YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT POLICY

2022 UPDATE

Acknowledgments

COVER PHOTOS (Clockwise from left):
USAID/DAI, Tanzania; USAID, North Macedonia; AFP; USAID/Young African Leaders Initiative

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CDCS   Country Development and Cooperation Strategy

CLA   Collaborating, learning, and adapting

DREAMS   Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored and Safe

FGM   Female genital mutilation

GBV   Gender-based violence

LGBTQI+   Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex

MO   Mission Orders

OHW-NG   One Health Workforce – Next Generation Activity

OU   Operating Unit

PDD   Project Development Documents

PPR   Performance Plan and Report

PYD   Positive Youth Development

RDCS   Regional Development and Cooperation Strategy

USAID   United States Agency for International Development

USG   U.S. Government

WASH   Water, sanitation, and hygiene

WPS   Women, peace, and security

YDI   Youth Development Index

YP2LE   YouthPower2: Learning and Evaluation

YPAT   Youth Programming Assessment Tool

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2012 USAID Youth in Development Policy was the first of its kind by a bilateral donor, and has proven pivotal in moving the needle for millions of young people around the world. As USAID updates this policy, however, the need to invest in young people to help solve our world's pressing issues is even more apparent. Our world faces no shortage of crises that demand urgent action and partnership across borders with all demographics. A pandemic reminded us of our global interconnectivity. A changing climate is challenging marginalized communities around the world through extreme temperatures and weather patterns. And, the very notion of democracy is at risk, with a democratic recession threatening the freedom and stability of billions of people.

Investing in young people is critical to solving these pressing and growing challenges. Since 2012, the youth population around the world has grown by 1.4 billion, with nine out of ten youth projected to live in Africa and South Asia by 2050. The global youth landscape has evolved dramatically to include demographic shifts creating pressures to migrate. Young people specifically are also facing unprecedented economic challenges: throughout the world, due to the inequitable economic policies and the aftermath of the economic crisis that has followed the COVID-19 pandemic, youth throughout the world are predicted to be worse off financially than their parents' generation. These challenges have led to a rise in adverse mental health impacts on young people.

Critically, increasingly closing civic and political spaces has contributed to a declining trust in government institutions. Around the world, youth are turning away from institutional politics as they feel their governments are not addressing critical issues they care about. Perhaps most front and center is youth frustration with inaction on climate: a recent global survey demonstrated that 83 percent of young people said their government has failed to care for the planet.

Recognizing the imperative of combating these crises of growing economic inequality, a democratic recession, and rising climate change, USAID is launching its updated policy with a renewed focus on working closely with young people as partners in development.

Photo: USAID, Bangladesh

Evidence shows that if we invest effectively in youth's integrated development, the current generation will contribute to greater economic growth, democracy, and stability, and development efforts are more efficient and effective when we engage youth as partners. However, youth, especially those encountering

Photo: USAID, El Salvador

discrimination based on their identity, are less likely to be engaged in international development programming. Without thoughtful and deliberate program design to ensure their inclusion, these programs are likely to replicate systems of exclusion. Development will likely stagnate or even decline without the partnership and leadership of youth themselves.

USAID's decades of experience working with young people and local communities on the transition from youth to adulthood inform the foundation of this Policy. Further, the valuable experience of our partners and young people informs its principles and practices, building on a development vision articulated in many

other USAID policies and strategies.[1] However, USAID has not always approached its work with youth systematically or at scale. This Policy posits an overarching vision and goal for youth development along with related objectives and outcomes that address both systems and scale. 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 and collective action. Importantly, by recognizing and responding to the youthful age composition of many of the countries where we work, implementation of this Policy—by, with, and for

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1   Documents informing the Youth Policy: 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 National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality, U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education, U.S. Strategy on Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity, U.S. 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) Local Capacity Development Policy, (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, USAID's Building Resilience to Recurrent Crisis Policy, and USAID's Economic Growth Policy, among others.

youth—will position USAID's partner countries to make investments that can open the window for a *demographic and democratic dividend* and catapult long-lasting sustainable economic growth and human development.[2]

Over time, USAID anticipates change in a number of ways. At the planning level, youth should be more strategically and prominently featured in policies and strategies, and youth assessments should be considered as a component of all country strategies. As appropriate and based on evidence of both need and USAID's comparative advantage in addressing the development challenge, all USAID Operating Units (OUs) should include youth-specific narratives and desired outcomes in CDCSs. With expanding youth portfolios, the number of dedicated technical youth specialists and trained staff should continue to increase. The youth evaluation, research, and learning agenda will yield an enhanced body of knowledge around what works in youth development and how to increase impact.

IN THIS UPDATED POLICY, USAID PUTS FORTH THE FOLLOWING VISION, GOAL, AND OBJECTIVES:

VISION: USAID envisions a world in which young people have agency,[3] 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, and fostering healthy relationships so they may build on their collective leadership.

POLICY OBJECTIVES:

1. **ACCESS:** Youth are better able to access high-quality information, safe services, and livelihood opportunities and build the skills they need to lead healthy, productive, and engaged lives.

2. **PARTICIPATION:** Youth have the right to fully participate in decision-making as key partners to contribute to individual, household, community, and national well-being.

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 PYD.

