

# Mobilising Young Surveyors toward Globally Impactful Causes - The VCSP Core Team

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## **SUMMARY: OUR PROFESSION IN AND AFTER COVID TIMES**

Pulling together a group of 18 young surveyors across eight time zones to connect other young surveyors with opportunities to volunteer as humanitarian surveyors is a challenge. The Volunteer Community Surveyor Program (VCSP) - run and led by young surveyors - have tackled this head on successfully. The results are a continuation of the VCSP Pilot and a feat that shows young surveyors have the dedication, creativity and soul to create impact and a strong future for our profession.

Over the VCSP's life-span, the Core Team, in collaboration with our Partners, have deployed 20 young surveyors in Africa and Asia-Pacific, held two e-Volunteering events and two Wisdom Workshops. These require months of planning, communicating, and collaborating with people across different disciplines, ages, cultures, and genders. Breaking through silos and interacting beyond differences, we support each other as the VCSP core team because we have a shared vision and a strong team culture. With this paper, we wish to share our story on how we have created a sustainable structure for continuously evolving geospatial excellence to support better living for marginalised communities and support climate action. We showcase the methods we have employed to create an inclusive culture that facilitates more than just diversity but moves it towards equity and belonging, through strategic planning, skill development in project management and governance, succession planning, and consistency.

## 1. Introduction

Unity, succession, breaking down geographical and technical silos and working together over time are challenges well known in industry bodies around the world - and surveying is no different. Despite this, not only has the Volunteer Community Surveyor Program (VCSP) team succeeded in deploying 20 young surveyors across the globe, run Wisdom Workshops with over 170 participants from over 40 countries, run e-Volunteering events over 2 countries with 400+ mappers from 45+ countries and laid down the groundwork for a Knowledge Portal, but we have done so with the collaborative spirit of a team united by a constant vision and shared values. This paper is based on our experience and sheds light on how we have managed to work together during a pandemic, across continents and timezones, while still retaining a level of clarity and comradery.

Our intended audience are surveyors in people management roles (formally and in a volunteer capacity) and fellow young surveyors who aspire to be inclusive, transformational and impactful leaders. In sharing the story of the VCSP Core Team's journey, our hope is that greater emphasis is given to building up the people in surveying organisations rather than more outdated practices that we still see today around placing profits over people. In this paper we will run you through the big picture of the VCSP down to the details on how we operate, then provide some lessons for the industry to use in order to see past perceived biases to allow for innovation and positive change-making.

## 2. Background and Operations

As an FIG Young Surveyors Network initiative, the history of the VCSP Pilot has been evaluated and discussed at length (Unger, 2018). Since its revival in 2019, a few changes have been key to scale up the VCSP sustainably. This section details the tangible outcomes so far and how these were achieved through defining the big picture and clearly communicating it both internally and externally.

### 2.1 How is the VCSP designed to combat society and environmental problems

A vital tool to unite a team, regardless of location, is a vision (Kantabutra & Avery 2006). A clearly stated vision will allow the team to self-check individually and realign as a team as they make decisions and goals throughout their work together. Having a clear vision and strategy not only aligns the objectives and outcomes of what you need in place but also ensures that you set your long-term and short-term goals. Keeping this in mind has enabled the VCSP to have a clear strategic plan for an ultimate roadmap for success. Having a clear vision and strategy has defined the annual milestones that happen within the VCSP. The strategy doesn't need to be detailed. Details make themselves clear in annual work planning so long as the three overarching organisational statements are linked to throughout.

**- VCSP Vision -**

*By 2024, we envisage that the VCSP will be a respected and sustainably run program connecting skilled young surveyors with a strong network of partners who stand up for land rights for all and fight against environmental crises.*

Another vital tool to not only bring a team together but to also share externally why your organisation exists, is to have a purpose (Kempster et al 2011). This is your ‘why.’ Why do you do what you do?

**- VCSP Purpose -**

*The VCSP exists to have a positive impact on the environment and people in need at a community level, a country level, and on a global level for our common future.*

Finally, of the three overarching statements an organisation should clearly define, a commitment (otherwise known as a mission statement) states what you commit to do with your organisation and is vital for transformational leadership (Graetz 2000; Weiherl & Masal 2016).

