

USAID Youth in Development Policy

2021 Update

(This policy document will be professionally edited for style and readability before the final version, so stylistic or phrasing edits are not being requested through this external comment period.)

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DRAFT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The USAID Youth in Development Policy was first launched in 2012 and was the first of its kind by bi-lateral donors. Ten years later, USAID is updating this policy to ensure its relevance in a rapidly evolving world where authoritarian leaning regimes are on the rise, the world struggles to recover from the most significant pandemic in a century, significant and growing threats from climate change, digital technology has generated benefit but also harm, and research provides us new insights on evidence-based Positive Youth Development (PYD) approaches to effective programming. Today, there are 2.4 billion young people ages 10-29 living in the world¹ – the largest youth population in history. According to the United Nations, 9 out of 10 youth live in less developed countries and are affected disproportionately by poverty, conflict, violence, poor health, unemployment, and exclusion. Evidence shows that if we invest effectively in youth's integrated development and engage them as partners in development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding efforts, the current generation will contribute to greater economic growth, democracy, and stability and advance self-reliance for their communities and nations. Conversely, if youth remain marginalized, these development areas will likely remain stagnant or even decline. USAID believes in the importance of partnering with and integrating youth in all their diversity into development and shaping their own future. Youth are not only key drivers of prosperity, security, and democracy in their countries, but are also a vital resource to meet local, national, and global peace, security, and economic goals. USAID also believes in supporting youth development due to their unique needs and experiences and supporting them as citizens, deserving to be healthy, educated, employed, and engaged with the community around them.

This policy is predicated on emerging promising practices for youth development that are gleaned from USAID and partners' experience in youth programming, as well as through consultations with young people. The policy is further informed by principles and practices articulated in, among others, the [Interim National Security Strategic Guidance](#), the (forthcoming) Department of State and USAID Joint Strategic Plan, [U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security](#), [U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education](#), [U.S. Strategy on Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity](#), [US Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally](#), [U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls](#), and [U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability](#). Further, the policy aligns with the existing USAID policies and strategies, including the [Digital Strategy \(2020-2024\)](#), the [Education Policy](#), [Countering Violent Extremism Through Development Assistance](#), [Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting Sustained Development](#), (forthcoming) Geospatial Strategy, (forthcoming) Climate Strategy, the [Private Sector Engagement Policy](#), the [Global Food Security Strategy](#), [USAID's Vision for Health System Strengthening 2030](#), [Policy on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), USAID Disability Policy (forthcoming), [LGBT Vision for Action](#), [Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy](#), and [USAID's Economic Growth Policy](#), among others.

USAID has decades of valuable experience in working with young people and local communities to enable safe and productive transition of children to youth and of youth to adulthood. However, USAID has not always approached its work with youth systematically or at scale. This policy puts forward an overarching vision and goal for youth development along with related objectives and outcomes to be achieved. It outlines a conceptual approach of PYD and provides updated guiding principles and operational practices in support of USAID's efforts to mainstream youth in development; design and implement more effective programs; and elevate youth participation, the role of emerging young leaders, and youth collective action. Importantly, this policy will position USAID and its partners to capitalize on favorable global population trends by investing in programs and policies by, with, and for youth that seize opportunity and lead to

¹ UN World Population Prospects (estimate 2020).

sustainable growth and human development, including through the realization of what is often referred to as a *demographic and democratic dividend*. In this updated policy we put forth the following vision, goal, and objectives:

Vision: USAID envisions a world in which young people have agency², rights, influence, and opportunities to pursue their life goals, and contribute to the development of their communities.

Goal: Increase the meaningful participation of youth within their communities, schools, organizations, economies, peer groups, and families, enhancing their skills, providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and providing the support needed to build on their collective leadership.

Policy Objectives:

1. **ACCESS:** Youth are better able to access youth-responsive information, services, and opportunities, and to build the skills they need, to lead healthy, productive and peaceful lives.
2. **PARTICIPATION:** Youth, especially those with intersecting marginalized identities, fully participate in decision-making and resource allocation as key community partners to contribute to household, community, and national wellbeing.
3. **SYSTEMS:** Youth have a stronger collective voice in, and are better served by, local and national systems through more coordinated and effective services, practices, and policies that embody the principles of positive youth development.

Development can be accelerated when the majority of youth in any community or country are able to make significant contributions to economic, social, and political life in a way that lifts countries out of poverty, ensures greater stability, and promotes healthier societies. With few exceptions, in the coming decades, developing countries have or will have a population age structure that favors economic growth. For some countries, the window to capitalize on this opportunity is short, while for others, it is just opening or still a few decades away. Sizeable youth populations, utilizing their innovative and creative potential, present a unique opportunity to help achieve the above objectives. To fulfill youth potential we must both prepare them and create spaces for them to participate in development and resilience efforts. It is critical to plan a life-course approach of support and intergenerational engagement in order to set the stage for tomorrow's development outcomes, including increasing smart investments in early childhood development and pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary education.

With this policy, USAID seeks to strengthen cross-sectoral youth programming, participation, and partnership in support of Agency development and humanitarian objectives. It applies to both youth-focused and youth-relevant programming in all sectors:

- **Youth-focused:** An activity in which youth are the primary beneficiaries.
- **Youth-relevant:** An activity which includes youth or has an integrated youth-focused component. Youth-relevant activities may be focused on policy development, service delivery, and a broad array of other modalities and objectives.

Youth in Development at USAID is the intentional, ongoing process of supporting youth in their transition from childhood into adulthood. It is based on a Positive Youth Development approach – drawn from best practices in youth specific programs – focusing on four key domains:

- **Assets:** Youth have the necessary resources and skills to achieve desired outcomes. Programming should incorporate skills development through direct implementation or coordination with other initiatives.

² Youth have the ability to employ their assets and aspirations to make their own decisions about their lives and set their own goals, and to act on those decisions in order to achieve desired outcomes without fear of violence or retribution.

- **Agency:** Youth can employ their assets and aspirations to act upon their own decisions. This requires that programs engage with families, adults, leaders, institutions, and policies to reduce any obstacles that prevent youth from participating and applying their assets.
- **Contribution:** Youth are encouraged, recognized, and able to be involved in and lead through various channels as a source of change. Meaningful participation requires dedicated time and funding to ensure that youth mobilize, lead, and contribute to design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
- **Enabling Environment:** Youth are surrounded by an enabling environment that maximizes their assets, agency, access to services and opportunities, and ability to avoid risks while promoting their health as well as social and emotional competence to thrive. Developing high-quality, safe spaces, building relationships, and addressing norms, expectations, perceptions, and access to youth-responsive and integrated services help build enabling environments. Creating more supportive environments requires improved coordination, instituting supportive policies, optimizing resources, and better integration of services focused on safe, gender-transformative programming. Programming needs to engage parents, community leaders, and peers as partners, given their importance to youth development.

The PYD approach and guiding principles will shape efforts to meet objectives and achieve expected outcomes. The **guiding principles** are:

- Ensure meaningful youth engagement and leadership in the design and delivery of projects and strategies;
- Recognize that youth are not homogeneous³. Promote meaningful inclusion of diverse groups of youth;
- Recognize, map, and plan holistically with local systems;
- Integrate intergenerational approaches;
- Protect and support young people's overall wellbeing;
- Apply conflict-sensitive, trauma-informed, and other Do No Harm principles;
- Create pathways for youth who have experienced marginalization or disenfranchisement; and
- Maximize innovation and digital development.

To achieve Objective One - ACCESS: Youth are better able to access the youth-responsive information, services, and opportunities, and to build the skills they need, to lead healthy, productive and peaceful lives.

The Policy calls for Agency staff to consider youth-responsive information, services and skill building in activity design, implementation, and evaluation across all sectors. Skill building ensures youth develop the essential package of foundational, social-emotional/soft skills, education, employment, digital, and civic skills through skill building activities within individual, family, peer and community settings. Better access to youth-responsive services means youth have access to training and services, service providers recognize that youth are not homogeneous, and that services are inclusive for all youth regardless of sex, race, religion, ethnicity, age, marital/partner status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or disability.

To achieve Objective Two - PARTICIPATION: Youth, especially those with intersecting marginalized⁴ identities, fully participate in decision-making as key community partners to contribute to individual, household, community, and national wellbeing.

³ USAID defines youth as “a full spectrum of the population aged 10-29, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic identity, religion, race, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, political affiliation, or physical location.

⁴ Marginalized groups may include, but are not limited to, women and girls, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ people, displaced persons, migrants, Indigenous Peoples and communities, youth, older persons, religious minorities, ethnic and racial groups, people in lower castes, and people of diverse

The Policy calls for Agency staff to integrate and invest in youth participation across Agency core initiatives and priorities. Meaningful youth participation advances a development model that fully embraces youth insights and actions into how to program strategically for and with young people. Effective youth participation in the Program Cycle will ensure that:

- Youth are consulted and have roles in assessment, program design, implementation, and evaluation;
- Youth-serving and youth-led organizations are supported and engaged;
- Youth have dynamic platforms for voice, networking, and innovation;
- Strategies are informed by youth input and by research on what works and the life conditions of young people.

With this policy, USAID will continue to strategically reorient its development and humanitarian activities towards increasing opportunities for youth participation, leadership, collective action, and partnerships that advance peaceful, prosperous, just, and democratic societies.

To achieve Objective Three - SYSTEMS: Youth have a stronger collective voice in, and are better served by, equitable local and national systems through more coordinated and effective services, practices, and policies that embody the principles of positive youth development.

The Policy calls for Agency-wide prioritization of youth needs, assets, and voice within and across systems, including education, health, justice, security, labor markets, and all levels of governance. USAID defines a system as “interconnected sets of actors—governments, civil society, the private sector, universities, individual citizens and others—that jointly produce a particular development outcome.”⁵ Achieving and sustaining any development outcome involves multiple stakeholders.⁶ In the context of youth development, education providers, healthcare providers, employers, governments, and young people themselves and their families deliver critical support and opportunities that enable all youth to progress through adolescence and young adulthood to become healthy, engaged, and successful adults.⁷ A key focus is on strengthening the relationships, roles, resources, and norms with the actors within the youth system.

economic class and political opinions. These groups often suffer from discrimination in the application of laws and policy and/or access to resources, services, and social protection, and may be subject to persecution.

⁵ “Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting Sustained Development,” U.S. Agency for International Development, July 12, 2021, <https://www.usaid.gov/policy/local-systems-framework>.

⁶ “Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting Sustained Development,” U.S. Agency for International Development, July 12, 2021, <https://www.usaid.gov/policy/local-systems-framework>.

⁷ Clare Ignatowski et al., “Building Youth Infrastructure: Early Lessons from the Youth Systems Collaborative,” *Journal of Youth Development* 16, no. 2-3 (2021): pp. 74-99, <https://doi.org/10.5195/jyd.2021.1030>.

I. INTRODUCTION: YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT

As of July 2021, half of the world's population of 7.9 billion is under the age of 30, of which 2.4 billion people are between the ages of 10 and 29. This is therefore the largest generation of young people in human history, facing both tremendous opportunities and challenges. This generation of young people is spending more time in school, starting work later, and is now being challenged by the unprecedented strain that the COVID-19 crisis has placed on their economic livelihoods — not to mention the potential of new threats to their civic and political freedoms.⁸ Further, at least one in four young people between the ages of 15 and 29 is directly affected by conflict and violence in their community.⁹ Young women and girls, and gender non-conforming youth, are disproportionately impacted by many of the barriers to their full development and participation.

Globalization, technological advances, and the spread of social media offer new opportunities for youth to connect and become more active leaders in development and building resilience, while at the same time making their lives more complex and challenging. For example, while globalization has the potential to connect people more than ever, it also runs the risk of greater trends in youth out-migration as they search for better educational, economic, political, and social opportunities, thus potentially stunting the development of their countries of origin, contributing to shrinking markets and decreases in civic participation. Additionally, as social media advances, so does the risk of the spread of disinformation campaigns. Therefore, considering the strengths and needs of youth must be a central part of any development policy. Policy, and the implementation of policy, must be designed to integrate young people more fully in political, economic, and social life and enable them to share in the benefits of development.

How USAID Defines Youth

The transition to adulthood involves multiple and overlapping physical, cognitive, emotional, political, social, and cultural changes. Successful youth engagement and programming is based on a lifecycle continuum, beginning with deliberate attention to the critical years of children entering adolescence and into young adulthood. Recent research provides new understanding about brain development, physical changes, and social and emotional development that can be used to inform and target programming along the youth life span from adolescence through early adulthood. Other socially-ascribed aspects such as age of marriage, parenthood, and work, also can affect how young people are defined.

⁸ Rachel Nugent, "Youth in a Global World" (Population Reference Bureau, May 2006), https://sarpn.org/documents/d0002136/PRB_Youth_May2006.pdf.

⁹ SFCG Team, "The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security," SFCG, April 26, 2018, <https://www.sfcg.org/the-missing-peace-independent-progress-study-on-youth-peace-and-security/>.

Age Range

USAID uses the term **youth** and **young people** interchangeably. USAID defines youth as individuals aged **10–29, and engages youth within this full age range**. USAID recognizes youth up to age 35 if youth are defined as such in a given country context. While USAID defines youth as 10-29, it recognizes that those under age 18 are universally considered children and subject to numerous national and international norms and legal protections this policy seeks to reinforce.

Based on international research of youth development, USAID defines the different periods of youth¹⁰ as follows:

- Early adolescence (10-14);
- Adolescence (15-19);
- Emerging adulthood (20-24); and
- Transition to adulthood (25-29).

USAID recognizes that youth are undergoing rapid physical, emotional, social, and psychological changes across these different periods, and therefore advocates for a nuanced approach to program design and implementation, specifically addressing the particular needs and opportunities of youth at the different stages of youth development.

USAID will also be expected to use these age band disaggregations across all relevant indicators. See Annex 4 for more info.

What Has Changed in the Last Decade

Since 2012, the youth population around the world has grown by 1.4 billion, with 9 out of 10 projected to live in Africa and South Asia. It is also equally important to look at decreasing youth population trends in regions such as Europe and Eurasia, since this will have dire long-term consequences for development and economic growth. In Latin America, there are growing pressures for migration due to violence, political instability, and climate change. More importantly the global challenges and opportunities have evolved dramatically including:

- **Recognition of the capacity and commitment of young people and emerging leaders** to be vital partners in building resilience and development at the local, national, and global level, in a number of key areas including: peace and security, governance and rights, and global health;
- **Ability to network youth** and emerging leaders via digital means around the world;
- **Transformations in the future of work** due to digital and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) innovations;
- **Access to and use of digital learning options** due to global pandemics to keep youth from backsliding in education;
- **Emergence of global and humanitarian crises** such as climate change, pandemics, disasters, and complex crises;
- **Increase in youth-led movements pressing for social justice;**
- **Increased Agency focus on diversity, equity and inclusion;**
- **Increased international recognition of the role of youth:** e.g. UN Security Council Youth, Peace, and Security Resolution;

¹⁰ Note: In some countries, the legal definition of youth goes beyond age 29.

- **Demographic shifts** in Europe and Eurasia (E&E) where the percentage of the youth populations are shrinking and Africa and Asia where the percentage of the youth populations are growing;
- **Soft and socio-emotional skills as key** programming components for successful youth activities and outcomes;
- **Adverse mental health impacts on young people** are increasing in number along with the recognition of their negative influence on youth life outcomes. Mental health related issues are the leading cause of disability for young people globally.