2   Democratic Dividend refers to the concept that when young people have greater participation in volunteering, engagement, and voting early in life, they are more likely to be more civically active throughout their lives.

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

Photo: USAID/Generation workforce program, Kenya

Youth in Development at USAID is the intentional, ongoing process of supporting youth engagement in their transition from childhood into adulthood. It is based on a PYD approach—drawn from best practices in youth-specific programs—focusing on four key domains: assets, agency, contribution, and enabling environment. The PYD approach and guiding principles will shape efforts to meet objectives and achieve expected outcomes.

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 inclusively lifts countries out of poverty, ensures greater stability, and promotes healthier societies. With increased efforts to expand access to voluntary contraception, improve education, develop human capital, and create jobs, developing countries in the coming decades can have a population age structure that favors long-lasting economic growth. Countries that create supportive policies, systems, and institutions to drive development benchmarks in health, education, economics, and governance will have greater likelihood of achieving this demographic dividend. Sizeable youth populations will not only benefit from these efforts but, by utilizing their innovative and creative potential, can also help create the conditions for achieving the above objectives. To fulfill youth potential, we must 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 to set the stage for tomorrow's development outcomes.

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 programming in all sectors and acknowledges the following types of youth programming at USAID:

- **Youth-focused:** An activity in which youth are the primary program participants.
- **Youth-relevant:** An activity that includes youth within its targeted participants or beneficiaries or has a youth-specific component.[4]
- **Youth-led:** An activity in which youth are the primary implementers.[5] A youth-led organization focuses on youth-led development, promotes youth participation, and often has young people as staff.

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4   Youth-relevant activities may be focused on policy development, service delivery, and a broad array of other modalities and objectives.

5   Note that very little USAID funding goes to fully youth-led programming at the time of Policy drafting.

INTRODUCTION: YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT

Engaging youth and emerging leaders in development is essential to achieving the United States' most important foreign policy objectives. The voices and skills of 2.4 billion youth between the ages of 10 and 29 are critical to development work. Youth engagement and partnership offer leaders a chance to fully understand what it is like to grow up in today's rapidly changing world. Instead of viewing youth as passive recipients, young people should be viewed as agents of their own development. USAID must invest in youth so that they are actively involved in shaping development interventions. They have a right to represent their own interests. Through youth engagement, USAID and our development partners can do a better job of creating the services, opportunities, and support young people need to develop in healthy ways.

Today's youth face tremendous opportunities and challenges. This generation of young people is spending more time in school, meaning on average they are starting work and families later in life. However, the COVID-19 crisis has placed an enormous strain on their physical and mental health, access to services, economic livelihoods, and overall well-being—not to mention raising the potential of new threats to their civic and political freedoms.[6] At least one in four

young people between the ages of 15 and 29 is directly affected by conflict and violence in their community.[7] Gender inequalities persist that particularly threaten the successful transition of young women to adulthood. The global youth employment crisis also persists, placing enormous pressure on governments, employers, and workers to promote, create, and maintain decent and productive jobs and ensure just transitions to greener economies.

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 and ideas, it is also a pull factor for potential youth migrants who are searching for educational, economic, political, and social opportunities that ultimately affect their communities in both positive and negative ways. Additionally, as social media advances, so does the risk of the spread of disinformation and the complexity and scope of digital harm.

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6   Rachel Nugent, "Youth in a Global World," Population Reference Bureau, May 2006.
7   SFCG Team, "The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security," SFCG, April 26, 2018.

AGE RANGE

USAID uses the terms **youth** and **young people** interchangeably. Youth is a life stage, one that is not finite or linear. Key multilaterals define youth as 15–24 years for statistical purposes, yet for policy and programming many countries and organizations expand this range to reflect the broader range of changes and developmental needs in the transition to adulthood, as well as the diversity among cultural and country contexts. USAID defines youth as individuals between the ages of 10 and 29; it also 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 on stages of youth development, USAID defines the different stages of youth as follows:[8]

- Early adolescence (10–14)

- Adolescence (15–19)

- Emerging adulthood (20–24)

- Transition to adulthood (25–29)

OUs are required to use these age band disaggregations across all relevant indicators. See Annex 4 for more information.

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

- **Pandemic and humanitarian response** - These crises disproportionately affect young people—35 million of the 82 million displaced persons in 2020 were under age 18.[9]

- **Climate action** - This generation of youth will have to deal with the immediate and long-term catastrophic consequences of climate change; at the current country-level commitments to lower greenhouse gas emissions, 172 million children born in Sub-Saharan Africa since 2016 will face nearly 6 times as many extreme weather events, and about 50 times as many heat waves as previous generations.[10]

- **Peace and security** - Violence affects 1.1 billion young people and contributes to long-term consequences affecting their health, productivity, and wellness.

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

9   United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Figures at a Glance," UNHCR, June 18, 2021.

10   "The Kids are Not Alright," International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, September 27, 2021.

- **Gender equity and inclusive development** - Only 2.2 percent of parliamentarians are under 30, and less than 1 percent are young women.[11] The specific contextual and structural factors that affect diverse and marginalized cohorts of youth must be taken into consideration for their full participation and protection.[12]

Inclusive development is the concept that every person, regardless of their identity, is instrumental in transforming their society. Young women and girls, gender non-conforming youth, indigenous youth, and youth with disabilities are disproportionately affected by many of the barriers to their full development and participation in society. Of the 180 to 220 million youth with disabilities worldwide, upward of 80 percent live in developing nations.[13] The diverse needs of youth at different stages in their lives and within their specific contexts are key to Positive Youth Development and this policy.

