

Lebanon Youth - National Volunteer Service Program Strengthening and Sustainability (P158815)

Soft Skills Training - Training of Trainers



**Lessons learned from the October 2016 Training of Trainers' Event
around the soft skills curriculum "Building a Better Tomorrow"
and next steps**

From interviews conducted in Lebanon

October 2-8, 2016

Organized by
The World Bank and the
National Volunteer Service Program of the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Lebanon

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1. Background and summary

The National Volunteer Service Program (NVSP) focuses on involving Lebanese youth in volunteering activities, under the stewardship of the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), and in partnership with local NGOs, universities, and soon the corporate sector. The NVSP is currently funded by a US\$2 million World Bank State and Peace-Building grant (P126734 - Lebanon National Volunteer Service Program) managed by the Social Protection & Labor (SP&L) Global Practice. The NVSP project has three main components: (i) institution building and capacity development for volunteer civic engagement; (ii) Small Grants Program (SGP) for eligible NGOs, universities, and schools, as well as youth summer camps and weekend volunteering programs for expanding volunteer opportunities and building employability skills; and (iii) monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of civic engagement.

1.1. A new Soft Skills curriculum for NVSP volunteers

In 2015, the NVSP received additional support - “Lebanon Youth - National Volunteer Service Program Strengthening and Sustainability” (P158815) - to scale up both in depth and reach, the soft skills training for volunteering youth. A technical assistance (TA) program was specifically designed to prepare schools and universities selected under the second Call for Proposal (CfP) of the NVSP SGP to deliver soft skills training to youth volunteers who serve with them.

To meet the needs of these implementing institutions and fulfill the objective of scaling up the NVSP soft skills training, the World Bank, in partnership with various U.S. academic institutions, developed a new soft skills training curriculum - “*Building a Better Tomorrow*” -, which was customized and adapted to the Lebanese context by a Lebanese training company, the Lighthouse Coach Sarl. While the International Youth Foundation (IYF) curriculum used in the first phase of the program was subject to intellectual property rights, “*Building a Better Tomorrow*” is a public good, free of license and free of reuse by anybody, whether NVSP, or other agencies.

- **Core curriculum content:** To address the identified needs of Lebanese youth - sense of belonging, conflict resolution and employability skills - while ensuring maximum local adaptation, the new training’s core curriculum covers a universal set of: life skills, career planning and management skills, and soft business and entrepreneurship skills, on top of which a customizable layer of local content has been added. These locally adapted lessons are organized in four main themes for a total of twenty modules.

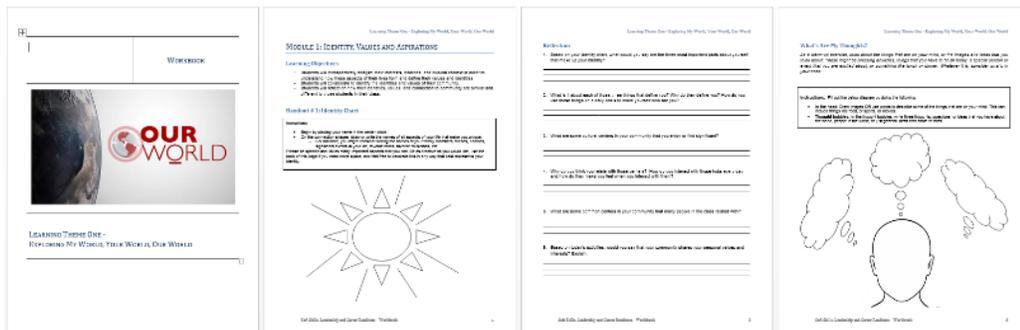
The customized Soft Skills training “*Building a Better Tomorrow*” is organized in four themes and twenty modules:

<u>Theme 1: Exploring my World, your World, our World</u>	<u>Theme 3: Prepare to Enter a Professional World</u>
Module 1.1. Identity, Values and Aspirations	Module 3.1. Transformative Change and 21 st Century Skills
Module 1.2. Encountering the Other; Fostering Empathy	Module 3.2. Creativity
Module 1.3. Conflict Management; Understanding the Emotions	Module 3.3. Communication and Advocating
Module 1.4. Valuing diverse Perspectives and Finding Win-win Approaches	Module 3.4. Teamwork and Collaboration
Module 1.5. Cultivating a Sense of Belonging and Accountability	Module 3.5. Personal Responsibility and Time Management
<u>Theme 2: Building Pathways to a Purposeful Life</u>	<u>Theme 4: Creating Value with Your Ideas</u>
Module 2.1. What is a Purposeful Life?	Module 3.1. Sharing Your Idea and Gathering Support
Module 2.2. What is my Purpose in Life?	Module 3.2. Improvement through Feedback
Module 2.3. Presenting your Best Self: The Resume	Module 3.3. Financial Plan and Opportunity Costs
Module 2.4. Presenting your Best Self: The Interview	Module 3.4. Mission Statement and Business Plan
Module 2.5. My Pathway: Review and Practice	Module 3.5. Persuasive Language and Rhetorical Devices

