



Technical Brief:

YOUTH ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

IYF ensures young people have the right skills, at the right time, in the right place, so that they can secure decent jobs or start their own businesses. Accomplishing our mission means putting young people at the center of our work and partnering with local organizations for impact.

The International Youth Foundation (IYF) stands by, for, and with young people. We believe all young women and men possess the ability to control their own economic futures. However, economic opportunities for youth—whether through employment, self-employment, or entrepreneurship—are not equitably distributed. As a result, far too many young people, often for reasons beyond their control, can't create the lives they desire for themselves and their families.

FOUR CORE ELEMENTS

IYF's 30 years of experience has taught us the key to expanding youth employment lies in understanding how—and within what conditions—skills, market opportunities, education and training providers, and workforce development systems work together to support young people to have productive and rewarding lives. We focus on the intersection of these issues by focusing on four core elements.



1 We prepare young people for employment.



3 We build the capacity of education and training providers.



2 We connect young people to economic opportunities.



4 We strengthen workforce development systems.



We prepare young people for employment.

We prepare youth for the **future of work**, whether that is in **employment**, **self-employment** or as an **entrepreneur**. We work with local partners, building capacity to ensure young people gain the life skills, technical skills, and entrepreneurial skills they need.

Life skills help young people to recognize and control their emotions; establish positive relationships; make responsible decisions; solve challenges; and set and achieve goals. IYF's economic opportunity work strengthens these skills through our Passport to Success® program.

For youth who choose self-employment or entrepreneurship we build skills such as personal leadership, negotiating and risk taking.

How We Do It

- » Soft and Life Skills Development
- » Entrepreneurship Skills Development
- » Technical and Sector-Specific Skills Development

RESULT
Increased Employment



We connect young people to economic opportunities.

Connecting youth to economic opportunities means supporting youth as they **transition from education to employment**, or supporting disconnected youth **back into the labor market**, on whatever economic path they choose. That can be employment, self-employment or entrepreneurship.

To do this we work with youth, training institutions, and with labor market intermediaries to build those pathways. IYF help young people access market opportunities to sell their skills or products. IYF works with employers to ensure youth have access to jobs as they are created, and have the opportunity to gain on-the-job experience.

How We Do It

- » Employer Engagement
- » Career Guidance
- » Labor Market Information
- » Mentorship and Apprenticeship
- » Market Linkages
- » Job Placement

RESULT
Increased Incomes



We build the capacity of education and training providers.

IYF considers capacity strengthening of local youth-serving and community organizations one of the most critical components of youth programming. The most **effective programs are developed by local organizations** familiar with the issues and population being served. We help organizations to meet their own goals, which we do using IYF's Quality Standards Toolkit, a facilitated process to identify strengths and gaps in organizational capacity.

IYF also builds capacity in the formal education and training sectors. We help align course offerings with market demand, and support curriculum development, teacher training, competency based training, educational access, and quality assurance.

How We Do It

- » Education and TVET Strengthening
- » Organizational Capacity Building
- » Teacher training
- » Curriculum Development
- » Supply/Demand Alignment
- » Monitoring and Evaluation

RESULT
Improved Learning Outcomes



We strengthen workforce development systems.

It is not enough to treat youth employment as a simple supply and demand issue, the reality is more complicated. Even with perfect information on demand from employers, and education and training institutions can build those skills in youth, that doesn't mean young people will be able to access decent work opportunities.

IYF's **systems work focuses on the 'connective tissue' in the workforce system** such as improving hiring and recruitment practices, reducing barriers to employment, and creating equitable policies. Rather than seeking to build parallel systems, IYF works to realign the resources, relationships, roles, routines, and rules of local systems to achieve scalable and sustainable results.

How We Do It

- » Youth Inclusive Market Systems
- » Equitable and Youth Friendly Policies and Regulations
- » Employer Practices
- » Awareness Raising with Families and Communities

RESULT
Increasingly Youth Inclusive and Responsive Systems

IYF'S APPROACH: PREPARING, CONNECTING, BUILDING, & STRENGTHENING

To address the challenges youth face, IYF uses equitable and inclusive market-led approaches. We start by working with both businesses and youth to understand the critical skills they need to meet market demand. We ensure these needs are effectively translated, communicated, and met—working with education and training providers to deliver in-demand skills and competencies. We assess what aspirations youth have, what skills they need to reach their goals, and what barriers they face. At every step, we work with and through local partners who are best equipped to respond to unique local challenges. Simultaneously, we are strengthening the national workforce development systems within which youth and their communities live and work. Finally, we ensure young people get placed in jobs. When they are working on the job or as entrepreneurs, we continue to support employees and employers to ensure those jobs are safe and productive and offer a fair income.

Case Study

ZIMBABWE:WORKS

Zimbabwe:Works (Z:W) provided nearly 29,000 young people—61 percent of whom were women—with the market-relevant skills and services needed to access local employment and self-employment opportunities.

Z:W partnered with microfinance institutions to design and implement programs that enhanced access to economic opportunities. New start-ups and the expansion of existing youth-owned businesses created more than 1,900 jobs. Over 3,600 youth, the majority of whom were women, accessed more than US \$680,000 worth of financing.

IYF secured 745 private sector companies to provide internships. More than 1,800 youth, largely women, were placed into internships. Of these young people, 80 percent then transitioned to full-time employment, and 43 percent of interns were young women who accessed opportunities in occupations where women have been underrepresented.

As a result, youth participants were projected to earn over US \$31 million in incremental income over a 12-month period through employment and business growth.



IYF'S ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY TOOLKIT

IYF's record of success in promoting economic opportunity for youth includes tested, innovative solutions.

- **Highly experiential life skills curricula** like Passport to Success,[®] that equip youth with the critical skills they need for success.
- **Youth-informed digital solutions** including our award-winning PTS Traveler—an online game-based life skills course.
- **Tools to enhance gender equity & social inclusion** including vocational training through a gender lens.
- **Tools and models to strengthen organizational capacity**, supporting partners' internal capacities for growth.
- **Tool and processes to engage employers** to align skills to market demand and promote youth-friendly workplaces.
- **Evidence-based measurement and learning systems** to evaluate, learn, and adapt programming.



For partnership inquiries, please contact Anna Schowengerdt, EVP Programs and Business Development, at a.schowengerdt@iyfnet.org

IYF'S FOUNDING PRINCIPLES

Regardless of where or in which sector we are working, IYF's founding principles underpin everything we do to advance youth economic opportunity:



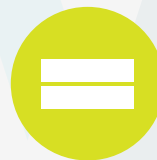
We engage young people as integral partners in program design and implementation from the outset. We support employees and employers to ensure the jobs young people secure are safe, productive, and pay a fair income.



We partner for success at scale. Playing the role of ecosystem connector and convener, IYF ensures that goals of corporations, foundations, multilateral organizations, local leaders, communities, and young people are aligned, and solutions include and respond to the real needs of youth.



We work with and through local actors, supporting on-the-ground partners who are uniquely equipped to respond to local challenges, while strengthening national workforce development systems.



We advance Gender Equity and Social Inclusion. IYF takes concrete measures to counteract youth marginalization. We work to promote personal agency, economic opportunity, the power to make their voices heard, and the ability to participate fully in society.



We measure impact and share what we learn. Our work is rooted in effective performance measurement, evaluation, research, and learning (MERL). We use data to assess progress, to inform course adjustments, and to make maximize project impact. We share what we learn with organizations worldwide.

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