



STRENGTHENING MIGRANT YOUTH LEADERSHIP THROUGH PERSONAL WELL-BEING AND COMMUNITY COMPASSION

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INTRODUCTION



WHY

A WHITE PAPER

- 10 years anniversary of Rays of Youth
- Increase quality of monitoring and evaluation
- Assess current challenges and improve the programme
- Identify best practices and expand the project inside Myanmar



GOALS

1. Explore general issues of *well-being and challenges* for youth participating in Rays of Youth program
2. Understand ways in which the program builds *resilience and opportunity* for young people in addressing these issues, as well as exploring where persistent challenges may lie



RESEARCH FINDINGS - WELL-BEING



Significant **differences** in youth's lives *before* entering Rays of Youth program and *afterwards*

“I used to be isolated, I had no friends and lacked confidence. I would never speak in public and people hardly noticed me - sometimes I was bullied by other kids for being so quiet. Now I feel confident, I have practiced communicating and public speaking and love to perform dramatic skits about social change in front of family and friends. I feel I can make a difference!”

RESEARCH FINDINGS - WELL-BEING

*“In Myanmar, we grew up learning that the country’s leaders were corrupt and could not be trusted. Many of our families faced daily violence and discrimination, things were often so bad that we had to leave and come to Thailand. Here the challenges are also large, but the leadership we learn through Rays of Youth is a **different kind of leadership**. It’s about respect, expressing yourself with confidence, allowing girls to be leaders (as before only boys were respected), helping your peers and working to make our communities stronger”*



RESEARCH FINDINGS - WELL-BEING

Challenges faced by the youth before the program:

- Family discord and *violence*
- *Poverty*
- Being shy and *lacking confidence*
- Feelings of *loneliness*
- Being *bullied* by Burmese or Thai peers
- *Lacking empathy* for others
- Having *few friends*
- Lacking in *life skills*
- *Not having personal goals* or a sense of hope for future possibilities



RESEARCH FINDINGS - WELL-BEING

Benefits of the Rays of Youth project:

- Learning the true meaning of *participation*
- Understanding the importance of respecting and promoting *human rights for all*
- Becoming more *physically active*
- *Growing emotionally*
- Improving *language skills*
- More able to *empathize* and help others
- Finding opportunity for *self-expression* through creative arts
- Receiving more *recognition* and *encouragement* from parents and community members
- Learning about *team work* especially through creative tasks like producing music together



RESEARCH FINDINGS - RESILIENCE



Key factors enabling young people's ability to *recover from situations of adversity*

1. Arts & Identity
2. Encouraging generosity
3. Peer support
4. Rooted in culture



RESILIENCE - ARTS & IDENTITY



Use of media, digital storytelling, radio programs and artistic expression through drama, dance and music, to **help young people tell their story, find their gifts and connect with others** in building social and cultural capital to:

- Explore different gender roles (e.g. peer leader, community leader)
- Express through body movement and dance expressed in drama
- Find their voice in developing unique skits and narrative stories



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RESILIENCE - ENCOURAGING GENEROSITY

The youth shared that the most significant interventions were those that tie personal skill development with *altruism, agency, empathy and compassion*

“We see that for our youth leaders, it’s not enough that they benefit personally from the Rays of Youth program, many of them want to help their families. They want to support those less fortunate than them back home in the communities, and they would very much like to help the Thai society that has allowed them to come here and study for a better future”



RESILIENCE - PEER SUPPORT

“Youth, whether boys or girls, enter the Rays of Youth with special challenges and strengths. Our job in designing programs is to find the best way to target problems by building on personal strengths. Using modern tools like media, internet and youth driven music and arts, helps address these challenges using youth friendly approaches.

This is why our programs are always evolving, while we have similar life skills formats for each RoY cohort, the content varies based on new innovation that we introduce.”



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RESILIENCE - ROOTED IN CULTURE



*“Our cultures have withstood challenges throughout our history, we can draw on our **cultural strength and pride** to help us manage the modern challenges we youth face. As a young female leader I feel I can help my culture in old and new ways!*”



RECOMMENDATIONS



1. **Evaluation & Learning**
2. **Expand** network of institutional allies to assist the Rays of Youth
3. Make **explicit** Rays of Youth's psychosocial benefits for vulnerable migrant young women and men
4. **Share** ROY as a national, regional and international model of good practice in youth lead life skills and development programming





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THANK YOU!

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