**- VCSP Commitment -**

*We commit to enabling young surveyors to volunteer for the future through projects that prepare them for the world (career and personal) through learning different perspectives and allowing them to connect, promote, and share knowledge with others.*

The VCSP (VCSP) creates positive change through four interlocking paths and initiatives: in-Country deployments, e-Volunteering, Wisdom Workshops, and the Knowledge Portal. So far, since its inception in 2017, 20 young surveyors have been deployed through what we call our in-Country paths. These Volunteer Community Surveyors (VCSs) have come from many different parts of the world to either their own country (during COVID-19) or across continents during the pilot. From lived experience, they get to learn about different customs to their own while delivering and developing their own skills to VCSP partners.

Complementary to the VCSP in-Country deployments are a series of Wisdom Workshops which allow young surveyors to support humanitarian surveying even if they can't travel to support communities in-Country, of which we have run two since 2020. These workshops are a chance for young surveyors who wish to become VCSs or work in another capacity within the humanitarian surveying realm, receive an introduction to various soft skill wisdoms and exposure to technical topics. These include fit-for-purpose techniques, stories from past-VCSs, lessons from seasoned humanitarian surveyors, and models and technology relating to this area (think GLTN's Social Tenure Domain Model, Cadasta's tool, FAO's Open Tenure, etc). To broaden our area and link to the VCSP Vision, the Wisdom Workshop this year, is focussed on climate action and how surveyors can make a difference to the global warming mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Since the revival of the VCSP in 2019, we have collaborated with two organisations to support and run two e-Volunteering events. The first was in 2020 with Surveying and Spatial Sciences Institute, Australia on the Firewater Mapathon, and the second at the FIG Working Week 2021 with Crowd2Map Tanzania on the mapping of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) out of Tanzania. Not all young surveyors can volunteer for 6 weeks on an in-Country deployment and they may not have interests in the areas of land administration and tenure security, like most of our deployments have been in the past. To provide young surveyors variety and accessibility to volunteering as a humanitarian surveyor, the VCSP introduced e-Volunteering. A number of existing mapathons and online volunteering like the Firewater and FGM-combatting events are available and this path of the VCSP allows for a more considered connection between FIG surveyors and these initiatives. The value-add for e-Volunteering partners is the data quality expertise that surveyors bring. This is covered well in a chapter of the Commission 3 publication due to come out in late-2020.

For more details on our most recent outcomes, refer to papers submitted in 2021 on e-Volunteering (Sharma et al., 2021) and in-Country deployments from a VCSs perspective (Taiwo et al., 2021) as well as those coming in 2022 on in-Country deployments (both organisationally and from a VCSs perspective), running Wisdom Workshops and from young African surveyors writing on various topics relating to influencing institutional and legal challenges in their own context.

Finally, all volunteers on the VCSP including the Core Team, the Volunteer Community Surveyors, their Mentors, and e-Volunteer Community Surveyors, bring their perspective from various ethnicities, genders, surveying backgrounds, and experience levels. With this representative group of volunteers, challenges can be tackled in a more effective way using local knowledge from each member and the empowerment of local people. The aim being to grow each person's capacity in soft skills and technical skill, increase innovation and understanding, and ultimately reduce inequalities and marginalisation.

## **2.2 The journey of the VCSP core team**

At the beginning, the VCSP team was a small group of young surveyors led by Eva-Maria Unger, the FIG YSN Chair at the time. The pilot was evaluated and discussed in depth during a round-table at the 2018 Working Week in Istanbul. Since then, Claire Buxton was inspired to take up the challenge and scale up the VCSP, sustainably. To do that, not only was a strategic plan required but so too was a team of dedicated volunteers. With the help of Melissa Harrington and Dr Kwabena Asiama (Chair and Vice-Chair of the YSN at the time), Claire chose the team through an online application process.

In order to keep personal biases out of the selection process, personally identifying information, for example gender, race, and name, were hidden from view. This practice continues throughout any selection process the VCSP undertakes. The result was a group of young surveyors who came from varying parts of the world with different technical backgrounds and with various levels of FIG involvement.



Figure 1: Map Showing the geographical spread of the VCSP Core team in 2022

The bringing together of the first VCSP core team meant the ambitious four-year strategic plan for the VCSP has had more of a chance to succeed. With eighteen dedicated young surveyors, we have been able to create the tangible outcomes discussed earlier in this paper. Since this first team selection, a new bunch of young surveyors have been welcomed to the core team as others had to step back due to conflicting commitments. This new group has come into a team where existing dynamics exist and as with the entire team, have had to learn how to work with new people in an online context. A majority of the VCSP Core team members have never met in person.

