

Small Grants for Innovation in Youth Service Policy An ICP Project Report

Summary

The purpose of the ICP small grants program was to fund organizations to develop and work toward the creation of government policies that involve young people in community service. In 2004 through this grants program, ICP funded 11 organizations in 10 countries, including: Argentina, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Ghana, Panama, Peru, Romania, Russia, and Uruguay. Organizations were funded in amounts of \$5,000 to \$15,000 for a nine-month period. At the start of the grant period, none of the countries had a youth service policy. With the support provided by ICP through the small grants program, the government of Panama recently passed a youth service policy. Further, governments in four countries, including Peru, Belarus, Brazil, and Romania, were presented draft youth service policy documents by grantee organizations. Such documents have potential to form the basis for a future youth service policy. In the other countries, ICP grants were used to advance the movement toward youth service policy through conferences, workshops, and capacity building efforts at the local and national level. The grants program at ICP demonstrated that small amounts of funding can provide important support to organizations working to promote opportunities for youth involvement in service.

Project Description

In 2003, ICP received 180 Letters of Intent in response to a request issued through newsletters, key contacts, and the ICP website. The request indicated that ICP was seeking applications from organizations and agencies (e.g., government, education, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, etc.) around the world. Grants were in amounts of up to US \$15,000. An important component of the project design, included in the initial Request for Letters of Intent, was the iteration of definitions for key terms essential to the project. These definitions were provided to present ICP's understanding of these terms in reference to the project, due to dissimilarities in vocabulary in the youth service field that are sometimes exacerbated by language differences.

Youth: The United Nations General Assembly defines “youth” as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years inclusive. However, we understand this definition of youth may differ from country to country. Thus, we will consider proposals concerning persons younger than 15, and older than 24 (but not older than 30).

Service: Service is defined as an organized period of substantial engagement and contribution to the local, national, or world community, recognized and valued by society, with minimal monetary compensation to the participant.

Policy: For this project, policy is defined as a strategy devised to create or contribute to sustainable youth service on a local, regional, or national level.

Reactions received from the applicant organizations assisted grants program staff to understand different country's contexts, and aided grantee organizations in focusing their proposals on youth service policy. Still, many proposals described projects to support youth policy, and not specifically related to youth

serving in their communities. Other proposals were to fund youth service programs and did not include a plan for policy development.

ICP selected 31 organizations with innovative plans to submit full proposals, and grants program staff asked critical questions of these applicants to determine if the organizations would be able to focus their projects on developing policies specifically for youth service. In highlighting the elements of each proposal that would contribute directly to policy development, ICP observed that many organizations re-centered their efforts to focus more pointedly on those elements.

Ultimately, ICP awarded grants in 2004 to 11 organizations in 10 countries for the purpose of developing a youth service policy in their respective country. In Argentina, two organizations were asked to work together to develop and submit a joint proposal to take advantage of the complementary strengths of the two organizations. Each of the selected organizations met criteria determined by grants program staff to reflect an emphasis on youth service policy development and innovation. The allotted grant period was for nine months, with the understanding that these initiatives often take years to develop, and therefore realistic expectations were agreed upon. The short grant period encouraged the grantee organizations to begin developing their initiatives immediately and to consider creating partnerships to aid in the policy development process.

Two program officers at ICP tracked each grantee organization's progress through tri-monthly progress reports, culminating in the review and approval of all final reports submitted. ICP intends to continue communication with each of the grantee organizations in order to track further progress. Progress over the course of the grant included capacity building coalition efforts among non-governmental organizations, government ministries, local authorities, and, in some cases, higher education institutions. Grantee organizations held national conferences and regional consultations, along with training workshops and the development of research agendas. Most developed draft versions of a youth service policy for their respective countries, and many are using a variety of advocacy tools to advance the movement toward policy creation.

ICP regards this project as highly successful, and believes that this grants program illustrates that policy development, creation of partnerships, and increased awareness of youth service is possible with limited resources. If ICP can secure additional resources to support another round of small grants, the progress made in this round of small grants will be useful in extending support in other countries working to develop youth service policy.

