



Youth Civic Engagement & Dialogue in Romania and Moldova **Formative Evaluation**

Mixed-
methods
evaluation
using the Most
Significant Change
storytelling
technique

IREX is an international nonprofit organization providing thought leadership and innovative programs to promote positive lasting change globally. We enable local individuals and institutions to build key elements of a vibrant society: quality education, independent media, and strong communities. To strengthen these sectors, our program activities also include conflict resolution, technology for development, gender, and youth.



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Acronyms

CSA	Community Schools Academy
DRL	Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor at the U.S. Department of State
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSC	Most Significant Change
ORID	Objective, Reflective, Interpretive, Decisional Questions
PM&E	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
PMEP	Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
PYD	Positive Youth Development
RCRISS	Romani CRISS
YAT	Youth Action Team
YCED	Youth Civic Engagement and Dialogue program

Executive Summary

In the summer of 2012, IREX undertook a mixed-method, formative evaluation of the Youth Civic Engagement and Dialogue (YCED) program. The combined internal and external evaluation team focused primarily on a methodology based on the participatory Most Significant Change (MSC) technique, eliciting youth's stories of change resulting from their participation in the program. The expected and actual benefits of using this methodology were many:

Using open-ended questions to elicit results and evidence of change allowed the team to capture unintended outcomes of the project to date and will continue to allow the team to capture outcomes as it applies MSC in future monitoring activities and in the final evaluation.

The MSC technique provided a systematic way to capture attitudinal change, without diminishing the rich qualitative data shared by participants. Storytelling provided a means for gauging beliefs and perspectives in a program whose highest objective involves attitudinal change. It also allowed staff to understand how and why those attitudinal changes had occurred.

The evaluation team also used traditional surveys to attempt to measure attitudinal and behavioral change. Survey data served to triangulate and complement data from the qualitative storytelling tool, though local and partner staff believed that the storytelling tool often provided a clearer picture of some changes than did the survey.

The participatory nature of the evaluation—in which youth used video cameras to record their peers' stories of change—complemented the activities of the program, which aimed to provide youth with the skills and knowledge to make positive changes in their communities. This youth-led evaluation reinforced key principles of Positive Youth Development,¹ a cornerstone of the program's youth approach.

The participatory nature of the evaluation also provided an opportunity for local project stakeholders—including local partner Romani CRISS (RCRISS) staff as well as local IREX staff—to take a lead role in the

Highlights from Most Significant Change Stories

"[The project] taught me to be better, to not be aggressive like I used to be. Before, I didn't care about anything. Now I am interested, first of all, in the people around us. We must not mock them; **we must not discriminate against each other based on ethnicity.**"

"Even though [the Roma] did not bother me, I didn't try to become friends with them [before the project]. People say: you are of a different religion, you dress in a certain way, you listen to a certain kind of music. This is not good. **They are people and they really have something to say and to show.**"

"I learned what it means to volunteer. I didn't know what this was beforehand. I would only do things if I got paid. Before, I only cared about myself, but **this project made me think of others.** This project made me more responsible, towards myself and towards society and towards my school."

¹ See more on Positive Youth Development on p. iv.

evaluation. Romani CRISS staff members took ownership of the evaluation process and have since incorporated MSC into their monitoring of another program serving the Roma population.

Background of this evaluation

A. Overview of the YCED Program

While Romania and Moldova have made impressive strides toward promoting intercultural education and increasing school attendance among Roma children at the primary level, limited support exists for rural and marginalized youth beyond Grade 8. Despite explicit prohibition of segregation under Romanian, Moldovan, and European law, certain schools in the region are still segregated. In integrated schools, Roma students are at times discriminated against by educators and other students, which can contribute to low attendance and high dropout rates. In Moldova, only roughly 45% of secondary-school age Roma youth are enrolled in schools.² In Romania, in recent years the percentage of Roma youth aged 16-19 enrolled in school has been as low as 17%.³ These marginalized youth experience higher rates of drop-out at the high school level⁴, lack employment opportunities, and may become disengaged, passive, and disenfranchised.⁵

“I made a Roma friend who changed all my opinions about the Roma. I realized that they are also human, that they have the same reactions I have.”

- Youth participant,
Moldova

The Youth Civic Engagement and Dialogue (YCED) Program brings together Roma and majority students in Romania and Moldova to lead and engage in community development projects. The program is funded by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) of the U.S. Department of State and is implemented by IREX and partner Romani CRISS, an NGO that works to defend and promote the rights of Roma throughout Romania. YCED began in April 2011 and will be completed in October 2013.

The central objective of the project is as follows: Roma and non-Roma youth are active and engaged citizens who mobilize other youth for community improvement and foster intercultural tolerance.

The program has three major outcomes: 1) Teachers, schools, and local NGO leaders effectively promote civic engagement and tolerance among Roma and non-Roma students; 2) Roma and non-Roma youth address community problems together; and 3) Youth reduce ethnic tension and promote tolerance in the community. This evaluation assesses the achievement of this objective and these outcomes according to two main conceptual outcomes: increases in tolerance and increases in civic engagement.

² Case, Sorin, et al. *Roma in the Republic of Moldova*. UNDP Moldova. Chisinau: 2007. P 61-62.

³ *Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma*. Open Society Institute. Monitoring Reports, Volume 1. 2007. P. 349. Accessed at <http://www.romadecade.org/files/downloads/Education%20Resources/roma_20070329.pdf> September 2012.

⁴ The number of Roma students attending school drops from 95% to 55% between the ages of 12 and 15. Country Assessment and the Roma Education Funds Strategic Directions. The Roma Education Fund. 2007 http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/documents/Romania_report.pdf.

⁵ IREX assessment, 2010.

IREX uses Positive Youth Development (PYD) theory to approach its work with youth in the YCED Program. Based on the principles of asset-based youth development, PYD is an approach to working with youth, adopted by international donors and development organizations, that:

- Views youth as a resource to be developed, rather than a problem to be solved
- Holistically nurtures the skills and competencies that young people will need as healthy, successful adults
- Involves youth in the community and the community in youth.⁶

Building off PYD principles, YCED employs a Community Schools Model to engage students in the civic life of their society. This model gives youth a hands-on opportunity to explore principles of civic engagement in practice. At the school, students are already engaging with one another, interacting with adult role models, and being taught about the fundamental subjects needed for success in their post-academic life. The Community Schools Model gathers students from across ethnic groups to engage actively with one another and identify community problems of mutual interest. As the project progresses, the participants create and enact a plan to solve the problem they have identified. Through the program, students have the opportunity to request seed funding from IREX to obtain resources for their project. Upon completion of their community development projects, students are encouraged to share their successes with the local media and their peers. In addition to benefitting youth participants, the Community Schools Model makes the school a locus of community development and inter-cultural communication. YCED targets youth between the ages of 14 and 18.

A. Evaluation Objectives and Methodology

IREX undertook a midterm evaluation to determine the degree to which the program had achieved its objectives after one year and to solicit information that would allow IREX to improve its program implementation in the second year. The evaluation was conducted in May 2012 through field visits to target communities in Romania and Moldova, and analysis was finalized through online meetings and electronic correspondence. An evaluation consultant from Village Earth trained local and partner staff in Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) and facilitated the evaluation. IREX and Village Earth selected the Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology—using participatory video—to solicit qualitative data on outcomes that may or may not pertain to indicators. IREX also collected quantitative data through written youth and adult participant surveys.

The MSC question:

Looking back over the last year, what do you think was the most significant change that occurred in your personal life/ your sense of civic engagement/ relationships in the community as a result of the YCED project?

Two tools were used in the evaluation, as follows:

Most Significant Change Storytelling Technique: MSC is a method of PM&E that consists of the collection and systematic analysis of significant change stories from project stakeholders. MSC diverges from other types of PM&E in that it does not rely on the use of indicators, and it is participatory because project stakeholders are deeply involved in the collection and analysis of the data. It can be used as both a

⁶ Adapted from the National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth, <http://www.ncfy.com/publications/reconnect/index.htm>. Accessed 8/21/07.

monitoring tool throughout the life cycle of project and as an evaluation tool to provide data on the effectiveness and efficiency of the project as a whole. As one local staff member said, “It’s important that such a method provided an opportunity to think about the program and the future of the program,

“I never knew the youth were able to do such an analysis of the project themselves.”

- Local staff member

not only for staff who manage the program, but for participants also. Such a method helps them to find their place in the current process and build new goals for the future.”

In accordance with the MSC technique,⁷ the evaluation team gathered stories of change that were considered most important to the youth.

In order to do this, during a two-day training period, staff discussed expected “domains of change” for the program and then created

questions for the youth that were meant to elicit corresponding stories of change. Youth then used handheld video cameras to record one another responding to these questions. Staff then watched and analyzed each significant story, categorizing it into a domain.

Romani-CRISS and IREX-Moldova staff identified these four domains of change:

Table 1

Domain 1	Personal Changes / self-esteem / personal development / motivation
	This domain could include changes about personal attitudes toward people of other ethnicities or could relate more generally to changes in confidence, worldview, communication abilities, or other personal changes.
Domain 2	Changes in Civic Engagement /sense of responsibility to community
	This domain was designed to capture any changes in youth’s sense of civic engagement and ways of interacting with the broader community.
Domain 3	Changes in Communities / schools / relationships between different groups
	This domain was designed to capture broader change than any of the other domains, encompassing change at the school or community level. The evaluation team was most interested in changes in relationships between Roma and non-Roma groups—specifically changes in tolerance—but framed the domain broadly to capture changes among other groups, such as between adults and youth or local government leaders and students.
Domain 4	Any Other Changes
	This domain captured significant changes that would not fit into the other domains and was provided to allow participants more freedom to focus on changes that they thought were relevant.

During data collection, stories were first written by each youth member and then shared orally on video camera in small groups of youth facilitated by a local or partner staff member. Staff evaluators also interviewed adult mentors directly and separately from the youth, and care was taken to ensure that adults were not present when and where youth shared their stories. At the end of each data collection day, evaluation team members watched each video together and analyzed the themes in each story, assigning each story a domain according to the biggest change communicated by the youth.

⁷ Davies, Rick, and Jessica Dart. 2005. *The Most Significant Change Technique: A Guide to Its Use*. CARE International, Oxfam, et al. Accessible at <http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf>.

After the end of the data collection period for each school, RCRIS and IREX staff selected the most significant per school per domain change stories. Staff arrived at this decision on the basis of how deep the change appeared to be, as communicated by the youth, as well as how closely it aligned with the program's objectives. After data had been collected at all schools, project staff discussed the most significant change stories that had been selected at each school and determined the most significant change stories per domain across the entire project population. Criteria used in this final stage were the same as those used to determine the most significant change stories in each school.

"I was surprised that there wasn't such a big awareness in some of the students about discrimination. I noticed even in myself that I wasn't so aware of how strong that problem is, until I visited the community."

- Local staff member

Written Survey: At the time of gathering stories, staff also distributed written surveys to youth and adult participants. Survey questions were identical to those used in the pre-training assessment phase in order to maximize the degree to which staff could measure progress in attitudes and behaviors. However, due to a low sample for the pre-training assessment, comparisons were highly limited in their usefulness. Data from the surveys were disaggregated, where appropriate, by Roma and non-Roma and males and females to look for patterns, though low identification or responses from Roma youth⁸ made comparison between Roma and non-Roma youth inconclusive.

At every school, the evaluation team collected data from each youth present, surveying and interviewing the entire present participant population in each school for a total of 82 youth. Due to resource constraints, staff visited six of eight participating communities. Eighty of these youth shared stories that were classified into a domain,⁹ and 78 of these stories were captured on video. All 82 participants completed the written survey. Of the 82 youth, 17 identified themselves as Roma in the survey.¹⁰ Evaluators also surveyed 14 and interviewed 10 adult mentors. The table below breaks down the evaluation sample by school, gender, and story type.

Table 2

School	Country	# of students	# of surveys	Male	Female	# of Video Stories	# of Written Stories	# of adults
Ivesti	Romania	14	14	7	7	14	14	1
Cotea	Romania	10	10	3	7	10	10	2
Marasesti	Romania	16	16	7	9	14	16	3
Nicolau	Romania	10	10	6	4	10	10	4
Hincesti	Moldova	13	13	5	8	12	13	1
Zirnesti	Moldova	19	19	9	10	18	19	3
Total		82	82	37	45	78	82	14

⁸ Few youth were identified as Roma in the written survey, due to lack of identification or lack of participation. See p. 7 for more information on this constraint.

⁹ Two stories were not deemed to exhibit a significant change and were not categorized.

¹⁰ This number is likely lower than the actual number of Roma youth participating in the evaluation. See Methodological Constraints for more detail.

Methodological Constraints: Key constraints to the evaluation that may have affected the validity of the findings are as follows:

- **Response bias/Story validity:** The team implemented measures to mitigate the possibility of youth embellishing their stories inadvertently to please evaluators or mentors or mimic their peers, including thorough introductions inviting negative feedback, facilitating storytelling in small groups to allow youth to verify the stories, and separating youth from adult mentors during storytelling.
- **Bias in analysis:** The evaluation team used video clips as the primary raw material for analysis, referring to accompanying written stories for verification or additional detail. While staff members remained vigilant about the possibility of favoring the most videogenic stories, a slight bias toward the stories articulated the most eloquently on camera may have affected the outcomes of the story selection process.
- **Comparability with pre-training assessment:** The pool of respondents for the pre-training assessment was limited to 15 youth and differed significantly from the pool of respondents for the midterm survey. Thus, any conclusions based on comparing the midterm survey with the pre-training assessment are drawn cautiously. At the pre-assessment phase, surveys were administered only to those youth participating in the Community Schools Academy (CSA), youth who were selected by school administrators according to success factors such as positive attitudes and engagement in the community. In addition to those trained in the CSA, the midterm survey was also administered to all youth participants of the program. With the initial assessment respondent group of 15, compared to 82 in the midterm survey, analysis is presented more to raise questions than to present firm conclusions. Conclusions drawn from comparing midterm survey and pre-training assessment results are accompanied by caveats throughout the report.
- **Identification of Roma youth:** Only 17 of 82 youth completing the midterm survey reported Roma as their ethnicity. It was suspected that some Roma youth chose to not identify as Roma in the written survey. It is also possible that as Youth Action Teams expanded, the ethnic composition of project teams and other involved youth became unbalanced, due to the difficulties of identifying in-school Roma of secondary school age. This unbalanced composition makes comparison across the two groups difficult.

Building Capacity in Qualitative Evaluation Methods

After a two-day training and hands-on experience, Romani CRISS staff took the lead on data collection and analysis in Romanian communities, strengthening their own relationships with youth and adult participants, as well as with schools and community leaders.

After the YCED evaluation, RCRISS staff applied the MSC methodology to a different project aimed at early childhood development for Roma youth and used the results from storytelling to increase the effectiveness of their intervention.