The team structure was helpful to define so that all members knew where they stood and so there was a shared seniority but a flat structure to encourage innovation. The flat governance structure is inclusive without losing momentum for workflow. The core team Lead guides the four team leads (in-Country deployment, Wisdom Workshops, e-Volunteering and Knowledge Portal) and functional leads (Communications and Marketing, Sponsorships and Partnerships). Each of these team leads have a mentee / second-in-charge whom they mentor and work with, too. This also allows for sharing the workload but also to avoid having too many ‘direct-reports’ to the VCSP Lead. A single person can only effectively manage around eight people directly (Chin, 2022).

Each of the leads is supported with coaching and regular one-on-ones to enable a focus on what

every individual on the core team is gaining from the act of being a volunteer in the team and what they personally find fulfilling in their work with the VCSP in particular. The opportunity to give open and constructive feedback to each other is given during the one-on-ones.

Recently, we have moved to a slightly different structure where a more collaborative and strength-based approach is encouraged and where previous VCSP core team members can remain involved in an ‘advisory’ role. As with our first team structure, we want to create clarity for team members but maintain effectiveness and flexibility while not becoming bureaucratic. The mentees have had an opportunity to rotate through different roles which has allowed them exposure to different facets of the VCSP paths and initiatives but also new perspective from a new lead.

### **2.3 How we operate**

As a Core Team, the VCSP have fundamental operational characteristics of compassion and empathy alongside our technical skills to *do what we say we will do*. We are each individually working to face barriers to living our values, harnessing our passions towards a shared purpose through a clear and shared vision and purpose that allows us to sustainably grow our team while we progress towards our commitment.

Volunteerism is the foundational value that guides the VCSP, and we proudly live it through giving our time and skills to the commitment of the VCSP without expecting anything in return. As volunteers, we give our time and energy to both support causes we care about, but also to gain experience and learn new skills to support us in our careers. This is especially relevant for young surveyors. It is more vital for young surveyors in particular that when volunteering, we are gaining just as much, if not more, than we are giving, to build our leadership skills and encourage us to continue volunteering.

The earlier-mentioned interpersonal support activities are paired with three-weekly core team meetings which are for updating what team members are working on, removing roadblocks, and sharing knowledge. To continue to get to know each other on a personal level, we share favourite music, foods, childhood memories, and sometimes play games. While this frequency of meeting takes time, it must be recognised that it is also this which provides the motivation for those on the core team to remain proactive, passionate, and connected. These team meetings are an opportunity for valuable discussions and lessons about how to operate effectively as part of a team, how to lead a meeting and take notes, how to manage and track ongoing action lists within the context of multiple projects on-the-go at once, how to use platforms for project and resource management, and many other useful and valuable skills that young surveyors can take back into their personal and professional lives.

Collaboration and communication are also vital to bringing the values of volunteerism and sustainability to life for the VCSP. We strive to work collaboratively in the ways that we undertake our partnerships, such as with GLTN and Cadasta for in-Country Deployments and SSSI and Crowd2Map Tanzania for our e-Volunteering events, for example. We also recognise

the pitfalls of working on local devices with a global team across many timezones, and have implemented a google drive folder structure that allows all of our team to work in-parallel using the Google suite of collaboration tools. This has involved a steep learning curve for some team members as we each develop a new skill set around collaborative work and adopt new platforms. More on how we support team members with this is discussed below.

The benefit of having a team across many time zones comes into fruition when we have e-Volunteering events working around the clock that our core team members support, as well as when our global team comes together to support Wisdom Workshops with presenters from various countries, attendees often from dozens of countries and continents, and a preceding MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) that last 7-10 days before the Wisdom Workshop itself. We focus our collaboration into communication through email and WhatsApp to support our use of the Google Drive and Google Suite platforms for our file management and project management. Delegation has been a key skill that we have been teaching each other on the Core Team, as this is a skill that many a young surveyor has found challenging over the course of their early career. We proactively work within the coaching structure of our team to keep track of tasks and encourage proactive delegation without micromanagement. With respectful checking-in on progress and clear lines of communication about roadblocks as they arise, we continually try to build these soft-skills within our team.