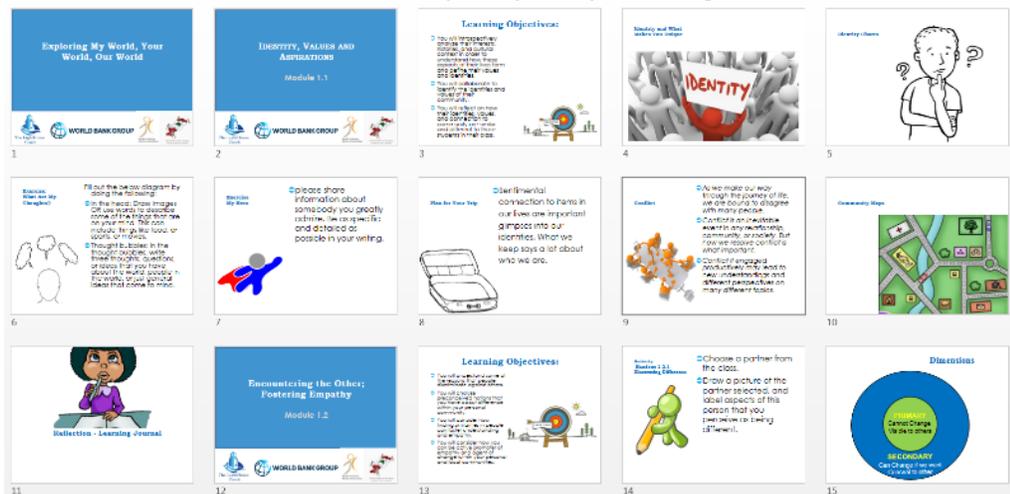
- Three delivery methods targeting different audiences: In order to fulfill the objective of scaling up the soft skills training, the content of “*Building a Better Tomorrow*” can be delivered in three different modes, and therefore reach different target audiences: face-to-face training (f2f); self-paced training using the workbooks designed to that end, or as a self-paced eLearning training. Regardless of the delivery mode, all training material have the same core curriculum content (see the modules in the table above), and use the same material to the extent possible:
 - o The face-to-face version of the curriculum, especially relevant to this note, is only delivered to youth participating in NVSP-sponsored volunteering opportunities. The face-to-face format includes a variety of pedagogical formats and techniques such as: role-playing, team-building, videos, gamification, and small group activities.

This interactive methodology is delivered live and on site by the academic institutions and NGOs youth are volunteering with, and according to a schedule adapted to these organizations and the needs of young people. The trainers are selected by their specific institutions and then trained by a Lebanese master trainer during Training of Trainers workshops (ToT).

Student's workbooks for the face-to-face training:



PowerPoint® for the face-to-face training



- The four self-paced workbooks containing each five modules, are for wider distribution through NGOs, schools and universities. They use six fictional Lebanese youth comic book characters created to that effect, who are of different backgrounds, and who all deal with issues youth volunteers and other Lebanese youth can identify with. These self-paced workbooks are also being handed over to face-to-face trainees, for them to be able to review the materials and reflect and practice the skills on their own after the training sessions.

Self-paced workbook



- Finally, the four eLearning modules, with five sub-modules each, will be made available for free access to anyone, on the NVSP online portal. The eLearning modules are self-administered. They are the eLearning version of the self-paced workbooks with the fictional comic book characters.

Self-paced eLearning



1.2. First “Training of Trainers” Event: Attendance and agenda

In the first phase of the new TA program, eleven academic institutions as well as two NGOs with a student-volunteer program were selected to receive a NVSP grant and train youth in using the “*Building a Better Tomorrow*” curriculum in face-to-face training sessions. Twenty-six future trainers (13 recipients x 2 trainers) were selected by their institutions to be trained in interactive and experiential training techniques and to learn and practice the twenty modules of the new soft skills curriculum.

The first “Training of Trainers” event (ToT) organized by NVSP took place at Hotel Smallville in Beirut from September 26-29, 2016.