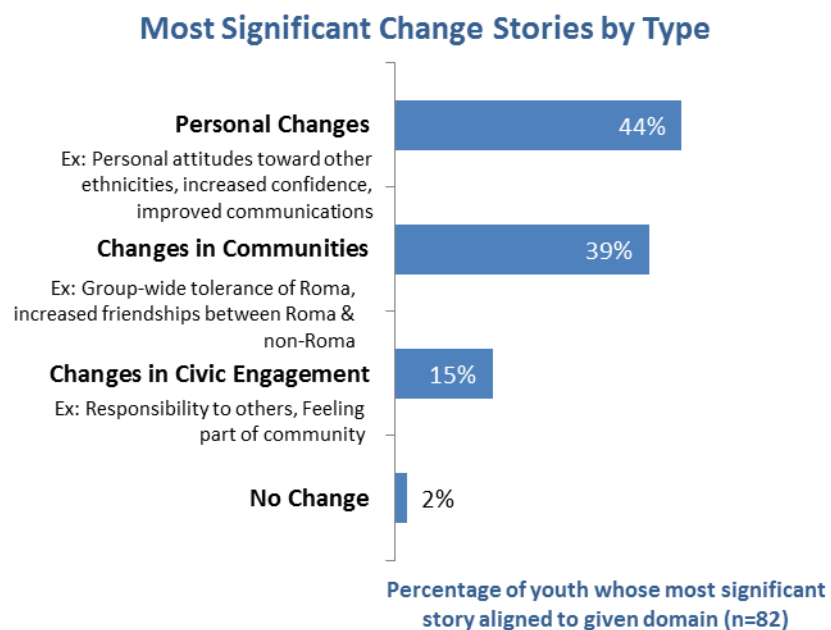
Main Findings

Summary of Most Significant Change Component

Youth and adult stories addressed changes that overlapped with various program outcomes, indicating that many participants perceived changes across multiple domains of change. In the analysis phase, however, the evaluation team worked to identify the single most significant change shared by each youth and then categorize the story appropriately. Only two youth gave such stories so weak that the team could not perceive a significant change, which indicates that the vast majority of students did see the program as having a direct impact on them, their school, or their community.

Of the 80 significant change stories, most youth's stories involved changes with regard to personal attitudes or relationships at the group or school level. The chart below provides a breakdown of the types of change reported by youth:

Figure 1



Below are summaries of the stories that were selected across all communities as the most significant:

Domain 1: Personal Changes / self-esteem / personal development / motivation

[Two stories were selected for this domain because they demonstrated changes in personal attitudes toward another ethnic group from different perspectives and were determined to demonstrate equally significant change.]

- Raluca, a young Roma student, said, “Each person has their own personality – we must accept them how they are.” She explained how she used to be aggressive and led a hard life, as she grew up without her mother. She never accepted advice from other people. But now, because of the project, she has learned to listen to people and is now more interested in other people.

- Simona, a young non-Roma student, spoke of the transformative shift in her attitude toward Roma. “Before, I didn’t talk to any Roma students, but now I pay more attention to ethnic issues,” she said. She explained how she thinks fondly of Roma now and that has increased her pride in her school.

Domain 2: Changes in Civic Engagement / sense of responsibility to community

- One youth, Alexandra, said, “I finally understand what volunteering means.” Her story outlined how she increased her sense of social responsibility and no longer litters. She is now careful to do positive things for the community.

Domain 3: Changes in Communities / schools / relationships between different groups

- Denisa said, “This project gave us wings to do better things.” She spoke of how relationships between Roma and non-Roma students grew and how tolerance in general increased of the Roma. She said that the positive impacts of their project extended beyond the school into the community.

These examples, which revealed deep, powerful transformations, indicate that in just one year, the program’s activities have had a largely positive effect on the youth and their attitudes. That much of the change youth cited was personal and individual can be explained in part by youth developmental stages that cause young people to have inward-focused perspectives, in addition to the fact that for many youth, this was their first project of any kind. Stories from Domain 2: Changes Civic Engagement appeared less frequently than had been anticipated. Staff hypothesized that this finding was a result of the fact that many projects had only recently been completed at the time of the evaluation.¹¹

Adult mentors stories were categorized as follows: seven stories in Domain 3: Changes in Communities; two stories in Domain 1: Personal Changes; and one story in Domain 2: Changes in Civic Engagement. That adults emphasized Domain 3 more than the youth participants can be explained by their role in their schools, as well as their developmental stage resulting in a more outward-focused worldview. Because the adults are teachers or community leaders, their perspective was likely already oriented toward groups in the school or community, and so the changes they perceived as most significant largely qualify at the broader level specified in Domain 3.

Outcomes related to tolerance

The MSC technique allowed youth to frame issues of tolerance in ways that cut across domain lines. Deep changes regarding youth’s tolerance of ethnic differences were expressed frequently both through Domain 1: Personal Changes and Domain 3: Changes in Communities. Qualitative data indicate substantial increases in youth’s tolerance of people from other ethnic backgrounds, and some survey data support such stories. More than half of youth shared, in detail, stories of significant change in their attitudes toward people from other backgrounds or in the relationships they

“Until this year, I cannot say there were tense relationships, but there weren’t friendly relationships between the ethnicities. [The students] passed over these prejudices that even some adults cannot overcome.”
- *Mentor, Romania*

¹¹ See Recommendations for details on how staff might increase the level of civic engagement for Year 2.

had formed with youth across ethnic lines. Survey data indicate mixed results in terms of attitudinal change, though in several key areas, such as awareness of ethnic discrimination and acceptance of difference, youth showed marked improvements. Relationships also appear to have improved based on survey data. For example, youth reported more positive interactions with those of other ethnicities in the midterm than in the pre-training assessment, as well as higher numbers of acquaintances of youth from other ethnic backgrounds. Adult mentors' stories corresponded to youth stories, with several adults sharing positive change in the relationships between ethnic groups.

Key Results from Midterm Survey and Storytelling:

- 56% of youth shared, in detail, stories about strengthened relationships between Roma and non-Roma youth.
- Up to 23% more youth in the midterm survey demonstrated an awareness of ethnic discrimination in the community than in the pre-training assessment.¹²
- In some areas, youth demonstrated an increased acceptance of difference. For example, 28% fewer youth agreed with the statement, "It is justified to forbid certain religions" in the midterm than in the pre-training assessment.
- While variation between Roma and non-Roma youth resulted from survey questions, the variation was inconsistent and did not reveal any clear patterns in attitudinal differences.
- 15% more youth reported discussing issues of tolerance in a productive way with youth of another background at least once in the past month.
- 18% more youth said that their interactions in the last week with peers of another ethnic background were all positive.
- The fraction of youth reporting having more than 10 acquaintances of another ethnicity increased by 26%.

Outcomes related to civic engagement

Positive stories of change and key positive survey results indicate that youth increased their sense of civic engagement throughout the project. Though only 15% of youth's stories were classified in Domain 2: Changes in Civic Engagement, these stories revealed deep transformation. Other youth noted positive changes in civic participation as well, even if their stories were ultimately categorized differently. Based on survey results, behaviors around civic engagement improved substantially, with more youth becoming involved in their communities. Youth also demonstrated an increased understanding of civic engagement and more positive attitudes toward their community, though survey results were mixed in certain areas. Adults demonstrated improvement in participatory approaches to working with youth and in their application of PYD principles, as well as in

"We showed the community that young people want to do better things for the community."
- Youth participant, Romania

¹² It must be emphasized that comparison between the midterm survey and pre-training assessment is inconclusive, given the low survey pool of 15 youth and 20 adults at the pre-training stage. Analysis was nonetheless performed with the hope that it would provide insight into the general trends in attitudes and behaviors among participants and that it might provide insight into the degree to which evaluation tools were effective.

frequency of engagement with local leaders. Several results are inconclusive and merit further research in the final evaluation.

*Key Results from Midterm Survey:*¹³

- 68% more youth in the midterm survey than in the pre-training assessment had participated in an activity intended to improve their community in the past year.
- Youth increased their number of interactions with local government or community leaders by 43%.
- 23% more youth demonstrated an understanding of what civic engagement means.
- In the survey, youth demonstrated little improvement in their sense of efficacy to make positive changes within their communities. In storytelling data, at least 15% of youth shared stories detailing how their sense of their ability to improve the community had improved.
- 35% more adults had interacted with leaders supportive of youth causes in the month prior to the survey.
- Adults increased up to 50% in their ability to demonstrate having incorporated PYD principles into their work with youth.

Recommendations

Based on the recommendations provided by participants and an analysis of the survey and MSC data, below is a set of suggestions that may help improve the outcomes of YCED:

1. **Ensure the sustained participation of trained adult mentors:** In two of the six schools visited for the evaluation, the non-Roma mentor was the only mentor deeply involved in the project. The project does not provide adult mentors with any material incentives, and some attrition would be expected in any voluntary project. However, the YCED Program model requires strong role models both from Roma and non-Roma populations. Staff members should establish a system of regular contact with both mentors to discover and address any issues that may cause them to stop participating and to provide both mentors with an equal sense of ownership in the project.
2. **Ensure high levels of participation of Roma youth:** The low profile of Roma youth in the community is a problem that the YCED program seeks to address, and at the same time poses practical challenges to the implementation of the program. Two challenges affect the ideal balance of the YCED model: lower rates of participation by Roma and lower rates of identification. Either of these challenges may be alleviated in part by the sustained involvement of a strong Roma mentor, regular check-ins with both leaders to monitor the continued participation of youth and address problems that arise, and possibly more targeted outreach to Roma youth. Staff might consider increasing their marketing efforts in Roma neighborhoods and expanding the project to include out-of-school Roma youth.
3. **Implement training on participatory planning and facilitation:** Village Earth cited the need for more training in participatory programming, specifically planning and event facilitation, for both

¹³ Again, comparisons between midterm and pre-training assessment are inconclusive. See footnote 12.

local staff and for adult mentors. Such trainings would enhance the process to make it even more student-driven and based on group decision-making than the model that is currently in place. Such trainings would also address the concerns of a few youth who expressed an interest in being more heavily involved in the planning and management of the project, though many youth said they were able to make decisions throughout the project life cycle.

4. **Support teams to involve more youth in the projects:** Many youth recommended that the groups be expanded to the benefit of other youth. IREX can take steps toward coaching mentors and youth leaders to create more activities that bring in a wider group of youth. This possibility would need to be weighed carefully against the benefit of having a small, concentrated group where strong relationships form and where youth receive a 'more concentrated dosage' of programming. One solution might be to encourage youth to implement tolerance-specific projects that benefit more students and community members, so that the messages stay focused even with an expansion of participants. Staff should also consider a final project activity bringing together youth with school administrators to discuss future opportunities for extracurricular engagement.
5. **Increase discussions around civic engagement:** As fewer youth than expected shared stories of significant change regarding civic engagement, staff should investigate ways to heighten the impact of the project on this area. Staff might conduct regular meetings or workshops with adult mentors to discuss issues of community involvement with youth more explicitly. Staff could also consider holding discussions directly with youth groups to ask students what would make them more connected to the community and likely to continue the project, continuing the cycle of participatory project activities.

Conclusion

Overall, stories shared by youth and adult participants in the MSC exercise, as well as some corroborating data from the survey, point to deep, positive changes effected by YCED to date. In fact, during the storytelling exercise, many staff expressed that the changes they heard the youth share were far more significant than they had expected. Specifically, changes regarding relationships between Roma and non-Roma youth surfaced frequently and powerfully. Because capturing attitudinal change is universally understood to be difficult, perhaps particularly through surveys, the MSC technique gave a more descriptive picture of the changes effected by YCED than the survey and left evaluators with a strong sense of which program outcomes were being met most effectively: first, youth were transforming at the personal level, whether through broad skills and attitudes or through attitudes specifically toward those of other ethnicities. Second in strength, the project was changing relationships between groups in the school and community, particularly between Roma and non-Roma youth. Third and last, the project was increasing youth's sense of civic engagement. Taken together, these results provide a coherent picture of the effects of YCED and where programmers should devote resources to ensure that YCED fully meets all objectives by the end of the project cycle.

The stories shared by youth also illuminated some of the inconsistencies that were evident in the survey results. In particular, survey questions that aimed to measure attitudinal change provided mixed results, with youth increasing tolerance and empathy in some cases, and showing little or no improvement in others. Some of the inconsistency may be due to flaws in the survey design, which will be addressed to

the extent possible in the final evaluation. However, the stories also showed a complex process of change that many youth were undergoing, and one that was not always linear. At times, while non-Roma youth shared stories of how they had learned to have greater respect for their Roma colleagues, they did so using insensitive language. With one more year of the intervention left, it is hoped that the final results will show more consistent and positive trends across attitudes and beliefs.

Stories and survey data corresponded with regard to civic engagement, with such stories showing less change than in areas of tolerance and relationships between Roma and non-Roma. Similarly, survey data did not indicate much of an increase in youth's sense of civic engagement. Staff members hypothesized that because many youth had just completed their projects or were in the final stages, they had yet to experience the full project cycle and learn about serving the community. The pride that comes with completing a project and listening to community feedback, it was hypothesized, is an important component of learning the value of civic engagement. With more projects coming up in the following year for current Youth Action Teams and new teams embarking on projects for the first time, it is predicted that results of improvements in civic engagement will be stronger in the final evaluation.

Finally, the MSC storytelling methodology—particularly combined with participatory video—was at once an effective tool in learning about hard-to-measure changes among the youth and within their communities and a useful learning tool for staff members. Staff members said, “I like the project better now” and expressed surprise at the level of analysis that youth demonstrated. Youth participants were determined to be candidly, openly sharing of their experiences and recommendations, which the staff found to be invaluable. Furthermore, the participatory methodology is likely to prove useful for staff in the future, with any project that targets youth in small groups, focuses on qualitative change, and seeks to increase youth voice. At the time of this report, RCRISS staff had already implemented the MSC methodology in another local project aimed at educating Roma youth. IREX plans to implement similar methodology in the final evaluation.

Introduction

In the summer of 2012, IREX undertook a mixed-method, formative evaluation of the Youth Civic Engagement and Dialogue (YCED) program. The combined internal and external evaluation team focused primarily on a methodology based on the participatory Most Significant Change (MSC) technique, eliciting youth's stories of change resulting from their participation in the program. The expected and actual benefits of using this methodology were many:

Using open-ended questions to elicit results and evidence of change allowed the team to capture unintended outcomes of the project to date and will continue to allow the team to capture these outcomes as applied to MSC in future monitoring activities and in the final evaluation. For example, the storytelling tool revealed powerful changes among youth in confidence and communication skills, which were not explicit objectives of YCED.

The MSC technique provided a systematic way to capture attitudinal change, without diminishing the rich qualitative data shared by participants. Storytelling provided a means for gauging beliefs and perspectives in a program whose highest objective involves attitudinal change. It also allowed staff to understand how and why those attitudinal changes had occurred.

The evaluation team also used traditional surveys to attempt to measure attitudinal and behavioral change. Survey data served to triangulate and complement data from the qualitative storytelling tool, though local and partner staff believed that the storytelling tool often provided a clearer picture of some changes than did the survey.

The participatory nature of the evaluation—in which youth used video cameras to record their peers' stories of change—complemented the activities of the program, which aimed to provide youth with the skills and knowledge to make positive changes in their community. This youth-led evaluation reinforced key principles of Positive Youth Development (see more in the Overview Section below), a cornerstone of the program's approach to working with youth.

The participatory nature of the evaluation also provided an opportunity for local project stakeholders—including local partner Romani CRISS (RCRISS) staff as well as local IREX staff—to take a lead role in the evaluation. RCRISS staff took ownership of the evaluation process to the extent that they implemented an evaluation with similar methodology in another, non-IREX-funded program serving the Roma population.

Overview of the YCED Program

While Romania and Moldova have made impressive strides toward promoting intercultural education and increasing school attendance among Roma children at the primary level, limited support exists for rural and marginalized youth beyond Grade 8. Despite explicit prohibition of segregation under Romanian, Moldovan, and European law, certain schools in the region are still segregated. In integrated schools, Roma students are at times discriminated against by educators and other students. This can

contribute to low attendance and high dropout rates. In Moldova, only roughly 45% of secondary-school age Roma youth are enrolled in schools.¹⁴ In Romania, in recent years the percentage of Roma youth aged 16-19 enrolled in school has been as low as 17%.¹⁵ These marginalized youth experience higher rates of drop-out at the high school level¹⁶, lack employment opportunities, and may become disengaged, passive, and disenfranchised.¹⁷

The Youth Civic Engagement and Dialogue (YCED) Program brings together Roma and majority students in Romania and Moldova to lead and engage in community development projects. The program is funded by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) of the U. S. Department of State and is implemented by IREX and partner Romani CRISS, an NGO that works to defend and promote the rights of Roma throughout Romania. YCED began in April 2011 and will be completed in October 2013.

