



Benefiting Highly Vulnerable Youth

Snapshot

Some young people are disadvantaged by more than poverty and lack of education: they face serious threats to their health, security, and well-being. These highly vulnerable youth, having survived natural disasters, epidemics, or war, face exceptional challenges as they try to build their futures. Orphans, former soldiers, refugees, trafficked youth, and others need special help, particularly if they try to make a living in post-conflict or post-emergency environments. Youth:Work programs can help these young people develop the array of skills they need to support themselves and their families.

Meeting Extraordinary Needs

Highly vulnerable youth face enormous, complex challenges to becoming healthy and productive members of society. Such youth may:

- Need psychosocial counseling to overcome trafficking experiences, post-traumatic stress disorder, the loss of parents to war or HIV/AIDS, or other issues
- Be caregivers to older relatives or younger siblings, which may pose conflicts with work opportunities
- Not be able to afford tuition, books, educational supplies, or other essentials, including food
- Have engaged in dangerous or illegal activities in order to contribute to household income
- Have gaps in school attendance and other educational deficiencies
- Be socially ostracized because of their race/ethnicity, disability, HIV status, socioeconomic status, lack of education, or previous illicit activities
- Live in communities with unstable economies, poorly functioning or nonexistent civic resources, and overtaxed services
- Not know how to access services, where available

Youth:Work job readiness programs for highly vulnerable youth will include the following core components to address the complex challenges facing this underserved population:

- **Technical training and life skills** to prepare youth for work and help them develop confidence and self-respect
- **Entrepreneurship training** for youth who want to start their own businesses or who live in poorly functioning formal economies
- **Opportunities for internships and apprenticeships**, mentoring, and other relevant employment services that help youth adapt to formal work environments and put their technical and life skills into practice

In addition, Youth:Work programs for this population may include interventions of special relevance to highly vulnerable youth, that could include:

- **Education on reproductive health and other issues, such as substance abuse prevention, nutrition, and STD/HIV/AIDS prevention.** Programs created by the International Youth Foundation (IYF) for highly vulnerable youth often include referrals for or provision of basic health services.
- **Psychosocial support and counseling.** These components are available to highly vulnerable youth throughout their participation in employability programs and internships. Such services help young people overcome stigmatization, social exclusion, and trauma, and also help to safeguard against exploitation in the workplace.

- **Community or recreational activities.** Activities such as theater, dance, choir, and sports help highly vulnerable youth identify with the program and become integrated with their peers and communities.
- **Community involvement.** Nurturing a sense of civic responsibility helps highly vulnerable young people feel valued, while benefiting their communities.
- **Remedial education.** Highly vulnerable youth may need basic numeracy and literacy skills that are necessary for further training.

When provided comprehensive training and services that address their needs, highly vulnerable young people graduate from job training programs with:

- Life skills to improve their health, well-being, and outlook
- Ways to translate their life experiences into relevant work skills
- A clear understanding of workplace expectations
- Concrete experience as productive employees
- Stronger self-confidence and self-esteem

Keys to Success

Proven practices. Detailed assessments of local conditions and resources are especially valuable when tailoring service provision for highly vulnerable youth.

Flexibility. Any program launched in unstable social or economic conditions can adjust rapidly as circumstances change.

Multi-sector support. Youth:Work fosters networks of nonprofit, corporate, and government stakeholders that work together to support young people.

Strong monitoring and evaluation. Youth:Work monitors and continually improves its programming, showing results even under the most difficult circumstances and with the most challenging populations.



Ex-Combatants Build Peaceful Communities in the Philippines

In partnerships with ALTERPLAN and Habitat for Humanity, the International Youth Foundation's (IYF) Civil Trades Training for Ex-Combatants project trained young ex-combatants and refugees to help deal with the urgent need for housing in post-conflict areas. Filipino youth received training in carpentry, plumbing, masonry, and other construction trades that are in high demand. Combined with life skills training, these technical skills gave young people a way to earn a living, alleviate a critical housing shortage, and work with others to build a peaceful community. IYF's efforts in building local capacity, developing alliances, and leveraging resources have enabled the program to succeed and expand. To date:

- 735 youth are enrolled in training
- 724 have graduated
- 426 are already employed in Manila and Mindanao, including Habitat for Humanity Philippines home construction sites, Chevron-sponsored elementary school sites, and other school construction sites under the USAID-EQuALLs Program
- 465 have earned government (TESDA) certification

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