Agenda of the first Training of Trainers based on “Building a Better Tomorrow”, September 26-29, 2016, Hotel Smallville, Beirut:

9:30 - 17:30 DAY 1		9:30 - 17:30 DAY 2		9:30 - 17:30 DAY 3		9:30 - 15:30 DAY 4	
9:30 – 9:45	Morning Coffee Break	9:30 – 9:45	Morning Coffee Break	9:30 – 9:45	Morning Coffee Break	9:30 – 9:45	Morning Coffee Break
9:45-11:15	Opening ceremony	9:45 - 10:00	Review day 1	9:45 - 10:00	Review day 2	9:45 - 10:00	Review day 3
	Introduction of participants	10:00 - 11:15	Continue Theme 1 – (Exploring My World, Your World, and Our World)	10:00 - 11:30	Theme 3: Preparing to Enter a Professional World	10:00 - 11:30	Continue Theme 4 – (Creating Value in Your Ideas)
	Participants’ expectations		Module 1.3: Conflict Management - Understanding the Emotions		Module 3.1: Transformative Change & 21st Century Skills		Module 4.4: Mission Statement/Business Plan
	Course Introduction		Module 1.4: Valuing diverse perspectives and finding win-win approaches		Module 3.2: Creativity		Module 4.5: Persuasive Language and Rhetorical Devices
	Goal and objectives		Module 1.5: Cultivating a Sense of Belonging & Accountability	11:30 - 12:30	Module 3.3: Communication and Advocating / Active Listening & Assertiveness	11:30 - 12:30	Group discussion about Learning Themes
	Course materials						
11:15 - 12:30	Techniques of Training Part 1	11:15 - 12:30					
	Trainer Success Model						
	Physical Skills						
	Managing Nervous Energy						
	Discussion						
12:30 – 13:15	Lunch BREAK 45 min	12:30 – 13:15	Lunch BREAK 45 min	12:30 – 13:15	Lunch BREAK 45 min	12:30 – 13:15	Lunch BREAK 45 min
13:15 - 13:30	Warming up	13:15 - 13:30	Warming up	13:15 - 13:30	Warming up	13:15 - 15:30	Organization of training courses in Trainers’ Communities
13:30-15:15	Techniques of Training Part 2	13:30-15:15	Theme 2 – (Building Pathways to a Purposeful Life)	13:30-14:15	Continue Theme 3: Preparing to Enter a Professional World		Materials
	Using interactive training methods		Module 2.1: What is a Purposeful Life?		Module 3.4: Teamwork and Collaboration		Plan preparation
	Interactive presentations, Brainstorming, Case-study, Role play, Small group discussions, Practice sessions		Module 2.2: What is My Purpose in Life?		Module 3.5: Being Responsible and Time Management.		Preparation check-lists
	Adult Learning Principles		Module 2.3: Presenting your best self: The resume	14:15 – 15:15	Theme 4 – (Creating Value in Your Ideas)		Course evaluation
	Facilitating Experiential Activities				Module 4.1: Sharing your idea & gathering support		
	Managing Group Energy						
	Class Management						
	Transfer of Training						
	Commitment						
15:15 – 15:30	Break	15:15 – 15:30	Break	15:15 – 15:30	Break	15:15 – 15:30	Break / Closing ceremony
15:30 - 17:30	Curriculum Themes	15:30 - 17:30	Continue Theme 2 – (Building Pathways to a Purposeful Life)	15:30 - 17:30	Continue Theme 4 – (Creating Value in Your Ideas)		
	Theme1 – (Exploring My World, Your World, and Our World)		Module 2.4: Presenting Your Best self - The interview		Module 4.2: Improvement through feedback		
	Module 1.1: Identity, Values and Aspirations		Module 2.5 - My Pathway: Review and Practice		Module 4.3: Financial Plan: Opportunity Costs/Trade Off		
	Module 1.2: Encountering the Other/Fostering Empathy						



1.3. Objectives of follow-up

Under the second CFP of the NVSP SGP, the selected institutions have sixty days to train youth volunteers on the new soft skills curriculum. The NVSP and World Bank team felt that it was important to garner the impressions of the attendees of this first ToT event directly after completion of the training. The evaluation covered: i) the appropriateness of the content and style of delivery of the ToT event, ii) the relevance of the soft skills curriculum’s content, activities, and material, and iii) assessment of any mentoring that the trainers may need. Therefore, the team conducted semi-structured interviews with three ToT participants from three academic institutions in the week following the ToT (October 2-8, 2016) and conducted two separate interviews with the ToT master trainer.

This note presents the early findings of the implementation of the NVSP’s new soft skills curriculum, by:

- Assessing the relevance of the new soft skills curriculum’s content.
- Identifying the strengths and areas of improvement in the delivery style and content of the ToT.
- Evaluating the capacity building impact of the ToT on trainers-in-training.
- Assessing whether and how schools and universities are deploying the new curriculum to youth volunteers post ToT.
- Identifying further capacity needs of training delivering institutions.

1.4. Summary of early findings

Early results indicate that the new soft skills curriculum, “*Building a Better Tomorrow*”, enjoys support among ToT attendees as they deem its content relevant to the needs of Lebanese youth volunteers and they appreciate that the schedule and delivery methods can be adjusted to their academic institutions’ and programs’ needs. The various materials supporting the curriculum are rich and can help trainers prepare their training sessions with youth; yet youth may find these materials too wordy at times and trainers will need practice to be fully competent in handling these multiple resources.

