



1776 Massachusetts Avenue, NW | Suite 201
Washington, DC 20036 | USA
phone 202.775.0290 | fax 202.833.8581

SUSAN E. STROUD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

stroud@icicp.org
www.icicp.org

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Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) is very pleased to announce the publication of *Innovations in International Youth Volunteering*, a study identifying innovative approaches to youth volunteering (and particularly youth-led volunteering) from around the world. In this report, ICP analyzes these approaches and makes recommendations for fostering similar innovation in England and other countries. This report was commissioned by v (<http://www.wearev.com/>), a new charity based in England which is dedicated to motivating a million more youth to volunteer in their communities.

Out of 134 submissions, the ICP team and members of the project Expert Panel chose 22 projects to profile in the final report. These 22 projects represent 17 countries, including three cross-national programs, from Africa, the Middle East, Eastern and Western Europe, Latin America, and South Asia. Selection criteria included the degree to which the program serves an underserved population; the degree of innovation; the potential to be replicated and adapted; program sustainability; coherence between project objectives and activities; impact; and youth empowerment. Detailed case studies of each of these programs have also been published along with the report.

ICP would like to thank the Expert Panel for their invaluable contribution to this project: Nieves Tapia and Enrique Ochoa of CLAYSS in Argentina; Helene Perold and Rejoice Shumba of VOSESA in South Africa; Richard Beattie, formerly with CIDA and now an independent consultant in Canada; Arnie Wickens of CSV in England; and Cyprien Semushi of YADDI in Rwanda. Additionally, we offer a heartfelt thanks to the project managers and youth volunteers who provided us with additional materials and perspectives on the projects. Their work speaks for itself, and it is our pleasure to share their experiences and insights with others. Finally, ICP thanks v for recognizing and supporting the need to research and analyze innovation in youth volunteering on an international level.

This report and the accompanying case studies are available on the v website (<http://www.wearev.com/>) or through ICP's website: (<http://www.icicp.org>)

For more information, contact Charmagne Campbell-Patton, ICP Program Associate at campbell-patton@icicp.org.

vresearch

Innovations in International Youth Volunteering

An analysis of 22 innovative youth volunteer programs from around the world

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 MetaReciclagem focuses on reutilising technology to create social transformation. The programme has two principle functions: (1) acquiring used computers and setting up “recycled” laboratories with free software and Internet access and (2) providing operational support to technology projects that focus on digital inclusion.

¹ V Research Specification for project.

- 17. Global Connections & Exchange Programme, Palestinian Territories** **54**
 Part of Relief International, this programme uses a youth service-learning approach that is implemented and created by student clubs based in schools and community centres throughout the Palestinian Territories. The programme has three main objectives: integrating information technology (IT) and active learning methods into mainstream teaching, encouraging students to become engaged members of their communities, and promoting cultural exchange and understanding.
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 Young men and women of all cultural, social and educational backgrounds come together in teams for a full-time commitment of six or nine months. Volunteers work with disadvantaged children and young people, isolated elders, people with disabilities, and the homeless. They work to fight racism, protect the environment, and promote local economic development. While they serve, 20% of their time is dedicated to debating, reflecting, and preparing for “life after Unis-Cité.”
- 21. Healthy Housing Project, Bolivia** **65**
 In poor, rural areas of Bolivia, the devastating Chagas disease is endemic and the vincucha (the insect whose bite leads to infection) lives in traditional homes made of straw and mud: thousands of people are thought to be infected. Young volunteers in this project constructed a database to help the government understand the scope of the problem and allow it to more effectively target educational programmes and housing construction projects.
- 22. Young Philanthropists, Kenya** **68**
 An informal youth organisation has created an entirely student-led programme that provides sanitary towels to adolescent girls in poverty-stricken areas of the capital city. The organisation, which began in 2006, independently raises the money needed to provide local girls with the towels, while also conducting workshops for these girls on sexual health and how to effectively use the towels to avoid infections.

13. IMPACT

Programme Goals and Activities

Under Communist rule, community service was mandatory in much of Eastern Europe. Consequently, since the fall of Communism in the region, many Romanians are apathetic toward civic engagement in general, and have negative attitudes about community service in particular, seeing it as a punishment rather than an opportunity for personal enrichment and community development. To combat these attitudes, New Horizons, an NGO that works within the Eastern Orthodox culture of Romania and also has ties to the Ministry of Education, founded the IMPACT service programme in 2002. IMPACT, originally implemented in the poor mining area of the Jiu Valley, mixes adventure education, character development, and service learning to involve young people in the decisions that affect their lives. Trips incorporate outdoor activities, such as rock climbing or hiking, as well as a service component, such as cleaning up a river.

