

Possible Methods to Collect Data on Youth-Related Program Objectives



OBJECTIVES FOR CHANGES IN YOUTH	POSSIBLE METHODS TO COLLECT DATA ON THE OBJECTIVE	COMMON CHALLENGES OR ERRORS	TIPS
Education			
<p><i>Secondary school graduation, or progress towards completion</i></p>	<p>Monitoring of school records of participants for graduation, drop-outs, and grades</p> <p>Pre- and post-tests related to program content.</p> <p>When records are not reliable, tracking of youth participants individually to verify whether they are progressing in school or graduating.</p> <p>Communications with teachers and/or parents could also help to verify progress.</p>	<p>Lack of access to school records, or unreliable and incomplete school recordkeeping systems.</p> <p>Tracking of participants – and communications with parents or teachers -- is challenging and time-consuming when the program serves large numbers of youth or covers multiple sites.</p>	<p>Graduation rates, drop-out rates, or grades of program participants could be compared to school-wide data, to see whether participants do better on average than their peers.</p> <p>However, it is important to verify whether the youth in the program are different from their peers in ways that might explain any differences (e.g. more motivated; higher performing to begin with).</p>
<p><i>Improved 21st century skills (computer & language) needed for globalized economy & society</i></p>	<p>Standard educational methods of assessing students’ skills, including monitoring of grades. Tests should measure skills in practice, such as observation of conversations in the language, or producing a spreadsheet in Excel.</p> <p>Tracking program graduates (ideally for at least one year) is important to evaluate whether the training contributed to the young person’s further education, employment, or wellbeing. Possible methods include mobile phone surveys, and collecting information during activities for alumni, and staying in touch via social media (Facebook,Whatsapp etc).</p> <p>Surveys or interviews with potential employers, and with those who have hired graduates, provide essential information for designing and evaluating the training.</p>	<p>The needs of the local job market can change rapidly in computer-related skills, making it difficult to find instructors and keep the program up-to-date.</p> <p>Tracking of graduates is typically a challenge.</p>	<p>When certification is needed for jobs using specific skills, measure the percent of graduates passing the certification test, and adjust curriculum if needed.</p>

Objectives for Changes in Youth	Possible Methods to Collect Data on the Objective	Common Challenges or Errors	Tips
Health & Wellbeing			
<p><i>Increased knowledge and/or capacity to protect health</i></p> <p>The concept of “capacity” has two elements: 1) a young person’s attitudes, skills and confidence to protect their own health, such as strategies to resist pressure to engage in unsafe behavior, or avoid coercive sex and 2) a young person’s access to “youth-friendly”¹ health services, medicines, and contraceptives.</p>	<p>Both knowledge and some aspects of capacity can be assessed through pre- and post-tests.</p> <p>Focus groups can identify attitudes on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) among youth to refine program content and design a pre- post-test. This method is not good to measure individual change.</p> <p>If the program has social media, periodic analysis of content may yield insights on issues that the program needs to address, and on whether the main messages are being absorbed.</p> <p><u>Capacity-specific methods</u> Guided observation of role plays can evaluate some skills. Interviews at program end with youth and teachers (separately) can capture their perspectives on changes in attitudes, intentions, and behavior due to the program.</p> <p>If the program refers youth to health services, service statistics can verify whether young people increase their use of services due to the program.</p>	<p>Much knowledge is short-lived if not used regularly, reducing the usefulness of post-tests.</p> <p>Skills measured by participatory methods are more challenging to evaluate. If observation is to be used, guides need to be developed, and tested by those doing the assessment.</p> <p>Pre and post tests on SRH issues are often misleading because youth may give socially acceptable answers in the pre-test, and more truthful answers in the post-test.</p> <p>Local youth vocabulary on SRH may differ from that of SRH professionals.</p> <p>It is challenging to link service use increases directly to a program, but providers can note how the young person was referred to a health service.</p>	<p>There are tested tools to verify increased health knowledge and attitudes in participants, but these must be adapted to the local culture. (See additional resources.)</p> <p>If there are items that most of the participants know in pre-test, remove them from the post-test, and design the program to concentrate on the knowledge gaps.</p> <p>For any program addressing sensitive issues such as gender and sexuality, use more than one method to assess results.</p> <p>Have local youth check the wording in test, survey, or interview guide for appropriate vocabulary.</p>
<p><i>Improved wellbeing, safety or psychological health for highly vulnerable youth (e.g. survivors of trafficking, violence, abusive situations)</i></p>	<p>Some interventions to reduce vulnerability are easily monitored. such as removal from unsafe situations, provision of stable housing, entrance into education or employment</p> <p>Standard tests of psychological health, applied pre- and post, if adapted to the culture.</p>	<p>There are challenges in evaluating psychological health. Tools to measure “resilience” are evolving and without conclusive evidence yet on which are best</p>	<p>Indicators for reduced vulnerability & improved psychological health could include increased school attendance; improved family relationships; increased social capital (supportive</p>

¹ Youth-friendly services respond to youths’ preferences on how and when services are delivered to ensure that youth feel comfortable and welcomed in the space. Provider training helps to remove judgment and stigma from all interactions with youth, which is especially important for SRH services.