The first ToT event seems to have enhanced the trainers-in-training’s capacity to deliver the new soft skills curriculum as six institutions – and among them the three the team has met with – have started training youth volunteers post ToT. However, two areas of concern remain: First, the ToT learning objectives were not clearly

stated and the discrepancy between the official agenda and the actual activities resulted in time management issues. Second, the heterogeneity of this specific group of ToT attendees has hampered a smooth delivery of the content as not all attendees started with the same capacity level.

To promote sustainable outcomes this notes recommends, among other suggestions, a careful selection of attending trainers-in-training for future ToT sessions; the establishment of a follow-up mechanism enabling schools and universities to adapt and deliver the soft skills training in addressing both their institutional and youth volunteers' needs without jeopardizing the integrity of the curriculum; and the provision of a regular mentoring mechanism for trainers.

2. Findings

2.1. Sample and methodology

Following the ToT event, the team met twice with the master trainer, and once with three of the ToT participants representing three of the thirteen academic institutions present at the event.

Both interviews that the team conducted with the master trainer were open-ended. The first interview focused on two areas: 1) the design of the soft skills curriculum and the relevance of its content and 2) the master trainer's impressions of the Training of trainers' event and the post ToT mentoring needs of implementing institutions. After the initial interview, the master trainer kept the team updated of his post ToT follow-up activities with each of the ToT participating institutions. A phone interview took place three weeks later to share further information on the status of implementation strategies and youth training activities in progress or in preparation.

The three interviewed ToT participants represent the following academic institutions:

- Lebanese University of Tripoli (LU Tripoli)
- Institut Technique Supérieur - La Sagesse, from Beirut (IT Sagesse)
- Makassed Philanthropic Islamic Association of Beirut (Makassed Association) linked to Makassed University and Hospital, and which supervises the Makassed Volunteers program.

Standard interview questions were used with the three ToT participants, which all invited open answers. The same interview protocol was used for each interview, with the following standard list of questions:

- How satisfied are you with the way the master trainer conducted the ToT, and why?
- Can you please describe and comment on, the working environment during the training?
- In your opinion, how pertinent are the training's modules: Order? Length? Content learned? Activities?
- Which pedagogical tools and materials were you given during the ToT? How would you rank them? Which ones will you use to train Youth volunteers?
- How interactive were the training sessions according to you, and why?
- Were you given any or enough time to reflect on each module's takeaways? Please give any additional information.
- How confident do you feel to facilitate the soft skills training for Youth volunteers post ToT?
- Which follow-up post training were you offered? What type of support would you further need?

The interviews lasted for one hour to one-hour and a half, and notes were taken to capture the answers.

2.1. Relevance of the soft skills curriculum content

According to the master trainer and to all participants, the curriculum content is of good quality, contains universal lessons and is aligned with the NVSP's objectives of fostering social cohesion and improving youth employability skills.

The comments from the interviewees fall into three main categories:

- Modules' sequence: All participants stated that each theme builds logically upon the others and address the needs of youth attending their academic and volunteering programs. In training them in socio-emotional skills such as: empathy, conflict management, listening skills, sense of belonging to a community and openness to others and other communities, the modules address the identified needs of Lebanese youth who want to volunteer to improve the communication between their community and others, and to enhance social cohesion at the wider national community level. The soft business and entrepreneurship skills' modules can foster youth's sense of initiative as well as equip them with skills that are relevant to employers.

- Modules’ activities and exercises: All modules are facilitated in using interactive and experiential learning techniques, which enable youth to draw directly from their face-to-face training to understand how to apply these skills in their daily life, in their communities, and as future employees or entrepreneurs. Each participant plays an active role and stays engaged throughout the sessions either individually when reflecting on his or her own emotions or actions, or during small group and larger group activities and practicing team work. Participants also confirmed that thanks to the variety of “hands-on” and practical activities, exercises, and the variety of materials shown, handed out or used (pens, flipcharts, cards, wall activities...), the modules present real-life situations and trainees do not have the time to get bored. The trainees also benefit from the trainers demonstrating the specific skills, and from peer-learning and constructive feedback which are fully part of the “Building a Better Tomorrow” methodology.
- Modules’ relevance to the local context: On the whole, participants consider the curriculum culturally relevant. The addition of the comic book and the six young Lebanese characters, presented to the TOT participants during the training is a welcome addition which will appeal to youth volunteers. The master trainer and one participant suggested, however, that the modules of Theme 4 on soft business skills and entrepreneurship skills, be made even more relevant to the Lebanese market.

Overall the structure, the activities, and the suggested delivery methods of the twenty modules are consistent with best practices found across leading soft skills training programs. Each lesson plan is structured around the three basic pillars of soft skills training and experiential learning: short explanation of the main concept(s) at hand, practice and self-reflection. As mentioned the variety of activities allow youth trainees to engage in multiple ways by addressing the needs of all learner types: auditory, visual, and kinesthetic. Furthermore not only the methodology but also the content is adapted to Lebanese youth’s needs and is aligned with the NVSP overarching objectives.