What's New and Different about this Policy?

To respond to this changing context, this updated policy works to make USAID's activities relevant through:

- Updated **principles spotlighting authentic engagement and inclusion**, among other rights;
- Strengthened **focus on youth as full partners** in addressing key priorities in development;
- Focused on **inclusion and diversity** of young people;
- Better **connection to other U.S. Government (USG)** and USAID policies and initiatives, such as Youth, Peace and Security
- Focused on **resilience**, in response to pandemics and climate change, and other global shocks, stressors, and challenges;
- Used **conflict sensitive and trauma-informed** approaches;
- Integrated **Do No Harm elements**, including digital protection;
- Prioritized **Positive Youth Development (PYD)** approach;
- Refined **operationalization at the mission and OU level** to achieve development and humanitarian outcomes, based on feedback from youth, youth POCs, and implementing partners;
- Focused on **adaptive management** in the design, management, and implementation of youth-focused and youth-relevant activities;
- **Improved metrics** to capture what's working and what's not in USAID programming for youth;
- Emphasis that this policy applies to all USAID programming, including both **youth-focused and youth-relevant** activities;
- Harnessed **digital technology and innovation** for youth inclusion, participation, and leadership.

USAID's Youth in Development policy recognizes that young people are both individuals transitioning through life's developmental stages, and actors in the development of their communities and countries. As young people, they experience physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes that influence their needs, identities, and behavior as well as their opportunities.¹¹ Research shows they also make choices and respond to incentives differently than young children and adults. Better understanding of the biological, social, and cultural dimensions of youth behavior will facilitate the design of programming that better supports youth, partnering with them to become part of the solution to today's challenges.

This policy will advance both global priorities, such as supporting young people's contribution to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as Government priorities and mandates including young people's civic participation and role in:

- **Pandemic and humanitarian response** efforts given the disproportionate impact of these situations on young people - 35 million of the 82 million displaced persons in 2020 were under age 18.¹²
- **Climate action** given that this generation of youth will have to deal with the long term catastrophic consequences of climate change. At the current level of country-level commitments to lower greenhouse gas emissions, 172 million children born in sub-

¹¹ "The Adolescent Brain New Research and Its Implications for Young People Transitioning from Foster Care," *Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative*, 2011, https://jcc.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/jcyoi_adolescent_brain_development_executive_summary_final_090611.pdf.

¹² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Figures at a Glance," UNHCR, June 18, 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>.

Saharan Africa since 2016 will face nearly six times as many extreme events, and about 50 times as many heat waves as previous generations¹³.

- **Peace and Security** given that violence impacts 1.1 billion young people and contributes to long term consequences affecting their health, productivity, and wellness.
- **Gender equity and inclusive development** given the barriers affecting diverse cohorts of youth.

While addressing the needs of youth today, USAID’s Youth Policy recognizes that there is a continuum in development as children grow and transition into adults. The overlapping youth years are critical windows of opportunity to help older children thrive and reach their fullest potential especially during this second important period of brain development.

Research also highlights the impact of **adverse child and youth experiences (ACES)** on long-term outcomes. Failure to address adversity at this time leads to lifelong deficiencies and compromises future youth in development opportunities. USAID sector strategies pay close attention to a life-course approach focusing on child, adolescent and youth development in areas including violence prevention, education, health, and food security. Enabling countries to empower youth in development and realize their demographic dividend requires continued investment across this life course of children, adolescents, and youth and intergenerational collaboration.

IMPACT OF ADVERSE CHILD AND YOUTH EXPERIENCES ON LIFE OUTCOMES¹⁴

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) are traumatic events that, if not mitigated, can be harmful to children (0-17). Traumatic events include a wide range of experiences such as experiencing or witnessing violence, growing up in households with substance misuse, mental health concerns, household instability, or parental separation. The CDC reports that, “toxic stress during childhood can harm the most basic levels of the nervous, endocrine, and immune systems, and that such exposures can even alter the physical structure of DNA (epigenetic effects).”¹⁵ These changes impact young people’s decision making, attention, learning, emotion, and response to stress,” and can have long term impacts such as decreased school completion, increased risk of engaging in violence and drug and alcohol use, mental health, and other health-risk behaviors. The World Health Organization ACES questionnaire expands upon the CDC’s work for international settings¹⁶.

Investment in youth programming and services can reduce conditions that limit the potential for a demographic dividend, including, for example, high rates of youth unemployment, school dropout, early pregnancy, HIV/AIDS acquisition, and poor nutrition. Early marriage and pregnancy and limited family planning services are major contributors to the inability of girls and young women to complete their education, and achieve their full potential. Over 30 percent of all new HIV infections globally occur among youth ages 15 to 25 years-- with the greatest rates of new infections occurring among adolescent girls and young women.¹⁷ Furthermore, 70 percent of premature

¹³ “The Kids are Not Alright”, October 2021. <https://iiasa.ac.at/web/home/about/210927-the-kids-are-not-alright.html>

¹⁴ “Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 6, 2021, https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/fastfact.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fviolenceprevention%2Facestudy%2Ffastfact.html.

¹⁵ “Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 6, 2021, https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/fastfact.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fviolenceprevention%2Facestudy%2Ffastfact.html.

¹⁶ [https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/adverse-childhood-experiences-international-questionnaire-\(ace-iq\)](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/adverse-childhood-experiences-international-questionnaire-(ace-iq))

¹⁷ “Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health,” World Health Organization, <http://www.emro.who.int/iraq/priority-areas/maternal-newborn-child-and-adolescent-health.html>.

deaths among adults can be linked to harmful behaviors, such as smoking and alcohol use which are initiated during adolescence.¹⁸ Increasing our investment in youth will amplify and sustain important health and social gains from childhood interventions.

What is the Demographic Dividend?¹⁹

The Demographic Dividend is the accelerated economic growth that may result from a decline in a country's birth and death rates and the subsequent change in the age structure of the population. With fewer births each year, a country's young dependent population declines in relation to the working-age population. With fewer people to support, a country has a window of opportunity for rapid economic growth if it makes the right social and economic policies and investments.

What Youth are Saying: Changing Context

USAID consulted young people during the creation of the Youth in Development Policy through a series of Listening Session focus groups conducted from June-July 2021. The quotes in the "What Youth are Saying" boxes come from these sessions.

"A main opportunity for my peers in the future is taking advantage of the growing use of technology, which has taken place over the past decade. Technology has increased accountability in governance and is leveling the playing field for youth and new emergent voices and leaders." - Youth Listening Session Participant

I. PRINCIPLES AND APPROACH

Guiding Principles and PYD Approach

With this policy, USAID seeks to strengthen youth programming, participation, and partnership in support of Agency development and humanitarian objectives. Youth in Development at USAID is the intentional, ongoing process of assisting youth in their transition from childhood into adulthood. The policy addresses programming that is both youth-focused (targeting youth as primary beneficiaries) and youth-relevant (targeting a wider population but including youth in select components or as a cross-cutting issue). It is based on a **Positive Youth Development Approach** – drawn from best practices in youth specific programs – focusing on **four key domains**:

- **Assets:** Youth have the necessary resources and skills to achieve desired outcomes. Programming should incorporate skills development through direct implementation or coordination with other initiatives.
- **Agency:** Youth can employ their assets and aspirations to act upon their own decisions. This requires that programs engage with families, adults, leaders, institutions, and policies to reduce any obstacles that prevent youth from participating and applying their assets.

¹⁸ Anna Glasier et al., "Sexual and Reproductive Health: A Matter of Life and Death," *The Lancet* 368, no. 9547 (2006): pp. 1595-1607, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(06\)69478-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(06)69478-6).

¹⁹ Kaitlyn Patierno, Smita Gaith, and Leahy Madsen, "Which Policies Promote a Demographic Dividend? An Evidence Review," PRB, October 2019, <https://www.prb.org/resources/which-policies-promote-a-demographic-dividend-an-evidence-review/>.

- **Contribution:** Youth are encouraged, recognized, and able to be involved in and lead through various channels as a source of change. Meaningful participation requires dedicated time and funding to ensure that youth mobilize, lead, and contribute to design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
- **Enabling Environment:** Youth are surrounded by an enabling environment that maximizes their assets, agency, access to services and opportunities, and ability to avoid risks while promoting their health as well as social and emotional competence to thrive. Developing high-quality, safe spaces, building relationships, and addressing norms, expectations, perceptions, and access to youth-responsive and integrated services help build enabling environments. Creating more supportive environments requires improved coordination, instituting supportive policies, optimizing resources, and better integration of services focused on safe, gender-transformative programming. Programming needs to engage parents, community leaders, and peers as partners, given their importance to youth development.

PYD Domains	PYD Program Features	Key Activities
Assets	Skill building	Develop soft and life skills through skill building activities within individual, family, peer and community settings
Agency		
Contribution	Youth engagement and contribution	Allow youth engagement to take different shapes. This can include youth expression, youth involvement in community service and creating opportunities for youth decision-making at various levels of government. This can also include programs that provide structure for youth contribution or that support youth leadership.
Enabling Environment	Healthy relationships and bonding	Identify and link youth to positive adult role models, mentors, coaches, teachers, health care providers, and community leaders. Ideally, youth have at least one caring and consistent adult in their lives. Healthy peer relationships are also particularly important to youth.
	Belonging and membership	Foster activities where youth feel included regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disabilities or other factors. Identify activities that provide positive sense of belonging (schools, sports, community service, faith based youth groups, etc.)
	Positive norms, expectations, and perceptions	Have clear and consistent norms and expectations about health, relationships, and forms of engagement that provide youth an increasing amount of responsibility and independence and allow youth to grow and take on new roles.
	Safe space	Create safe spaces that are tailored to the needs of youth - including physical infrastructure as well as emotional safety. Space can be defined in a number of ways, including virtual. Many communities lack any space for youth to convene. Thus communities must be committed to providing youth with safe spaces to practice, engage, and learn creatively and collaboratively. An emotionally safe space is critical to learning.
	Access to age appropriate and youth friendly services; integration among services	Make information available to youth and families, connecting and integrating health and social services so there is a continuum of care and support at a community level.

Youth programming varies widely owing to the distinct phases of the life span, the multiplicity of sectors and policies that influence youth development outcomes, and the diversity among youth and their needs and aspirations. In order to take these into account while at the same time utilizing best practice interventions and responding to broader Agency objectives, the following principles are designed to improve the consistency and quality of USAID’s youth development efforts.

USAID YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT GUIDING PRINCIPLES	
1)	Apply meaningful youth engagement and leadership in the design and delivery of projects and strategies. Meaningful youth engagement is defined as an inclusive, intentional, mutually-respectful partnership between youth and adults whereby power is shared, and respective contributions, including young people’s ideas, leadership, perspectives, skills and strengths, are valued.
2)	Recognize that youth are not homogeneous²⁰. Promote meaningful inclusion of diverse groups of young people to ensure equity and address systemic barriers to participation based on gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity.
3)	Recognize, map, and plan holistically with local systems to involve the private sector, community organizations, faith-based organizations, governments, and families in youth programming.
4)	Integrate intergenerational approaches to strengthen youth participation in decision-making with local leaders and systems. Recognize the traditional roles that youth play in their communities and families, and meaningfully address youth-adult power dynamics into interventions.
5)	Protect and support young people's overall wellbeing by building resilience to shocks, reducing harmful practices, and supporting mental health and wellness while applying trauma-informed approaches.
6)	Apply conflict sensitivity and do no harm principles , while recognizing that engaging young people as partners in peacebuilding and humanitarian activities is critical to success in fragile environments.
7)	Create pathways for youth who have experienced marginalization or disenfranchisement to access opportunity for development.
8)	Maximize innovation and use of technology by and for youth, by leveraging digital literacy, appropriate skills development, and citizenship for positive change, while reducing risks for digital harm.

²⁰ USAID defines youth as “a full spectrum of the population aged 10-29, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic identity, religion, race, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, political affiliation, or physical location.”

III. VISION, GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

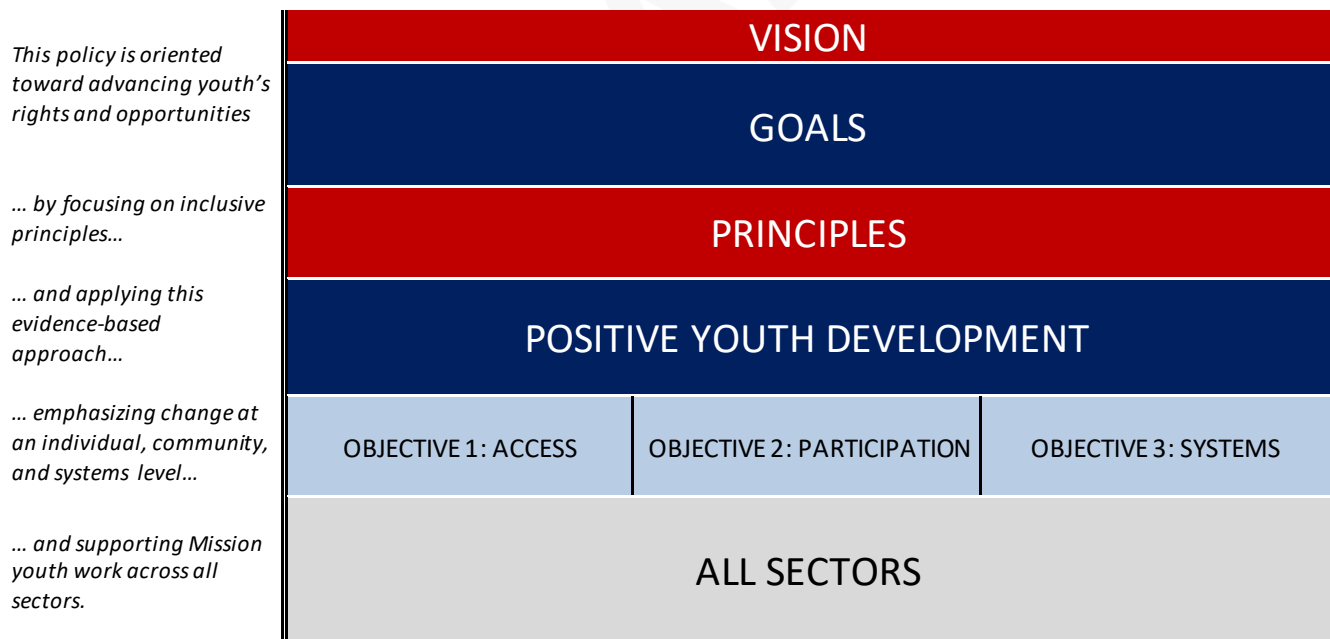
USAID envisions a world in which young people have the agency, rights, influence, and opportunities to pursue their life goals and contribute to the development of their communities.

The goal of the USAID Youth in Development policy is to increase the meaningful participation of youth within their communities, schools, organizations, economies, peer groups, and families, enhancing their skills, providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and providing the support needed to build on their collective leadership.

