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PRESENTS

The role of non-profits in building socially conscious leaders:

A case study of the impact, benefits and challenges in engaging youth volunteers in the non-profit sector.



JULY 2018



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YMCA – Youth for Causes



Executive Summary

Youth are a critical part of our society and future. This case study research, conducted by Conjoint Consulting (Singapore) and funded by the Singapore Totalisator Board, as part of the Tote Board Case Study Collaborator Programme, provides pioneering insights into the role of Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) in developing socially conscious leaders. In this case study, we examine the key motivations for youth to volunteer with NPOs, show how volunteering helps to develop leaderships skills in youth and how that benefits the NPOs and the larger society as a whole.

To understand the benefits and challenges of youth volunteering for NPOs and society more broadly, seven qualitative interviews were conducted with organisations in the youth, volunteerism, social service, leadership sectors, alongside a survey of 154 youth volunteers. Secondary analysis of interview and survey data from a previous research project (Conjoint Impact Stories 2018) was also conducted.

Survey data revealed a strong link between volunteering with an NPO and youth leadership development. Volunteering supported youth leadership development through increased skills in task orientation and leadership flexibility. At the societal level, youth volunteerism and investment in leadership development led to significant building of social capital, including enhanced social networks, increased empathy and sense of belonging.

To achieve the above, we found that there were both incentives and challenges in engaging youth volunteers. Youth volunteers are a vital resource for NPOs and have the potential to support social innovation by providing fresh perspectives and new ideas. However, there are challenges in engaging youth volunteers due to competing priorities for youth as well as challenges in allocating resources and time to effectively train and manage volunteers. Ultimately, there is a need to find balance between providing a positive volunteer experience for youth while addressing community needs on the ground.

This case study provides an important step in understanding the role of NPOs in developing socially conscious leaders. The study is intended for policymakers, organisations and youth interested in volunteering, in the light of our national priorities to build a more caring, cohesive and confident society. Going forward, we hope that more research using nationally representative samples will be conducted with recommended actions to build a nation of socially conscious leaders.

Definitions, Research Objective & Methods

DEFINITIONS:

NPO (Non-Profit Organisation): is an organisation that works towards public interest and benefit and does not distribute surplus income to its members.

Socially Conscious or Societal Leadership: Leadership that is 'devoted to the public good' through creating sustainable value and social impact that benefits society.

Youth: People aged between 15-35 years old, as defined by the National Youth Council, Singapore.

Volunteering: This study is focused on formal volunteering, defined as long-term, planned activities that benefit others within an organisational setting.

Research Aims and Objectives

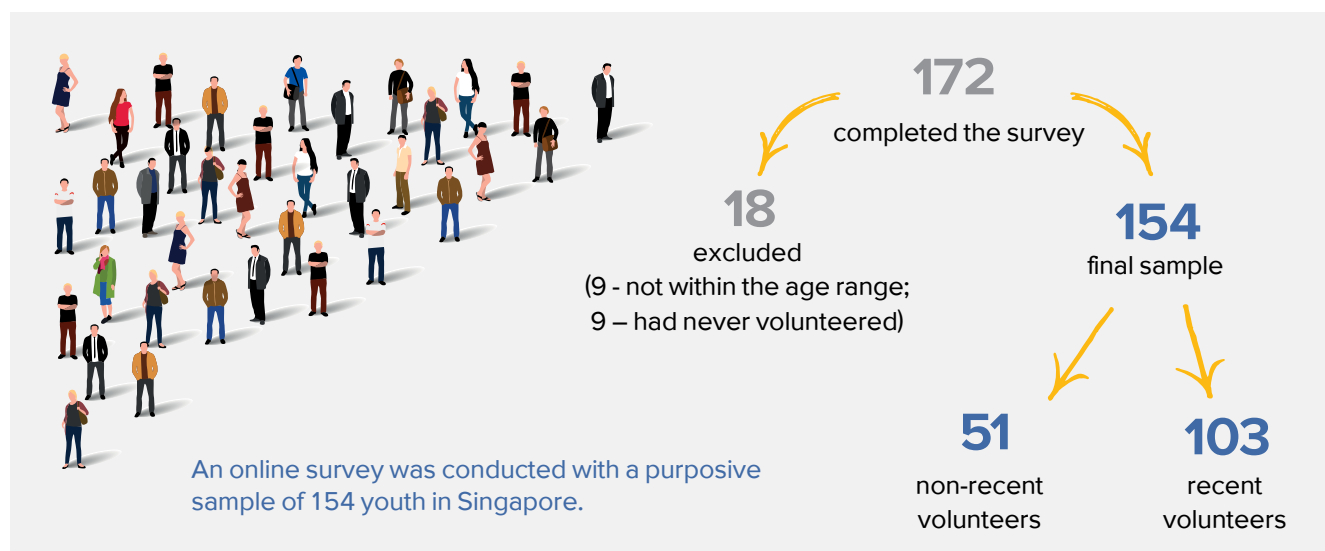
This case study aimed to understand the role of NPOs in Singapore in developing socially conscious leaders.

Specifically, the research sought to understand:

1. What motivates youth to volunteer with non-profits and the impact of volunteering on leadership development.
2. The benefits and challenges of youth volunteering for non-profits.
3. The societal benefits of engaging youth volunteers with non-profits.

To meet the research aims and objectives, both quantitative and qualitative research methods were undertaken, including a survey with Singapore youth aged 15-35 years old as well as interviews with key stakeholders and subject matter experts.

Respondents Info



Selection of survey participants

Survey participants were recruited through youth and social service organisations such as NYC, NCSS as well as NPOs that predominantly engage youth volunteers, such as Youth Corps Singapore (YCS), Conjoint Consulting, Mendaki Club and others. Due to its non-random design, our survey is not representative of all youth volunteers in Singapore.