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	Systematic teacher/monitor assessments		relationships), self-esteem; etc.
Livelihoods			
<i>Increased prospects for employment through acquiring vocational skills</i>	Standard teaching methods of assessing students' skills through grades. Tests should measure skills in practice for vocational training, and for employability skills such as job interviews, which can be assessed through observation of role plays.	Prerequisites for employability vary widely depending on local labor market and the youths' profile.	All assessment methods require that criteria for grades (or pass/fail) be clearly outlined (for example, criteria for a good CV, job application, or role-played interview).
<i>Increased prospects for employment for youth through improved employability skills</i>	Competency standards are needed to evaluate relevant employability results such as writing a CV, filling out a job application, researching local openings, and good performance in roleplaying a job interview.	For all three objectives, the program can only evaluate whether prospects of employment improved by following up with graduates, which has additional costs and logistical challenges.	Potential employers or other small businesses in the local communities can be helpful to evaluate the curriculum, and whether the skills of the graduates meet labor market needs.
<i>Increased prospects launching and running viable micro-businesses through acquiring business skills</i>	Vocational training evaluation must verify functional competence needed for employment or starting a business related to the skills being taught. Some vocations have certification tests; which students must pass.		
<i>Increased income or assets from decent employment or microbusiness</i>	Completion of the program often coincides with the launching of a micro-business or employment for the graduates, allowing easier follow up with graduates on changes in income or assets through: short surveys through cell phone texting, social media, or convening graduates for an attractive activity.	Follow-up of graduates to see whether they still have increased income or assets six to twelve months after completing the training is important to evaluate whether initial results led to sustainable livelihoods. However, this can be challenging, and entails additional costs.	

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Core Elements of Youth Development	POSSIBLE METHODS FOR ALL CORE ELEMENTS OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT		
<i>Increased awareness & capacity re gender equity</i>	Teacher/mentor observation using a checklist tool to assess changes due to the program	<p>Results on these social/emotional skills (as opposed to knowledge) are challenging to measure, so using more than one evaluation method is a good idea.</p> <p>The most common error is to fail to assess these objectives systematically, and rely solely on subjective impressions of staff</p> <p>Focus groups and open-ended questions in surveys or interviews can produce more qualitative data than the program can analyze well. Such analyses often require expertise (see EMpower’s guidance on Focus Groups and Interviews).</p>	<p>There are tested tools (see USAID Resource below) to verify increased awareness and capacity for most of these objectives; they must be adapted to the local culture</p> <p>The same evaluators should conduct the initial and final assessment so that scoring is standardized.</p>
<i>Increased leadership and community participation skills</i>	Pre- and post-tests, surveys, or interviews on youth’s perceptions of their assets, skills, and behavior. Attitudinal surveys on gender.		
<i>Improved self-esteem or self-confidence</i>	To assess attitudes & perceptions of the whole youth peer group, focus groups could be used as needs assessment, or pre- and post to measure changes over time. This is not a good method to measure individual change.		
<i>Increased social capital</i>			
<i>Increased core life skills</i>			
<i>Improved goal setting and planning for the future</i>	At the end of the program, spoken or written reflections by youth on changes due to the program.		
	METHODS FOR SPECIFIC CORE ELEMENTS		
<i>Increased leadership and community participation skills</i>	<p>Observations by staff/trainers on skills (planning and budgeting a project, running team meetings, resolving group conflicts, speaking in public, or reaching out to community members.</p> <p>Teachers use scoring guide to assess quality of youth’s design and implementation of projects.</p>		
<i>Increased core life skills</i> (critical thinking, problem-solving, communications, teamwork, financial literacy)	Standard educational testing can assess basic financial literacy.	Core life skills are defined differently. Evaluation tools may not correspond to objectives of a program for the specific life skill needs of youth in its community.	See Resource #5, USAID.

Improved goal setting and planning for the future²	Assessment by trainers of feasibility of goals/plans set by youth, using uniform guidance for grading.	Many programs lack guidelines on evaluating the feasibility of youth’s goals and plans.	
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Additional Resources on Evaluation Methods and Instruments/Tools

1. A TOOLKIT FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATING PROGRAMS FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS , developed with EMpower support by The Learning Community in Mumbai -- is an excellent resource for evaluating core elements of youth development for girls. <http://www.empowerweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/April-LC-toolkit-2015-EMpower.pdf>
2. The Interagency Youth Working Group has compiled tested and reliable Data Collection Materials for a Variety of Youth Development Programs – most of them focused on sexual and reproductive health, but also on livelihoods, working with especially vulnerable young people, and risk and resilience. [https://www.iywg.org/resources/?f\[0\]=im_field_resource_type%3A676](https://www.iywg.org/resources/?f[0]=im_field_resource_type%3A676)
3. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, *Using Qualitative Methods in Healthcare Research: A Comprehensive Guide for Designing, Writing, Reviewing and Reporting Qualitative Research. A Web-based Resource with basic guidance on Qualitative Methods.* The page on “Common Methods and Analytical Approaches” includes Observation, Interviewing, and Collecting Texts. Although the guide is focused on health care, the guidance on observation and interviews is useful for many types of programs. Focus groups and semi-structured interviews are described on the Interviewing page. <http://www.qualres.org/HomeComm-3597.html>
4. Rutgers University and IPPF. *EXPLORE: Manual for Training Young People as Researchers* This is a guide to involving young people in needs assessments and program evaluation, and also includes some basic guidance on implementing the methods. <http://www.rutgers.international/our-products/tools/explore>
5. USAID, 2013. *Scan and Review of Youth Development Measurement Tools.* <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2155/USAID%20Life%20Skills%20Measurement%20Review%20FINAL%20EXTERNAL%20REPORT.pdf> Two of the five tools mentioned as valid and reliable are available free of charge. The Jamaica Youth Survey is composed of all close-ended questions, and can be analyzed using Excel. The Child Trends survey -- *Flourishing Children ... Cognitive Interview Protocols* -- has both close-ended and open-ended questions.

² This objective refers to feasible paths to education, livelihoods and/or to the young person’s visions of their desired adult future, which may include other goals.