

Evaluation Report - Volunteers of the "Older Brother, Older Sister" Program

Below, we will present the profile of the involved volunteers and describe their experience while working with children and volunteering in the "Older Brother, Older Sister" program during the 2022/2023 program cycle.

Volunteer Profile

During the 2022/2023 program cycle, a total of 176 volunteers were involved, but 150 of them filled in the questionnaires:

- 132 females (88 %)
- 18 males (12 %)

Based on the answers of volunteers who completed the evaluation form, they participated in the program through volunteer engagement in the following non-governmental organizations:

Organisation	No. of included volunteers
Udruženje za prevenciju ovisnosti NARKONE, Sarajevo	40 (24.4%)
Udruženje za pomoć djeci i omladini sa posebnim potrebama Tračak nade, Foča;	24 (14.6%)
Centar za psihološku podršku <i>Sensus</i> , Mostar	20 (12.2%)
Fondacija Muharem Berbić, Sarajevo i Visoko	11 (7.2%)
UG Nova generacija, Banja Luka	17 (11.2%)
Centar za edukaciju mladih, Travnik	9 (5.9%)
Udruženje <i>Naša djeca</i> , Zenica	6 (3.9%)
Udruženje <i>CEZAR</i> , Srbac	8 (5.3%)
Zemlja djece u BiH, Tuzla	9 (5.9%)
Centar za djecu, mlade i porodicu, Laktaši	8 (5.3%)

When it comes to the level of education, the current volunteers are at the following levels:

- Bachelor students: 80 volunteers (52.6%)
- Masters students: 15 volunteers (9.9%)
- High school diploma holders: 55 volunteers (36.6%)

The average age of volunteers is 22.5 years old.

The largest number of volunteers (N = 92; 60.5 %) are enrolled in one of the humanities faculties (Psychology, Social Work, Special Education, etc.). Following that, students of social sciences are in second place (N = 18; 11.8%), and students of health sciences are in third place (N = 14; 9.3 %).

The majority of volunteers are indeed students (110; 72.4%), followed by employed individuals (32; 21.1%), and unemployed individuals (8; 5.33%).

When it comes to volunteer experience in the "Older Brother, Older Sister" program, the data is as follows:

- Novice volunteers - 96 volunteers (64 %)
- One year of volunteer experience - 42 volunteers (28 %)
- Two years of volunteer experience - 5 volunteers (3.33%)
- Three years of volunteer experience - 3 volunteers (2 %)
- Four years of volunteer experience - 4 volunteers (2.67%)

Child-Volunteer Relationship

- At the beginning of the cycle, the majority of volunteers (129) did not consider the child's gender important for their relationship. In the end, only 77 volunteers had a child of the same gender. Furthermore, for 159 volunteers, it was not important for the child to be of the same religion or nationality, while 9 volunteers mentioned that this was only somewhat important to them.
- 74 volunteers believed it was important to spend time with the children every week, while this criterion was not essential for 12 volunteers. By the end of the program cycle, 67 volunteers stated that they spent time with the child every week.
- At the start of the cycle, 132 volunteers believed that it was mostly or very important for each interaction with the child to last a minimum of two hours. For 6 volunteers, this wasn't significant at all. By the end of the program cycle, 138 volunteers stated that their interactions with the child lasted at least two hours.
- Regarding other criteria, almost all volunteers indicated that it was mostly or very important to them that they could organize engaging activities, that the children confided in them, that they worked on homework together, fulfilled promises, praised the children, and helped them express their feelings and thoughts better. By the end of the program cycle, the results showed the following:
 - 144 volunteers were satisfied with the quality and engaging nature of their interactions.
 - 119 volunteers had children who suggested places to visit.
 - 94 volunteers stated that the children mostly confided in them when they had problems, and 135 volunteers kept the children's personal secrets.

- 147 volunteers believed they had kept all their promises to the child.
- 148 volunteers thought they had praised the child every time they did something well.
- 145 volunteers made an effort to help the child talk about their thoughts and feelings.
- 113 volunteers believed they had successfully helped the child make new friends.
- 145 volunteers believed that the child could express disagreement in their presence.
- 134 volunteers felt they had established a close and confidential relationship with the child, with 106 volunteers being confident that the child had fully accepted them.
- 39 volunteers felt that the children they worked with had more serious problems that were challenging for them as volunteers to handle.