In support of this goal, USAID will work towards three objectives:

1. **ACCESS:** Youth are better able to access the youth-responsive information, services, and opportunities, and to build the skills they need, to lead healthy, productive, and peaceful lives.
2. **PARTICIPATION:** Youth, especially those with intersecting marginalized identities, fully participate in decision-making and resource allocation as key community partners to contribute to household, community, and national well-being.
3. **SYSTEMS:** Youth have a stronger collective voice in, and are better served by equitable local and national systems through more coordinated and effective services, practices, and policies that embody the principles of positive youth development.

Youth as partners in achieving these objectives engage USAID across the socio-ecological model including as individuals, within families, and as actors in organizations, communities, and institutions. Putting this framework together:



IV. OBJECTIVE ONE - ACCESS

Youth are better able to access the youth-responsive information, services, and opportunities, and to build the skills they need, to lead healthy, productive, and peaceful lives.

“Too often the services provided by local governmental agencies don’t take into account our realities and needs as young people, leading to us too often not taking advantage of these needed resources.” - Youth Listening Session Participant

USAID will implement programming designed specifically to support young people’s access to youth-responsive, quality services. These include education, health and nutrition, employment, and other social services, including in conflict and crisis situations. When services are not designed with youth in mind, they can create youth-specific barriers due to limited mobility, lack of identification, and low personal decision-making power, among others. Activities that target only the highest educated youth, or those with pre-existing skills reinforce unintentional biases against the large proportion of youth. Designing with diverse youth in mind mitigates these unintended consequences through intentional youth partnership. Increasing our attention to accessibility in youth services and skills programming will leverage important health, education, and other social gains from childhood interventions, leading to improved youth outcomes over time.

SNAPSHOT: Improved Access to Education, Employment, and Entrepreneurship in Guatemala

The Puentes Project (2018-2023) supports youth in high migration areas of Guatemala to improve their skills, complete their education, and find new or better employment in Guatemala. The activity facilitates access to education, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities while providing youth with basic life skills so that they can actively contribute to their communities. The project’s ability to increase youth access to services included appropriate inclusion of family and community, youth engagement and leadership, as well as participatory mapping of barriers and opportunities at the community level.

The Policy calls for Agency staff to consider youth-responsive services and skills-building in activity design. Skill building ensures youth develop foundational skills, social-emotional/soft skills,²¹ and employment-specific skills through skill building activities within individual, family, peer and community settings through skill building activities within individual, family, peer, educational, and community settings. Better access to youth-responsive services means youth have access to services, service providers recognize that youth are not homogeneous, and that services are inclusive for all youth regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic identity, religion, race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, political affiliation, or physical location. Youth-responsive services:

²¹ “Social and Emotional Learning and Soft Skills,” USAID EducationLinks, August 1, 2019, <https://www.edu-links.org/resources/social-and-emotional-learning-and-soft-skills>.

- Apply age-appropriate and relevant interventions;
- Are youth-friendly;
- Are safe and respectful;
- Make information available to youth and families that is age and developmentally appropriate and relevant;
- Connect and integrate health, education, and social services so there is a continuum of care and support at a community level;
- Include social services such as mental health and in-school feeding programs;
- Minimize barriers for parental consent, for young people under 18 or in conflict affected environments;
- Make referrals - there is integration among service providers and an ability to provide referrals to other youth-responsive providers;
- Apply a systems approach that incorporates youth-centered social and behavioral approaches and evidence-based components, rather than implementing isolated interventions;
- Imply that policies, procedures, and programs across the entire system are adapted to respond to the diverse needs and preferences of youth;
- Engage family and communities in an appropriate way to ensure acceptance of necessary service provision for adolescents and youth;
- Provide services by youth-led or youth-serving organizations;
- Apply PYD approach principles in their delivery of services.

V. OBJECTIVE TWO - PARTICIPATION

Youth, especially those from intersecting marginalized identities, fully participate in decision-making as key community partners to contribute to individual, household, community, and national wellbeing.

“Prioritize youth in the design phase as it gives youth ownership of the project and its strategic direction. Having your voice heard is empowering. Relationships should continue after as well, such as through listening sessions.”

- Youth Listening Session Participant

To achieve smarter, inclusive, coordinated investments and accomplish USAID’s development and humanitarian outcomes while realizing demographic dividends, USAID must create an environment where youth are encouraged, recognized, and able to be involved as a source of change for their own and their communities’ positive development. USAID Operating Units should create environments in which youth can contribute by mainstreaming youth into core initiatives, ensuring youth issues and participation are integrated throughout the Program Cycle, and applying relevant and operational processes to youth. Proactively increasing youth participation, particularly that of marginalized groups, in the development of policies, programs, and services should inevitably lead to better results. Marginalized groups include, but are not limited to, women and girls, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ people, displaced persons, migrants, Indigenous Peoples and communities, youth, older persons, religious minorities, ethnic and racial groups, people in lower castes, and people of diverse economic class and political opinions.

USAID will seek to identify and strengthen youth-led and youth-serving organizations and networks. USAID will further seek to identify, support, and promote research and innovation by, with, and for youth. It is expected that Agency policies, country strategies, and partnerships will be inclusive of youth and will actively leverage the assets, priorities, and ideas of young people.

USAID efforts towards these objectives are designed to achieve three critical outcomes across multiple programs and sectors:

- Youth are better able to access economic and social opportunities, share in economic growth, live healthy lives, and contribute to household, community, and national wellbeing.
- Youth fully participate as key community partners, leaders, innovators, researchers in democratic and development processes, and play active roles in peace building and civil society.
- Youth have a stronger voice in, and are better served by, local and national institutions, with more robust and youth friendly policies and services while experiencing a decrease in practices that marginalize and harm youth.

EFFECTIVE YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE USAID PROGRAM CYCLE ENSURES:

- Roles: Youth have specific roles in assessment, program design, implementation, and evaluation.
- Support: Youth-serving and youth-led organizations are supported and engaged.
- Networks: Youth have dynamic platforms for voice, networking, and innovation.
- Assessment: Strategies are informed by youth input and by research on what works and life conditions of young people.

Program Cycle integration of youth uses ADS 201 along with the USAID Youth in Development Policy Implementation Guidance (forthcoming) to guide the operationalization of this Policy, with an emphasis on the roles and responsibilities of all USAID Operating Units (OUs). The Agency will revise this guidance and these Chapters periodically to ensure harmonization with related ADS Chapters as well as other changes in USAID's operations or applicable U.S. Government laws. Among the key recommendations related to youth integration in USAID's Program Cycle are the following:

1. **Youth assessments** provide a detailed understanding of the needs of the diverse youth population including the identification of vulnerable youth, the areas of greatest need, the conditions that may drive youth toward risky behavior, and the potential opportunity for impact. USAID OUs should either undertake stand alone youth assessments or ensure that youth considerations are integrated into their Inclusive Development or Gender, Youth and Social Inclusion Analyses when designing strategies, projects, and activities. Youth-led assessments are the gold standard. Technical teams and Program Offices in all USAID Bureaus, Missions, and Independent Offices should reflect the findings of these analyses in Country Development Cooperation Strategies (CDCSs) and Strategic Frameworks, Project Development Documents (PDDs) or their successors, Action Memoranda, and solicitations. Design teams should reflect the findings of the youth analysis in the different components of a solicitation and must include a statement that clearly indicates how it incorporates the results of the youth analysis or gives a rationale for why youth engagement is not an issue for the particular activity the requested action would implement. If neither of these is in the request, the cognizant Contracting Officer (CO)/Agreement Officer (AO) should notify the design team that she or he is unable to take further action until she or he receives the required documentation.

UNDERSTANDING YOUTH: THE POWER OF ASSESSMENT

Since 2004, USAID has innovated methodologies for conducting cross-sectoral youth assessments to enable missions and implementing partners to identify critical dynamics in education, employment, health, security, and democracy and governance that affect young people's life chances. USAID has trained youth in developing countries to conduct the various steps of assessments including: facilitating focus groups, collecting and analyzing data, and offering input to strategic programming decisions.

Between 2015 and 2020, USAID conducted 43 youth assessments to investigate young people's priorities and needs. A *Journal of Youth Development* article²² reviewed 17 of these assessments and found that having a decent livelihood, access to education, and gaining tangible work-related skills were top priorities for youth. Additionally, the analysis showed that young people prioritize mental health, substance abuse prevention, and reproductive health as key concerns. Other concerns included a desire for adults and society to listen to and hear young people, and opportunity to take on leadership roles and engage in society, particularly in conflict or unstable contexts. The findings suggested that, "common implications focus on sectoral programming, research, and policy using a positive youth development framework, acknowledging the importance of any program to foster cross-sectoral collaboration."²³

2. **Mainstreaming youth through planning and design** at the country level uses the CDCS as the primary planning tool. CDCS Guidance states that Development Objectives (DO) should integrate approaches, principles, and resources from various sectors and sources to achieve a common objective, such as community-based stabilization, youth development and empowerment, improved economic governance, or effective social service delivery, and endeavor to integrate issues such as gender, youth, and capacity building.²⁴ In accordance with CDCS guidance, operating units should engage youth in consultations and include youth issues as appropriate in parameter-setting, development objectives, and results frameworks. USAID's *Project Design Guidance* includes youth analysis as an optional component and recognizes youth as key stakeholders for consultation. In addition, certain missions may be asked to discuss how they considered youth in their budget requests.

²² Cassandra Jessee et al., "Listening to Youth through 17 Cross-Sectoral YOUTH ASSESSMENTS: Implications for Programming and Policy," *Journal of Youth Development* 16, no. 2-3 (2021): pp. 20-54, <https://doi.org/10.5195/jyd.2021.1046>.

²³ Cassandra Jessee et al., "Listening to Youth through 17 Cross-Sectoral YOUTH ASSESSMENTS: Implications for Programming and Policy," *Journal of Youth Development* 16, no. 2-3 (2021): pp. 20-54, <https://doi.org/10.5195/jyd.2021.1046>.

²⁴ "Country Development Cooperation Strategies (CdcS): Results & Data," U.S. Agency for International Development, June 22, 2021, <https://www.usaid.gov/results-and-data/planning/country-strategies-cdcs>.

YOUTH IN USAID COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION STRATEGIES

A 2021 analysis of recently updated CDCS showed an increase in the intentional focus on youth demonstrated by:

- A 54 percent increase in the number of youth mentions within the Development Objective (DO);
- A 77 percent increase in youth mentions at the intermediate result level;
- An 85 percent increase in the frequency youth mentions overall in CDCSs.

These numerical changes indicate a rising focus on integrating youth into multi-sector development approaches. Four CDCSs mention youth in the DO title, showing a clear prioritization of their inclusion in decision making and interventions.

- Malawi CDCS - DO 2: "Youth lead healthy, informed, and productive lives;"
- North Macedonia CDCS - DO 2: "Youth Contributions to Society Increased;"
- Tanzania - primary CDCS goal: "Tanzanian youth advance the country's long-term prosperity and journey to self-reliance;"
- Jamaica CDCS - DO 2: "Youth crime and violence prevented in targeted communities."

Including "youth" in the DO titles and overarching goals exemplify their inclusion in CDCS planning and increase Agency accountability.

Youth as Implementing Partners

USAID's YouthPower defines meaningful youth engagement as an "inclusive, intentional, mutually-respectful partnership between youth and adults whereby power is shared, respective contributions are valued, and young people's ideas, perspectives, skills and strengths are integrated into the design and delivery of programs, strategies, policies, funding mechanisms and organizations that affect their lives and their communities, countries and globally." This Policy acknowledges that young leaders and youth-led and youth-serving organizations often face challenges becoming implementing partners due to the complexity of the acquisition and assistance process and the demand of USAID reporting requirements. International development systems have left youth voices out of the development conversation, leaving youth to solve problems themselves without donor support. It is important to recognize youth's role as key partners through initiatives like the New Partnership Initiative (NPI) – to lower the barriers to entry for youth to partner with USAID. For example, USAID is supporting programs like Youth Excel, a model of the Agency's New Partnership Initiative that endeavors to expand opportunities for non-traditional partners. Two of the activities under Youth Excel include strengthening intergenerational partnerships to facilitate dialogue between youth and adults as well as supporting advocacy to leverage youth-led research and adults' support to influence development agendas and policies. Additional examples of youth engagement at the implementation stage include: employing youth as part of the implementing team, establishing a USAID youth advisory group composed of heterogeneous youth voices, and engaging older youth as peer leaders, and/or mentors in any skills training components.

VI. OBJECTIVE THREE - SYSTEMS

Youth have a stronger collective voice in, and are better served by equitable local and national systems through more coordinated and effective services, practices, and policies that embody the principles of positive youth development.

“Being able to influence conversations dedicated towards improving the lives of other youth like me is the first step to a better society.”

-Youth Listening Session Participant

The Policy calls for Agency-wide prioritization of youth needs, assets, and voice within and across systems, including education, health, justice, security, labor markets, humanitarian systems, and all levels of governance. USAID defines a system as “interconnected sets of actors—governments, civil society, the private sector, universities, individual citizens and others—that jointly produce a particular development outcome.”²⁵ Achieving and sustaining any development outcome involves multiple stakeholders.²⁶ In the context of youth development, education providers, healthcare providers, employers, governments, and young people themselves and their families deliver critical support and opportunities that enable all youth to progress through adolescence and young adulthood to become healthy, engaged, and successful adults.²⁷ The daily practices and services of these organizations and individuals are influenced by underlying norms, values, and mindsets that may marginalize youth, many of which are shaped by culture and are deeply held. These critical supports and opportunities are also shaped by laws, regulations, policies and standards at national, subnational, and institutional levels. Moreover, these laws and policies that could benefit youth are insufficiently resourced by resource flows (financial, material, and knowledge-based). The process of social change toward more supportive youth systems often requires that these underlying dynamics be shifted.²⁸

To advance sustainable and equitable systems that meet the needs of all youth on an intersectional and intergenerational basis, USAID and its partners must shift their own knowledge and practice to increase their own effectiveness to serve youth. Moving from discrete, short-term projects that may not be sustainable over the medium and long-term, USAID and its partners will begin by mapping youth systems and listening deeply to the perspectives of stakeholders. USAID’s work will aim to support the convening, coordination, and collaboration of stakeholders, including youth, for continuous improvement towards youth development outcomes. The Agency will engage and partner with new and underutilized partners, such as youth-led and youth-serving organizations as well as local public-private collaboration mechanisms dedicated to improving youth outcomes. USAID’s work will seek to amplify the voices and priorities of

²⁵ “Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting Sustained Development,” U.S. Agency for International Development, July 12, 2021, <https://www.usaid.gov/policy/local-systems-framework>.

²⁶ “Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting Sustained Development,” U.S. Agency for International Development, July 12, 2021, <https://www.usaid.gov/policy/local-systems-framework>.

²⁷ Clare Ignatowski et al., “Building Youth Infrastructure: Early Lessons from the Youth Systems Collaborative,” *Journal of Youth Development* 16, no. 2-3 (2021): pp. 74-99, <https://doi.org/10.5195/jyd.2021.1030>.

²⁸ Clare Ignatowski et al., “Building Youth Infrastructure: Early Lessons from the Youth Systems Collaborative,” *Journal of Youth Development* 16, no. 2-3 (2021): pp. 74-99, <https://doi.org/10.5195/jyd.2021.1030>.

marginalized and vulnerable youth populations, including gender and sexual minorities, persons with disabilities, and racial and ethnic minority groups.

