

Youth Resilience Assessment Tool (YRAT)

The American Institutes for Research[®] (AIR[®]) in collaboration with ACIDI/VOCA, developed the Youth Resilience Assessment tool aligning with the latest evidence on Youth Positive Development (PYD) and from Youth Violence Prevention theories for the Latin American and Caribbean region. Youth resilience (YR) in this tool follows the theory that resilience “is as much as what you have (individually and collectively) as what you think (mentality)” (Ungar, n.d.) and for this tool it is seen on a continuum and is defined as “the capacity to live with purpose, perseverance, equanimity, authenticity, and self-reliance... (and) positively manage change, challenge, and adversity” (Version, 2013).

What is the Youth Resilience Assessment Tool?

The tool’s objective is to identify and measure the protective and risk factors for youth for personalized programming. The YRAT is a criterion-referenced assessment tool that is designed to assess individual youths’ “resilience” as defined within their context, by evaluating against a set of pre-specified criteria (e.g. factors in the YRAT). As opposed to other psychometric tools that compare individual results with the mean score of the group, the YRAT scores are used to classify participants in one of four resilience levels, where each level describes progressive attitudes and skills related to resilience. The tool has been validated through cognitive interviews, factor analysis, and Classical Test Theory.

The YRAT can be used by youth-serving organizations, youth-serving program staff, and youth-focused evaluators in the following ways:

Participant Screening

- **Use of data:** Assess the resilience scores of prospective youth participants and determine eligibility for program enrollment.
- **Relevance:** As resilience is multidimensional, even in the most violent and impoverished communities, not all youth are vulnerable to engage in violent or delinquent activities. A robust targeting approach supports achieving program goals and related theory of change.

Program Design

- **Use of data:** Analyze trends in resilience scores of youth participants to customize program offerings and target supporting specific factors, either at the individual-level or the group-level.
- **Relevance:** Evidence from evaluations of different crime and violence prevention interventions have demonstrated that targeted interventions (at the secondary and tertiary levels) have higher degrees of effectiveness than interventions offered at the primary level.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

- **Use of data:** Assess effectiveness and learn from program results by tracking resilience scores among participants over time and after the intervention.
- **Relevance:** There are a limited number of psychometric tools available to MEL for programs that support youth resilience, youth crime and violence prevention, or promote youth leadership. The YRAT is one such MEL tool that can be used to robustly assess whether a program contributed to increased resilience levels among youth participants, including by how much, and in which domains.

What does the YRAT Measure?

After a careful review of existing youth resilience tools, validated internationally, a gap was identified for a practical tool that sought to evidence both protective and risk factors across the socio-ecological framework commonly used in youth violence prevention. The socio-ecological model could be summarized to three dimensions: 1) individual, 2) relationships (family, peers, and school, and 3) society/community. Most tools analyzed covered only the first level (individual) or were directly developed for social re-insertion of past offenders or drug addicts. A need was identified for a more generally applicable tool that was practical to use and provided additional context given the definition of youth resilience.

The tool supports the recently updated USAID Youth Policy 2022, by supporting programs on designing evidence-based activities. It is well evidenced that poverty and high levels of violence in a community are not determinants of youth resilience (Ungar, 2013). Even in poor and violent communities, not all youth face the same risk of falling into problems of drug use, criminality, early pregnancy, or vagrancy. Resilience is associated with individual capacities, social relationships, and the supply of resources and opportunities for youth in their communities.

The tool supports the generation of evidence on youth resilience, identifying the main protective and risk factors that influence youth behavior, across the various socio-ecological levels. The figure to the right outlines the 5 dimensions and the 19 factors examined cross referenced with the PYD framework domains. The generation of evidence allows the intervention to provide differentiated attention to its participants, depending on their level of resilience and their main needs, in order to effectively engage them in initiatives that promote positive youth development and address their low protective factors.

Dimension	Factors	PYD Domains
Individual	<i>Antisocial attitudes</i>	Assets and Agency
	<i>Self-control</i>	Assets
	<i>Self-esteem</i>	Agency
	<i>Civility</i>	Agency
	<i>Criminal conduct*</i>	-Youth Violence Prevention-
	<i>Integrity</i>	Assets and Agency
	<i>Positive identity</i>	Agency
	<i>Soft skills (Assets)</i>	Assets
	<i>Substance Abuse*</i>	-Youth Violence Prevention-
Family	<i>Family Belonging</i>	Enabling Environment
	<i>Family Disfunction</i>	Enabling Environment
	<i>Rules and roles</i>	Enabling Environment
Peers	<i>Friends with criminal conduct</i>	Enabling Environment
	<i>Protective relations</i>	Enabling Environment
School	<i>School life</i>	Enabling Environment
Community	<i>Community Belonging</i>	Enabling Environment & Contributions
	<i>Social Justice</i>	Enabling Environment
	<i>Opportunities*</i>	Contributions
	<i>Protective communities</i>	Enabling Environment

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