Qualitative Interviews

Seven primary interviews were conducted with key experts and stakeholders that specifically engage with youth volunteers (all acknowledged on page 3). Secondary analysis of Conjoint interview data and a mini-case study among one NPO working with youth volunteers, Mendaki Club, was also conducted.

Understanding Youth Volunteering and Leadership:

Youth are a key stakeholder in examining socially conscious leadership. Youth spend hours giving back to the community and investing in their own development. This section outlines the context for youth volunteerism in Singapore and presents our findings on the relationship between youth volunteering and leadership development.

National Context: Youth Volunteerism in Singapore

Youth in Singapore

Youth aged 15-35 make up 19% of the population in Singaporeⁱ. According to NYC's National Youth Survey 2016, youth in Singapore are:

- Well-educated, fairly happy and satisfied
- Civic-minded and active in the community
- Worried about emerging adult responsibilities and future uncertaintiesⁱⁱ.

Youth Volunteerism in Singapore

- Between 2014 and 2016, the total number of volunteers increased from 18% to 35% and the number of volunteer hours almost doubled (66 million hours to 121 million hours).
- School aged youth (15-24 year olds) have the highest volunteerism rate across age groups (41% compared to 35% for the national average)ⁱⁱⁱ.

“

Since the formation of MCCY five years ago, we have been working tirelessly to build the three “Cs” that are the cornerstones of a strong society – a Caring people, a Cohesive Society and a Confident nation.

”

Ms Grace Fu,
Minister for Culture,
Community and Youth
Committee, March 2018

Since the establishment of the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY) in 2012, there is a strong push to strengthen community bonds, promote volunteerism and philanthropy in Singapore. The government has committed funding and resources to support peak bodies in the youth, volunteering and social service sectors. Another initiative launched is Singapore Cares (SG Cares) (co-led by NVPC and NCSS), which encourages both formal and informal volunteering in Singapore.

For this case study, we show data of 154 youth in Singapore to understand volunteer engagement, motivations, leadership factors and benefits to youth. Here is a summary of **Key Findings**.

- **Volunteering in Singapore starts early (80% start before 19 years old) with Children/Youth (40%) being the most favoured area to start in. 60% of youth have volunteered every week/every month over the last 12 months (recency) (Figures 1-3).**
- **Youth are more motivated by intrinsic factors (i.e. values and developing understanding) over extrinsic factors (such as career) (Figure 4).**
- **Youth who volunteer exhibit strong leadership skills, particularly in relation to task motivation and leadership flexibility (Figures 5-6).**
- **Distinct leadership personalities of volunteers have emerged to better understand how to develop youth leaders (Figure 7)**
- **The demographic profile of survey respondents and further research findings, including variations by age and gender, are included in the Annex to this case study.**



THE START – AGE, SECTOR & FREQUENCY

Age When First Started Volunteering

Singapore is very unique as youth begin volunteering at a young age. Schools and IHLs have community service embedded into the curriculum. With close to 80% of youth beginning volunteering before the age of 19 (Figure 1.), there is huge potential to build programmes to ensure youth can continue volunteering and contribute longer-term.

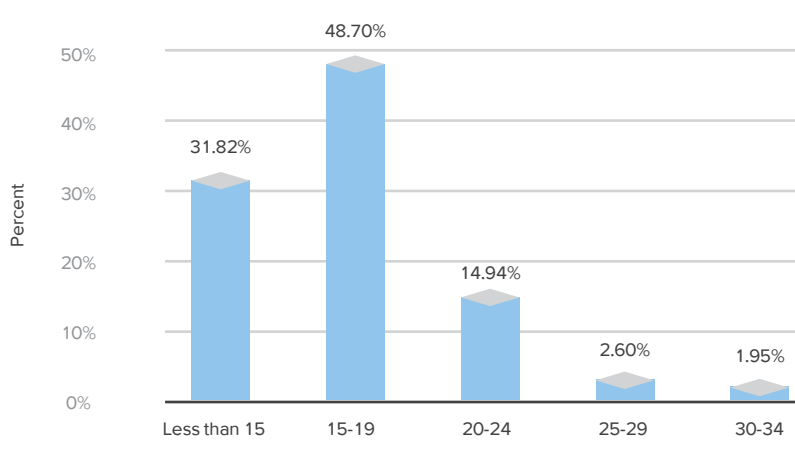


Figure 1. Age when first started volunteering

Frequency of Volunteering

Most youth who volunteer, do so regularly (61%) (Figure 2). This shows a fairly high level of motivation. If the social sector is able to design programmes and tasks that can help engage youth on an ongoing basis, our research shows that youth will be frequently available and will allocate the necessary time. Our research further shows that when volunteers are identified as leaders, 68% of them volunteer weekly/monthly compared to just 45% for non-leaders, showing the importance of investing in youth leadership.

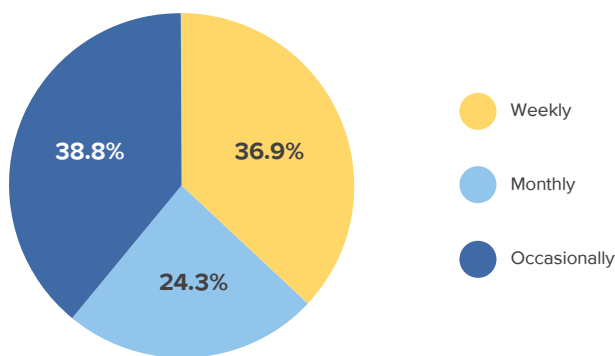


Figure 2. Frequency of volunteering

Sector/Cause Area They Start Volunteering

When youth start volunteering (Figure 3), the most preferred sector is Children/Youth (41%), followed by the Elderly sector (16%). This implies that these two sectors are the most relatable and accessible to youth. However, it is important to raise awareness and accessibility of other sectors like mental health, disability, environment, etc to help youth become more aware and empathetic of a range of social issues.

