UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS: ASHOKA'S ANSWER TO THE CHALLENGE OF MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

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For 25 years, Ashoka has supported leading social entrepreneurs by investing in them and connecting them to a global community of their peers. Today's Ashoka Fellowship consists of more than 1,600 social entrepreneurs in 60 countries working in every area of human need – from health care and education, to civil justice and the environment. Ashoka has no religious or political affiliation and receives funding primarily from individuals, volunteer chapters, foundations, and business entrepreneurs.

Social entrepreneurs play a unique role in creating world change. They are distinguished from other citizen sector leaders[1] by their long-term focus on creating wide-scale change at the systemic level. This type of change is often difficult to measure. Many of the methodologies designed to assess impact in citizen sector organizations today focus on easily-quantifiable figures such as financial ratios or programmatic outputs. Such metrics emphasize financial stability and other "hard" organizational factors that lend themselves to quantitative measurement. But these measures miss what Ashoka considers to be the most important and meaningful product of a social entrepreneur's work—systemic social change over time.

Ashoka developed the Measuring Effectiveness (ME) program in 1997 to better understand the progress of its social entrepreneurs toward systemic social change. The cornerstone of the program, the Measuring Effectiveness annual survey, is designed to track the progress of cohorts of Ashoka Fellows over time. This self-response survey is

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[1] Ashoka employs the term "citizen sector" to refer to what is commonly known in the United States as the nonprofit sector. Other labels include voluntary, civil society, non-governmental (NGOs), and the "third sector." The challenge with many of these terms is that they define the sector in terms of what it is not, i.e., in the United States, "nonprofits" are so-labeled to distinguish them from profit-producing entities. Abroad, "non-governmental" organizations are distinguished from the state. And the term "voluntary" may imply that the participants are unpaid, a misnomer given that in the United States alone, the citizen sector employs up to 12.5 million people—more than all state and local governments combined.

distributed among groups of social entrepreneurs at the five- and 10-year anniversary of their Ashoka Fellowship. The survey employs a group of *proxy indicators* which track data that can be aggregated across widely divergent fields of work and organizational strategies; examples of some of the *proxy indicators* include the frequency with which the Fellows' work has been replicated by other organizations, and the level of influence that Fellow has had on public policy. To complement the broad strokes painted by the results of these surveys, Ashoka staff carry out case studies with a sub-set of the surveyed Fellows to obtain more in-depth, qualitative information.

The ME survey's *proxy indicators* are closely linked to Ashoka's Fellow selection process, which enables staff and peers to make qualitative assessments of candidates' potential by applying five rigorous selection criteria. This front-loaded selection process is the chief mechanism that Ashoka employs to screen social entrepreneurs at the early stages of their work, and is designed to select only those candidates who are highly likely to achieve wide-scale systemic change in the long term. The ME program is thus a tool that is useful both for tracking the Fellows' progress toward systemic change and for measuring Ashoka's ability to successfully identify leading social entrepreneurs at the launch stage.

This article explores in depth the Measuring Effectiveness program, focusing on the annual global Fellowship survey and accompanying case studies. The article begins with an overview of recent trends in social entrepreneurship and select milestones in performance measurement in the U.S. citizen sector. The article then offers definitions of social entrepreneurship and systemic change that have been developed by Ashoka during its 25 years of investing in and supporting the field. It goes on to present the Ashoka Measuring Effectiveness methodology and includes sample results from the first six years of survey implementation. Ashoka continues to refine its ME approach each year, but proposes that its current methodology provides a useful first solution to the challenge of tracking large groups of social entrepreneurs' progress toward systemic change over time.

Context: Trends in Citizen Sector Growth and Performance Measurement

The citizen sector, often referred to as the nonprofit sector in the United States, is expanding around the globe. Consider that in the United States alone, it encompasses more than 1.3 million organizations and is growing rapidly; citizen organizations grew faster than the Gross Domestic Product from 1983–1998, with the equivalent of 30,000 new organizations created each year (Lowell, 2001). Internationally, the rise and growth of citizen organizations reflects a similar trend. In the 22 countries studied by Johns Hopkins University, citizen organizations now employ 19 million workers and engage the equivalent of another 10 million full-time volunteers. As Salamon (2000) observes, "Few developments on the global scene over the past three decades have been as momentous as the recent upsurge in private, nonprofit, voluntary, or civil society organizations. We are in the midst of a 'global associational revolution,' a massive expansion of structured citizen activity outside the boundaries of the market and the state."

