GCHL LONGITUDINAL STUDY

"We are all leaders"

Final Report

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Disclaimer

This report presents findings from the GCHL Longitudinal Study conducted by Associate Professor, Phil Connors and Helen Seignior, Associate Researcher. The research was commissioned by the Centre for Humanitarian Leadership (CHL). It draws on information sourced from GCHL graduates. While attempting to capture a range of graduate perspectives, this report is not intended to represent the views of all graduates of the course and CHL does not accept responsibility for any omissions or errors of fact. To protect people's privacy, names and identifying details have been changed throughout this report.

List of acronyms

CHL   Centre for Humanitarian Leadership
GCHL   Graduate Certificate of Humanitarian Leadership
INGO   International non-governmental organisation
NGO   Non-governmental organisation
UN   United Nations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Graduate Certificate of Humanitarian Leadership (GCHL) is a post-graduate program accredited by Deakin University and delivered jointly by the Centre for Humanitarian Leadership (CHL), a partnership between Deakin and Save the Children Australia.

This report describes the findings of the latest 'GCLH Longitudinal Study', a multi-year research project conducted by CHL—designed to build an understanding of factors contributing to transformational leadership in the humanitarian sector and the role of the GCHL program in leadership transformation. This instalment of the study aimed to identify how GCHL is influencing graduates' work—with a view to understanding GCHL's relevance and what types of impact it is having on graduates' careers, teams, colleagues and organisations.

GCHL was designed in 2011 and 2012 in response to ongoing concerns of a perceived "lack of effective leadership" in the humanitarian sector[1] and its impact on aid effectiveness. It is an eight-month course comprising four units which include two cloud-based units and two intensive face-to-face residential units. It is delivered using a blended learning approach that combines theory and academic rigor with practical application for graduates to test their learnings in a safe environment.

This research is generously funded by the IKEA Foundation and used a mixed methods approach. In depth semi-structured interviews (qualitative method) were used to gain a rich and detailed understanding of how graduates perceive their leadership changes. An online survey was also used to include data that could be measured and compared, to help triangulate and strengthen the validity of the research.

A total of 13 participants (eight female, five male) were interviewed in September and October 2021. Twenty anonymous online surveys were completed between February and October 2021. The study participants are graduates who completed GCHL between 2012 and March 2020. The sample size was limited to enable a rich and detailed analysis of graduates' accounts.

The six main research questions asked by the study were:

1. How relevant do graduates feel GCHL course content was for them?
2. How do graduates share new knowledge and skills from GCHL with their colleagues?
3. How has knowledge gained through GCHL influenced how graduates perform their work?

4. What have been the enablers and barriers to applying GCHL learning?
5. How do graduates perceive learning from GCHL has impacted on their career?
6. What was the impact of the relationships established through the program?

A summary of overall findings includes:

Relevance of GCHL learnings
The findings indicate graduates are applying their learnings, with most (95%) of survey respondents saying they apply them "a lot". This indicates that graduates find the course content and learnings highly relevant and useful.

New ways of working
- Graduates commonly describe a significant shift in focus from being a "do-er to a leader", indicating a new leadership mindset and behaviour.
- Graduates are significantly more focused on team empowerment and greater collaboration with others for collective success, a sign of transformational leadership.
- Graduates are building trust and relationships to be more influential and effective.
- Graduates demonstrate more strategic thinking and a strong growth mindset which is helping them take calculated risks for better program delivery.
- Graduates are practising more self-care and care for others, helping to build resilience.

Graduates commonly describe a significant shift in focus from being a "do-er to a leader", indicating a new leadership mindset and behaviour.

Team impacts
- There are examples of teams becoming more cohesive, autonomous, higher-performing and delivering better results, indicating more effective leadership among graduates.

Career impacts
- The majority of graduates (85%) surveyed have gained new roles or responsibilities and attribute their promotions to skills and confidence gained during GCHL.

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1 This concern was highlighted in the results of a survey of more than 500 aid workers, published in the *2010 State of the Humanitarian System* (ALNAP 2010). The *2012 State of the Humanitarian System* report (ALNAP 2012) highlighted continuing "gaps and failures in leadership".

- The majority of graduates (70%) surveyed believe their career opportunities have increased a lot—due to stronger skills, confidence and ability to cope with pressure.
- GCHL is influencing career decisions by giving time and support to gain clarity and by fostering a growth mindset.

Relationship impacts
- Graduates are staying connected and supporting each other with professional, personal, and psychosocial support when facing challenges in a humanitarian response.

Impacts on organisations
- Graduates are strengthening their organisation's capacity to adapt and respond to emerging crises by building stronger teams and external relationships.

BACKGROUND

GCHL program and context

What is the Graduate Certificate of Humanitarian Leadership program?

The Graduate Certificate of Humanitarian Leadership (GCHL) is a post-graduate course accredited by Deakin University and delivered by the Centre for Humanitarian Leadership (CHL), a partnership between Deakin University and Save the Children Australia. The GCHL course has its origins in the Humanitarian Leadership Program (HLP), which was designed and delivered by Deakin University and Save the Children Australia in 2011 and 2012. With support from Deakin's Faculty of Arts and Education, GCHL was accredited in 2013 and has since met the requirements of the AQF (Australian Qualifications Framework) and TEQSA[2] (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency).

GCHL is designed to develop the leadership skills required by mid-to-senior level practitioners working in humanitarian assistance or related areas. To enter the program, applicants must demonstrate a minimum of five years' work experience with an organisation or government body involved in humanitarian assistance, emergency management or international development.

GCHL is an eight-month course comprising four units which include two cloud-based units and two intensive face-to-face residential units. The graduates

in this study completed these residentials (referred to as 'simulations' from hereon), although due to COVID-19, current students completed their simulations online. The program is delivered using a blended learning approach that combines theory and academic rigor with practical application for graduates to test their learnings in a safe environment. It generates learning through a carefully designed combination of academic lectures, expert-led seminars and workshops, guest speakers, and individual coaching and peer learning, particularly during scenario-based simulations.

Program context and need

GCHL was designed in response to concerns emerging in the humanitarian sector about inadequate leadership and its impact on aid effectiveness. A perceived "lack of effective leadership in the humanitarian sector" was a key finding in a survey of more than 500 aid workers, published in the 2010 *State of the Humanitarian System* (ALNAP 2010). In their research, Buchanan-Smith & Scriven (2011) identified a need for a more systematic approach to developing the operational leadership capacity of those working in the humanitarian sector. This was supported by the 2012 *State of the Humanitarian System* report (ALNAP 2012), which raised further concerns about ongoing "gaps and failures in leadership".

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2 TEQSA is Australia's independent national quality assurance and regulatory agency for higher education

THE LONGITUDINAL STUDY

Research aims and objectives

This longitudinal study is part of a multiyear research project which ultimately seeks to better understand what factors contribute to leadership transformation in the humanitarian sector.

A first iteration of the Longitudinal Study was completed in 2018.[3] This new instalment of the study aims to discover what type of impacts GCHL leadership development has on individuals' behaviour over time, and the types of impact on their teams, colleagues, and organisations—with a view to contributing to an understanding of leadership effectiveness and transformation in the humanitarian sector.

Key objectives

The key objectives for this study are:

- To review, analyse and document how graduates have applied the learning from the GCHL course.
- To assess the impact of the GCHL course on graduates' career pathways.
- To assess the impact of the GCHL course on the organisations where graduates are working.

Research questions

The six main research questions asked by the study were:

1. How relevant do graduates feel GCHL course content was for them?
2. How do graduates share the knowledge and skills they gained through the GCHL with their colleagues?
3. How has knowledge gained through GCHL influenced the way graduates perform their work?
4. What have been the enablers and barriers to applying GCHL learning?
5. How do graduates perceive learning from GCHL has impacted on their career?
6. What was the impact of the relationships established through the program?

Methodology

Research design

This research employed a mixed approach of both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore and analyse the impact of the course on individuals. The research team considered that a mixed methods approach, including quantitative method (online questionnaire) enhanced with qualitative method (in depth semi-structured interviews), would provide

a deep understanding of the nature and level of leadership change and transformation.

As explained by Castleberry and Nolen (2018, p. 807), qualitative research methods are designed to gain "a better understanding of (a) phenomenon through the experiences of those who have directly experienced the phenomenon". They also help researchers to "explore the beliefs, values, and motives that explain why the behaviours occur". As such, qualitative methods are used in this study to examine individual behaviours from the perspectives of the study participants. However, quantitative methods are also included to help triangulate and strengthen the validity of the research (Hurmerinta-Peltomakl & Nummeia 2006).

Sample size

To explore each individual graduates' perceptions of their experiences and develop a deeper understanding of the nature of course impacts on their mindsets and behaviour, this study involves the type of "detailed and intensive" qualitative research highlighted by Anderson (2010, p.4). The target group are highly experienced practitioners with extensive experience and knowledge in multiple and diverse settings. As such, they were expected to provide a particular depth and breadth of insights for detailed analysis. To conduct such detailed analysis and study required a relatively small sample size, compared to the total GCHL graduate population.

Furthermore, the recruitment strategy takes into account the nature of the target group and their work. It is not easy to take time out to participate in interviews while in the midst of high-pressure humanitarian response settings—now compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, this is part of a longitudinal study, which will allow for further study with other individuals to build and strengthen the understanding of leadership transformation.

