ecogenia
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SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT ANALYSIS

CIVIC SERVICE PROGRAM OLYMPUS 2024

Contents

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Executive Summary

This Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis was conducted to evaluate the Civic Service Program implemented by Ecogenia at Mount Olympus from April to July 2024. The primary objective of this analysis was to quantify the social impact generated by the program, with a specific focus on the outcomes for key stakeholders, including the beneficiaries, external contributors, public authorities and an educational institution among others.

Scope of the Assignment

The analysis focused on Ecogenia's Civic Service Program, which engaged youth with paid positions in activities such as trail network development, sustainable forest management, and natural-hazard disaster prevention. The study measured both the direct and indirect outcomes of the program, such as the enhancement of participants' skills, cost savings for public authorities, and increased environmental awareness. By applying the SROI methodology, this analysis aimed to provide a comprehensive view of the program's effectiveness in generating value relative to the resources invested.

SROI Results and Interpretation

The calculated SROI ratio for the Civic Service Program stands at 5.32, indicating that for every Euro invested in the program, 5.32 Euro of social value was generated. This ratio underscores the significant impact of Ecogenia's initiatives, demonstrating that the program not only meets but exceeds the expectations for social return. The results highlight the program's efficiency in leveraging resources to create meaningful, sustainable outcomes for the various stakeholder groups involved.

Key Takeaways

Significant Skills Enhancement:

Participants in the Civic Service Program reported considerable improvements in leadership, teamwork, and professional expertise, contributing to their personal and professional development.

Heightened Environmental Awareness:

The program successfully increased environmental and social awareness among participants, fostering a deeper understanding of and commitment to sustainable practices.

Cost Savings for Public Authorities:

The program's activities in disaster prevention and environmental management resulted in substantial cost avoidance for public authorities, illustrating the program's value in reducing public sector expenditures.

Insights from a Pilot Initiative:

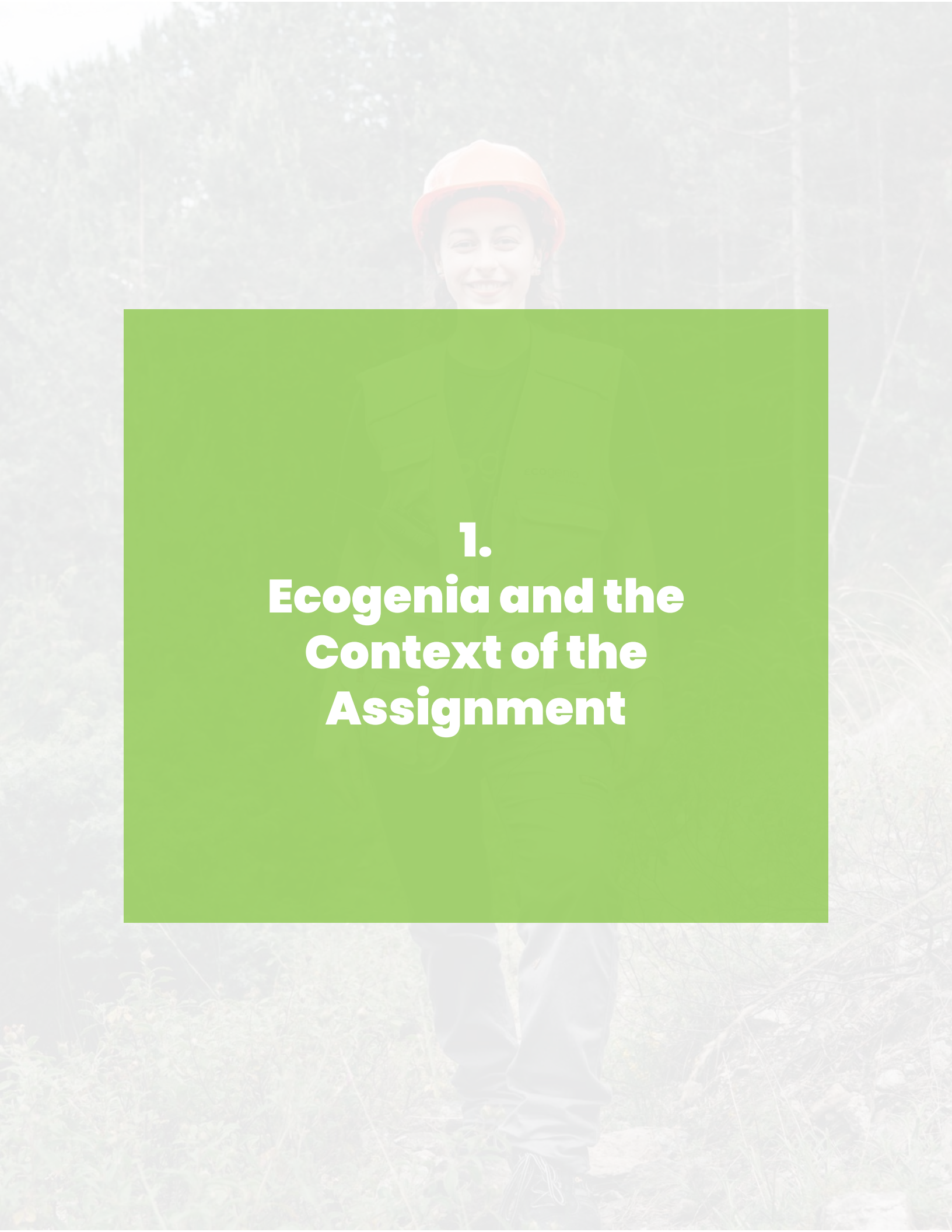
As this was a pilot project, the analysis was limited by the absence of historical data. However, the positive outcomes observed provide valuable insights for refining and scaling the program in future iterations.