By increasing the capacity and self-reliance of the array of stakeholders who support youth's transition to adulthood, USAID maximizes the scale and sustainability of its investments. USAID's activities will thus contribute to more supportive youth systems by:

- Supporting participatory mapping of youth systems in close partnership with stakeholders to understand the deficits and assets within the system dynamics and identify points of leverage and collaboration;
- Convening and facilitating mechanisms that allow for dialogue, experimentation, collaboration, and exchange of data and knowledge-sharing between system actors at local levels (going beyond the piloting of new service delivery models);
- Systems approaches include attention on norms and culture, on policies and laws, and on resource flows.
- Identifying and supporting local mechanisms for stakeholder coordination (including local "backbone organizations"²⁹), ensuring that youth are engaged as leaders and agents of change;
- Prioritizing sustainability of efforts, and committing to transformational change (and assessment or measurement of that change) in youth outcomes over a longer time horizon;
- Measuring success not only by the numbers of youth reached by a single activity, but also on indicators of positive, transformative, and lasting change across the system writ large, recognizing the contributions of diverse local stakeholders.

SNAPSHOT: A SYSTEMS APPROACH IN RWANDA IMPROVES EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS BUILDING³⁰

In Rwanda, more than two-thirds of the population had less than a primary degree in 2008, and most employers preferred to recruit university graduates, but had difficulty finding qualified candidates with work readiness skills. A decade later, service providers on the ground have made a key difference in aligning themselves with the interests and resources of youth and the private sector. This success was a catalyst for shifting norms and practices among a number of other system actors, first by prompting the government to integrate a soft skills curriculum into secondary schools, and then into the entire national secondary education and the technical and vocational education and training systems. Over time, such changes have prompted other system actors to actively engage in improving youth skills and employment outcomes in Rwanda such as financial service providers adapting and expanding their products to meet youths' drive to establish their own businesses.

²⁹ John Kania & Mark Kramer et al., "Collective Impact (SSIR)," Stanford Social Innovation Review: Informing and Inspiring Leaders of Social Change, 2011, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact#.

³⁰ Scaling Youth Workforce Development Outcomes by Transforming Local Systems: A Rwanda Case Study," <https://www.edc.org/sites/default/files/uploads/Youth-Rwanda-Report.pdf>.

VII. SECTORAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

A GLOBAL SNAPSHOT

Youth represent the opportunity of both today and tomorrow. Their interests and skill sets are not bound by sectors —young people are already in many cases educators and innovators, entrepreneurs and investors, health professionals and scientists, politicians and peacemakers. This makes it doubly important to invest in them now —making it possible for future generations not only to survive but also thrive. USAID’s Youth in Development Policy reviewed sectoral strategic priorities from Operating Units across the Agency and cross-reviewed those priorities with the inputs received from implementing partners and youth to identify the following global priorities.

Importantly, USAID’s PYD approach promotes cross-sectoral programming as the most effective method for holistically designing interventions with youth.³¹ Across sectors, soft skills such as self-control, higher order thinking, positive self-concept, and communication skills lead to improved outcomes. USAID will continue to support youth development programming that maximizes outcomes across multiple sectors. Youth are not one dimensional, meaning the youth programs we design should foster cross-sectoral linkages to complementary interventions to realize an individual and program’s full potential.³² The illustrative interventions should incorporate as many of the seven key features of the PYD model as feasible.³³ These components include assets and skills development, healthy relationship development, youth contribution as changemakers, access to safe spaces, promotion of a sense of belonging and pro-social norms, and access to youth-responsive services.

Education and Youth Workforce Development

Did You Know:

- Recent estimates suggest that 600 million jobs would need to be created globally over the next 15 years to meet youth employment needs.³⁴
- 258 million children and youth were out of school in 2018³⁵ and 387 million children are unable to read, write or do basic math despite most of them attending school.³⁶
- 90 percent of children with disabilities in the developing world do not go to school.³⁷
- 58% of LGBTQI+ youth surveyed globally responded that their needs are “never” addressed in school or education policies.³⁸

³¹ “What Works in Cross-Sectoral Skills for Youth,” YouthPower, <https://www.youthpower.org/youthpower-issues/topics/peer-education>.

³² Michael McCabe, “How the RUBIK’S Cube Helps Explain the Evolving Approach to Effective Youth Development,” *Journal of Youth Development* 16, no. 2-3 (2021): pp. 13-19, <https://doi.org/10.5195/jyd.2021.1113>.

³³ “A Systematic Review of Positive Youth Development Programs in Low- and Middle-Income Countries,” YouthPower, April 27, 2017, <https://www.youthpower.org/resources/systematic-review-positive-youth-development-programs-low-and-middle-income-countries>.

³⁴ “Global Youth Development Index and Report,” USAID EducationLinks, August 1, 2021, <https://www.edu-links.org/resources/global-youth-development-index-and-report>.

³⁵ “Out-of-School Children and Youth,” UNESCO UIS, January 16, 2020, <http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/out-school-children-and-youth>.

³⁶ “More Than One-Half of Children and Adolescents Are Not Learning Worldwide,” September 2017, <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/fs46-more-than-half-children-not-learning-en-2017.pdf>.

³⁷ Christin McConnell, Yussouf Ntwali, and Judith Reen, “Children with Disabilities Face the Longest Road to Education,” Global Partnership for Education, December 3, 2016, <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/children-disabilities-face-longest-road-education#:~:text=UNICEF%20estimates%20that%2090%25%20of,of%20which%2010%25%20are%20children>.

³⁸ Gabrielle Richard, “Summary Report from Mag Juenes LGBT with support from UNESCO: Global Consultation: Inclusive Education and Access to Health of LGBTI+ Youth around the world.” 2018 <https://www.mag-jeunes.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Global-Summary-Report-LGBTI-Youth-ENG-2.pdf>

Quality education investments, including in formal and nonformal primary, secondary, and higher education, have the power to harness the potential of youth. Educated populations, particularly those with a secondary level education and beyond, are better able to adapt their behavior in response to adversity³⁹ — even though 100 million youth remain illiterate.⁴⁰ Development through education contributes to poverty reduction, improved health and nutrition, economic growth, peacebuilding, and increased labor market opportunities.⁴¹ USAID’s work in the higher education sector prepares the workforce, raises industry standards, builds research and evidence, and increases overall GDP to reduce extreme poverty. Higher education faculty and students contribute to strengthening all sectors of the economy.

Realizing the demographic dividend requires getting more young people into productive and safe employment and income-generating activities, making the current scale of youth underemployment and unemployment a matter of worldwide concern. An increasing number of youth are ‘Not Employed or in Education or Training’ (NEET) — with 20 percent of all youth in the developing world not in education, training, or employment. Unemployment rates among young people everywhere are higher than among adults — averaging nearly three times the rate of the adult workforce. Often young people’s education and training does not prepare them for the world of work or is not matched to growth sectors. Programs should address both the demand and the supply side of job creation, promote market driven self-employment and entrepreneurship, engage youth productively in market systems, and expand access to services for economic success such as financial literacy, information communications, technology, and credit. Furthermore, investment in youth employment in gap areas such as healthcare workforce can solve other development challenges facing youth.

Inclusive education expands access to quality education for all, particularly for marginalized and vulnerable groups. Youth with disabilities face barriers due to lack of accessibility and discriminatory policies and attitudes about their potential to access education and employment. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) youth in all regions face challenging educational environments with non-responsive or restrictive school policies compounded by bullying or harassment. Globally, a survey found more than a tenth of LGBTQI+ students - including one-third of transgender girls or women that responded - “are considering” or “have considered” leaving school.^{42 43}

Educational environments and opportunities impact young learners' future development, related to their context. For youth in conflict affected areas, education and training can be adapted to more flexible modalities such as cell phone and radio instruction. Out-of-school youth benefit from flexible hours of instruction and young mothers from wraparound services like childcare. When adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) have trained, supportive instructors with reformed curriculum, they can be exposed to nontraditional career opportunities, increasing their employability. The physical infrastructure of facilities can lead to improved learning outcomes for AGYW when equipped with safe latrines, sanitation, and menstrual health and hygiene support. Education increases the ability of women to make more informed choices about their lives, particularly regarding matters such as marriage and reproduction. From a livelihood

³⁹ “World Bank Annual Report 2018,” 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-1296-5>.

⁴⁰ *GLOBAL Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and Education: All Means All* (UNITED NATIONS EDUCATION, 2020).

⁴¹ Educate a Child (2016). Education and the SDGs: Occasional Paper #2. Retrieved from: <https://educationaboveall.org/uploads/library/file/2a8e15847d.pdf>

⁴² Gabrielle Richard, “Summary Report from Mag Juenes LGBT with support from UNESCO: Global Consultation: Inclusive Education and Access to Health of LGBTI+ Youth around the world.” 2018 <https://www.mag-juenes.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Global-Summary-Report-LGBTI-Youth-ENG-2.pdf>

⁴³ <https://www.usaid.gov/LGBTQI/research/documents/integrating-lgbtqi-considerations-education-programming>

perspective, education helps women use information and services to diversify beyond subsistence agriculture, increasing their financial independence and reducing vulnerability.⁴⁴⁴⁵

The U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education (2019-2023) promotes education from early childhood through workforce development and vocational training, and acknowledges the potential of a Positive Youth Development approach when combined with high-quality education. The Strategy commits nine U.S. Government Agencies to work with partner governments and the private sector to remove barriers to education for youth and provide programs for out-of-school youth to develop skills that will either help them re-enter formal schooling or prepare them for the workforce. The *USAID Education Policy (2018)* highlights youth as one of four priority areas, specifically: “Youth gain the skills they need to lead productive lives, gain employment, and positively contribute to society.”

What Youth Are Saying:

“Our education system does not prepare the youth for the work environment. The education system needs to be revamped. 21st century teaching methodology and skills should be taught in classrooms including: leadership, emotional intelligence, robotics, coding, data analysis, product development.” - Youth Listening Session Participant

⁴⁴ “Building Resilience to Recurrent Crisis,” December 2012, [usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/USAIDResiliencePolicyGuidanceDocument.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/USAIDResiliencePolicyGuidanceDocument.pdf).

⁴⁵ “World Youth Report” (United Nations, 2020), <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2020/07/2020-World-Youth-Report-FULL-FINAL.pdf>.

SNAPSHOT: Addressing unsafe conditions and lack of employment in El Salvador

To address unsafe conditions and lack of employment opportunities, USAID funded the Bridges to Employment (Bridges) Project in 2015. Bridges targeted El Salvadorian youth in high-crime municipalities, who were in need of technical training, education, psychosocial support, and/or related assistance to complete their education or find employment. The theory of change hypothesized that “when at-risk youth have access to a high-quality, holistic, and market-relevant package of services and support that utilize and maximize their strengths, they are more likely to improve their employability, income and/or employment situation.” Participants chose from four pathways that would help them improve their employability including: technical training; life skills (improving skills such as self-esteem, teamwork, and proactivity); sector specific training; and labor and vocational training.

Health

Young people’s diverse needs, experiences, environments, and attitudes affect their access to, and use of, health services. This is compounded by different identities, including gender norms. Additionally, young persons with disabilities, very young adolescents (VYAs, ages 10-14), youth living in humanitarian and fragile settings, LGBTQI+ youth, and other youth subpopulations require tailored programs for meaningful support. Adolescence is a time of tremendous physical, cognitive, and social change⁴⁶ and a time when many young people initiate sexual activity.⁴⁷ Adolescent mortality rates have remained virtually unchanged over the past 50 years.⁴⁸ The most recent review of available evidence suggests that more than 2.6 million young people ages 10 to 24 die every year, mostly due to preventable causes.⁴⁹ Over 30% of all new HIV infections globally are estimated to occur among youth ages 15 to 25 years,⁵⁰ where AGYW are twice as likely to acquire HIV than their male peers, highlighting continued significant gender disparities. An enhanced focus on adolescents and youth is vital to USAID’s ability to achieve its global health goals for an AIDS Free Generation as well as those set at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) High-level Meeting on Ending Tuberculosis (TB). The lack of comprehensive sexuality education that is inclusive of the experiences of gender and sexual minorities results in young people who are unable to make informed decisions about their sexual health and rights. High rates of unintended adolescent pregnancies and HIV infections occur in low and middle income countries (LMICs) driven by poverty, social/gender norms, early sexual debut and marriage, sexual violence, and lack of education and employment options. Essential to addressing and understanding these issues is taking a life course approach, as well as including age-appropriate body literacy and fertility awareness which can support reproductive empowerment across the life course. Youth face worsening health risks due to broad exposure to pandemics such as COVID-19 and Ebola which affect other health outcomes ranging from access to prevention and treatment healthcare services, food, shelter, jobs, education.

While adolescence is generally considered a healthy time of life, young people face adverse experiences that have negative health consequences. Responsive services must meet the physical, psychosocial, and emotional needs of young people as individuals, caretakers, parents, professionals, advocates, and policymakers to keep them safe, healthy, and engaged. This includes efforts to reduce

⁴⁶ Health for the World’s Adolescents A Second Chance in the Second Decade,” 2014,

https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/112750/WHO_FWC_MCA_14.05_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

⁴⁷ Mengjia Liang et al., “The State of Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health,” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 65, no. 6 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2019.09.015>.

⁴⁸ Daniel Dicker et al., “Global, regional, and national age-sex-specific mortality and life expectancy, 1950–2017: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017,” *Lancet*, (2018), [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)31891-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31891-9).

⁴⁹ “#YouthStats: Health – Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth,” (United Nations), <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/health/>.

⁵⁰ “HIV and Adolescents: HIV Testing and Counselling, Treatment and Care for Adolescents Living with HIV: Policy Brief,” November 2013, https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/94561/9789241506526_eng.pdf?sequence=1.

child marriage and unintended pregnancies, decrease rates of unmet contraceptive need, prevent HIV acquisition, ensure continuous access to antiretroviral drugs and wrap-around support for youth living with HIV (YLHIV), address mental health needs, support water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), including menstrual health and hygiene. It also includes prioritizing youth in the reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health (RMNCH) continuum of care, support systems to identify and treat non-communicable diseases, and connect youth to other cross-sectoral services. This includes prioritizing youth in health security and global health crises, including COVID-19. As 70% of preventable adult deaths are a result of behaviors started in adolescence, investing in young people's health and development *now* will help to sustain and strengthen global health gains made in USAID partner countries and multiply *future* health gains for individuals, families, and communities.

USAID's investments in youth's health continues to work toward achieving the global SDG health goals, as well as other global health goals including:

- Family Planning FP2030 goal is to ensure “voluntary modern contraceptive use by those who want it...” by targeting youth in intentional, responsive programming that engages young people for their contributions.
- PEPFAR's goal for an AIDS-free generation focuses on reaching young people with HIV prevention information and services to decrease their risk of HIV infection, especially to reduce their risk of horizontal and/or vertical transmission of HIV.⁵¹
- Global goal to prioritize improved coverage, quality, and equity of MCHN and WASH services for youth.
- Global goal to end TB by supporting the [Youth Declaration to End TB](#).
- Strengthen health systems through the [USAID's Vision for Health System Strengthening 2030](#)
- Support youth mental health by building resilient individuals and systems especially in fragile settings.