The project aims to achieve the following objective: **Roma and non-Roma youth are active and engaged citizens who mobilize other youth for community improvement and foster intercultural tolerance**. In pursuit of this goal, the project aims to accomplish three smaller-order outcomes:

1. Teachers, schools, and local NGO leaders effectively promote civic engagement and tolerance among Roma and non-Roma students;
2. Roma and non-Roma youth address community problems together; and
3. Youth reduce ethnic tension and promote tolerance in the community.

This evaluation assesses the achievement of this objective and these outcomes according to two main conceptual outcomes: increases in tolerance and increases in civic engagement (see Methodology section below).

IREX uses Positive Youth Development (PYD) theory to approach its work with youth in the YCED Program. Based on the principles of asset-based youth development, PYD is an approach to working with youth, adopted by international donors and development organizations, that:

- Views youth as a resource to be developed, rather than a problem to be solved;
- Holistically nurtures the skills and competencies that young people will need as healthy, successful adults; and
- Involves youth in the community and the community in youth.¹⁸

Building off PYD principles, YCED employs a Community Schools Model to engage students in the civic life of their society. This model gives youth a hands-on opportunity to explore principles of civic engagement in practice. At the school, students are already engaging with one another, interacting with adult role models, and being taught about the fundamental subjects needed for success in their post-academic life. The Community Schools Model gathers students from across ethnic groups to engage

¹⁴ Case, Sorin, et al. *Roma in the Republic of Moldova*. UNDP Moldova. Chisinau: 2007. P 61-62.

¹⁵ *Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma*. Open Society Institute. Monitoring Reports, Volume 1. 2007. P. 349. Accessed at <http://www.romadecade.org/files/downloads/Education%20Resources/roma_20070329.pdf> September 2012.

¹⁶ The number of Roma students attending school drops from 95% to 55% between the ages of 12 and 15. Country Assessment and the Roma Education Funds Strategic Directions. The Roma Education Fund. 2007 http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/documents/Romania_report.pdf.

¹⁷ IREX assessment, 2010.

¹⁸ Adapted from the National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth, <http://www.ncfy.com/publications/reconnect/index.htm>. Accessed 8/21/07.

actively with one another and identify community problems of mutual interest. As the project progresses, the participants create and enact a plan to solve the problem they have identified. Through the program, students have the opportunity to request seed funding from IREX to obtain resources for their project. Upon completion of their community development projects, students are encouraged to share their successes with the local media and their peers. In addition to benefitting youth participants, the Community Schools Model makes the school a locus of community development and inter-cultural communication.

YCED targets youth between the ages of 14 and 18 and supports them to:

- Build their skills in leadership, citizenship, problem-solving, project management, and communications;
- Become active, engaged citizens who mobilize peers to improve their lives, schools, and communities;
- Engage with their peers on cross-cultural and community development issues; and
- Promote intercultural tolerance through leading joint community service initiatives.

At the beginning of the project cycle, staff organized the Community Schools Academy (CSA), which brought together youth and adults from eight target communities—six in Romania and two in Moldova—for training in project management, tolerance building, and civic engagement. One Roma youth and one non-Roma youth were delegated from each community, as well as one Roma adult mentor and one non-Roma adult mentor. Mentors were either teachers in the school or, in the case of Roma, leaders in the community.



At the conclusion of the week-long camp, delegates returned to their communities and formed Youth Action Teams (YATs) consisting of 10-20 Roma and non-Roma students. After conducting participatory needs assessments in their schools and communities, each YAT identified a project that required roughly \$1,500 of seed funding. YATs then proposed projects to IREX for funding and refined their proposals based on feedback. All eight teams were awarded funding and went through the stages of project planning, project management, and budget management to complete these projects.

At the time of the midterm evaluation, all eight YATs had completed or were nearing completion of their community projects. While several groups implemented smaller activities in conjunction with their primary project, main projects included the following: creating a meeting/conference/relaxation room in the school; renovating the school gymnasium; creating a volleyball court in the school yard; cleaning and refinishing gym locker rooms; and establishing and running a radio station. The program is premised on the idea that youth should be the agents of change and make decisions throughout all stages of the project, and that it is the process, rather than the product, that will produce outcomes in civic engagement and tolerance building.

In the second year of program implementation, IREX and RCRISS are expanding the reach of the program to include 10 new communities in Romania and two new communities in Moldova, for a total of 20

communities across the project. Representatives from these new communities participated in the Community Schools Academy, along with representatives from the existing communities who serve as mentors to incoming youth. Each school new to the program will implement a project, and existing schools will implement an additional project during Year 2.

Methodology

IREX undertook a midterm evaluation to determine the degree to which the program had achieved its objectives after one year and to solicit information that would allow IREX to improve its program implementation in the second year. The evaluation was conducted in May 2012 through field visits to target communities in Romania and Moldova, and analysis was finalized through online meetings and electronic correspondence. An evaluation consultant from Village Earth trained local and partner staff in Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) and facilitated the evaluation. IREX and Village Earth selected the Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology—using participatory video—to solicit qualitative data on outcomes that may or may not pertain to indicators. IREX also collected quantitative data through written youth and adult participant surveys.

The evaluation methodology combined qualitative and quantitative tools to measure changes with regard to all three program outcomes and corresponding indicators. The evaluation team also sought to gather data on results that may not have been captured in the indicators in order to gain a fuller understanding of the effects of the program on youth, adults, and communities.

A major goal of the evaluation was to build staff capacity in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and participatory approaches to M&E as well as project activities. In addition to determining the type and level of change occurring for participants and in their communities, the evaluation followed a participatory approach and served as a learning tool to help staff understand how to strengthen implementation. Five staff members from partner organization RCRISS and one local IREX staff member participated in a training about the Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology and then led the data collection and analysis phases.

The following two tools were used in the evaluation:

- 1) **Most Significant Change Storytelling Technique:** The MSC technique is a method used in PM&E. MSC diverges from other types of PM&E in that it does not rely on the use of indicators, and it is participatory because project stakeholders are deeply involved in the collection and analysis of the data. It can be used as both a monitoring tool throughout the life cycle of project and as an evaluation tool to provide data on the effectiveness and efficiency of the project as a whole. As one local staff member said, “It’s important that such a method provided an opportunity to think about the program and the future of the program, not only for staff who manage the program, but for participants also. Such a method helps them to find their place in the current process and build new goals for the future.”

In accordance with the MSC technique,¹⁹ the evaluation team gathered stories of change that were considered most important to the youth themselves. During a two-day training, staff discussed “domains of change” for the program and then created questions for the youth to elicit corresponding stories of change. For example, with regard to community relationships and impact, staff developed the question, “What was the most significant change in the community that resulted from the YCED program?” Youth then used handheld video cameras to record one another responding to these questions. Later, staff watched and analyzed each story, assigning each story to a domain of change and selecting the most significant story from each domain (see below for more information on how this tool was implemented).

- 2) **Written Survey:** At the time of gathering stories, staff also distributed written surveys to youth and adult participants. Youth were given time to fill out the surveys during the time in which other youth were filming or being filmed for their MSC story. Survey questions were identical to those used in a limited pre-training assessment delivered to 15 youth and 20 adults at the start of the program. While some analysis was conducted to compare the results from this pre-training assessment to the wider survey used in the midterm phase, conclusions from this comparison are drawn with caution due to the low sample of respondents in the pre-training assessment.²⁰

Data from the surveys were disaggregated, where appropriate, by Roma and non-Roma and males and females to look for patterns, though low identification or responses from Roma youth²¹ made comparison between Roma and non-Roma youth inconclusive.

Taken together, these two tools allowed staff to collect data on changes related to most aspects of the program. The table below outlines the tools used to measure results and select corresponding indicators. These indicators were selected from the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (PMEP) because of their relevance to IREX staff with regard to program management decisions and also to inform staff of the progress to date toward results targets.

Table 1

Result	Indicator	Tool Used
Roma and majority youth are active and engaged citizens who mobilize other youth for community improvement and foster intercultural tolerance.	% increase of youth participants reporting productive interactions with community members regarding intercultural tolerance	Storytelling, Survey
	% change in youth participants who report that their school has increased their interest in civic engagement	Storytelling
	% of youth participants who report having engaged with local or regional government	Survey

¹⁹ Davies, Rick, and Jessica Dart. 2005. *The Most Significant Change Technique: A Guide to Its Use*. CARE International, Oxfam, et al. Accessible at <http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf>. See below for further elaboration of the MSC technique.

²⁰ See Constraints section for an explanation of the limited use of comparing pre-training assessment and midterm survey results.

²¹ Few youth were identified as Roma in the written survey, due to lack of identification or lack of participation. See p. 7 for more information on this constraint.

Teachers, schools, and local NGO leaders effectively promote civic engagement and tolerance among Roma and majority students.	% change in teachers and NGO leaders who report that local government and community leaders actively support youth civic engagement activities	Storytelling, Survey
	% of youth-serving adults reporting an increase in empathy towards those of other ethnicities, religions, or national origin	Storytelling, Survey
	% of youth participants who report feeling increased value within the community	Storytelling, Survey
	% of youth participants who demonstrate an understanding of civic engagement	Survey
Roma and majority youth address community problems together.	% of students who agree that citizen actions can improve community life	Storytelling, Survey
	% change in program participants' level of confidence in their own ability to positively affect community life	Storytelling, Survey
Youth reduce ethnic tensions and promote tolerance in the community.	% of youth participants who report more positive interactions with those of other ethnicities	Storytelling, Survey
	% of youth participants who demonstrate an acceptance of ethnic, cultural, and other diversity	Survey
	% of youth participants reporting an increase in empathy toward those of other ethnicities, religions, or national origin	Storytelling, Survey

While MSC is innately a tool used to measure outcomes without indicators, the evaluation team anticipated that the indicators marked above would be addressed through the storytelling process. To varying degrees (see more information in the Main Findings section), the stories shared by youth did address these indicators.

Training and Data Collection

Prior to data collection, the Village Earth consultant conducted a two-day training in Bucharest designed to build staff capacity in PM&E, particularly in the MSC methodology. The training addressed topics such as participation by project participants, analyzing power, empowerment, theory of the oppressed, steps of the MSC methodology, a participatory discussion method, and participatory video. Participants included IREX Moldova staff, staff from Romani CRISS, and community youth leaders who implement projects targeting the Roma population. See Appendix 1 for training agenda and feedback from participants.

Application of Most Significant Change

Because MSC is focused on learning, rather than just accountability,²² it allowed the evaluation team to approach the process as a participatory learning experience. In this evaluation, the team sought to build both staff and participant capacity through various layers of participation, through the training mentioned above and through the practical experience of collecting and analyzing data.

"I never knew the youth were able to do such an analysis of the project themselves."

- IREX Moldova staff member

²² Ibid.

Domains are broad categories of possible significant change stories. Unlike the standard measurable indicators, domains of change are kept general to allow participants to have different interpretations of what constitutes a significant change in that area. Identifying domains of change in advance provides evaluators with some guidance regarding the types of change they expect to see, without confining participants' responses too narrowly.²³

The key steps involved in the evaluation process for IREX and RCRISS staff, adapted from the MSC Methodology, were:²⁴

1. Defining the domains of change
2. Collecting significant change stories
 - a. Using a participatory video technique
 - b. Using the ORID discussion method
 - c. Simultaneously verifying stories
3. Analyzing stories and selecting most significant change stories
4. Quantifying stories and themes
5. Feeding back the results of the selection process

1. **Defining Domains of Change:** During the training the staff collectively defined four domains of change that would guide the data collection process and facilitate analysis. Romani CRISS and IREX Moldova staff identified these four domains of change:

Table 2

Domain 1	Personal Changes / self-esteem / personal development / motivation
	This change could include personal attitudes toward people of other ethnicities or could relate more generally to changes in confidence, worldview, communication abilities, or other personal changes.
Domain 2	Changes in Civic Engagement / sense of responsibility to community
	This domain was designed to capture any changes in youth's sense of civic engagement and ways of interacting with the broader community.
Domain 3	Changes in Communities / schools / relationships between different groups
	This domain was designed to capture broader change than any of the other domains, encompassing change at the school or community level. The evaluation team was most interested in changes in relationships between Roma and non-Roma groups—specifically changes in tolerance across groups—but framed the domain broadly to capture changes among other groups, such as between adults and youth or local government leaders and students.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ The MSC Guide describes ten steps for implementing the methodology. IREX staff highlights here five key steps, with some of the original steps incorporated under a single step. See p. 10 of MSC Guide for more information (Davies and Dart).

Domain 4	Any Other Changes
	This domain captured significant changes that would not fit into the other domains and was provided to allow participants more freedom to focus on changes that they thought were relevant.

- 2. Story collection:** For the data collection period, the domains listed above guided questions focused specifically on changes associated with the YCED program. Stories were first written by each youth and then shared orally on camera, in groups of three to four youth facilitated by a local staff member. Staff evaluators also interviewed adult mentors directly and separately from the youth, and took care to ensure that adult mentors were not present when and where youth shared their stories. Clear instructions were given to youth and adults to be open and honest and to provide both negative and positive feedback as they desired.²⁵



- 2a. Participatory Video:** All but four stories collected were filmed. This participatory video method enabled the youth to assume more ownership of the process—by physically operating the video cameras and facilitating the conversations with their peers—and was intended to correspond to the empowerment processes of the YCED program activities.

During data collection, evaluation staff also gave youth license to film their projects and narrate their progress—without any adults (including evaluation staff) in the room, providing them with ultimate control of presenting their projects. These video clips were used in the two video products created by IREX and shared with the participants and their communities.

The MSC question:

Looking back over the last year, what do you think was the most significant change that occurred in your personal life / your sense of civic engagement / relationships in the community as a result of the YCED project?

2b. ORID Discussion Method: The ORID discussion method is a set of types of questions—objective, reflective, interpretive, and decisional—that guides participatory discussion. This discussion method, which staff learned in the training, was used as a tool for group reflection at the end of each site visit. This helped the group to reflect on the day's activity and helped staff to gather the feelings of the group about whether they should continue to use these methods in the YCED program. During the ORID reflection at the end of school visits, some youth said they felt timid at first in front of the camera but grew more confident throughout the process. At each school, youth expressed a desire to participate in this type of evaluation activity again.

²⁵ Despite efforts to make clear to participants that negative feedback was welcome, staff acknowledge that a tendency to provide positive feedback existed and remained a constraint to the validity of the data.

2c. Verification: The evaluation team integrated verification of stories into the story gathering process (see more below in the Constraints section), using peer groups to verify stories as youth shared them. Because most stories were based on attitudinal or personal behavior change, verification in the traditional sense of the MSC methodology was deemphasized.²⁶

3. Analysis and story selection: At the end of each data collection day, evaluation team members watched each video together and analyzed the themes in each story. Local and partner staff evaluators examined the video story along with the written story provided by each student. They reached consensus in order to assign each story a domain and then select the most significant story in each domain from each school. After the end of the data collection period, staff agreed on the most significant change story in each domain across all communities and schools. Mentor stories were watched and categorized at a later date, after field visits were over, due to time constraints.

4. Quantification: After the individual story analysis and story selection phases, stories were grouped according to domain. Quantification with regard to type of story and profile of participant who shared each story is explained in further detail in the Main Findings section below.

5. Feedback: At the time of the publication of this report, IREX was finalizing a video that includes footage from each school of their YCED projects, including a clip from each student who was filmed in order to model inclusion. A video was also made to highlight youth sharing the stories that were selected as the most significant change stories.²⁷ At the time of this report, IREX and RCRIS are in the process of both sharing videos with project participants and fostering discussion around those

videos. Furthermore, RCRIS, IREX Moldova, and IREX DC staff had created an action plan for incorporating some of the youth's recommendations (See Recommendations section) into programming.