Positive Feedback Loop:

The Civic Service Program created a virtuous cycle of engagement and impact, where increased stakeholder involvement led to greater social value creation, which in turn motivated further participation and investment in the program.

The SROI analysis of Ecogenia's Civic Service Program at Mount Olympus demonstrates that the initiative generated significant social value, well beyond the initial investment. While the analysis faced certain limitations due to its pilot nature, the findings are overwhelmingly positive, showcasing the program's effectiveness and potential for future expansion.

The strong SROI ratio and key takeaways provide a compelling case for continued support and further development of Ecogenia's Civic Service Program.



1.
Ecogenia and the Context of the Assignment

1.1 The State of Affairs: Climate challenges, Disasters, and Civic Participation in Greece

Greece's geographical and climatic diversity, while contributing to its natural beauty and cultural heritage, also makes the country highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

The Mediterranean climate—characterized by hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters—exacerbates conditions that fuel natural-hazard disasters such as wildfires, especially in regions with dense vegetation and insufficient rainfall. Greece's position on major tectonic fault lines further exposes it to frequent and destructive earthquakes. Beyond these existing threats, the broader climate crisis is accelerating rising temperatures, both on land and at sea, at rates faster than the global average, bringing new challenges such as prolonged droughts, coastal erosion, and more extreme weather patterns.

In recent years, Greece has been repeatedly struck by severe natural-hazard disasters that have caused profound human suffering, extensive property damage, and environmental degradation. These events, ranging from catastrophic wildfires to violent storms, underscore the urgent need for robust climate adaptation and disaster preparedness and risk management strategies.

However, the scale and frequency of these crises are overwhelming the country's existing infrastructure and response systems, highlighting a major challenge: the chronic lack of public resources available from the Greek State to adequately address these growing threats.

In the face of these challenges, there has been a growing recognition of the role that civic engagement and community-led initiatives play in enhancing disaster resilience and fostering sustainable development. Grassroots organizations, volunteer groups, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have emerged as key actors in mobilizing resources, raising awareness, and implementing initiatives aimed at addressing environmental degradation and promoting community cohesion.

However, despite these efforts, there remains a gap between the scale of the challenges posed by natural-hazard and climate-related disasters and the level of civic engagement required to effectively address them. Factors such as limited resources, bureaucratic barriers, and a lack of coordination between stakeholders often hinder the implementation of comprehensive disaster management strategies, leaving communities vulnerable to future hazards.

It is fair to say that Greece finds itself at a crossroads. Without significant investment in resources, infrastructure, and coordinated civic engagement, the ability to effectively mitigate the impacts of climate change and natural-hazard disasters will remain constrained, leaving the country exposed to even greater risks in the future.

1.2 Ecogenia's Solution: "Civic Service Program - Olympus 2024"

In response to these challenges, Ecogenia has emerged as a pioneering initiative that seeks to bridge the gap between environmental conservation and civic engagement through innovative youth-led programs, while addressing youth unemployment and responding to pressing local community needs. Founded on the principles of sustainability, social responsibility, and experiential learning, Ecogenia aims to empower young individuals to become agents of positive change in their communities while fostering a deeper connection to the natural world.

At the heart of Ecogenia's approach is the belief that young people possess the creativity, energy, and passion necessary to address complex environmental issues and drive meaningful impact. By providing opportunities for hands-on participation in conservation projects, disaster preparedness and risk management initiatives, and community outreach programs, Ecogenia seeks to equip youth with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to become effective leaders and changemakers in their respective fields.