Data collection and analysis

Thematic analysis was selected for its ability to yield a "rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data" (Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 78). Thematic analysis is an approach used to identify and analyse themes that emerge from narrative data and is particularly associated with "experience-focused methodologies" (King, N., & Horrocks 2010, p.142), making it suited to identifying and analysing themes arising from the study participant's accounts and perceptions of their experiences of behaviour change.

Table 1 below provides details of the study participants gender and year of completion of the course.

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3   Bell, V, *The Graduate Certificate of Humanitarian Leadership Longitudinal Study Report*, Centre for Humanitarian Leadership, Deakin University, September 2018.

Table 1

	Year completed (Cohort)						Total	Response lc Rate
	2013 (1 & 2)	2017 (7)	2017 (8)	2018 (10)	2019 (12)	2020 (13)	1–13	
No. online surveys							20*	7%*
No. key informant interviews								
• Male interviewees		1	1	1		2	5	
• Female interviewees	1	1		1	2	3	8	
Total interviewees							13	10%*

*Of the total 287 graduates targeted in two recruitment rounds, 41 provided signed consent forms to be included in research, with 20 graduates completing the survey. Interview participants were recruited from the first recruitment round comprising 130 graduates only. The response rate refers to the numbers of respondents out of the total number of graduates invited to participate. The online survey is anonymous, and the does not allow for cohort identification of respondents.

Interview participants

Gender

Female (8)   Male (5)

Organisation type

International Consulting (1)   Unitation Nations (1)   Red Cross/ Red Crescent (1)

INGOs (9)   Government (1)

- Asia Pacific
- South Asia
- South Central Asia
- South-East Asia
- East Africa
- Eastern Central Africa
- West-Africa
- Middle East
- Eastern Europe
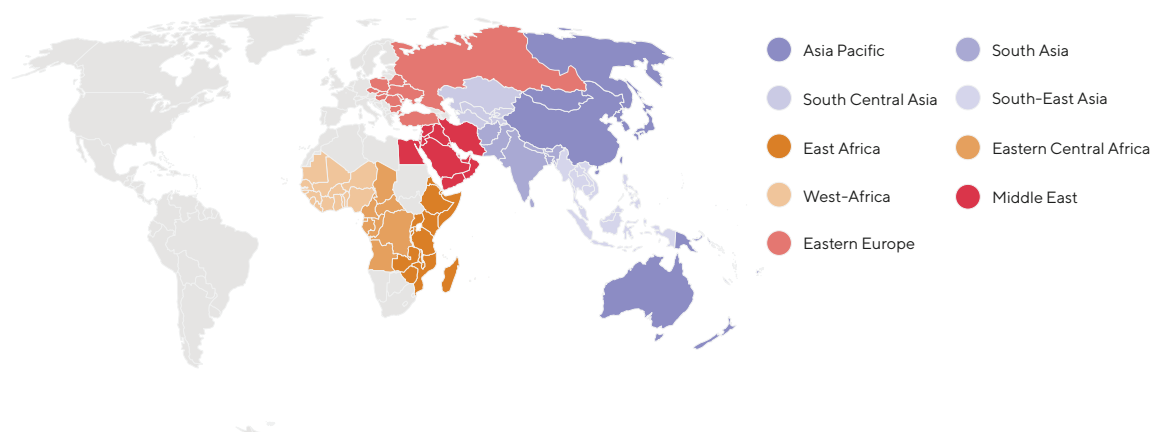
Regions working

Asia Pacific (6)
East Africa (1)
Eastern Central Africa (1)
Middle East (1)

South Asia (1)
South Central Asia (1)
South-East Asia (1)
West Africa (1)

Nationalities

Asia Pacific (7)
East Africa (2)
Eastern Europe (1)

South Central Asia (2)
South Asia (1)

Interview participants comprised of eight females and five males working in over eight geographical regions and organisation types including INGOs, UN, the Red Cross & Red Crescent movement, government and an international development consulting firm.

Scope and limitations

As explained above, the sample size of this study is restricted in order to enable an intensive, in-depth analysis of the rich experiences and perceptions of the GCHL graduates. However, this means there are limitations to the research.

Firstly, the responses and findings may not be representative of the experiences of all graduates from GCHL. Future iterations of the study will continue to build a broader understanding of the impact of GCHL on the leadership transformation of humanitarian practitioners.
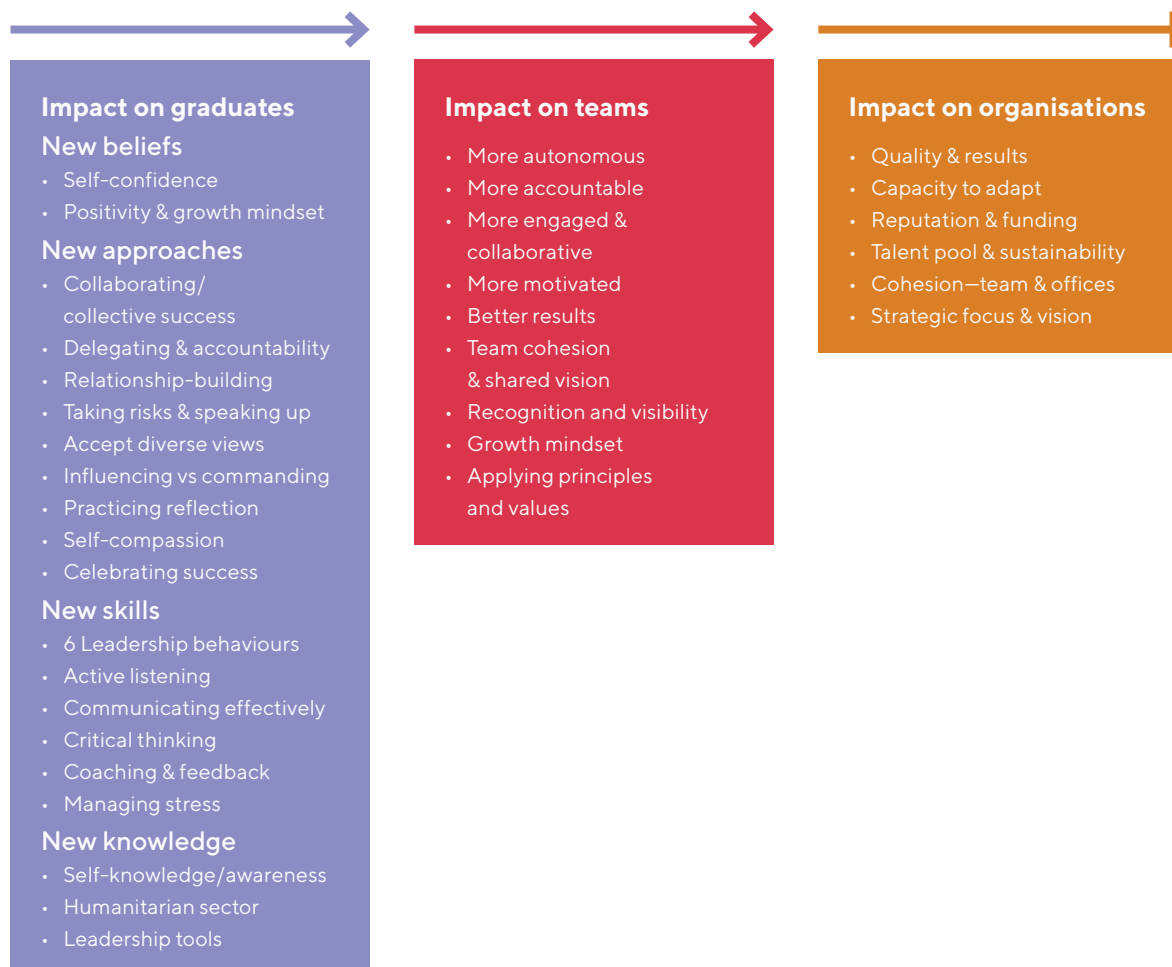
Secondly, it is noted that the participants most willing to participate in this study are those who may perceive they had the most learning and experience applying it. However, the responses of graduates do reflect a range of learning and experience. In addition, giving and receiving feedback, both positive and negative, was heavily instilled during GCHL, possibly limiting any concerns graduates might have about being reluctant to speak if they perceived it having little impact.

It is also acknowledged that the data collected is from graduates and is based on their perceptions only. The data collected in this study did not include the views of colleagues, supervisors or GCHL teaching staff or peers, limiting the ability to fully triangulate data and determine if other factors might have been more influential in leading to behavioural change. This limitation is factored into the design and approach, which aims to build an understanding of the impact on graduate's behaviours, through their perceptions of their experience. A significant component of GCHL is to develop self-awareness and personal insight and understanding of how graduates are perceived. The responses from graduates indicate many have continued to seek feedback on their performance and behaviour, which helps inform the study.

Despite not directly including colleagues and line managers in this study, it attempts to gain an understanding of the potential impact of graduate learnings on their teams, colleagues and organisations. Building this understanding is limited due to the complexities of measuring impact on organisations and prioritisation of the research approach focusing on graduates' perceptions at this stage of the research. The author recommends that future research include line managers and colleagues to help deepen and broaden the understanding of the impact of leadership training via GCHL.