Curiosity, respect, and sustainability are the remaining values that act as the foundation for the VCSP. We strongly emphasise that all ideas are welcome and encourage exploration of new technologies, potential partnerships, and opportunities for the VCSP. No matter a core team member's place in the team, geography, gender, technical background, level of familiarity with VCSP initiatives, we strive to create an atmosphere where openness and transparency create psychological safety, and we unashamedly protect this at all costs. We act inclusively, working to create meetings that are at a time when our global team can attend, no matter where in the world they are based, so that every single member of the team knows that they have a role to help the whole team function well. As will be described in the following section, we have created a robust and respectful succession planning process that allows our team to build knowledge over time in a sustainable way. A team member's term needs to be sustainable over time to offer proactive growth opportunities and allow people to follow opportunities as they arise. Rather than be tied down to the VCSP for many years at a time if that no longer excites and fulfils them. To remain sustainable, we like to keep the team fresh so that we do not fall into the trap of having stale members holding a title but not contributing due to a loss of motivation.

## **2.4 Bringing up the team with new skills**

As the VCSP is based on teamwork focussed on externally-facing events and initiatives, over the past two years, the team has been learning how to plan, run and review events and initiatives as a foundation for project management. We have had a focus on how to set goals and success metrics, and how to plan and execute a communications and marketing plan in conjunction with the VCSP Communications and Marketing lead to bring to life an initiative and make sure

that it reaches the right audience to maximise success. While we had some understanding of brand and marketing, there was a lot to learn and the VCSP team were fortunate to be given the time and guidance of a marketing professional at no cost in 2020. They were able to take a look at the VCSP brand as it stood and suggest improvements as well as recommend ways to build the brand through clearly defining an elevator-pitch, developing a clean logo, and how to choose colours and fonts that reflect the VCSP purpose. They also kindly provided us advice on website design and what strategic speaking and presenting can do for the success of an organisation.

This has been paired with coaching and mentoring on how to use strategic thinking skills to leverage empathy to focus business development as we undertake outreach - how can we seek funding and partnerships that will be mutually beneficial and reach the right people? How can we work towards bringing together organisations who are doing so much good work in the world, and help them in their efforts? These sorts of big questions required external support initially and the VCSP Lead has leaned on her coaches and mentors then passed on these lessons to the core team. In times of need, other experts (including from Louise at the FIG office and ACCO representative, Prof. Dr. -Ing. Hartmut Müller) have been kind enough to give their advice on strategic fundraising and general volunteering leadership.

The core team are actively encouraged to learn business development skills and communication skills which they can take back to their own professional and personal lives. We offer a psychologically safe ‘playground’ for team members to test and try these soft skills. Examples of activities that the VCSP core team have in this space include podcast episodes with GeoHolics (The Geoholics et al., 2021) and Defining Boundaries (Defining Boundaries & Cox, 2021) podcasts, a suite of articles and interviews such as this one with RICS (Buxton et al., 2021), running training sessions on new technology at national conferences (Figure 2), writing papers for FIG Working Weeks and Congresses, among many others.





Figure 2: Nigerian Young Surveyors learning from VCSP core team members Angela Etunovbe (top) and David Elegbede (front left at bottom) at their Ideas Harvest in November 2021

Over the recent six months as the VCSP core team has been moving towards the end of its second year after the pilot, the team has also been undertaking regular upskilling sessions as part of their three-weekly sessions. Spearheaded by the VCSP incoming core team Lead Roshni Sharma, the immediate focus of this has been project management. This is a recognised area that many leads and second-in-commands have mentioned in one-on-ones as an area that they can grow in through volunteer work. They are then able to apply these skills to grow their own careers and implement into their workplaces to increase professional performance.

These are being delivered internally by members of our core team based on their areas of expertise, and key learning outcomes include:

- Identify the project life cycle and the relevant planning and action steps in each phase.
- Articulate tools and techniques to plan, organise and manage a project, including management of multiple stakeholders.
- Understand constraints that impact project management and how these can be managed.
- Understand the role of communication in project management.
- Understand the role of strategy in project management.
- Develop a project plan from beginning to end.

These build skills among our core team such as strategic planning, realistic scheduling and measurement of progress, estimating and managing scope, time and cost, including competing priorities, assessing and managing progress and obstacles, working autonomously while being part of a team, successful project initiation, developing a realistic project schedule, communication and effective stakeholder management, risk identification and management and balancing quality of work, resilience of your team and learning of your team.

