n162.xml - accessed on 16/4/14
[9] GRM, Australia Awards- Africa, *2013 Outcomes Study*, p 1.

- A snowball sampling approach was also applied in that identified individuals were encouraged to suggest other Alumni members as well as nominating work colleagues and supervisors.

This resulted in a sample of Alumni and their associates i.e. colleagues, supervisors and subordinate, by sector and country as <u>approximately</u> outlined in the table below. The exact number of these and other people consulted e.g. national Coordinating Authorities, DFAT and GRM staff, are listed in **Attachment D**.

TABLE 1
Sample of Alumni (+ associates) by country and sector

	AGRICULTURE	GOVERNANCE	MINING	HEALTH
South Africa		7 + 14		
Botswana				9 + 5
Kenya	17 + 4			
Zambia		12 + 8		8 + 3
Ghana	13 + 9		6 + 1	
Madagascar			6	
Totals	22	39	13	27

2.3 Assessment framework

The ToR for the review raised two key **evaluative questions**, both of which comprise two substantive elements:
- To what extent are alumni contributing to the development of their home country or their region? To what extent have they strengthened the capacity of their organisations to contribute to the development of their country or their region?
- To what extent are Alumni and institutions maintaining links with Australia and networking with other Awardees? What happened as a result of the links?

The review team developed a Study Plan and then a Field Manual (**Attachment C**) to address these questions and to guide inquiry in a consistent manner. The Field Manual includes a set of **question guides** for the range of stakeholder groups i.e. Alumni, supervisors/associates, national Coordinating Authorities, GRM staff, and DFAT staff.

The review team took notes and completed a standardised **Summary Record** for each Alumnus and other key informant interview.

On the basis of these interview notes, and for each group of Alumni in the same sector in each country i.e. a 'cluster', the review team used the **Discussion Guide** to analyse the perceptions and other information provided by respondents.

The review team then used this information to complete a **Summary Assessment Framework** for each 'cluster' in each country. The framework has three dimensions for consideration, and uses ten indicators which are rated green, orange or red i.e. a three level traffic-light rating system to indicate significant, moderate or little contribution.

The ratings and stories for the ten indicators are used narratively rather than arithmetically, to rate three dimensions of Alumni contributions: to development; to

strengthening organisational capacity; and to maintaining links with Australia and with other Alumni. A completed summary assessment framework is provided in Table 2 in section 3 below.

This assessment process and framework was informed by the review ToR, tools used in DFAT cluster evaluations of the AusAID NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) [10], and also by doctoral studies analysing the returns on investment for Australian Development Scholarships (ADS).[11]

The information generated by these tools was compiled into a narrative **Country Summary** for each cluster and country (**Attachment E**). The tools were piloted in South Africa and revised in consultation with DFAT and GRM prior to further work in Botswana, Zambia, Ghana, Kenya and Madagascar.

2.4   Limitations/constraints

There are limitations or constraints on any review or evaluation. They are, by definition, influences which the review team cannot control and which can influence data collection, analysis and findings. Evaluations in general are limited by budget and time constraints, the scope proposed, and the availability of an appropriate sample population. Key limitations on this review include:

- The number of the Alumni population from award programs in Africa, over 5,000, limited budgets and time-frames, and the review purpose to obtain illustrations of contributions to development, meant that it was not feasible to identify a probability-based representative sample.
- The outcomes data bank was the basis for sampling. It was developed prior to this review using random and purposive sampling. It is a databank of stories of positive outcomes and this limited the review's sampling process to those who 'had a story to tell'. The databank does not include those who did not have positive stories e.g. those currently unemployed.
- This lack of randomisation meant that both positive and negative stories were not generally considered in this review, and hence the process, the analysis, and the findings must be considered within these limits.
- The review was premised on the notion of a functioning 'cluster' of Alumni working collaboratively in the same sector in a country. The current awards program is not designed to foster 'clusters' of Alumni. This issue was apparent in the pilot phase of the review, and the process was adapted to consider a 'cluster' to be a group of individual Alumni, working in the same sector in the same country.
- Given these factors, the results of this review cannot 'conclusively' be generalised across the entire Alumni population. In other words, if another group of Alumni in other sectors and countries were selected, there might reasonably be different responses to the questions, different analyses and findings.
- At an operational level, interviews were conducted face-to-face in capital cities. Constraints on time and budgets meant that phone and Skype interviews were used with Alumni working in rural or regional areas. Phone and Skype interviews limited the process, nuance and tone were lost, and it was difficult to establish rapport with the participants. Unfortunately a high number of consultations e.g. 38% in Ghana, 63% in Kenya and 100% in Madagascar were via phone or Skype. The Madagascar

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[10] DFAT, *India ANCP Cluster Evaluation*, November 2006.
[11] Nolan, P.G., PhD thesis, *Australian Development Scholarships: returns on investment*. Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne, January 2011.

consultation plans were changed from personal to telephone interviews during the course of the review. This influences the reliability of the information when compared with face-to-face interviews, and hence the findings.
- The inclusion of six countries was ambitious. Given the time required for interviews, recording cluster, sector and country level information, and developing country summaries, there was limited time available during fieldwork for the review team to reflect on data collected, analyse it, identify lessons or issues emerging, and address any need to re-craft the inquiry as it progressed.