GCHL impact chart

Impact on graduates

New beliefs
- Self-confidence
- Positivity & growth mindset

New approaches
- Collaborating/ collective success
- Delegating & accountability
- Relationship-building
- Taking risks & speaking up
- Accept diverse views
- Influencing vs commanding
- Practicing reflection
- Self-compassion
- Celebrating success

New skills
- 6 Leadership behaviours
- Active listening
- Communicating effectively
- Critical thinking
- Coaching & feedback
- Managing stress

New knowledge
- Self-knowledge/awareness
- Humanitarian sector
- Leadership tools

Impact on teams
- More autonomous
- More accountable
- More engaged & collaborative
- More motivated
- Better results
- Team cohesion & shared vision
- Recognition and visibility
- Growth mindset
- Applying principles and values

Impact on organisations
- Quality & results
- Capacity to adapt
- Reputation & funding
- Talent pool & sustainability
- Cohesion—team & offices
- Strategic focus & vision

FINDINGS

New ways of working—from "me to we"

This study has sought to identify how graduates are applying their learnings from GCHL, to understand how relevant GCHL has been and how it is influencing the way graduates perform in their work.

A key finding of this study is that the vast majority of graduates (95%) who were surveyed believe they are applying their learnings "a lot" or "to a great extent". One graduate respondent stated they are applying them "somewhat" but was able to describe numerous learnings that they now apply in their work. These findings are illustrated here in Figure 1 and correspond with findings from interviews with other graduates.
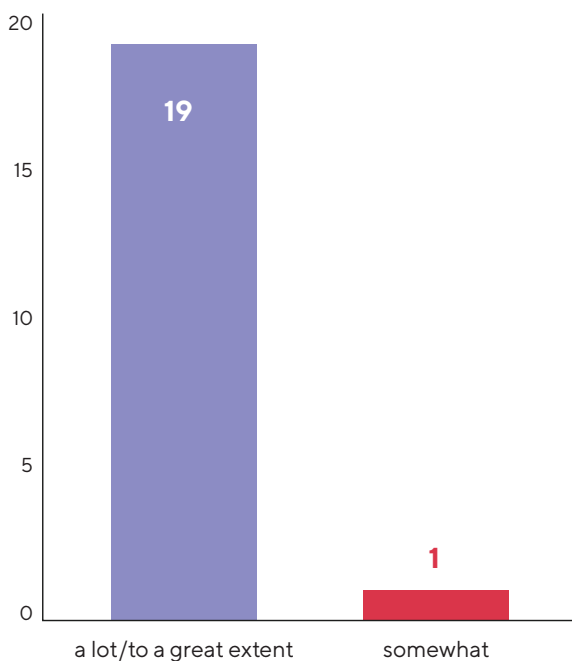

Figure 1: Rate the degree to which you have been able to apply the GCHL course learning in your work?

The following section describes what graduates from both the survey and interviews say they learned at GCHL and how they are applying these learnings. They describe applying specific new skills, knowledge, awareness, tools and confidence on a day-to-day basis in their work, illustrating some common themes in the way they have changed the way they work.

a)   Empowering teams for collective success

One common theme identified in this study is a conscious shift by graduates to achieving greater collective success, by focusing a lot more on empowering their teams and building relationships and collaboration with other stakeholders.

To empower their teams, numerous graduates describe being influenced by a significant change in mindset, expressed by one graduate as shifting from "me to we". Another graduate interviewee who demonstrated this mindset shift said they learned through the GCHL Hogan psychometric assessment (Hogan et al. 2007) that although they were "good at achieving results", they were "struggling leading the team" because they "used to do it not through my team and if it was through my team, I would be working on the results, not the people".

To empower their teams, numerous graduates describe being influenced by a significant change in mindset, expressed by one graduate as shifting from "me to we".

Graduates described how their new awareness of their tendencies to "to be a bit of a micro-manager" helped change their mindset. How this new mindset is now influencing graduates' work is demonstrated by one interviewee, who describes shifting their attention from themselves to better supporting the team:

"… one main important element characterised a new approach, following the learnings of the GCHL: the shifting from 'doer' to 'leader'. While before, much of my attention was on my skills, capacities, and abilities to deliver, following the learning I started in practice to focus on the ability to lead a team, support the team achievements, accept others' opinions".

Building trust and performance through delegating, coaching and feedback

This study finds that many graduates, in order to shift from "me to we" and empower their teams, are using skills and tools they learned at GCHL to delegate more often and more effectively. This includes using coaching skills and the ability to give feedback (practiced extensively during GCHL), to help build capacity and establish greater trust in their teams. This is illustrated in the experience of this graduate:

"When I have completed my course, I have started the same thing… I have coached my team, how to do the things, and now they have their autonomy… their own capacity to deliver and … to take decisions".

This represents a change in ways of working for many graduates who stated how difficult they used to find delegating. They explained, "I used to delegate
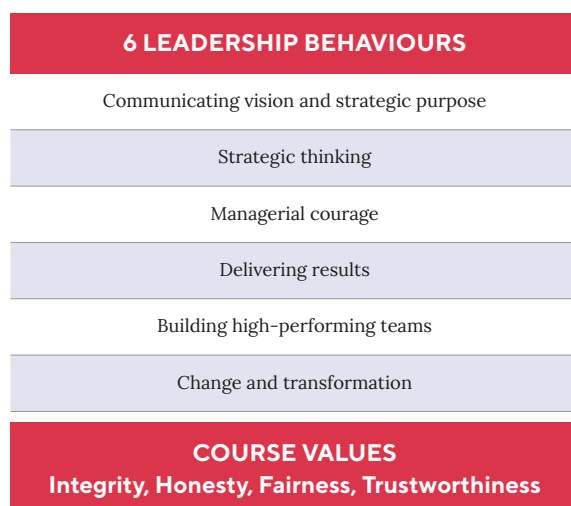
responsibilities, but at the same time, not...fully delegating..." Others said that they "would often take up other people's roles if they seemed to delay", or said they lacked trust in their teams and found it "very hard...to delegate...because I would think, 'how will they manage?'"

The impact of different ways of working on teams and colleagues will be explored more in a later section of this report. However, it is a finding of the study that learning how to delegate, coach and give feedback has helped some graduates improve team performance and has also helped graduates to manage stress. As one example of the latter, a graduate who didn't previously feel comfortable delegating, stated that their first step in responding to COVID-19 was to form a task force which alleviated pressure "because now we were able to delegate everything". Another graduate highlighted that they had learned that "whenever you coach a team you transfer them some responsibilities and tasks, then that will ease your life as well".

"We are all leaders", "more space" and "more forgiving of mistakes"

In addition to coaching and supporting team members, delegating effectively has meant graduates are consciously giving "more space now to work" and "the opportunity to make mistakes and learn". They do this by being "more forgiving of mistakes" and being "more willing now to publicly own up" to their own mistakes "in front of my team", thus modelling this behaviour and building trust and safety. They also cite using managerial courage, one of the six leadership behaviours instilled in the course (outlined in Figure 2 below), to defend their teams in front of senior management to "give such kind of courage" to team members to step up and "take decisions".

Figure 2

6 LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS
Communicating vision and strategic purpose
Strategic thinking
Managerial courage
Delivering results
Building high-performing teams
Change and transformation

COURSE VALUES
Integrity, Honesty, Fairness, Trustworthiness

More consultative and participatory—"accepting diverse views"

Graduates also believe they now work better to harness their teams' collective strengths and build more collaboration as a result of participating in GCHL. They provide examples of being more consultative and

seeking greater participation and engagement from team members. For a number of graduates, this has meant using new self-awareness, skills and attitudes, in particular, applying active listening skills and a greater acceptance of diverse views learned during GCHL, as the quote from one participant here indicates:

"What I have learned... I was just trying to impose my own ideas, my own decisions... but I have a team, I have colleagues I have subordinates and I have office, so why not to listen to them? Why not share our ideas and find a better way?... they came up with very good ideas on how to resolve such things in future and how to move ahead".

For other graduates, harnessing the strengths of their teams and other stakeholders meant overcoming behavioural patterns such as being a "perfectionist", which meant they were "used to working by myself" and found it "challenging" and a risk to ask for help as that means they would have to "expose" themselves. This graduate said that they were aware of their tendency before GCHL, but that the program simulation helped them understand "how to manage that". They said: "I learned that ... I need to bring a lot of people, to get one job done" and applied this learning when seeking government endorsement of a disaster contingency plan in their country, requiring support from actors both within and outside their organisation.

Many graduates also mentioned the value of using active listening with their teams. For one graduate, they found using it "changed the environment and the atmosphere of the team" and led to "more collaborative working" because people felt respected, seen and heard.

Strategies for motivating the team

In line with graduates increased focus on team performance, they provided evidence of using learnings to better motivate their teams. The most common learnings cited were the need to effectively communicate a vision, convey "optimism", care for teams and recognise their successes.

For some graduates, such as the one quoted here below, they made more of an effort to convey "positivity" and "how to be calm, not always pushing, pushing".

"Keeping the team motivated and engaged during difficult time was the time I had to remember the GCHL simulation. During the simulation we were under high level of stress, but we were trained how we stay positive and strategic. Not to forget to take care of each other".

Graduates commonly cited making more of an effort to communicate a strategic vision, one of the six leadership behaviours. For one experienced and skilled graduate in a senior role, a valuable reminder through feedback at GCHL was that, "I was often not spending enough time in communicating the vision and strategic purpose to my team..." This graduate stated they subsequently did so upon returning to work.

Another graduate who said they still find it "really useful" to refer to the six leadership behaviours matrix regularly, used their understanding of these behaviours to keep the team on track when working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, by "really focusing on the communication, building the vision and making sure we have the common goals and the common vision of the projects".