With the growth of the citizen sector has come an increased focus on measuring organizational effectiveness and ensuring accountability. In the U.S. context, factors

contributing to this trend include increasing pressure on government managers to demonstrate results because of the recent Government Performance and Results Act (Salamon, 2002), and heightened scrutiny in response to visible scandals such as the conviction of United Way's Bill Aramony in the 1990s. As many established foundations and some high net-worth individuals increasingly emphasize the outcomes of their donations, sub-industries have emerged to support this trend. In the United States, consider the launch in 1997 of the foundation affinity group, Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO), and the creation in 2000 of the Center for Effective Philanthropy. New institutions such as these have helped further the development of methodologies to evaluate performance and measure impact, building on earlier contributions by Drucker, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and others who built influential frameworks for measurement in the sector (Drucker 1990, Patrizi 1998). The focus of the recently-developed methodologies has moved toward assessment of outcomes (such as the rate by which teenage pregnancy has been reduced) and away from measurement of programmatic outputs (such as number of clients served or number of sites opened). Independent Sector, a nonprofit membership organization, asserts that outcomes assessment was new to most private nonprofit organizations as recently as 2001 (Morely, 2001).

The recent rise of venture-style philanthropy has also influenced the outcomes-assessment debate. Venture philanthropists adapt commercial venture capital and investment industry techniques to the challenge of supporting and growing nonprofit organizations. The U.S. venture philanthropy wave gained real momentum after *Harvard Business Review* published in 1997 the article, "Virtuous Capital," which provided side-by-side comparisons of philanthropic foundation and venture capitalist approaches to funding organizations. In "Virtuous Capital," Letts et al. suggest that some of the advantages of the for-profit venture capitalists' approach include longer investment time horizons (typically seven years rather than two to three), closer relationships with "investees," and a focus on building capacity to deliver goods and services, rather than funding individual programs (Letts, 1997). Subsequent reports published by Venture Philanthropy Partners (2000) have tracked the development of this emerging field.

Table 1

Select Venture Organizations Supporting Social Entrepreneurs	Year Founded
Ashoka	1980
Echoing Green	1987
Avina Foundation	1994
Roberts Enterprise Development Fund	1997
Social Venture Partners (Seattle)	1997
New Profit, Inc.	1998
New Schools Venture Fund	1998
Omidyar Network	1998
Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship	1998
Skoll Foundation	1999
Venture Philanthropy Partners	2000

The trend toward venture-style investing has contributed to heightened interest in social entrepreneurship in the United States, as venture philanthropists seek entrepreneurial nonprofit "investees" who can maximize the value of their donations through increased social change on regional, national, and even international scales. Toward this end, venture philanthropists have employed new sets of tools to track the impact of social entrepreneurs. In one prominent example, Kaplan's balanced scorecard brings together several performance indicators and consolidates them into a single measurement tool, which is useful in measuring progress towards an organization's mission. However, the balanced scorecard largely serves as an internal management tool rather than as a mechanism for assessing external impact (Clark, 2003).

REDF's Social Return on Investment (SROI) strategy presents another pioneering approach to the challenge, one that involves assigning quantitative values to qualitative indicators of social change. The application of SROI has many challenges; for instance, REDF includes as inputs to the SROI formula, "social outcomes of ordinarily difficult-to-monetize measures of social value, such as increases in self-esteem and social support systems, or improvements in housing stability" (REDF, 2005). Monetizing intangible factors such as self-esteem is both extremely time- and resource-intensive, and is vulnerable to faulty valuation, among other drawbacks (Clark, 2003).

In the more recent Digital Era, a spate of internet-based platforms has provided potential donors with easily-accessible information about tax-exempt groups that they might fund. Examples of such websites include Charity Navigator, GEXSI, Global Giving, and Guidestar. These groups use data gleaned primarily from organizations' IRS Forms 990 to provide largely quantitative data analyses designed to illustrate the efficiency and effectiveness of charities through financial ratios. They score each charity relative to peer organizations based on these ratios, offering conclusions such as organizations with relatively low administrative-to-program expense ratios are preferable to donors. Given that the scores are published with limited explanation, "this approach can cause more harm than good" (Lowell, 2005). Websites such as these are not well-suited to address questions of programmatic effectiveness and external societal impact.