Grant Summaries

Argentina – CACID and Fundacion SES

In Argentina, community service and volunteerism are established social institutions. This is exemplified over time as citizen volunteerism is a common norm and more recently through the creation of public laws such as the Social Volunteer Service Law. This Law, enacted in 2004, promotes volunteerism among Argentina's citizens in general. Despite these forms of citizen participation, in Argentina there is no organization or institution in government that centralizes and coordinates service by young people. Thus, efforts are duplicated or not done at all, and in general there is poor use of the scant resources that are available. Another challenge is the historic lack of priority for youth issues in general, which is typified by the lack of a national youth policy in Argentina. While the potential of service-learning in educational settings exists, there is still a lack of clarity with regard to how a framework might be created through which young people can be provided systemic opportunities for meaningful participation in society through service. The purpose of the ICP Small Grants project in Argentina was to explore the different avenues for achieving a national youth service policy. Two non-governmental organizations, CACID and SES, were awarded grants to work in conjunction toward this goal.

CACID's ICP Small Grant project was called "Building Up a National Youth Service Policy from the State in Argentina." The project called for a multi-faceted approach, including conducting research on programs, creating a directory of these programs, and on furthering the dialogue regarding the topic of youth service. The milestones of the grant period included coordinating efforts among the major entities involved in the youth service policy development process, including state officials, NGO members, and researchers at universities. CACID analyzed and performed research on the best practices in youth service over the past decade, especially related to the practice of service-learning. CACID developed a dialogue for how the term 'service' should be understood and promoted in society. For example, some understand service in the military sense, some understand service as a form of charity, and still others see service as a form of civic inclusion and involvement among youth. The final aim of the CACID grant period was to establish a directory of youth service projects and programs in Argentina. This aspect of the grant period was crucial for the eventual implementation of any youth service policy and provided a foundation for implementing any policy in the future. CACID faced many complex challenges. Foremost among them, at the national level there was no institution in charge of coordinating the various players involved in moving a youth service policy forward.

SES's main objective was to mobilize support for the creation and implementation of a national youth service policy through trainings, networking, and facilitating dialogues. During the grant period SES brought members of organizations together to take part in a training session with the goal to impact the development of youth service policies. SES, as a member of the Integration Committee of the Civil Society Consultative Council, under the aegis of the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Culture of Argentina*, submitted a document to the Mercosur Presidential Summit emphasizing the importance of implementing policies that promote youth activities, including service. SES also facilitated a dialogue between and among the various provincial and regional bodies of government with the aim of building a social movement to help youth engage in service. In summary, SES accomplished the main goal of the grant period to raise public awareness, especially the awareness of the members of the Argentine Youth Joint Action Committee, about the issue of youth service.

Belarus – Support Center for Associations and Foundations (SCAF)

In Belarus, there is a general youth policy that includes broad statements to encourage service involvement as a strategy for youth development and for addressing community needs. However, the

policy does not concretely support programs or provide a framework through which youth can serve. SCAF was awarded an ICP Small Grant with the objective of advancing the movement to create a youth service policy to involve youth in service on the local, regional, and national levels. Further, a second objective for the grant period was for SCAF to build institutional capacity around the promotion of youth service programs to ensure that a youth service policy could be successfully implemented.

During the grant period, SCAF performed an exploratory research study of youth experts to further understand the landscape for youth service in Belarus. The research formed the basis for the “Youth Service Policy National Strategy Document”, which was approved at a conference in Minsk, Belarus, on September 30, 2004. The conference was attended by government representatives, civil society stakeholders, and international experts. At the conference, participants engaged in a National Consensus Building Workshop during which issues were deliberated and discussed. The Strategy Document is now being used as the basis for the development of specific programs of action aimed at service implementation in rural communities. SCAF also used the grant period to explore the opportunity to have youth service more concretely included within the existing youth policy in Belarus.