The organization's flagship project in Litochoro exemplifies this ethos, offering participants a transformative experience that combines practical applications of environmental stewardship with cultural immersion and personal development.

Through a blend of volunteer work, skills training, and intercultural exchange, participants not only contribute to the preservation of Mount Olympus' pristine ecosystems but also gain a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic issues.

The Ecogenia project, spanning from April 1, 2024, to July 5, 2024, immersed participants in the breathtaking landscapes of Litochoro, Pieria, Greece, for a total of 14 weeks. This endeavor involved a team of enthusiastic young adults aged 18-30, hailing from various parts of Greece, who are keen on contributing to environmental conservation and disaster management efforts.

Throughout the duration of the project, participants dedicated 8 hours per day, Monday through Thursday, to a variety of activities aimed at supporting disaster prevention (wildfires) and fostering community resilience. On Fridays, the focus shifted to professional development sessions, tackling topics such as sustainable development, the climate crisis, and active citizenship.

Participants received a monthly gross stipend of €830 for their full-time commitment to the project, with potential adjustments based on prevailing minimum wage regulations for 2024.

The project also included a capacity-building exchange with 11 members of the California Conservation Corps (CCC) for a period of two months, providing invaluable opportunities for knowledge transfer and skill enhancement. The collaboration between Ecogenia and the California Conservation Corps (CCC) marks a significant milestone in the project's journey toward environmental stewardship and community resilience. With the presence of members from the CCC, renowned as the oldest and largest state conservation program globally, the partnership offers a unique opportunity for knowledge exchange and capacity-building.

Over a duration of two months, the CCC team was actively engaged in collaborative efforts with Ecogenia, sharing expertise, best practices, and innovative approaches to environmental conservation and disaster management. Beyond their invaluable contributions to project activities, the CCC members played a crucial role in enhancing the collective knowledge and skills of both organizations, particularly in critical areas such as disaster preparedness, mitigation strategies, and community engagement.

By fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the environment, Ecogenia empowers young people to become advocates for sustainable development and catalysts for positive change in their communities. Through collaborative partnerships, innovative programming, and a commitment to lifelong learning, Ecogenia aims to create a generation of environmental leaders who are equipped to tackle the pressing challenges of the 21st century and build a more resilient and sustainable future for all.

The Goals of the Olympus 2024 Service Project Included:

Environmental Conservation:
To assess and enhance the ecological benefits derived from conservation projects, such as habitat restoration, trail maintenance and clean-ups, and biodiversity monitoring.

Community Resilience
To build community resilience in the face of natural-hazard disasters through capacity-building activities, disaster preparedness training, risk reduction work, and community engagement initiatives.

Youth Empowerment
To empower young participants by enhancing their skills, fostering leadership qualities, and promoting civic engagement.

Cultural Exchange
To facilitate cultural exchange and cross-cultural learning experiences among participants from diverse backgrounds, local communities,and partner organizations.

Economic Impact
To estimate the economic value generated by the project in terms of job creation, income generation, and local economic development.

International know-how Exchange
To facilitate the exchange of international expertise and best practices in environmental conservation, disaster management, and youth empowerment, enriching the project with global perspectives and innovative approaches.

Advocacy
To advocate for sustainable practices, environmental stewardship, and youth involvement in community development, thereby promoting long-term societal change and policy reforms through the institutional recognition of civil service at a national level.

1.3 The Scope of the SROI Analysis

This assignment was carried out at the request of Ecogenia and consists of preparing an evaluation of the SROI for the Civic Service Project in Olympus.

This evaluative SROI analysis will comprehensively examine the social impact generated by Ecogenia's project, which took place from April 1, 2024 to July 5, 2024. By delving into the intricacies of the project's activities and outcomes over this timeframe, the analysis seeks to provide a detailed assessment of the project's effectiveness and efficiency in creating positive social change.

Through rigorous evaluation and measurement, it aims to quantify the value generated for various stakeholders, including participants, local communities, and the broader society.

This holistic approach will enable stakeholders to gain deeper insights into the tangible and intangible benefits produced by the project, thereby facilitating informed decision-making and strategic planning for future endeavors.

2.
Process and Methodology

This assessment utilized the SROI methodology developed by Social Value International. Ecogenia, as a youth-led environmental organization, has adopted this methodology to gauge and convey the social value generated by its initiatives.

2.1 Understanding the Social Return on Investment Methodology

Social Value International (SVI) defines social value as the "understanding of the relative importance of changes people experience." SVI emphasizes that these insights are instrumental in making informed decisions, ensuring that organizational efforts align with what stakeholders find valuable.