Photo: USAID/Alcance Positivo, Michael McCabe

11 Call to Action–On young women's political participation and leadership
12 A Systematic Literature Review of Positive Youth Development Impacts on Marginalized and Vulnerable Youth
13   UN, Youth With Disabilities

GENDER AND ADOLESCENCE

USAID works to advance gender equity and equality, with sensitivity to the experiences of those who suffer systemic discrimination, including adolescent girls and young women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) youth. Adolescence and young adulthood is a pivotal period through which USAID supports generational foundations for gender equality. Differences in gender norms emerge most sharply with the onset of puberty, affecting the life trajectories of adolescent girls and young women, adolescent boys and young men, and gender-nonbinary youth in profoundly different ways.

USAID's work is deeply motivated by a commitment to adolescent girls and young women, in light of longstanding systemic discrimination and barriers that continue to affect their full participation and access to opportunity. Adolescence is a critical period, especially for girls, when significant physical, emotional, and social changes shape their futures. One in three girls in the developing world is married by the time she is 18, and approximately 21 million girls aged 15–19 in low- and middle-income countries become pregnant. The consequences of child, early, and forced marriage and unions are severe, affecting girls' and boys' present and future lives. Every year, millions of girls undergo female genital mutilation/cutting. Many girls continue to be infected with HIV/AIDS, and too few girls have the education or skills they need to participate fully in their countries' economies. Support for adolescent girls also benefits their families and communities; educated, healthy, and safe adolescent girls possess a better complement of tools to make the transition into adulthood and engage productively in society as adults.

USAID's efforts also combat discrimination and harmful gender norms that affect young men and adolescent boys and LGBTQI+ youth. While adolescence for boys can be a time for expanded participation in community and public life, harmful gender norms can hold adolescent boys and young men back from meeting their potential. They may be socialized in ways that lead to limited participation in sexual and reproductive health and acceptance of violence as a form of conflict resolution. Yet, globally, youth are refashioning gender norms for the 21st century, and development partners must work with adolescent boys and young men to support healthy expressions of masculinity, advance gender equity and equality, and promote young men's respect for themselves and others.

USAID recognizes that the development and realization of an individual's sexual orientation and gender identity is a process, rather than a singular event. This implies that young people may need varying levels of support during self-identification of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Violence, discrimination, stigma, and exclusion may lead to increased risks to physical and mental health, social isolation, and being denied educational and formal employment opportunities. USAID upholds the protection and advancement of human rights for LGBTQI+ youth across our policies, training, and inclusive programming.

Development processes that are inclusive and gender-equitable 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. Youth have intersectional identities that should be considered throughout the Program Cycle. For the purposes of this Policy, vulnerable and 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, persons with unmet mental health needs, and people of diverse economic class and political opinions. **Any reference to youth in this Policy acknowledges and incorporates youth with intersecting identities who may be marginalized by society**.

How USAID Defines Youth

The transition to adulthood involves multiple and overlapping physical, cognitive, emotional, and moral changes. Successful youth engagement and programming are based on a life-course continuum, beginning with deliberate attention to the critical years of children entering adolescence. 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. Other socially ascribed factors, such as age of voting, marriage, parenthood, and work, can also affect how young people are defined.

Age-specific factors, such as brain development, physical changes, and social and emotional development, should inform and target USAID programming to ensure that programming is age-appropriate along the life span from adolescence through early adulthood. Young

Photo: Lasha Kuprashvili and Ellie Van Houtte/USAID

people experience physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes that influence their needs, identities, behavior, and opportunities.[14] Research shows that they also make choices and respond to incentives differently than young children and adults. This is further affected by gendered perspectives and local social norms that affect young men, women, and gender-diverse youth differently. Better understanding of the biological, social, and cultural dimensions of youth behavior facilitates the design of programming that better supports youth and enables USAID to partner with them to become part of the solution to today's challenges.

WHAT IS THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND?[15]

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.[16] With fewer births each year, a country's young dependent population declines in relation to the working-age population. With necessary investments in policies, systems, and institutions to reach key benchmarks in health, education, economics, and governance, and with a demographic transition to fewer non-working dependents, a country with these context-specific conditions has a window of opportunity for rapid economic growth. The window to capitalize on this opportunity opens when fertility declines rapidly, and economic and social policies facilitate increased education and labor-force participation (especially for women and girls).

The stage of development along the lifespan will strongly determine the types of intervention selected.[17]

- **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.

- **Late 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.

- **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.

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14   "The Adolescent Brain New Research and Its Implications for Young People Transitioning from Foster Care."

15   Kaitlyn Patierno, Smita Gaith, and Leahy Madsen, "Which Policies Promote a Demographic Dividend? An Evidence Review," PRB, October 2019.

16   "Fact Sheet: Attaining the Demographic Dividend," Population Reference Bureau, November 2012.

17   Developmental protection programming for those aged 10–17 years should incorporate guidance and adhere to the U.S. Government Action Plan on Children in Adversity.