In Belarus, the concepts of youth service and volunteering are closely related to activities of youth civil society organizations. To build institutional capacity to implement youth service programs successfully, SCAF planned several strategies. One, SCAF wrote a concept paper for the establishment of Local Activities Support Center (LASC) in Belarus communities. The Centers would provide opportunities for youth to serve in programs under a policy, and would meet community needs. During the grant period, SCAF also wrote guidelines for the service-learning curriculum, methodologies for high school students' education, and strategies for teacher and principal pre-service and in-service training all to be used for the eventual implementation of a youth service policy. Finally, during the grant period, SCAF developed an interactive webpage describing youth service and the youth service policy movement in Belarus. The webpage is available at: <http://youthservice.at.tut.by>

Bosnia and Herzegovina – OSMIJEH

OSMIJEH, the Association for Psychosocial Help and Development of Voluntary Work, is an organization working to empower people through voluntary work as a means of facilitating social reconstruction. Due to a strong demand from many sectors for programs that involve youth in voluntary service, OSMIJEH's small grant proposal was designed to develop a national youth service policy through which government support and recognition would be given to young people actively involved in improving their communities.

One of the goals of OSMIJEH's small grants project was to organize a conference where representatives from NGOs and government could come together to learn about models of good practice in youth service, and the different sectors could exchange information about both the need for and obstacles to the development of youth service policy in BiH. This conference was seen as an important step in educating government representatives on the need for a youth service policy, as well as bringing together the necessary stakeholders for the development of such a policy. The conference, held in November 2004, involved 100 participants from government, NGOs, and young volunteers as well. Discussions during the conference highlighted the inherent problems and disagreements that would make the development of a national youth service policy difficult. As a result of the conference, OSMIJEH chose to alter their strategy, working instead on the canton level with local NGOs and government institutions. This advocacy will be completed in coordination with youth representatives and school representatives in the local areas.

OSMIJEH believes in the importance of involving teachers as stakeholders in the youth service policy process, as schools are the best way to reach children and youth. During the grant period, OSMIJEH in collaboration with a Slovenian organization held trainings for over 150 primary school teachers to teach them about the importance of voluntary work and strategies for implementing volunteer programs in their schools.

OSMIJEH has also been involved with the development of a draft Law on Volunteering that was proposed to the national government. OSMIJEH has committed to working with other organizations to monitor the implementation of this law in order to avoid duplication of efforts. As this law largely does not address issues of volunteering for young people under 18 years of age, OSMIJEH believes that this is yet another reason to push for the development of a national youth policy that would be more encompassing of young people.

Brazil – Viva Rio

Viva Rio, a civil society organization advocating the social integration of youth in Rio de Janeiro, aimed to draft and advocate for a policy to engage at-risk young people involved in the drug trade or armed violence in youth service. Currently in Brazil, the only national youth service program is the Civilian Volunteer Service, which involves 18-year olds in volunteer work in poor communities and includes an education component. Viva Rio was awarded a small grant by ICP due to the innovation central to their plan to target the thousands of young people involved in crime in the Rio area, which included utilizing the experience of these young people to inform policy development.

Viva Rio began their project by researching policies affecting young people and previous experiences with youth service policy in Brazil in order to assess the environment for policy creation and advocacy. Part of this investigation included setting up a “youth policy creation group” comprised of young people formerly involved in organized armed violence, in order to train these young people in designing youth service policies and programs. The group also gave important feedback on the proposed solutions involving youth in organized armed violence. The results of the research and policy creation group allowed Viva Rio to author two papers on youth service policy, one aimed at the national level, “Youth Service: A policy for preventing and providing alternatives to youth involvement in urban violence in Brazil” and the second targeting municipal government, “Youth Service: Local Governments and prevention of urban violence.” Part of Viva Rio’s advocacy strategy includes distributing these papers to members of the inter-ministries commission for youth and members of the parliamentary commission for youth policies, as well as informing the media about them.

In attempting to affect policy on the national level, Viva Rio arranged a meeting with one of the people implementing a proposal for a National Youth Secretariat, to be linked to the General Secretariat of the Presidency and coordinate youth policies at the national level. A pilot program under the Youth Secretariat was also proposed; Viva Rio has had conversations with multiple people involved in these initiatives to advocate for the inclusion of youth service as a priority area. At the municipal level, Viva Rio established partnerships with local NGOs and local government bodies to implement a service program in the city of Resende. This program is structured as an alternative sentence for youth in conflict with the law, and is modeled around five core principles: encouraging leadership, community service, promoting active citizenship, improving education standards, and sports training. Viva Rio will continue to advocate for a youth service policy in Resende based on the experiences of at-risk youth involved in the program.