Other common practices cited by graduates include more explicit and proactive approaches to recognising and celebrating team success and looking after the wellbeing of the team. Several graduates described now ensuring their teams are looking after themselves by having access to food, taking breaks and "making sure that they have enough internal resources to deliver the work." This is in contrast to some former practices and attitudes where graduates state they were "just focusing on how to deliver… not too much caring about (my) colleagues…" Another graduate explained she used to be more focused on the organisation rather than team members:

> "The last thing I learned (at GCHL)… Previously, I used to look out for the organisation… I've learned to balance that. I have an individual here, they want to develop certain skills, or they have a certain problem. How do I support them, so that they are also able to support the team…and …the organisation…?"

Sharing tools and knowledge

Most graduates in this study have been sharing specific GCHL knowledge and tools with their teams, although the degree to which they do so explicitly varies significantly. In a couple of cases, graduates cited doing this mostly via role-modelling the six behaviours themselves. Most other graduates are more actively sharing knowledge, tools and techniques. The most commonly used tool cited by graduates were coaching techniques, to help their teams "find solutions together". A number of graduates also used the leadership behaviours matrix as a useful tool to "not just provide technical advice", but so they can "focus on building leadership skills in my counterparts".

The findings of this study also indicate that graduates are commonly encouraging ongoing learning and growth among their staff. Many graduates shared the SPHERE standards and encouraged staff to complete the training, for example. One graduate said they send regular information about study or learning opportunities and now has more than ten employees in their team "doing online courses in different universities".

This section looked primarily at how graduates applied their learnings to empower their teams. The impact of empowering teams will be outlined in the section below on "Impact on Teams and Colleagues". The following section looks at other learnings graduates are applying in their work and how this is influencing their way of working.

b) Building relationships for better results

In addition to building collaboration within their teams, graduates provided numerous examples of increasing collaboration with other teams within their organisations and with external stakeholders. As evidence of applying their learnings, one graduate said that despite finding it "a challenge previously" to do so, they now "encouraged collaboration and team work between departments". Another graduate introduced "bilateral check-ins with other departments to facilitate regular communication and coordination cross-functionally".

In one example of a change to a more collaborative approach, which improved program delivery, a graduate described that previously they did not attempt to engage certain key external stakeholders, assuming "that's their role, why would they give us access?" The graduate states that "what I've learnt to do now, ever since this course, is to identify people who I really need and who may be difficult to work with and … I give them a call and have meetings with them". As a result, the graduate claims, "That has made it very easy for my teams to work in those locations".

Other new approaches: reflection, courage and compassion

a) More strategic and less reactive—"instead of just going like an emergency responder"

Several graduates gave examples of how completing GCHL had led them to be more strategic in their work. They refer to learning strategic thinking as one of the six leadership behaviours, and practicing it by using the 'balcony' approach of stepping back and reflecting on the bigger picture.

For graduates transitioning from technical roles to leadership roles, the GCHL helped them learn to be more strategic, rather than "reactive". One such graduate stated they were "technically sound" in their area of work, but "earlier I was more reactive to the challenges, now I'm very analytical". They describe using this awareness to analyse how to address programmatic challenges and think more strategically about their communication with a donor. This resulted in turning around poor program delivery, securing more funding and rescuing an important donor relationship.

Another graduate said they were able to use their learning from the GCHL simulation to be more strategic responding to the COVID-19 response. For other graduates, they learned at GCHL how to step back instead of getting "so… involved in details of how the thing would be done until I lose the bigger picture of what are we doing and why". This graduate used their learning to develop a successful strategy for a nexus program for their organisation. Another graduate in a senior role said they now use "tangible" methods they learned during their GCHL to "avoid get(ting) stuck and have a very tunnel vision". They explain this further in the following quote:

"What the course helped me is to be able to move between, to be flexible and move between the different levels of engagement, tactical, operational, strategic and being able to step back and look at the bigger picture.... What the course has helped me to do is basically to be able to understand how important this is, but also to find ways of doing this, to find those tangible things that you can do in order to facilitate the approach. For example, working from home...close your emails..."

b) Influencing others

An approach numerous graduates mention learning at GCHL is the concept of leading and influencing from any role or position. As one graduate explains it, as a leader, "you lead from within, you lead upwards, you lead across, you lead down".

One graduate mentioned the value of observing their peers' diverse ways of operating during GCHL simulations. They learned from others that by using "soft skills", such as influencing, people can lead from anywhere. This has influenced the way this graduate now leads in some emergency responses where they allow national staff to take more "front facing roles" and they, themselves, lead "in the background". In a similar way, another graduate received feedback during GCHL that "their behaviour was not visible" when they were a team member, but that they would step up when given the title of Team Leader. As such the graduate said they now use this understanding to strengthen their "influencing" and "negotiation skills" in their current role where they are an advisor, not a Team Leader with direct authority.

For one graduate trying to build a high performing team "where you are not formal manager or leader", said they have learned to use the leadership behaviour of 'managerial courage' and strong communication skills to wield effective influence.

In the case of one graduate, whose organisation focuses more on development work than emergency response, the GCHL gave them "a lot of skills, a lot of knowledge, an understanding of the humanitarian sector... specifically around leading emergency operations". This gave them the confidence to influence their organisation to "get on board to respond" to flooding and COVID-19 crises.

Many graduates in this study highlight the value of discovering how they can be perceived by others and how they have used this knowledge to change how they communicate and influence others. They cite learning this through Hogan assessments, 360-degree feedback exercises and coaching and peer feedback. Graduates also said they use active listening skills learned at GCHL to try to better understand others. For one graduate working in a highly sensitive political conflict setting, understanding how they could be perceived as "lacking sensitivity" towards people's feelings has helped them to "work with people to not turn them off, or turn them away".

Other graduates found active listening "useful" for working and influencing in "multicultural, diverse" settings where previously their directives and communications were ignored or people would not engage. One graduate, an experienced humanitarian practitioner, said after the GCHL training, they worked to understand this lack of response by looking at it "from their point of view." Another graduate transitioning from the private sector into the humanitarian sector learned from GCHL that to engage and influence others, they needed to use active listening and adjust their communication style

One graduate who works for a government donor stated that their "ability to understand what we do and why we do it" in a humanitarian response was "fundamental" to being able to engage with and influence key actors, internally and externally, when designing a response to a large humanitarian crisis.

c) Stepping outside of comfort zone

As graduates discussed the ways they apply their GCHL learnings, a common theme of making a greater effort to step out of their comfort zones emerged. This manifests largely as graduates taking more risks, embracing change, speaking up and pushing back and taking on different roles. This is discussed further in the "Career Impacts" section.

Taking risks

Graduates describe various ways they have applied a key learning from GCHL regarding the need to make decisions without complete information and to take risks in humanitarian settings.

In one example, a graduate working in a rapidly changing conflict setting where the government has fallen to an armed group, described having to innovate and take risks to ensure the ongoing delivery of aid. This required finding ways of paying local suppliers cash outside the country. This graduate says that "one thing I learned" at the simulation "is how to take some risks, some healthy risks", while "keeping in mind" the imperative "to deliver assistance to the most vulnerable population". This graduate also described how useful it has been to learn about the humanitarian principles, for negotiating humanitarian access and maintaining neutrality and impartiality. Despite having years of experience in humanitarian aid in their country, this graduate had not had an opportunity to learn the principles and they now consider it important for their teams and national counterparts to learn them also.

Speaking up

Numerous graduates said they had challenges speaking up prior to GCHL, as they didn't want to appear "contrary" or found it "scary" because it made them feel vulnerable. These graduates state how GCHL helped give them "the affirmation that it is okay to speak your mind" as it is important to bring ideas and value and to be "visible" as a leader.

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They also indicated that the course helped them find effective ways of speaking up, by learning to be constructive when proposing solutions and being careful with their language. One graduate, for example, claims they now "can stand up better for myself and my team and my vision, in terms of arguing and fighting back in a more constructive way rather than in a resentful and angry way". Another graduate says that they were able to raise and resolve concerns with their supervisor because "I also got the language and the way to engage, to come with a proposal". This graduate said that previously they "would always hold back" from speaking up in meetings.

Other graduates highlighted how focusing on wellbeing and stress management in the program helped them feel confident that "it's legitimate" and "ok" to "push back" and "say no" in order to avoid being overworked and risking burn out. They also suggested that the program gave them "a wake-up call for me to say that you know you can't be continuously working".

Pushing back

Many graduates mention learning to use one of the six behaviours, managerial courage, in their work. In addition to speaking up, numerous graduates give examples of using such courage to push back against higher level decisions when necessary. In one example of this, a graduate was able to influence their organisation to say no to donor demands they could not easily meet, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when travel and access to communities was limited. This graduate said that "even though the organisation was saying you need to do this…I had to say no. We need to reflect and look at what is going to work for both of us, as well as the donor, and as well as the beneficiaries, the communities".

Adapting and embracing change

One graduate described that one impact of GCHL was learning to embrace rather than fear change. They said that "before the course…I feared change and the impact it brought to the team", but that the course "has enabled me to champion change". Other graduates managed the challenges of change by keeping the focus on "find(ing) out number of potentials, place the trust and the belief in the humanitarian work at first priority".

d)   Practicing more self-care and managing pressure

Almost all graduates interviewed described using GCHL learnings to help manage stress and pressure during emergencies. Graduates commonly raised how useful it was that they received feedback about their tendencies

under pressure and how these tendencies can be perceived or affect others. Consequently, numerous graduates in the study highlight that they have become more aware of not only needing to look after themselves for their own sakes, but in order to best help their teams and colleagues.

