

THE STUDENTS FOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM 2005-2014: Its contributions to International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**By Conscribe Enterprises Ltd.
February 2014**



Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
Association des universités et collèges du Canada

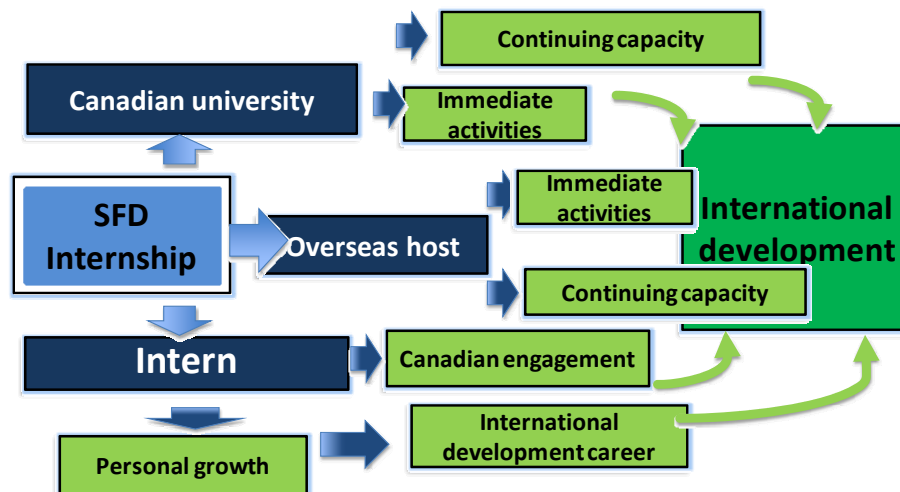
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Students for Development was a program funded by the Canadian International Development Agency and managed by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada from 2005 to 2014. SFD supported senior Canadian university students to undertake internships with host organizations in developing and in-transition countries.

The perceptions of Canadian interns in SFD, their Canadian universities, and their overseas hosts shed light on: i) the kinds of benefits for international development that can result from a program such as SFD; ii) the kinds of intangible costs that can be incurred in producing those benefits; iii) the factors that determine the extent of benefits and costs; and iv) action that might be taken by designers of, and participants in, future programs involving international Canadian student internships so as to get the most for out of them for international development.

SFD contributed to international development by supporting the development work of internship hosts, enhancing interns' own development-relevant capacities, and enriching the attention given to international development by Canadian universities.

Paths along which SFD Canadian Student Internships Contribute to International Development



Interns instigated and supported development-oriented research, education, outreach, and networking which contributed both to hosts' immediate work (path 1) and continuous capacity building (path 2).

Interns contributed to hosts' development-oriented research and education (including equipment and curriculum materials), promotion of multiculturalism and social inclusion (including

empowerment of women and support for youth, and meeting health needs of vulnerable people), facilitation of international and domestic bridge building, and strengthening of the hosts' own financial, management, and ICT capacities. Many of those contributions are being sustained through: continuing contact with interns after their return to Canada, the knowledge that interns helped to generate or disseminate the social inclusion and multiculturalism advances made, the bridges built, and the capacities strengthened. Active hosts deemed SFD's costs to their development work as being far outweighed by the benefits received.

Interns also strengthened their own competencies (path 3) to engage with international development by deepening their understanding and sharpening relevant skills. Some have aligned their careers with international development needs (path 4). Many have contributed (path 5) to Canadian public awareness of, and financial or other kinds of support for, international development. Finally, SFD internships have enriched Canadian university activities dedicated to international development activities (path 6), and prodded academics to pay more attention to international development in ongoing research and education (path 7).

The factors that determined the degree to which SFD's benefits for international development were maximized and costs minimized, its "success factors," can be identified from information that has been generated through surveys and meetings.

Some of the success factors identified by host leaders were largely outside hosts' control: the lengths of internships were bounded by the parameters of the SFD program, the personal pre-dispositions of interns affected their attitudes and behaviour, and funding from external sources to support intern activities could not be counted on. Others factors related to the quality of collaboration between hosts and their Canadian university partners in the realms of intern selection, orientation, supervision, and support. A third set of success factors, including the quality of effort that hosts put into arranging for internships, planning intern's work, and supervising/supporting interns once in the host country, could largely be addressed through planning by hosts on their own or in consultation with interns.

Success factors from the intern's point of view related somewhat to personal abilities (especially with regard to language), but mostly to external conditions: the nature of the host country, personal living conditions (accommodation, transportation, and social interaction), work conditions (host's resources, organizational culture, mentorship provided, intern's role, workloads and deadlines), preparation and support by home university, and SFD program operations.

Success factors identified by universities relate to the organizational context within which internships were located (with multi-year projects being seen as particularly valuable), the efforts and incentives made to attract capable students, their pre-departure preparation and support during internships, and the ongoing adaptive management of partnerships with hosts.

Quantitatively, internship success can be linked to various characteristics of interns and internships through the data provided in the survey of alumni. Analysis of these data suggest that intern age and level of study have the most bearing on success in terms of matching intern skills with host needs and in terms of interns' enhancing development-relevant skills. Older, more advanced students were found to more likely to be of assistance to hosts, and more likely to enhance their own research skills. Younger students were more likely to see their personal competencies and cross-cultural skills

enhanced by their SFD experience, and also more likely to contribute to raising other students' awareness of international development.

Overall, the experiences reported by SFD participants suggest it was most successful when all parties communicated, collaborated, and monitored well.

Program designers, funders and managers are advised by hosts, interns and universities to continue programs such as SFD, particularly in its present form that allows for two-way internships and multi-year projects, but to consider the duration of internships funded, and the amount of financial support allocated to individual interns. Interns have an abundance of advice for any organization charged with managing an internship program. It is advised to make sure that hosts are well selected, that participating universities are attentive to the conditions that enable interns to make immediate and continuing contributions to development, and, that communications flow smoothly among all parties.

SFD hosts advise future hosts to embrace and learn with interns, to be clear on objectives and expectations, and to provide effective supervision and support. They advise future interns to be diligent, respectful, flexible and friendly, and to learn continuously. They advise Canadian universities to plan for true partnerships, optimal internship timings, effective intern selections and orientations, and contingencies.

Canadian universities are advised by their peers to link internships systemically with ongoing research, teaching and social engagement.