Ghana – CRI

At the time of ICP's funding of Children's Rights International (CRI), a national youth service policy did not exist. The Small Grants project undertaken by CRI was intended to support the creation of a national youth service policy for insertion into the draft national youth policy, which was under development within the government of Ghana. CRI finds both the current National Service Scheme, which involves only graduates of tertiary education, and the draft national youth policy, which includes a community service component, as inadequate for meeting the needs of young people in Ghana. CRI is eager to promote a policy which will allow the majority of young people the opportunity to service and contribute toward the development of the country.

In order to insert a more inclusive vision of youth service into the draft national youth service policy, CRI undertook a strategy designed to compile the opinions of Ghanaian citizens prior to drafting a national youth service policy for circulation to government officials and the general population. In order to do so, CRI held a number of regional and district consultations to discuss a framework for national youth service policy, which resulted in the collation and summation stakeholder views, including youth and civil society groups, government officials, and secondary school representatives. These consultations in combination with a media strategy allowed CRI to get the word out about the lack of a national youth service policy, which resulted in the call by some for a public debate on the subject. In addition, CRI met with the heads of the Ministry for Education, Youth, and Sports and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. Their feedback on the framework was taken into account in preparing the draft national youth service policy. A national consultation was the means by which the policy document was distributed to the general public. The most important points of the draft national youth service policy are:

1. The amendment of the National Service Act
2. The need for inter-sectoral and ministerial approaches to youth development in Ghana
3. A separate ministry for youth affairs
4. Quantification of National Service savings and benefits.

Elections in Ghana early in 2005 changed the landscape for national youth service policy somewhat, as the youth portfolio was moved from the Ministry of Education and Sports to the Ministry of Manpower and Development. CRI was optimistic that this change would not adversely affect the government's draft youth policy, or the national youth service policy proposal. The final version of the draft national youth service policy submitted to ICP by CRI delineates the need for a NYSP in Ghana, the goals and objectives of such a policy, and outlines a framework for the implementation of a national youth service program, including specific areas in which service would be especially beneficial to Ghana's development.

Panama – Fundacuna

Fundacuna, an NGO dedicated to the promotion of social development in Panama, was awarded a small grant to work toward incorporating youth service policy into an overall national youth policy in development by the Ministry of Youth, Women, Child, and Family in coordination with UNFPA and the '*Defensoría Del Pueblo*' (Ombudsman) of Panama. Panama has, in recent years, taken steps toward the creation of a national youth policy through the creation of the aforementioned Ministry and the establishment of a Youth National Council formed by youth organizations from around the country. In the realm of youth service, civil society was increasingly active through the coordination of Global Youth Service Day and the creation of a national youth service award by Fundacuna.

In order to advocate successfully for the inclusion of youth service in the national youth policy, Fundacuna undertook the development of institutional capacity through the coordination of a group of leaders in youth service. The creation of consultative and advisory councils allowed young people and adults from key volunteer organizations to be informed about advocacy strategies related to youth service policy. Fundacuna led the way in implementing a pilot program to train disadvantaged young people in

leadership skills so that they could in future lead other young people in service projects. In addition, the project included training sessions for civil servants in the youth ministry designed to impart the skills needed for the future implementation of youth service policy.

In August 2004, Panama adopted a youth public policy with youth service noted as an important strategy for youth participation. The election of a new government in April 2004, which assumed power in September, created optimal conditions for the formal proposal of a policy on youth service to the Youth Minister, which occurred on December 30, 2004. This public policy strategy document was accompanied by a Fundacuna publication, “Youth Service Policy in Panama: tools for innovation in public policy,” which is intended as a resource for policymakers and practitioners in implementing the proposed policy framework. Fundacuna understands that in 2005, the Youth Minister will launch the *National Program on Volunteer Service*. As a direct result of ICP’s funding, Panama will now have a policy that advocates for youth service, and a program that reflects youth service as a priority for the government.