Expressing what several graduates conveyed, one graduate affirmed that when "I'm under a lot of stress or whatever the case may be, all the time, I'm still conscious of what my behaviour and my actions, how that impacts on other people". Other graduates have said they are also now more focused and disciplined in using self-care strategies, after becoming more aware of how they react and their impact on others. One said that previously, "I wouldn't be so consistent", but "now, I know myself, if I don't exercise, I don't do any jogging, it will take me three days and I will be shouting at everyone".

Self-awareness was particularly important for one graduate new to emergency response who came to understand that they are perceived as "passive" because "suddenly, you just pull out" from engaging in meetings when "you are really very stressed". As a result, this graduate now stays alert to this and makes a conscious effort to "maintaining positivity" as a strategy to deal with this.

In addition to self-awareness, this focus on positivity and staying open to solutions and opportunities was highlighted by several graduates as being important and had an impact on managing the pressure of humanitarian response work. One graduate stated that: "The knowledge and skills gained [during GCHL] provide me with the support and robust ground to think differently, look for opportunities in every difficult situation". This approach to finding solutions, along with other useful "coping mechanisms" taught during GCHL, helped the graduate, quoted here below, to manage their first major emergency response to an earthquake in their country:

"For me, some of the coping mechanisms that were taught during the course were very helpful… It really helped me to step back and do the reflection, to do those breathing exercises, it really helped me to calm me down. I was someone like when I'm under pressure, 'I want this done!' Everyone has to do it. I didn't have the time to step back and say, 'Okay, try and understand what the situation is and how can we do this better?' Instead, that pressure is then put on someone else. My direct supervisor said 'You know [Interviewee name]… I've seen you really change the way you've approached the situation after this course.'"

Supporting factors for applying leadership behaviours

Supporting factors

One of the key factors graduates cite as supporting their ability to applying their learned leadership behaviours includes the support of their organisations and supervisors, especially where values align. This

was the most common supportive factor mentioned and graduates describe how this support gives them both the space and backing to work with and build their teams, as well as the space to influence upwards. Having a supportive team was also cited by one graduate as important because it "pushed" them to be a "better leader".

The second most cited supporting factor was having a role of manager or leader, with the formal authority to make decisions, although graduates also describe using their learnings to overcome this barrier. They used their leadership learnings to influence where they don't have the authority to command.

The COVID-19 pandemic was also cited as an enabling factor, given that it forced rapid change and the need to be agile which has provided a lot of opportunity to apply the leadership behaviours. Other factors individual graduates believed helped or would help their leadership were the learnings about themselves from the program, including being aware of their strengths and practicing reflection outside of the work environment.

Barriers

Despite the high degree to which graduates believe they are applying their leadership learnings, they also describe a number of common barriers to doing so. These ranged from organisational and political, to mission specific and personal ones.

Organisational barriers

The most commonly cited barriers were organisational culture. In particular, graduates found that organisational cultures that were hierarchical and bureaucratic, restricting their ability to influence, develop, adapt quickly and make decisions. These barriers are more acute for women of colour.

In addition, graduates highlighted particular barriers when organisational values and commitments did not align with humanitarian principles, requiring them to focus more on influencing upwards than on team building and delivery.

A common barrier is also the limited or mixed capacity of teams and colleagues, at times the result of organisational practices of prioritising expat staff without "relevant experience and levels of competence" for working effectively in particular cultural settings.

One graduate also faced barriers to leadership due to a perceived lack of flexibility in the humanitarian sector to value leadership skills from outside the sector. This graduate found that their four months of a disaster management backfill management role was valued more than their 10 years of leadership in logistics in the commercial sector.

Gender and racial inequality

One female graduate, a person of colour, highlighted significant leadership barriers for women of colour, related to gender and racial inequality. These barriers were greater in organisations not adequately addressing inequality and power imbalances leading to issues of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, which put women of colour at particular risk.

In this graduate's extensive experience, organisational culture and structural inequalities prevented people of colour, particularly women, from being heard, valued and gaining equal access to opportunities. These issues are highlighted in this graduate's quote:

> "I saw so many women leave the sector because they don't get justice. They don't feel seen or heard, or there aren't equal opportunities".

Personal, political and mission-specific barriers

Other common barriers included the challenge of leading in roles where you do not have formal authority, a lack of energy due to burn out and the timing of deployments when grants are nearing their end, leaving "less scope to improve".

While one graduate cited a more personal barrier of a "lack of personal courage", most graduates highlighted larger, external factors such as the politicisation of humanitarian responses and decisions, especially in fast-paced responses with high level actors pushing for quick decisions which limit the space for strategic decision making.

Impact on teams and colleagues

This study surveyed and interviewed graduates, not colleagues and teams directly. However, the responses from graduates, while requiring validation, indicate that their changes in ways of working are having an impact on their teams and colleagues.

Several graduates give examples of improved team performance due to greater cohesion, clarity of purpose, motivation, accountability and coaching support. Several graduates make reference to having teams that are now more "cohesive". They attribute this to creating more acceptance of "divergence in views". One graduate also described how their team is more motivated, autonomous and achieves better results. As a result of showing the team more trust, this graduate now sees their team "really, really trying" to deliver and getting better results. Another graduate who previously had trouble trusting their team, highlights in the following quote the greater confidence their team have in themselves as a result of being given space to work and lead:

> "Having more trust, trusting them more to do what they are expected to do. I've seen them really come out as well. That helped in terms of, you know, bringing their own confidence out..."

One graduate was able to give a clear example of team changes. They described how some colleagues were "not autonomous in their job although they knew how to do their own activities" and would wait for direction and "were not caring about some of the priorities", resulting in delays and missed deadlines. To address this, the graduate used the GCHL coaching approach and asked colleagues to come forward with ideas for resolving their own problems and to say what support they needed. According to this graduate, the team is now more autonomous and proactive because these colleagues "brought their own solutions". Consequently, this graduate is clear that they "don't face any problem, any challenge" like this anymore, which is particularly critical in the high pressure setting in which they work.

Impact on organisations

This study only examined data from graduates of GCHL and not data collected from other members of their organisations. As such, the impact of graduates' learnings on their organisations warrants further study and validation. However, this section provides an indication of the type of impacts that can be detected from graduates' responses. They include strengthening the talent pool of organisations by building the capacity of teams and colleagues, improving program delivery, results, reputation, and funding opportunities, as well as contributing to greater cohesion in the organisation.

Adaptation and capacity to respond

One graduate was inspired to explore nexus programming, designed to link humanitarian assistance activities with longer term development interventions and peace building, following learning and reflecting about this during GCHL. They were able to communicate this "strategically" and secure funding to trial two innovative nexus-based programs in the refugee response in their organisation, "the first of its kind" for the organisation according to the graduate.

Another graduate was able to apply their learning and reflection on localisation when the COVID-19 pandemic struck their country and they had to find and support local partners to deliver where their organisation could no longer travel. At first, the organisation was reluctant and unsure how to deliver "without an office there", but the graduate was able to use their understanding of localisation to develop a strategy to engage local civil society to deliver and was successful in doing so.

One graduate's effective work advocating for and securing government funding of international COVID-19 initiatives, while supporting the organisation's health staff and programs internationally, convinced the organisation they had the capacity to continue health programming. Subsequently, it was included in the organisations' five-year strategic plan.

Reputation and funding

The ability of graduates to be more strategic and take calculated risks helped one graduate to restore the reputation and funding of one organisation. Upon arrival at their new mission, the graduate learned a major WASH program was only 49% into its delivery and there was only one month remaining to complete the remaining 50%. They negotiated an extra month and were able to complete the program. According to the graduate, this effort helped restore the organisation's reputation with a major donor who had previously complained about poor delivery, resulting in additional funding for more programming.

Sustainability and depth of talent

Several graduates cited how they now work very consciously to build high performing colleagues and teams who can step up when the graduate leaves. In one example, a graduate explained that due to their coaching, their deputy was able to step up after them and "lead that department perfectly" once the graduate moved on. Upon leaving their organisation, another graduate received positive feedback from their supervisor, as indicated in the quote below, confirming they had left a strong team in place:

"You've really mentored your team well. There is very little gap we can see, especially at the high-level strategic level, because that's where I was sitting. But at the implementation level, it's been really taken care of. Your team leaders are being able to manage the grants, the work is constant, there is continuity there. It's not that you've left and there is no continuity."

Impact on careers

The vast majority of graduates in this study believe GCHL has helped them to gain new roles and responsibilities, and many believe it has also increased their career options. They cite a range of reasons for this, including greater confidence and skills, more self-awareness and clarity of purpose, as well as a greater understanding of the humanitarian sector. The course content, coaching, peer feedback and influence are cited as key factors in building graduates' confidence, skills, motivation, and clarity.

