

*Presentation for the WB-ICP International Experts Meeting
Measuring the Impact of Youth Voluntary Service Programs:*

[Session III:](#)

Existing Evaluation and Challenges
(outcomes, indicators and measurement)

*Experiences from the
IYF-Nokia Global Youth Development Initiative*

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Global Initiative Background

Initiative Goal: Equip young people with the life skills they need to be active and engaged citizens and to succeed in life

Program Models:

- **Youth volunteerism/community service** *(Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia)*
- Youth leadership
- Self-expression using arts, media and technology
- Formal/non-formal education
- Workforce development

Geographic Scope: 26 countries since 2000

Target Population: Young people between age range 15-25, includes at-risk youth

Outcomes Measurement Study

External Study conducted by Brandeis University (2005-2006)

Who: Surveyed **3,500 youth** (ages 15-25) in **13 countries** on five continents

What: To measure impact of IYF-Nokia initiative on target youth (document life skills changes and other outcomes)

Type of Data Collected:

- Demographic information
- Life Skills development
- Schooling, employment, volunteering
- Aspirations (the “hope gap”)
- Opinions about the program (continuous improvement)

Self-reported surveys (pen/paper and online)

- Prospective (3 points in time)
 - Baseline
 - Exit (at completion)
 - Follow-up (usually 3-6 months after program completion)
- Retrospective (one time)

In select countries, conducted “in-depth assessment” which included:

- Focus groups/interviews with youth, program staff, parents and community members
- Site visits by evaluators
- Review of existing evaluation and other data

LIFE SKILLS

- 95% of surveyed youth point to increased life skills, with team work, self-confidence and creative thinking most frequently cited; one third of programs experience statistically significant changes in life skills

VOLUNTEERISM

- 72% of youth continued their involvement in volunteerism after program ended

EDUCATION

- 43% scored better grades; 50% reported working harder in school and 66% aspired to higher education

ASPIRATIONS

- In all countries, youth felt more confident about their future after participating in the program (e.g. 74% said project helped them prepare for a better life)

PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

- Excellent or very good overall ratings cited by most participants; ratings persist and even improve over time

Promoting youth volunteerism and civic engagement
(context is a legacy of communism and limited tradition of volunteerism)

Program components

- Regional/National geographic reach with target ages 15-25 (certain projects focus on disadvantaged regions)
- Youth groups (5-10 youth) propose projects that address real community need (e.g. environment, social issues)
- NGO provides small grants, training and mentoring
- Youth lead and implement projects, practicing critical life skills, project management skills and leadership (over 6 month period)
- Youth encouraged to continue service to their communities

Volunteer Program Findings

Country	Respondent Results
Czech Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48% of youth participants with increased average life skills scores. Findings were not statistically significant. However, more than 80% attribute a positive program effect on at least one life skill. • 33% doing more service now than before the project • 24% working harder in school • 17% practicing more leadership • 42% of completers volunteer after program
Hungary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33% of youth participants with increased average life skills scores. Findings were not statistically significant. However, 38-78% attribute “a great deal” or “quite a bit” of improvement in a range of life skills to participation in the program • 61% indicate the program made them more productive in school • 64-82% rate program experience highly • 73% of completers volunteer an average of 20 hours a month after program
Poland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48% of youth participants with increased average life skills scores. Findings were not statistically significant. However, 56-84% attribute “a great deal” or “quite a bit” of improvement in a range of life skills to participation in the program • 49% of completers volunteer after program, averaging 23 hours per month
Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 81% of youth participants with increased average life skills scores. Life skills improved by statistically significant margins. • More than half of project completers were volunteering an average of 19 hours monthly and credit the program with influencing this outcome.

Volunteerism Outcomes and Indicators

Individual level:

- ✓ Increased life skills (team work, communication, conflict management)
- ✓ Increased project management skills (planning, implementation, budget management)
- ✓ Increased volunteerism/contribution/leadership in communities

Community level:

- ✓ Tangible benefit of youth projects/activities on the communities
- ✓ Youth-adult partnerships formed (parents, local authorities, etc)
- ✓ Community perception of young people and value of volunteerism

Sustainability:

- ✓ Youth projects continue activities with local support
- ✓ Integration into formal education systems (as applicable)
- ✓ Youth continue volunteering in their communities

Issues:

Setting success targets

Demonstrating change in small periods of time

Using appropriate methods of measurement & rigor:

- Self-reported data versus other forms of data collection
- Balancing quantitative and qualitative
- Value of follow-up surveys to assess long term impact (after program completion)
- Comparison/control groups, when are they absolutely necessary?

Measuring life and other skills

- Surveys using attribution versus index/statistical significance
- Self reported versus mastery?
- What about peer/adult observation?
- Comparison/control groups?

Measuring volunteerism

- Dosage/intensity of volunteerism (hours, type of activity, duration)
- Ethic of service, contribution to community
- Self-reported data, interviews, activity reports, group membership, volunteerism rates through national-level surveys

Measuring community benefit & sustainability

- Evidence of youth-adult partnerships (self-reported, structured interviews)
- Community support of youth projects (# of community contracts with youth, \$ raised, media awareness, mainstreaming projects into local plans)
- Tangible impact of projects on community (direct beneficiaries, qualitative and objective assessment of benefit through direct observation, structured interviews with community members)

- 1. Trying to capture big changes in small periods:** Individual changes/benefits from volunteerism accrue over time - immediate results from short-term projects (3-6 months) may be subtle, and not easily captured
- 2. NGOs have limited capacity:** tend to be strong in program implementation and weak in measurement and evaluation. Encourage partnerships with universities and other organizations experienced in evaluation – this also brings external credibility to the findings.
- 3. Are volunteerism outcomes sufficient? Are we missing an important part of the picture?:** Direct outcomes tend to be the focus of program evaluation, yet indirect outcomes (health, education, employment) are equally important . What is the evaluation community most interested in?
- 4. Volunteerism outcomes relative to others difficult to measure:** volunteer/service outcomes are difficult to capture. How does one accurately measure “connections” between youth and communities or sense of identity/ belonging?

Challenges Cont.

5. Inherent bias in targeting: Youth volunteerism programs tend to attract highly motivated youth 1) need to see these youth as leaders and; 2) need to be more inclusive and reach out to those in most need and who thus stand most to gain

6. Challenge of tracking youth: Youth are mobile and in periods of transition. Makes it very difficult to do follow-up and long-term surveys

7. Small projects with limited resources and time: Evaluation tends to focus on documenting outcomes, versus causality and identifying what intervention or combination of interventions worked best. Triangulating data/administering control groups and/or longitudinal surveys is costly and time intensive. Need to assess these trade-offs.

A15

Also

Author, 5/7/2008

Evaluation Moving Forward

- Designs modified as a result of lessons and findings from evaluation
- Survey tools developed that can be adapted modified for local use
- Design encourages outcomes to go beyond life skills, to look at other youth outcomes and also to look at impact at a community level
- Evaluation plan adapted to local program design and needs – guide developed
- Encourage learning questions as part of evaluation plan – that get to the why?
- Challenge grants for programs that want to go to extra step in measurement and evaluation