SNAPSHOT: Youth Responsive Health Services in Burma

The Burma Youth Power activity provides diverse services to vulnerable adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) aimed at preventing new HIV infections and unintended pregnancies. By September 2018, Youth Power had enrolled over 5,000 adolescent girls and provided comprehensive services intended to increase access to high-quality HIV and family planning services, improve their economic assets and enrollment in schools, and enhance awareness of HIV-related issues amongst their families and social circles. All of these interventions use the same model which combines peace building activities and economic components in various forms - including cash for work, cash prizes, and microfinance revolving loans - in order to reduce youth involvement in violence.

⁵¹ See www.ghi.gov

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

Did You Know: Globally, among those ages 15 to 29, suicide is the second leading cause of death (with 77 percent of global suicides occurring in LMICs).⁵²

Adolescence and youth represent a critical and formative period of human physical and psychological development during which individuals begin their transition from childhood to adulthood. Young people, particularly young women, youth from marginalized communities and survivors of trauma, are at higher risk of experiencing poor mental health and may not have access to strong psychosocial support networks. LGBTQI+ youth also face heightened mental health risks that can result from bullying and social discrimination, and they may feel uncomfortable seeking support or have a lack of direct access to responsive services. Adolescents with mental health conditions are vulnerable to social exclusion, discrimination, stigma (which affects readiness to seek help), educational difficulties, risk-taking behaviors, physical ill-health, and human rights violations. In 2021, a global survey of representatives from youth-led organizations across 62 countries identified mental health disorders (specifically depression, anxiety, and eating conditions) as the single most important health issues facing people ages 18-29.⁵³ Ensuring that adolescents are fully supported across all facets of life—including their mental health, physical health, and social well-being—and protected from adverse experiences and risk factors that may impact their potential to thrive is critical for fostering their transition to adulthood and laying the foundation for a long, healthy, and productive life.

What Youth Are Saying

“We see mental health as well as sexual and reproductive health as very important issues, especially the large gender disparities in healthcare. Having access to information is important to health outcomes and social media and technology advances can help us access that information, but with these advances also comes the importance of keeping us safe online from misinformation and harassment, which can affect mental health.” - YouthLead Ambassador

Climate Action

The impacts of climate change will disproportionately define future opportunities and challenges for young people for the foreseeable future. Climate change is one of the top three issues of concern for young people globally according to recent surveys. In a recent study of 10,000 young people (16-25) from 10 countries, findings suggested that, “respondents were worried about climate change (59% very or extremely worried, 85% at least moderately worried). Over 50% felt sad, anxious, angry, powerless, helpless, and guilty.”⁵⁴ Young people are key actors in raising awareness, running educational programs, promoting sustainable lifestyles, conserving nature, supporting renewable energy, adopting environmentally friendly practices and implementing adaptation and mitigation projects.⁵⁵

⁵² “Suicide” (World Health Organization), <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide>.

⁵³ Regina Guthold et al., “Priority Areas for Adolescent Health Measurement.” *Journal of Adolescent Health*, (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.12.127>.

⁵⁴ “Young People’s Voices on Climate Anxiety, Government Betrayal and Moral Injury: A Global Phenomenon.” SSRN Electronic Journal, September 2021. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3918955>.

⁵⁵ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, “Youth in action on climate change: inspirations from around the world,” May 2013, page 9. https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/publication_youth_2013.pdf.

Youth under age 30 constitute the majority of the population in many countries and have an increasingly strong social and environmental awareness, which has the power to transform our societies towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient future.⁵⁶

Young people will face the most severe consequences of environmental degradation and will be forced to deal with these ongoing consequences throughout their lives.⁵⁷ The increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events and other adverse effects of climate change are negatively impacting living standards, including food security, water availability, health and safety conditions, housing security, agricultural productivity, and natural ecosystems.⁵⁸ These negative impacts will most severely affect the developing world. Young women and girls will be disproportionately impacted as they are the most vulnerable to natural disasters and face significantly higher mortality rates due to their lower access to and control of resources such as shelter and food. Climate change and its many impacts will leave marginalized and vulnerable populations, such as youth, and future generations, to suffer its worst consequences.

Partnering with Youth for Climate Action

Through its climate change work, USAID is committed to engaging and preparing young people as a constituency for policy change, as innovators, and as the emerging green industries workforce. USAID's draft 2021 Climate Strategy includes a commitment to partner with youth-led and youth-serving organizations to strengthen their capacity and participation, as well as direct more financial and technical resources to their efforts to address climate action, including through green jobs. USAID will apply principles outlined under the Agency's Youth Policy of effective engagement of youth in decision-making.

SNAPSHOT: Reducing Oceans Plastics Initiative (Asia)

Through grants to local organizations in Indonesia, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam, the **Municipal Waste Recycling Program** engaged 200,000 youth in reducing ocean plastic pollution. Youth engagement has a multiplier effect: Introducing educational modules on ocean plastic pollution in the schools is producing a new generation of environmental champions, young people who care deeply about what happens in their schools, homes, and communities. They take this new knowledge home and teach their parents and family members.

Did You Know: Climate change is one of the top three issues of concern for young people globally according to recent surveys. Only nine percent of youth are very confident that the world will act quickly enough to address climate change.⁵⁹ Encouragingly, around 89 percent of youth respondents say young people can make a difference on climate change.

⁵⁶ "Youth and Climate Change," November 12, 2013, <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-climatechange.pdf>.

⁵⁷ *World Youth Report, 2010: Youth & Climate Change* (New York: United Nations, 2010).

⁵⁸ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "AR5 Synthesis Report - Climate Change 2014," 2014, pages 15 to 16. https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full.pdf.

⁵⁹ "#Youthstats: Environment and Climate Change" (United Nations Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth), <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/environment-climate-change/>.

Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance

It is vital that governments and civil society take steps to ensure that young people are engaged and encouraged to be part of both the response to crises and broader democratic participation. This is particularly critical now, as youth around the world are being challenged by the unprecedented strain that the COVID-19 crisis is placing on their economic livelihoods, health, well-being, and access to education—not to mention the specter of new threats to their civic and political freedoms.

Increasingly, young people are identifying informal pathways to participate in civic and political life and champion issues, for example engaging in social movements and digital campaigns as a way to challenge the power imbalance, championing for rights and greater equality. In the last decade, there has been a notable rise in social movements and protests (27% in 2009 to 44% in 2019).⁶⁰ However, movements and informal actions led by youth still require support to help move an issue from protest to policy - to build more inclusive, equitable, responsive, and resilient democracies. It is critical to promote network and coalition-based approaches and initiatives to connect youth working on the frontlines of democracy, governance, and human rights issues, to help maintain civic space and advocate for reform. Evidence shows that “coalition building and the forging of alliances among groups in civil society, both within and across borders, can be an important strategy for maintaining civic space in the face of democratic backsliding.”⁶¹

Youth, Civic Education, Leadership and Participation in Civil Society

Ukraine National Identity through Youth (UNITY) is a five-year, USAID-funded program that supports youth leadership towards a values-based Ukrainian identity. By joining the UNITY network, young Ukrainians access improved economic and skills-building opportunities, take leadership roles in civil society structures, and contribute to community-based problem solving. By 2025, UNITY aims to engage over one million diverse Ukrainian youth to lead normative, behavioral, and institutional change in support of common values of human rights, democratic principles, and equity.

The Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity: A U.S. Government Strategy for International Assistance (2019-2023) ensures U.S. Government investments for the most-vulnerable children and adolescents to promote early childhood development; support the most vulnerable children and adolescents who are, or are at risk of, living outside of family care; and support the protection of children from violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect.

⁶⁰ “Autocratization Surges—Resistance Grows Democracy Report 2020,” 2020, https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/de/39/de39af54-0bc5-4421-89ae-fb20dcc53dba/democracy_report.pdf.

⁶¹ “Maintaining Civic Space in Backsliding Regimes,” September 17, 2017, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/Maintaining_Civic_Space_in_Backsliding_Regimes_-_Research_and_Innovation_Grants_Working_Papers_Series.pdf.

What Youth Are Saying

“We want to see more transparency and accountability in our governments and leaders and more focus on youth policies. Including all youth equally in policymaking and the government sector will empower societies. When we say that we need more young people in policy making positions, we need to be expansive in our wording; we should be careful not to imply that youthfulness should be the only qualifying factor. We need competent, accountable, and transparent young leaders in these offices.” - Youth Listening Session Participant

Did You Know:

- 69% of countries impose a waiting time between voting age and age of eligibility for parliamentary office.⁶²
- Young people ages 18-29 are more likely than those ages 50 and older to engage politically on issues related to free speech, discrimination, poverty, government corruption, poor social services, and other issues.⁶³

Peace and Security

The peace and security sector is an essential place for USAID to cultivate youth leadership and participation. The demographics speak for themselves: youth represent the majority of the population in many conflict-affected countries, where on average 50 percent of the population is below the age of 20. In many fragile countries, more than 70 percent of the population is below the age of 30. Without including youth and integrating youth issues into all our work, conflict and violence prevention efforts will fail. Peacebuilding work will languish.

In addition to a PYD approach lens, there is a separate, additional framework for the peace and security sector—known as the Youth, Peace, and Security framework (YPS).⁶⁴ YPS is a United Nations global framework designed to advance the positive role that youth can play in the peace and security sector. USAID is aligning its youth-focused peace and security sector work with this global YPS framework,⁶⁵ which includes five key areas as follows:

- **Participation:** USAID’s YPS approach elevates youth’s leadership and participation so that all views must be taken into account in conflict and non-conflict violence prevention and peacebuilding decision-making processes. This includes ensuring youth-led organizations are represented in efforts promoting peace and have access to adequate resources to enhance their inclusion throughout all stages of project development.

⁶² “#Youthstats: Public and Civic Participation” (United Nations), <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/political-participation/>.

⁶³ Richard Wike and Alexandra Castillo, “Political Engagement around the World,” Pew Research Center’s Global Attitudes Project (Pew Research Center, May 30, 2020), <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2018/10/17/international-political-engagement/>.

⁶⁴ See UNSCR 2250 (2015) (Urges Member States to consider ways to increase inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels for the prevention and resolution of conflict); UNSCR 2419 (2018) (Emphasizes that when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to consider the meaningful participation and views of youth); and UNSCR 2535 (2020) (Emphasizes protection of youth’s human rights and inclusion of youth leaders and organizations in conflict and violence prevention).

⁶⁵ UN Secretary General’s Advisory Group of Experts. *YPS Progress Study*. March 2, 2020. <https://www.youth4peace.info/SGreport>.

- **Protection:** USAID recognizes that the protection of young civilians' lives and human rights in highly violent or conflict-affected contexts is critical. Likewise, a protection focus also means that overlapping systems of oppression that affect young people and others, such as racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, and xenophobia, must be addressed.
- **Prevention:** USAID's conflict prevention work incorporates young leader's efforts to identify, understand, and prevent the underlying causes of conflict and non-conflict violence. Youth violence prevention work may be conducted through multiple pathways, including, but not limited to, citizen security, countering violent extremism, atrocities prevention, and mental health and psychosocial support.
- **Partnership:** USAID works with other USG agencies and the private sector to reach out and engage youth organizations and individuals via innovative partnerships both during and after conflicts when developing stabilization and peacebuilding strategies.
- **Disengagement, Disarmament, and Reintegration (DDR):** USAID has youth-focused programs to work with those who have been recruited into armed conflicts and wars by state or non-state actors. Tailoring approaches to work with children and youth, who have already taken up arms and violence, to facilitate their reintegration back into families and communities is key for advancing peaceful solutions in post-conflict societies.

USAID is also guided by legislation to improve development outcomes, including for young people, in countries affected by fragility, conflict, and violence. These include the Global Fragility Act (GFA)⁶⁶ and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Act.⁶⁷

- **Global Fragility Act (GFA):** The GFA requires a USG comprehensive, ten-year global strategy to address the stabilization of conflict-affected areas and to strengthen the USG's capacity to be an effective leader of international efforts to prevent extremism and violent conflict. It requires that GFA priority countries/regions also develop ten-year plans that align and integrate all diplomatic, development, and security activities toward GFA outcomes. The GFA requires youth participation and empowerment throughout its implementation.
- **Women, Peace, and Security Act (WPS):** The WPS requires the USG to ensure a strong focus on the empowerment of women and girls to help countries overcome crisis, conflict, and fragility. To mitigate conflict and promote peace, approaches include engaging young women's participation in all peace and political processes and building capacity to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.

USAID also applies several programming lenses that can be particularly helpful in addressing the challenges faced by young people in these contexts:

- **Conflict Integration:** Conflict integration is the intentional effort to embed conflict sensitivity, context monitoring, complexity awareness, and adaptive management to further peacebuilding results across all USAID technical sectors. By applying a conflict lens to all sectors, conflict integration can help improve overall development outcomes, and reduce flashpoints for violence.
- **Citizen Security:** Citizen security is the protection of core basic rights, including the right to life, respect for the physical integrity and material of the person, and the right to a dignified life. Focused on the welfare of all people, the provision of public safety is an essential requirement for youth development as well.

⁶⁶ 22 USC §§ 9801-9810 (2019).

⁶⁷ 22 USC §§ 2151-2152j (2017).

- **Countering Violent Extremism:** CVE refers to proactive actions to preempt or disrupt efforts by violent extremists to radicalize, recruit, and mobilize followers to violence. CVE encompasses policies and activities to increase peaceful options for political, economic, and social engagement available to communities and local governments.⁶⁸

What Youth Are Saying:

“We believe USAID should prioritize keeping youth safe and focus on global security. USAID should build infrastructure that is resilient to crises. We believe we are stronger together and would like to see more task forces and youth advisories so we can stay connected with donors and each other during crises.” - Youth Listening Session Participant

SNAPSHOT:

Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization (CPS) People-to-People Reconciliation Program (P2P): Focusing on the specific needs of youth in people-to-people reconciliation is key to building communities that are inclusive, resilient to external threats, respect human rights, and support peacebuilding norms. As part of a P2P program in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, USAID developed youth cadres throughout the country that participated in transformative seven-day Peace Camps, which provided a community space for facilitated deep discussion of identity and helped to mitigate the lasting effects of historical violence. In **Ethiopia**, the P2P program brings together students of conflicting groups to interact and engage constructively in a safe space, where they can break down barriers to trust and understanding and collaborate to eliminate factors contributing to tribal violence and internecine wars.

In **Honduras**, the innovative program, [Proponte Más](#) works with youth in a family-centered approach and recognizes that complex risk factors affect youth and their families and need to be part of the public policy debate (and backed by reliable data). Their activity was built on the earlier Alianza Joven Honduras Activity which created “outreach centers” to provide youth-responsive spaces in 64 high-risk communities in Honduras. The centers enhanced the social and vocational skills of youth to improve their employability, while partnering with community members to foster civic cohesion.”

Did You Know:

- About 408 million, or about one in four young people (aged 15–29 years) in the world, lived in settings affected by armed conflict or organized violence.⁶⁹
- Worldwide, homicide is the fourth leading cause of death in people aged 10–29 years, and 84 percent of these homicides involve male victims; the same age group accounts for 42 percent of homicides globally each year.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ See USAID, *Policy for Countering Violent Extremism Through Development Assistance*. April 2020. www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USAID-publication-policy-for-countering-violent-extremism.

⁶⁹ “Youth, Peace and Security A Programming Handbook,” 2021, https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/YPS_Programming_Handbook.pdf.