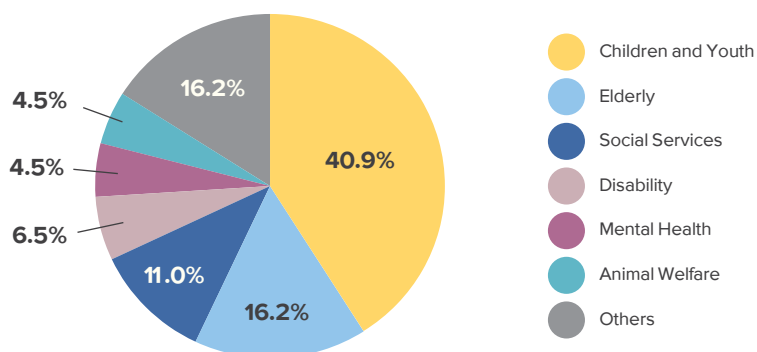


Figure 3. Sector youth first start volunteering

Data on youth volunteerism can help to improve youth engagement, including how to attract and develop youth and support them to stay engaged in the sector.



YOUTH VOLUNTEERING AND LEADERSHIP

To understand what motivates youth to volunteer, we used the 30-item Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI)^{iv}. The highest motivation for youth was a desire to help others (i.e. Values) followed by the motivation to learn more about the world through different skills and experience (i.e. Understanding) (Figure 4.). Other factors such as Enhancement, Career, Social and Protective were less important motivations.

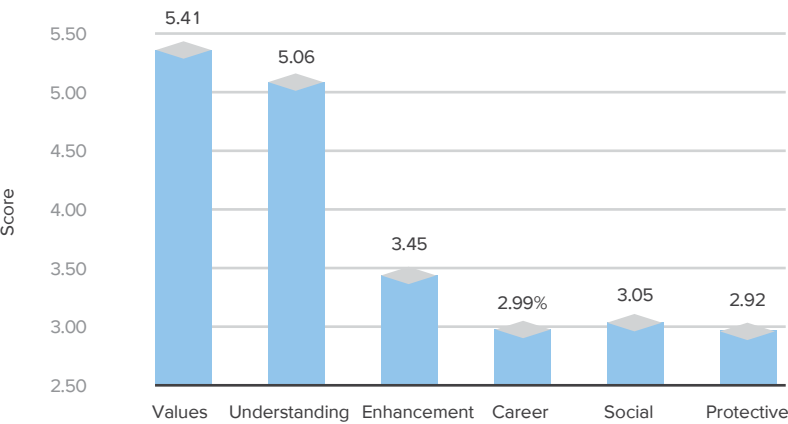


Figure 4. Primary volunteer motivations among youth volunteering volunteers

“In a fast advancing country like Singapore, a sizeable segment of the low income/ underprivileged population will exist. I saw a need during National Service to be involved as far as I can to give back to this community. My parents and grandparents always inculcate values of others before self since young. So, they might be my main source of motivation.”
– Survey Respondent

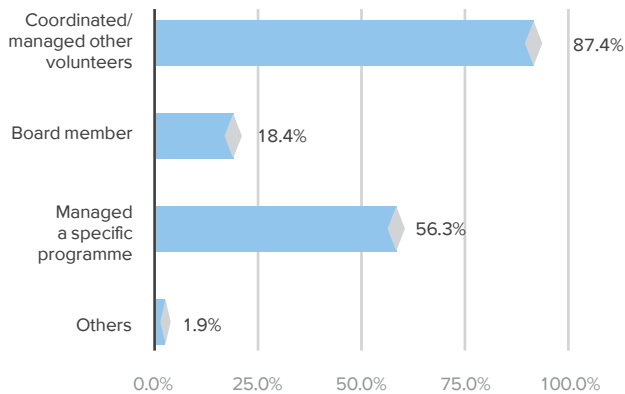


Figure 5. Leadership roles for youth volunteers leader

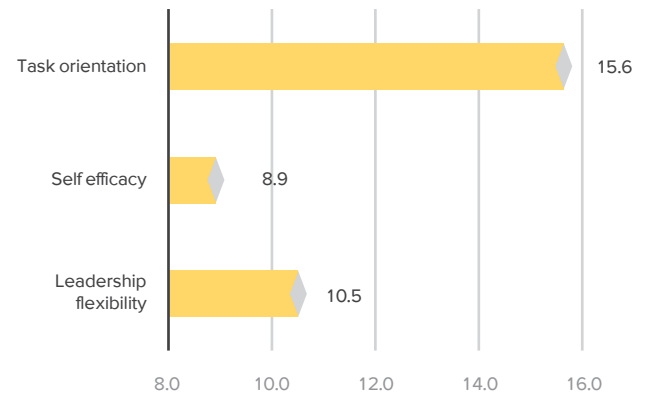


Figure 6. Leadership Factors for youth volunteers

Most youth volunteers who play leadership roles have managed volunteers themselves (87%) and also managed specific programmes (56%) (Figure 5). To further assess youth leadership, we used the 25-item Rating Scale for Leadership (Roets) scale (1997). Figure 6. shows that the most dominant leadership characteristic among youth was Task Orientation (defined as “Characteristics that relate to the completion of projects or tasks”) followed by Leadership Flexibility (defined as “Interpersonal skills, openness to new experiences and perspectives, as well as flexibility when working with others”). Self-efficacy (defined as “self-perceived leadership competence”) was the lowest leadership characteristic in our sample of youth.

These findings are consistent with other studies^v, where youths are more confident in their ability to complete tasks but still developing other leadership skills. Nonetheless, all three leadership characteristics are immensely valuable life skills that youth can apply to all facets of their lives.



Youth Volunteer Profiles in Our Sample of Volunteers

Based on our survey data, we have created some sample volunteer profiles to show a few different kinds of youth leaders/volunteers (Figure 7).