As a team, we recognise that good work begins with an individual, however it should live on in the legacy of that individual after they move to the next sphere of influence or impact in their work and lives. Success of the VCSP should not be limited one person's presence: it needs to be bigger than any one personality to really have an impact and truly make the program sustainable. Our VCSP core team Lead for the revival of the program and through years one and two, Claire Buxton, has been instrumental in establishing a robust, sustainable and simple succession planning method which is at the core of why the VCSP core team is sustainable over time. Her method involves using two key tools:

1. A brief half-page strawman summary which describes the broad tasks involved in the role under their relevant themes.
2. A longer succession planning document that describes the position description, key lessons over time, key contacts, a succession plan spread over 6-12 months with monthly meetings mapped out to indicate how transition of roles and responsibilities will occur, with the percentage of these shifting to manage a sustainable and clear transition managed sustainably over time while documenting the key knowledge that needs to be transferred along the way.

This method has been instrumental for the VCSP core team incoming lead for years three and four, Roshni Sharma, and we are applying it to transitions for other team leads within the VCSP Core Team.

### **3. A Challenge for the Industry**

In 2002, FIG Commission 1 released a business management guide for surveyors. Within that, a checklist is provided, the business planning and strategy process defined, and general governance guidance was given. 20 years later and parts of that publication are still relevant but some could be updated as professional spaces have developed with generational growth i.e. through communication tools and understanding of the positive potency of diversity and inclusion on an organisation's success.

#### **3.1 Current status of governance in the industry**

It's not new knowledge that the surveying industry, on a global and local scale, is in need of a reboot to excite and inspire new people to join its ranks. In many countries, there is a demographic within the surveyors leaning towards those over 45, with a clear shortage of those under 45.

Generationally, many surveyors who work in private industry find that they would like to venture into business ownership as they see this as a sustainable path forward for their mid- and late-careers. However due to the heavily technical focus and siloed nature of the work we do as well as the ways in which tertiary education has functioned to date, they often do not have the necessary business and soft skills to do this. On a related thread, technically proficient people are too often promoted to people management roles as this is seen as the obvious next career step but this often results in higher staff turnover as those people are not equipped with the skills to manage people. We know this to be true in countries like North America (Maguire, 2017), New Zealand, and Australia based on experience.

Finding the balance between technical prowess and business skills is a global challenge, and one that needs action. This is one of the drivers for the VCSP's team structure and core team focus, which through its conscious design, is able to create an environment where young surveyors can learn these sorts of skills on-the-job as they volunteer, with targeted coaching and guidance to help to build these soft skills effectively in a safe, supportive, and respectful environment.

#### **3.2 Remote working**

Throughout COVID-19, there was a massive shift for a lot of surveyors toward a remote working experience. As many countries are adapting now to living with COVID-19, we are now experiencing a lull period while business owners consider their next moves are. Going back to the 'old ways' of full-time office employment seems like the easy option against going fully remote. But is it the best option? As with many arguments, the easy option is not the best and there are complexities that come with managing a hybrid working environment. As a fully remote team, the VCSP core team have some examples of why remote working is a viable option for leaders to consider offering.

### **3.2.1 Pros of remote working**

When it comes to business operating costs, leasing a commercial space is one of the highest. With the increase of vacancies in Canada for office of 3.1% since the start of COVID-19 pandemic, this may indicate a new world for business and surveyors are not exempt. In the UK, 15% of employees work from home and 54% of the employees now spend many hours working somewhere else other than their company's office location (Arifi, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated an astronomical increase in the ratio of the workforce working remotely. By April 2020, 46% of the UK workforce worked from home, and 86% of those that worked from home attributed it to COVID-19 (ONS, 2020b). CEOs of global organisations with huge space usage (such as Barclays Bank, Twitter, and Morgan Stanley) are already discussing possible structural changes to the workspace going forward (CBRE 2020).

In Uganda, the occupational side of the office sector came to a stand-still pause after the government imposed Standard Operating procedures (SOPs). Potential tenants were only interested in reducing their capital expenditure to sustain their staff during this black swan (Knight Frank, 2021). In a survey conducted between 11th and 20th May 2020, 60.87% preferred a balance between work from home and the office, 23.48% opted to go back to the office while 15.65% would rather work from home.