⁷⁰ “Youth Violence” (World Health Organization), <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/youth-violence>.

Gender

Gender is a critical dimension to consider when addressing every sector in which USAID works. Young men and women along with young people that are gender and sexual minorities have very different roles in participation in public life, access to key services in education and health, and ability to earn livelihoods. Gender norms and dynamics, as well as social roles and expectations intersect with the roles and expectations associated with young people. Given the multitude of contexts and cultures within which gender norms reside, we need to equip adolescents and young people to identify those that are harmful, and work to explore, challenge, and ultimately, to transform harmful gender norms across generations.

Young men and women, along with young people that are gender and sexual minorities, experience different sets of opportunities and vulnerabilities related to their engagement. Ensuring adolescent girls and young women are meaningfully included in youth engagement means targeting their specific challenges: child marriage, gender-based violence, threats to their health (i.e., early sexual debut, HIV, and maternal mortality), and the many obstacles they face to staying in school. Boys and young men also face significant challenges due to harmful gender norms that often lead to increased risk-taking related to sexual behaviors, alcohol/drug use, and traffic injury/death. To shift gender norms, boys and young men need to be engaged in transformational efforts to increase empathy and support for women's rights and well-being and promote norms that lead to greater equality for all genders.

Did you know: Around the world, 132 million girls are out of school, including 34.3 million of primary school age, 30 million of lower-secondary school age, and 67.4 million of upper-secondary school age.

What Youth Are Saying

“We need safe spaces and a better way to reach out to marginalized youth through community mapping, youth networks, partnerships with local organizations, and supporting already existing movements/initiatives to promote inclusive development. If we use inclusive language, avoid token participation, and ensure the inclusion of marginalized groups in organizations and state-wide policies, we can reduce discrimination.” - Youth Listening Session Participant

YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS LEADING THE WAY

USAID’s “whole-of-girl” approach encompasses the interconnected events that resonate across a girl’s life from birth to adulthood. The Agency’s programs address the differentiated needs of girls in specific stages of adolescence, recognizing that the challenges young adolescents encounter are distinct from those experienced by older adolescents approaching adulthood.

Adolescent girls and young women face particular challenges to getting a quality education, among them: poverty, geographical isolation, gender-based violence, and traditional attitudes about the roles of girls and women. A focus on education, particularly that of girls, can break the cycle of disadvantage between generations, as children tend to acquire more education than their parents. However, gender equality in education cannot be achieved by the education sector alone. Residual negative gender norms in society bring gender bias in education, influencing teachers’ attitudes, subject and career choices, and affect women’s opportunities later in life.

In Mali, USAID’s Girls Leadership and Empowerment through Education (GLEE) activity addressed persistent gender gaps in education enrollment. As a result, over 5,000 out-of-school adolescent girls were enrolled and successfully transitioned to formal public schools. Facilitators, grandmothers and aunts, and teachers mentored girls about reproductive health, gender equality, and leadership. More than 8,000 mentoring sessions were attended by about 170,000 participants. Also under GLEE, 92 school management committee members were trained on gender, SRGBV, and school safety. The program’s training and mentorship model took a holistic approach to prepare young women and girls to succeed in their educational goals, and established the enabling environment for them to succeed moving forward.

Inclusion

USAID’s Youth in Development Policy recognizes that youth are not homogenous. Like all people, youth have multiple, intersecting identity traits and that the interaction of these different traits can affect the discrimination and exclusion that they experience, often based on race, ethnicity, religion, class, caste, disability, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and/or sex characteristics. These identities, when intersected with age and stage of development, create complexities for youth programming to meet young people where they are, ensure “do no harm” principles, and prevent a siloed approach. This is especially consequential among marginalized and underrepresented youth populations. USAID affirms the importance of holistic youth programming that supports the inclusion of youth of all identities in both the physical and digital world.

Inclusive Development

Persons with Disabilities: USAID is committed to the access, inclusion, and empowerment of youth with disabilities on an equal basis with their non-disabled peers, and welcomes their engagement in youth-related activities whether those activities are disability-focused or not. USAID respects the primacy of voice of youth with disabilities (i.e.: “nothing about us without us”) in discussions of issues impacting their lives. Youth with disabilities are represented across multiple social groups, and thus reflect a rich diversity of intersecting identities. We recognise that youth with disabilities have an important leadership role to play in creating accessible and inclusive societies: that are free from disability-based discrimination and ableism; in which their human rights, agency, and self-autonomy are respected, protected and promoted; and in which persons with disabilities can participate fully in all areas of community life. Young people with disabilities have valuable contributions to make across the full spectrum of development topics, including climate change, education, employment, participation in political and public life, access to health care, and much more.

LGBTQI+: LGBTQI+ youth globally can flourish in societies and communities that respect their rights, dignity, and self-autonomy. When included in decision making LGBTQI+ youth are proven leaders in confronting harmful gender norms that feed discriminatory practices, gender-based violence, toxic masculinity, and anti-LGBTQI+ violence. Education settings that are safe and contain policies that are responsive to the unique needs and challenges facing LGBTQI+ youth are necessary so that they can thrive alongside their peers. Professional skill building and leadership initiatives that are inclusive of LGBTQI+ youth, like USAID’s Global LEAD, act as accelerators for access to decent work, social inclusion, economic empowerment, and ensuring the protection of human rights.

Indigenous Peoples: Youth leaders from Indigenous Peoples’ communities are uniquely positioned to appreciate the competition and potential conflict between traditional values (i.e. governance structure, knowledge, culture, and practices) and the broader development standards pursued by dominant societies. As future leaders of the communities, it is incumbent on these youth leaders to understand both paradigms and find a path forward that will best maintain and strengthen the traditional values of the communities, and at the same time, help the communities to adapt and respond to the global context. It is thus critical that youth leaders from Indigenous Peoples’ communities be afforded the opportunities to better connect with their heritage, to learn about global development, and to access resources for piloting innovative win-win development interventions for the communities.

Children in Adversity: Youth leadership is critical to promoting positive parenting practices both for their children and for themselves as young parents - this will lead to improvements in violence prevention, health outcomes, child development, and prevention of child - family separation. Incorporating young leaders’ voices, particularly care leavers and other youth with lived experience and expertise, strengthens reform efforts for care and protection systems. Youth participation in the social service workforce is important to improving the professionalism and relevancy of social services, especially in policy reform. Building digital safe spaces and reducing digital harm (including bullying, sexual exploitation, and disinformation) creates a better virtual world for young people of all ages. Youth and young people are often targets and perpetrators of physical, sexual and emotional violence -- active engagement and participation of youth in violence prevention and recovery activities is critical to pave the way for a violence-free future.

Mental Health: Youth leaders in Mental Health are critical to reduce stigma, for youth MH and the general population. Providing educational material on mental health for youth leaders can lead to improved programming outcomes, especially related to suicide prevention.

Resilience and Food Security

Youth engagement, particularly that of girls and young women, is critical in resilience and food security. Threats associated with natural disasters, climate change, and conflict that impact households and communities. Young men and women face different life cycle challenges with the access, availability, and utilization of food. While youth face many challenges, they can benefit from programming to build resilient food systems and are key stakeholders to creating sustained change. It is two to four times more effective in raising incomes among the poorest compared to other sectors⁷¹.

Successful youth interventions in food security and resilience activities share a common set of characteristics. There should be an understanding of youth needs and opportunities based on gender, stage of life cycle, and ability to engage. Standalone youth-only or youth inclusive approaches should address identified gender and age-specific gaps and issues. Youth-specific tools such as the Feed the Future Project Design Guide for Youth-inclusive Agriculture and Food Systems can help further integrate a PYD approach in activities. Conducting youth assessments can help identify challenges such as accessing land, credit, and other agricultural-related inputs, finding off and non-farm employment options, engaging in local decision-making processes, and identifying youth-friendly services. The utilization of these practices and tools can help bring outcomes such as 1) delivering agricultural innovations and technologies into the hands of youth; 2) developing resilient and sustainable production, processing and distribution strategies that center around a young workforce; 3) improving access to finance and local, regional, and international markets, particularly for young women; and 4) improving nutrition-sensitive outcomes for adolescents all while strengthening their resilience capacities.

What Youth Are Saying

“Food security has a great link with livelihoods and economic empowerment - topics such as the need for greater financial access for youth to initiate agricultural projects/ policy environments that make it easier for youth to invest in food security sectors, or gain vocational skills that are market driven and in high demand. In developing countries, there’s a great opportunity for youth to be included in the food security industry through innovative and sustainable models.” - Youth Listening Session Participant

⁷¹<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/700061468334490682/Ending-poverty-and-hunger-by-2030-an-agenda-for-the-global-food-system>

The Next Generation of Leaders in Agriculture

Africa Lead's A-LEAP internship programs cultivate the next generation of leaders in the agriculture sector. In Ghana, Africa Lead developed the A-LEAP internship program connecting youth with over 100 agribusinesses in FY17 for internships that offered unique leadership development opportunities for students and recent graduates that include training, on-the-job experiences, and specialized skills transfer.

Africa Lead I and II institutionalized the “Champions for Change” (C4C) course into the university curriculum in Ghana, Senegal, and Nigeria to provide leadership building for youth to catalyze agricultural transformation. In total, six universities have adopted the C4C modules into their core agricultural curriculum and 600 students have completed the course.

Digital Technology and Innovation

The demographic dividend of youth combined with the rise of digital technologies provides a unique opportunity for governments and development practitioners to support, protect, prepare, and engage young people around the world. Digitalization and new IT products and services continue to rapidly change and as such present great opportunities for new training, jobs, careers, industries, and networks. Because today's youth have more access to information, networks, and communication platforms than ever before, they are often the earliest adopters and most frequent users of new technology. When used properly, greater access to technology for youth promotes civic engagement, expands learning and workforce development opportunities, and sparks innovative solutions to societal and developmental challenges for and by youth. When young people have equitable access and are supported to use information and communication technologies in healthy ways, technical skills develop, capacities increase, and youth can transform from participants to partners in development. As such, the digitalization trends need to be better reflected in development programming. USAID focuses on four key areas around digital technology and innovation including: digital literacy; data and youth representation; protecting young people from digital harm; and digital health and technology. Guided by USAID's [Digital Strategy](#), work surrounding digital technology and innovation will be grounded in best practices, address digital inequalities, and mitigate potential risks or harms for youth entering the online space.

What Youth Are Saying

“We are the leading producers and consumers of online media and know that using technology is a useful way to highlight our voices. We can use technology to create networks with each other but we also know that access to technology is not equal, and that movements cannot depend on technology and have to find other ways to communicate and connect.” - Youth Listening Session Participant

International Youth Digital Leadership Council (IYDLC)

The International Youth Digital Leadership Council (IYDLC), through USAID's YouthLead Platform, has brought together a representative group of innovative young digital changemakers from across USAID's YouthLead impact areas to inform and propose adjustments to strengthen USAID's response to protecting children from digital harm. The Council's primary objective is to reduce digital harm for children and youth and to better understand how children and youth want to interact with digital assets. With guidance from USAID, the Council will be equipped to use personal experiences and represent youth from their country/region to help inform and advocate for greater protection from digital harm.

YouthMappers

The YouthMappers program is a network of university-based chapters with students who map their own communities and countries while developing technical and leadership skills needed to work in the digital economy. The program has chapters in 270+ universities in 60+ countries and its members have made over 12 million map edits to an open, web-based digital mapping platform known as OpenStreetMap. The program generates valuable geospatial data for humanitarian and development projects while empowering local university students to have an active role and voice in decisions concerning the development of their communities.

Humanitarian Assistance

Youth needs are often overlooked during times of crisis — meaning that at the minimum their social and emotional development may be put on hold. Disasters and complex crises amplify existing inequalities and risks for marginalized youth populations. In settings of crisis, young women and adolescent girls face sexual and reproductive health challenges as well as an increased risk of exposure to multiple forms of violence and exploitation, including gender-based violence (GBV), early and forced child marriage, and female genital mutilation. This has both short and long term health, psychosocial, and developmental effects. In situations of conflict, youth face increased vulnerability to forced recruitment and other forms of violence by armed groups. In areas of conflict and crises, school attendance decreases, risk for family separation increases, and child labor rises. Young persons with disabilities are more likely to be separated from their families during a natural disaster or conflict, isolated in their homes, at risk of GBV, and face limited access to information and services. Further, the increased frequency of climate-related hazards have jeopardized youth livelihoods and safety, including reduced income and closure of educational opportunities. Despite these challenges, diverse groups of young people are stepping up to contribute to response and recovery, including through raising awareness, countering misinformation, and mobilizing assistance. By recognizing and supporting the contributions of young people, we can amplify their role as changemakers and increase the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance. Efforts to engage youth in humanitarian assistance should also include: tailoring feedback and complaints mechanisms; recognizing the unique vulnerabilities of youth in these settings, especially young girls and LGBTIQ+ youth to exploitation, violence, and abuse; strategically targeting adolescents in program designs with gender- and age-specific interventions.

SNAPSHOTS:

In Mali, BHA-supported programming aims to help displaced, host, and returnee IDP households restore livelihoods impacted by conflict or displacement. Youth, who previously may not have been economically active, are prioritized for grants for entrepreneurship and apprenticeship training. Participants are also paired with mentors and youth applications receive priority to increase the chance of continuation after the program period, as they are less likely to have previously-established livelihoods.

In Iraq, BHA supports IRC to establish youth groups for Iraqi young men and women IDPs, with a focus on building resilience and fostering dialogue. Youth groups participate in life skills and psychosocial support sessions to build positive relationships, communication skills, and conflict resolution skills, overall increasing participants' problem solving and coping skills. Additionally, this program increases youth engagement in their community, as youth are responsible for identifying and implementing community improvement processes and child protection awareness campaigns.

In Kenya, with BHA support, WFP provides mid-day meals to young people from Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps and host communities in Vocational Training Centers, where youth participate in vocational training courses such as carpentry, dress-making, and computer skills in both Kakuma and Dadaab. WFP also conducted a pilot activity on engaging youth in agriculture.

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Regional Prioritization

AFRICA (AFR): USAID youth programming in the Africa Region is focused on the continent’s changing demographics. Seventy-one percent of Africa’s population is under age 30—the youngest population in the world. It is imperative that youth programming in Africa enable youth to see they have a future to work toward. Afrobarometer tells us that African youth are more educated and that jobs are their top priority. But they also want to feel they are a part of something, to not be marginalized, and for their voices to be heard, as demonstrated by Sudan’s overthrow of al-Bashir and in Nigeria’s fight against police abuses. Otherwise, they will find alternatives to productive participation in their communities and societies, potentially resorting to violence. Given the potential demographic dividend, youth need to be engaged, trusted, validated by authorities, and provided more opportunities.

ASIA: USAID youth programming in the Asia Region tends to take an integrated approach. Many interventions and activities at our Missions that cover health, economic growth, and education have youth elements such as programming around maternal and child health, workforce development, etc. USAID defines youth as those between the ages of 10 and 29, but youth programming in missions conforms with local definitions of youth. Considering this broad age band, youth are integrated into much of our programming in the Asia region. Additionally, there is youth-focused programming that Missions with large youth populations may undertake. For example, Timor-Leste, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines, amongst other Missions, currently have, or are in the process of designing youth-focused activities.