PROFILE	ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE ^v
 <p>Non-leaders (capacity building needed)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less motivated overall • Low score on leadership scale • Occasional volunteer • Employed • 30-34 years old • Non-recent volunteers • Professional and Secondary degrees
<p>Leaders (values driven)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate score on leadership scale • More motivated by intrinsic (values and understanding) factors • Weekly volunteer • 15-19 years old • Female • University
 <p>Leaders (careers driven)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High score on leadership scale • More motivated by extrinsic (career) factors • Monthly volunteer • 20-29 years old • Male • Recent volunteers • Post-secondary (non-tertiary)

Figure 7. Leadership profiles among our sample of youth volunteers

This section has looked at the national context for youth volunteering in Singapore. There has been strong investment by the Government to promote volunteerism, where youth volunteerism is increasing. Our survey found that youth get involved early in the social sector and are primarily motivated by a desire to help others. There is a need for youth to be involved in a range of sectors early on, which would raise their awareness of a range of social issues. We found that during their time volunteering, many youths take on leadership roles. Volunteering has helped youth to develop important leadership skills in task orientation and leadership flexibility.

Together, this highlights the important role that non-profits play in developing youth leadership, along with the need for continued leadership development. On the whole, data on how youth engage with the social sector, what motivates them to volunteer and how volunteering supports their development is useful in guiding non-profits on how to attract and develop youth and support their longer-term engagement. The next section considers the benefits and challenges of engaging youth volunteers for non-profits, along with best practices and models to further their leadership development.



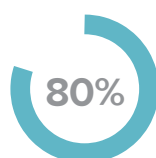
NON-PROFITS: BENEFITS, CHALLENGES OF ENGAGING YOUTH AND MODELS TO CREATE SOCIALY CONSCIOUS LEADERS

Non-profit organisations are central to providing the opportunities for young people to give back. They are the backbone for creating a culture of socially conscious leadership. With over 2,200 non-profits in Singapore, there is a large demand for youth volunteers and many non-profits have a long history of engaging youth volunteers.

A previous survey with 21 NPOs in Singapore found that:



86% of the non-profits engage youth volunteers in varying capacities.



80% of these have been engaging youth for more than five years.

Of the non-profits engaging youth, 68% employ them in skilled engagements (website, communication, IT, mentoring, consulting, etc) with 32% are engaged in for traditional volunteering (hands and legs for various execution projects)^{vi}.

For this case study, we conducted seven qualitative interviews with non-profits and other stakeholders and analysed secondary data to understand the benefits, challenges and leadership potential in engaging youth volunteers.

Key Findings

Benefits

1. Youth volunteers are a vital resource for non-profits in both traditional, skills-based and leadership roles.
2. Youth provide a fresh perspective and contribute to social innovation in the sector.

Challenges

1. Managing the youth volunteer life-cycles and stages
2. Providing a positive volunteer experience versus responding to community needs.

Benefits:

Youth Volunteers as a Vital Resource for NPOs

Volunteers make significant contributions and are recognised as a vital resource to NPOs. Research has shown that engaging youth volunteers can be an inexpensive and sustainable way for non-profits to increase their capacity and service delivery functions^{vii}. Volunteers provide both financial and non-monetary benefits and can: support the delivery of services and programmes; assist with training and strategic planning, and support administrative and technological functions^{viii}.

“For the social service sector, we are talking about less than 16,000 staff. If we believe we’re serving the bottom 10 per cent of the society, that is half a million population in Singapore. 16,000 to half a million, it doesn’t sound right. So there is a greater need for us to see how we can leverage or tap on volunteers...”

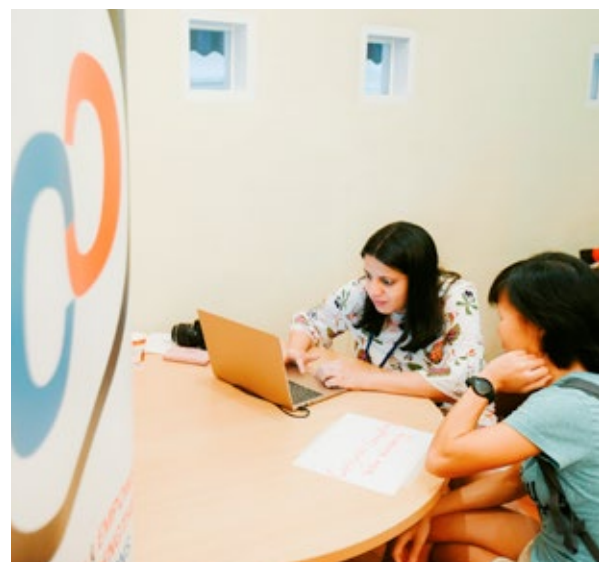
– Dr. Andrew Lim, Director (Volunteer Resource Optimisation), NCSS

NCSS is the social service sector administrator with more than 460 social service organisations as members. It looks at capability and capacity building as one of its key roles.

The types of jobs performed by youth volunteers range from back-end administrative work to fundraising to direct patient interaction in the dialysis centres. They also form a strong pillar for major Foundation events such as flag days, charity carnivals and other events.

– Ms. Selena Tan, Assistant Manager (Donor & Volunteer Management) with NKF

NKF is the largest kidney foundation in Singapore. NKF has worked with over 1500 youth in 2017 accounting for a total of 30% of all volunteering hours.



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WELCOME ADDRESS

Samantha Lee & Kwok, Jia Chien



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The Institute was initiated by SMU to advance societal leadership in Southeast Asia and beyond.

Challenges: Youth Volunteer Life-cycle

There is recognition that due to life stage and competing priorities such as study, family and other responsibilities, youth cannot always commit to continuing volunteering for prolonged periods of time. For NPOs, who are already stretched in terms of time and resources, this creates challenges in investing staff time to train and support volunteers, who may eventually leave.

