

For Immediate Release

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Making Youth Work Visible: Impact Assessment of Youth Interventions in India

New Delhi, India – This spring Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) and Delhi-based NGO Pravah laid the foundation for sector-wide evaluation of the impact of youth interventions in India. ICP and Pravah convened two meetings of diverse stakeholders from sectors throughout India to develop a common framework to measure the impact of youth interventions in India.

The process began in March 2010 with a three-day workshop designed by Pravah for its team leaders and youth facilitators, to discuss outcomes and indicators to assess its work with young people. A subsequent core-group meeting during April 8-10, 2010, in New Delhi, engaged a dynamic group of practitioners from 11 youth organizations.¹ The participants discussed their evaluation experiences and challenges in assessing the impact of youth interventions, and identified key competencies and indicators that can be measured to show the impact of their work. The core group challenged itself to make its evaluation processes more rigorous and developed a common framework for assessing the impact of youth programs.

The findings of the core group were shared and refined at a stakeholders' meeting of nearly 50 people representing high-performing youth development programs, the national youth service program (NSS), universities, international organizations, donors and youth-led initiatives. At this meeting, diverse stakeholders from across India built on and prioritized the key competencies and indicators, discussed opportunities for the various stakeholders to work together in developing a cohesive youth sector in India, and explored evaluation experiences in India, the United States and South Africa. The stakeholders' meeting built on the work of the core group and served as a platform to co-create a common framework that can be used not only by additional organizations to assess the impact of their programs and make their work more visible, but also by young people for their own development.

“Young people in South Asia represent one of the largest cohorts that can actively contribute to meeting critical social needs in the world,” said Susan Stroud, Executive Director of ICP. “We know that both young people and communities benefit from youth active citizenship opportunities. This effort and the common framework of competencies and indicators developed by this diverse group of stakeholders is an important first step in rigorously evaluating youth interventions and making these benefits visible to stakeholders in all sectors.”

Core group members also shared the competencies and indicators with young participants and youth facilitators in their organizations, soliciting their input on the core group's work. While some members designed a similar process with young people, others facilitated a discussion around the indicators developed by the core group. The process generated a great deal of thought and animated discussion around the desired outcomes of their work. It gave young people a chance to reflect on their experiences and share examples from their lives. Many welcomed this initiative and requested a simpler, more accessible format that would serve as a learning tool and could be used to map their own progress. While they acknowledged the importance of these competencies, they also pointed out that developing many of these competencies – especially in the area of relationships within the family – took time and that the efforts need to be assessed rather than the success. Their insights reiterated the need to look beyond time-bound project periods and to find more innovative ways of assessing outcomes that are often hard to capture through conventional means.

The processes and frameworks produced by the meetings and subsequent efforts will enable youth organizations to strengthen their own impact assessment processes and thereby also strengthen the field of youth active citizenship in India. ICP and Pravah will launch a report outlining the proceedings of the meetings, the common framework of

¹ In addition to Pravah and ICP, the core group participants included representatives from Patang (Orissa), Thoughtshop Foundation (Kolkata), Jan Vikas (Ahmedabad), YUVA (Maharashtra), ComMutiny, the Youth Collective (New Delhi), Ashoka's Youth Ventures (Mumbai), Student Partnerships Worldwide, Doosra Dashak (Rajasthan) and the Sir Ratan Tata Trust.

competencies and indicators identified by diverse stakeholders and evaluation resources to support youth organizations in building their evaluation capacity.

“This is an important contribution to the youth development sector in India and we are definitely interested in taking this effort forward,” said Rita Mishra, CEO of Patang in Orissa, India, and a participant in both meetings.

Additionally, various stakeholders will take these materials back to their own organizations and communities to get feedback on the common framework and continue to refine it to meet their needs. A small working/learning group of practitioners anchored by Pravah will continue to meet, share feedback and learnings from the application of the framework, develop tools to collect data on the indicators and support each other in improving and celebrating their work with young people.

