

## Getting Under the Skin: how participatory evaluation supports organizational change

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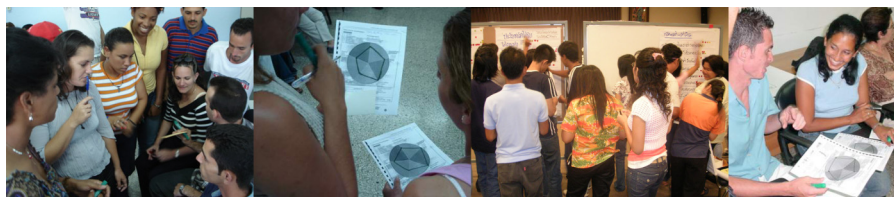
### Key Words

Free listing, Pile Sorting, The Wheel, Values and Gains, Social Domain, Activity Dynamics, Roman Carousel, Forum, International Development, Civic Engagement, Workplace Engagement, Evaluation, Canada, Consulting, Youth, Participatory Action Research

### Context

- Each year, Canada World Youth (CWY) /Jeunesse Canada Monde (JCM) hosts youth exchange programs involving Canada and more than 25 countries.
- In 2006, CWY celebrated its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary and commissioned an innovative impact evaluation of the past 10 years.
- At the same time, CWY was in the midst of "une grande tempête"—a major organizational change that eventually led to restructuring and staff cuts. A change in senior management occurred during the early stages of the evaluation process.
- CWY's major donor, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), was reconsidering the nature of its support for Canadian volunteers working abroad and looking for a demonstration of results.
- The Evaluation took place between January and December 2006.

### Participants



- 290 former exchange participants at 17 workshops in Canada, Benin, Cuba, Thailand, and the Ukraine, plus five former exchange participants in the pilot workshop in Canada.

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- 101 community participants (host families and work supervisors) at seven workshops in the five countries.
  - Four overseas partner institutions whose staff participated in the design process and facilitated evaluation workshops in their countries.
  - CWY staff at regional offices and in Montreal who provided administrative and operational support.
  - At the post-evaluation workshop, two former exchange participants, a CWY Board member, 13 Canadian-based staff (eight of whom had been exchange participants) and two former field staff.
  - The Evaluation Team consisted of five consultants and two CWY staff. The CWY staff helped design the process.

## Questions

1. What are the **two main impacts** of the CWY experience on past participants, host families, and communities? What two program components most account for each impact?
2. What is the impact on participants' **knowledge** (development, history, culture etc.) and **personal skills** (technical, organizational, communications, and learning)?
3. What is the impact on **personal values and gains** (or interests)?
4. How has CWY influenced your involvement in **civic and community engagement**?
5. In a **post-evaluation workshop** with CWY: What is the interaction between the six main impact areas and the six most important program components? What factors account for the weaker impact areas?

## Tools

- **Free listing and pile sorting** to obtain the main impacts in six pre-selected domains (knowledge, personal relationships, values/attitudes, local/global action, career/studies, and skills). Each participant named their two main impacts and the two program components that most accounted for the impact.
- **The Wheel** to rate the level of impact on knowledge and four pre-set skill areas. See Figure 1 for results from five countries.
- **Values and Gains** (modified Values, Interests and Positions).
- **Social Domain** to define and measure the nature of civic engagement of former participants.
- **Activity Dynamics** to assess the relationship between the six main impact areas identified in the evaluation workshops and the six most important program components.
- **Roman Carousel** to further assess the factors that account for the weaker evaluation impacts.

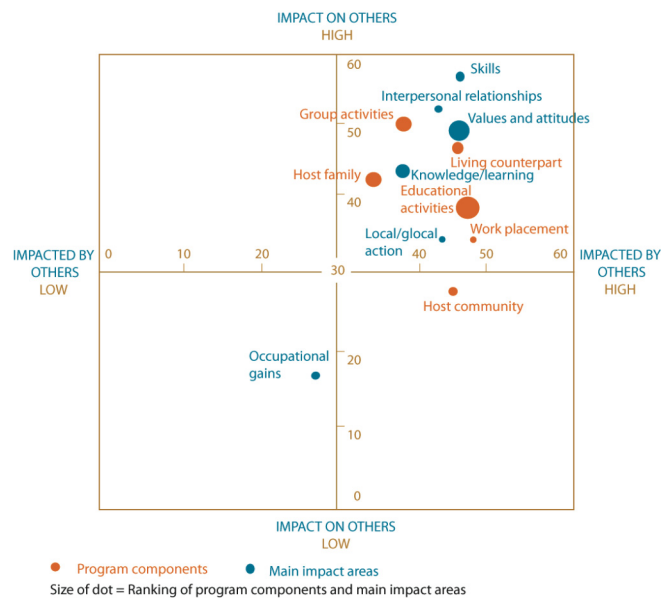
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## Examples of Results

### Activity Dynamics

Evaluation results showed areas of higher and lower impact on former exchange participants in each country. Programming components were a factor in these results. After the evaluation, CWY members used Activity Dynamics to analyze the relationship among the impacts and the programming components. (See Figure 2).