By prioritizing stakeholders' perspectives, organizations can amplify positive outcomes and mitigate negative impacts, thereby enhancing the overall social value of their activities. SVI's prescribed measurement tool for this purpose is the SROI method, which places central importance on the SROI value map.

The SROI method combines stakeholder-driven evaluation with a cost-benefit analysis, requiring adherence to standardized approaches guided by agreed-upon principles and standards outlined in the SROI guide. This guide delineates six distinct steps integral to conducting a comprehensive SROI analysis. At its core, the SROI measurement yields a ratio that reflects the perceived social value, encompassing both positive and negative aspects, as perceived by stakeholders.

A ratio exceeding 1 signifies that the value generated surpasses the investment made, while a ratio below 1 indicates a negative return on investment, suggesting that more resources were invested than the value created.

Critical to the SROI measurement are eight underlying principles, each aligning with various standards essential for ensuring methodological rigor:

 Involve stakeholders

 Understand what is changing

 Value the results that matter

 Include only what is substantial

 Do not overclaim

 Be transparent

 Verify the result

 Be responsive

For further insights into the methodology and its guiding principles, additional information is available through provided links or on the Social Value International website.

2.2 Selected Approach

The SROI analysis for Ecogenia's project was conducted by DOTANK Plus, an external and independent consultant, with Ecogenia providing support and ensuring smooth collaboration throughout the process.

To ensure objectivity, they carefully conducted the interviews, focus groups, and questionnaire surveys in a way that allowed stakeholders to freely and honestly express their opinions. Although Ecogenia staff were informed about the process, they did not participate in the interviews or focus groups, nor did they interfere with the questions, timing, or outcomes. This approach preserved the integrity and impartiality of the results.

The consultant led the SROI analysis, which involved several key tasks, including the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured 1-on-1 interviews, focus groups, and online meetings, utilizing platforms like Google Meet and Zoom.

These interviews and focus groups allowed for in-depth exploration of stakeholders' inputs, outcomes, and potential contributions, and were guided by standards set by Social Value International (SVI). Stakeholders confirmed that the digital approach posed no challenges, as they were generally familiar with this mode of interaction.

Based on the qualitative insights obtained, an online survey was developed to collect quantitative data. This survey was distributed to all stakeholders involved in the project in 2024. It aimed to quantitatively assess several key aspects:

Level of Support for Various Outcomes: Measuring how strongly stakeholders support the different outcomes identified.

Perceptions of Duration: Evaluating stakeholders' views on how long the outcomes are expected to last.

Valuation Ratings: Assessing the monetary value stakeholders place on the outcomes using the Willingness to Pay (WTP) methodology and the cost-avoided approach.

The following table provides detailed information about the samples used in the interviews and surveys. It includes the distribution of participants across various stakeholder groups, as well as the number of responses collected for each data collection method.

The following table provides detailed information about the samples used in the interviews and surveys. It includes the distribution of participants across various stakeholder groups, as well as the number of responses collected for each data collection method:

Stakeholder Group	Population	Participation in interviews (%)	Participation in Survey (%)
Cohort Members	8	100%	88%
California Conservation Corps	11	100%	45%
Academic Partners (American Farm School & Tulane University)	15	36%	47%
Local Mountain-related Organizations	15	33%	40%
Public Authorities	4	100%	75%

The data collection process, conducted between June 2024 and September 2024, ensured a comprehensive and current assessment of the project's social return on investment. The consultant then used this data to develop Theories of Change (TOCs), map impacts, calculate the SROI ratio, and conduct sensitivity analyses.

Mapping complex social changes into a 'chain of events' inevitably involves making choices. In this analysis, we have adh ered closely to the narratives provided by stakeholders and frequently referenced their exact words.

The decisions made were guided by the principles of Social Value International. While we have applied these principles as rigorously as possible throughout the process, some degree of judgment error remains inevitable. Considering the risk of bias, we regard that risk as minimal. While the current SROI analysis provides a snapshot of the present situation, it may not capture every potential insight or learning opportunity. However, we are confident that the key elements have been thoroughly identified.

The assumptions and calculations are detailed in this report and are also available in the accompanying value map linked to it.