The argument can therefore be made that with a lower cost of leasing, profit margins can be retained without having to increase rates due to increases in inflation, thereby making that surveying company stand out in the market. With that extra operating cost out of the way, or at least reduced, the business owners may also have more freedom to make investments in research and development. R&D is not only effective for encouraging innovation within a workplace but it also increases staff engagement and when done well, will strengthen the company's place in the market (Clarine, 2021).

Staff engagement is an obvious pro for remote working. In a study completed by PwC in Germany, remote work was preferred by 71% of their employees after the pandemic. Beyond this improved employee satisfaction though, there is a benefit for the business' bottom line with the same study finding that "meaningful savings over a 10-year period from a 20% reduction in office space" could be made (Magliocco, 2021).

The next largest cost, not only to an employee but also to the environment, is commuting to and from an office and energy use. During the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, a complete lock down of the borders to non-essential traffic was agreed upon between Canada and the US. This lock down and related municipal restrictions to workers resulted in people using less energy. Many claims were made that the first few months of this lockdown were a chance for the planet to breathe and revive, the below figure shows a stark example of this using electricity consumption as an early indicator on consumption and particulate pollution.

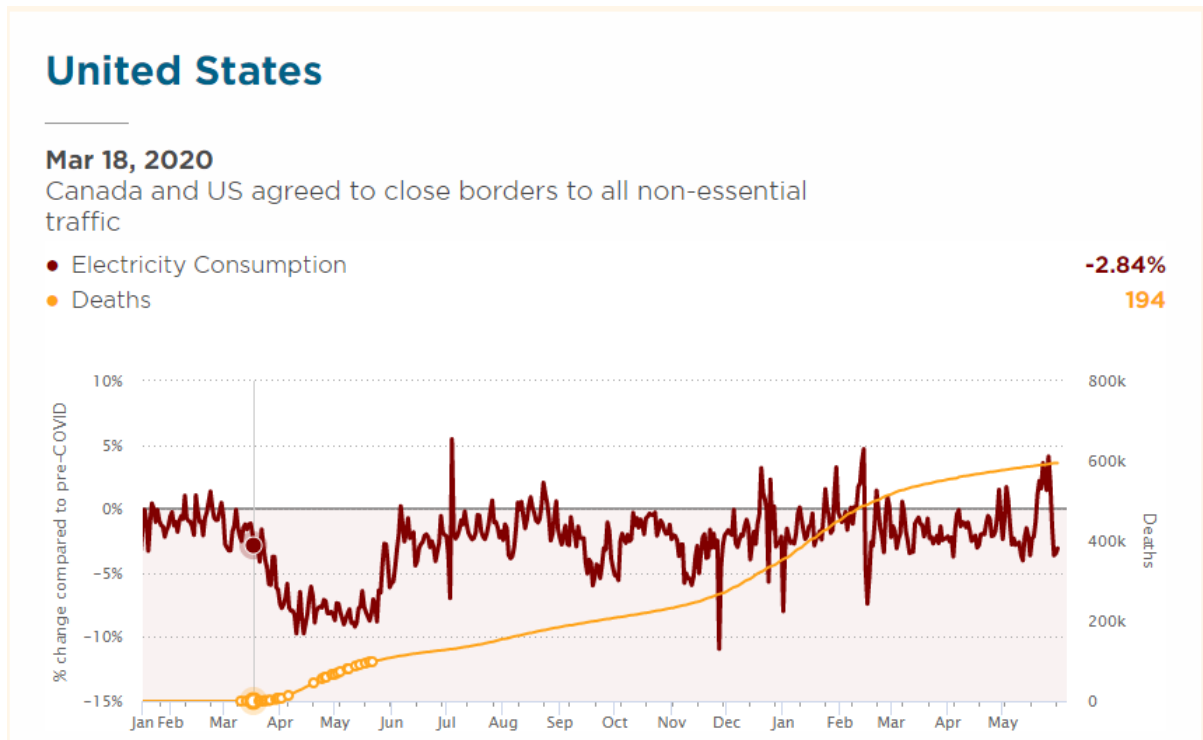


Figure 3: Graph showing the impact of COVID-19 on Electricity Consumption and Particulate Pollution (Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago et al., 2021)

### 3.2.1 Cons of remote working

Working remotely does bring its challenges. As mentioned earlier, the best option is not always the easiest but nothing ever worth having was easy. The top three challenges of remote teams are ones that the VCSP Core team came up against: engagement, accountability, and less control over a consistent work environment for employees. There is extensive research on team engagement during remote work. So much so that there are now PhDs being written on them. Researching this topic are large companies like Microsoft who are kindly sharing their knowledge with the rest of us (Microsoft, 2022).