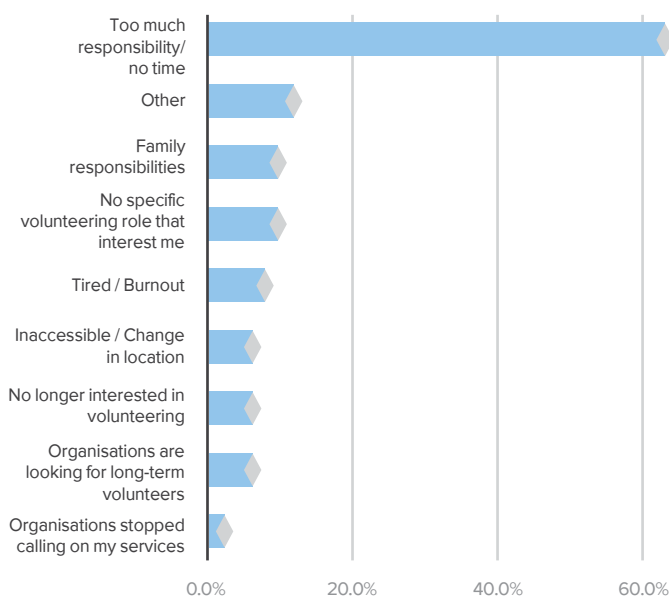


Figure 9. Reasons for discontinuing volunteering



The very nature of working with volunteers is that they go through life stages, things change. It's very hard to expect the volunteer to stay for a long, long time. Sometimes, before the mentorship can happen, they have to leave; And then most of the time it falls on the staff again.

– Mr John Chong,
Youth Engagement Lead, NVPC



NVPC is an NPO promoting a giving culture in Singapore through catalysing development in volunteerism and philanthropy.

Challenges: Providing a Positive Volunteer Experience Versus Responding to Community Needs

For NPOs, it can be difficult to match volunteer interests and skills to identified community needs. However, providing youth with meaningful volunteer roles allows them to develop skills and have a meaningful stake in addressing community needs. Figure 10 shows that when youth are involved in a leadership role, they feel more strongly about the importance of the work they are doing. Conscious youth engagement will ensure sustained involvement and longer-term commitment, improved organisational capacity and generate brand ambassadors for NPOs.



I would say that it's not a good idea for non-profits to treat volunteers as just pure "hands and legs". I think they need to make sure whatever work that's being assigned is something that is meaningful... It doesn't mean that they cannot do mundane things but they need to know why they're doing it...



– Mr Ong Kah Kuang, Executive Director, YCS

YCS is a division of NYC and aims to empower and support youth to ignite positive societal level change through large-scale volunteering and leadership programmes.

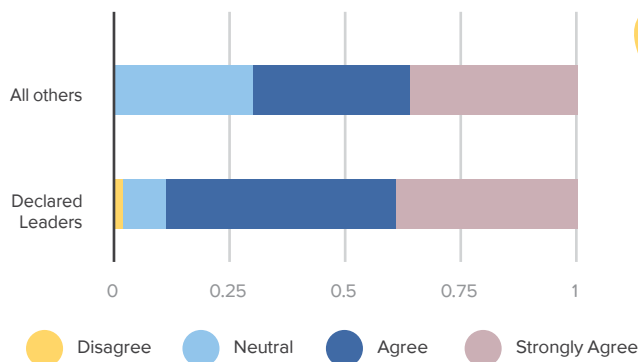


Figure 10. Considering your task is important correlated with taking on leadership roles (youth survey)



It is not enough to simply be doing something. A sense of purpose should be made clear in order to retain volunteers in the long-run. It is not enough to simply be involved in a foundational manner if leadership opportunities could be made available so as to broaden both the horizons of the youths and the organisation.

– Mr. Kwok Jia Chuan,
Founder, Conjunct Consulting



Opportunities: Improving Volunteer Engagement and Management

In dealing with some of the challenges in engaging youth volunteers, interview participants identified a number of strategies. One aspect involved predefined strategic volunteer engagement, which included matching volunteers with identified roles. There was also recognition that allocated resources for managing volunteers could improve volunteer retention and management:



For NPOs who are on board our programmes they are now taking a closer look at how they can re-design the roles internally to better engage volunteers.

– Dr. Andrew Lim, Director (Volunteer Resource Optimisation), NCSS

I think the change has to happen at the leadership level...the top management perspective towards volunteers cascades downward... if they see that it's an investment, they don't mind having headcount to actually support that function...

– Mr John Chong, Youth Engagement Lead, NVPC



On the whole, a shift in thinking was required to view volunteers as an integral resource and to adequately invest in volunteer programmes, such as through dedicated volunteer manager roles.

Opportunities: Support from Capacity Building Organisations

It is clear that NPOs benefit from a partnership approach. In this case study, there is strong evidence of the important role that capacity building organisations play in the youth, volunteering and social services sector. For example, NCSS shared an example of their role in working with a local school to develop a pilot programme with Lions Befrienders, a social service organisation working with the elderly.

“The conversation started when the Principal, who is really passionate, came forward and said can I [develop a volunteering programme] for the entire school. And of course, we did tell him that’s a little challenging so we actually scoped it into a pilot and then we had to find an appropriate partner to come on board...”

– Dr. Andrew Lim, Director (Volunteer Resource Optimisation), NCSS



After partnering with NCSS, the school has developed a pilot programme with a cohort of 15-year-old Secondary 3 students, who will visit homes of the seniors one hour per week as befrienders over a 3-6 month period, commencing in 2018, with plans to scale it further.

To highlight some of the key benefits and challenges of engaging youth volunteers for NPOs, a mini case study of Mendaki Club, is profiled. Mendaki Club is an NPO that focuses on youth engagement and leadership development for Malay/Muslim youth in Singapore. They also play an important capacity building role through training youth and partnering with NPOs on various projects.

MINI CASE STUDY

MENDAKI CLUB



Founded in 2000 by Yayasan Mendaki, the Mendaki Club (MClub)’s mission is to foster, nurture and bridge communities by developing positive agents of change and has engaged with over 2500 young people between the ages of 13-35 years old since it began. MClub relies on three key thrusts that guides the curation of its various programmes and initiatives: ‘Capacity Building’, ‘Inclusiveness’, and ‘Partnerships’.