“I was surprised that there wasn’t such a big awareness in some of the students about discrimination. I noticed even in myself that I wasn’t so aware of how strong that problem is, until I visited the community [for this evaluation].”

- Local staff member

Survey Tool

The evaluation team administered written surveys to youth and provided time for them to complete the surveys before or after they shared their stories. The evaluation team also administered written surveys to

²⁶ Davies and Dart, p. 10. The Verification step of MSC typically involves visiting the site of the story of change and confirming its validity with staff members and potentially community members.

²⁷ That video is available to the public here: <http://www.irex.org/news/participatory-evaluation-shows-increasing-tolerance-among-youth>.

each adult present on data collection day. The surveys consisted of questions identical to those used for the pre-training assessment and were designed to capture the current state of attitudes and possibly to detect changes from the year prior through direct questioning and a series of statements intended to elicit attitudes and levels of tolerance. Please see the Constraints section for more explanation on the limited comparability of the midterm survey results and the pre-training assessment results.

Scope and Sampling

Due to time constraints, the evaluation team selected four of six Romanian communities and two of two Moldovan communities to visit. These communities were selected on the basis of proximity to one another for ease of travel and logistics. The table below outlines the number of students and adults surveyed and interviewed.

Table 3

School	Country	# of students	# of surveys	Male	Female	# of Video Stories	# of Written Stories	# of adults
Ivesti	Romania	14	14	7	7	14	14	1
Cotea	Romania	10	10	3	7	10	10	2
Marasesti	Romania	16	16	7	9	14	16	3
Nicolau	Romania	10	10	6	4	10	10	4
Hincesti	Moldova	13	13	5	8	12	13	1
Zirnesti	Moldova	19	19	9	10	18	19	3
Total		82	82	37	45	78	82	14

Constraints

Methodological constraints affecting the validity of findings include the following:

Response bias/Story validity: A common challenge in MSC evaluations is determining the validity of stories. It was hypothesized that youth might inadvertently make their stories of change seem more significant than they were in reality or would embellish their stories to please adults. The team implemented a few measures to mitigate this constraint: first, local and partner staff provided a thorough introduction of the process and explicitly expressed interest in negative stories and in the reality of youth's experiences. They conducted storytelling in small groups, so that the presence of peers might dissuade them from sharing false stories. By going further and having youth interview one another using cameras, the team worked to increase the likelihood that youth would share only valid stories of change. The possibility remained that youth replicated stories they heard from their peers or were somehow influenced by their peers' stories. To eliminate the possibility of youth trying to please authority figures, staff took care to ensure that adult mentors and teachers were not in the rooms where youth were telling stories. For program improvement purposes, at the end of each story youth were asked for their recommendations to improve the program, whether or not they had already shared negative feedback through their stories.

Varying capacity of evaluation team: Most local and partner staff members involved in the data collection participated in the two-day training on MSC, with the exception of three staff of IREX Moldova. An abbreviated training was provided for those staff, but their limited background on the technique likely diminished their ability to facilitate the process. Even for staff who participated in the training, capacity in facilitating the MSC process increased with time, resulting in modifications to the process throughout data collection. For example, on Day One, staff asked youth to write down their stories of MSC on paper before sharing it with their peers on video; however, many youth read from their paper, which hindered the storytelling quality and reduced the interactivity among the youth. Starting with Day Two, staff asked youth to put their paper aside when responding to questions for the video storytelling. As a result, the quality of stories collected on Day One is likely the lowest of all days.

Language barrier: Village Earth and IREX DC staff did not have Romanian language skills and relied on an interpreter and on local and partner staff support to understand conversations during the data collection introduction and throughout the rest of the process. Details in the explanation and introduction of MSC may have been omitted, despite their being rehearsed by local and partner staff during the training. Careful translation of questions from English to Romanian during the training—with the consensus of the training group—helped to mitigate any significant constraints in the story gathering process due to language. Furthermore, native Romanian speakers led the analysis process and facilitated an interactive discussion with non-Romanian-speaking members of the team to ensure comprehensive understanding of each story collected.

Bias in analysis: Most of the stories collected (78 out of 82) were captured on video, and the evaluation team used video clips as the primary raw material for analysis, referring to accompanying written stories for verification or additional detail. During the story selection phase, evaluation team members discussed the possibility of bias in favor of the most photo- or videogenic stories, that is, stories that came across as most powerful on video, whether or not they were the most significant in a programmatic sense. While staff members remained vigilant about this possibility, a slight bias toward the stories articulated the most eloquently on camera may have affected the outcomes of the story selection process.

Comparability with pre-training assessment: The pool of respondents for the pre-training assessment was limited to 15 youth and differed significantly from the pool of respondents for the midterm survey. Thus, any conclusions based on comparing the midterm survey with the pre-training assessment are drawn with extreme caution. At the pre-training phase, assessments were administered only to those youth participating in the Community Schools Academy (CSA) at the beginning of the program. These youth were selected by their schools' administrators to be trained and were already likely to have positive attitudes and higher than average levels of civic engagement. The midterm survey was administered to all youth participants of the program, which numbered between 10 and 18 in each school. While these youth also had to agree to be

Building Capacity in Qualitative Evaluation Methods

After a two-day training and hands-on experience, Romani CRISS staff took the lead on data collection and analysis in Romanian communities, strengthening their own relationships with youth and adult participants, as well as with schools and community leaders.

After the YCED evaluation, staff applied the MSC methodology to a different project aimed at early childhood development for Roma youth and used the results from storytelling to increase the effectiveness of their intervention.

part of the Youth Action Team, they were not necessarily handpicked by administrators and did not, as a group, possess any specific qualities or success factors as identified by administrators. The midterm survey also included those youth who participated in the CSA. In addition to these significant qualitative differences between the groups, the wide variation in the sample size also makes comparison tenuous. With the initial assessment respondent group of 15, compared to 82 in the midterm survey, analysis is presented to raise questions more than to firm conclusions.

IREX expects to be able to draw more robust conclusions through comparing the midterm and final surveys, both of which will have samples that are larger and more representative of the participant population as a whole.

Identification of Roma youth: Consistent with local and partner staff experiences during the initial program assessment and project activities, self-identification of ethnicity was not always straightforward. As a result, it was suspected that some Roma youth chose to not identify as Roma in the written survey. In other cases, it was suspected that youth of mixed ethnic background would more readily identify with a non-Roma identity. Finally, it is likely that the ethnic composition of project teams is not equally Roma/non-Roma, due to the difficulties of identifying in-school Roma of secondary school age. The combination of these and possibly other factors resulted in a low survey response of Roma youth, with 17 of 82 identifying as Roma. While results are disaggregated by Roma and non-Roma youth at times in pursuit of trends, few conclusions can be drawn from comparing the two ethnic groups due to the small identified sample size of Roma youth. Youth were not asked their ethnicity during the storytelling process, though in a few cases youth volunteered it or local staff were aware of ethnicity from working with the youth on project activities. Ethnicity was not factored into the analysis of significant change stories because it was deemed too insensitive to ask youth outright about their ethnicity in person and on camera.

Resource constraints/analysis constraints: Due to time, budget, and personnel shortages, evaluators were limited in the analysis they could conduct of the stories. Staff members were unable to translate and transcribe all of the 82 stories in full, which would have allowed detailed coding of the complete stories, in addition to word frequency counts. Instead, all evaluators analyzing the videos during the initial viewing stage took detailed notes and recorded the domain in which stories were categorized, which forms the basis of all of the analysis of the stories found in this report.

Main Findings

The primary purpose of the evaluation was to determine the degree to which the program was on track to meeting its objectives and to develop recommendations for improving implementation in the second year. Other secondary research questions were considered and addressed to varying degrees. This section will examine the results as related to each key outcome and briefly touch on additional results that the MSC method yielded.

At its core, YCED seeks to improve youth outcomes in two key areas: 1) tolerance and the attitudes and behaviors associated with respect for people of other ethnic, religious, and other backgrounds; and 2) civic engagement, the degree to which youth feel a responsibility toward their community, act to

improve their community, and are valued within the community. The results framework represents these changes more specifically, as shown in Appendix 2.

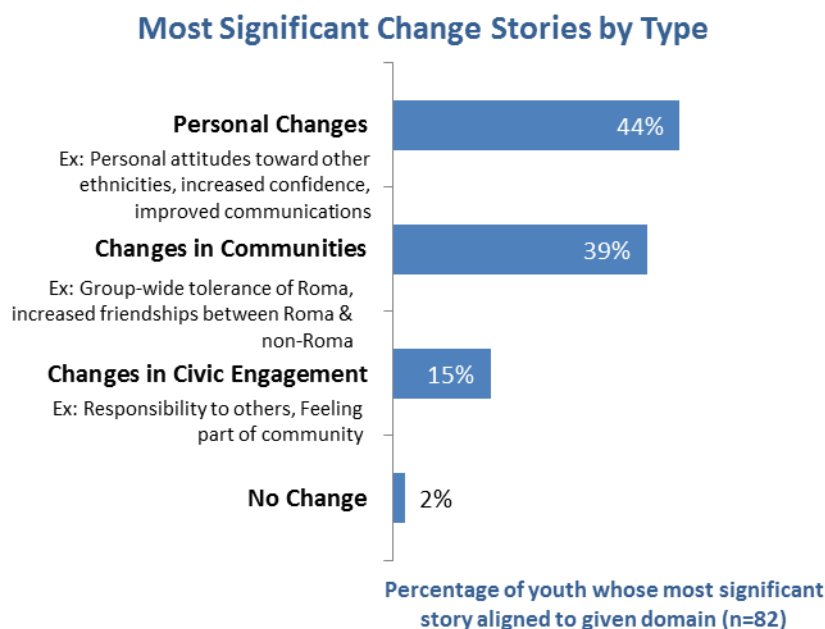
Because MSC—also called “Monitoring-without-Indicators”²⁸—was a primary tool for data collection, the results captured often overlapped among the outcomes and outputs that comprise the original M&E framework. Thus, a summary of the MSC storytelling results immediately follows, providing comparisons of the types of changes youth shared. For more detail, results are best conceptualized according to the two essential intended outcomes of the program, increased tolerance and increased civic engagement, as outlined above. The two sections following the Summary of Findings from Storytelling below will address the degree to which the program has achieved those outcomes to date. Following those sections, remaining findings will be presented.

Summary of Results from Storytelling

Youth and adult stories addressed changes that overlap with various program outcomes, indicating that many participants perceived changes across multiple domains of change. In the analysis phase, however, the evaluation team worked to identify the single most significant change shared by each youth and then categorize the story appropriately. Only two youth gave such stories so weak that the team could not perceive a significant change, which indicates that the vast majority of students did see the program as having a direct impact on them, their school, or their community.

Of the 80 significant change stories, most youth’s stories involved changes with regard to personal attitudes or relationships at the group or school level. The chart below provides a breakdown of the types of change reported by youth:

Figure 1



²⁸ Davies and Dart. 2005.

The table below breaks down the story classifications further by school. The concentration of youth stories in given domains did vary by school, which may have resulted from differences in the projects or the stages of the process youth had completed at the time of the evaluation.

Table 4

School	Country	# of students	# of surveys	Male	Female	# of Video Stories	# of Written Stories	Domain 1 - Personal	Domain 2 – Civic Engagement	Domain 3 – Community	No Change
Ivesti	Romania	14	14	7	7	14	14	4	3	5	2
Cotea	Romania	10	10	3	7	10	10	6	2	2	0
Marasesti	Romania	16	16	7	9	14	16	6	4	6	0
Nicolau	Romania	10	10	6	4	10	10	4	1	5	0
Hincesti	Moldova	13	13	5	8	12	13	7	0	6	0
Zirnesti	Moldova	19	19	9	10	18	19	9	2	8	0
Total		82	82	37	45	78	82	36	12	32	2

Below are summaries of the stories that were selected across all communities as the most significant in their domain:

Domain 1: Personal Changes / self-esteem / personal development / motivation

[Two stories were selected for this domain because they demonstrated change in personal attitudes toward another ethnic group from different perspectives and were determined to demonstrate equally significant change.]

- Raluca, a young Roma student, said, “Each person has their own personality –we must accept them how they are.” She explained how she used to be aggressive and led a hard life, as she grew up without her mother. She never accepted advice from other people. But now, because of the project, she has learned to listen to people and is now “more interested in other people.”
- Simona, a young non-Roma student, spoke of the transformative shift in her attitude toward Roma. “Before, I didn’t talk to any Roma students, but now I pay more attention to ethnic issues” she said. She explained how she thinks highly of Roma now, which has increased her pride in her school.

Domain 2: Changes in Civic Engagement / sense of responsibility to community

- One youth, Alexandra, said, “I finally understand what volunteering means.” Her story outlined how she increased her sense of social responsibility and no longer litters. She is now careful to do things for the community.

Domain 3: Changes in Communities / schools / relationships between different groups

- Denisa said, “This project gave us wings to do better things.” She spoke of how relationships between Roma and non-Roma students grew and how tolerance in general increased of the Roma. She said that the positive impacts of their project extended beyond the school into the community.

These examples, which revealed deep, powerful transformations, indicate that in just a year, the program’s activities have had a largely positive effect on the youth as individuals and on their attitudes. A few factors might explain why much of the change youth cited was personal and individual rather than

outward: First, for many youth, their YAT project was their first community project to date, a significant milestone in their lives. It was also hypothesized that individual change is a necessary precursor to group-level change, as individuals must change their own attitudes in order to effect positive changes in their communities. Finally, a factor related to adolescent development may influence these findings; as developing youth's cognition tends to be more inward or self-focused, personal changes may have presented themselves more frequently than other changes in their experiences.



It must also be noted that the line between Domain 1 and Domain 3 was often blurred, because youth could describe changes in their attitudes toward Roma or non-Roma, and that type of change might be classified within either domain: If local and partner staff perceived that the youth was discussing their change in attitudes as representative of larger changes in relationships, it was classified in Domain 3. If the change was purely individual, without having much of a discernible impact on others, it was classified in Domain 1.

Stories from Domain 2: Changes in Civic Engagement appeared less frequently than had been anticipated. Staff interpreted this finding as a result of the fact that many projects had only recently been completed at the time of the evaluation. Youth were perhaps only beginning to feel the effects of having completed a project for the good of the community. It is predicted that a higher percentage of stories collected during the final evaluation will relate to Domain 2, for the reason stated above, though other factors, such as the cognitive tendencies of adolescents mentioned above, may cause individual-level change to continue to be the most significant change. However, staff agreed that strengthening civic engagement promotion activities could also improve outcomes in this domain (see Recommendations section).

In addition to the 82 youth interviewed, ten adult mentors shared their stories of most significant change through video. As with the youth's stories, mentors' stories addressed multiple types of changes from each domain. Staff analyzed and categorized the adult mentor stories across communities and classified seven mentors' stories of most significant change as Domain 3: Changes in communities; two stories were categorized as Domain 1: Personal Changes; and one story addressed Domain 2: Changes in Civic Engagement. That adults emphasized Domain 3 more than the youth participants can be explained by their role in their schools and the notion that adults, more fully developed than the adolescent participants, may be cognitively less self-focused than the youth. Furthermore, because the adults are teachers or community leaders, their perspective was likely already oriented toward groups in the school or community, and so the changes they perceived as most significant largely qualify at the broader level specified in Domain 3.