3. Findings

3.1 General

Overwhelmingly, Alumni are very positive about the award, Australia, and outcomes achieved through award-acquired knowledge, skills and experiences.

In broad terms and as reflected in the Country Summaries (**Attachment E**), a number of general findings applied across the clusters, sectors and countries. These included:
- Almost all Alumni affirmed increased confidence in their knowledge and professional skills as a result of their studies in the program.
- There is strong indication of adoption and adaptation of relevant Australian practices to the African context - most evident in conservation agriculture (Kenya), post harvest management (Ghana and Kenya), public health strategies and policies (Zambia and Botswana) and project and personnel management (all countries).
- The Workplan on Return (WPR) is a significant factor in ensuring smooth transition back into the employing organisation.
- Project management, leadership, change management and other 'soft skills' were perceived as significant indirect benefits of the awards and Alumni suggested they become formal components of future programs.

Some challenges and constraints faced by Alumni generally included:
- Short or unclear timeframes between key dates in the scholarship and fellowship awards cycle e.g. due date of applications, notification of award, mobilisation, departure from Australia post-studies.
- Scholarship i.e. long-term Alumni tended to have some difficulty in reintegrating back into Ministries, often due to their younger age, relatively junior roles in the employing organisation, and duration away from work. This was not generally the case with fellowship i.e. short-course Alumni who were often older, more senior in the workplace and away from it for a relatively short period.

Employing organisations, particularly government organisations and NGOs, that derived significant benefits from the work of Alumni and the awards program often had some common characteristics including:
- Supervisors who took a strong interest in the participant's 'journey' e.g. they provided support before the award, often nominating the applicant, maintaining contact while on award, and then supporting the Alumni on return with work plans, professional promotion and other enablers.
- Work units that had clear priorities, existing work programs and plans all of which provided a platform for Alumni to re-join and provide additional skills and expertise e.g. the Adolescent Health Unit in Botswana.

The broad benefits and outcomes achieved through award-acquired knowledge, skills and experiences were further articulated at the individual, organisational and societal levels.

3.2 Individual level benefits and outcomes

All Alumni identified benefits and positive individual level outcomes derived from the award. These were along two main lines, and were generally reported across the four sectors and six countries. They pertain to:

- Increased personal knowledge and skills in specific technical areas of the award studies e.g. post-harvest management, soil analysis, public health, bio-security, aquaculture, conservation agriculture, dry-land farming, HIV, and a range of other specialised areas.
- Broader benefits related to strengthening the individual's 'soft skills' in areas such as cultural awareness, planning, management, leadership, communications including presentations and writing, coaching and mentoring, and teamwork. Alumni reported individual level changes and outcomes when they used these skills to more effectively work with colleagues, to adapt and adopt new approaches and practices, to reflect on previous work, to revise it in light of the new knowledge, and to take on enhanced roles and responsibilities within their organisations.

An Alumnus in the health sector in Botswana noted that the awareness, the social and cultural skills derived from living and studying in Australia had helped him become a more rounded and involved person. This sentiment was echoed by Alumni in other sectors and countries.

Individual level outcomes, agriculture cluster, Ghana

Thirteen Alumni in the agriculture sector in Ghana worked at district, regional and national level. They identified a range of personal benefits and positive changes derived from scholarship and fellowship awards including:

➤ Significant increase in their knowledge of technical topics such as post harvest management techniques, dry-land farming, soil analysis, small-scale irrigation, conservation agriculture and other topics directly relevant to their work.
➤ The exposure to a range of cultures, influences, people and experiences 'was an eye opener' that provided perspectives on commonalities and differences between agriculture in Australia and Ghana, and prompted them to think differently about their work.

The combination of theory with practice on award was very beneficial – Australian teaching/learning methods were different and useful for the Alumni's continued learning and training with colleagues and clients. It also helped them integrate their technical knowledge with ideas about how to utilise this on return. They gained skills in presentations, IT, simpler communications, writing, organising arguments, adult-learning approaches, professional discipline and time management. The exposure to broader ways of thinking about management including leadership and critical consideration of options, helped them develop 'more mature approaches' to work leading to enhanced responsibilities on return.