2.3 Application of the Principles

Principle	Application
Involve stakeholders	Ecogenia actively engaged stakeholders in the SROI analysis, involving them directly in interviews and surveys. They provided input on various aspects such as requested input, perceived outcomes, and other stakeholders involved.
Understand what is changing	During one-on-one interviews, stakeholders were encouraged to discuss the changes they experienced and how they were interconnected. This information was then cross-checked during the survey.
Value the results that matter	The importance and valuation of outcomes were assessed during interviews and surveys, ensuring stakeholders' perspectives were considered. Valuations obtained during interviews were cross-verified during the survey.
Include only what is substantial	The outcomes presented in the value map were solely based on stakeholders' input, ensuring relevance and significance. No predetermined outcomes were included.
Do not overclaim	Discussions with stakeholders addressed attribution, deadweight, and displacement, with valuations approached cautiously to avoid double-counting. Overclaiming was avoided by considering the relative importance of activities.
Be transparent	This report provided transparent details of the methodology, valuations, calculations, assumptions, and judgments made during the process.
Verify the result	Stakeholder input was confirmed at all stages of the process, with double-checks conducted during surveys. Feedback from stakeholders was incorporated into the report, ensuring accuracy.
Be responsive	The report underwent review and feedback from Ecogenia staff, with their input already integrated. Ecogenia disseminated the results to stakeholders to incorporate their feedback into future development and strategy.

3. Stakeholder Analysis

Introduction

The process of identifying stakeholders began with Ecogenia's consultation, where potential stakeholders were initially identified. Additionally, input from various stakeholders and interviewees further enriched this list, ensuring comprehensive coverage.

Each interviewee was specifically prompted to suggest additional stakeholders who might have a significant involvement or impact on the project. This collaborative approach helped validate and expand the list to include relevant parties that might have been overlooked initially.

In conducting the SROI analysis, the emphasis was placed on including only those stakeholders deemed material to the project's success and impact. This criterion was evaluated in consultation with Ecogenia and stakeholders directly involved in project implementation.

By focusing on material stakeholders, the analysis prioritized those with direct influence or significance in shaping project outcomes. This approach ensured that resources and attention were directed towards stakeholders who have a tangible impact on the project's social and environmental objectives.

The process aimed to streamline the analysis while ensuring its relevance and effectiveness in capturing the project's true value and social return on investment.

Table 2: Stakeholders' Mapping

Stakeholders	Involvement with the Project	Relevance and Justification
Retained		
Cohort Members	Direct involvement as beneficiaries and implementers.	Crucial for executing project activities and directly impacted by project outcomes.
California Conservation Corps	Collaborative partnership in conservation efforts.	Contribution of expertise and resources to enhance environmental conservation initiatives.
Academic Partners (American Farm School & Tulane University)	Research Project alongside the cohort members.	Important part of the multidisciplinary approach of the project with benefits for academia.
Local Mountain-related Organizations	Benefited from the Ecogenia programs and activities as one of the secondary beneficiaries.	Hikers and other relevant groups use the paths that the project developed.
Public Authorities	Regulatory oversight.	Provide essential resources, regulatory guidance, and collaboration opportunities.

Table 2: Stakeholders' Mapping

Stakeholders	Involvement with the Project	Relevance and Justification
Non-Retained		
Local Community	Potential involvement through partnerships, supply chain, or economic impact.	May benefit economically - and in terms of environmental and disaster risk awareness - from project activities but not directly involved in project planning or execution.
Media	Public awareness and outreach.	Raise awareness about project activities but not directly involved in project implementation.
Emergency Services	Response to disasters.	Involved during emergencies but not directly engaged in ongoing project activities.
Ecogenia Organizers and Staff	Directly involved in project planning and execution, coordination of activities, ensuring project objectives are met.	Central role in implementation and success of the project; not retaining though for impartiality purposes.
Other Implementation Partners	Collaborative partnership and implementation support.	Involvement primarily auxiliary, with indirect impact on project operations.
Donors and Funders	Provide financial support for project activities, may offer guidance.	Involvement primarily financial, indirect impact on project operations.
Environment	Impacted by project outcomes.	Although not directly included in the analysis, the environment is impacted by project activities and outcomes.