Launched in 2004, the Young Minds Club is one of the earliest programmes of MClub. Working with secondary school students in cohorts of 15-25 years old, over 3-4 months, its objective is to facilitate the development of youth to help them to realise their potential. Other programmes that MClub runs include, 1) Talent Development Programme, 2) Career Awareness Programme, 3) Values in Action Programme, 4) MClub mentoring. Many of the youth participating in MClub return in various volunteer and leadership capacities, highlighting the success of the programme in building a community of youth leaders.

Leadership Incubator Programme (LIP):

What?

The flagship leadership programme under the MClub is the Leadership Incubator Programme. Developed in 2010, and first run in 2013, this community leadership programme works with youth from 18-25 years old over a period of 3-6 months for 1-2 days every week. Through this programme, MClub aims to build socially conscious and engaged young leaders who continue to stay active and contribute to the social sector and community.

How it operates?

The LIP is a completely volunteer run programme, from the board, to the Executive Committee (ExCom) to the programme delivery. Key components of the programme include:

**Self-Awareness Building ▶ Landscape Awareness ▶ Skills Building ▶
Community Group Project ▶ Networking and Project Pitch ▶ Graduation**

Benefits to Youth:

Awareness-raising

Becoming self-aware supports the youth to understand their own preferences, motivations, working style, leadership styles and most importantly, identify which cause they are most passionate about. They are able to direct their energies more productively, work with team members more efficiently and prepare for meaningful engagements with an NPO.

Networks

MClub has learnt that developing social and professional networks is a key motivator for youth to stay engaged. Even if some of the initial projects fade away, they keep coming back due to the strong friendships and relationships they have built. Outside of the peer group the network, MClub provides other opportunities for networking with community leaders and government, that helps build a broader ecosystem or community with shared values. This allows youth to stay connected and thrive.

Platform for intervention

The final benefit is providing opportunities to give back. This includes understanding of Malay history, community, structure, organisations and government initiatives as well as knowledge of real world issues. This provides skills in empathy and ground-level understandings of social problem. The youth are equipped to build solutions that are realistic, and address issues they feel most strongly about, with the support of MClub.



Why it works?

Being selective

Being a completely volunteer run programme, it can be difficult to mandate time commitments for youth volunteers. Hence the MClub has a very selective interview process. They pay close attention to the young person's life stage. They also include a questionnaire that tries to understand youth motivations to ensure that he/she stays engaged throughout the programme.

Updating the programme to stay relevant

Every year, the MClub Board and ExCom go back to review the content of the programme. Changes are made wherever necessary to ensure that the youth are benefitting as much as possible. All current regulatory changes, government and community agendas are also updated to ensure programmes stay relevant and up to date.

Engaged Partners

The MClub puts a lot of effort in engaging with NPOs that are doing important work in the sector and are willing to engage with youth. It is very helpful for youth to know who the main players, currently addressing on-the-ground issues, are. They can then partner with them, volunteer with them, or request for them to become mentors for their own projects/social enterprises.

Constant networking & contact

MClub focusses on staying in touch and providing networking opportunities. Community and government leaders (e.g. heads of Mendaki, Ministers, Political Advisors and Senior Parliament Leaders) are invited to speak with youth, which helps to keep them updated on community needs and motivates them to continue to do good.

Mindset needed – MClub & participating NPOs:

Since its existence, MClub has been able to create long term socially conscious youth leaders. To see further impacts in youth leadership, MClub recommends the following :

Long-term engagements

The first caveat is the horizon to assess the effectiveness of projects like LIP. Youth join the programme at 21-28 years of age. The key is to keep them engaged, through events, etc. so when they are ready to return, there is an existing network. A long term view is necessary to see engaged members & a cascading effect of youth they are able to impact.

Infrastructure provision

Once a youth has signed up and found a sense of purpose, MClub seeks to provide the community networks and infrastructure to support youths to get involved and stay active in the community. Organisations like Ally, Youth Corp Singapore, LIP, Conjoint provide the necessary community infrastructure to the diverse youth groups.

Realistic expectations – knowing what is important

MClub helps youth launch a number of projects each year, so as to build a sense of belonging in the community and to give a source of support to the youth. These projects can be improved and scaled up, even if they do not succeed the first time.

Empowering them to contribute in local and global capacities

MClub works to broaden and widen the perspective of youths from the Malay/Muslim community. This empowers the youth to think of challenges as a larger community.

Socially conscious leadership involves long-term and active involvement

Over the course of the last 18 years, MClub has seen ample success stories of projects and engagements where the youth have continued to give back to the social sector. One of the greatest examples is the ExCom of the Leadership Incubator Programme. As of today, of the 11 members in the ExCom, seven are programme alumni (including the president). On the whole, MClub is an important example of an organisation that engages youth at different ages and with different programmes to build a sense of community and social consciousness of youth, which sees them giving back to the community, to Singapore and globally.



SOCIETAL BENEFITS: BUILDING CONNECTED AND COHESIVE COMMUNITIES

The previous sections present findings on the benefits and challenges of youth volunteering for youth and NPOs. Drawing again on interview data, this section examines the benefits of youth volunteering and leadership development within the NPO sector to society as a whole.

Key Findings

1. Investing in volunteering and youth leadership builds community connections, including increased networks
2. Volunteering shifts perspectives and fosters empathy development which leads to an increased sense of belonging and community involvement.
3. Together, these effects support increased social capital and community cohesion.

Defining socially conscious leadership

According to SMU's ISL, societal leadership is about raising awareness and motivation in individuals to address social challenges.