Individual level outcomes, agriculture cluster, Kenya

Since 2011 there have been 74 awards in the agriculture sector in Kenya, mostly fellowship and hence short-term training courses. Most Alumni were older and held more senior management roles within the Ministry of Agriculture. They noted individual benefits and outcomes including:

➢ Individual skills enhancement particularly around leadership, management, communication, and engagement with stakeholders.

➢ This, together with increased technical knowledge and their senior roles meant they could lead in the adoption and adaption of new practices, technologies and approaches based on the Australian experience. This was evident in the field of conservation agriculture with approaches around demonstration plots, training methodologies and evaluation of tasks being completed.

3.3   Organisation level benefits and outcomes

These personal benefits and outcomes have in many cases been leveraged to achieve positive organisation level outcomes.

As with the individual level outcomes, these often involved two dimensions, increased knowledge and skills in a particular area and also and perhaps more importantly, an improved approach to leadership, management, and utilisation of the new knowledge and skills in the employing organisation. This latter dimension often led to a more effective sharing of the award-acquired knowledge amongst colleagues, farmers and other stakeholders with whom the Alumni worked.

In Ghana, one supervisor in the private sector noted that the Alumnus was 'the most effective middle manager I have here. He has everything under control'. Another supervisor in the Ministry of Agriculture noted that since return from award the Alumnus had strengthened their contributions to management team meetings, had taken on greater representational roles, and initiated work across departments e.g. agriculture inputs into a multi-sectorial Regional Coordination Plan.

In Botswana there were significant contributions being made by individuals towards developing a national M&E system for adolescent and child health utilising skills and knowledge derived from studies in Australia.

Organisation level outcomes, agriculture clusters, Ghana and Kenya

The Alumni in the agriculture sectors in Ghana and Kenya and also their supervisors and other associates identified a range of broad benefits and positive outcomes for organisations including:

➢ The organisation is able to provide new services e.g. a technical service such as on-site soil testing learned on award, and to consider new approaches to extension work including a 'client focus'.

➢ The organisation gains access to award course materials, training methodologies and resources which can be shared across the organisation, particularly at a district or regional level.

➢ The 'softer skills' such as leadership, management, communications, writing, presentation etc. have been valuable for the organisation in developing proposals for

funding in a particularly challenging budgetary context, and achieving more success.

Some initiatives or contributions by individual Alumni achieved specific positive outcomes for an employing organisation including:
➢ development of a crop budget and crop calendar for one acre of maize, a cost benefit analysis tool that the local team is using with farmers to enable more informed decisions about investments;
➢ training of District level colleagues using award-acquired knowledge in post-harvest techniques to control pests in grain storage, and then this being shared widely with farmers;
➢ the District Office using the Alumnus outside his normal role to provide training and support on a consulting basis to adjacent Districts;
➢ initiating a post-harvest management team at the municipal level, a cross-department team covering all aspects of post-harvest and hence enabling the department to provide a more coordinated service to farmers in the District.

3.4 Societal level benefits and outcomes

Some Alumni reported benefits and positive outcomes at the societal level. This often applied with Alumni working at a District or Regional level, where they worked directly with local populations, and were able to readily introduce new knowledge, approaches and techniques acquired on award. They observed local level societal changes in the short-medium term.

Societal level outcomes, agriculture cluster, Ghana

Alumni, their supervisors and other associates identified a range of benefits and positive outcomes at a local population or societal level including:
➢ An Alumnus re-crafted an existing revolving loan scheme with sheep farmers to achieve gender balance across beneficiaries, an issue he had considered on award. He engaged in extensive negotiations and a range of project management processes to achieve this. Stock numbers are increasing within a year i.e. the project is showing greater results during the implementation phase. The Alumnus noted that the revolving loan scheme is premised on a two-year cycle, so wisely cautioned that these early changes and associated livelihood and food security results could only be confirmed over the next several years. His supervisor confirmed this new approach and the short-term results.
➢ Another Alumnus working at District level studied post harvest management and, using adult learning principles studied in Australia in his extension work, he introduced a range of new and adapted techniques to local farmers. During the first growing season there has been substantial reduction in post harvest losses in the onion crop with improved outcomes in food security and livelihoods for local farmers. The District M&E Officer confirmed these results.
➢ Similarly, another fellowship Alumnus introduced minimal tillage techniques into a District and for the first time farmers were able to achieve a second crop of okra, a significant boost to local food security.

These examples of societal level outcomes at a district or regional level in Ghana were echoed in other sectors and countries. For example, two District Health Officers in Zambia reported positive changes in health indicators in the Districts subsequent to

their scholarship awards as they introduced research-based responses to local disease outbreaks, along with a team-based approach to health management.