2.2. Perceptions of the Training of Trainers’ event

The interviewees reported different degrees of satisfaction with the conduct of the ToT event. While the master trainer and two participants seem satisfied with the overall event, especially with its level of interactivity and outcomes, another participant is more critical. Some critical issues are related to the selection of trainers-in-training and the heterogeneity of the group, time management issues in both the initial organization and the conduct of the ToT, and a training environment not consistently conducive to efficient learning.

The following themes were noted most often during the interviews:

- Participants’ selection, group composition and learning environment: According to the master trainer and all three participants, the group of 26 participants was very diverse; indeed they observed that the trainees - two of whom were youth themselves under the age of 25 - started with different capacity levels, training expectations, and preferences in training styles ranging from interactive facilitation to traditional lecture style. Participants also had various levels of experience with either one or all of these areas: youth volunteers, soft skills training, and interactive delivering training. As observed by one participant during one practice exercise, not all attendees did seem “to know their volunteers well” and some could not adapt the experiential learning techniques acquired during the ToT to their future audience.

There were diverse reactions to the heterogeneity of the group. One participant perceived this as a demotivating factor as the group appeared divided and a professional working atmosphere did not emerge. Other participants considered that the group was able to overcome these differences thanks to the master trainer’s facilitation skills. Yet, the overall gap in starting levels and in training expectations resulted in time being lost.

“Experiences were shared; and almost everyone would play the game despite extremely various backgrounds.”
Participant

- Time management issues and actual program covered: There were discrepancies between the initial agenda (as depicted above under 1.3.) according to which the ToT

event would offer a training delivery workshop and a curriculum-based training covering the twenty modules - as it is best practice -, and the actual event's activities. This can be a source of concern as it may reflect either a lack of preparation or a lack of consistency by the organization delivering the ToT. The agenda did not make time either for the preparation and presentation of the practice assignment or for the corresponding feedback session, although this activity is an essential part of a ToT and is, by definition, time-consuming. Moreover, and due to time management issues also linked to group management issues in the first two days of training, only half of the curriculum modules was introduced and discussed, while the other half was presented by reading the Trainer's Guide and the PowerPoint® presentations. One participant stated that the amount of modules covered was sufficient to prepare participants to create their own delivery sessions for youth volunteers. However, this remains sub-standard since ToT best practices usually prescribe that all modules of a curriculum be demonstrated by an experienced master trainer.

- Group management and learning environment: It is the responsibility of the master trainer to maintain a positive environment conducive to effective learning. From the interviews, it can be inferred that the master properly assessed the teaching style each participant was more familiar with, as well as the gap level among participants; he thus tried to adjust the initial schedule to address these needs in ensuring that all receive proper training in experiential learning techniques. Yet, too much time was spent discussing with participants resistant to interactive methods; one participant felt that long questions and monologues held by other trainees were disruptive and hampered the delivery of the content. A more obvious display of assertive group management techniques and facilitation skills by the master trainer might have helped diffuse tensions within the group and create a better learning environment.

- Activities and interactivity: The training delivery workshop introduced trainers-in-training to experiential and interactive delivery techniques, and prepared them to facilitate soft skills training sessions with youth learners. According to the interviewees, the ToT itself was on the whole conducted in an interactive and participatory fashion; two participants confirmed that the activities presented were "hands-on" and prepared them well to facilitate the modules with youth volunteers. Yet, one participant noted that there could have been even more practice exercises challenging participants with both physical and cognitive activities, such as using flip-charts on the floor or trying out new work methods.

"Day 4 was the most active: Each group presented its module and how they would facilitate it; everyone participated and gave feedback".
Participant

- Practice time: One major component of any TOT is practicing an actual curriculum's module, and sufficient time should be allocated to that activity. This, however, did not fully realize during this ToT. At the end of the first day of training, ten small groups of participants were tasked with facilitating some parts of a curriculum's module's live session in using the delivery techniques learned on Day 1. They had then to present to the larger group on Day 4 and received peer-reviewed feedback. The participants were very satisfied with this small group assignment, as it allowed them to practice both the methodology and the content. However, no time was allowed to this essential activity in the original schedule. There was not much time left on Day 4 and each group was given only ten minutes to present; moreover, the exercise was limited to presenting one module's activity and its purpose, monitoring that activity, and debriefing its outcomes. This is not fully in par with the expectations of a soft skills ToT which should put trainees in the situation of real live youth training sessions.

- Capacity building impact on trainers-in-training: The trainers' level of confidence to deliver the new curriculum to youth volunteers after completion of the ToT varies among ToT participants. Two participants reported that the ToT prepared them to deliver the soft skills curriculum. Another noted they would mix the methods learned during this ToT with other interactive methods, as they argue that they would not be fully prepared otherwise.