Changes in Tolerance

Qualitative data from the stories point to substantial increases in youth's tolerance of people from other ethnic backgrounds, and limited survey data support such stories. More than half of youth shared in detail stories of significant change in their attitudes toward people from other backgrounds or in the relationships they had formed with youth across ethnic lines. Survey data reveal mixed results in terms

of current attitudes and behaviors, and tentative findings comparing the pre-training assessment and the midterm survey point to some improvement. For example, youth reported positive interactions with those of other ethnicities at a higher frequency in the midterm survey than in the pre-training assessment survey, as well as higher numbers of acquaintances of youth from other ethnic backgrounds. Adult mentors' stories corresponded to youth stories, with several adults sharing stories relating positive change in the relationships between ethnic groups.

Youth Outcomes from MSC

The MSC technique allowed youth to frame issues of tolerance in ways that cut across domain lines. While youth spoke about deep change regarding their and others' views of people of other ethnic groups, the storytelling methodology provided staff with a window into how the change occurred. Deep changes regarding youth's tolerance of ethnic differences were expressed frequently both through Domain 1: personal changes and Domain 3: Changes in Communities. Project staff had hypothesized that changes in attitudes toward the Roma and levels of tolerance would take longer than one year to register significantly, which caused the evaluation team to create domains broader than tolerance alone. However, at least 46 of 82 youth, or roughly 56%, spoke in some detail about changes in relationships between Roma and non-Roma youth. As mentioned, 44% of youth's stories were categorized into Domain 1, which spanned topics ranging from personal attitudes toward other ethnicities to communication skills. Just as youth detailed deep changes in tolerance, local and partner staff members were able to observe just how deep stereotypes were before the project and witness the often non-linear path of youth toward acceptance of difference.

"I made a Roma friend who changed all my opinions about the Roma. I realized that they are also human, that they have the same reactions I have.
- Youth participant, Moldova

For example, one illustrative story of change in attitudes regarding the Roma came from a non-Roma youth in Moldova who opened up to her peers and to staff about the degree to which her views were changed:

"First of all, this project changed my opinion of the Roma. Secondly, it allowed me to get involved in my community...Before I started participating in this project, I considered the Roma vulgar. But after I became involved in this project, I understood that they are humans. I made a Roma friend that changed all my opinions about the Roma. I knew her before, but did not have a good opinion of her. I didn't really know her, and knowing she was Roma, I thought she was like all the other Roma...Now I have a different opinion of the Roma in general. I realized that they are also human, that they have the same reactions I have. Like every other person, they go home and cry in their pillow."

One Roma youth from the same school said, "I learned I do not have to stick only with Roma, but I can also be with others. We should be surrounded by others."

Expressions of tolerance varied greatly by school. For example, in one school, in Marasesti—in which only one of 16 students identified himself as Roma—only two students discussed relations between ethnicities as a significant change. Many of those students shared stories about personal transformation, but these changes related more to their role in the school and their personal skills

than to their attitudes toward Roma or non-Roma. In other schools, such as a school called Cotea, ethnicity was mentioned by almost all students sharing stories. In the case of Cotea, it is likely that two very dedicated mentors—one Roma and one non-Roma—actively worked to foster unity among the team. In other schools, the degree to which mentors outright addressed tolerance may have varied, and in two schools, the Roma mentor had dropped out of the program. (See Recommendations for more.)

Most Significant Change Stories for Domain 1: Personal Change

Two stories—one from a Roma student and one from a non-Roma student—were selected as the most significant for Domain 1. These stories showed attitudinal change toward other ethnicities from both the Roma and non-Roma perspectives. Excerpts of their stories are below:

Roma youth: *I've met several people who helped me a lot to change my conduct. They taught me to be better, to understand the world around me, not to be aggressive like I used to be. They tried to talk to me. There were people around me before to talk to me also, but I didn't understand what they were saying. And now I think it's good to take the advice of a mature person. Before, I didn't care about anything. Now I am interested, first of all, in the people around us...we must not mock them; we must not discriminate against each other based on ethnicity, that one is Romanian and another one Roma or that one is sick and one is healthy. And we should integrate everyone just the way they are and make no differences between them.*

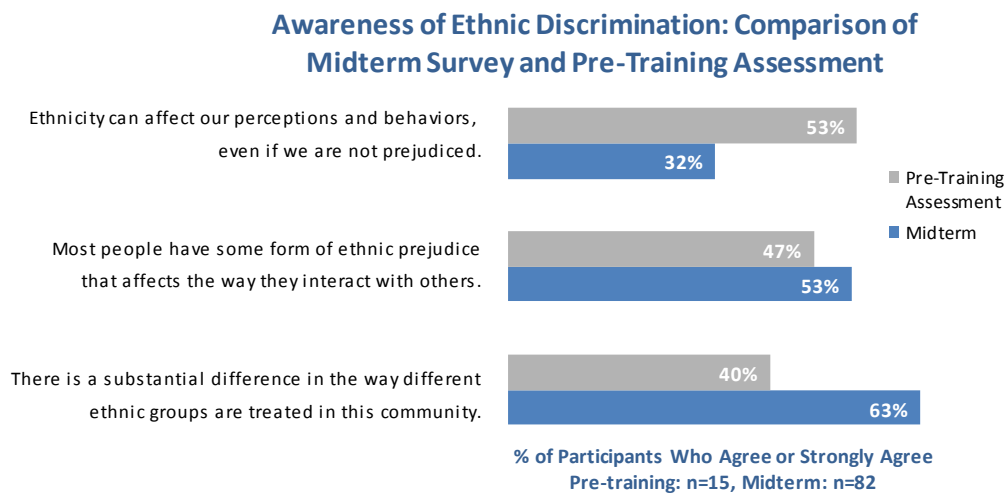
Non-Roma youth: *Before, I didn't care too much about the problems of this school or of the pupils, but now I am really interested. And if we talk of the Roma people, even though they did not bother me, I didn't try to become friends with them. But I realized that some of the Roma are even better people than we are and that they want to do something in life. People say: you are of a different religion, you dress in a certain way, you listen to a certain kind of music. This is not good. They are people and they really have something say and to show.*

Youth Outcomes from Survey

Youth Attitudes: Midterm survey results indicate that youth possess tolerant attitudes in some key areas and have room for growth in others. Based on the difficulty of comparing the midterm survey and pre-training assessment results, few conclusions can be drawn from the surveys about the degree to which participants increased their tolerance in the first year of YCED. As noted above, the qualitative data from MSC suggests that youth improved most in levels of tolerance than in any other type of change as a result of their participation in the program. While some survey data support this qualitative finding, other data indicate either no change or a slight decline from the pre-training assessment. Interpretation of these findings follows the results below.

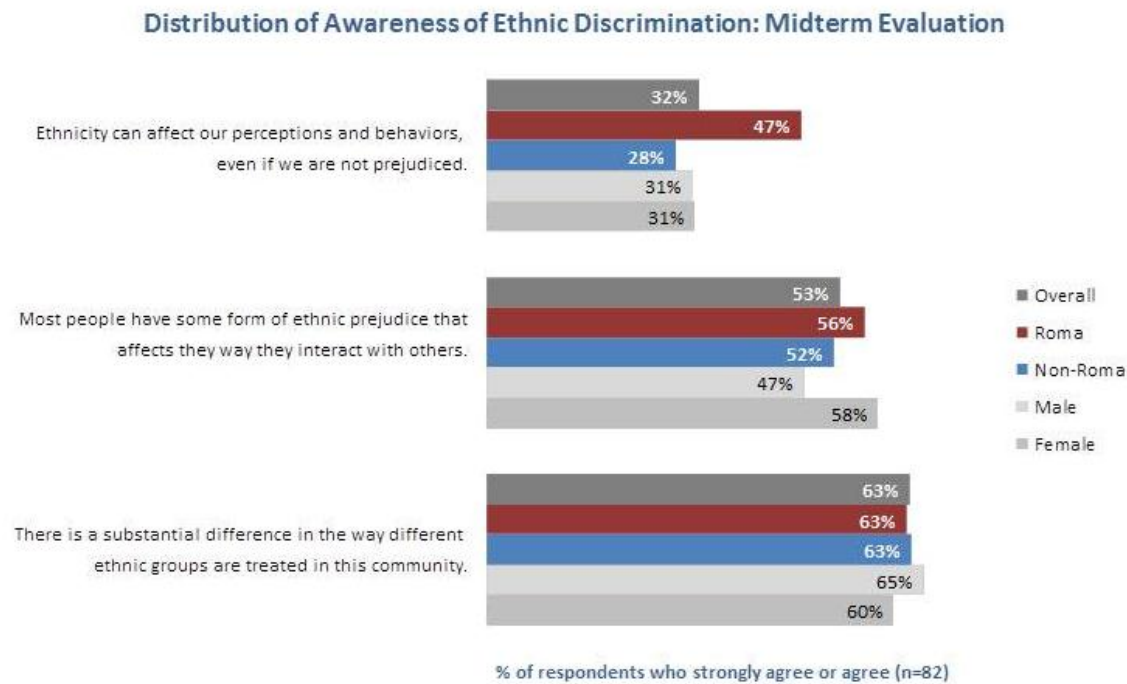
While the number of respondents in the pre-training assessment is low, the data indicate that in two of three categories of awareness of ethnic discrimination, youth may have improved their attitudes up to 23% (See Figure 3). It was hypothesized that because many local authorities and community members deny ethnic tensions or discrimination in the community and schools, awareness of discrimination would be an important first step in reducing discrimination, particularly for non-Roma students. The final survey, as compared to the midterm, will be more instructive with regard to progress of youth in awareness of discrimination.

Figure 2



Sub-analysis was conducted to determine differences in levels of awareness between Roma and non-Roma and between male and female youth, though it should be noted again that the lack of self-identified Roma representation in the survey makes comparison tentative. In one category, Roma youth exhibited more awareness about ethnic discrimination, agreeing that “Ethnicity can affect our perceptions and behaviors, even if we are not prejudiced” at a rate of 19% more than their non-Roma counterparts. However, overall, no conclusions can be drawn regarding differences in attitudes based on gender or ethnicity, given that variation was low and that the numbers are not statistically significant. See Figure 4 below for a graphic illustration of those results.

Figure 3



Other results regarding attitudes and tolerance were also mixed. Youth mostly showed improvement in their acceptance of others: in five of six statements regarding tolerance, youth showed at least some improvement. However, for two of those five statements, improvement was under 10%, which is too small to indicate any real improvement, given the small sample size of the pre-training assessment. In some cases, improvement was more striking. For example, 28% fewer youth agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “It is justified to forbid certain religions” at the midterm compared to the pre-training assessment (See Figure 5). Twenty-three percent fewer of youth agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “People of different ethnic groups should adapt to the culture of the majority people and not practice their own cultural traditions.” One statement, “I am not against people of other nationalities or religion living in my town or village,” garnered widespread agreement at the pre-training assessment and so left little room for improvement. Another statement with little change in response was “People of different ethnicities have important biological differences.” While the agreement was relatively low in both the pre-training assessment and midterm survey (27% and 26%, respectively), it is possible that this question was confusing for respondents, without guidance on how to interpret “important.”²⁹

Enough variation existed between Roma and non-Roma youth in both directions, that given the small sample size of self-identified Roma youth, few additional conclusions can be drawn. Differences were

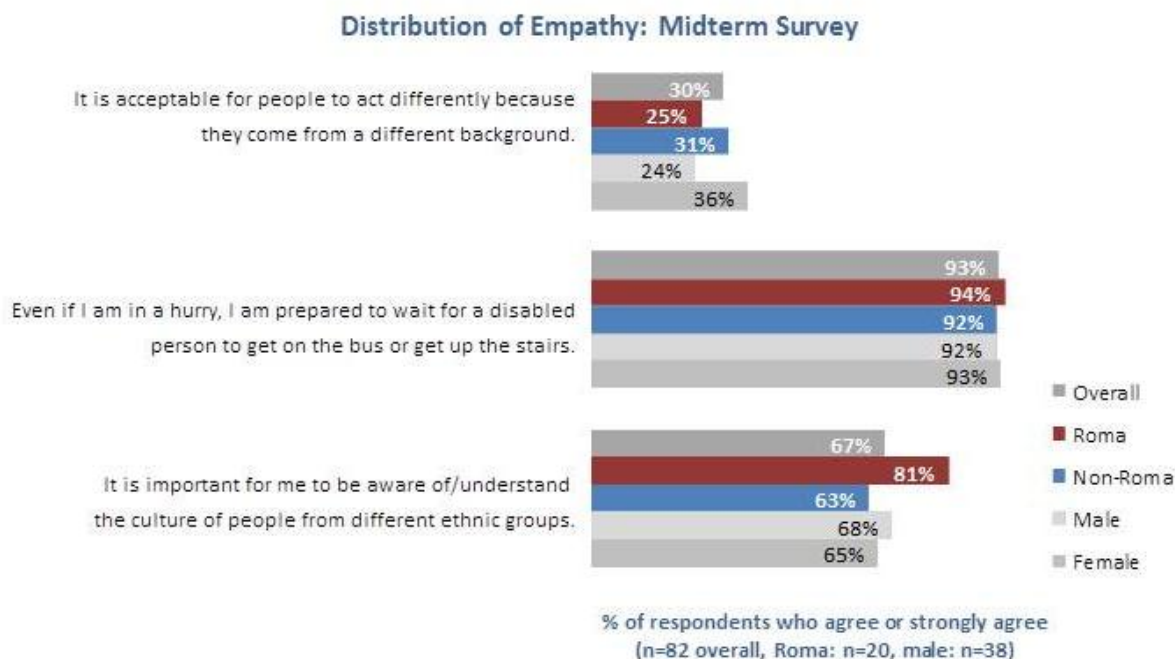
²⁹ Several questions included in the survey were drawn or adapted from materials of *Teaching Tolerance*, a Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. More can be found at http://www.tolerance.org/tdsi/uir_intro. It is possible that such questions do not translate to the Romanian/Moldovan context, or that youth simply interpreted these findings differently than was intended. Such questions will be dropped from the final survey.

registered between male and female respondents, though the direction of these differences varied in both directions across categories, and no conclusions can be drawn.

In expressions of empathy toward others, youth did not demonstrate notable improvement; this is likely due, in part, to the high pre-training assessment results, and compounded by the fact that the youth selected for the CSA were more likely than other youth to understand the ‘right’ way to respond to these questions. Youth’s responses declined or improved from the pre-training assessment for different statements, though it should be noted again that comparison between the midterm survey and the pre-training assessment is inconclusive. For example, 15% more youth in the midterm survey agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “It is acceptable for people to act differently than I do because they come from a different background.” Conversely, youth showed negative movement with regard to the following statement: “It is important for me to be aware of/understand the culture of people from different ethnic groups.” In the pre-training assessment, 93% of youth agreed or strongly agreed with that statement, compared to 67% at the midterm survey. This unexpectedly low percentage in the midterm survey indicates room for improvement in program implementation (see Recommendations section) as well as room for improvement in measurement tools.

The chart below illustrates the distribution of results across ethnic and gender groups for the midterm survey. These results will be compared directly with the final survey results, given that in each survey large enough samples from various groups should allow for more robust data.

Figure 4



Overall, based on the small sample sizes, particularly in the pre-training assessment, no valid conclusion can be drawn from the survey regarding changes in attitudes of tolerance and discrimination. Furthermore, because of variation and small sample sizes of disaggregated groups within the midterm survey—only 17 youth respondents identified themselves as Roma—no conclusions can be drawn regarding attitudinal differences among groups. Given that in the final evaluation, even larger sample sizes will be drawn, comparison will be more useful in one year in order to determine real changes in attitudes among youth participants.