Generally Alumni working at national level attested to individual and some organisation level benefits and outcomes. However, they are often part of a larger process wherein their contributions are aggregated with a range of other actors and inputs to affect organisation-wide and larger societal changes. In these cases, Alumni were understandably reluctant to directly link their award-acquired knowledge, skills and approaches to observable societal changes.

In this context there were some notable examples of Alumni contributing to or leading in societal or national level benefits and outcomes. Two Alumni in Zambia had been members of the Technical Committee developing a new Constitution for that country, and one of them had drafted a significant amount of national legislation including a recent Extractive Industries Bill. An Alumnus in Botswana is playing a key role in national level outcomes in child health.

Societal level outcomes, health cluster, Botswana

Ms. Ndibo Monyatsi studied a Masters in Public Health at Deakin University in Melbourne. Since her return to Botswana, she has been promoted twice within 18-months due to her increased skills and practical application of knowledge from Australia. Her most recent promotion has been to head the Child Health Unit within the Ministry of Health where she has responsibility for, and leads or contributes to positive national societal level outcomes including:
➢ Heading three sub-divisions totalling 12 officers.
➢ Formulating health policies contributing to child health and development - this involved the introduction of two new vaccines in 2012 when the normal average is one new vaccine per year.
➢ This resulted in increasing the immunisation coverage rate from 92% of the under 1 year old population in 2009 to 97% in 2013. This had a direct impact on the health of thousands of children in Botswana.
➢ Ensuring that Botswana implements national strategies for the elimination and eradication of vaccine preventable diseases.
➢ Planning, implementing and monitoring and evaluating all activities for the Ministry responsible for child health.

Ms. Monyatsi noted that the skills and knowledge acquired on award in Australia changed her professional career: 'I am now more focused and a results-orientated leader. I also need to respond to disease outbreaks so I need to be able to respond calmly and introduce strategies to control the outbreaks and contribute to the reduction and elimination of childhood diseases.'

3.5 Overall assessment of six countries

The review team consulted with 78 individual Alumni in six countries, South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Kenya, Ghana and Madagascar. The Alumni worked in four technical sectors, agriculture, governance, health and mining. Informants provided their perspectives on how they had contributed to:
• development in their own country;
• the capacity of their employing organisation; and
• maintaining links with Australia.

The review team used an assessment framework comprising these three dimensions and ten indicators, and a three-tier traffic light rating system to moderate and aggregate these perspectives. A summary assessment for the six countries is presented in Table 2 below.

General ccharacteristics of the traffic light ratings include:
- **Green**: Clear strengths or positives to be noted; innovation; stories readily triangulated with other sources; recurring links between Alumni; links/work of each Alumni complements or strengthens other Alumni work; achievements suitable for broadcasting to a wider group; extensive scale or reach; close alignment with other work towards MDGs; results/ achievements likely to continue past the involvement of the Alumni.
- **Orange**: Steady positive work; continuing and strengthening previous work; triangulation from colleagues; some strengths as well as some challenges; reasonable scale and/or reach; clear and recurring links between Alumni; Alumni is central to the work and the links.
- **Red**: significant challenges or weaknesses e.g. disconnect between employment and award focus; no information available; active obstacles to Alumni contributions; tenuous links to MDGs; very limited reach of work; very limited links with other Alumni and Australia; if the situation and results relating to this Alumni were widespread across the program they could undermine the program objectives.

TABLE 2
Overall Assessment Summary for Six Countries

Dimension A Contribution to development of home country/region.		Dimension B Contribution to the capacity of their organisations (in the development of their home country/region)		Dimension C Contribution to maintaining links with Australia & other Awardees, and subsequent results.	
	Orange		Orange		Orange
Indicators					
1) Alumni working in organisations aligned with MDG goals.	Orange	1) Effective Work Plan on Return (WPR)	Orange	1) Alumni maintaining links with country Alumni and Australians.	Red
2) Examples of organisational policy, practice or other achievements with Alumni involvement.	Green	2) Supportive work environment on return of Alumni.	Orange	2) Employing organisation establishing or maintaining links with Australian organisations.	Red
		3) Alumni using award acquired knowledge & skills in various types of work.	Green	3) Results of links maintained by Alumni or organisation.	Orange
		4) Alumni transferring award acquired knowledge and skills to others.	Green	4) Links with other country professional peers met on award.	Green

TABLE LEGEND

G	Significant progress and results	O	Sound progress and evidence of results	R	Limited evidence of results

The outcomes of Alumni contributions were clear and positive at the individual, organisational and to some extent societal levels across dimensions A & B, contributions to development and to the employing organisation.