Peru – Iberoamerican Youth Organization (OIJ)

In Peru, the General Law of Volunteerism (LGV) was approved by the Congress of the Republic on July 1, 2004. The law provides opportunities for all Peruvian citizens to become involved in service and volunteerism, but does not specifically address the needs of youth. The creation of the law during the ICP Small Grant period altered the objectives of OIJ project. Rather than working to advance the movement toward the creation of a youth service law, or policy, OIJ developed new goals to promote youth volunteerism within the LGV, including 1) proposing a modification to the LGV, 2) proposing to create national volunteer programs for youth, and 3) proposing to provide a legal framework for youth volunteerism.

To achieve these goals during the grant period, OIJ held workshops of civil society experts and government representatives for the purpose of developing a proposal for modifying the LGV and including provisions specifically for a targeted youth involvement in the general service law. The document was entitled the *Youth Volunteerism Promotion Project* and proposed the inclusion of representatives from the National Youth Commission and from the Ministry of Education within the National Commission on Volunteerism. OIJ indicated that there would be no costs associated with these modifications to the LGV, yet there would be many benefits to society for the non-compensated work and to youth who serve themselves.

A central aspect of the OIJ proposal called for the creation of a National Program of Youth Volunteerism, which would implement the policy and provide concrete opportunities for youth to serve. The provision would provide support and incentives to organizations and schools that implement service programs. The proposal called for a pilot phase through which programs under the policy could be tested, and for dissemination of the program afterward. OIJ also developed a document that described the current landscape of youth volunteerism in Peru. Further, in conjunction with the bill to modify the LGV, OIJ developed a document that detailed volunteerism in Peru from the legal perspective. The purpose of the document was to create a legal framework for young volunteers to guarantee their protection, security, and conditions in which they work to benefit the community.

OIJ noted the valuable contribution in this project by the National Youth Commission of Peru (CNJ), which collaborated in the work undertaken in the field as well as in orchestrating the workshop of government and civil society leaders.

Romania – New Horizons Foundation

In Romania, there is no distinction between volunteer work and community service, and the educational discipline of service-learning is almost completely unknown. In this regard, there is no national policy that presently involves youth in service in Romania. The mission of New Horizons Foundation (FNO) is to promote positive values as a strategy for sustainable development. Youth service is at the core of this mission, in the form of adventure-education and service-learning pedagogies. FNO received the ICP Small Grant to pursue the development of a national youth service policy in Romania.

Romania's National Youth Action Plan (Y-NAP) is a landmark accomplishment in formulating a comprehensive youth policy for Romania, and provides for meaningful opportunities for youth in Romania. Aspects of the Y-NAP do focus on civic and vocational competency, but there are no mechanisms to achieve these goals. FNO's Small Grant Project through ICP was designed specifically to address the possible inclusion of youth service within the Y-NAP policy. Youth service, particularly through service-learning, provides a means for achieving Y-NAP's goals for youth participation in the economic, cultural, educational, political, and civic spheres. During the grant period in 2004, FNO utilized several strategies to advance the movement toward the inclusion of service in the Y-NAP. As well, FNO explored other avenues for creating and advancing the movement toward a youth service policy.

During the grant period, FNO hosted a conference on service-learning and social capital for the purpose of bringing together experts working in the field to reach a common understanding. Sixty individuals attended the conference and it was positively received. FNO made an attempt to contact the necessary officials to amend the Y-NAP by including service as a strategy for youth development, yet the amendment faced several challenges. The efforts to affect Y-NAP through discussions with the Minister of Youth and Sports, who is responsible for implementing the plan, were not fruitful, partially because of a lack of activity in general and partially because of the timing during an election year. The grant period ended in January 2005, with FNO promising to continue involvement in discussions about the Y-NAP, and with the plan to continue networking with the appropriate youth representatives. Further, FNO authored a national youth service policy that can be presented to the appropriate youth governmental representatives if the opportunity arises.