Youth leadership builds community connections, including increased networks

“ Our end goal with Youth Corps is to create a more caring and inclusive society. I believe [if] you get people who are actively volunteering and they make it a way of life then Singapore will be a much better place... it will be a better society, more socially gracious, more civic minded so there are definitely benefits. – Mr Ong Kah Kuang, Executive Director, YCS ”

There are clear societal benefits for investing in youth volunteering and leadership development. Volunteering can increase young people’s social capital and support more active types of citizenship^{xii}. Volunteering also supports the development of new social networks, as well as expanding existing networks^{xiii}. These benefits then lead to greater opportunities and sense of connectedness and cohesion. The benefits of volunteering in enhancing social capital and cohesion were explained by Youth Corps Singapore. Their model of youth engagement was based on establishing four key senses to support youth personal and leadership development:

1. **Sense of Purpose:** allowing youth to know why they are doing what they
2. **Sense of Confidence:** preparing youth with skills and confidence to serve beneficiaries
3. **Sense of Belonging:** facilitating team and community interaction, by providing opportunities to build relationships and networks
4. **Sense of Ownership:** providing leadership opportunities to youth, by allowing them to have a say in project planning and management



Changing Perspectives and Developing Empathy



It's very common to hear [the phrase] "I understand now" [amongst youth volunteers]... when the context changes, decision making changes... they have a much more balanced view of [situations] now, and the sort of idealism disappears... it becomes a lot more grounded in terms of what is possible and what's not and how to move [forward].

– Mr Tong Yee, Director, Thought Collective

The Thought Collective shares common goals of building Singapore's social and emotional capital.

Empathy is going to be really beneficial for society at large right because I think as we progress as society, as a country, it is important for our next generation to develop empathy, to develop deeper understanding [of] their role and their purpose.

– Mr Jonathan Chang, Executive Director, ISL



In discussing the societal level benefits of youth volunteering, there was strong recognition of how volunteering with NPOs exposed youth to issues in the community and helped them to develop empathy. This in turn leads to a shift in perspective, through greater understanding of the complexity of social problems and their causes. This new perspective has a flow-on effect in the community, while also enabling a sense of belonging for youth.



So if a youth grows in the social awareness journey...then [they are] actually very close to the ground and will address the real needs without just thinking about me [themselves] wanting to do good.

– Mr Tong Yee, Director, Thought Collective

I think for them to develop that sense of belonging to a place...and what our role is as a member of society. I think that is very important for us so that we can have a sustainable society, that our next generation of people, young people, leaders understand...the day to day issues.

– Mr Jonathan Chang, Executive Director, ISL



Leadership development is ultimately a process that involves having greater social awareness along with increased understanding of ground-level community issues. In the journey towards greater social consciousness and societal leadership, there is a need for greater understanding of not just the need to "do good" but also to "do good well" to ensure broader societal impact. Increased awareness and exposure to grassroots community issues was seen as vital to the development of socially conscious or societal leaders.

The broader impact of increased awareness and capacity leads to a deeper sense of belonging, where youth can feel part of the community and have a sense of social purpose. This in turn allows youth to have a meaningful stake in the issues that are important to them and ensure their longer-term involvement.

HOW DO WE GO FORWARD?

Implications and Recommendations

This case study has explored the link between volunteering and socially conscious leadership from the perspectives of key youth, social service and NPO stakeholders. Clearly, important progress has already been made in developing socially conscious leaders in Singapore. Youth start volunteering early and continue to stay engaged with the social sector. Youth feel confident to take up leadership roles, which contributes to their understanding and development. NPOs in Singapore have, for some time now, viewed youth as a vital resource to their operation. They see the value in engaging youth in various capacities, including leadership roles. The Singapore Government has encouraged and supported youth volunteering. Finally, the societal impacts of interventions and youth engagements in the social sector are evident. On the whole, there is a strong ecosystem to develop youth as socially conscious leaders in Singapore. Going forward, there is an important need for NPOs to consider how they can further engage youth volunteers through:

These include:

1. Ensuring that the right platforms, opportunities and networks are provided.
2. Providing opportunities for awareness-raising and context-building for youth, including awareness of ground-level reality.
3. Creating the right circumstances and infrastructure to support long-term youth development.
4. Matching youth volunteer motivations with meaningful roles and responsibilities.
5. Furthering investment and support for capacity building organisations.
6. Knowing the life cycle and realities for youth and providing mechanisms to keep them engaged.
7. Focusing on not only short-term benefits, but longer-term goals of building inclusive, cohesive and conscious communities.

In going forward, we can be mindful of both opportunities and challenges and continue to work together in a spirit of partnership and collaboration. It has been an insightful experience for us at Conjoint Consulting to develop and create this case study. We view this case study as an important step in understanding the role of NPOs in developing socially conscious leaders. We hope that this case study makes a useful contribution to the NPO and social service sector, youth and policymakers and contributes to our national priorities of building a more caring, cohesive and confident society, in Singapore and across the region. Going forward, we hope that more research using nationally representative samples is conducted to inform policy and practice.

We would once again like to thank Toteboard and everyone who has generously contributed to making this case study a reality. Tote Board will continue to be an active voice in developing socially conscious leaders and we look forward to continued partnerships in meeting these shared goals.

If you would like further clarification about this report or a particular data point, please write to us at info@conjointconsulting.org.

Annex

Youth Survey – Technical Summary

Profile of youth volunteer sample

		n	%
Age	15-19	27	18%
	20-24	63	41%
	25-29	40	26%
	30-34	24	16%
Gender	Male	58	38%
	Female	95	62%
	Other/ Prefer not to answer	1	1%
Race	Chinese	120	78%
	Malay	12	8%
	Indian	12	8%
	Other	10	6%
Nationality	Singapore citizen	133	86%
	Permanent Resident (PR)	11	7%
	Other	10	6%
Marital status	Single	133	86%
	Married	21	14%
Religion	Buddhism	24	16%
	Islam	24	16%
	Christianity	41	27%
	Hinduism	7	5%
	Taoism/Traditional Chinese Beliefs	6	4%
	No Religion	48	31%
	Other/Prefer not to answer	3	3%
Education	Below Secondary	1	1%
	Diploma & Professional qualification	19	12%
	Post-Secondary (Non-Tertiary)	23	15%
	Secondary	18	12%
	University	86	56%
	Others	7	5%
	TOTAL	154	100%

Table 1. Demographic profile of survey respondents, Conjoint Youth Survey 2018

Measuring Volunteer Motivation – Using the VFI

To understand what motivates youth to volunteer, we used the 30-item Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI)^{xiv}. The VFI has been widely used in the academic literature^{xv} and provides the most comprehensive measure of volunteer motives and is comprised of six key motives (Table 2).