It was apparent that Alumni contributions to establishing and maintaining links with Australia were more varied and problematic.

As noted against Dimension C indicators 1) and 2), there were very few examples of professional links between Alumni and Australia, and almost none between employing organisations and Australian organisations. The few notable examples of links with Australia e.g. several Alumni in South Africa and one in Zambia, occurred where Alumni had professional attachments or work experience with organisations in Australia as part of their scholarship studies.

Many countries do not yet have formal Alumni associations and those that do are only recently formed and have not yet achieved significant traction or defined a role that promotes a high level of engagement or interest. Many provincial and district based Alumni can only participate at the level of awareness because of distance, travel times and overall costs. Most Alumni indicated significant interest in local Alumni associations and events and provided suggestions as outlined in section 5 below.

A clear finding, as indicated against indicator 4 in dimension C of the table above, was the significant and extensive links established with other international students, some of whom were Alumni from other countries e.g. Indonesia, Timor Leste and many countries in Africa. Professional networks had been established through social media sites such as Facebook and Linked-In and in one case in Ghana, an Alumnus had established a post-harvest Facebook page showcasing local work and connecting with similar work in other countries. Similarly, a group in Kenya established a Facebook and Linked-In site for members of their crop production short-course training in Australia. Membership has now expanded to include other farmers and professionals where ideas, problems and issues on post-harvest production are posted and discussed.

4. Findings against specific review objectives

The review had four specific objectives:
- Identify a critical mass of Alumni collaborating on common development areas in the target countries.
- Gather and analyse such contributions as evidence of the outcomes and impact Australia Awards is helping shape in Africa.
- Explore plausible links between such contributions and Award-gained skills and knowledge.
- Investigate any multiplier effect at the organisation, country and/or regional level.

These have been collapsed into three issues for feedback in this review:
- Is there a critical mass of Alumni, a cluster, and an associated multiplier effect?
- Illustrations of Alumni contributions to development and consideration of how they might be linked to, or provide evidence of, program outcomes and impact?
- How plausible are the links between individual Alumni contributions to development and award-gained skills and knowledge?

4.1   A critical mass of Alumni and any multiplier effect

As noted in section 2.4 above, this review was premised on the notion of a functioning 'cluster' of Alumni working collaboratively towards agreed outcomes in the same sector in a country. It was apparent at the outset, in document reviews and in pilot work in South Africa, that the awards program is not designed to foster 'clusters' of Alumni.

In light of this, the review process was adapted to consider a 'cluster' to be a group of individual Alumni, working in the same sector in the same country. Within this group, people generally applied for awards as individuals with the endorsement of their organisations, and they returned to their individual careers. The sectors in which they worked usually comprised a large workforce spread across the country at district, regional, and national levels, so there was no compelling reason for Alumni to be working collaboratively.

There was no apparent synergy between the 78 Alumni consulted in six countries, nothing to suggest that any of the groups or 'clusters' were a critical mass collaborating on common development areas, working towards a shared set of objectives. In this context there was no multiplier effect of a cluster.

Zambia: an accidental cluster in the governance sector

An accidental cluster may have occurred in Zambia, where there are 11 Alumni working in the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), a government agency with a small number of professional staff. They constitute a reasonable fraction of the organisation's workforce and there are some synergies in that one has acted as a pathfinder for others helping them access the awards program, they have supported each other in their work in an ordinary collegial manner and as a group they have been central to the establishment of the Zambia Australia Alumni Association (ZAAA).

The ACC has been pleased to endorse a large number of staff to apply for awards, generally three each year, and hopes to continue doing so for purposes of staff motivation and retention, and workforce enhancement. It sees this as useful for the organisation and for individuals who need a Masters degree to achieve promotion in the public service. While there is a broad strengthening of organisational capacity through the work of individual Alumni, there is no evidence, or assertions by Alumni or the ACC Human Resources Director, that a cluster effect occurs i.e. that the effect of the group of Alumni, the outcome of their work, is greater than the sum of their discrete efforts.

Botswana: a potential cluster in the health sector

There is potential to develop a cluster in Botswana given the number of scholarship or Masters degree Alumni who have participated in the program, the size of the country, target ministry workforce numbers, and the intent of the Ministry of Health (MoH) to work strategically with regard to scholarships.

Challenges or constraints to the formation of a cluster include the absence of any intent to do so prior to award distribution; the absence of any medium and longer term outcomes mutually developed and agreed between the program, awardees, and the MoH; the absence of a formal system or structure to enable Alumni to meet post-award.

The relatively young age of Alumni coupled with high levels of motivation and similar areas of study i.e. public health, provide a clear opportunity for the formation of a strong cluster network e.g. around policy development. At present Alumni are meeting informally within individual cohort groups that are not always supported by more senior Alumni or relevant MoH supervisors.