4.
From Outputs to Outcomes

Introduction

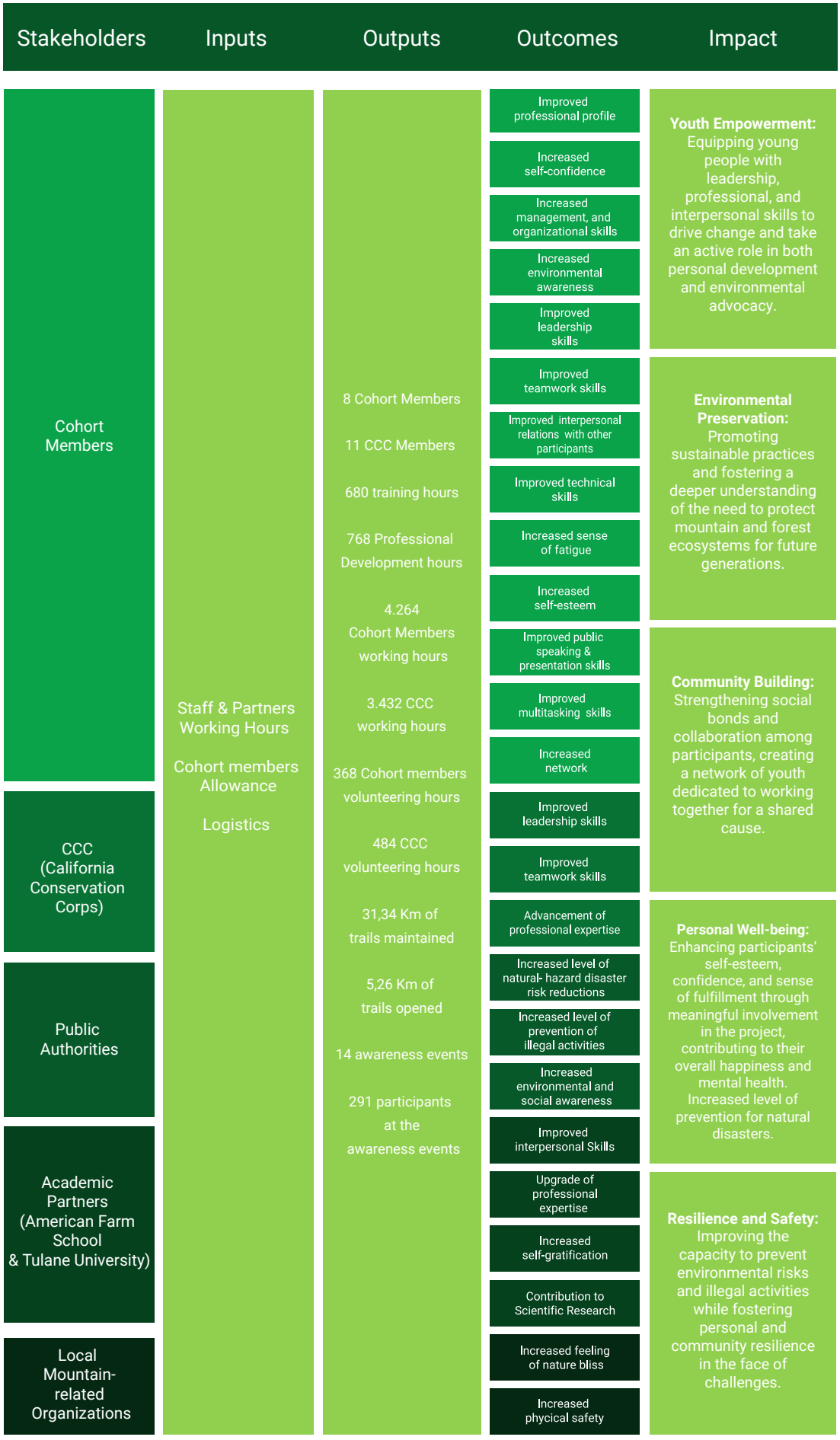
In assessing the impact of Ecogenia's interventions, it's essential to differentiate between 'outputs' and 'outcomes.' 'Outputs' refer to the quantitative data summarizing the activities carried out, such as the number of participants in Ecogenia's programs.

However, these numbers offer only a partial view of the overall impact. 'Outcomes,' on the other hand, capture the actual changes experienced by participants and other stakeholders due to their involvement with Ecogenia.

As defined by Social Value International (SVI), "Outcomes represent the changes brought about by an activity, including both expected and unexpected, positive and negative effects from the stakeholders' perspective." These outcomes go beyond the basic outputs and are central to this analysis.

The following table outlines the connections between Stakeholders, Inputs, Outputs, Outcomes, and Impact. It serves as a clear mapping of how resources and activities (inputs) are transformed into short-term results (outputs), which in turn lead to long-term changes (outcomes), ultimately contributing to broader societal or environmental impact. This framework is informed by the perspectives of the stakeholders, ensuring that their experiences and contributions are central to the analysis.