The difficulty of measuring effectiveness of any citizen organization is well-documented (Sawhill 1999, Salamon 2002). The field of social entrepreneurship, in particular, presents a specific set of challenges (Kramer 2005). The approaches outlined above offer a helpful array of measurement tools, which have limited usefulness when applied to the challenge of measuring systemic change over time. The following sections explore in greater depth the problems inherent to impact-assessment in the field of social entrepreneurship, and present Ashoka's solution to the challenge.

Social Entrepreneurship as Systemic Change: Ashoka's Definition

To fully understand the complexities of evaluating the progress of social entrepreneurs, it is first necessary to understand the complexities of defining the term. Ashoka's founder, William Drayton, first coined the phrase "social entrepreneurship," a concept for which he later received a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (commonly known as the "genius" grant). For Drayton and Ashoka, the term social entrepreneur describes an individual who conceives of, and relentlessly pursues, a new idea designed

to solve societal problems on a very wide scale by changing the systems that undergird the problems. This definition includes two critical components. First, the entrepreneur must seek to create impact on a wide societal scale; he or she will not rest until the new idea has been broadly adopted at the national and even international level. Second, the entrepreneur must seek systemic change, defined as the fundamental reform of existing societal systems and/or the creation of new ones. The theory of entrepreneurship as systemic change is traced by Dees to Schumpeter, who says the entrepreneur's main function in society is to, " '…reform or revolutionize the pattern of production…by producing a new commodity or producing an old one in a new way…by reorganizing an industry and so on'" (Dees, 1998).

Drayton provides the following description of the role that social entrepreneurs play in society: "The job of a social entrepreneur is to recognize when a part of society is stuck and to provide new ways to get it unstuck. He or she finds what is not working and solves the problem by changing the system, spreading the solution and persuading entire societies to take new leaps. Social entrepreneurs are not content just to give a fish or teach how to fish. They will not rest until they have revolutionized the fishing industry." Drayton founded Ashoka because he believes that the most powerful force for change in the world is a new idea in the hands of a leading social entrepreneur (Ashoka, 2005).

Drayton's definition of social entrepreneurship varies from others used in the field. In the past two decades, social entrepreneurship (as Ashoka defines it) has sometimes been conflated with "social enterprise"—the activities in which social-purpose organizations engage to generate revenue through earned-income. While social entrepreneurs may employ revenue-generating strategies, every individual who leads a social enterprise is not necessarily a social entrepreneur as Ashoka defines the term.[2]

The label "social entrepreneur" has also been applied to any citizen who launches a new organization. Again, under Ashoka's definition, this is a misnomer. Dees' reference to Drucker illustrates the concept that, "Not every new small business is entrepreneurial…there is nothing especially innovative or change-oriented in "a husband and wife who open another delicatessen store or another Mexican restaurant in the American suburb" (Dees, 1998). Likewise, Ashoka would not qualify as a social entrepreneur someone who launches a single charter school *per se*, but would consider someone to be a social entrepreneur if she is creating an entire network of charter schools positioned to reform the existing public education system.

A Case Study for Measuring Systemic Change

To measure the impact of a social entrepreneur, Ashoka seeks to capture progress toward systemic social change in a way that standard descriptions of output, expansion, or financial sustainability do not. The case of U.S. Ashoka Fellow J.B. Schramm,

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[2] While Ashoka recognizes that social entrepreneurs may operate social enterprises, Ashoka's policy is only to select and fund Fellows who operate nonprofit (tax-exempt) entities. Ashoka holds this policy because a wide array of highly-developed institutions exist to support for-profit entrepreneurs; whereas this is not true for the nonprofit sector—let alone for nonprofit social entrepreneurs—where the social capital markets are far less efficient.

elected to the Ashoka Fellowship in 2000, highlights the difficulties of accounting for systemic change.

Through his organization, College Summit, Schramm connects low-income high school students with college-going potential to institutions of higher education that otherwise might not recruit and accept them. In so doing, College Summit is changing the underlying dynamics of the college-admissions system by creating a new marketplace designed to close the gap between the estimated 200,000 low-income students who are college-capable, and the nation's many college and universities seeking capable students who contribute to the socio-economic and racial diversity of their student bodies.