While staff evaluators may have expected more consistent, positive results demonstrating a change in attitudes from the survey based on the high volume of youth reporting changes in tolerance through the MSC tool, the mixed survey results may in fact line up with what might be expected of youth attitudinal change with regard to sensitive issues such as ethnic tolerance. First, even though a majority of youth mentioned changes in relationships and attitudes toward other ethnicities in their stories, the silent minority may have not experienced such positive changes or possibly experienced negative changes, which they would have been unlikely to share. Second, it is possible that the mixture of statements with desired outcomes at different spectrums (for example, in some questions, the most desired response was “strongly agree” whereas in others, it was “strongly disagree”) confused students. Third, the mixed survey results might serve to temper the overwhelmingly positive storytelling results, given the response bias toward favorable stories. Correspondingly, even though some youth reported increases in tolerance in their stories, they were still, at times, employing discriminatory language to discuss Roma people and related issues of ethnicity.

It should be noted that trends in these attitudinal responses held roughly constant across schools, indicating that students read and interpreted the questions similarly and held roughly similar beliefs. The final evaluation will provide more instructive results. Finally, it is possible that the intervention itself—approximately halfway through—caused mixed results in youth’s attitudes. On one hand, more exposure to different groups could cause ‘growing pains,’ making it likely that stereotypes that were latent have risen to the surface and will require continued, sustained attention to be addressed effectively. See Recommendations and the Conclusion for more information.

Youth Behaviors: In addition to measuring attitudes and attitudinal change toward groups of different backgrounds, the survey also sought to measure behaviors of youth regarding tolerance, such as interactions with people from different backgrounds. For questions regarding behaviors, youth demonstrated improvement in most categories, to the extent that the pre-training assessment can be compared with the midterm. For example, the percentage of youth who reported discussing issues of tolerance in a productive way with youth of another nationality, religion, or ethnic background increased from 60% to 75%.

Youth were asked to estimate the number of times they had discussed issues of tolerance in a productive way with four types of people in the previous month, and below are the results:

Table 5

Category	Midterm: Once or more	Pre-Training Assessment: Once or more
Other youth my age, and of my nationality, religion, or ethnic background	86%	67%
Other youth my age, but of another nationality, religion, or ethnic background	75%	60%
Adults of my nationality, religion, or regional background	83%	57%
Adults of another nationality, religion, or regional background	63%	64%

As seen in the chart above, youth had increased the number of interactions they had, total, regarding issues of tolerance. Not surprisingly, the majority of youth had addressed tolerance more frequently in homogeneous groups, but with the exception of “adults of another nationality, religion, or regional background,” the number of youth who had discussed issues of tolerance productively increased by at least 15% with each group. The exception, discussions of tolerance with adults of other nationality, religion, or regional background, may be explained by a lower-than-desired level of involvement by Roma mentors (see Recommendations section).

Respondents were also asked about the quality of interactions with peers of other ethnicities. In an open-ended question, they were first asked how many times they had interacted with someone of a different ethnicity in the last week, but their responses were deemed too varied to analyze. However, a follow-up question asked them to determine, “Of those interactions...all were positive/more were positive than negative/some were positive and some were negative/they were neutral/more were negative than positive/all were negative.” These results yielded improvements: The number of youth who said all of those interactions were positive rose from 36% to 54% from the pre-training assessment to the midterm survey.

Youth were asked to estimate the number of friends and acquaintances they had who belong to a different ethnic group. The percentage of youth reporting having close friends of another ethnic group did not change appreciably, hovering at approximately 70% of youth reporting at least one close friend of another ethnicity. However, the percentage of youth reporting having “more than 10” acquaintances of another ethnicity increased by 26%, from 21% to 47%. These results are in line with what was expected, given that a project activity was to bring youth together across ethnic lines, often youth who scarcely interacted before. If the project results in its intended outcomes, then the percentage of youth with multiple close friends of other ethnicities will improve by the final evaluation, given that youth will have had one more year to forge relationships with those of a different background. The percentage of youth with acquaintances of another ethnicity is also expected to continue to increase by the time of the final evaluation.

Adult Outcomes from MSC:

As mentioned, adults' stories dealt most heavily with community- or group-wide change, which would have been expected given their role in the community. All of the ten mentors who shared stories discussed the relationship between Roma and non-Roma, though at least two suggested that relationships had already been good before the project began. One Roma mentor from Moldova said, "The most important thing was that Roma children got involved with children from other ethnicity and got along in this project, because there was no discrimination. And I wish that Roma children would get involved more in this project, because we are not doing this just for us, but for the whole community."

"Until this year, I cannot say there were tense relationships, but there weren't friendly relationships between the ethnicities. [The students] passed over these prejudices that even some adults cannot overcome."

- Mentor, Romania

A non-Roma mentor from Romania said, "What surprised me pleasantly was the relationship between Roma and non-Roma students. Until this year, I cannot say that there were tense relationships, but there weren't friendly relationships between those ethnicities. I don't know if they really avoided each other, but surely they did not have contact. Moreover, the work made them establish close relationships and made them forget that they have different ethnicities, and they passed over these prejudices that even some adults can not overcome."



Beyond speaking about the changes in relationships between Roma and non-Roma youth and in the community, some mentors spoke of personal change they had experienced with regard to tolerance. One non-Roma mentor from Romania spoke of his personal change in overcoming stereotypes. He noted that the change began before the beginning of YCED implementation, but that his experience with YCED made the transformation complete: "The change first happened in April 2011, during another project with the Roma community, targeting Roma students of 7th and 8th grades. This was the beginning of my change in

prejudices. If then I saw them as less positive persons of society, the week spent in April 2011 with them changed my attitude. I got to know some extraordinary children who delighted me. In this project I fully changed this prejudice. Now I don't have any prejudice when I meet a Roma ethnic citizen, no matter if at the market, at school, a private or public place."

Adult Outcomes from Survey:

Results from the limited-sample midterm survey and pre-training assessment vary, indicating at times positive, negative, and no change. First, in all three statements relating to awareness of discrimination, survey results indicated a decline in awareness by at least 24%. This result contrasts to the outcomes of the youth survey questions on awareness of ethnic discrimination, in which youth demonstrated improvement in two of three categories. As most of the adult respondents were overall the same respondents for the pre-training assessment, this difference may indicate different motivations on the part of adults and youth; adults may have been more likely to want to portray a community in which people are treated fairly and to show positive steps in their community's attitudes. Furthermore, that at

least two Roma mentors dropped out of the program may indicate that those most aware of ethnic discrimination had left the program. The final evaluation should investigate that possibility and seek to determine the degree to which adults are aware of ethnic discrimination in their community broadly.

In categories related to empathy, results were again mixed. As with youth, adult survey results indicated almost no change in relation to the statement, “Even if I am in a hurry, I am prepared to wait for a disabled person to get on the bus or get up the stairs,” as 100% of pre-training respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Similarly, for the statement, “It is important for me to be aware of/understand the culture of people from different ethnic groups,” results indicated a 2% decline, with little room for growth given high pre-training responses. In one category, however, adults demonstrated a 27% improvement: “It is acceptable for people to act differently than I do because they come from a different background.” The final evaluation will seek to determine whether that positive trend continues and reflects a deep change in understanding, tolerance, and empathy.

Finally, results were mixed in categories related to tolerance broadly. Changes in the six statements related to tolerance varied between positive or negative, but all within 9%, leaving little opportunity to comment on broad change.

Changes in Civic Engagement

Positive stories of change and some positive survey results indicate that at least some youth increased their sense of civic engagement throughout the project. The 15% of youth’s stories that were classified in Domain 2: Changes in Civic Engagement revealed deep transformation. Other youth noted positive changes in civic participation as well, even if their stories were ultimately categorized differently. Based on survey results, behaviors around civic engagement improved substantially, with more youth becoming involved in their communities. Youth also demonstrated an increased understanding of civic engagement and more positive attitudes toward their community. Adults demonstrated improvement in participatory approaches to working with youth and in their application of PYD principles, as well as engagement with local leaders. However, some results are inconclusive and merit further research in the final evaluation.

“We showed the community that young people want to do better things for the community.”

- Youth participant,
Romania

Youth Outcomes from MSC

The MSC technique allowed staff to understand the processes behind changes in civic engagement, as youth shared their stories of becoming more confident in their ability to effect positive change and feeling proud of their accomplishments with respect to the community. Fifteen percent of youth’s stories of significant change related most strongly to civic engagement. Multiple youth at each school said that the YAT project was the first project in which they had ever participated. Youth said, “We didn’t think we could accomplish projects” and “We showed the community that young people want to do better things for the community.” Another youth entitled his written story, “I believe in projects.” Even for youth whose stories did not principally relate to civic engagement, a sense of accomplishment and pride in their community or school project surfaced in many cases. For example, in a youth’s story

that was categorized as a Domain 1 story, she said, “I feel a lot of pride because of how the school is now better.”

Most Significant Change Story for Domain 2: Civic Engagement

The story that was selected as most significant came from a female youth in Romania. An excerpt of her story is below:

This project changed me a lot. It made me more communicative. I can express myself more freely than before. I made lots of friends. I learned new things. I can say that I've been greatly changed by this project from many points of view- both as a person as well as my activities that have completely changed. I learned what it means to volunteer. I didn't know what this was beforehand. I would only do things if I got paid. Very few youth do something for their community without pay. Very few students get involved in activities. It made me care about my community. Beforehand, I only cared about myself, but this project made me think of others. This project made me more responsible, towards myself and towards society and towards my school.

Youth Outcomes from Survey

Changes in behaviors and level of community participation:

Youth behaviors around civic engagement improved significantly from the pre-training assessment, likely due to the fact that choosing to participate in a YAT necessarily meant participating in a civic project. Given that extracurricular activities and organized projects are rare in schools in Romania and Moldova, this finding was not surprising. Youth were asked, “In the past 12 months, did you participate in any activity intended to improve your school or community?” and invited to respond yes or no. If they responded yes, they were prompted to describe the activity. Responses were only counted in the affirmative if they had provided a valid example, for verification purposes (see Appendix 5 for a rubric used to determine validity of responses). Compared to 18% of respondents (or three of 15) at the pre-training assessment, 86% of respondents in the midterm survey provided an example of an activity in which they had participated. This percentage should have been 100% due to the nature of YCED, but was likely lower because youth either did not take the time to provide an example, or possibly because they did not necessarily see their YAT project in the terms described in the question. Local and partner staff expect to see the same percentage or higher in the final evaluation.

In addition to changes in participation in community improvement activities, youth were asked about their interactions with local or regional government representatives.³⁰ Interactions increased

³⁰ This set of questions was deemed important based on the theory that youth need successful interactions with members of authority in order to feel confident to voice their opinions and to feel that their opinions are valued.

significantly, from 53% in the pre-training stage to 96% in the midterm stage. Interactions were further broken down by type, with the following response choices, shown in the table below.

Table 6

Type of interaction with government representatives	Midterm: Number responded	Midterm: Percent of total	Pre-training: Percent of total
Attended an event where a government representative spoke	55	69%	27%
Wrote a letter to a government representative	6	8%	0%
Spoke on the phone	15	19%	7%
Spoke in person	30	38%	7%
Received material or non-material support for a project or initiative	40	50%	20%
Other (please explain)	3	4%	7%
None	3	4%	47%

Changes in attitudes regarding civic engagement:

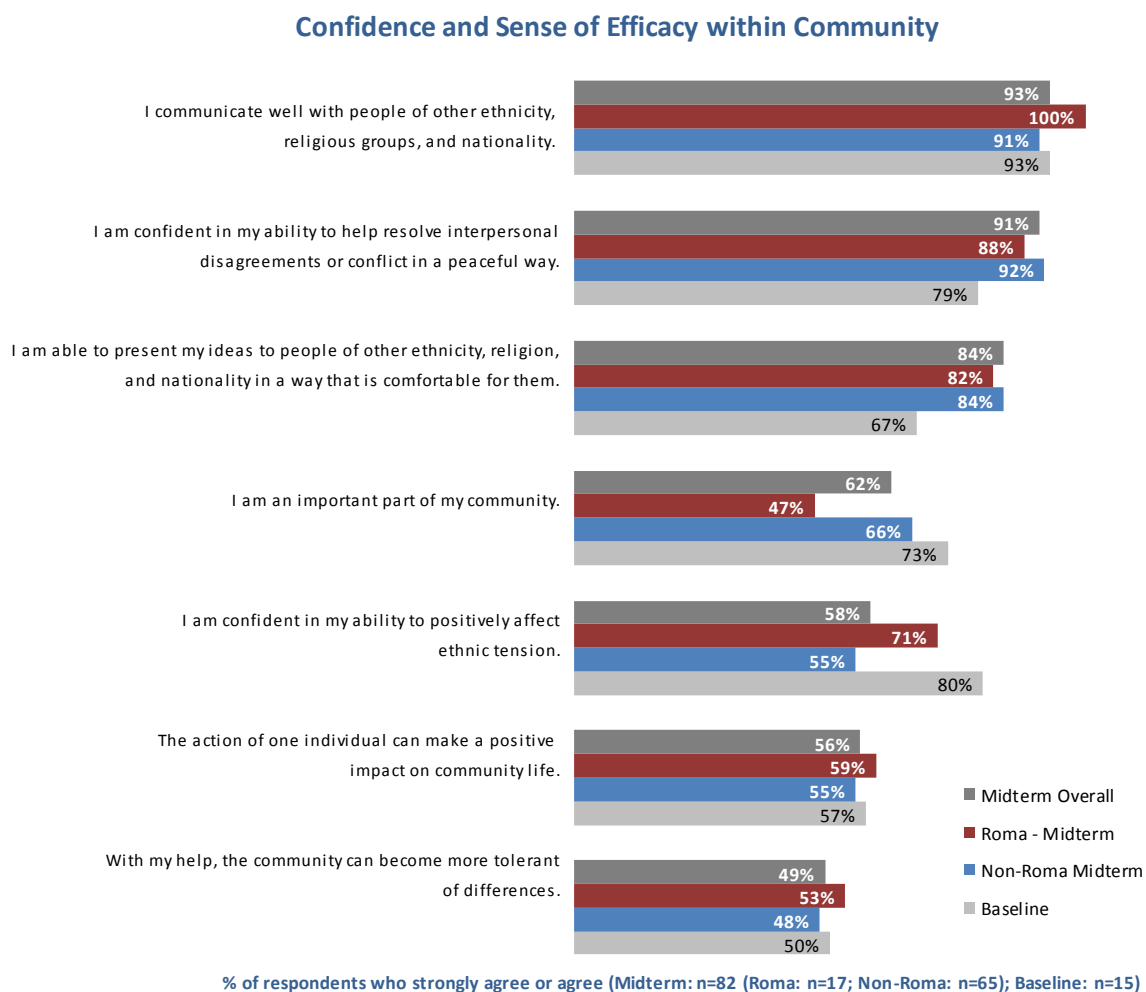
A majority of youth responding to the midterm survey demonstrated an understanding of civic engagement. Youth were asked to respond to the open-ended question, “What does civic engagement mean?” Valid answers were determined using a rubric (see Appendix 5) and were required to include one of the following concepts: action, activism, responsibility, sense of something larger than oneself, or role in the community. Seventy percent of youth demonstrated an understanding of civic engagement in the midterm survey, compared to 47% of youth in the baseline. Again, the small sample size of the pre-training assessment makes comparison tenuous.

In the midterm survey, while many youth did attempt to provide answers, several respondents illustrated important concepts they had learned, though outside the meaning of civic engagement. For example, 12 youth—from different schools and communities—described civic engagement roughly as ‘committing to finishing something they set out to do.’ Mentors likely emphasized perseverance and the importance of keeping commitments throughout the project, but while perseverance is an important quality to learn, it was not counted as an adequate definition of civic engagement. Other responses were project-specific; for example, two youth responded that civic engagement meant being involved in a competition, and two youth responded that civic engagement meant working in a team. These responses were also not considered to display an adequate understanding of civic engagement.