Areas of Children's Development

At the beginning of the cycle, volunteers believed they could help children improve certain areas of their lives. Out of 164 volunteers, the vast majority felt confident in their ability to assist children in the following developmental goals:

- To make children more self-assured and improve their self-image - only two volunteers did not believe they could achieve this. By the end of the program cycle, 11 volunteers were not satisfied with their work on this task.
- To help children manage their emotions better - 10 volunteers did not believe in their abilities. By the end of the cycle, 21 volunteers were not content with their achievement in this developmental task.
- To help children make better use of their leisure time - 2 volunteers didn't believe in their abilities. By the end of the program cycle, 17 volunteers believed they could have offered more leisure activities.
- To encourage children to be more open and communicative - 9 volunteers didn't believe in their abilities. By the end of the program cycle, 14 volunteers were not satisfied with their achievement in this task.
- To facilitate visits to new places - 22 volunteers didn't feel they could provide this. By the end of the program cycle, 45 volunteers were not content with their work on this task.
- To assist in the acquisition of life skills and desirable behaviors - 10 volunteers stated that they couldn't do this. By the end of the program cycle, 33 volunteers were not satisfied with their achievement in this task.
- Simultaneously, a large number of volunteers (126) stated that they believed the child wouldn't change in any way or that there was a low chance of that happening. Optimism about changes in the children was shown by 38 volunteers. By the end of the program cycle, 84 volunteers stated that the child had not changed in any way.

From the above data, we can see that at the beginning of the program cycle, a smaller number of volunteers were skeptical about their abilities. However, by the end of the program cycle, there was a greater number of volunteers who believed they could have done better. This conclusion could indicate that volunteers became more aware of the challenges through the program cycle, became more self-critical, and exercised caution in their promises and goals.

Beliefs and Attitudes about Children at Risk

Below, we will analyze the volunteers' attitudes towards children at risk at the beginning and end of the program cycle:

- Do the negative experiences that children have survived leave lasting negative consequences? At the beginning of the cycle, 97 volunteers mostly or strongly agreed with this statement, while 67 volunteers held the opposite view. By the end of the program cycle, 73 volunteers somewhat agreed with this statement, indicating a decline and a more positive attitude compared to the beginning of the cycle.
- Although a volunteer tries to help a child, can little change be achieved? At the beginning of the cycle, only 12 volunteers agreed with this statement, and by the end of the program cycle, this number increased to 14 volunteers. This might suggest that volunteers consider the well-being of the child more in the context of external factors the child is facing.
- Can a volunteer encourage a child to change certain unacceptable behaviors? At the beginning of the cycle, 154 volunteers believed they could, and eight volunteers held the opposite view. By the end of the program cycle, 16 volunteers felt they couldn't encourage a child to change specific unacceptable behavior.
- Does a quiet and obedient child have no difficulties? Only 7 volunteers agreed with this statement at the beginning of the cycle, and the same result remained at the end of the program cycle.
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- At the beginning of the cycle, 34 volunteers didn't think they could understand the motives of those whose behaviors they found unacceptable. The rest believed they had a high understanding of motives even if they considered the behavior unacceptable. By the end of the program cycle, this number decreased to two volunteers.
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- Can mentoring sometimes be harmful? At the beginning of the cycle, 43 volunteers believed that sometimes it could be harmful. By the end of the program cycle, 10 volunteers still held this view.
- Does working with children have an effect if it doesn't address problems in the family and environment? At the beginning of the cycle, 82 volunteers agreed with this statement, and 82 disagreed. By the end of the program cycle, 28 volunteers believed that working with children has no effect if it doesn't address family problems. This result suggests that volunteers came to recognize the importance of each individual protective factor, regardless of the child's circumstances.

- Is showing pity harmful behavior? At the beginning of the cycle, only 12 volunteers believed it wasn't harmful. The same result persisted at the end of the program cycle.
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- Should a volunteer focus on changing harmful behaviors in their work? At the beginning of the cycle, only 29 volunteers believed this didn't need to be the focus of their relationship. By the end of the program cycle, 40 volunteers believed that their relationship doesn't necessarily have to be exclusively centered on changing harmful behaviors.
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- Is a volunteer unsuccessful if their "child" doesn't show visible positive behavior changes? At the beginning of the cycle, only 13 volunteers considered this criterion valid. By the end of the program cycle, only 5 volunteers agreed with this statement, while the rest believed it wasn't relevant to the success of a volunteer.
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- Is a volunteer hypocritical if they hide from the child that they smoke cigarettes? At the beginning of the cycle, 43 volunteers saw this as hypocritical behavior. By the end of the program cycle, this was the case for 40 volunteers.
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- Does a volunteer know better than the child themselves what's good for the child? At the beginning of the cycle, a minority of 53 volunteers supported the idea that the volunteer knows better what's good for the child. By the end of the program cycle, this view was held by 41 volunteers.
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- Should a volunteer be indulgent towards the child and provide them with all the experiences they haven't had the chance to have before? At the beginning of the cycle, 49 volunteers supported this indulgent stance regardless of everything. The results show that by the end of the program cycle, this stance was held by 41 volunteers.
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- Is "unconditional acceptance" crucial for improving a child's behavior? At the beginning of the cycle, 99 volunteers supported this view, while 65 volunteers had the opposite opinion. The results show that by the end of the program cycle, 87 volunteers believed that unconditional acceptance is crucial for change in a child's behavior.