Background

Although there is a youth policy, national youth service programs, and many organizations designing and implementing youth programs in India, there remains a need to build a body of knowledge that draws on the experiences of these organizations and develops standards, tools and resources that can be used by others.

India has the largest number of young people in South Asia and some of the most innovative youth programs in the region. However, in contrast to topics such as women’s empowerment or the environment, there is little research on the status of youth in India. Youth issues and youth programs tend to remain largely invisible to the public and policy makers.

A more collaborative sector where youth organizations can pool their resources and build new knowledge, based on each others’ experiences, would enhance and deepen the work that they are already doing. As such, in March 2009, ICP and Pravah partnered to design and facilitate a stakeholder consultation on youth active citizenship in India. (See www.icicp.org/indiaconsultation for more details.) One of the recommendations that emerged from this consultation was the need for effective evaluation tools, methods and a common framework to measure the impact of youth active citizenship programs.

This work responds to that recommendation and builds on ICP and Pravah’s previous evaluation efforts. In 2008, ICP facilitated an international experts meeting on measuring the impact of youth voluntary service programs in collaboration with the World Bank and subsequently proposed a framework on evaluating the impact of youth service programs. (More information about this meeting and the framework are available at: www.icicp.org/impacetevaluation) The meeting demonstrated that there is a lack of consensus about what model best captures the theory of change behind voluntary youth service. It also demonstrated the need for an established set of norms and key features of high-quality youth voluntary service and highlighted the need for further work and reflection on impact assessment.

Pravah also designed and facilitated a workshop in 2008 for partners of the National Youth Foundation in India to discuss evaluation of their youth interventions. Their experience showed that few organizations had developed indicators or instruments for evaluating impact.

Despite efforts to develop appropriate instruments to measure impact and develop stronger evidence in India, there has been limited success. Some of the reasons include: a) very few available evaluations of youth programs, b) the available evaluations are mostly case studies that describe the program rather than studying its impact, c) lack of agreement on the outcomes to be measured, d) the needs for standardized criteria for assessing program impact, e) a lack of appropriate tools for documenting changes in youth’s knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors.

Finding a feasible solution to this challenge requires further research and building a common understanding of youth development and active citizenship in India. This effort is a first and important step in creating that solution.

Additional Resources

This is one piece of a multi-year, multi-component ICP effort to expand youth civic engagement opportunities in South Asia.

- For more information about the regional consultation ICP and Pravah designed and facilitated, please visit: www.icicp.org/indiaconsultation.
- In the coming weeks ICP will be launching an asset mapping study providing an overview of programs and policies supporting youth civic engagement in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan.
- In collaboration with local partners, ICP will also launch a South Asia Online Resource Center in the coming weeks with resources developed as part of this project, materials from the region regarding youth civic engagement, evaluation and service opportunities, and a dynamic discussion forum to share ideas and collaborate throughout the region.

Please visit ICP's website (www.icicp.org) for more information as we share these exciting resources. ICP's efforts in South Asia are possible through generous support from the American Center in New Delhi, India.

Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP), based in Washington, DC, is a global leader in the field of youth civic engagement. ICP's mission is to facilitate the generation of opportunities for young people to improve their communities and build essential skills for future success through civic engagement. ICP works with individuals and organizations around the world to support the development of innovative approaches to two civic participation strategies: national youth service and service learning. Founded in 2001 by Susan Stroud through a multi-year grant from the Ford Foundation, ICP grew out of Ms. Stroud's 30 years of experience in designing programs and policies and building networks that result in many more young people being given the opportunity to engage in civic activities. Since 2001, the team at ICP has worked to expand opportunities for tens of thousands of young people throughout the world to engage in service.

Pravah, registered in 1993, is based in New Delhi. It works to build leadership for social change through active citizenship and youth development interventions. Pravah builds with and in youth respect and understanding of citizenship, attitude of ownership for common spaces, skill of leadership for social change and behaviors to develop strong relationships as the foundation. After a decade of intensive work with individuals, it expanded its portfolio to include teachers training, incubating new initiatives and facilitative work with other organizations working on youth development and together with these partners advocate for youth development and citizenship action.