College Summit targets high school juniors who are "better than their numbers." These students have grades and standardized test scores that fall below national averages, but achievements in non-traditional areas—those typically overlooked by universities—that together create a promising overall profile. The students attend a four-day "college summit," in which trained volunteers guide them through the college application process. In one workshop, students learn how to craft college entrance essays that highlight personal attributes emphasized in college admissions criteria, such as strong leadership skills and personal ethics, which they demonstrate in non-traditional venues. For instance, a College Summit student may not have excelled in after-school volunteer activities like his more privileged peers, but may instead have advanced in a paying job while helping his mother care for younger siblings at night and on the weekends. Students learn to frame their backgrounds and experiences to best express their strengths in ways which admissions offers will understand. College Summit then shares the results with colleges and universities that have sponsored college summits, providing them with a more robust package of information about a pool of low-income, high-potential candidates.

College Summit quantifies its own impact as follows: More than 10,000 students have attended College Summit's workshops in its first 10 years, including 1,200 who traveled to 30 colleges and universities for this purpose in 2005 alone. Seventy-nine percent of students attending these workshops have enrolled in college, compared with the national average of 46 percent for low-income populations on the whole (College Summit, 2005). Beyond this, the 20 percent of students attending workshops from a single graduating class inevitably shift the discourse about college attendance among their peers, becoming coaches for fellow students.[3] Although no statistics are available, anecdotal evidence indicates an increased rate of college attendance among these peers of College Summit students (Bornstein, 2004).

While important, these numbers fall short of describing what Ashoka considers the "systemic" component of Schramm's work. The College Summit approach creates a shift in the U.S. college-admissions system by introducing a new "market" for underprivileged students (Bornstein, 2004). Schramm addresses both the supply and the demand sides of the equation: On the supply side, College Summit works with low-income students who are college-capable to help them create personal profiles

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[3] College Summit recently formalized this program that assists College Summit alumni to serve as peer leaders who guide classmates though the college application process.

which provide better, more targeted information of interest to colleges. On the demand side, College Summit establishes relationships with many of the nation's colleges and universities that seek applicants who hail from low-income and other diverse backgrounds, enabling them to more accurately identify and understand the capabilities of applicants who are "better than their numbers" make them appear. Schramm has convinced college admissions officers from 30 selective schools to change their very admissions policies, each supplementing traditional admissions data with materials that more adequately represent college-capable students from low-income backgrounds. These universities fund "College Summits" on their campuses not out of charity, but because it is in their own interest to do so.

By building a new market that matches demand with supply, Schramm is *changing the system* for college admissions and creating a lasting pathway for low-income students to attend college. His work alters a college admissions process that might otherwise continue to discriminate (unintentionally) against college-capable students from low-income backgrounds. In so doing, Schramm is reducing inequality, advancing educational opportunity, and increasing social justice in this country—social impacts that are of paramount importance to society, but difficult to quantify.

Ashoka's Methodology for Assessing Systemic Change: The Selection of Social Entrepreneurs

Ashoka's approach to assessing progress toward systemic change is rooted in its process for selecting social entrepreneurs into the Ashoka Fellowship. Ashoka engages fellowship candidates in a rigorous five-step selection process that begins with a nomination and ends with approval by Ashoka's international board of directors. Between these two steps, local Ashoka representatives thoroughly research each candidate's background and work, and local social entrepreneurs as well as an experienced Global Ashoka representative extensively interview the candidate. By the time someone is named an Ashoka Fellow, he or she has already passed through a thorough screening process and Ashoka has confidence that he or she is among the world's top social entrepreneurs.

Much of Ashoka's "evaluation," therefore, happens during a front-loaded process based on five fundamental criteria reviewed below. While the selection criteria for this process are well-defined, the application of the criteria is inherently judgment-based. No simple set of quantifiable "indicators" or "measures" are used to define a candidate. Instead, the process is structured such that several groups of experienced individuals come to a consensus on the likelihood that a particular candidate will successfully change history.

Ashoka's selection process relies on a set of five criteria. Two of the five criteria— those most relevant to this discussion on measuring impact—reflect Ashoka's definition of social entrepreneurship:

Criterion #1—Systems-changing new idea: This is the cornerstone of any candidacy for the Ashoka Fellowship. In the example above, J.B. Schramm's idea for College Summit represents a systems-changing new idea, involving the creation of an entirely

new market—providing low-income students access to a college education while giving colleges a new pool of the high-potential, low-income students they seek.

Criterion #2—Potential for social impact: Ashoka is only interested in ideas with the potential to significantly change the practices of a particular field and to trigger nationwide or broad regional/international adoption. For instance, Ashoka Fellow Don Shalvey, through his organization, Aspire, is transforming the California public school system by building clusters of charter schools in targeted urban areas. By grouping a critical mass of high-performing educational institutions in under-performing districts, Aspire's goal is to create such a groundswell of demand for excellent education that it forces the existing system to improve in order to compete for students. Shalvey's model is designed to create a "tipping point" that results in local, state, and national school reform. The potential impact is not predicated on a new type of school, but on a strategy that will allow Aspire to reach deeply into America's existing urban public school districts with improved education.