"We have been equipped with the right tools to deliver the soft skills training as well as methods to manage a group of volunteers."
Participant

The conduct of the ToT could also be improved by adding the following elements:

- Clearly stated ToT learning outcomes: It would have been useful and aligned to common training standards that learning objectives and outcomes of the overall ToT be clearly enunciated. Indeed learning objectives help frame a training's structure and its subsequent activities, and help manage learners' expectations.
- Monitoring and assessment of trainees' skills and certification mechanism: While constructive feedback of the master trainer and peer-reviewed feedback were both provided during the ToT event, no mechanism was in place to provide the NVSP or the trainees' institutions with a fair, balanced and useful assessment of their candidate's skills. Completion of the ToT seems to have been understood as a sufficient condition to consider the trainees to be qualified to facilitate the new soft skills curriculum. Best practice would be to set up a system enabling the master trainer to track and monitor the trainees' progress during the ToT; after completion of the practice exercise the training could be then validated through a certification mechanism in order to ensure the credibility of the new curriculum, harmonize expectations, and ensure the same quality of youth training across NVSP implementing institutions.

2.3. Quality and relevance of the training materials

The materials supporting the "*Building a Better Tomorrow*" curriculum are rich and offer various solutions and opt-out alternatives to trainers as they prepare the training sessions. Yet, some issues remain; these materials appear at times too wordy for youth, furthermore trainers will need practice to be fully competent in handling these multiple resources.

- Quality of the Toolkit: The interviewees gave a generally positive feedback on these written materials. During the ToT event, all thirteen participating institutions were handed out a toolkit with extensive trainers' and youth training materials in both hard copy and CD format. They were shown how to use each of these items, integrate them, and opt-out or replace them when preparing and delivering the training sessions. Two participants confirmed the high quality of the materials for trainers; by the time of the interviews, both had already worked with the different items and were actively using them to prepare their youth training sessions, even creating their own materials in synthesizing information from the Trainer's Guide and the presentations, or adding self-developed content if deemed necessary.

A "Training Toolkit" with the following items was distributed to all ToT participating institutions:

- "*Techniques of Training*" Guide
- Trainer's Guides and Handouts
- Trainer's PowerPoint presentations for all four themes
- *At Glance* Maps for all four themes
- A file listing the learning objectives of each module
- Materials required to prepare each module
- Youth Workbook

- Relevance of the materials for youth: Participants seemed less satisfied with the materials to be handed out or presented to youth. They noted that the handouts are very useful, yet two added that if the face-to-face training Workbooks might be helpful to re-inforce the lessons learned after the training, they still might not disseminate them, as youth will not necessarily use them and copying this material can be costly to the organizations. Participants also raised a common concern which is the share of the written word in all training materials. Indeed, the presentations' slides to be used during the face-to-face training sessions with the youth, which are supposed to be supporting elements, can be very wordy as are the Workbooks. Even more so the Workbooks are very didactic in some instances. This might be challenging for youth volunteers, especially for younger ones, those

"Thanks to the first soft skills training's camp, our Volunteers now think before they talk and know each other better. Future camps will focus on them being trained in knowing themselves better."
Participant

who are students in secondary education institutions or those in vocational training programs, or for kinesthetic learners. The dissemination of the comic books in Arabic would be an asset so as to balance the time spent reading explanations and exercises' instructions. Moreover the introduction of a fully illustrated storyline is definitely appealing to youth learners.

- Translation issue: To all participants, one major issue lies in the fact that the training material has not been translated into Arabic yet. In order to ensure a smooth training delivery to youth volunteers whose English skills are limited, they opted to translate some of the materials on their own. This, however, poses the issue of standardization and monitoring of the translation activities.

The following points should be added to the comments made by the interviewees:

-
- Interplay between and selection of the appropriate tools: The interplay between all instruments - Trainer's Guide, presentations, handouts, at-glance maps and Workbook – might be challenging for beginner trainers. Trainers will need practice after the ToT as well as mentoring to get used to these various resources. It is advised to not use all resources at once. For instance, one could rather use the lesson plans from the Trainer's Guide with the PowerPoint® presentations to prepare the youth training sessions. During the training sessions, the At-glance maps can be very helpful as reference points and to make sure one does keep up with the overall lesson plan's logic and does not forget one activity. New trainers will have to develop a sense of when to use the presentations or rather use other interactive materials such as flip-charts. In this instance, trainers will have to learn how to develop their own flip-charts' content to prepare for the training sessions in helping themselves from both the Trainer's Guide and the presentations.
 - Missing elements: Some elements of the Trainer's Guide and the Youth Workbooks are still missing. For instance a general introduction synthesizing the soft skills' curriculum goals and objectives, its methodological approaches and learning styles as well as its four main themes should be added to the Trainer's Guide. Similarly, a youth-specific introduction presenting the context and the purpose of "*Building a Better Tomorrow*" for youth in Lebanon could be added to the Youth Workbook; the six young Lebanese characters could also be introduced here to link these materials with the comic book and to make the Workbooks more palatable to youth volunteers. Moreover, a table of contents should be created and added, and the general glossary and the full bibliography should be attached to these two major materials.
 - Use of practical cues: To ease the trainer's preparation, it would be helpful to add practical cues by formatting the lesson plans consistently throughout the Trainer's Guide and creating a system of easily recognizable signs and icons. For instance, each type of activity can be graphically introduced by a special icon such as a pen (materials needed) or three human shapes (group work).