Microsoft released their statistics last year on engagement and released an update to their calendar products to allow for breaks between meetings to reduce video conferencing fatigue

and improve wellbeing. The VCSP core team have relied on online games during team meetings, getting to know each other with quirky ice-breaker questions, and just collaborating together. We did not get to the point of marathons on balconies, sourdough baking, and Wordle challenges though.

Accountability is perhaps a big test for many surveying companies because of the field-work nature of many surveyors roles. This was also a test for the VCSP core team and is something we are certain many volunteer-run organisations struggle with. In the end, hiring well and not rushing into employment is a great way to start.

Without the ability to provide a single space with the same desks, consistent IT supplies, and printers, surveying companies had to pivot quickly and so have the VCSP core team although we had the benefit of being remote from the start. The challenges we face are more around equal access to good-quality internet connection and disparate access to computer literacy training. Some benefits may be though that survey companies had been heavily reliant on paper prior to COVID-19 pandemic and have since gone paperless. Another environmental benefit.

The flexibility of office space will become the new norm as occupiers look at ways of balancing available space with social distancing guidelines (Knight Frank, 2021). As young surveyors, it is important to look at this concept as we set up firms for our various surveying needs.

### **3.3 Contradiction and differences = innovation**

Disagreement and differences in approach are a great opportunity to encourage creativity which ultimately leads to innovation. Contradiction is an art that can be utilised in order for one to make a beautiful win-win situation (de Ruijter, 2020). There are often situations where you try something that might be so opposed to the original idea but that difference can be all that it takes to make you stand out and your idea unique. Most issues in society occur due to conflict of interest and thus arise problems but these contradictions should then offer you the right energy demand to create something unique and innovative. The VCSP core team try to encourage open conversations and have found a handful of innovative solutions out of it, however sometimes struggle to encourage these conversations due to cultural and social norms involving respect for authority.

### **3.4 Leadership styles**

VCSP used the Egalitarianism doctrine to ensure that all members receive equal rights and opportunities within the program. Equal treatment is given to all the members despite having different gender, age, beliefs, religions, or race. This is a global community that ensures equal rights and mutual respect is given in all affairs, hence the VCSP value of respect. With this kind of support, the team works productively even with the diverse culture encompassed within the VCSP.

### **3.5 Boosting Cultural Differences**

Omni-and abvi-culture is a way of learning about all the cultures at the table, then taking the best parts of everyone's culture to make decisions. This is a governance-method that the VCSP core team lead strives to work on but did not know there was a name for it until Elle Archer and Sina-Cooper Tait were talking about cooperative leadership and governance on the Maori in Engineering Podcast (Lysaght et al., 2022). For a small example of this, the effort it takes to learn someone's name properly, for example, or learn what customs a person may be observing during different days or times of year, may make the difference between an effective working relationship and a non-effective one.

### **3.6 Coaching**

Main characteristics of the coaching leadership style include collaboration, support and guidance respectively. The VCSP has collaborated with many of its partners such as GLTN to ensure that VCS have an opportunity to give back to communities in various projects. The VCSP team also offers support to all fellow leads as well as the VCS to ensure everyone brings their best to table and finally there is continuous guidance that ensures that the members within the VCSP accomplish their goals and tasks and overcome any obstacles faced along the way. We would like to encourage the wider industry of surveying professionals to increase efforts around coaching and mentoring since we see such impact and potential in it for our team and individually.

### **3.7 Funding**

Funding has been a struggle and a frustration for the VCSP core team given that the purpose is so connected to the industry and so important to the professions succession and ethical obligations. Its a work in progress and the leaders have some learning to continue with but our plea is to the wider FIG membership to take the VCSP seriously when considering your donations or corporate social responsibility budget each year.