Photo: Roman Shalanov, IFES

- **Transition into Adulthood (25–29 years):** Although physical maturation is largely complete, learning continues. In post-conflict situations, programs that provide accelerated learning opportunities to make up for lost years due to war and that provide psychosocial support are often needed.

By taking a life-course approach through each sector, focusing on child, adolescent, and youth development at each stage in development, USAID can better achieve outcomes such as violence prevention, education, health, food security, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). Enabling countries to engage youth in development and contribute their demographic dividend requires continued investment across this life course.

Research also highlights the impact of **adverse childhood and youth experiences (ACES)** on long-term outcomes. Failure to address adversity while young leads to lifelong deficiencies. It compromises future opportunities for individual, community, and national development.

IMPACT OF ADVERSE CHILD AND YOUTH EXPERIENCES ON LIFE OUTCOMES[18]

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) are traumatic events that, if not mitigated, can be harmful to children (ages 0–17). Traumatic events include a wide range of experiences, such as experiencing or witnessing violence or growing up in households with substance misuse, mental health concerns, household instability, or parental separation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 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."[19] These changes affect 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. Failure to ensure that young women have equal opportunity, complete secondary education, access high-quality health services and good-quality jobs, and avoid early and forced marriage, early pregnancy, and gender-based violence leads to the intergenerational transfer of poor development outcomes. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing and created new adverse childhood experiences for millions of children. Globally, more than five million children have lost a primary or secondary caregiver from the pandemic,[20] increasing vulnerability and the potential for youth-headed households.

What Has Changed in the Last Decade, and How It Is Reflected in the New Youth Policy

Since 2012, the youth population around the world has grown by 1.4 billion, and by 2050 an estimated 9 out of 10 young people worldwide will live in Africa and South Asia.[21] More importantly, the global youth landscape has evolved dramatically to include the following challenges and opportunities:

Challenges:

- **Demographic shifts** such as in Europe and Eurasia, where the percentage of youth in the population is shrinking, or in Africa and Asia where the percentage of youth in the population is growing. In Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, youth face growing pressures to migrate because of violence, political instability, and climate change.

- **Stagnant underemployment and unemployment** at rates of two to three times higher than the adult population,

18 "Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 6, 2021.
19 Ibid.
20 "Global Minimum Estimates of Children Affected by COVID-19 Associated Orphaned and Deaths of Caregivers: A Modelling Study," The Lancet 398, no. 10298 (2021).
21 Demographic challenges and opportunities for child health programming in Africa and Asia, World Population Prospects 2019, United Nations.

particularly facing youth in rural areas of developing countries, especially young women. This persistent trend means that young people often never transition into stable employment, even once they are older.[22] Other labor market factors such as ongoing digital transformations and the labor market dynamics due to the COVID-19 pandemic put increased pressure on young job seekers to adapt to changing needs.

- **Interconnected global and humanitarian crises** such as climate change and increasingly common extreme weather events, natural disasters, and complex crises, all of which have been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Young people will face the most severe consequences of climate change and environmental degradation including increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events leading to increased migration, decreased living standards, food and water scarcity, reduced agricultural productivity, and destruction of natural ecosystems. 84 percent of young people surveyed across 10 countries reported feeling at least moderately worried about climate change and reported feelings of climate anxiety impacting overall youth mental health.

- **Increasing adverse mental health impacts on young people**, 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, and the World Health Organization found that there has been a 13 percent rise in mental health conditions and substance use disorders in the last decade.

- **Governments have been shrinking civic and political spaces** around the globe, which challenge the ability of youth to contribute to society effectively and meaningfully, often resulting in **declining trust in government institutions** among youth, leading to youth directing social, civic, and political participation to informal channels.

- Recognition that **violence often begets violence**, with greater evidence of the linkages between violence in the home and violence in communities, particularly as related to **gender-based violence**.

Opportunities: This Policy updates the last youth policy and applies lessons learned from bilateral and global projects, their evaluations and monitoring data, and an overarching assessment of the Policy in 2018.[23] Some key elements and opportunities that are new are:

- Prioritized **PYD** approach based on new research in cross sectoral-based approaches to youth development;

- Increased programming and reporting on results using an **"ages and stages"** approach with awareness of the needs and opportunities of individuals at different stages of their lives to match the various stages of brain development;

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22   Alam, Andaleeb and Maria Eugenia de Diego. "Unpacking School-to-Work Transition: Data and Synthesis Analysis." UNICEF Office of Global Insight and Policy, Scoping Paper No. 2, August 2019.

23   In July 2018, USAID's Office of Policy within the Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning conducted the Youth Policy Implementation Assessment (PIA). The goals of the assessment were to identify progress, successes, challenges, and lessons learned and recommend actions the Agency could take to improve the Policy's implementation. Key recommendations include: 1) strengthen leadership and organizational support structures, 2) enhance technical capacity-building and expertise, and 3) prioritize youth engagement in capacity-building efforts of partners and local youth-serving organizations.