FNO also continues to explore other opportunities to advance the movement to create a national youth service policy. Specifically, in Romania there is a presence of volunteer centers, most or all funded through foreign aid, which have helped to create a climate for systemic youth involvement in community activities such as service. FNO is working with the Youth National Authority, who has not been able to formally put youth programs into practice, to offer the service-learning example as a potential model for invigorating these youth centers. FNO believes the service-learning model may be recognized and implemented on a broader policy level. Lastly during the grant period, FNO created an innovative website (in Romanian and English) which provides a national clearinghouse for information on service-learning. This website can be found at: <http://www.new-horizons.ro>

Russia - Sozidanie

In Russia, youth service is a new phenomenon that has emerged within the last 10 years, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Communism. Presently in Russia, youth service has many organizational forms ranging from informal networks to time intensive and organized programs, and is often associated with actions through non-governmental civil society organizations rather than governmental or military-based forms of service. The purpose of Sozidanie's Small Grant project was to develop a national youth service policy in Russia. The strategy was to advance the movement by promoting the institutionalization of youth service at the national level through a positive image campaign. The campaign was to be driven by positive results from youth service projects at the regional and local levels through NGO-based youth

projects and international youth volunteer experiences. The project posed creating a council of experts to push the movement. The results of these projects and the potential of service would be publicized and discussed at conferences and workshops for the purpose of networking with and influencing government officials in key agencies.

The Small Grants period achieved the main goals set forth at the start. During the grant period a National Coordinating Committee was formed to manage the Global Youth Service Day (GYSD) in Russia, and to steer the establishment of the special “Federal Expert Council on National Youth Service Policy,” which was made up of representative experts on service from public and private institutions for the purpose of advancing the youth service policy movement. During the grant period Sozidanie prepared and published an analytic paper on the topic of youth service which was based on results from Global Youth Service Day in Russia, a nationally implemented youth service program. The results from this report were used to write a “Draft Youth Service Policy” paper. Another accomplishment during the grant period was the participation in many national and regional meetings on youth issues, in which Sozidanie brought the topic of youth service to the forefront. Lastly, Sozidanie hosted a conference at the end of the grant period during which members of the Expert Council advanced the NYSP movement in Russia by engaging members and experts from the Ministry of Health and Social Development and the Ministry of Science and Education.

Uruguay – CVU

The Uruguayan Volunteer Center (CVU), a non-governmental organization committed to advancing voluntary work in Uruguay, joined together with the National Institute of Youth (INJU) to complete a project titled “Young Citizens: My Problem – Your Problem” for the ICP Small Grants Program. Prior to this project, youth service and volunteering programs in Uruguay lacked coordination due to the disparate efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations. This, combined with the fact that public and educational policies in existence do not include youth service, led CVU to design a project that would demonstrate the importance of youth service as a means of building citizenship in Uruguay. CVU, with a wealth of experience in coordinating service-learning programs involving primary schools and the community, decided upon collaboration with INJU because of the institutional purposes of the INJU, which include the promotion of youth volunteerism and youth participation in local, national, and international spheres. This joint project was undertaken to promote involvement of young people in community service in Uruguay, while simultaneously advocating for youth service policy development in the country.

CVU and INJU organized two focus groups on youth volunteering policies; leaders of volunteering organizations took part in the first meeting, while young volunteers participated in the second. Discussion in both groups centered on the role of the government in creating policies and laws around youth service and volunteering, resulting in a general consensus around the need for a law to regulate volunteering in Uruguay. The INJU submitted for government approval a law on the regulation of volunteering that specifies the rights and obligations of volunteers and of the organizations which utilize volunteers. The regulation was passed within the INJU in February 2005, and the Parliament has since begun a discussion of a new Voluntary Work Law using the INJU regulation as a model. Key aspects of this law include the recognition of volunteering as a distinct social activity, the differentiation of voluntary work from salaried work, and the recognition of the merits of voluntary work.

CVU and INJU jointly produced a paper “Policies on youth voluntary service: reflections and contributions for the practice of an active civic participation” highlighting the current state of volunteering in Uruguay, benefits of and objections to volunteering, and including the findings from the focus groups. This paper is one of the advocacy materials created by CVU and INJU; others include

radio and television spots, and all were disseminated widely with the expectation that the media materials will be nationally broadcast. In addition to public advocacy efforts, CVU held meetings with the Ministry of Social Development, a newly created entity as of March 2005. The INJU, now under the jurisdiction of this ministry, is currently advocating for the creation of a National Youth Commission. Lastly, CVU has been advocating for the incorporation of service-learning activities into public schools through the extension of the “Learning Together” project. The Technical-Professional Education Council of the Work University of Uruguay has decided to implement a pilot of this project with assistance from CVU.