



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in  
Children, Youth and Civic Engagement  
Ireland



NUI Galway  
OE Gaillimh

CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTRE



Foróige's  
Youth Development Programmes

# Leadership

A Briefing Paper on the Foróige Leadership for Life Programme Evaluation





## Introduction

This briefing paper provides a summary of the evaluation of the Foróige Leadership for Life Programme in terms of type, methodology, results and conclusion. This is a companion to the Leadership and Citizenship Information Booklet and should be read in this context in order to understand fully the nature and effect of the programme.

## Why this research?

Foróige established its youth leadership programme sixty years ago, in response to a need to engage youth as active leaders in their communities. Whereas Foróige has always had an interest in youth citizenship as a group activity, more recently it has focused its attention on developing individual youth as leaders and change agents, particularly among marginalised and disadvantaged youth. In order to establish the benefits that accrue for young people who participate in the programme, Foróige commissioned the National University of Ireland, Galway to carry out an independent evaluation.

## University Accreditation and Partnership with UNESCO

The Leadership for Life Programme has received formal accreditation (NFQ Level 6) from the National University of Ireland, Galway namely the Foundation Certificate in Youth Leadership and Community Action. In addition, the programme is operated in association with the work programme of the UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement at the University. To date over 1,600 young people have taken part in the Leadership for Life Programme.

## Nature of the Research

This study involved a mixed-methodology approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative components in order to establish how much, and in what ways (if any) the programme has proven benefits. This research included a quasi-experimental component with young people receiving the Foróige Leadership for Life programme and a comparison group who did not. Under the quantitative strand of the research questionnaires were collected at three time points over an eighteen month period. The study focused on 267 young people who were involved in the leadership programme and a comparison group of 164 respondents. Standardised measures of Life skills, Leadership skills, Resilience, Social Support and Empathy were utilised. The qualitative strand of the research involved interviews at three time points with young people considered at high and low 'risk' of well-being issues as well as focus groups with programme facilitators.



 OUR PURPOSE  
YOUR POTENTIAL



## What are the key findings?

### Quantitative evidence



The key findings of this part of the research were as follows:

- The youth leadership programme is effective in increasing and sustaining leadership skills over time: The young people involved in the leadership programme demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in decision making, critical thinking, life skills, leadership skills and community involvement. Furthermore, these benefits were maintained and others accrued over time including empathy, communication skills and goal setting.
- Young people who completed the leadership programme and were part of the intervention group showed significant improvement when compared to the comparison group: These improvements included factors such as goal setting, empathy, critical thinking, communication skills, team work, problem solving, leadership skills and community involvement.
- Youth Leadership involvement increases resilience: Young people involved in the programme demonstrate significantly increased capacity to be resilient (overcome the odds) when compared to the comparison group.
- Youth Leadership improves social support: Participants demonstrated significantly improved perceived sibling support over time and enhanced emotional support when compared to the comparison group.
- Self-perception of leadership improves for high & low risk youth over time: Self-perception of leadership capacity significantly improved for both groups over time. Importantly, the high risk group who initially demonstrate very poor self belief improved in terms of perception of leadership ability over time to the extent that by the end of the study they were on a par with the low risk youth.
- Key factors in developing young leaders: The study identified a set of core factors key to developing young leaders. These factors include leadership mechanisms towards better resilience, adolescent well-being, empathy and understanding oneself.

In summary, the Leadership for Life Programme demonstrates improvements in Leadership skills, Life skills, Resilience and Social Supports among respondents.

### Qualitative evidence



Interviews with the low and high 'risk' young people identified the following benefits resulting from involvement in the Foróige Leadership for Life programme:

- Both groups perceived that their supports had improved over the course of the programme with the high risk group identifying particular improvement.
- Young people reported improvement in leadership skills, communication skills, team work, conflict resolution, problem solving, social skills, sense of achievement and self-belief, empathy, self-awareness, self-control, confidence, public speaking, and assertiveness.
- Young people involved identified more opportunities to engage as leaders.

In addition facilitators reported similar positive results in terms of the perceived improvement of leadership skills among youth.

115  
16-18 year olds graduated  
from NUI Galway in 2011

empowering youth  
enriching communities  
**foróige**



## Conclusion

There is promising evidence that young participants in the Foróige Leadership for Life programme garner benefits from their involvement both personally and in their ability to contribute to their communities. The results demonstrate that involvement in the programme accrues potential benefits in terms of leadership skills, resilience and social support. Participants reported that they have gained improved skills including assertiveness, communication skills, confidence, social skills, problem solving ability, and leadership skills. The study indicates that the programme provides promising evidence that it is effective in enabling young people to be effective leaders.

## Quality Assurance Statement

*This is by way of confirmation that the independent evaluation of the Foróige Leadership for Life Programme was conducted to a high level and reviewed by subject matter experts. The results accruing from the study indicate a rigorous evaluation of the programme and are presented in a fair and unbiased manner.*

### Professor Pat Dolan,

UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement, NUI Galway.

### Professor Mark Brennan,

Leadership & Community Development, Penn State.



### Foróige

Block 12D, Joyce Way  
Park West  
Dublin 12

Phone: +353 1 630 1560

Fax: +353 1 630 1568

Email: info@foroige.ie



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in  
Children, Youth and Civic Engagement  
Ireland  
CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTRE



PENNSYLVANIA  
STATE

