



Technical Brief:

YOUTH INCLUSIVE SYSTEMS

IYF recognizes that young people unlock and develop their potential within the context of systems—and that these systems are often captured by adults to serve their own purposes. As an advocate for young people, IYF facilitates the transformation of those systems by enabling local, reform-minded actors to lead the charge. Together, we ensure that systems are youth inclusive and able to produce results for young people.

For IYF, this means recognizing how local systems impact youth and building this understanding into program design, management, and learning. Rather than seeking to build parallel systems, which are limited in scope and duration, IYF works to realign existing resources, relationships, roles, routines, and rules of local systems to achieve scaled and sustained results. When systems are youth-responsive, young people can engage in critical decisions in their lives and hold leaders to account while accessing opportunities for increased incomes and improved livelihoods.

OUR DISTINCTION

1 Forging commitment

IYF conducts an in-depth analysis of power and interests within systems to identify, foster, and increase the commitment of local actors. IYF identifies the levers for change for key actors by analyzing the accountability system they

operate within, as well as the risks and opportunities posed by a given change. This allows IYF to guide stakeholders to define and advance a shared vision aligned to the incentives of the local decision makers while including young people

and their allies in decision making. All this results in locally owned solutions to improve results for young people, which IYF uses to make the case to build in tailored levers for change within local incentive structures.

2 Facilitating Durable Transformation at Scale from The Bottom Up

While many efforts to change “the rules of the game” start with policy changes or complex new inter-organizational arrangements and stay on the desks of national or international officials, IYF employs a different approach. Taking into consideration

how young people experience systems, IYF begins work by meeting them where they are— at street level, in classrooms, in markets, and community centers. Then, through the step-by-step process described below, IYF conducts a stress test of the system to discover

what happens when it serves young people better. When we determine that a new practice leads to better outcomes for young people, we facilitate a process to institutionalize that practice through policy and inter-organizational arrangements.

Case Study

YOUTH-INCLUSIVE SYSTEMS IN MEXICO

Rutas was a four-and-a-half-year, \$3.9 million cooperative agreement between USAID Mexico and IYF. IYF supported national and state level actors to adopt eleven systems changes to improve:

1. The transition of Mexican students, in particular those from lower-income communities, from upper secondary technical education to the workforce
2. The alignment between the upper secondary technical education and the labor market

These changes included restructuring the national career orientation strategy, developing over 3,000 hours of technical curricula with seven industries now delivered in high schools across the country, and leveraging technology to address information failures in the labor market.



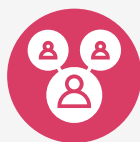
IYF'S APPROACH: PARTNERING, LEARNING, DEVELOPING, & TRANSFORMING

IYF's systems approach builds on USAID's Local Systems Framework by building in a rigorous political economic analysis. By taking a systems approach tailored in its context, to strengthen systems and reinforce incentives IYF invests for sustainable impact.



We choose partners based on their relevance to young people and their potential to affect change.

IYF builds partnerships with organizations that can act as levers for change within a system—such as a labor market, an electoral system, a food system, or the norms governing who can or can't pursue a specific career—prioritizing organizations whose work will effect that engage large numbers of young people. IYF also weighs how feasible and risky making change will be with that partner those partners. We bring 30+ years of experience and the deep expertise of our global staff to bear on every phase of our work—starting with the determination of who can best help us and the young people in those systems achieve the critical goal of systems change.



We learn about how systems work, identifying allies, pathways to change, and impacts on young people.

IYF collects and analyzes data about how a particular system is impacting the lives of young people, including the degree to which it recognizes and addresses their wants, needs, preferences, ambitions, and challenges. We map systems, paying special attention to how young people, information, and resources move through them. We identify key players, learning what motivates them, how they fit into the ecosystem, where their greatest strengths lie, and how to harness their assets and cultivate their allyship to achieve maximum impact and meaningful change.



We work with partners and allies, including young people themselves, to develop and adapt locally owned solutions that improve results for young people.

We recognize the value and power of innovation and how sometimes an entirely new solution is needed to address the unique challenges of a given system. On the other hand, we also realize that often the best solution might be adapting what already works well—for example an existing best practice interventions—such as career guidance or youth leadership training. Part of our expertise involves drawing on deep experience and knowhow to discern which approach is needed to make real, lasting change.



We facilitate change so that solutions that improve results for young are not one-off additions, but rather enduring transformations.

IYF builds an evidence base of not only the impact of each solution, but also the barriers to implementation. IYF works with partners to address these barriers, applying pressure and facilitating change management processes. These second-order changes are generally not youth-facing, but instead modify the formal and informal routines, roles, and rules needed to sustain youth-facing solutions at scale. IYF builds in targeted capacity strengthening so existing actors can meet new expectations and take on new roles.

At each stage of its approach to systems transformation, IYF leverages its grounding principles and unique asset areas.

- To understand target systems, IYF's singular focus on young people guides its research into the **systemic nature of social exclusion** that impacts young people.
- Many systems are hampered by ineffective information flows where **youth-informed digital solutions** connect young people to opportunities, services and decision-making processes.
- With decades of experience with programming for young people, such as **highly experiential life skills**, IYF is in a unique position to work with target systems and young people to co-develop and adopt effective solutions.
- To build an evidence base of not only the impact of each solution, but also the barriers to implementation, IYF leverages **measurement, evaluation, research & learning** to understand the extent to which systems change was achieved and how that change transpired.
- IYF's systems approach seeks to elevate **youth voices** in decision making.



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

IYF'S GROUNDING PRINCIPLES

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



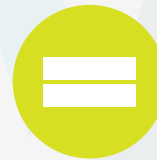
We engage young people as integral partners in program design and implementation from the outset. We support employees and employers to ensure the jobs young people secure are safe, productive, and pay a fair income.



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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