Overall, the majority of youth responding to the midterm survey expressed a belief in their abilities to change situations in their communities. This finding is important because a central component of civic engagement that YCED seeks to increase is youth’s feeling of value and their perceived ability to effect positive change. The survey included a matrix of statements about confidence in their abilities to change things in their community, in which youth were asked to select one of the following: strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, undecided, somewhat disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree. For each statement but one, a majority of youth agreed or strongly agreed with statements about their efficacy.

The pre-training assessment and midterm surveys produced similar results in areas of efficacy, and for most statements, little variation exists between Roma and non-Roma respondents. Two statements reveal differences, however, as seen in the chart below. Nearly 20% more non-Roma students than Roma students agree with the statement “I am an important part of my community.” This disparity may reflect underlying discriminatory conditions for Roma in a broad sense in the community, which the program seeks to address. However, due to limitations in Roma identification, more research should be conducted before drawing any conclusions. Again, due to a low sample size in the baseline, limited conclusions can be drawn in comparing the baseline to the midterm survey. After one more year of project activities, that gap is expected to narrow.

Figure 5



Most Significant Change Story for Domain 3: Changes in Communities & Relationships

The story of a female youth from Romania was selected as the most significant in this domain. Here is an excerpt of her story:

I am proud to see something behind me. We worked as a team and we did something for the community, for our school. We received funding. It was very well thought-out, the idea of involving Roma and Romanians. There are some other things that could be done for the community. I find that the things which we do not give great importance, in reality are very important in society. We have this conference room that was done in the framework of the project, and we want to have a festivities hall that would benefit more people.

Adult Outcomes from MSC

The evaluation team applied the same questions they asked of youth to adult mentors. A distinct outcome of YCED is “Teachers, schools, and local NGO leaders effectively promote civic engagement and tolerance among Roma and majority students,” and it was determined that attitudes, observations, and behaviors of teachers should be measured similarly to those of youth.

Only one adult shared a story of change relating primarily to Domain 2: Changes in Civic Engagement, while the majority of adults shared stories of change relating most to community-wide changes (Domain 3). This was in line with expectations, given that many adults involved in the project—voluntarily—would have already felt a strong sense of civic engagement, enough to lead youth in a community project. For example, one adult mentor said, ““I consider myself an active citizen and that’s why I try to imprint this to youth I work with.”

For the one Roma mentor whose most significant change was in her sense of civic engagement, she said, “I went into the community, learned how to get involved in the community, to have initiative and tell other young people how to get involved in a project. Now I go into the community very often, I collaborate with youth often, and we meet often to discuss about the project.” She said she also communicated with the mayor, the vice mayor, and the principal of the school. “As a group we realized that we should have more initiative, make more changes, and attract more youth from other ethnicities, both Roma and Non-Roma, and not to discriminate.”

Adult Outcomes from Survey

Adults began the program with high levels of civic participation, as this was a selection criterion for their participation. All but two of 20 adults reported having participated in an activity intended to improve

their school or community at the pre-training stage, and 14 of 14 adults said the same in the midterm phase.

The survey also sought to measure the degree to which teachers and mentors had access to and support from local leaders. In the midterm evaluation, 12 of 13 respondents for that question said that they could name local government or community leaders who support youth civic engagement or volunteerism activities in the school, and these same respondents said they had interacted with these leaders about youth civic engagement activities. Similarly, 16 of 20 in the pre-training assessment could name supportive community leaders, and 15 of those had interacted with at least one with regard to youth civic engagement.

A notable difference arose in the frequency of interactions: In the midterm, 100% of adults who knew about supportive leaders had interacted with them in the past month, whereas in the pre-training assessment, 13 of 20, or 65% of adults, had done so. Adults were also asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements relating to the support of local leaders, but no discernible difference occurred between the pre-training assessment and midterm survey. The majority of adults surveyed for the midterm agreed—but not strongly—with statements relating to the support of local leaders. This indicates room for growth in Year 2, with heightened involvement of local leaders as adult mentors improve their coaching, advocacy, and marketing skills.

Adult Facility with Positive Youth Development: For YCED to be most effective, adults must espouse principles of Positive Youth Development (PYD) and adopt a learning-by-doing approach to mentoring youth. The survey asked adults a series of questions about the degree to which they allow for youth agency in their projects. For example, the first statement reads “I consult with youth when making decisions about projects,” with response choices of always, most of the time, about half of the time, rarely, and never. Following this, adults were asked the following: “Please give an example from the last year of when you consulted with youth about a project decision.” Responses were only counted as affirmative if adults provided an example deemed qualified according to a rubric (see Appendix 5).

At the midterm stage, the range of adults following PYD principles varied greatly by type of PYD practice. For example, 83% of adults provided adequate examples in response to the following statement: “I give youth the opportunity to take on different roles in projects, including leadership roles.” However, 30% of adults provided an adequate example in response to this statement: “I give youth the opportunity to learn from their own mistakes, developing the skills they need for adult life.” Other statements were “I consult with youth when making decisions about projects” (54%) and “I develop and implement projects in such a way that young people from different family, social, economic and ethnic backgrounds can work together” (40%). In the pre-training assessment, adults registered examples between 10% and 30% of the time, compared to the range of 30%-80% in the midterm survey, which demonstrates some improvement in youth-serving practices. This may be in part due to an increased understanding in what the PYD principles are and a higher facility in answering the question.

Other Changes

Because MSC is designed explicitly to gather information about changes that may or may not be related to the program’s outcomes, this section describes the changes that youth and adults shared that fall outside of the two main goals of increasing tolerance and increasing civic engagement. Youth shared

powerful examples of personal transformations, and while some of these transformations related to feelings of tolerance and openness toward those of other ethnicities, some of them related to youth's skills, confidence, and way of interacting with the world more broadly.

As mentioned previously, 44% of stories shared by youth were classified as stories of personal change. Of these, several broad themes emerged: improved communication skills, increased confidence, change in status in the school or community, motivation, and personal development/maturity. The points below represent the types of changes other than increases in tolerance that youth shared within Domain 1: Personal Changes.



- One youth entitled his story “Radical Change Bulls eye” and described how he became much more confident and able to interact with his peers. He recommended that other shy people be given the chance that he was given.
- A Roma youth from Romania said that his most significant change was that he stopped skipping school because he has an obligation to be at the radio as a DJ. He also shared that he is no longer rude to teachers.
- Another youth said that he became more sociable and listens to colleagues, whereas before his tendency was to mock his peers. “I learned not to be mean about other people’s ideas,” he said.
- One youth said that before the project, he had no friends, and now he is in a group with people who “before didn’t notice my presence.”
- One youth said that she was shy before the project and did not speak to colleagues of a higher level than her, but that the project changed that.
- One youth, with his story entitled “My First Participation in a Project,” shared that his greatest change was learning how to work on a project. “The IREX project gives me a new beginning,” he stated. He said that others in the school want to be involved and are envious of the group.³¹
- For one youth, her most significant change was becoming more responsible and improving her organizational skills.
- One youth said, “The project brought more personal changes to me than in other parts. I started to believe in myself and that my opinion could be heard by others. That was an important change, discovering that I could be heard.”

The MSC storytelling technique aptly brought out changes that the youth considered to be central to their lives but that were not explicit intended outcomes of the project. One change in particular might be considered a negative outcome, the rise in status of the YAT members, possibly at the expense of non-participant peers in the school. At least one youth said that others were “jealous” of him and his participation in the project, and certainly the point of the project is to bring students together, not divide them (see more in the Recommendations section). Overall, however, the unintended changes

³¹ Such a change should be noted for staff so they can work to avoid the effect of the project excluding other youth in the school.

that the MSC methodology captured correspond to the goals of the program, given the importance of personal development for youth—including confidence and communication skills—and its relevance to helping shape capable, concerned adult citizens who create positive change in their communities.

Recommendations

Evaluators asked youth and adult participants explicitly for any recommendations to improve the project. Thirty-two of 82 youth provided direct recommendations, with three of those youth providing more than one type of recommendation. The most common recommendation centered on the concept of “more of” the project in some form, which is not wholly unexpected given predicted positive response bias. Eighteen youth voiced a desire for more youth to get involved and benefit from the project (nine) or for the project or money to be continued (nine). Eleven youth recommended a specific, different activity or project. For example, in one school, several youth mentioned that they wanted to create a festivity hall, as this idea had been brainstormed earlier and ruled out. Other recommendations shared by youth, though by fewer youth, include: increasing communication with other YATs (three); more autonomy to make decisions (one); more support from Romani CRISS or IREX Moldova staff (one); and for the project to make students less busy (one).³²

Four of ten adults provided recommendations, which included the following:

- To create a festivity hall.
- To emphasize project writing and reporting: “It was an extraordinary week at CSA-1, but regarding the writing of the project, there was not enough information provided. We had some trouble with that: establishing objectives, implementing activities, making the budget.”³³
- “It is best to select students from 8th and 10th grades to attend the CSA. They are not so busy with exams like the ones from 9th and 12th grades.”
- For more adults to participate in the team and for the grant amount to be increased.

Based on the above recommendations provided by participants and an analysis of the survey and MSC data, below is a set of suggestions that may help improve the outcomes of YCED:

1. **Ensure the sustained participation of trained adult mentors:** In two of the six schools visited for the evaluation, the non-Roma mentor was the only mentor present and was reported to be the only mentor deeply involved in the project. Given that the project does not provide adult mentors with any material incentives, the retention rate may be considered relatively high. However, the YCED approach requires strong role models both from Roma and non-Roma populations. While changing schedules and priorities make some attrition inevitable, staff

³² Note that care was taken to record and categorize every recommendation offered by the youth. However, it is possible that some youth provided recommendations that were not recorded as such and, as a result, not included in the count of 35 above.

³³ This recommendation had also surfaced in a post-training survey following the CSA in 2011, and staff members have already adapted training materials based on this suggestion.

members should keep in regular contact with both mentors —not just the ‘lead’ mentor—to discover and address any issues that may cause them to stop participating. In cases where either mentor must stop participating, staff should seek to find a supportive replacement. Staff might consider conducting weekly calls not only with the non-Roma mentors, who are often more connected to the schools because they are teachers or administrators, but also with the Roma mentors. This way Roma mentors can voice their concerns and provide project information directly. Direct, regular contact with Roma mentors might also provide Roma mentors with an equal sense of responsibility and duties as those of the non-Roma mentor, which will in turn positively affect the dynamics with youth (see Recommendation #2 below).

2. **Ensure high levels of participation of Roma youth:** The low profile of Roma youth in the community is a problem that the YCED program seeks to address, and at the same time poses practical challenges to the implementation of the program. In the pre-program design assessment, IREX partner and local staff noted underrepresentation and hesitance to self-identify as Roma as a pervasive issue in the community. The evaluation confirmed that observation, at least to a degree, based on the small numbers of Roma youth reporting themselves as such in the survey. However, it is impossible to determine how many youth were Roma who did not identify as such, as it is likely that the percentage of participants who are Roma is smaller than that of non-Roma. Thus, two challenges affect the ideal balance of the YCED model: lower rates of participation by Roma, and lower rates of identification. For low rates of participation, the primary source of this challenge was said to be a corollary low rate of retention of Roma youth in secondary school,³⁴ a challenge that YCED is not equipped to address. In any case, either of these challenges may be alleviated in part by the sustained involvement of a strong Roma mentor, regular check-ins with both leaders to monitor the continued participation of youth and address problems that arise, and possibly more targeted outreach to Roma youth.

In one community, only one of 16 youth participating in the evaluation identified himself as Roma, and he was the selected Roma leader who had attended the CSA training. While there may simply not be enough Roma attending school to make the group ethnically balanced, the Roma members of the YAT were not present on the day of the evaluation, or Roma youth were not identifying themselves as such, the situation bears investigation. That school also corresponded to the lowest rates of change relating to tolerance and attitudes toward ethnicity; only two of the 16 shared changes in attitudes regarding Roma in their stories. Again, staff may be limited in what they can do, but it should be noted that the goal of promoting tolerance and empathy will be difficult in groups that are roughly homogeneous.

Local and partner staff can increase their marketing efforts to garner more participation by Roma youth. If necessary, staff could market the project in Roma-dominant neighborhoods, targeting not just in-school but out-of-school Roma youth as well. While schools will still serve as the hubs for the project, inviting out-of-school Roma youth may improve the ethnic balance given the low enrollment rates of Roma in high school as mentioned above and work to reduce

³⁴ This finding corresponds to broader research on the Roma in Eastern Europe, in which youth drop out of secondary school for myriad reasons, including economic constraints, health issues, migration, and perceived discrimination. See UNDP 2007, p. 11, 61-62.

discrimination more broadly in the community. Also, in conjunction with Recommendation #1, more sustained communication with Roma mentors may also allow Roma mentors to communicate barriers to participation by Roma youth and work with local staff to create solutions.

3. **Implement a training on participatory planning and facilitation:** Village Earth cited the need for more training in participatory programming, specifically planning and event facilitation, for both local and partner staff and for adult mentors. Such training would enhance the process to make it even more student-drive and based on group decision-making than is currently in place. Such training would address the concerns of the youth who expressed an interest in being more heavily involved in the planning and management of the project, though many youth said they were able to make decisions throughout the project life cycle. A methodology provided to adults and youth leaders that outlines how to facilitate group decision-making might leave less room for variation based on personality. Adult mentors most likely need more support than just one week per year of training in PYD and project facilitation, so it is recommended that an interim, refresher training be implemented that would at once increase local and partner staff's connections with mentors and also reinforce principles of PYD that were introduced at the CSA.
4. **Support teams to involve more youth in the projects:** As many youth who offered recommendations expressed interest in expanding the group so that other youth may benefit, IREX and RCRISS can take steps toward coaching mentors and youth leaders to create more activities that bring in a wider group of youth. This recommendation comes wholly from the youth providing feedback and should be considered as a critical next step in improving the project. While this possibility would need to be weighed carefully against the benefit of having a small, concentrated group where strong relationships form and where youth receive a 'more concentrated dosage' of programming, IREX and RCRISS staff can work with mentors and youth to identify project ideas that involve other youth in a deliberate way. One solution might be to encourage youth to implement tolerance-specific projects that benefit more students and community members, so that the messages stay focused even with an expansion of participants.

That so many youth recommended the involvement of more youth and the expansion of the project's mandate reveals a great appetite for projects in schools. RCRISS and IREX can work with mentors and administrators to communicate youth's desire to have opportunities for more extracurricular activities. A final activity of the YCED project could be to bring together youth and their administrators to discuss ideas in a participatory way so that opportunities for engagement continue beyond the life of the project.

5. **Increase discussions around civic engagement:** As fewer youth than expected shared stories of significant change regarding civic engagement, staff should investigate ways to heighten the impact of the project on this area and seek to understand better this gap between results and expectations. One possibility is that the concept of civic engagement is discussed in different ways among YAT members, or perhaps not discussed at all. Staff might conduct regular meetings or workshops with adult mentors to discuss how to discuss issues of community involvement with youth more explicitly. Staff could also consider holding discussions directly with youth groups to ask them what would make them more connected to the community and likely to continue the project, continuing the cycle of participatory project activities. To improve

monitoring of civic engagement outcomes throughout the final year of the project and in the final evaluation, a clearer definition of civic engagement—one that possibly accounts for the unintended outcomes related to confidence, communication skills, and perseverance—might allow staff to evaluate more effectively their efforts to increase civic engagement. This improved and broader definition of civic engagement will be used in the final evaluation and will be employed to refine the domains of change to reflect changes the youth are experiencing more accurately.