Ashoka's remaining three selection criteria are designed to assess characteristics of the social entrepreneur as an individual, rather than as predictors of expected outcomes:

Criterion #3—Creativity: Successful social entrepreneurs must be creative both as goal-setting visionaries and in the implementation of their problem-solving ideas. This criterion begs several questions: Does the individual have a vision of how he or she can meet some human need better than it has been met before? Is it his or her own idea? Does he or she have a history of creating new solutions to problems?

Criterion #4—Entrepreneurial quality: Entrepreneurial ability is the defining characteristic of world-class venturers. It characterizes leaders who see opportunities for change and innovation and devote themselves entirely to making that change happen. These leaders pursue their visions with a single-minded intensity and are willing to devote 10 to 15 years of their lives realizing historical change.

Criterion #5—Ethical fiber: As social entrepreneurs introduce major structural changes to society, they must convince many people to alter their behavior. If the entrepreneur is not trusted, the likelihood of success is significantly reduced.

Ashoka's Methodology for Assessing Systemic Change: The Measuring Effectiveness Study

In 1997, Ashoka formalized its impact-tracking methodology to account for the progress of the social entrepreneurs engaged in its Fellowship and to understand trends in the sector around the globe. By extension, Ashoka's ME tool also provides a means of tracking the progress of Ashoka as an organization that supports social entrepreneurs. The ME program is comprised of a two-part evaluation tool designed to track the social change created by Ashoka's Fellows in both the short- and long-terms. The first part of the tool, still in its early stages of implementation, measures short-term impact, and is conducted via biannual reports submitted by the social entrepreneurs themselves on progress made against benchmarks mutually agreed upon at the start of their Fellowship.

This short-term component of the ME program reflects Ashoka's ultimate belief that the measure of progress toward systemic change will vary for each entrepreneur's work. Moreover, as entrepreneurs change their strategies, confront unexpected barriers, and succeed in novel ways, only self-defined measures can allow the appropriate flexibility. Though clearly useful, project-specific indicators have many drawbacks.[4] Most critically, individually-tailored metrics cannot be aggregated or compared across groups of social entrepreneurs or over time. Ashoka resolves this dilemma with a second tool on which the remainder of this paper will focus.

The second measurement tool, the cornerstone of Ashoka's ME work, is explicitly designed to allow for comparison across fields and over longer time horizons, and to do so without sacrificing the systemic component of an entrepreneur's work. This balance is particularly difficult to strike because, as shown through JB Schramm's story, numbers alone cannot encapsulate systemic change; only complementary stories can illustrate such complex shifts. But impact assessment must go beyond story-telling, as stories cannot be aggregated and easily compared across time, space, and diverse activity. To resolve this dilemma, Ashoka developed two additional components to its ME program: 1) an annual survey containing "proxy indicators," which is distributed to cohorts of Ashoka Fellows at either their five- or 10-year post-election date, and 2) a series of case-study interviews with a subset of survey respondents.

To measure how widely a social entrepreneur's impact has spread, Ashoka's proxy indicators address factors such as number of times the idea has been adopted by independent groups and the level to which the idea has been implemented through public policy at local, state or national levels. To measure strength of the social entrepreneur's institution, data is requested about the funding, governance, and staff levels of the organization, among other measures. And to evaluate the influence the entrepreneur has achieved in terms of the overall system or field, indicators such as policy change are collected. Ashoka uses the following core set of specific proxy indicators in its measuring effectiveness survey:

■ *Proxy indicator: Are you still working toward your original vision?*

Ashoka selects social entrepreneurs with a lifelong commitment to their vision for the future. Continued dedication signals a Fellow's ongoing effort to spread a new idea or practice in society, and his or her relentless pursuit of that vision.

■ *Proxy indicator: Have others replicated your original idea?*

Replication is not the *only* sign that an idea has spread, but it is *one* indication that an idea has taken root. Social entrepreneurs who succeed on this front have moved beyond their direct impact to influence the way other groups in society approach a social problem. Ashoka asks Fellows to report on the metrics that correspond to this replication, whether the number of organizations, sites, or individuals that have adopted the practice.