Programme participants develop social capital as well as vocational and entrepreneurial skills. The volunteers meet twice each week for two to three hours to discuss public ethical issues such as corruption, and train and plan for the community service projects. Leaders train the young people in project management, budgeting, lobbying, and conflict resolution, as well as computer, public speaking, and facilitation skills. Participants apply community analysis and problem-solving approaches to development, and become involved in local public life through their work at IMPACT. IMPACT volunteers have initiated and implemented programmes in such diverse areas as reduction of corruption and bribery, peer education about HIV/AIDS, environmental preservation, provision of food and clothing to poor families, and reduction of youth violence.

Seventy percent of IMPACT participants are between the ages of 16 and 18. About 800 young people have been involved since the project's inception, with about 550 participants last year. Most young people participate in the club for two to four years.

Innovation

IMPACT uses adventure education to encourage all young people to participate, even those who are not initially interested in community service.

IMPACT uses a unique social capital framework as the basis for the programme, holding highly participatory and democratic meetings to build trust and teamwork skills. IMPACT has partnered with a local university to research the programme's impact on social capital development, and initial results seem promising.

Other innovative elements include IMPACT's easily adaptable model that uses a system of clubs as its base and has allowed IMPACT to expand far beyond the Jiu Valley. To share knowledge with other programmes, IMPACT has also created an online searchable database for all its curricula. In addition, each club creates a webpage on which they post projects, media articles, and a calendar of activities. This promotes an exchange of ideas, but also a little healthy competition, which is incentive for each of the clubs to think of new ideas.



IMPACT Retreat

Youth Focus

IMPACT young people democratically decide and implement the community service projects. Project leaders merely serve as facilitators, posing questions to try and draw out the youth participants. Young people also co-lead the clubs and help develop and manage the games, stories, and trainings. One training session focused on the negative impact of corruption.

Youth participants wrote and performed a play demonstrating their findings and reactions to the session. Another group of young people in the Jiu Valley came up with the idea to put speed bumps on a dangerous road that had been the site of a series of accidents. After 2 years of lobbying the government to support this initiative, the speed bumps will finally be installed.

Youth Voice

Name: Robi Bogdanfy

Age: 18

Position: Student and Volunteer

“We gathered sponsors, bought meals, and then brought meals to their houses on Christmas. An old lady started crying. I didn't know I could help the community... now I know that anybody can help.”

Robi Bogdanfy

Robi got involved with IMPACT when one of his friends from another NGO suggested he go to a meeting. He finds the work incredibly rewarding and enjoys the fact that along with all the work, he also has fun. Robi has learned a great deal from his participation in IMPACT. He says “I didn't know some issues existed before joining IMPACT. I didn't know that so many people in my community were infected with HIV/AIDS.” Before IMPACT he also “didn't know that there were NGOs that work with community service. I thought community service was a penalty.” Now Robi has decided that he wants to study something related to community development.

Robi said his most memorable experience was when the group did a project to bring Christmas dinner to disadvantaged people in their community.

Programme Impact and Future Development

IMPACT has been successful in involving young people in post-Communist societies who are apathetic towards civic engagement. In addition, the programme continuously conducts research on its effectiveness in increasing social capital, which it incorporates into its planning. IMPACT has recently expanded from the Jiu Valley to seven other areas of Romania. Next year, IMPACT will partner with the Ministry of Education to launch 50 more clubs across Romania. Eighty percent of the existing clubs are becoming self-sustainable, generating and using their own resources after initial grant money runs out.

The programme hopes to improve its “youth public policy guide” to train the young volunteers to participate in the political process and advocate for their own interests, for example, by participating in town council meetings or lobbying for a line item for young people in the local budget. This public policy guide will support a long term goal of the organisation, to have IMPACT members serve as watchdogs on local public expenditures, thus increasing transparency and citizen involvement, elements which have been absent in the young democracy.

Robi recalls, “We gathered sponsors, bought meals, and then brought meals to their houses on Christmas. An old lady started crying. I didn’t know I could help the community...now I know that anybody can help.”



IMPACT volunteers working on a painting project

Contact Information:

Dana Bates

Email: danabrandi
@new-horizons.ro

Organisation:

New Horizons Romania

Programme Locations:

8 states all over
Romania. It is based in
the Jiu Coal mining valley.

Year Established: 2000

Website:

<http://www.new-horizons.ro>