4.1 Theory of Change per Stakeholder Group



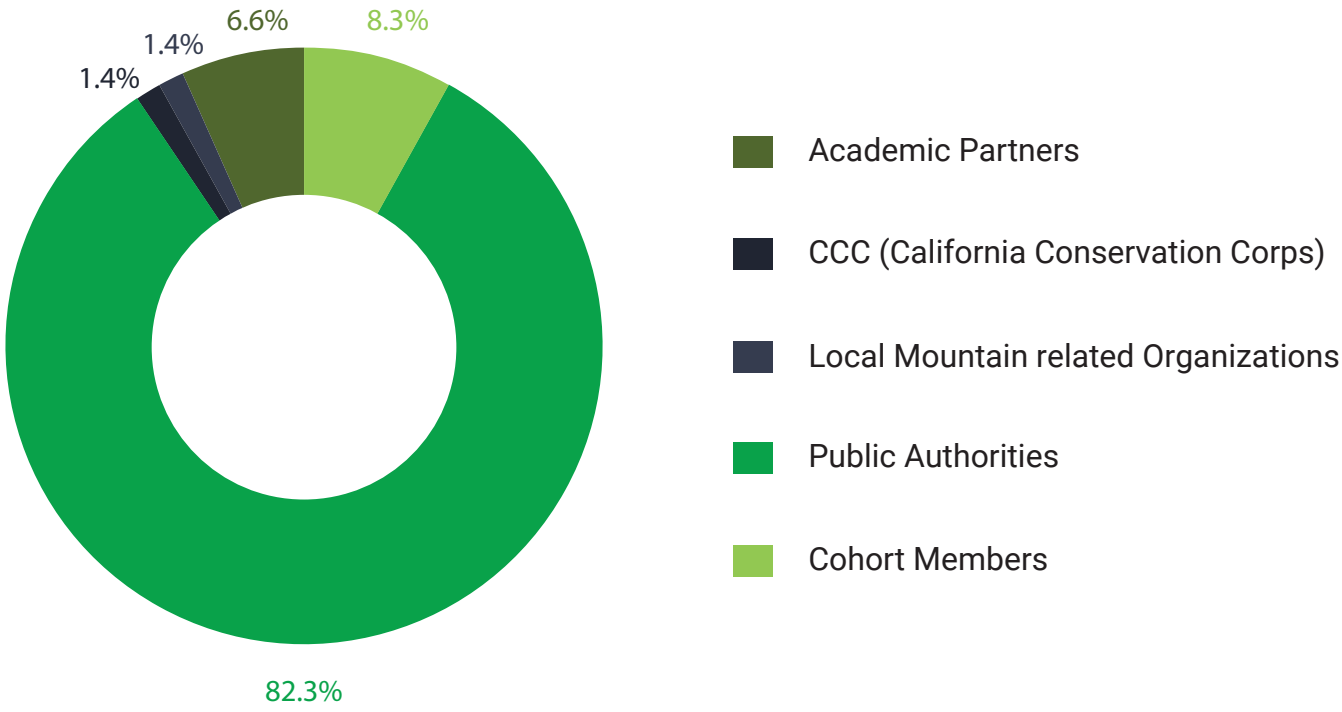
5.
Calculations of SROI

5.1 SROI Analysis results

The SROI for this project has been calculated at 5.32. This means that for every unit of investment, approximately 5.32 units of social value are generated. This ratio reflects the positive outcomes and impacts of the project, particularly in areas like natural-hazard disaster prevention and youth empowerment, which contribute to long-term benefits. The SROI indicates a substantial return on the investment, showing that the resources committed to the project are generating significant value for the stakeholders involved.

As indicated by the following diagram, the largest portion of the generated value comes from public authorities. In the context of this project, this value represents the services that Ecogenia aims to support and enhance in their efforts to protect against and mitigate natural-hazard disaster risks. It is therefore expected that the project's value is most evident in outcomes related to the prevention of natural-hazard disasters and illegal activities in the forest and mountain areas.

However, this does not diminish the value generated for other stakeholders. The overall value of the project is the result of the interconnectedness and interactions among all stakeholders' contributions.



In closing, this analysis underscores the project's substantial impact in addressing critical issues while contributions from all stakeholders highlight the project's overall effectiveness and the collective value created through collaborative efforts.

5.2 Sensitivity Analysis

The following table presents the sensitivity analysis for the SROI calculation. This analysis examines how changes in key factors affect the SROI, providing insight into the robustness and variability of the results.Each test explores different scenarios, including adjustments to stakeholder numbers, valuations of outcomes, attribution, deadweight, displacement, and drop-off rates.

By comparing the original SROI value of 5.32 with the adapted values under these various conditions, we gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of different assumptions and identify areas of sensitivity within the calculation.