■ *Proxy indicator: Have you had impact on public policy?*

Changes in government policy signal the adoption of a Fellow's idea in the public

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[4] Kramer notes that most organizations supporting social entrepreneurs "track progress against a set of pragmatic and project-specific goals" (Kramer 2005).

sphere. Existing systems in most societies can be broadly reformed through policy change. Ashoka asks Fellows to specify in which level of government they have instituted this change – local, state/regional, or national.

■ *Proxy indicator: What position does your institution currently hold in the field?*

A strong institution that is recognized as a leader in its field effectively provides permanent status in society for a Fellow's idea and creates the base from which that idea will spread.

Ashoka recognizes that simple qualitative data collected in response to survey questions such as those listed above do not offer a comprehensive answer to the challenge of measuring the results achieved by social entrepreneurs, particularly in the realm of systemic change. Therefore, as mentioned above, Ashoka conducts in-depth case studies of a cross-section of surveyed Fellows to better understand their effectiveness. These case studies emphasize the level of systemic change and the extent of its spread, offering qualitative information which complements the aggregated quantitative data culled from the surveys.

Measuring Effectiveness Survey Results

This section presents results from Ashoka Measuring Effectiveness surveys conducted between 1998 and 2004, and from the complementary case studies. Response rates to the annual surveys averaged 83 percent for Fellows responding at the five-year post-election point, and 68 percent for Fellows at the 10-year post-election point.[5] The total sample includes 164 Fellows five years post-election and 149 Fellows 10 years post-election. The five-year study data presented are a composite of results from surveys conducted in 1998, 2000, and 2002; the 10-year study data are a composite of surveys conducted in 1999, 2001, and 2003.

The Idea: Ashoka Fellow Continues Working Toward Original Vision

5 Years Post-Election
■ 6%
□ 94%

10 Years Post-Election
■ 17%
□ 83%

⊡ Still working toward vision
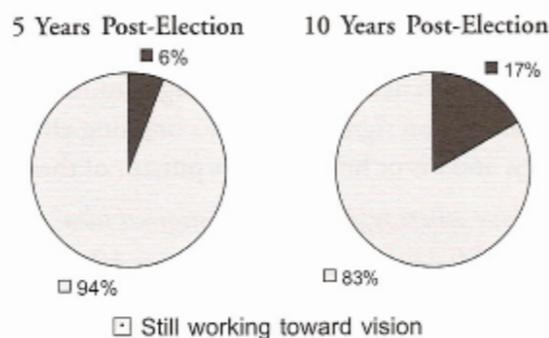
Fellows continue working toward their goals in different ways. The following examples illustrate two avenues:

■ Ashoka Fellow Suraiya Haque founded the organization Phulki to prove to Bangladeshi factories that opening childcare facilities could be profitable. Her vision from the start was to eventually transfer the responsibility for childcare services to the

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5 The response rates for individuals still in contact with the Fellowship are 97 percent for five-years post election and 70 percent for 10-years post election. The most common reasons for loss of contact with Fellows include death, ethical concerns, and career changes.

factories, rather than to position her organization as the full-time, long-term service provider. To achieve this goal, Haque mobilized financial and other resources from the multiple stakeholders with vested interest in the system, including: garment manufacturer executives and managers, mothers working in the garment factories, garment buyers, funders, and government agencies. Leveraging the participation and support from each of these players, Haque helped factory owners to create and sustain profitable in-factory child care centers, and in so doing demonstrated that such centers actually improve the bottom-line by reducing worker absenteeism. As demand for her model has risen, Haque now consults with other Bangladeshi factory owners who wish to implement her program.

■ When elected to the Ashoka Fellowship in Africa, Halidou Ouédraogo was launching a national organization designed to empower the citizens of Burkina Faso to protect their own human rights. This institution continues to thrive, but Ouédraogo has shifted his focus to another systemic problem underlying the failure of African human rights work. Over the past years, he has built a pan-African coalition of more than 40 human rights groups to address the problem of reliance on western-based organizations to achieve human rights goals.

Policy Change
Have you contributed to policy change on the national level?