2.4. Training's outcomes: Activities since the ToT event and first lessons learned

Both the rapid deployment post ToT of the new soft skills curriculum by new trainers as well as their youth volunteers' positive feedback validate the program's content and its methodology.

- Implementation status and youth volunteers' reactions: The soft skills curriculum is currently being implemented and tested by all three academic institutions with which the team met. Two participating institutions started training youth volunteers on the new soft skills curriculum immediately post ToT. The master trainer reported that, since the interviews, three more academic institutions have started training youth volunteers and are adjusting their training schedule and progressing through the themes with his support. These institutions are:
 - Lebanese University – Faculty of Economics Science and Business Administration.
 - Lebanese German University.
 - Lebanese University – Faculty of Public Health, Fanar.

According to the interviewees, youth volunteers reacted very positively to the soft skills training so far: Two participants reported that youth interacted actively with one another during the training and some even mentioned “feeling at home” (Master trainer’s observation). One participant added that youth volunteers were particularly enthusiastic and shared with the trainers that they “needed more training”.

- Master trainer’s follow-up activities: The ToT participants and the master trainer put in place various actions to support the deployment of the soft skills training.
 - First the ToT group and the master trainer created a WhatsApp® group in order to exchange ideas about curriculum’s and schedule’s adaptation and coordinate, especially, their translation activities which they distributed among each other.
 - Moreover, the master trainer is offering follow-up and mentoring activities to all ToT participants and has already observed various youth training sessions post ToT. The level of post ToT support varies among the institutions: while all participants felt confident that they would be able to deliver the training efficiently and according to the techniques learned, the master trainer had to help one of the participants rectify the size of the youth groups participating in the training.
 - The intensity of the follow-up and the time spent by the master trainer with each trainer and training institution post-ToT demonstrate that some trainees still have a steep learning curve, and speak to the gap existing among ToT participants pre- and post-training in terms of acquisition of the techniques and their capacity to deliver training using experiential techniques. It also shows that the provision of support should not be based on participants’ self-assessment but on the master trainer’s assessment. It should be a building block of the soft skills training’s implementation process in order to monitor the activities of the institutions that the NVSP accredited.
- As they are training the first cohorts of youth volunteers, the interviewees reported that they are taking three types of actions. They started adapting the modules to their academic and logistical needs, to the needs of youth attending their institutions, by selecting parts of the training activities, or modifying the suggested delivery techniques, and the duration and the frequency of the training schedule. However, these actions, while speaking to the degree of potential customization and flexibility of the methodology and the content, could jeopardize the integrity of the soft skills’ curriculum and pose quality delivery challenges. Limitations need to be clearly delineated to avoid these pitfalls.
 - Adaptation of the new curriculum’s delivery techniques: Training institutions are adapting and selecting the delivery techniques learned and tools suggested during the ToT. For instance, and as suggested by the master trainer, one participant is foregoing the use of PowerPoint presentations for handouts that were distributed with the Trainer’s Toolkit and for flip-charts that they tailored to their needs. One participant decided to use both the new curriculum’s and IYF’s delivery methods to increase interactivity and youth engagement. This type of adaptation requires that the trainer has previous soft skills curriculum’s experience, masters the content of the modules, and is well versed in aligning tools and techniques to each

module's learning objectives. It is therefore preferable that the master trainer supervises these adaptations when new trainers wish to carry them. It also implies that a mechanism of ToT participants' skills assessment be in place to enable the master trainer to prioritize with whom he/she should be following-up post-ToT.

- Modules' adaptation: Two of the interviewed participants have decided to select some module's specific activities on their own while two others are being supported by the master trainer in that process. The level of customization that this curriculum allows is surely an advantage to address the specific needs of each volunteers' groups according to their age, educational background, and level of life and work experience, and which soft skills trainers will have evaluated. Yet, this can only be done if the sequence of the modules is respected and each module is not devoid of its objectives. Furthermore the lesson plans' general structure – short introduction of concept, practice, and debriefing activity – cannot be modified. During the ToT the master trainer suggested a color-coding system to adapt – under his supervision – the content to each institution's training's needs: red for must-haves, orange for careful selection, and green for sections or exercises or activities which may be skipped entirely. This requires that the trainers know the purpose of each activity, its context in the module, and the previous and next activities to ponder which can be adapted.
- Schedule, sequencing and duration of youth training sessions: While they have been given an overall time frame of sixty days to deliver the soft skills curriculum, implementing institutions are adjusting the frequency of the training along their own programs' schedule to ensure that both youth and youth trainers stay motivated. All three interviewed participants have organized their delivery schedule differently – from weekly two-hour sessions throughout the academic year to a series of two-day camps on an 8-12 week schedule –; the master trainer reports that two more higher education institutions are customizing both duration and frequency of the soft skills training and embedding it with other ongoing programs to create synergies and address logistical issues.