The results showed a high level of interaction among the program components (orange circles) and the main impacts (blue circles). One exception was occupational gains of the former exchange participants. Occupational gains were not so much the result of the program activities, nor did they contribute much back to the program.

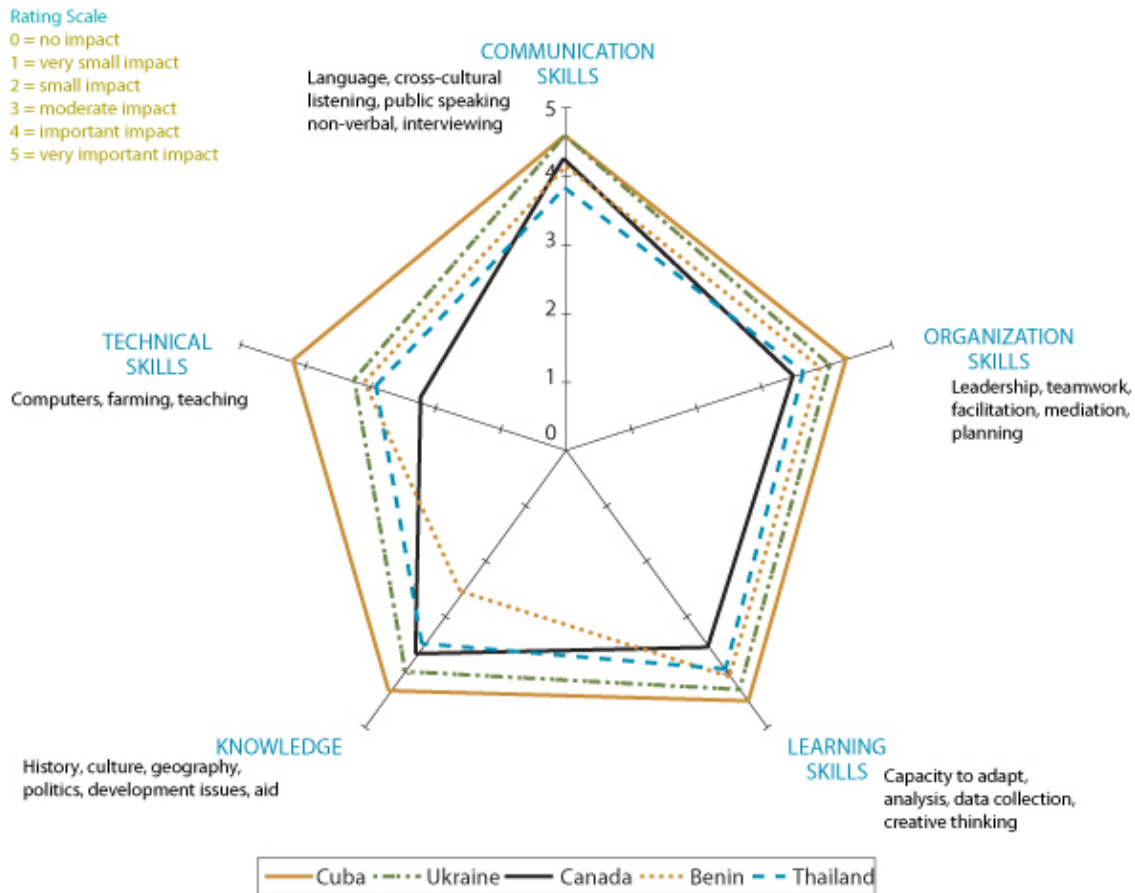


### The Wheel

The **Wheel** was used in five countries to rate the level of impact on knowledge and four pre-set skill areas.

### Outcomes

- The evaluation process was the calm in the eye of the storm: “It kept us centred on what we have achieved ... and in line with who we are,” said a CWY staff person.
- The participatory process used in the evaluation inspired CWY’s approach to restructuring. It encouraged CWY to adopt a new team approach in its program planning and management decision-making.
- The conclusions that emerged from the evaluation helped to articulate and support some of the emerging program directions. For example, CWY is acting on one result from Activity Dynamics by seeking better ways to address the aspirations of exchange participants by enriching their work placements in the program.



## Contributions of SAS<sup>2</sup>

- Built CWY staff and partner capacity to use SAS<sup>2</sup> techniques.
- Modeled the effectiveness of greater participation by bringing overseas and community voices into management decision-making.
- Raised the credibility of the results.
- Permitted many more people to participate in shared analysis and reflection, in particular overseas partners and community members.

## For future SAS<sup>2</sup> evaluations

- Some SAS<sup>2</sup> tools generate a large amount of individual and collective data that require careful advance planning. To ensure that each country team can quickly compile and process the information from the workshops, the data-collection tables should be easily converted or merged into appropriate database software.
- The number and nature of the final report(s) should be clear in advance. We did not initially envisage a complete report for each country as well as a synthesis report. Preparing such reports took additional time for all consultants and CWY staff.