FINDING 1—GCHL has helped graduates gain new roles and responsibilities

The vast majority of GCHL graduates in the survey believe GCHL played an important role in helping them gain higher roles and responsibilities. Eighty-five percent [N17] declared they now had more responsibilities than in their previous role. Of all the 20 survey respondents, 70% [N14] stated that completing GCHL was a significant factor in changing roles, rating the degree of influence of GCHL as "a lot" or "to a great extent". Twenty-five percent of survey respondents [N5] stated the impact was "somewhat" or "very little", while 5% [N1] said GCHL did not have any impact at all. These results are illustrated in Figure 3 and 4.
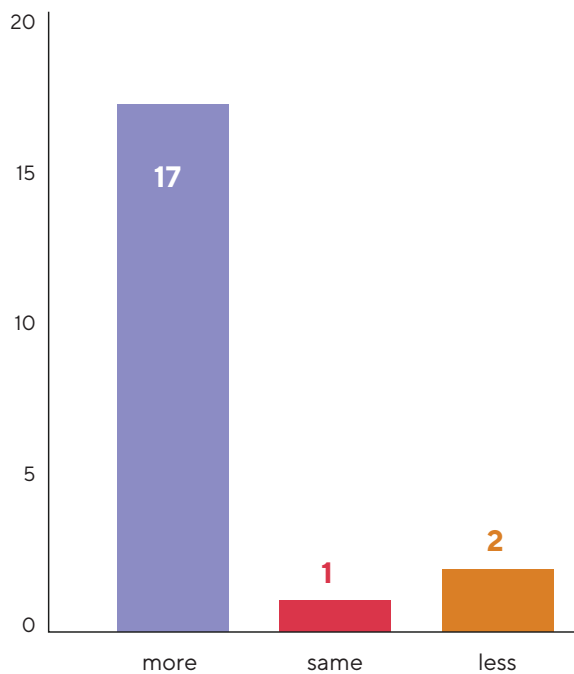
Figure 3: Does your current role/position have more, the same, or less responsibility than your previous role/position?
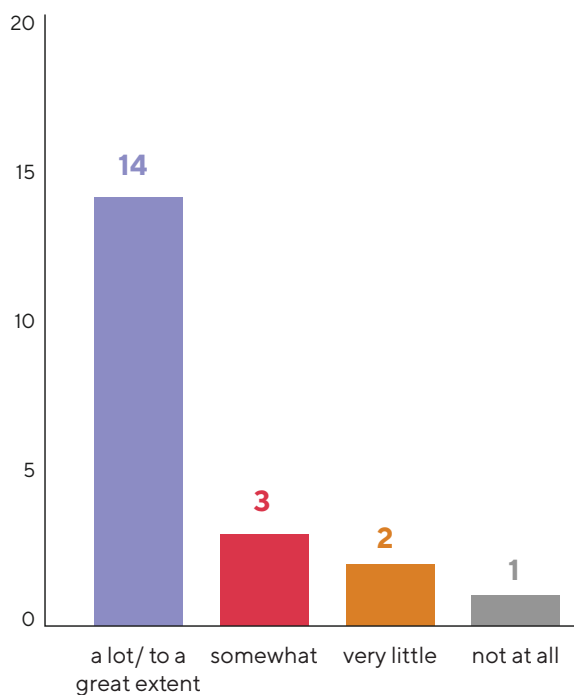

Figure 4: Was graduating from GCHL a factor in changing roles?

FINDING 2—Most graduate respondents believe their greater confidence and skills has helped them gain new roles

For the six survey respondents in Figure 3 who didn't believe GCHL had influenced their changes of role very much or at all, the reasons they cite changing are the need to leave a toxic work culture or because the move was already in line with their existing career plan and goals.

Among the 14 respondents (see Figure 4) who believed GCHL had played a significant role in their change of jobs and responsibilities, the key factors they attribute to GCHL are the following:

- Increased leadership skills and the motivation to use them.

- Greater self-confidence and mindset to challenge themselves.
- Improved self-awareness, strengthening their ability to lead a team.
- Deeper understanding of the humanitarian sector and the opportunities available.
- Recognition by others of their skills.
- The opportunity to discuss career goals with a coach and peers.
- Achieving greater clarity and sense of purpose.

New skills and validating existing skills

Many graduate respondents believed they gained helpful new skills, such as this graduate, who stated, "I believe the skills I have learnt have equipped me to become more self-aware and to successfully lead a team". For others, GCHL validated their existing skills, which increased their confidence.

Coaching and career direction

The role of feedback from peers was important for increasing confidence in existing skills. For other participants, like the one below, the feedback from their coach helped them develop skills, confidence and also career direction:

"… most important was interaction with coach on improvement and development. It was indeed opportunity to discuss with coach in details about professional career, which motivated me to apply my learning at wider platform and finally I got my first international employment…"

Confidence and courage

For other interview participants, such as the one cited here below, GCHL helped them gain the "the affirmation that it is okay to speak your mind" and this new confidence and skill led to seeking and securing a new emergency response role, with greater responsibilities:

"That has helped me, this issue of managerial courage. Previously my current boss, why he would not even have thought of me as an ideal candidate for my job, he thought I'm very timid".

For another interview participant, their new confidence was the key to stepping out of their comfort zone, leading them to seek and accept a more challenging role rather than accept another less challenging role.

"I actually decided to challenge myself. I got my new job…. Previously, before I took the course, I don't think I would've applied for this job".

FINDING 3—Many graduates believe they now have increased career opportunities

A significant majority of survey respondents [70% or N13] believe that their career opportunities have increased "a lot" or "to a great extent" as a result of GCHL. A fifth of survey respondents [20% or N5] said GCHL had "somewhat" increased their opportunities, while 5% [N1] rated the impact of GCHL on career opportunities as "not at all". These results are illustrated in Figure 5.
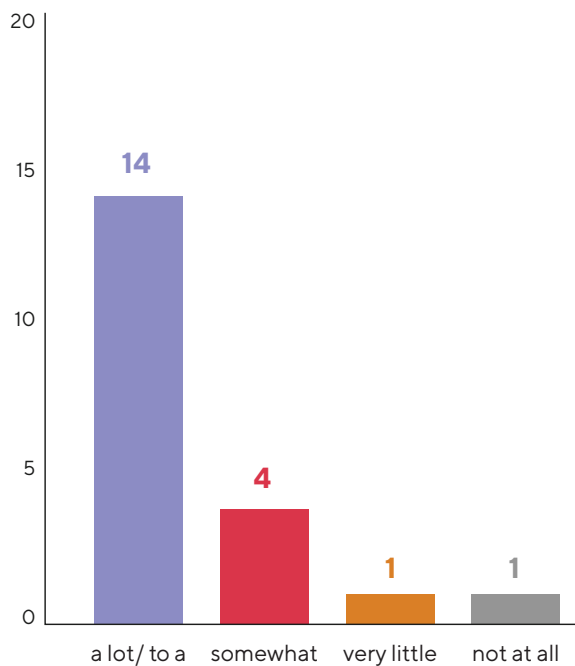
Figure 5: Do you think completing the GCHL has increased your career opportunities within or outside of the humanitarian sector?

FINDING 4—There are a variety of reasons graduates believe GCHL has increased their career opportunities

Among the 70% of graduates [N14] in Figure 5 who believe their career opportunities have increased "a lot" or "to a large extent" due to GCHL, a number of graduates cited increased confidence and specific leadership skills, in particular. This is indicated by one participant's response, in which they state:

"The course has given me the necessary skill sets and experience to demonstrate real leadership that delivers results. In this way, I think that I have more opportunities to take my career to the next level in the humanitarian sector".

Reasons for new career opportunities:

- Increased confidence.
- Enhanced leadership skills.
- More resilient and adaptable—able to cope with pressure and diverse stakeholders.
- Recognition of their qualifications and skills.
- Increased self-awareness.
- Ability to articulate strengths, weaknesses, leadership skills and experience.

A stronger ability to articulate and sell their leadership skills was also cited as an important factor to increasing career opportunities. At least three INGO participants believed that their GCHL qualification opens opportunities as it is recognised and well regarded in the sector. In contrast to this, the reason one graduate stated their career opportunities had increased "very little" due to GCHL was because they are a UN worker and the qualification wasn't as well known in the

UN. Among the reasons four graduates responded "somewhat" to the question about GCHL's influence on their career opportunities, was a feeling that although their skills had increased, they weren't sure how this affected their opportunities, while another graduate felt restricted as a person of colour with challenges obtaining visas. The one participant who responded "not at all" to the question about career opportunities stated this was because they were not looking into any career moves.

FINDING 5—GCHL is influencing many graduates' career motivations and decisions

Graduates in this study cite other ways GCHL has impacted their careers and choices. One graduate found some "inspiration to make [role] changes as well" after seeing that "most" of their cohort members had changed roles. Most graduates also expressed a desire to keep learning and challenging themselves in new roles or with further study because, as one graduate put it, GCHL gave them "a platform to see my career as a learning journey".

Several other graduates want roles that allow them to "keep pushing the humanitarian agenda" now that GCHL has helped them expand their horizons and focus on "the bigger picture".

Learning about the importance of taking time to reflect using the "balcony approach" was cited by several graduates as important for being able to make career decisions. In one example of this, a graduate states:

"it's helped me to understand where I am professionally and what would I want to invest professionally in the future... the only reason why I was able to figure out one is because of being able to utilise that balcony approach to look at...'what do I need as a professional?'".