Conclusion

Overall, stories shared by youth and adult participants using the MSC technique, as well as key corroborating data from the survey, point to deep, positive changes effected by YCED to date. In fact, during the storytelling exercise, many local and partner staff expressed that the changes they heard the youth share were far more significant than they had expected. Specifically, changes regarding relationships between Roma and non-Roma youth surfaced frequently and powerfully. Because capturing attitudinal change is universally understood to be difficult, perhaps particularly through surveys, the MSC technique gave a more consistent picture of the changes effected by YCED than the survey and left evaluators with a strong sense of which program outcomes were being met most effectively: first, youth were transforming at the personal level, whether through broad skills and attitudes or through attitudes specifically toward those of other ethnicities. Second in strength, the project was changing relationships between groups in the school and community, particularly between Roma and non-Roma youth. Third and last, the project was increasing youth's sense of civic engagement. Taken together, these results provide a coherent picture of the effects of YCED and where programmers should devote resources to ensure that YCED fully meets all objectives by the end of the project cycle.

The stories shared by youth also illuminated some of the inconsistencies that were evident in the survey results. In particular, survey questions that aimed to measure attitudinal change provided mixed results, with youth increasing tolerance and empathy in some cases, and showing little or no improvement in others. Some of the inconsistency may be due to flaws in the survey design, which will be addressed to the extent possible before the final evaluation. However, the stories also showed a complex process of change that many youth were undergoing, and one that was not always linear. At times, while non-Roma youth shared stories of how they had learned to have greater respect for their Roma colleagues, they used insensitive language. For example, one youth in Romania who spoke of having Roma friends for the first time and profound change in reducing discrimination, said, "I am really happy with the [project] because this little town will not be considered a Roma town filled with stupid people." Clearly, this youth has yet to grasp fully concepts of tolerance, and yet positive steps are encouraging. With a story as complex as that, then, it comes as little surprise that survey results portray a cohort of youth in growing stages. With one more year of the intervention left, it is hoped that the final results show more consistent and positive trends across attitudes.

Stories and survey data also corresponded with regard to civic engagement, with stories showing less change in this domain than in areas of tolerance and relationships between Roma and non-Roma. Similarly, survey data did not indicate much of an increase in youth's sense of civic engagement. Staff

members hypothesized that because many YATs had just completed their projects or were in the final stages, they had yet to experience the full project cycle and learn about serving the community. The pride that comes with completing a project and hearing community feedback, it was hypothesized, is an important component of learning the value of civic engagement. With more projects coming up in the following year for current YATs and new YATs embarking on projects for the first time, it is predicted that results of improvements in civic engagement will be stronger in the final evaluation.

Finally, the MSC storytelling methodology—particularly with participatory video—was at once an effective tool in learning about hard-to-measure changes among the youth and within their communities and a useful learning tool for staff members. Local and partner staff members said, “I like the project better now” and expressed surprise at the level of analysis that youth demonstrated. On data collection days, stories that staff analyzed spurred discussions on project implementation and left staff with ideas of improvements to the program. The participatory methodology is likely to prove useful for staff in the future, with a project that targets youth in small groups, focuses on qualitative change, and seeks to increase youth voice. At the time of this report, RCRISS staff had already implemented the MSC methodology in another local project aimed at educating Roma youth. IREX plans to implement a similar methodology in the final evaluation.

List of Appendices

1. Participatory M&E Training Agenda and Feedback
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Appendix 1. Participatory M&E Training Agenda and Feedback

MONITORING AND EVALUATION TRAINING SCHEDULE

DAY 1

Introductions and Course Overview (9:00 am – 9:30 am)

Ground Rules for Participation - Expectations (9:30am – 10am)

Why M&E? (10am – 10:30am)

Break (10:30 am – 10:45 am)

Story Collection (10:45 am – 11:15 am)

Participation and Empowerment (11:15 am – 12:00 pm)

Lunch Break (12:00 pm – 1:30 pm)

Theory: Humanization and Participatory Methods (1:30 pm – 3:00 pm)

Break (3:00 pm – 3:15 pm)

Most Significant Change Technique (3:15 pm – 5:00 pm)

DAY 2

Opening Reflection & Discussion Method (9:00 am – 10:30 am)

Break (10:30 am – 10:45 am)

Defining Domains of Change & Collecting Significant Change Stories (10:45 am – 12:00 pm)

Lunch Break (12:00 pm – 1:30 pm)

Selection Process, Feedback, and Verification (1:30 pm – 3:00 pm)

Break (3:00 pm – 3:15 pm)

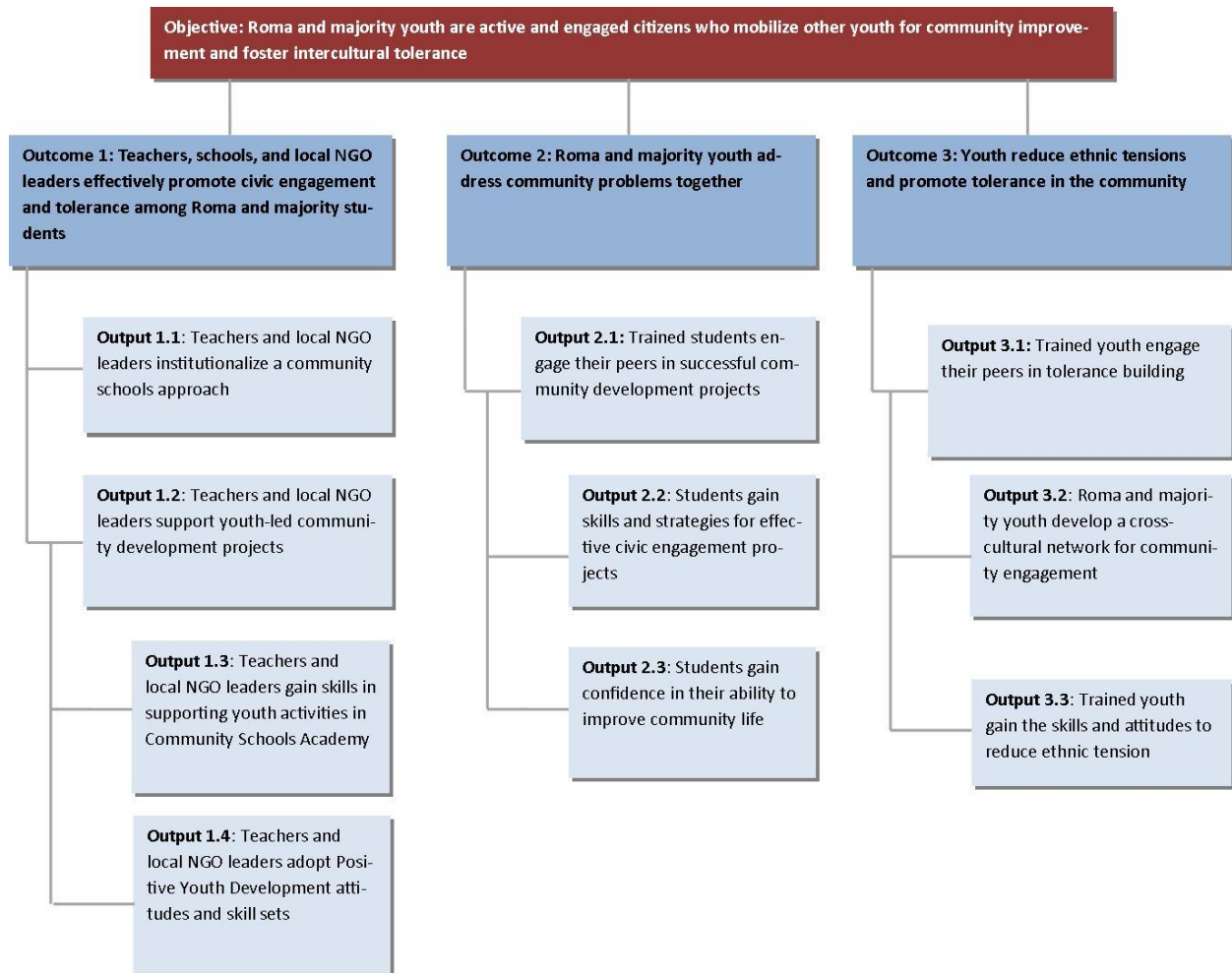
Quantification, Meta-Monitoring, and Revisions (3:15pm – 4:30pm)

Final Reflection and Evaluation (4:30pm – 5:00 pm)

Training evaluation written comments from Romani -CRISS and IREX-Moldova staff:

- “I like this way to learn this new method of evaluation and monitoring because it brings us closer with the teams.”
- “I liked the atmosphere, team spirit, the part where everyone shared their experience, and the facts helped me to learn participatory monitoring and evaluation techniques.”
- “I liked the relaxed atmosphere and the way debates took place. These two elements helped me comprehend easier the monitoring and evaluation techniques. I would have liked to have seen more monitoring techniques.”
- “I liked that we were a small group and thus able to interact a lot, ask, and respond to questions. Another thing I liked was the fact that it was interactive and it did not leave us time to fall asleep or even watch the time impatiently. Regarding the content, the second day was better due to the very specific information applicable to the project and the way it was structured. The last thing I liked was the environment. I would have liked to have seen more examples from other projects and more discussion on shifting power and concrete examples.”
- “The exercise of writing a most significant change story from YCED projects on the first day and sharing it with the others later in the day – this was a good introduction to the MSC method, which we later discussed more in-depth. The training was interactive and friendly, where everyone felt at ease to share their ideas openly without being judged. I liked the video “Bucket of Crabs” about internal oppression. I would have liked to have seen examples of MSC stories collected from other projects in other countries.”
- “I liked very much the approach used. Usually trainers use more stiff methods and it’s really nice to use friendly methods of teaching. I would have liked to work more in teams.”
- “I liked that the trainer was very open and that we established rules at the beginning of the training. I liked the balance of power. I was very pleased by the measures to equalize power.”
- “I really liked the monitoring technique because it really is different than what we are used to. I call it refreshing because it is not focused on indicators – it is focused on people. It is really useful for the work I do. I would have liked to have seen more samples of final reports and final documentation examples.”
- “I really liked the way this course occurred, at the beginning I thought we shall stay and listen to some presentation. But I really changed my perspective because we debated a lot of things and I really like the concept of participatory M&E, in which as a monitor you become a friend to not someone who comes to make you feel stressed out or obligated because you have a project that needs to be evaluated. I would have liked to learn about more methods.”

Appendix 2. Results Framework



Appendix 3. Rubric used to determine validity of survey responses

YCED Survey Questions Requiring a Rubric:

From Youth Baseline Survey:

2. What does civic engagement mean?

0 = No or invalid answer

1 = Valid answer: Involves some semblance of the following concepts: action, activism, engagement, community, responsibility

Borderline Examples:

Yes:

- *Doing something useful for society.*
- *Civic engagement means taking responsibility towards someone else.*

No:

- *Civic engagement means loving and respecting your heritage/motherland*

From Adult Baseline Survey:

7. For the following questions, please think about your recent work on youth projects in school-based extracurricular activities, or in community activities, to respond to the following questions:

a. Please give an example from the last year of when you consulted with youth about a project decision.

1 = Relevant example

- Clear explanation of how youth gave input to design, development, or planning.
- Must indicate that youth had some input to how the program, project, or event “looked.”
- Not necessary for youth to have taken a lead role. If youth were surveyed, or even asked informally about their opinions, this counts.

0 = Insufficient or irrelevant example

- The example is not specific or detailed enough to serve as evidence.
- The example demonstrates that youth were reached by the event as subjects, rather than actors in the development/design.

Borderline:

- *We often ask youth about their opinions, needs, perspective, and personal thoughts = 0*
- *In our workshop, we had to work on a project about work protection and we had to choose a workplace where accidents may occur = 1*

b. Please give an example from the last year of when you gave an opportunity for youth to take on a leadership role:

1= Relevant example

- Clear explanation of how youth were positioned to make decisions about a project or step in a project.
- Must indicate that youth had ownership of the project or step in a project.

0 = Insufficient or irrelevant example

- The example is not specific or detailed enough to serve as evidence.
- The example indicates that youth were instructed what to do, rather than assuming decision-making abilities in the project.

Borderline:

- *We involved youth in the project "Save the Earth" = 0*
- *In a project at school, the youth had the opportunity to become informal leaders = 0*
- *In our workshop, we had to choose a leader which represented the team and spoke on our behalf = 1*
-

c. Please give an example from the last year of when you allowed youth to learn from their own mistakes and develop crucial skills:

1 = Relevant example

- Clear explanation of how youth worked through an issue or problem on their own, with some to little interference from adults.
- Must indicate that youth developed skills through practical experience in which they played an important role.
- Not necessary for youth to have actually made a mistake, but rather that they were given the opportunity to test their ideas in a real-world setting.

0 = Insufficient or irrelevant example

- The example is not specific or detailed enough to serve as evidence.
- The example indicates that youth were not provided the space and guidance to develop their own skills.

Borderline:

- *In a project at school, the youth expressed their point of view in a radical way. It was explained to them that being a leader, you must express your point of view in a diplomatic way = 0*
- *In an craft project there was some tension in the youth teams but we resolved them by discussing what a democratic leader is = 1*

d. Please give an example from the last year of when you fostered collaboration among youth across divisions:

1 = Relevant example

- Clear identification of the youth groups involved, whether from different ethnicities, religions, classes, or genders.
- Must indicate that youth from different groups directly collaborated in working toward a common goal.
- Must indicate that youth demonstrated an awareness that they were collaborating across divisions.

0 = Insufficient or irrelevant example

- The example is not specific or detailed enough to serve as evidence.
- The example indicates that youth did not address, directly or indirectly, the divisions among them.

From Post-CSA Survey for Youth:

3. Please choose any three of the above steps and explain what that step requires:

- 1. Youth Action Team Formation:** Identifying team members and agreeing to work together toward goals and objectives
- 2. Community Assessment and Identifying Assets:** Effective research methods that involve community members directly doing the research themselves / Assets are strengths and resources that exist within the community
- 3. Project Design:** Involves vision, data analysis, and design (developing project's goals and objectives) / Project design is the process of making a dream a reality
- 4. Action Planning:** Identifying and sequencing a list of tasks needed to reach your goals and objectives / Assigning roles, responsibilities, and timeline to tasks
- 5. Identifying Resources and Budgeting:** Finding local resources and managing grant money / Can involve using assessment data
- 6. Project Implementation:** Can mention any of the following:
 - Clearly defined roles and expectations
 - Frequent internal communication
 - Budget and resource monitoring
 - Keeping to your timeline
 - Flexibility and problem-solving
 - Keeping team's motivation up

7. **Project Evaluation:** Checking the progress of tasks (monitoring) or the progress toward goals and objectives (evaluation) / Identifying “signs” of success or “indicators” and measuring changes regarding indicators
8. **Celebration!:** Acknowledging work of team members, publicizing results in the community, using M&E data to publicize results

For scoring purposes, answers receive one point for each step for which they mention at least one element of those listed for action steps; the maximum is three points for Question 3.

4. What are three concepts that you learned about good leadership and team-building, as a result of this training?

One concept, which can include any of the below, counts for one point.

Good leaders:

- Build trust through displaying strong beliefs, values, skills, and traits
- Have a strong and positive character
- Take risks

Developing good leadership requires:

- Building interpersonal strengths
- Good communication skills
- Self-confidence
- Ability to motivate others
- Organizational skills

Good teambuilding:

- Builds trust within the group
- Maximizes group participation and learning:
 - Brainstorming
 - Small groups/report backs
 - Go around
 - Equal time
 - Rotating chair
 - Empty-chair discussion
 - Twice-once rule

From Post-CSA Survey for Adults:

2. I learned the following three techniques I can use to bring together youth of different ethnicities:

Can be related to the following, one point for each technique:

- Processing challenges
- Building bridges
- Employ tips for conflict resolution
- Create group awareness and explicit relationship building
- Use direct leadership style
- Cooperation and focus, allowing for youth-led activities
- Promote productivity, unity, autonomy, and commitment, using youth-led techniques