5 Years Post-Election
■ 44%
□ 56%

10 Years Post-Election
■ 29%
□ 71%

□ Has changed national level policy
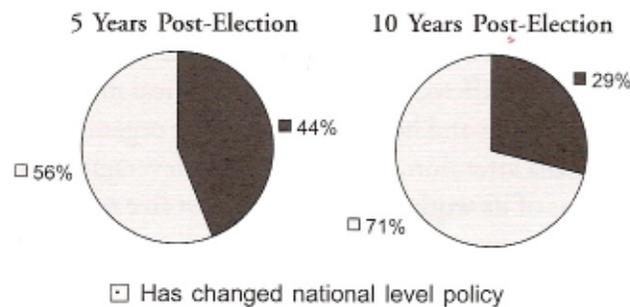
Again, influence on national-level policy takes a variety of forms:

■ Fellow Halidou Ouédraogo again provides a dramatic example of a social entrepreneur impacting society through policy change. While creating new social institutions to facilitate grass-roots monitoring of human rights abuses, he also has developed a significant public policy component to address systemic problems, such as Burkina's requirement that all criminals receive mandatory sentences. In 1984, Ouedraogo contributed to changes in Burkina's sentencing laws, introducing legislation that now allows for flexibility in sentencing. In 1990, Ouédraogo helped draft Burkina Faso's new constitution, which eventually was ratified and adopted by the government. And in 1997, Halidou was involved in the codification of laws regulating violence against women.

■ Slovakina Ashoka Fellow, Michal Kracík, launched "Water for the 3rd Millennium" in 1993 with the goal of introducing a structured process for community participation in decision-making concerning local water issues. His approach was adopted by the Slovak government as part of the state's official water management policy in 1994.

Independent Replication

Has your work been replicated by an individual or group that you did not lead?

5 Years Post-Election	10 Years Post-Election

■18%

■7%

□82%

□93%

⊡ Idea has been independently replicated
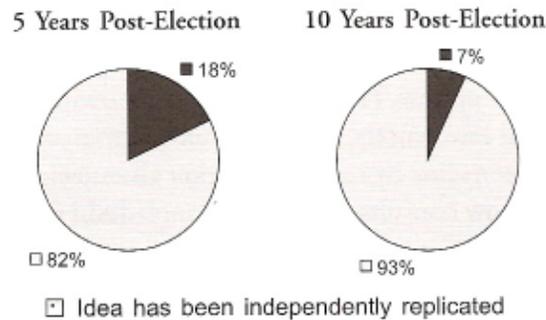
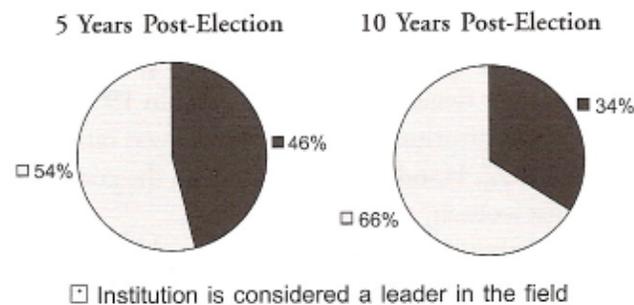Like the indicators above, strategies for replication differ across fellows:

■ Brazilian Ashoka Fellow Vera Cordero's organization, ACSR, has replicated its medical treatment model in 14 public hospitals (11 in the Rio de Janeiro area and the remaining three in other Brazilian states) by establishing a network of sister organizations. ACSR supports the network through capacity-building workshops, information exchange, and sharing of key contacts; ASCR also occasionally provides fundraising support, but each sister organization is an independent organization. Approximately 20,000 people have been served through the network of ASCR and its sister organizations.

■ Brazilian Ashoka Fellow Celia Destri's organization, AVERMES, helps its clients obtain legal redress for losses suffered as the result of medical malpractice or inadequate services in state-operated clinics and hospitals. One of the organization's strategies has been to attract major media attention, and its success in leveraging the media has led to growing public awareness of its work. As a result, at least five new organizations in other parts of Brazil are now pursuing similar missions.

Institutional Status

Which of the following applies to your institution?
1) The institution is recognized as a leader in its field.
2) The institution still exists but faces major challenges.
3) The institution has ceased to exist.

5 Years Post-Election	10 Years Post-Election

■46%

■34%

□54%

□66%

⊡ Institution is considered a leader in the field

■ An example of a Fellow's institution that is considered a leader in the field is Ismael Ferreira's APAEB, which covers 15 towns, with a total population of approximately 450,000 inhabitants, 65 percent of whom still live in the countryside (in accord with the institution's goals). With revenues of $7 million and 980 workers

directly employed, APAEB is not only the second-largest employer in Valente but has transformed the economy of the region where an estimated 500,000 people depend on sisal. Seven-hundred-fifty farmer families are members of APAEB and about 2,000 sell sisal fibers to the association. Overall, APAEB has contributed to reducing migrations to urban centers and has greatly improved farmers' incomes and livelihoods in the region. It has become a leading model for all rural development organizations in Brazil.