### **3.8 The importance of self-reflection and wellbeing as a leader**

Being a fully volunteer-run program with a strong purpose, the VCSP is easy to become absorbed in. Most VCSP core team members are working full-time so we have had to learn to manage our time and our energy-levels alongside our mental wellbeing. Mental fitness is an important part of the compassionate team environment we have strived to create with the VCSP Core Team. Alongside empathy, personal mindset shift is important. We encourage young leaders to realise that sometimes things are not happening to you, they are happening for you. When something happens to you, it is easy to fall into victim mode, and then it becomes a self fulfilling prophecy and really becomes a disaster. However, when something is happening for you, it's happening for your benefit. Once you realise this situation is happening for you, you ask better questions of yourself. Like "how can I avoid this happening again?", "how can I

become a better leader to prevent this from happening again?”, “can I control this?”, or “what do I need to change?” Such questions not only impact on your actions but massively increase your leadership and teamwork skills, and help you see incredible results in other areas of your life too if you apply the principles there.

### **3.8 Benefits of empowering more people toward a common goal**

Youths are now more widely seen as key players in country development and global stability. In extension to this, young surveyors are now partaking in key roles within their various regions throughout the YSN networks based on testimonies from VCS and members of the VCSP Core Team. ActionAid points out that youth are not only the leaders of tomorrow but are the drivers of change today. (Hoban et al., 2019).

Throughout our time volunteering in various industry organisations, we notice that a small number of very dedicated people are usually behind that organisation's success. However, we recommend treading lightly and taking care not to overload the young surveyors in your voluntary organisation because it is likely they are ‘yes-people.’ While it is up to the individual to assess what they are capable of fitting into their life, the risk of overwhelming a small number of volunteers is that there will be no one to run the show if they become burnt-out.

## **4. Recommendations - How to convert team atmosphere towards making impact**

There are various key aspects that have taken the VCSP core team through the journey of mobilising fellow young surveyors all round the world so that they can leave an impact in their various communities. This has been a collective effort from the team leads to ensure there is a positive and creative working atmosphere. These aspects have been broken down but not limited into the following:

### **4.1 Define your purpose**

Connecting your organisation's purpose with the purpose of the people who work or volunteer for you is one of the most impactful ways to increase engagement. This comes from creating a clear strategy complete with three facets of a vision, commitment, and purpose. It comes from involving team members in annual strategic planning and key decision-making. It comes from continually referring to your organisations values and vision as you work together to a common goal.

### **4.2 Leadership and style implemented**

The VCSP always uses positive language encouraging all participants to share ideas and creates space to explore other cultures by asking members to share some of the favourite phrases and dishes in the various nationalities. Over time this has built a point of interaction and built rapport. Ensuring that there is a positive attitude and language towards the volunteering work we are faced with as young surveyors becomes very important as it's a huge influence on the



team work and atmosphere within which we operate as young people.

### **4.3 Team environment**

The VCSP considers the program home. Therefore imagine how you would like to feel in your home. That is the environment that has been built overtime. It is sociable, friendly, engaging and welcoming. The positive attitudes that have been shared between the team leads and the second in charge respectively have encouraged the program to function effectively and facilitated productivity. This is very important for an effective team with strong bonds and giving the required results.

### **4.4 Opportunities for the team to work together**

Inclusive leadership that allows members in the organisational chart, to collaboratively take on projects in teams largely because of the trust in their combined abilities to deliver. It has enabled the teams to value each other's input, capabilities and contributions. Coming up with new ideas as a team and generating solutions has been a great unifying factor in order to achieve the greater goal and mission of the VCSP.

### **4.5 All for one and for all setting (family)**

VCSP core team members have each other's back. All good and bad days are taken in as a team as we share vulnerabilities. Ensuring that all the members keep a positive mindset that pushes them to remember how valuable they are on the team. Reminding the team of the various successes and achievements and strides that have enabled us to accomplish a lot around the world.

### **4.6 High challenge, high support**

The best teams have leaders who set the bar extremely high, but then ensure every player is supported, resourced and mentored to enable them to meet those high expectations. That is the VCSP Core Team. The more the team achieves, the more positive reinforcement there can be to motivate them to achieve even more. The team leads ensure the team has everything it needs to hit the heights. As the Sandhurst cap badge says, 'serve to lead' – that's your job.

## **5. Concluding Remarks**

We have provided the reader and FIG proceedings with a fresh perspective on modern leadership and organisational development. This comes with examples from the VCSP Core Teams experience and background over the past three years of voluntary service. The team continues to strive and dedicate hours of their weeks to the VCSP commitment and will continue to do so.

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