Europe & Eurasia (E&E): Youth in the E&E region face challenges including: youth unemployment; low levels of labor participation; high rates of young people who are not employed, in education, or training; significant brain drain; and declining and aging populations, matched with increasingly low levels of civic engagement, volunteerism, and media literacy; and distrust in local and national politicians. One of the big factors for youth's dissatisfaction and the overall inertia is the corruption, nepotism/cronyism, and heavy political interference (in employment, career advancement, the overall life). The economic and social effects of youth unemployment include a negative effect on the future employability and life-time earnings and undermine young people’s broader role and contribution to society. In order to begin retaining and empowering youth, they need social protection, quality education, employment, and the skills and opportunities for engagement.

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC): The youth population in the LAC region is the largest in its history, creating potential for a demographic dividend, which refers to the potential benefits when youth have a larger population share, leading to a favorable working age/non working age ratio. The roadblocks for taking full advantage of this moment include: high rates of violence, unemployment, health, democratic backsliding, and State repression. Youth in Latin America have a higher level of education and socioeconomic status than in the past decade, enjoy high rates of literacy, and enrollment in higher education continues to increase, however, extreme income inequality is dramatic, and the transition from school to the labor market is a challenge. These factors and a lack of rootedness to their communities contribute to youth being the largest single population group irregularly migrating.

Middle East and North Africa (MENA): The population in the MENA region is expected to more than double in size during the first half of the 21st century, which presents a historic opportunity to promote rapid economic growth and development. To harness this opportunity youth need social protection, quality education, employment, and the skills and opportunities for engagement. Challenges to achieving this include: the social exclusion of girls, refugees, the displaced, and persons with disabilities; long-term negative impacts

from crises and conflict; and grievances around government corruption, lack of opportunities, and unemployment. Citing these challenges, nearly half of MENA youth have considered leaving their country. Despite the challenges, young people demonstrate remarkable leadership and resilience playing critical roles ranging from peacemakers to supporting COVID-19 response efforts. The future of the region may ultimately hinge on the ability to engage and provide opportunities for young people.

VIII. AGENCY BEST PRACTICES FOR MAINSTREAMING AND ENGAGING YOUTH

This Policy applies to all USAID's OUs (Missions, Bureaus, Independent Offices) and covers policy and programming in Washington and the field. Below is a compilation of recommended promising practices utilized by Missions for effective youth integration.

1. LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE:
 - a. Youth Points of Contact
 - b. Full-time Youth Advisors or Specialists
 - c. Youth Working Group
 - d. Youth or Inclusive Development Mission Orders
2. PROGRAM CYCLE INTEGRATION:
 - a. Youth and PYD integrated into CDCSs, Project Designs
 - b. Youth assessments completed prior to CDCS
 - c. Review process for applying the guidance on Youth
 - d. Youth engagement/PYD principles in annual plans
3. LEARNING AND M&E
 - a. Age-disaggregated and Youth F indicators
 - b. Mission reporting on Youth key issue
 - c. Tracking reported expenditure related to youth
 - d. Mapping Youth interventions to outcomes
4. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS
 - a. Youth advisory councils or consultation mechanism
 - b. Engagement of youth leadership networks and programs

FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS

MISSION AND OFFICE ORDERS (MO/OOs): Mission, Bureau, and Office (M/B/IO) processes are codified through Mission Orders (MOs) or Office Orders (OOs) which are periodically updated. MO/OOs should reflect how USAID will integrate youth development across the Program Cycle. M/B/IOs may find it more useful to have a Youth Mission Order, or to ensure that youth considerations are integrated into the relevant Mission Orders, such as Activity Design, Budget, Strategy Development, Gender, Inclusive Development, Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA), Performance Monitoring, and Evaluation.

LEADERSHIP AND STAFFING SUPPORT

Missions, Regional Missions, and Country Offices

Youth Advisors, Youth Point of Contact, or Youth Champion: All Missions and Bureaus are strongly encouraged to designate a dedicated Youth Advisor, Youth Point of Contact, or Youth Champion (terms which are used interchangeably), who has the technical skills, competencies, and youth development experience necessary to provide appropriate, in-depth guidance to technical and program staff to ensure the integration of youth in meaningful ways across USAID's Program Cycle. Youth Advisors should have responsibilities explicitly included in their job descriptions.

Youth Working Groups: Missions and Bureaus are also encouraged to establish youth working groups composed of technical sector experts to:

- Ensure cross-sector synergy in both youth-focused and youth-relevant activities;
- Improve collaboration among USG agencies and other development agencies;
- Determine youth targets and monitor progress towards them; and
- Liaise with host country government counterparts and relevant stakeholders, including youth.

Youth Advisory Committees: Missions may also consider mechanisms to regularly solicit feedback from youth, such as through the creation of youth advisory committees. Youth Advisory Committees can provide insights on assessments, inputs to co-creation and other program/activity design, and support on Mission-led learning efforts related to youth. Other forms of youth engagement at Missions can include: trainings for mission staff on how to dialogue with youth; regular consultations with youth leaders, engaging youth as members of assessments teams, country planning and activity designs processes and as researchers and enumerators for research and evaluation.

Training: All USAID staff should have foundational understanding of effective youth development programming principles and resources. The Positive Youth Development 101 and 201 courses are highly recommended for all Agency staff across all hiring mechanisms. It is recommended that staff complete this training within one year. USAID should continue to develop and offer advanced training that meets the needs of Youth Advisors and PoCs. M/B/IOs may establish advanced youth training for other relevant positions or technical backstops. OUs should also incorporate specific content on promoting youth engagement and empowerment into broader technical or sectoral training they manage. USAID has also had positive experiences with PYD training that is open to implementing partners as well as USAID staff, when appropriate.

Agency Senior Advisor on Youth: AID/A will designate an Agency Senior Advisor responsible for youth development issues to advocate for and integrate youth into Agency initiatives, oversee policy coherence, support implementation and training, and to serve as a senior representative on youth issues in the interagency and external community, in coordination with bureaus, missions, and other relevant Agency coordinators.

PROGRAM CYCLE INTEGRATION

As highlighted in Objective Two, effective youth participation in the USAID Program Cycle ensures that:

- Youth have specific roles in assessment, program design, implementation, and evaluation.
- Youth-serving and youth-led organizations are supported and engaged.
- Youth have dynamic platforms for voice, networking, and innovation.
- Strategies are informed by youth input and by research on what works and the life conditions of young people.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

USAID's youth programming is intentionally integrated across sectors, M/B/IOs, and coordinates with multiple U.S. Government Agencies and Departments. USAID ensures alignment of the various actors and efforts through the following:

External Collaboration: USAID will partner with a wide range of key actors to ensure that youth programming is coordinated and non-duplicative, and reflects country priorities. This includes host governments; international and host country civil society; youth-serving and youth-led organizations; high schools and higher education institutions, the donor community; foundations; and the private sector, including youth-led businesses. Missions can champion ministries of youth and sports, national youth advisors, and youth-led organizations as voices for youth and where possible strengthen youth inclusion and vision within ministries, which is currently limited. A recent assessment of the PYD approach found that, "more efforts are needed for broader national level understanding, commitment and implementation, as inclusion of the PYD approach and terminology in youth programming, remains inconsistent⁷²." USAID's partnerships with local individuals and organizations will capitalize on and leverage their passion, experience, and achievements, while building their capacity as advocates, leaders, and voices for change. USAID programs should be coordinated with interagency efforts, at headquarters and mission levels, to ensure maximum efficiency of USG investments. Donors and other working groups at the country and global-level have also been proven effective coordination platforms around learning, planning, and implementation. Particular emphasis on coordination with other agencies and donors is needed around communication, funding, planning and implementation.

Internal Collaboration: Due to the cross-sectoral nature of youth programming, USAID efforts should be coordinated across USAID sectors, including but not limited to:

- *USAID Senior Champions for Youth Working Group.* Composed of senior leadership from every regional and technical bureau, the group meets on an as-needed basis to coordinate Agency-wide responses to opportunities and challenges.
- *USAID Youth Corps Working Group.* Composed of representatives from every regional and technical bureau, the group meets regularly to produce tools and guidance to improve youth programming. The Agency Senior Advisor and bureau, region, and office leads will be empowered to work collaboratively through the Agency YouthCorps to develop tools, action plans, and provide technical support for policy implementation. The group will leverage existing agency platforms to build out its community of practice and continue regular Mission Youth Champions technical assistance calls and networking.

⁷² Assessment of Positive Youth Development (PYD) Including the Experience and Contributions of YouthPower. (November 2020) Prepared for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). USAID HEARD., https://www.heardproject.org/wp-content/uploads/PYD_assessment_eng_v8_Public.pdf

Global LEAD

Global LEAD is USAID's Agency-wide initiative to support the capacity and commitment of one million young people as partners in building healthy, peaceful, prosperous, and democratic communities. USAID engages young people at the local, national, and global levels to promote innovative solutions to critical development challenges.

The initiative builds on the Agency's current work with young leaders, higher education institutions, civil society, and other partners to develop a continuum of education, civic skills and engagement, and leadership development activities across sectors to advance development outcomes.

Global LEAD supports Missions and OUs to respond to the needs of youth and emerging young leaders and meet development priorities through:

- Technical Assistance for Program Design
- Platforms for Youth Engagement
- Communications Support
- Tools to Integrate Youth Throughout the Program Cycle

For example, by harnessing youth talents and engaging with youth as partners, such as through the YouThink media literacy activity in North Macedonia, Europe and Eurasia Missions are working with youth to expand opportunities to contribute positively to their communities and countries. Young people are capable of solving some of the toughest development challenges and it will be critical to partner with youth to build self-reliant communities.

Private Sector Engagement: Private sector partners have significant interest in collaborating with donors such as USAID on youth programming as youth are key potential employees, brand ambassadors, and consumers. Many private sector partners such as Lego Foundation and Hilton Foundation value the partnership investment related to building soft skills or socio-emotional skills for young people. Mission private sector engagement officers could do intentional dialogues with businesses that focus on common goals related to youth well-being, skills development, and education.

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING

Planned Funding: As relevant, all OUs must attribute funding each Fiscal Year to the Youth Key Issue to track planning and progress against U.S. Government youth priorities.

Internal Reporting of Results: OUs must report on results realized during the reporting Fiscal Year through the Performance Plan and Report (PPR) including use of the standard indicators maintained by the Office of Foreign Assistance (F), which are required as applicable. The Master Indicator List (MIL) includes cross-cutting indicators that cover youth engagement and development across sectors. All USAID OUs should work with implementing partners to collect data and report on one or more of the standard indicators on youth if the OU's programming produces data that contribute to the measurement of these indicators. In addition, all USAID's people-level standard and custom performance indicators must be sex-disaggregated and age-disaggregated by the age bands identified in the implementation guidance.

To measure progress on the *Youth in Development Policy*, USAID projects and activities utilize five Standard Foreign Assistance Indicators for Youth across the four main age bands (10-14, 15-19, 20-24, 25-29):

- Youth-1- Number of youth trained in soft skills/life skills through U.S. Government assisted programs.
- Youth-2 - Number of laws, policies or procedures adopted or implemented with USG assistance designed to promote youth participation at the regional, national or local level.
- Youth-3 - Percentage of participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources who are youth (15-29).
- Youth 5 - Percentage of youth who participate in civil society activities following soft skills/life skills training or initiatives from U.S. Government assisted programs.
- Youth 6 - Number of youth who complete USG-assisted leadership programs.

USAID also utilizes 13 age-disaggregated standard indicators relevant for youth programming across many technical sectors: economic growth, health, education (basic and higher), democracy and governance, and resilience and food security. Many of the indicators can be disaggregated to identify youth if programming is not exclusive to youth participants.

Operating Units (OUs) and partners also have the ability to develop custom indicators to measure youth programming outcomes. Prominently, the [PYD measurement toolkit](#) provides additional valuable illustrative indicators for implementers as well as USAID OUs. Given that the PYD field has mostly been developed and evaluated in high income countries, it is essential that these measures be appropriately and thoughtfully adapted to low- and middle-income country contexts to effectively evaluate youth programming in various sectors from a PYD approach perspective. USAID will work to quantify the total number of youth beneficiaries reached by their work.

External Reporting of Results: USAID will report on the results of the Agency's efforts to advance youth integration and development through a range of required and ad hoc reporting processes, including, but not limited to, Congressional, interagency, and donor reporting requirements and requests. Data and information collected through the OPs and PPRs will also inform USAID's external engagement, communications, and learning efforts.

USAID has invested in a significant body of knowledge, best practices, and lessons learned on Positive Youth Development that have influenced the vision, goal, objectives, and principles presented in this policy. Remaining gaps in evidence require rigorous research to expand the collective knowledge base about effective youth programming. To drive increased learning, USAID will better monitor investments, strengthen efforts to collect age disaggregated data, and utilize youth specific indicators. Practical knowledge is particularly strong in the areas of youth skills development, livelihoods, and financial services; school dropout prevention and educational achievement; health knowledge and behavior change (pregnancy, HIV and maternal child health); civic engagement; and conflict and crime prevention. More evidence is needed on youth and food security and climate change. USAID will collect and analyze data on costs and cost-effectiveness of youth programming, to inform decision-making throughout the program cycle and promote sustainability of these interventions. Policy makers cannot make fully informed decisions about the best way to invest limited resources without information about the costs of achieving desired outputs and outcomes through different interventions or delivery strategies. USAID's Education [cost measurement and reporting guidance](#) is a helpful resource that can be adapted for cross-sectoral programming.

Youth-led Monitoring, Research, and Learning

YouthPower2: Learning and Evaluation

YP2LE's Learning Network connects youth-serving initiatives, community-based organizations, international donors, academics, and government entities engaged in improving the knowledge, skills, practices, and partnerships around positive youth development. By compiling and sharing resources that take an evidence-based approach, YP2LE provides youth practitioners and researchers with the necessary tools to continuously improve the effectiveness of youth development practices.

- **Example:** The YouthLead Youth Ambassadors cohort, led by YP2LE, advises and supports special events such as USAID's International Youth Day, the annual YouthPower PYD Summit, the consultations that informed this youth policy and listening sessions, speaker outreach, facilitation. The ambassadors also provide outreach to thousands of YouthLead members and other youth groups for PYD research activities such as focus groups.

Youth Excel

Youth Excel supports youth-led and youth-serving organizations around the globe to conduct quality implementation research; use data and learnings to improve their own cross-sectoral, positive youth development programs; synthesize data and learning; and engage in intergenerational dialogue with adult decision-makers so that together youth and adults can shape and advance data-informed development policies, agendas, and programs.

- **Example:** Youth Excel's Issue-based Collaborative Networks (ICONS) in Guatemala, Kenya, and Iraq use a "whole-system-in-the-room" model that convenes a diverse group of youth-led and youth-serving organizations and groups to form a place-based collaborative that collectively tackles a shared problem. The participants build skills in Research-to-Change (implementation research), conduct research to strengthen their own work, share data, create new knowledge collectively, learn from each other, and produce knowledge products to support youth advocacy and engage with local decision-makers.

Youth Programming Assessment Tool - YPAT

The YPAT Tool is a self-assessment for organizations and grantees to measure their progress towards advancing youth engagement in their programs. USAID highly recommends the integration of this activity into broader youth-related activities as a means to both socialize PYD competencies as well as help organizations effectively engage youth across their programming through the various competencies outlined in the YPAT.