Table 4: Sensitivity Analysis

		Affected Outcome	SROI	Adapted SROI	Difference
Test 1	Increase stakeholders by 10%	All	5.32	6.53	-1.21
	Decrease stakeholders by 10%	All	5.32	4.10	1.21
Test 2	Highest valuations reduced by 50%	Cost avoided for natural-hazard disaster prevention measures	5.32	3.91	1.41
	Highest valuations reduced by 50%	Cost avoided for illegal activities prevention measures	5.32	4.53	0.78
Test 3	Attribution increased by 20%	All	5.32	4.05	1.27
	Attribution decreased by 20%	All	5.32	6.58	-1.27
Test 4	Deadweight increased by 20%	All	5.32	4.43	0.88
	Deadweight decreased by 20%	All	5.32	6.20	-0.88
Test 5	Setting displacement at 20%	All	5.32	4.25	1.06
Test 6	Drop-off increased by 20%	All	5.32	4.89	0.43
	Drop-off decreased by 20%	All	5.32	5.77	-0.45

The sensitivity analysis confirms that the calculated SROI of 5.32 is robust, showing a stable core value despite variations in key parameters.

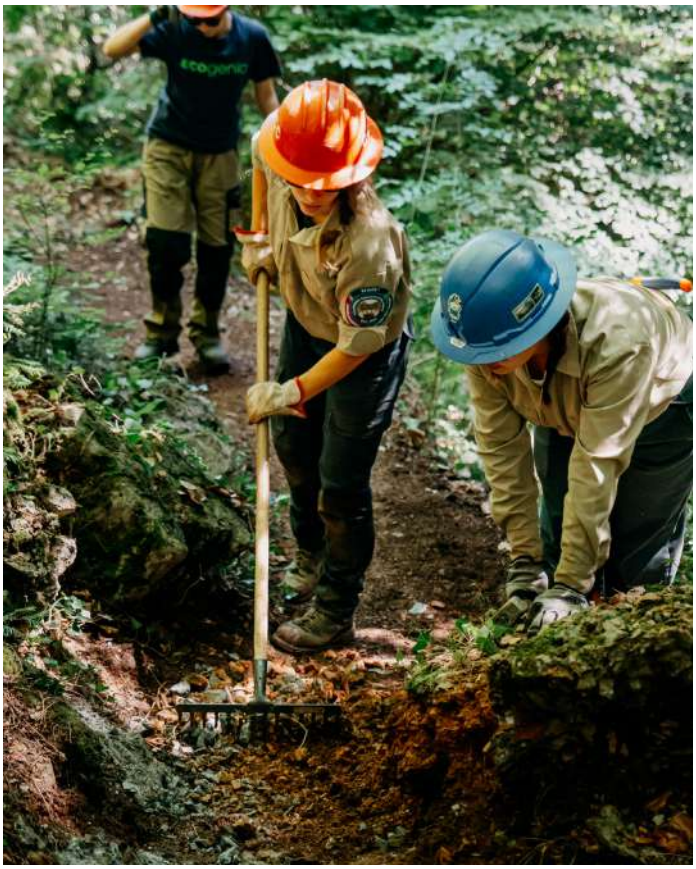
This stability indicates that the SROI calculation is reliable, with the overall value being consistent across different scenarios. However, the analysis also reveals that certain factors have a notable influence on the SROI, making it crucial to understand these elements in detail.

Also, the sensitivity analysis reveals a range of SROI values, with a minimum of 3.91 and a maximum of 6.58. The minimum value of 3.91 represents the worst-case scenario, reflecting the lowest return on investment under less favorable conditions. This value highlights the potential risks and challenges that could impact the project's effectiveness and overall value.

On the other hand, the maximum value of 6.58 represents the best-case scenario, showcasing the highest possible return on investment when conditions are optimal. This upper bound demonstrates the potential for significant positive outcomes and benefits when key factors align favorably.

Overall, the findings highlight that the SROI is most sensitive to changes in stakeholder numbers, valuations of key outcomes, and attribution rates. Variations in these parameters—such as adjustments to the number of stakeholders or the valuation of outcomes related to natural-hazard disaster prevention—can significantly affect the SROI. In contrast, the SROI exhibits less sensitivity to changes in deadweight and drop-off rates.

This understanding of sensitivity is essential for interpreting the SROI accurately and ensuring that the project's impact is effectively measured and represented.



6.
Disclaimer

Summary

This study was prepared by DOTANK Plus in collaboration with Dataphoria on behalf of Ecogenia. The analysis is based on information provided by the Organization and data collected from program stakeholders. The Consultant was reassured by those providing the data that it was valid and accurately reflected the reality of the situation.

This study is intended solely for the use of Ecogenia. Any utilization of this study or decisions made based on its content are the responsibility of the Organization. The Consultant does not assume liability for any outcomes resulting from decisions or actions taken based on this report.

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