- Increased focus on **diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility** in our workforce and partnerships and inclusive development, with a strong focus on gender equity and intersectionality to improve inclusion in our programs;

- **Increase in national and transnational youth-led movements** pressing for social justice, government accountability, and democratization and to strengthen youth capacities as leaders;

- Increased knowledge of the importance of **soft and socio-emotional skills** for predicting the long-term success of youth activities and outcomes;

- Application of **digital technology and innovation** for youth inclusion, participation, and leadership, understanding the growing **ability of youth to network** globally, the increasing power and risks of social media, and the **transformations in the future of work**; and

- Maximized impact through using **conflict-sensitive and trauma-informed** approaches and integration of **"Do No Harm"** elements throughout USAID's sectors including within digital spaces.

Photo: IRI

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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, with a specific focus on intersectionality and the impact of social and cultural norms on young people's participation. Youth in Development at USAID is the intentional, ongoing process of engaging youth in their transition from childhood into adulthood.

The Policy addresses programming that is youth-focused, youth-relevant, and youth-led.

YOUTH-FOCUSED: An activity in which youth are the primary program participants.

YOUTH-RELEVANT: An activity that includes youth within its targeted participants or beneficiaries or has a youth-specific component.[24]

YOUTH-LED: An activity in which youth are the primary implementers.[25] A youth-led organization focuses on youth-led development, promotes youth participation, and often has young people as staff.

Photo: Feed the Future, Guatemala

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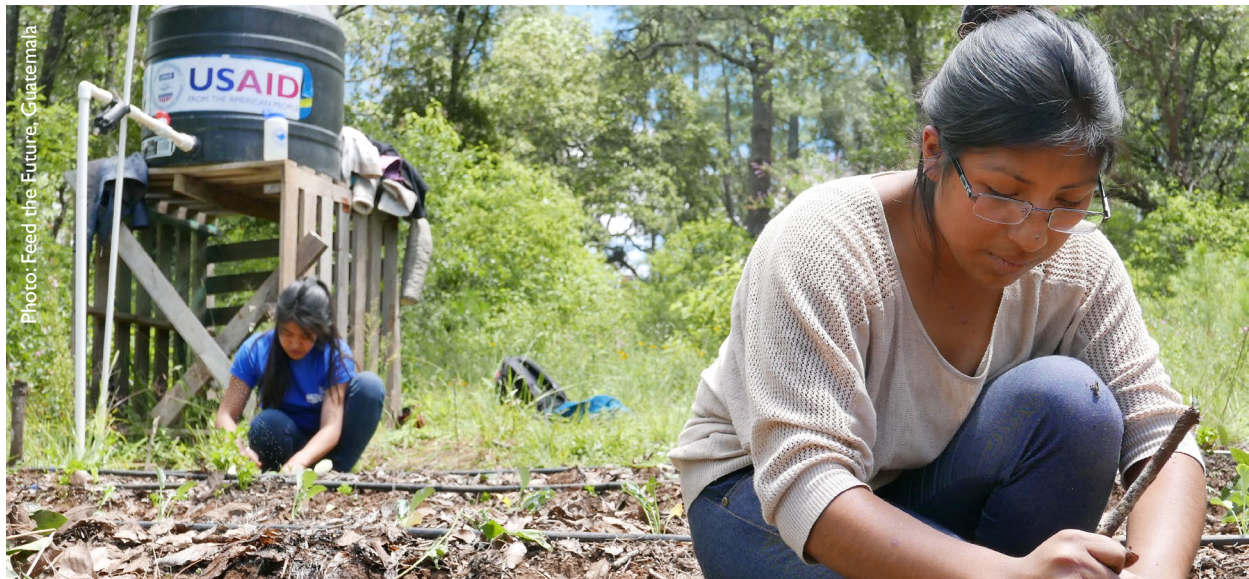
24 Youth-relevant activities may be focused on policy development, service delivery, and a broad array of other modalities and objectives.

25 Note that very little USAID funding goes to fully youth-led programming at the time of Policy drafting.

YOUTH-LED MONITORING, RESEARCH, AND LEARNING

YouthPower2: Learning and Evaluation (YP2LE)

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, and 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 high-quality implementation research; use data and learning to improve their own cross-sectoral, PYD 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)

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

USAID will work to strengthen mechanisms to ensure youth perspectives are solicited for feedback and accountability.

The policy is based on a PYD 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 on their own decisions. This requires that programs engage with families, adults, leaders, and institutions and work to strengthen policies to reduce obstacles that prevent youth from participating in decision-making processes 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 and their 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 integrating services focused on safe, gender-transformative programming. Programming needs to engage parents, community leaders, and peers as partners, given their importance to youth development.

Photo: USAID, El Salvador

Youth programming varies widely because of 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 context and aspirations. To take these into account while using 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 homogeneous.**[26] 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/expression.
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 in interventions.
5	**Protect and support young people's overall well-being** 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 opportunities for development.
8	**Promote responsible use of technology** by and for youth by leveraging digital literacy, appropriate skills development, and digital citizenship opportunities, while reducing risks for digital harm.

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26   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."

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, and fostering healthy relationships so they may build on their collective leadership.

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

1. **ACCESS**: Youth are better able to access high-quality information, safe services, and livelihood opportunities and build the skills they need to lead healthy, productive, and engaged lives.
2. **PARTICIPATION**: Youth have the right to fully participate in decision-making as key partners to contribute to individual, household, community, and national well-being.
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.