Impact of relationships

FINDING 1—Relationships have some influence on career choices, but are mostly for social and professional support in existing roles

In terms of career pathways or choices, 20% of survey respondents [N4] believe their relationships and networks from GCHL have influenced "a lot" or "to a great extent". Fifty percent of those surveyed [N10] say their networks were "somewhat" of an influence, while 30% or [N6] say the impact has been "very little" or "not at all". These findings are illustrated in Figure 6 here below.
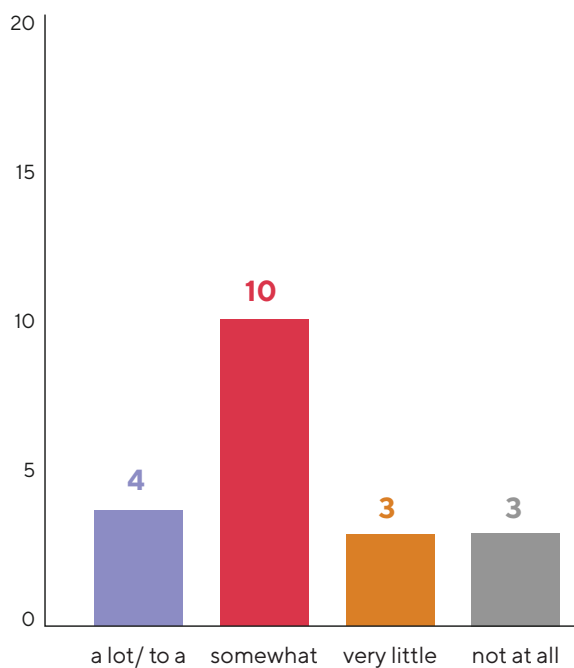
Figure 6: Can you rate how the relationships and networks you established through the GCHL has impacted your career pathway or choices?

[Bar chart showing values: "a lot/ to a [great deal]" = 4, "somewhat" = 10, "very little" = 3, "not at all" = 3. Y-axis ranges from 0 to 20.]

For those who felt very little or no impact on their career choices, they said this was because others couldn't directly "impact their chances" or because they didn't look to others for their choices and because relationships were more "social".

For graduates who felt "somewhat" of an impact, the common reason was that they knew the support from the network was there if they needed it, and they maintained communication, but they hadn't needed to reach out much for support to date. Other graduates said they had been influenced to do further study by their peers.

For the four graduates who felt "a lot" of influence, they said they found it valuable to reach out for referrals and introductions when establishing working relationships in a new country, or for learning about career opportunities. They also found the network encouraged them to aim for higher roles.

FINDING 2—The vast majority of graduates surveyed connect and stay connected

The study results indicate that the vast majority of graduates surveyed stay in contact and also meet up through their work in humanitarian responses—85% [N17] of those surveyed continue to communicate with other GCHL students within their cohort. Sixty-five per cent (N13) have connected in a work setting with other graduates from any cohort since completing GCHL.

Although graduates do not believe GCHL relationships are significantly impacting their career choices, graduates are keeping in touch with each other. In both the surveys and interviews, graduates describe several ways their relationships help them both professionally and personally. These include having access to useful contacts, expertise, tools and ideas for facing new challenges in emergency responses, enjoying psychosocial support and encouragement from peers, and having access to people with whom they have an "instant form of connection" to meet up with when they travel.

Professional support

There is evidence that graduates use their relationships to seek professional support to perform their work. During an emergency response in their country of work, one graduate was able to quickly access support from a colleague with expertise in cash transfers. The colleague quickly shared key training resources allowing their fellow graduate to quickly "pre-position a bit of that operation". Another graduate said that they used their GCHL contacts as "great to link to partners and different organisations" and to get "referrals and introductions" to "useful contacts" that could help "short cut establishing good working relationships during the initial stages of an emergency". Other graduates said they found it "very helpful" to reach out to their GCHL counterparts "to exchange ideas, knowledge experiences". This was particularly the case during the COVID-19 pandemic which presented many graduates with new challenges.

Numerous graduates in this study made a point of saying that that knowing someone had also completed GCHL gave them a certain confidence and trust which meant "building rapport quickly"—valuable in a humanitarian setting. Confirming this belief, another graduate stated that they felt there was "assumption that most people on the course would be really dedicated to their work, highly reliable and good to work with". As an indication of the instant strong connection between graduates, one graduate states how they felt when they met a graduate from another cohort:

> "We felt like long time buddies even though we attended different cohorts. We have one frame of mind".

Personal support

In addition to gaining professional support, graduates are using their relationships to maintain friendships that give them valuable personal support during difficult and stressful emergency responses. For one graduate in a large and complex emergency response, the contact with other graduates was a form of "psychosocial support" as it gave them "time to just laugh" when "meetings are too many". Another graduate said that "the fun side" of the network was meeting fellow graduates for drinks during a major humanitarian response operation. For one graduate who kept in touch "as friends", their fellow graduates would "keep reminding me to take care of myself and to take breaks".

WHAT DID WE LEARN IN THIS STUDY?

The overall aim of this multi-year longitudinal study is to increase our understanding of factors contributing to transformational leadership in the humanitarian sector and the role of GCHL in this leadership transformation. This instalment of the study aimed to identify ways GCHL is influencing the way graduates perform their work—with a view to understanding how relevant the GCHL program is and what types of impact it is having on graduates careers, teams, colleagues and organisations.

How have graduates applied their learning?

The graduates in this study provided details and examples of the many ways they are applying their learnings, often on a daily basis. The survey results that show 95% (or N19), believe they are applying their learnings a lot, corresponds with interviewees' accounts. Although interviewees demonstrated varying abilities to describe what they applying, everyone provided at least a couple of examples of key learnings and many provided strong descriptions and examples to validate this survey finding. These findings suggests that there is generally a very high level of application of learning, which indicates that most graduates have found their learnings highly relevant and useful to their work.

A major finding in this study is that most graduates described a distinct and conscious shift in focus from being a "do-er to a leader", indicating a clear new leadership mindset and behaviour that they had developed during GCHL. This change has led to graduates using their learnings to empower their teams to work better collectively to deliver results. A few powerful examples of teams becoming more autonomous, higher performing and delivering better results indicates a very important impact of this change in leadership and is a sign of some graduates becoming more effective leaders.

To better empower their teams, graduates described using new self-knowledge and insights into their personality traits gained through the Hogan psychometric tests and feedback from their coaches and peers. It is of interest that in some cases graduates were aware of their personality and behaviours, such as perfectionism, but did not necessarily consider how this impacted others or weren't sure how to change it. Other graduates discovered tendencies they weren't aware of, such as being a "micro-manager", or their reactions to pressure. It is this understanding of how tendencies are perceived or how they impact others, particularly when learned through peers from the sector, that graduates appear to be using as a motivation to change. However, based on the way graduates describe using the six behaviours, coaching and feedback, and other tools from GCHL to empower teams, it is the combination of their new personal insights and learning new skills and tools that is enabling graduates to change and demonstrate new leadership behaviours.

Confidence to apply new learnings also emerges as important to enabling graduates to apply new leadership behaviours. The frequent mention of simulations providing the moment of key insight is an indication of the importance of graduates having the opportunity to put into practice their new skills. This opportunity to practice and receive feedback from peers and coaches appears to have built the conviction and confidence graduates need to apply their learnings and try new ways of working in their workplaces.

By showing more confidence, optimism, and an increased willingness to step out of their comfort zones and act in new ways, while also seeing their careers as a "learning journey", graduates are demonstrating a growth mindset that is influencing the way they lead. This means graduates are demonstrating a greater belief in their own ability to achieve results, if they apply themselves. Graduates in the study attribute these changes to their experience at GCHL, which indicates the program has been effective at instilling a growth mindset that is generating an important leadership change.

Another key finding in this study is that graduates are also instilling this growth mindset in their teams, empowering them by fostering greater participation, accountability, and growth. Graduates commonly describe using coaching and feedback with their teams to help them delegate and help team members find their own solutions. To varying degrees, graduates also describe sharing a range of knowledge and tools, such as the 'balcony' approach to encourage reflection, strategic visioning, de bono for different perspectives, how to give feedback, the humanitarian principles and other standards and codes of conduct, among others. Time is considered a barrier to some sharing, but graduates express an intention to do more over time. The common use and sharing of knowledge and tools is a clear indication that they are relevant to their work empowering others.

Importantly, several graduates describe deliberately trying to foster a new culture of accountability where mistakes are learning opportunities. This is another indication of graduates demonstrating a key transformational behaviour and of a new focus on building trust in and among teams.

Building trust is a theme that also emerges in relation to building external relationships. It is a finding of this study that graduates are building more collaboration among teams, but also collaborative relationships

with other stakeholders. To do this, they are working more deliberately to show and establish greater trust. This appears to be a result of the new mindset that no-one can deliver on their own, but also a new understanding of leadership as being relational and that leadership requires an ability to influence others. To build relationships and influence others, graduates in this study showed that they are using their new understanding of how they are perceived, tailoring their communication to the audience, and using active listening skills and acceptance of other views. Again, this indicates a high level of use and relevance of learnings from GCHL.

The findings in this study also indicate other significant changes in ways of working as a result of GCHL. This includes being more strategic than reactive. Numerous graduates described an understandable tendency to lose sight of the bigger picture when under pressure to deliver in fast-paced, high-pressure responses where there are many urgent competing demands. The fact that graduates are illustrating efforts to step back and reflect to think more strategically, is a sign of graduates improving their leadership effectiveness, thanks to the strong practice of reflection during GCHL.

It is also a finding in this study that graduates are placing more attention on self-care and managing pressure for both themselves and their teams. Although some graduates were aware of certain coping mechanisms, graduates describe using their learnings from GCHL to be more consistent and intentional about doing so. This appears to be motivated by a new understanding of how their behaviour under pressure was affecting others. This again highlights the impact of GCHL using simulations and feedback to build this awareness, and then providing practical tools graduates can practice.

What are the impacts of GCHL on the career pathways of graduates?

The findings indicate that GCHL is helping some graduates advance to higher roles, as well as expanding the horizons of some by helping them clarify their motivations and goals. It is also enhancing most graduates' perception of the opportunities available to them.