In collaboration with the other agencies of the USG, other donors, and partners, USAID will expand learning efforts around youth development to improve results-driven programming. In accordance with USAID's Evaluation Policy, all youth programming falling at least within the median of the mission portfolio will be evaluated by a third party and the results will be shared within-country and across the Agency.⁷³ USAID/Washington will work with missions to identify and mobilize resources for impact evaluations of critical youth interventions for which definitive assessments of effectiveness are needed. USAID's approach, known as [Collaborating, Learning and Adapting](#) (CLA) supports the achievement of development results by facilitating internal and external collaboration and ensuring

⁷³ The Evaluation Policy (January 2011) requires missions to identify at least one opportunity for an impact evaluation for each development objective of their CDCS (p.6). <http://www.usaid.gov/evaluation> "Evaluation," U.S. Agency for International Development, August 26, 2021, <https://www.usaid.gov/evaluation>.

new learning is used to adjust activities, projects, and country strategies to be more effective in reaching their youth objectives. Accountability and Feedback Planning can be useful in youth inclusive activities. By identifying youth as a key voice and using their feedback to find ways the activity can be more responsive to youth needs USAID can track adaptive management in these activities.

ASSESSMENT OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION Following the requirements of ADS Chapter 200, USAID will assess the implementation of this Policy periodically, approximately once every five years, by using appropriate performance benchmarks such as our staff's knowledge of, and experience with, the Agency's youth requirements; youth integration in CDCs, Strategic Frameworks, PDDs, activities, and solicitations; budget attributions to the youth Key Issues in OPs and PPRs; and the use of the standard indicators for youth in PPR.

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IX. CONCLUSION

This policy challenges USAID to integrate critical priorities concerning youth into the mainstream of its programming, to more aggressively seek and design effective, evidence-based youth programming, and to increase the participation of young people across all sectors.

Because this elevated approach is relatively new, we recognize that practices will be developed and refreshed over time as the Agency implements this policy. Nevertheless, over time, USAID expects to see change in a number of ways. For example, at the planning level, youth should be more strategically and prominently featured in CDCS and other policies and strategies. With expanding youth portfolios, the number of dedicated technical youth specialists in regional and pillar bureaus and offices is also expected to rise. Youth programs at USAID are funded by multiple bureaus, missions, and initiatives, and funding toward youth programming from existing resources is likely to increase, especially in high youth population countries. The evaluation, research, and learning agenda will yield an enhanced body of knowledge around what works in youth development and how to increase impact. As best practices for youth development are garnered and assimilated into institutional practice, USAID will transform program design and implementation with better results using fewer resources.

Youth are the major stakeholders of today and tomorrow. It is essential that their ambitions and aspirations become part of the current development paradigm. The USAID Policy on Youth in Development is a critical step towards a fresh approach to development, one that proactively ensures youth can fulfill their dreams for prosperity, peace, and justice.

Annex 1- Demographics on Youth⁷⁴

USAID Countries with Youthful Populations	% of Population Under 15 (2021)	% of Population 10-29 (2021)	Median Age (2021)
Afghanistan	42%	43%	18.9
Albania	17%	29%	32.9
Armenia	21%	26%	35.1
Azerbaijan	24%	29%	32.3
Bangladesh	27%	37%	26.7
Belarus	17%	21%	37.1
Benin	42%	40%	18.2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	15%	23%	42.1
Botswana	33%	37%	24.5
Brazil	21%	30%	32.6
Burkina Faso	44%	41%	17.3
Burundi	45%	40%	17
Cambodia	31%	37%	25.3
Cameroon	42%	40%	18.5
Chad	46%	42%	17.8
Colombia	22%	33%	30
Côte D'Ivoire	42%	41%	20.9
Democratic Republic of the Congo	46%	39%	18.6
Djibouti	29%	36%	23.9
Dominican Republic	27%	35%	28.1
Egypt	34%	34%	23.9
El Salvador	27%	37%	27.1
Ethiopia	40%	42%	17.9
Georgia	20%	24%	38.1
Ghana	37%	39%	21.1
Guatemala	33%	41%	22.1
Guinea	43%	42%	18.9
Haiti	32%	39%	23

⁷⁴ "World Population Prospects - Population Division." United Nations. United Nations, July 1, 2021.

<https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>.

Honduras	31%	40%	23
India	26%	36%	28.1
Indonesia	26%	33%	30.2
Iraq	38%	39%	20
Jamaica	23%	33%	26
Jordan	33%	39%	22.5
Kazakhstan	29%	28%	30.6
Kenya	39%	42%	19.7
Kosovo	24%	33%	30.5
Kyrgyz Republic	33%	33%	26.5
Laos	32%	39%	23
Lebanon	25%	33%	30.5
Liberia	40%	40%	17.8
Libya	28%	33%	28.9
North Macedonia	16%	25%	39
Madagascar	40%	41%	19.7
Malawi	43%	42%	16.5
Maldives	20%	37%	28.2
Mali	47%	41%	15.8
Mauritania	40%	39%	20.5
Mexico	26%	34%	28.3
Moldova	16%	25%	36.7
Morocco	27%	32%	29.3
Mozambique	44%	41%	17.2
Nepal	29%	41%	24.1
Nicaragua	29%	36%	25.7
Nigeria	43%	39%	18.4
Pakistan	35%	39%	23.8
Paraguay	29%	37%	28.2
Peru	25%	32%	28
Philippines	30%	37%	23.5
Rwanda	39%	40%	19
Senegal	43%	40%	18.8

Serbia	15%	24%	42.6
Sierra Leone	40%	41%	19
Somalia	46%	42%	18.1
South Africa	29%	35%	27.1
South Sudan	41%	41%	17.3
Sri Lanka	24%	29%	32.8
Sudan	40%	40%	19.9
Syria	30%	37%	24.3
Tajikistan	37%	36%	24.5
Tanzania	44%	40%	17.7
Thailand	17%	26%	37.7
Timor-Leste	37%	42%	18.9
Tunisia	24%	28%	31.6
Turkmenistan	31%	33%	27.9
Uganda	46%	42%	15.8
Ukraine	16%	21%	40.6
Uzbekistan	29%	34%	28.6
Vietnam	23%	30%	30.5
Yemen	39%	42%	19.5
Zambia	44%	42%	16.8
Zimbabwe	42%	41%	20

Annex 2 - USAID Advances on Youth 2012-2021

The 2012 Youth Policy set USAID on a course to integrate youth and engage them more fully across its programming. As highlighted in the 2018 policy implementation assessment⁷⁵ and subsequent analysis, the first iteration of the Policy helped USAID:

- **At the Agency Level:**
 - Established an **Agency Youth Coordinator**.
 - Established the **YouthCorps**, a formal structure of Youth Advisors and points of contact in all Bureaus and Missions.
 - Increased the **integration of youth into the Program Cycle** by completing a record number of youth assessments (approximately 50) in countries that led to ensuring the issues impacting youth were meaningfully integrated into new Country Strategies and activity designs.
 - Created accessible **youth-focused central mechanisms** such as YouthPower,⁷⁶ Youth Excel,⁷⁷ Higher Education for Leadership, Innovation, and Exchange (HELIX),⁷⁸ and other funding streams that advance cross-sectoral youth mainstreaming in programming.
 - Improved **professional development** of staff through Positive Youth Development Training to Agency, Mission, and partner staff.
 - Increased **annual investment in youth-focused activities to over \$400 million**, including the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).
 - Developed **tailored guidance** for integrating youth into programming in specific technical sectors.
 - Hired youth technical advisors for multiple Bureaus, Offices, and Missions.
 - Developed four Standard F Indicators to track youth programming.
 - Strengthened **Mission youth-focused and relevant programming** resulting in:
 - 100 percent of country strategies include recognition of the role of youth; 88 percent include youth at the development objective (DO) level and 90 percent at the intermediate results level.
- **With Implementing Partners:**
 - Expanded understanding of a broad base of implementing partners on **effective evidence-based youth practices through Positive Youth Development reaching hundreds of thousands of youth**.
 - Provided youth-related technical assistance through research mechanisms (YouthPower Learning and its follow-on, YouthPower 2: Learning and Evaluation (YP2LE), Youth Excel, Youth Power Evaluation, and Youth Power Action).
 - **Promoted and scaled youth leadership and networking of youth** including networking more than 100,000 development professionals on **YouthPower.org**; 14,000 young changemakers on **YouthLead.org**; and launching the **Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI)** in conjunction with State Department to reach 20,000+ youth, the **European Democracy Youth Network (EDYN)** of 230 members across 23 countries, and the **Yes Youth Can** initiative to coalesce 1+ million Kenyan youth ('bunges') for actions such as income-generation, community service, and arts.

⁷⁵ "Assessment of the Implementation of USAID'S Youth in Development Policy," July 2018, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/YouthPolicy_Assessment_Exec_Summary_2018_FINAL_public.pdf.

⁷⁶ <https://www.youthpower.org/> *citing a homepage

⁷⁷ "Youth Excel: Our Knowledge, Leading Change," <https://www.irex.org/project/youth-excel-our-knowledge-leading-change>.

⁷⁸ Lorena Marko, "USAID Releases New Higher Education for LEADERSHIP, Innovation, and Exchange (HELIX) Annual PROGRAM STATEMENT (APS)," April 9, 2020, <https://www.edu-links.org/announcements/usaid-seeking-concept-notes-helix-aps>.

Annex 3 - USAID Youth Programming Metrics

Highlights from Fiscal Years 2012 through 2020

Programming Investment: In FY 2020, USAID allocated approximately **\$412 million** for youth programming accounts across the following USAID bureaus (bilateral, regional, functional, as well as PEPFAR); this represents a **134 percent** increase over the FY2013 allocation of **\$178 million**.

From FY 2013-2020, USAID youth programming allocations approximated **\$1.56 billion cumulatively**.

Programming Results (FY2016-FY2020): USAID tracked certain results across its youth cohort, notably Foreign Assistance Standard Indicators (including Youth Standard Indicators) starting in fiscal year 2016:

SECTORAL RESULTS		
EDUCATION ACCESS	945,000	Secondary or tertiary school age learners supported
INCREASED SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	1.4 million	Youth trained in life and social leadership skills
EMPLOYMENT	86 percent	Of youth completed USG funded workforce development programming, with 50 percent of completing participants finding new employment
HEALTH	1.2 million	Youth (ages 10-29) in FY20 on antiretroviral treatment for HIV
	1.4 million	Adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) aged 10-24 reached through DREAMS with comprehensive HIV prevention services in FY20
CROSS-SECTORAL PYD RESULTS		
PRODUCTIVE ASSETS	34 percent	Of participants in programming designed to increase access to productive economic resources were youth
BUILDING AGENCY	6,700	Young individuals from low-income or marginalized communities received legal aid or victim's support, and 3,500 young human rights defenders supported
CONTRIBUTION	76 percent	Of life and social leadership skill trainees subsequently

		engaging in civil society activities
ENABLING ENVIRONMENT	37	Laws, policies, or procedures adopted and implemented to promote youth participation at regional, national, and local levels

Annex 4 - Ages and Stages of Development

The stage of development along the lifespan will strongly determine the types of intervention selected.⁷⁹

- **Early Adolescence (10–14 years):** This is a critical time to build on previous investments in child health, nutrition, and education, and to lay the foundation for life skills, positive values, and constructive behaviors. The onset of puberty makes reproductive health and maturation an important area of focus. As the brain is now primed to learn new skills, developing critical thinking skills is essential. Vulnerabilities—especially for girls—may be particularly acute, so protection efforts should be emphasized. Appropriate interventions will include preventing child labor, school drop-out, early marriage, pregnancy and sexual exploitation, and expanding learning opportunities, promoting gender awareness and tolerance for diversity.
- **Adolescence (15–19 years):** These years are critical to sustain and expand health and education gains, protect against rights’ abuses such as trafficking, exploitation, or hazardous work, and prepare youth for citizenship, family life and the workforce. Programming includes health education for healthy lifestyles, promotion of positive gender norms, provision of youth–friendly reproductive health services, academic retention and vocational education, financial literacy and saving, soft skills and service learning, mentoring peer networking, civic engagement opportunities, and legal rights’ education. Second chance opportunities that allow disaffected youth to reconnect or reintegrate into school and society are particularly important.
- **Emerging Adulthood (20–24 years):** As behaviors form with last brain development, programs should continue to support positive and constructive decision making and build resilience. Second chance opportunities are still important. Examples of relevant programs include advanced education and job specific training, life and leadership skills, livelihood and citizenship opportunities, asset accumulation, reproductive and maternal health, and family support.
- **Transition into Adulthood (25–29 years):** Although physical maturation is largely complete, learning continues. Programs should link youth to employment and civic engagement opportunities, as well as enable youth to build assets and provide economic, health and social support for family life (housing for example). In post conflict situations, programs that provide accelerated learning opportunities to make up for lost years due to war ,and psychosocial support programs are often needed.

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Glossary

Assets: Youth have the necessary resources and skills to achieve desired outcomes.

Agency: Youth have the ability to employ their assets and aspirations to make their own decisions about their lives and set their own goals, and to act on those decisions in order to achieve desired outcomes without fear of violence or retribution.

Contribution: Youth are encouraged, recognized, and able to be involved in and lead through various channels as a source of change for their own and their communities' positive development.

Enabling environment: Youth are surrounded by an enabling environment that maximizes their assets, agency, access to services and opportunities, and ability to avoid risks, while promoting their social and emotional competence to thrive.

Gender Equality concerns women and men as well as gender and sexual minorities. Equality involves working with all genders, including men and boys, women and girls to bring about changes in attitudes, behaviors, roles and responsibilities at home, in the workplace, and in the community. Genuine equality means more than parity in numbers or laws on the books; it means expanding freedoms and improving overall quality of life so that equality is achieved for all genders.

Inclusive development is the concept that every person, regardless of their identity, is instrumental in transforming their societies. Development processes that are inclusive yield better outcomes for the communities that embark upon them. USAID promotes the rights and inclusion of marginalized and underrepresented populations in the development process.

Local system "refers to those interconnected sets of actors—governments, civil society, the private sector, universities, individual citizens, and others—that jointly produce a particular development outcome. The 'local' in a local system refers to actors in a partner country. As these actors jointly produce an outcome, they are 'local' to it. And as development outcomes may occur at many levels, local systems can be national, provincial, or community-wide in scope."⁸⁰

Positive Youth Development: PYD is an evidence-based model of youth development that promotes an assets-based approach to working with youth rather than a problem behavior-based approach. YouthPower Learning has developed the following definition of PYD: PYD engages youth along with their families, communities and/or governments so that youth are empowered to reach their full potential. PYD approaches build skills, assets, and competencies; foster healthy relationships; strengthen the environment; and transform systems.

Youth Engagement or Youth Participation: Meaningful youth engagement or participation is an inclusive, intentional, mutually-respectful partnership between youth and adults whereby power is shared, respective contributions are valued, and young people's ideas, perspectives, skills and strengths are integrated into the design and delivery of programs, strategies, policies, funding mechanisms and organizations that affect their lives and their communities, countries and globally.

Youth: USAID defines youth to be the young people in the 10 to 29-year age range.

⁸⁰ USAID, *Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting Sustained Development*, Washington, D.C., 2014.