



Mentoring matters!

The Power of Mentorship

The concept of mentorship has a long tradition, as it is evidenced by a famous tale in Greek mythology. In Homer's *Odyssey* the goddess Athena, disguised as a mentor, approaches Odysseus' adolescent son Telemachus and guides him in completing his education. She teaches him about his missing father and helps him cope with the situation of growing up without him.

Today, we use the word mentor for anyone who, through a trustful relationship, positively influences another person's life. Mentees on the other hand get the comfort that there is someone who believes in them and will support them when they navigate the challenges of life.

The powerful effects of mentoring on young people's personal growth, on their academic and professional achievements and interpersonal relationships are well researched, particularly in the US and Europe. NGOs in Dalyan's focus countries also increasingly recognise mentoring as a tool to help disadvantaged youth getting ahead.

Dalyan started supporting mentoring programs in 2011. We appreciate mentoring not only because of its positive effects on education and employability of young people

but also to instill self-confidence, self-management and resilience which enables young people to cope with challenges throughout their life. It is therefore an intervention with the potential to create highly sustainable long-term impact which is fully in line with Dalyan's principles.

Mentoring in our portfolio

Currently, six of our partners in India, Turkey and Switzerland apply some form of mentoring, whilst focusing on different beneficiary groups. Hayat Sende (Turkey) aims at strengthening the agency and education level of children from foster homes at the age of 13 to 22 through mentoring, group activities and scholarships. Medha (India) and CYDD (Turkey) seek to improve the successful entry of college and university students from disadvantaged backgrounds into the labor market through personal counselling and work skill training. Mentor Together (India) organises multi-year mentorships for adolescents and college level students, to help them stay in school and find a work place. Milaan (India) uses mentoring to improve the position of adolescent girls in rural areas of North India by strengthening their self-confidence and leadership skills. ChagALL (Switzerland) sup-

ports migrant children in accessing higher education by offering exam preparation and tutoring for special gateway exams.

Rebuilding trust is key

Whilst the mentoring programs in our portfolio pursue similar overall goals they differ in their approaches, such as how they combine life skills and academic content, in their choice between salaried mentors or volunteers, or in the intensity and duration of mentoring (e.g. one-to-one versus group mentoring, short term versus multi-year mentoring).

Not surprisingly all our partners concur on the importance of mentor quality and commitment as well as mentor-mentee relationship for success. The need to build and retain a trustful and enduring relationship between mentor and mentee is of particular importance for one-to-one mentoring with a focus on a more general life support. Mentees in these programs typically have a history of broken relationships. Specific efforts and patience are needed to rebuild their trust.



Volunteers or paid mentors?

To achieve this ambitious target, Mentor Together, Hayat Sende, Milaan and CYDD focus on working with carefully selected volunteers. They emphasise social competence and availability of mentors and stress the importance of an optimal matching of mentor-mentee profiles. Programs focusing on more narrowly defined goals such as employability and exam preparation (Medha, ChagALL), prefer working with paid staff with strong academic and didactic skills.

A big risk for one-to-one mentoring is the early termination of the mentorship, as it can cause more harm to the mentee than not having benefitted from a mentorship at all. Mentor Together addresses this through a rigid selection and training of mentors and a well-structured mentoring curriculum. CYDD and Hayat Sende on the other hand recruit their mentors preferentially from their alumni network of former mentees, who make powerful role models and are highly motivated and well positioned to relate to mentees. NGO partners also agree on the need to accompany the mentors closely and to build a mentor-community-feeling to keep mentors on board.

Mentoring isn't puppy-petting

Not surprisingly, one-to-one mentoring approaches are costly and difficult to scale, even when working with volunteers, as mentors and mentees need a lot of hand-holding. As an experienced mentor

expressed it: "Mentoring is not puppy-petting".

Finding quality mentors with the necessary stamina remains a major bottleneck to scaling. Hence, all our partners also practice group counselling wherever possible. Some NGOs such as Mentor Together and Milaan consider engaging paid mentors and tech-based mobile mentoring to bridge the mentor-mentee gap in specific regions and cut down costs. However, this may again limit the strength of the relationship and therefore might not fully address the problem.

Family support is crucial!

A common success factor in our programs is wider family support. Effective mentoring can be life changing, but positive transformation of mentees can only happen if tolerated - and ideally supported - by families and peers. It is a demanding task when empowered mentees start challenging socio-cultural concepts, such as the role of women in society as it is the case for Milaan and Medha.

As a final point, we should not forget that trustful mentor-mentee relationships can also bear a risk of abuse. It is important for Dalyan that our partners address this through same-gender-pairing, building awareness with mentees, clear and obliging rules of conduct, as well as controls and helplines.



Mentoring remains a focus area of Dalyan

It is still too early to conclude on the long-term impact of the mentoring programs in the Dalyan portfolio. Still, evaluations by Medha and Mentor Together show positive outcomes at the personal as well as the skill level. CYDD's satisfaction surveys over a period of five years received outstanding feedback. Surprisingly over half the mentors decide to take on new mentees after their initial one-year mentoring phase. The success rates of the ChagALL children in the exams and probation periods surpass the average by far. This is encouraging and Dalyan will certainly continue supporting mentoring in the future. We are keen to bring our mentoring partners together as we believe this might be a great cross-border learning opportunity for all and an opportunity to discuss specific challenges such as scaling, working with alumni and impact measurement.

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