In a sector that is highly transient it is not necessarily surprising that the majority of study participants (85% of survey respondents) had changed roles since completing GCHL. However, it is significant that 85% of survey respondents say they have higher level roles largely as a result of GCHL. A large majority (70%) said that the GCHL contribution was very important, a further 15% said GCHL had played a role but wasn't a main factor. This majority belief corresponds with and validates the finding that 90% of survey respondents also perceive that their career opportunities have increased due to GCHL, 70% said this was in great part due to GCHL, while the other 20% said this was in some part, or, in other words, to a lesser extent, due to GCHL. The two main reasons graduates believe GCHL has helped them is confidence and skills.

Most graduates believed they gained skills and others also felt their existing skills were validated through feedback at GCHL and that this increased their confidence. These findings suggest that the GCHL approach of building self-awareness and creating opportunities to practice learnings, in a safe environment with lots of feedback, is building the skills, confidence and growth mindset to seek out opportunities to use them.

In addition, the fact that graduates believe they have been successful in securing promotions due to GCHL indicates they find their learnings relevant and useful. This in turn indicates that the GCHL content, tools and approach are relevant for supporting their work in the sector.

Impact of relationships

The evidence in this study suggests that the collaborative and supportive approach that graduates are demonstrating in their work, as a result of completing GCHL, also manifests in their relationships with other graduates. The main feature of these relationships that is highlighted by this study is support and collaboration, both personal and professional. This takes place in the form of encouragement, sharing of ideas, expertise, tools and contacts, and in some cases inspiring others by providing examples of growth. There was no evidence to suggest the relationships are merely transactional. In fact, the perceived influence of relationships on career pathways was due to a feeling of encouragement, support and inspiration, rather than concrete job offers or referrals

The evidence shows graduates are giving each other both technical and psychosocial support during emergency responses, which suggests these relationships are having some influence on graduates' ability to perform and stay resilient. In this study, this support was particularly important for graduates who are less experienced in humanitarian response or in leadership roles, such as those transitioning from international development to humanitarian response or from technical to leadership roles. The full extent of this influence on performance and resilience is worthy of future exploration, but any such influence is significant in a sector that is prone to burn out and to placing staff in increasingly complex challenges. This indicates an important broader impact of GCHL on the wellbeing and effectiveness of graduates.

Impact on teams and colleagues

Although this study interviewed graduates only, their significant changes in behaviour suggest particular impacts on their teams and organisations. Given the main application of learnings from GCHL appears to be a focus on team empowerment, it is not surprising that there are impacts on teams that can be gleaned from this study. Graduate accounts suggest that some teams are becoming more cohesive, collaborative, autonomous in problem-solving and better performing. They are also benefiting from a new culture of learning in some cases and a culture that promotes leadership by everyone.

Impact on organisations

The ability of graduates to build higher performing teams and be more strategic, as well as their increased capacity to influence and build collaborative external partnerships, indicates benefits for organisations. Some of the benefits identified in this study are greater sustainability due to empowerment of teams and colleagues, the ability to adapt and respond to emerging crises and stronger reputation and funding through better program delivery. It is noted that a key barrier to applying learnings was organisational culture that is hierarchical and overly bureaucratic and where values are not aligned with humanitarian values. Given graduates perceive having greater career opportunities, this may mean graduates do not stay in organisations they cannot influence. Further research to explore the impact of greater leadership on different types of organisations would be valuable for understanding what factors support transformational leadership and what key changes are needed to influence change in the sector.

SUMMING UP

The GCHL is having a tangible, significant and ongoing impact on many of the graduates in this study. Although some finished the course over a decade ago, graduates remember insights, skills and tools that they continue to use and further develop both in themselves and in others. Of most significance, graduates are using their learnings from GCHL to achieve greater collective success and collaboration, which is a significant change for many of the graduates. They are also using their learnings to build resilience in themselves and their teams—a critical factor for avoiding burn out in the humanitarian sector. The extensive and ongoing perceived use of wide-ranging learnings from GCHL indicates the program's relevance and effectiveness in building the awareness, confidence, knowledge, and skills to improve and transform the leadership behaviours of graduates.

As a result of their learnings, graduates are showing signs of a deeper understanding of the role of a leader, seeing the bigger picture and motivating and enabling others to grow and work towards it for stronger collective outcomes. Importantly, they demonstrate a growth mindset which is supporting their ongoing growth and that of those around them.

Further research involving other stakeholders such as colleagues and line managers would help strengthen our understanding of the extent and impact of changes in graduate's leadership behaviours.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommendations from graduates in this study that identify ways GCHL could contribute further to influencing the humanitarian sector, and strengthening women's leadership.

- GCHL could be further leveraged as a safe platform for discussing the challenges graduates are experiencing in the humanitarian system, such as the lack of accountability and sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, and other issues of gender and racial inequality. To do this, there must be clear Chatham House rules that ensure graduates can speak safely, especially if members of their organisations are present as colleagues or staff. The feedback and ideas generated in this platform can be documented and disseminated to organisations and donors for consideration and action.

- GCHL can do more to support women of colour to attend and feel safe to speak up, by considering a women's only training to ensure they are selected and doing further consultation to identify ways women can feel more empowered to speak up safely amid their peers on issues that affect them in the humanitarian sector.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Leadership behaviours matrix

Communicating Vision and Strategic Purpose	Strategic Thinking	Managerial Courage	Deliver Results	Building High Performing Teams	Change & Transformation
High Level					
Communicates a compelling, inspired vision and sense of core purpose	Aligns ideas and solutions to strategic imperatives	States willingness to champion ideas	Removes barriers and constraints to ensure that plans are achieved	Facilitates and manages interaction between team members so that they perform more highly together than they would as individuals.	Addresses the concerns of others over change, helping them to embrace it and demonstrating own belief and high expectations
Tailors communication style to various audiences, using analogies, humour, gestures etc. to promote the core message	Evaluates the opportunities and risks of each idea and solution to make informed strategic decisions	Prepared to take calculated risks and stand by decisions despite resistance	Actively manages risk and takes action to reduce risk	Creates climate of high team morale by sharing team successes	Celebrates success of change both at the end and throughout the process
Conveys complex issues with clarity, brevity and confidence	Puts in place structured opportunities for others to generate alternative ideas	Confronts difficult situations and seeks resolution	Makes changes to improve performance as a result of information received	Promotes collaborative working across boundaries	Builds the confidence of others in their own ability to embrace change
Shows optimism about the project to vision and future possibilities, which in turn inspires others		Makes tough decisions and corrective action without delay	Creates measures and metrics to track performance		Effectively influences others by understanding their interests and showing how they will be met by own preferred solution
Adding Value					
Communicates clearly with logical structure	Develops at least two alternative ideas or solutions simultaneously themselves	Makes decisions when decisions are due	Plans appropriately and sets project steps	Encourages sense of belonging and team spirit by ensuring all members have the opportunity to contribute to team achievements	Able to tap into and use informal networks effectively to initiate, implement and/or embed change
Makes positive statements about the project	Can look at situations from different perspectives at the same time	Acknowledges the problems, issues and points of conflict of others	Allocates tasks and responsibilities to get the job done	Ensures that team contribution is fully realised by bringing people into the discussion	Adapts behaviour and communication style to get buy-in from others
Is generally optimistic and makes general statements to this effect	Encourages others to develop alternative solutions to a problem rather than going with the most obvious	Speaks out clearly for what they believe	Monitors plans to ensure that results are achieved on time	Generally recognises the benefits of a team approach	Presents features, benefits and advantages of ideas to persuade others of the change

Awareness

Communication is understood but impact is impaired by factors such as inadequate eye contact, low volume, high speed, distracting movements	Recognises the value of alternative ideas but does not use them to contribute to solutions	Recognises the need for strong decision making but delays when decisions or actions are clearly required	Responds to the plans or initiative of others	Actively participates in team interactions	Does not attempt to win others over to own position as part of the change process
	Understands the importance of alternative solution in achieving the 'bigger picture'	Overcomes conflict only when instigated by others	Makes own plans reactively when asked by others	Does not engage in managing the interactions of others	Expects own idea to sell itself rather than expressing the benefits for others
	Sees the strategic vision of their organisation and understands the contribution they make in achieving it		Shows an awareness of the importance of targets and measures but does not translate these into action	Does not disrupt or close down interactions	Demonstrates an awareness of change and possible implications but does not adapt behaviour to meet the change

Limiting

Communicates without clarity or structure in a way that makes the message unclear or impossible to receive	Adopts a single plan or strategy without considering alternative views or ideas.	Appears to be unclear about own responsibilities	Either sets no targets or measures or inappropriate ones	Shuts down the contributions of other team members by centralising issues around self	Shows hesitation or doubt about the future
Communicates with a lack of belief and confidence in the message, resulting in a lack of buy in from the audience	Rejects alternatives offered or valued by others	Tends to defer decisions to others rather than take responsibility themselves	Is constrained by restrictive or outmoded policies or procedures	Imposes consensus upon the group inappropriately	Actively resists change
Is limited in their communication style e.g. uses one style or same style for all audiences	Has difficulty seeing the wider context	Resists taking tough decisions due to fear of failure	Creates bureaucracy that hinders the ability of others to take action	Attempts to maintain control by discouraging or preventing interaction between team members	Expresses own lack of belief and confidence in the team to adopt change
			Consistently fails to deliver results by not focusing on outcomes		Is negative towards the interests and ideas of others in an attempt to promote own interest