USAID efforts toward 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 well-being.
- Youth fully participate as key community partners, leaders, innovators, and researchers in democratic and development processes and play active roles in peacebuilding and civil society.
- Youth have a stronger voice in, and are better served by, local and national institutions, with more robust and youth-responsive policies and services, while experiencing a decrease in practices that marginalize and harm youth.

OBJECTIVE 1: ACCESS

Youth are better able to access high-quality information, safe services, and livelihood opportunities and build the skills they need to lead healthy, productive, and engaged 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

All young people, including those with intersecting identities from marginalized groups, have the right to access high-quality, relevant, respectful information, services, and opportunities. More equitable access for youth is also critical to creating the conditions for a potential demographic dividend and unlocking the economic gains many low- and middle-income countries could experience. Ensuring that youth develop social-emotional,[27] technical, and employment-specific skills is essential to their own economic and social development. Governments and institutions must create and sustain systems that fully engage youth and that build and effectively use youths' skills.

USAID's programming that supports service-delivery—whether through direct service provision, technical assistance to service providers (both governmental and nongovernmental), policy, or monitoring interventions—will intentionally seek to increase the quality of and access to services for young people. To improve the uptake of critical services by youth, USAID will need to design interventions with youth in mind. Key sectors include education; employment; physical, reproductive, and mental health; nutrition; WASH; protection and security; and social services and includes services delivered in conflict and crisis situations. There are opportunities to leverage and continue gains made from childhood interventions in health and education in the past decade and to expand the provision of services to marginalized youth who may not currently receive formal services because of their vulnerabilities.

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27 "Social and Emotional Learning and Soft Skills," USAID EducationLinks, August 1, 2019.

Photo: Erald Lamja for USAID, Albania

When services are not designed with youth in mind, youth may have low uptake because of barriers including existing cultural and social norms, insecurities, lack of age-specific information, limited mobility, time restrictions, financial considerations, low personal decision-making power, and security considerations. Young people from diverse backgrounds and circumstances will have differing needs and barriers. USAID must consider the diverse needs of youth populations to avoid unintentionally increasing disparities and reinforcing biases. Adolescent girls, young women, and youth from other marginalized groups or communities, in particular, experience barriers to accessing opportunities because of gender- or identity-based discrimination and violence. In other words, youth-responsive services aim to be inclusive and appropriate for all youth regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic identity, religion, race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, political affiliation, or physical location. While youth-responsive services are often conducted within family, peer, and community settings, being inclusive and appropriate may lead to settings that are conducive to greater levels of privacy to reduce vulnerabilities.

Youth-responsive services are services that are equitable, accessible, acceptable, appropriate, and effective. USAID should:

- Analyze relevant data to understand trends and patterns with youth within targeted populations;
- Apply nuance to ensure that services and information are age- and developmentally appropriate;
- Guarantee accessibility by considering languages spoken and literacy rates and including features such as braille, alternative (ALT) text, and captioning;
- Support the reduction of financial barriers to youth entrepreneurship or services;
- Reduce risk to ensure safety and security considerations for diverse youth, including analysis of age, gender, and ethnic considerations;
- Prioritize establishing conditions and service that are respectful of all;
- Maximize innovation and use of technology to promote digital literacy, appropriate skills development, and citizenship for positive change, while ensuring equitable Internet access;
- Consider opportunities to make services holistic and connected to reduce opportunity costs, including integration of health, education, and social services and incorporating youth-centered social and behavioral approaches and evidence-based components, rather than implementing isolated interventions;
- Integrate screening for specific issues such as mental health and gender-based violence referrals; and
- Minimize barriers to obtaining parental consent for young people under 18 or in conflict-affected environments, while also considering the appropriate level of family and community engagement and information dissemination to ensure acceptance of necessary service provision for adolescents and youth.

SNAPSHOT: Improved Access to Education, Employment, and Entrepreneurship

The Puentes Project (2018–2023) supports youth in high-migration areas of Guatemala to increase 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 they can actively contribute to their communities.

Puentes supports private and public education providers to train vulnerable youth and improve the quality of their programs so they are training youth for job and market opportunities. The activity also works with private-sector employers to help them expand their businesses and hire trained youth for vulnerable populations. Additionally, the activity ensures that vulnerable youth have access to social services that are critical to their overall well-being, so they may take full advantage of opportunities available to them, improve their quality of life, and fully participate in civic spaces. The project's ability to increase youth access to services include appropriate inclusion of family and community, youth engagement and leadership, and participatory mapping of barriers and opportunities at the community level. It also includes youth in strategic decision-making, such as through youth networks and youth participation in the steering committee.

Photo: USAID, Egypt

OBJECTIVE 2: PARTICIPATION

Youth have the right to fully participate in decision-making as key partners to contribute to individual, household, community, and national well-being.

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 accomplish USAID's development and humanitarian outcomes, USAID will encourage, recognize, and enable youth, especially those from marginalized groups, to be a source of positive change for themselves and their communities. Therefore, OUs and projects should purposefully create opportunities for consistent youth engagement in initiatives and core processes. The Policy calls for Agency-wide prioritization of meaningful youth engagement in defining needs, assets, and voice within and across systems, including programming in education, health, justice, security, employment, humanitarian systems, and all levels of governance (local and national).