Trainers should arrange for regular and repeated contact time over camps, as youth's capacity of absorption of a material which can be emotionally draining, is limited. Moreover, regularity allows to keep the momentum and encourages strong group dynamics. Two soft skills modules weekly should be the limit and would still give youth time to reflect on each lesson and practice the newly acquired skills in their own community and their volunteering activity.

3. Recommendations and future steps

3.1. Improving the delivery of the ToT

Based on the aforementioned findings, the following areas could be improved to enhance the delivery of the ToT and increase its value:

- Selection of ToT participants: The ToT participants' selection process should be strengthened in order to:
 - o improve the ToT learning environment and increase all participants' learning experience during the training by decreasing the gap skills between participants and preventing bullying behaviors;
 - o better allocate the time of the master trainer post-ToT and simplify the monitoring and follow-up of the youth soft skills training implementation process as it is assumed that better selected trainers should need less support than challenged trainers;
 - o At a minimum, NVSP could suggest to the implementing institutions that they select trainers with a previous experience in experiential learning techniques and ideally with previous experience with, or knowledge in, soft skills or life skills.
- Composition of ToT groups: Beyond the issue of selection of ToT trainees, the team further recommends that future ToT groups be composed of implementing institutions serving youth with similar needs: One idea could be to create separate ToT events for institutions serving youth of secondary education age on the one hand and for higher-education institutions on the other hand.
- ToT learning objectives and outcomes: Clearly stated and measurable learning objectives and outcomes should be shared with ToT participants at the beginning of the workshop to frame its content and better manage the expectations of the participants.
- Duration of training and practice time: The ToT is content intensive as it covers both the techniques of training and a review of all curriculum's modules as per soft skills training's best practices. One could opt to extend the duration of the training by one day to allow for more practice time and for more in-depth discussions. The practice assignment could therefore be to facilitate more than one activity and allow trainers-in-training to demonstrate their facilitation and group monitoring skills.
- Time management: As it is essential that trainers-in-training are made aware of, have time to discuss, and practice both the techniques of delivery as well as the whole "*Building a Better Tomorrow*" curriculum and its twenty modules, each ToT activity should be clearly announced, detailed and timed in the training agenda. Master trainer and participants should follow this protocol and should establish their own training sessions' rules at the beginning of the workshop.
- Addition of elements to the Trainer's Guide and Workbooks: At a minimum an introduction and a table of contents should be added to both the Trainer's Guide and the Workbooks.
- Increased content customization to the Lebanese context: For further scaling up and deployment, it would be helpful to customize the curriculum by adding more examples relevant to the Lebanese context, especially in the modules of Theme #4 on entrepreneurship skills.
- Translation of the materials: A translation in formal Arabic of the presentations and the Youth Workbooks is necessary to reach out to all youth volunteers. However, youth will still need for the trainers to present the content and the materials in Lebanese Arabic as not all are conversant in formal Arabic.

3.2. Post ToT follow-up

The team further recommends to build upon the early findings, and develop or extend the following processes and services to ToT participants post training in order to improve the deployment of the soft skills curriculum:

- Assessment and monitoring of trainees' progress during and at the end of training, and certification of training process: An assessment system as well as a certification mechanism should be established to ensure that the quality of the delivery training is harmonized across all soft skills training' implementing institutions.
- Systematized supporting activities for a careful adaptation of the curriculum's content and the delivery timeframe: To maintain the integrity of the overall curriculum and to allow for a flexible, yet timely delivery of the soft skills modules, NVSP should supervise the curriculum's adaptation process and extend systematic supporting services to all institutions receiving a grant under the second CFP.
- Trainers' mentoring: In order to build up the capacity of the trainers, an institutionalized mentoring mechanism should be a building block of the soft skills training's deployment. Mentoring sessions should take place on site when trainers deliver soft skills training to youth volunteers as well as through regular mentor/mentee meetings to reflect on the lessons learned from past sessions and improve curriculum delivery in the future.
- Coordination among ministries is a critical element to ensure that the soft skills curriculum is deployed in a timely fashion after the ToT event and that all youth volunteers are given access to the soft skills training notwithstanding the institution they attend. In particular, it is recommended that MoSA communicate to the Ministry of Education the list of all public academic institutions that will need the approval of the latter to use a new training tool, from the moment of their selection into the NVSP.