Factor	Conceptual definition	Sample VFI item
Values	The individual volunteers in order to express an act on important values like humanitarianism.	'I feel it is important to help others'
Understanding	The volunteer is seeking to learn more about the world or exercise skills that are often unused.	'Volunteering lets me learn through direct, hands-on experience.'
Enhancement	One can grow and develop psychologically through volunteer activities.	'Volunteering makes me feel better about myself.'
Career	The volunteer has the goal of gaining career-related experience through volunteering.	'Volunteering can help me to get my foot in the door at a place I would like to work.'
Social	Volunteering allows an individual to strengthen his or her social relationships.	'People I know share an interest in community service.'
Protective	The individual uses volunteering to reduce negative feelings/to address personal problems.	'Volunteering is a good escape from my own troubles.'

Table 2: Volunteer functions according to VFI, Adapted from Clary and Snyder (1996)

Volunteer motivations by age and gender

Our study of youth volunteers confirmed the findings of previous research. For example, a recent systematic review of 67 studies using the VFI found that the mean score for the Values factor was highest in all studies, regardless of gender, age and volunteer setting^{xvi}. However, important differences were found in relation to age and gender. Similarly, in our sample (Table 3), younger age groups, including those aged between 15-19 years old and 20-24 years old, were more motivated overall. Younger volunteers, particularly those aged between 15-19 years old, were also more strongly motivated by Understanding factors than older participants. Career factors were also slightly higher for younger age groups versus older age groups, although only marginally. Differences in age are consistent with other studies using the VFI, which has found the career function was strongly dependent on age, where younger respondents were more motivated by career functions than older age groups^{xvii}. In other studies, volunteer age also influenced the understanding scale, where studies with young volunteers obtained significantly higher scores than studies with older participants^{xviii}.

VFI factor/Age	Values	Understanding	Enhancement	Career	Social	Protective
15-19	5.8	5.8	4.3	3.4	3.2	3.6
20-24	5.5	5.2	3.7	3.1	3.2	3.2
25-29	5.3	4.8	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.5
30-34	5.0	4.5	2.7	2.5	2.9	2.2
All participants	5.4	5.1	3.4	3.0	3.0	2.9

Table 3. Volunteer motivations by age, Conjoint Youth Survey, 2018

In relation to gender (Table 4), males and females were equally motivated by values functions, with only a slight variation in the understanding. Compared with females, males were more motivated by career and social factors, while there were only slight variations in enhancement and protective factors. On the whole, these findings largely support other research findings. For example, in a study of volunteer motives in Singapore, the authors proposed that due to Asian culture, male volunteers would score higher on the enhancement function than females, while females would report a higher score than males on values^{xix}. However, no significant differences in motivations by gender were found. In another Singaporean study on sports volunteering among college students, the authors found that females were more motivated by values, understanding and protective factors than males, and scored higher across all functions^{xx}. This study confirms other research supporting higher volunteer motives for women, particularly in relation to values and understanding^{xxi}.

VFI factor/Gender	Values	Understanding	Enhancement	Career	Social	Protective
Male	5.4	5.1	3.5	3.3	3.4	3.0
Female	5.4	5.0	3.4	2.8	2.9	2.9
All	5.4	5.1	3.4	3.0	3.0	2.9

Table 4. Volunteer motivations by gender, Conjoint Youth Survey, 2018

Measuring Leadership Scores – Using the Roets Scale

To assess youth leadership, we used the 25-item Rating Scale for Leadership (Roets) scale (1997)^{xxii}. We undertook a factor analysis using three subscales of the ROETS as conceptualised in the academic literature^{xxiii} (Table 5).

Factor	Conceptual definition	Sample ROETS item
Task Orientation	Characteristics that relate to the completion of projects or tasks.	'I am able to see what materials are needed to complete a project.'
Leadership self-efficacy	Characteristics related to self-perceived leadership competence.	'I have self-confidence.'
Leadership flexibility	Interpersonal skills, openness to new experiences and perspectives, as well as flexibility when working with others.	'I can understand the viewpoints of others.'

Table 5. Leadership factors using the ROETS scale, adapted from Chan (2000)

Leadership factors by age and gender

As shown in Table 6 below, there was little variation in how youth perceived themselves in relation to task orientation. However, while younger age groups, particularly 15-19 year olds, were more flexible and open to new experiences, they were also less confident in their leadership abilities (self-efficacy) than older age groups. 25-29 years olds were slightly more motivated overall across the self-efficacy and leadership flexibility traits.

Leadership factor/Age	Task Orientation	Self efficacy	Flexibility
15-19	15.4	8.3	11.1
20-24	15.5	8.8	10.4
25-29	15.7	9.4	10.5
30-34	15.6	9.1	10.1
All participants	15.6	8.9	10.5

Table 6. Leadership factors by age, Conjoint Youth Survey, 2018

In relation to gender (Table 7), females rated themselves slightly lower in relation to task orientation and significantly lower for self-efficacy than males, however were slightly more flexible when compared with males.

Leadership factor/Gender	Task Orientation	Self efficacy	Flexibility
Male	15.9	5.8	4.3
Female	15.4	5.2	3.7
All participants	15.6	8.9	10.5

Table 7. Leadership factors by gender, Conjoint Youth Survey, 2018

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