The DREAMS (Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored and Safe) Program aims to reduce HIV among adolescent girls and young women in 15 countries. DREAMS Ambassadors ages 15–24 advocate for and raise community awareness on DREAMS; recruit adolescent girls and young women to the program; engage in design, implementation, and program assessment; and promote HIV and sexual and reproductive health services. Namibia's DREAMS Ambassadors work to strengthen the use of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) among young women, including promoting and answering questions from peers about PrEP and building community support around PrEP use. Namibia's DREAMS Ambassadors are compensated for their work and are selected by implementing partners and peers based on leadership skills, interest in advocacy, and local knowledge of the community.

Youth Engagement within the Program Cycle

OUs should ensure that they have established avenues to seek youth input across the Program Cycle, including research and development of new awards and throughout project implementation.

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 access to virtual platforms for voice, networking, and innovation.

- **Assessment**: Strategies are informed by youth input and research.

Meaningful youth engagement is an inclusive, intentional, mutually respectful partnership between youth and adults whereby power is shared, 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 the

world.[28] Agency policies, country strategies, and partnerships will not only be inclusive of youth needs, but will also actively leverage the assets, priorities, and ideas of young people.

The kinds of resources and skills necessary to meaningfully engage adolescents differ from those needed to engage young adults. These specific and different considerations and resources should be reflected in budgets and program planning.

Photo: Helen Manson for USAID

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28   YouthPower 2, Youth Engagement Measurement Guide

SNAPSHOT: Enhancing the Relevance of USAID Programming to Local Youth Priorities through Listening

USAID/Timor Leste's Local Works (2020–2021) activity started with a youth listening tour to better understand youth needs, challenges, and priorities. The local NGO Haburas Ita Moris supported the Mission to conduct a month-long youth listening tour to gather youth views on development priorities and challenges.

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, engaging older youth as peer leaders and/ or mentors, and establishing youth networks for advocacy, watchdog, and other activities. Most efforts to partner with local youth civil-society organizations to date have limited their participation to delivering a project designed by others without their valuable input and have constrained their sustainability through lack of capacity-building and contract constraints. This is described below in the "Agency Best Practices for Mainstreaming and Engaging Youth" and in the forthcoming Implementation Guidance.

Photo: USAID/MOMENTUM, India

Photo: USAID/LEER, Dominican Republic

SNAPSHOT: Setting Up USAID Youth Councils

USAID's YouthPower2: Learning and Evaluation sets up and manages various youth councils to inform youth programming.

- **The Digital Youth Council** helps USAID explore issues around digital harm by providing the lived experience and expertise of youth who work to reduce digital harm in their countries.

- **The Care Leaders Council** provides a forum for young leaders to exchange practices on child care reform while also providing feedback to USAID on our engagement with children and adults in institutionalized or foster care systems.

- **The YouthLead Ambassadors Council** mobilizes annual cohorts of diverse young leaders who inform USAID's youthlead.org platform for young changemakers.

USAID will seek to set up formal channels to engage with youth, including but not limited to youth advisory councils, youth listening tours, and including youth on project steering committees and evaluation teams.

Youth Citizen Engagement

USAID will seek to support structures to increase citizen engagement between youth and their governments. The Agency also anticipates expanding its volunteer and civic engagement strategies to mobilize collective action for development priorities.

Photo: USAID/IMPACT-MED Vietnam

SNAPSHOT: Connecting Youth Leaders to Sri Lankan Government Officials

The Emerging Leaders Academy (2016–2022) brings together youth community leaders, ages 21–25, from across the country to provide technical assistance and small grants to enable young leaders to identify citizen concerns and develop issue-based advocacy campaigns and policy proposals more effectively. Through intensive workshops and follow-on community projects, Emerging Leaders Academy participants connect across a nationwide network of like-minded youth and local government officials to advocate for their communities' interests.

Partnering with Youth-Led Organizations

As demonstrated by the New Partnership Initiative, partnering is at the heart of USAID's effort to build a world that is safer, healthier, and more prosperous for people everywhere. The Agency works to expand partnerships with local actors to bring about sustainable change. Practically, this means lowering the barriers faced by nontraditional partners—including local actors, U.S. small businesses, faith-based organizations, cooperatives, diaspora groups, civil-society organizations, and youth-led organizations.

In its youth programming, USAID seeks to identify and strengthen youth-led and youth-serving organizations and networks, including groups led by marginalized populations. This includes providing training and capacity-development assistance and providing tools and resources for potential and existing partners. Youth-led and youth-serving organizations often face challenges when seeking to partner with USAID because of the complexity of the acquisition and assistance process and financial and reporting requirements. USAID will work to reduce partnership barriers, while also looking to address sustainability challenges for local youth organizations as an element of all relevant awards.

SNAPSHOT: Locally Led Development

Youth Excel (2020–2025) endeavors to expand opportunities for nontraditional partners as sub-awardees and through small grants to youth-led organizations. Two of the activities under Youth Excel include strengthening intergenerational partnerships to facilitate dialogue between youth and adults and supporting advocacy to leverage youth-led research and adults' support to influence development agendas and policies.

Photo: IREX

OBJECTIVE 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.

