

NOW, AND ALWAYS

How IYF Is Leaning in to Its Transformation 2025 Strategy to Support Young Leaders During COVID-19



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The future is always uncertain, but this truism has taken on a sharp, sobering clarity since the start of the COVID-19 crisis. From new social norms like physical distancing and self-quarantine, to drastic shifts in education and employment for millions of people, the status quo no longer exists. *We're living in a new, unexpected normal.*

If we take only one lesson from this crisis, it should be that transformative change requires a concerted effort, with young people at the center. We see evidence of this on display around the world, as young leaders work on the [front line](#) to address the most serious challenges of the day, in their own communities and beyond. Now, more than ever, we must equip, inspire, and support them to create the future they want—a future for us all. For that reason, IYF's vision, mission, and [Transformation 2025](#) strategy have not changed. In fact, our core strategic objectives—Youth Agency, Economic Opportunity, and Systems Change—are proving timelier and more essential than ever before. On the next page are three critical ways we are leaning into our strategy in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

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YOUTH AGENCY: HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE UNLOCK THEIR HIGHEST POTENTIAL MATTERS NOW MORE THAN EVER.

Supporting and investing in youth agency—a young person’s desire and ability to make decisions and drive change—is foundational in responding to the crisis and to the post-pandemic recovery. With that in mind, IYF is launching the [Global Youth Resiliency Fund](#) to support [youth-led ventures](#) and [businesses](#) around the world that are already working hard to meet the pressing needs of their employees, communities, and the world, as we face down this global pandemic together. In addition, since the COVID-19 crisis started, we’ve been reaching out regularly to young women and men in our networks—including young leaders from [Baltimore](#) to [India](#)—to provide a platform for their stories, experiences, and perspectives during these unprecedented times. In October, IYF will host a [Virtual Summit—From Crisis to Resilience: Youth Reshaping Society](#)—to provide a much larger stage for innovative young changemakers to lead discussions with a broad, multi-sector audience about the future they want to see take shape. *We encourage you to learn more about the Virtual Summit, the Global Youth Resiliency Fund, and how you can join this movement for youth-driven change.*

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY: PROVIDING ACCESS TO EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND GUIDANCE HAS NEVER BEEN SO CRITICAL.

As always, young people are eager to earn a living and to support themselves, their families, and their communities. However, during the pandemic global unemployment—especially among the world’s young people—has skyrocketed. In response, IYF is leaning into our commitment of providing economic pathways for young people and ensuring that opportunity gaps don’t open during the pandemic. A prime example of this is our [Youth Opportunity pre-employment program](#) in the United States. Launched in partnership with McDonald’s, this initiative equips young women and men with work readiness and life skills training and connects them to employment opportunities through local partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs) in Chicago and the Washington, D.C., metro area. Under normal circumstances, young people receive skills training in person, but since the crisis our team and partners are digitizing book-based content and conducting training sessions using online conference call platforms like Zoom and Google Hangouts. IYF staff can observe Passport to Success (PTS) sessions remotely to provide our CBO partner-trainers with virtual feedback and coaching. Other strategies that support distance learning involve utilizing our mobile-optimized digital life skills curriculum, PTS Explorer, which allows [young people](#)

[in the program](#) to learn anytime, anywhere. *Moreover, we’re engaging with McDonald’s to provide online career panels and other career development workshops, as well as virtual hiring fairs.* Sticking to critical strategic objectives while pivoting implementation tactics ensures that COVID-related restrictions don’t hinder our ability to support local partners and provide young people with critical training, guidance, and opportunities during times of crisis.

SYSTEMS CHANGE: TRANSFORMING SYSTEMS TO BE MORE YOUTH-RESPONSIVE IS ESSENTIAL TO RECOVERY AND REBUILDING.

At IYF, we know that for young people to unlock their agency and create the future they want, the systems supporting them must meet them where they are, and work to serve their interests. During the COVID-19 crisis, a variety of systems—from financial markets to health care—have been stressed to the point of cracking. This is also true of the education system. Due to the pandemic, face-to-face classroom learning is no longer possible for over [1.6 billion young people globally](#). The education system as we knew it is being totally disrupted and, chances are, will never return to past standard instruction fully in the classroom. In response, many institutions of learning, as well as other organizations working in the education space, have pivoted to [provide e-learning options](#). As a recent [report](#) from the World Economic Forum notes, life skills—like resilience, time management, and managing emotions—will be even more valuable in a post-pandemic world. To ensure there’s no gap in a young person’s ability to access life skills training, our PTS life skills curriculum is available as an online and [mobile-first platform](#). *In a time where physical distancing and self-quarantine are required, PTS Traveler allows young people to take a virtual tour around the world, learning new skills in a variety of locales.* With our partner at PepsiCo Foundation, we’re aiming to reach 1 million girls and young women, preparing them for continued success when society reopens.

Achieving the objectives of the [Transformation 2022](#) strategy—greater agency, more economic opportunities, and inclusive systems—will require that we all work together. Stakeholders from the public and private sectors—governments, NGOs, corporations, and members of civil society—must engage young people and youth-led organizations in their communities as partners and leaders for change. As IYF continues to stand by, for, and with young people during the COVID-19 crisis and recovery, we invite you to join us—now, and always.

Learn more about IYF’s Transformation 2025 Strategy and the Global Youth Resiliency Fund. Let’s transform lives, together.