■ An example of an institution that has ceased to exist because its work is "done": Fellow Beaulah Thumbadoo's strategies to promote literacy in South Africa through her organization ERA (Everyone's Reading in Africa) were adopted by the national government after a period of tireless lobbying. In the ensuing years, Beaulah dissolved ERA and has worked as an advisor to the government to improve implementation of her ideas.

Continued Challenges to the Measurement Framework

Ashoka's Measuring Effectiveness (ME) approach has several continued challenges in both its design and implementation. The first challenge, the use of proxy indicators, is discussed above. This design answered a need to apply a single set of measures across a broad range of ideas and fields—a common challenge for the field (Kramer 1995)—while tracking the efficacy of Ashoka's selection criteria in the process. Such generality, while useful, sacrifices descriptive value, a problem only somewhat alleviated by the case study component. Other challenges include the following:

■ Irregularities in the survey's implementation over time: The ME report summaries include data collected from surveys conducted over six years in more than 20 countries. The questionnaire was refined slightly through the years. Also, while most Ashoka Fellows were contacted and responded via e-mail, a portion responded to survey questions over the phone or in person.

■ Translation: With Ashoka Fellows speaking dozens of languages, there are inevitable distortions in the survey questions and responses received through the filter of translation to English. (Surveys and case-study interviews are conducted in the Fellows' native language, then the survey results and case studies are translated to English for aggregation and synthesis by staff in Ashoka's global headquarters in Arlington, Va.)

■ Self-reported results: Fellows self-report on their progress in both the survey and case-study portions of the study (although the case study includes some elements of outside research). Ashoka explicitly encourages Fellows to respond honestly to the questions, emphasizing that the study is designed to evaluate Ashoka's impact on the field rather than their individual success, and that results will not affect the Fellow's relationship with Ashoka. Some of the survey bias is mitigated by the fact that, at the five- and 10-year-post election point, Fellows are no longer eligible to receive financial assistance.

■ Internal process: Ashoka staff from around the world execute all steps of the Measuring Effectiveness project from design to analysis. This study is not, therefore, equivalent to an external audit of the organization's impact. Instead, it is serves as an internal learning tool for Ashoka to understand and communicate its broader impact on civil society worldwide.

■ Sample bias: The figures presented in the preceding section represent a broad, but not necessarily representative, sample of the total Ashoka Fellowship. Biases inherent in the self-reporting sample include: 1) Attrition, reflected in the number of Fellows who lose contact with or become inactive members of the Ashoka Fellowship over time, and 2) Response rate, as it relates to the self-selected sample of Fellows who respond to the survey.

Conclusion

The field continues searching for more effective means of assessing the work of social entrepreneurs in a manner that is sufficiently valid and rigorous, but also consistent with the spirit and dynamism of their work toward systemic social change. The existing strategies, such as ratings systems based on financial and other quantitative indicators, do not meet these needs. As Kramer (2005) notes, "The hope that philanthropic performance could be boiled down to a single number and compared across different objectives remains tantalizing in its field, but none of our interviewees believes that this goal [is] yet within reach."

Based on its 25 years of experience identifying and supporting social entrepreneurs worldwide, Ashoka has created a system for assessing the wide-scale, systemic impact that social entrepreneurs seek to create. Its usefulness is based first on a front-loaded assessment process that applies five carefully refined criteria in a robust process of interviews, discussion, and research. The system incorporates flexible indicators of systemic change that can be tracked over time. The use of these proxy indicators, complemented by qualitative case studies, provides a viable and resource-efficient method for tracking social entrepreneurs' creation of systemic change—one that affords a long-term view of change and a basis for comparison across time and distinct programs, without sacrificing the core belief that measuring effectiveness must include measuring systemic change.

As the citizen sector grows and social entrepreneurship becomes an increasingly important force for world change, the questions of accountability and measuring impact will only become more urgent. Ashoka is committed to refining its Measuring Effectiveness program and believes that, through continued creative exploration, the field will develop measurement tools which capture systemic change while avoiding the pitfalls of resource-intensiveness and stifling, bureaucratic reporting requirements. Ultimately, measurement can be useful only if it fulfills its function without hampering programmatic progress, and thus distracting social entrepreneurs from their ultimate goal–achieving wide-scale systemic social change.

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