Who has the greatest responsibility for the quality of interactions with the child?

At the beginning of the cycle, the volunteers held a hierarchical view regarding responsibility:

- 141 volunteers (86%) believed that volunteers have the greatest responsibility.
- 10 volunteers (6.1%) believed that it is the responsibility of the professional collaborator/coordinator.
- 9 volunteers (5.5%) thought that parents bear the responsibility.
- 5 volunteers (2.4%) believed that the child was responsible.

The results indicate that at the end of the program cycle, the volunteers maintained a similar view of the responsibility hierarchy. The only difference is that they attributed

greater responsibility for the quality of interactions to parents (14; 9.2%) compared to professional collaborators/coordinators of the project (7; 4.6%). Volunteers still considered themselves to have the greatest responsibility, while children were seen as having the least responsibility.

Personal values and motivation of volunteers

As a main motive to participate in the project, the volunteers stated the following reasons:

Motivation	Number of volunteers
Help child at risk	55 (33.5%)
Gain experience in work with children	42 (25.6%)
Satisfaction due to good actions	26 (15.9%)
Skill development and personal progress	23 (14%)
Need for new and fun experience	13 (7.9%)
Quality of leisure time	5 (3%)

As reasons to remain active in the project, the volunteers have stated following reasons:

Reason to stay project volunteer	Number of volunteers
Visible changes of children behavior throughout the project	62 (37.8%)
Learning and developing personal and professional skills	41 (25%)
Commitment to engagement in the project	26 (15.9%)
Clear expression of the child's desire to spend time with me	20 (12.2%)
Feedback from others that I am meaningful to the child	9 (5.5%)
Meeting new people and opportunities to socialize and have fun	6 (3.7%)

When it comes to qualities for working with children, volunteers had the following attitudes at the beginning and end of the cycle:

- At the beginning of the cycle, 5 volunteers believed they couldn't be a good role model for children. By the end of the cycle, this number decreased to 4 volunteers, while the rest maintained a positive self-perception of this quality.
- At the beginning of the cycle, 2 volunteers felt they didn't have enough patience for working with children, and by the end of the cycle, this number increased to 6 volunteers. The rest maintained a positive perception of this skill in both time points.
- At the beginning of the cycle, 5 volunteers didn't believe they understood children well. By the end of the cycle, this number had risen to 7 volunteers. The rest were satisfied with their skill level in both time points.

Self-assessment of volunteers traits and skills

The self-assessment of volunteers at the beginning and end of the program cycle is

Skill/Personality trait	Beginning of program cycle		End of program cycle	
	More present (no. of volunteers)	Less present (no. of volunteers)	More present (no. of volunteers)	Less present (no. of volunteers)
Ability to accept feedback	157	7	147	17
Ability to give feedback	154	10	149	15
Setting healthy personal boundaries	150	14	147	17
Sense of humor	154	10	137	27
Ambivalence tolerance	145	19	135	29
Authenticity	158	6	145	19
Frustration tolerance	150	14	110	54
Unobtrusiveness	95	69	140	24
Sincere interest vs formalities	157	7	145	19
Sensitivity	131	33	125	39
Shyness/Withdrawal	50	114	56	108
Curiosity	146	18	135	29
Self-awareness	156	8	147	17
Conflict management	149	15	144	20
Focus on well-being of others	156	8	147	17
Empathy	157	7	146	18
Flexibility	157	7	144	20
Emotional self-regulation	151	13	146	18
Boredom and lack of interest	8	156	9	155

described in the table below.

Although there are no statistically significant differences in the change of attributes, we can see from the table that the number of volunteers who believe they possess most of the positive attributes listed to a greater extent has decreased at the end of the cycle. This trend could indicate that volunteers have become more self-critical by the end of the program cycle and have become aware of areas for further development in these attributes.

When it comes to program support, at both time points, all volunteers indicated that all forms of program support are very important to them, particularly highlighting the usefulness of the introductory education for working with children, good preparation, and clear roles.

Recommendations and Additional Comments from Volunteers in the Final Evaluation:

- Working with children in the project should also involve providing support to parents (education and advisory assistance).
- There is a need for further efforts to ensure that professional collaborators understand the role of volunteers.
- Introduce even more group activities.
- Increase the budget allocated for individual interactions.
- Expand the program to include older children, up to 18 years of age.

An additional recommendation for evaluating upcoming programming cycles is to enhance the data collection phase, with a specific focus on improving children's and volunteers' understanding of the importance of providing more reliable feedback.

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Sarajevo, August 2023