4.2 Alumni contributions as evidence of program outcomes and impact

The purpose of the review is to provide illustrations and/or evidence of the Australia Awards-Africa programs contributions to development through the work of Alumni. Within the overall picture outlined in section 3 above, there are particular examples of Alumni contributions to development at the individual, organisational and societal levels. These are signposted in Table 3 below, and further details are provided in the relevant Country Summary (**Attachment E**).

These are illustrations of individual Alumni contributions to development rather than evidence of program wide contributions to development. The relevant Country Summary identifies the Alumnus and briefly outlines their circumstances prior to award studies; the type of award and study in Australia; their work on return from award; and the results or outcomes from that work. Each Alumnus has agreed to be further consulted by the MC in order to test and develop these case studies, potentially as Success Stories.

RECOMMENDATION A

The MC should follow-up with Alumni identified in Table 3 and where feasible, visit their work location to undertake an in-depth review of the Alumni's work, verification of the short and medium-term outcomes, and if appropriate write them up as Success Stories.

TABLE 3
Examples of Alumni contributions to development at the individual, organisation and societal levels

COUNTRY	SECTOR	# OF ALUMNI CONSULTED	ALUMNI INITIALS	OUTCOMES		
				INDIVIDUAL	ORGANISATIONAL	SOCIETAL
South Africa	Governance	7	NM	Yes	Some	No
			NR	Yes	Some	No
Botswana	Health	9	NM	Yes	Yes	Yes
			TK	Yes	Yes	Some
Zambia	Health	8	BM	Yes	Some	Yes
			EM	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Governance	12	EJ	Yes	Yes	Some
			RK	Yes	Yes	Some
Ghana	Agriculture	13	BS	Yes	Yes	Yes
			PD	Yes	Some	Yes
Kenya	Agriculture	17	TG	Yes	Yes	Yes
Madagascar	Mining	4	Not feasible to assess individual cases. See Country Summary.			

As noted in the table above, there are examples of Alumni contributions to development with results at the societal or systems level i.e. changes achieved in local or national systems addressing the MDGs. Some of the contributions and results are summarised in Table 4 below and will form part of the Alumni success stories that may be developed by the MC.

TABLE 4
Examples of results of Alumni contributions at a systems level.

Kenya	• Adaptation of new technologies at the district level based on practical experience and observation in Australia. • Introduction of new policies and strategies at the national and County level - i.e. customs form, veterinary regulatory framework.
Botswana	• Establishment of a national immunisation framework for children under 1 year old - taking coverage rate from 92% to 97%. • Introduction of two new vaccines within a 12-month period. • Establishment of a national M&E framework for child and adolescent health.
Zambia	• Improved population health indicators at district level due to new approaches to public health leadership. • Evidence-based research leading to reduced rate of childhood morbidity and mortality, and contributing to the introduction of rotavirus vaccine into national Expanded Program of Immunisations (EPI) scheme. • Drafting of national legislation on aviation, water and sanitation, tourism and recently the Extractive Industries Bill. Membership of the Technical Committee revising the national Constitution.
Ghana	• Introduction of new approaches to agricultural extension at district level resulting in 50% reduction on post-harvest losses; minimal tillage techniques resulting in a second crop; increased food security indicators.

As outlined in section 3 and the tables above, this review has recorded significant benefits and positive outcomes achieved through the work of individual Alumni at the individual, organisational, and wider societal levels. It is not possible use these examples of positive outcomes as evidence of program-wide outcomes or impact as they are from a purposively selected sample. Furthermore, there isn't a shared understanding amongst stakeholders, including Alumni, of the expected outcomes of the program. The initial program design did not include a robust Theory of Change or a Logic Model that would normally clarify short, medium and longer-term outcomes thus creating a shared picture of 'development outcomes'.

A British inquiry on Commonwealth scholarships[12] noted that **results of a scholarship** could be considered at the level of:
• The direct benefits for the Alumni (outputs);
• The beneficial effects of the application of the Alumni's knowledge and skills on their employing organisations and institutions (outcomes); and
• The longer term changes in society (impact).

The current re-design of the awards program presents an opportunity to clarify Australia's understanding of award program outcomes, to describe them in a theory of

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[12] http://www.nuffic.nl/en/news/blogs/can-we-measure-the-impact-of-scholarships (accessed on 19/1/14)

change and a program logic model that clearly articulates expected short, medium and longer-term 'development outcomes'. The Logic Model should also illustrate how these outcomes are linked to scholarship and fellowship Alumni as well as their employing organisations.

RECOMMENDATION B

The design of the next phase of the awards program could include a well-founded theory of change, tested amongst key stakeholders, and a program logic model that explicitly articulates expected 'development outcomes' in the short, medium and longer-term.

4.3 Links between award-gained skills and knowledge and contributions to development

Almost all Alumni consulted asserted a direct link between the knowledge, skills, confidence and a range of other 'soft skills' gained on award, and the benefits and positive outcomes they had achieved or contributed to on return to their country. Sometimes this was a structural matter e.g. a Masters degree was a pre-requisite for promotion in the public service, but usually it was a matter of outcomes achieved at the individual level, changes in the Alumni's knowledge, skills and confidence, being leveraged to enable the Alumni to contribute to organisational level changes, and in some instances to wider societal changes.

The review team accepted this assertion and also noted that a range of factors potentially affect the link between award-acquired skills, knowledge and attitudes and changes at an organisational and wider level. These include:

a) **Scholarships vs. fellowships**: Alumni on scholarship awards are away from work places for up to two years or more during which time their professional base, networks, roles and other factors affecting their capacity to contribute to change, were diffused to varying degrees. Scholarship Alumni generally returned to their workplaces, rebuilt their professional bases, and achieved promotion. This tended to occur in the medium term, and hence the links to award-acquired knowledge and skills were less apparent.

   On the other hand, fellowship Alumni were absent from workplaces for much shorter periods, returned to their established roles with new knowledge and skills, as well as fresh approaches that could often be applied quite quickly, and changes noted in the shorter-term.

b) **District, regional, national level**: the location of Alumni at district, regional, or national level affects the likelihood of outcomes linked to an award being apparent in the short, medium or longer-term.

   For example, a district-based agriculture officer who has undertaken a short course in post-harvest management is working directly with farmers and her work may have an affect during the subsequent growing season. This may provide short-term outcomes in terms of harvest losses at a district population level. District level practices such as this may affect food security indicators more readily than an Alumnus working at national level whose contributions are aggregated with a range

of other actors to effect change in national level food security policy over a longer period of time. During the review examples of this 'District level effect' were noticed in health and agriculture in several countries.

c) The Alumni's **Work Plan on Return (WPR)** and its **alignment with the employing organisation's annual workplan** influences the Alumni's potential to effect change on return.

While employing organisations signed off for the applicant to go on award, most if not all organisations did not plan strategically about the award in terms of alignment with specific organisational needs. There is potential for organisations to use the Alumni more effectively on return, and to achieve outcomes, had this been done.

There were several examples where Alumni explicitly 'carved out' their WPR from organisational plans, and thus even in the face of severe budgetary and other constraints, were able to achieve results. The WPR is an integral element of the fellowship awards and when used appropriately is a powerful tool in reintegration, future work planning and achievement of outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION C

The next phase of the awards program could consider working more closely with employing organisations to require stronger match of award and organisational needs over and above sign off for staff to go on award. This could for example mean that applicants have to include their organisation's annual workplan as part of their application, and that their WPR was explicitly linked to the organisational plan.

5. Other issues for consideration

5.1 Alumni links and networks

a) **Links**: As noted earlier, Alumni consulted in the six countries maintain very few links with Australia. Institutional linkages are non-existent for the most part. However, there are significant regional connections among peer Alumni who engage at a professional and personal level.

Some Alumni who had established and maintained links with colleagues in Australia cited professional attachments (internships) within their Masters degrees as a key enabler. An option to strengthen linkages would be to consider inclusion of professional attachments on scholarship awards i.e. Masters and PhDs, as a means to further enhance practical application of knowledge and skills and also to foster greater links between Australia and African countries.

b) **Networks:** Many Alumni voiced their appreciation for the engagement opportunities recently provided by the program e.g. the women in leadership network, the Alumni conference in Cape Town, a range of workshops and other activities. Formal Alumni associations are at varying stages of development in South Africa, Zambia, Kenya, Botswana and Ghana.

As these associations are established it will be important for the Australian government to clearly identify the incentives for people to participate. In doing so program support to alumni associations can be well targeted. Some suggestions from Alumni about reasons why they might participate in Alumni associations include:

• access to professional journals and resources on-line paid by the Alumni association fee;
• presentations/workshops and other events by guest speakers; and
• conducting in-country graduations, formal ceremonies at which Alumni could receive their degrees or formal qualifications.

Alumni in several countries raised an in-country graduation ceremony for degrees and qualifications obtained in Australia as a significant issue. It may be feasible for the MC to arrange these as stand-along activities, however there is an opportunity in the current and next phase of the program to consider this activity within , and perhaps to combine it with WPR presentations, liaison with employing organisations, and formal Alumni association meetings.

RECOMMENDATION D

The current and next phase of the awards program could consider reviewing the approach to Alumni association support so that it is targeted and responds to circumstances in each country e.g. some of the countries in this review identified access to a range of professional speakers, to professional journals and resources, and participation in in-country 'graduation' and awards ceremonies as key interests and incentives for participation.

5.2 The role of the national Coordinating Authority

In previous awards programs, the CA role was assessed as variable and at times problematic in terms of patronage. At present, most CA's fulfil an oversight role i.e. being aware of the awards program schedule, publicising application dates and other information within the Public Service departments, receiving short-lists from the MC, observing selection processes etc. CAs also provide an advisory role to respective Ministries.

The level of CA engagement with the program varied between the five countries visited in this review. There is scope for CAs to consider a variety of roles as part of their ongoing mandate, particularly in working with Ministries to liaise around key and emerging priorities and then with DFAT and/or the MC in a more detailed manner once national and DFAT funding priorities have been finalised.

5.3 Organisational capacity assessment

As noted in section 3.1 above, employing organisations that derived significant benefits from the work of Alumni often had supervisors who took a strong interest in the participant's 'journey', work units that had clear priorities, and existing work programs and plans, all of which provided a platform for Alumni to re-join and provide additional skills and expertise on return from award.

None of the employing organisations in the five countries visited in this review reported any discussion with the awards program about strategic direction, organisational

capacity, gaps and any particular intent of the awards program to develop clusters of Alumni who may then work towards addressing those gaps. This is a missed opportunity. It is also in tension with the program ToC[13] which identifies one of the evaluative questions considered in this review: to what extent have Alumni contributed to the capacity of their organisations in the development of their home country or region?

The current re-design of the awards program provides an opportunity for DFAT to be more strategic in terms of identifying key public service, private sector or civil society organisations whose work and results are central to Australian and the particular country's interests and priorities i.e. for the awards program to be more focused rather than the current broad-scale or scattered coverage. If these organisations are identified as key stakeholders, and changes in their capacity as expected outcomes, then there is a case for consultation about current organisational capacity i.e. a light touch organisational capacity assessment, and intended outcomes for the organisation in the short-medium-longer term. This could then inform the parameters for the scholarship and fellowship awards courses.

RECOMMENDATION E

The awards program could be more strategic, identifying organisations that are centrally aligned with Australian and partner government priorities, conducting a light touch organisational capacity assessment, and then targeting awards that can potentially be utilised by the organisation as well as the individual.

In these circumstances, clusters of awardees may be fostered in certain sectors and institutions, and these should be linked to agreed organisational outcomes in the medium to longer term.

The awards program could be more strategic, identifying organisations that are centrally aligned with Australian and partner government priorities, assessing their current organisational capacity, and then targeting awards that can potentially be utilised by the organisation as well as the individual.

In these circumstances, clusters of awardees may be fostered in certain sectors and institutions, and these should be linked to agreed organisational outcomes in the medium to longer term.

5.4   Outcomes and Impact Evaluation

As noted in section 1.2 above, scholarships have been part of the Australian Government's development programs in Africa since the 1960s. However they have been designed with a range of **different goals and objectives**, so assessment of long-term outcomes and impact is challenging at best.

If, as is likely, awards continue to be a significant part of the Australian aid program there is an opportunity and to some extent an obligation to establish a longitudinal study of a cohort of Alumni to evaluate the longer-term development outcomes associated with their work, and the links between that work and the awards.

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[13] GRM, *Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Strategy*, Draft November 2013, p 4.

This could be managed within a collaborative partnership between DFAT, the MC(s) that manage the implementation of any phase of the awards programs, and a separate research team. This may necessitate a different approach to contracting and to M&E than has been implemented in the past.

The current re-design of the awards program provides an opportunity for planning the evaluation of development outcomes in the next several-year phase and also over the next 50 years. This may require a two tiered approach to evaluation, one looking at short and medium term outcomes and another using those results and looking to longer term outcomes and adaptation of an evaluation framework as each iteration of the awards program was developed.

RECOMMENDATION F

Evaluation of the awards program should be considered at the outset of the next phase, and be clearly based on the ToC and the Logic Model.

DFAT could consider a separate evaluation framework that could serve its broad intent and goals over an extended period, to assess medium and longer- term outcomes. This could be separate from the 3-5 year period of the next phase of the program and the next MC engaged to deliver outputs i.e. recruitment, awards delivery, and Alumni engagement, and to monitor outputs and short-term outcomes.

Given the breadth of the current awards program, currently across 50 countries, this two tiered approach to evaluation could be complemented, as noted in the November 2013 draft M&E Strategy, by the current program focusing on specific clusters/groups, sectors and countries over an extended period to assess a sample of program outcomes in the short, medium and longer-term.