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

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."[29] Achieving and sustaining any development outcome involves multiple stakeholders and the application of youth-centered social and behavioral approaches.[30] In the context of youth development, education providers, health care providers, donors, employers, governments, communities, and young people 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.[31] 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. This critical support and these 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 (financial, material, and knowledge-based). The process of social change toward more supportive systems for youth often requires that these underlying dynamics be shifted.[32]

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29   "Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting Sustained Development," U.S. Agency for International Development, July 12, 2021.

30   Ibid.

31   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.

32   Ibid.

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 youth and emerging young leaders and meet development priorities through:

• Technical assistance for program design,

• Platforms for youth engagement,

• Communications support, and

• 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 them to build self-reliant communities.

Photo: Sharekna for USAID, Tunisia

Photo: UNFPA, Malawi

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 practices to increase their effectiveness at serving and engaging 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 the systems that affect youth and listening deeply to the perspectives of stakeholders. USAID's work will aim to support the convening, coordination, and collaboration of stakeholders, including youth from marginalized communities, for continuous improvement in youth development outcomes. The Agency will engage and partner with new and underutilized partners, such as youth-led and youth-serving organizations, and through local public-private collaboration mechanisms dedicated to improving youth outcomes. USAID's work will seek to amplify the voices and priorities of marginalized and vulnerable youth populations, including gender and sexual minorities, adolescent girls and young women, persons with disabilities, and racial, religious, and ethnic minority groups.

SNAPSHOT: Systems Change through USAID's One Health Workforce – Next Generation Activity (OHW-NG) (2019–2024)

OHW-NG creates a pipeline of future health leaders with the competencies and skills to address pandemics and other challenging infectious disease threats. The activity applies a One Health approach that recognizes that the health of people, animals, and their environment is inextricably linked. OHW-NG works in partnership with One Health university networks in 17 countries in Southeast Asia and Africa to empower the networks and their member universities to develop educational programming that trains students in leadership, communication, systems thinking, and other essential competencies inside and outside of the classroom through student innovation club activities in 50 member universities, national and regional student digital and case competitions, community awareness campaigns led by students, and student mini-grants for research, conference attendance, and fellowships or internships.

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

- 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);

- Including specific attention to norms and culture, policies and laws, and resource flows by taking into account context-specific adaptations during youth program design, implementation, and evaluation;

- Identifying and supporting local mechanisms for stakeholder coordination,[33] ensuring that youth are engaged as leaders and agents of change, especially vulnerable and marginalized youth who bring underrepresented perspectives to implementation of interventions;

- Positively contributing to conflict dynamics and sustainable peacebuilding;

- 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 number 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;

- 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; and

- Applying the 5R's framework of Results, Roles, Relationships, Rules, and Resources for identifying and monitoring interventions.[34]

Photo: USAID, Guatemala

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33 John Kania and Mark Kramer, "Collective Impact (SSIR)," *Stanford Social Innovation Review: Informing and Inspiring Leaders of Social Change*, 2011.

34 "Technical Note: The 5Rs Framework in the Program Cycle," USAID, October, 2016.

Photo: CRS

SNAPSHOT: Systems Approach in Rwanda Improves Employment and Skills[35]

AKAZI KANOZE (2009–2018): In Rwanda, more than two-thirds of the population had less than a primary education in 2008. Most employers preferred to recruit university graduates, but had difficulty finding qualified candidates with work-readiness skills. Since then, service providers have made an important difference by 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.

35   "Scaling Youth Workforce Development Outcomes by Transforming Local Systems: A Rwanda Case Study," Education Development Center, May 2021.

Photo: USAID

AGENCY REQUIREMENTS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND BEST PRACTICES

This Policy applies to all USAID OUs (Missions, Bureaus, Independent Offices) and covers policy and programming in Washington and in the countries where USAID works. The table below is a compilation of requirements, recommendations, and best practices that are to be adopted for effective youth integration.

Organizational Structure	1. **Mission Orders (MOs):** USAID's Missions, Regional Missions, and Country Offices are encouraged to adopt or revise, and periodically update, an MO on youth integration or integrate youth considerations into relevant MOs. The MO should describe how a Mission will implement this Policy, including by mainstreaming youth considerations throughout the Program Cycle. 2. **Youth Working Groups:** Missions should establish cross-sectoral youth working groups, as appropriate, to maximize coordination and integration.
Staffing	1. **Agency Senior Advisor on Youth:** The Administrator will designate an Agency Senior Advisor responsible for youth development issues, including to advocate for and integrate youth into Agency initiatives, oversee policy coherence, support implementation and training, and serve as a senior representative on youth issues in the Interagency and external community. 2. ***New | Youth Advisors:** *Pillar and Regional Bureaus* are required to designate a Youth Advisor (part-time or full-time, through any hiring mechanism) who has (or will develop) the technical skills, competencies, and youth development experience necessary to provide appropriate, in-depth guidance to technical and program staff across their respective Bureau to ensure the integration of youth in meaningful ways across USAID's Program Cycle. Youth Advisors should have responsibilities including those listed above, explicitly included in their job descriptions, as determined by the Pillar or Regional Bureau. 3. **Youth Points of Contact:** Missions should designate a Youth Point of Contact or Youth Advisor with appropriate youth development experience and technical skills to coordinate with Mission staff on youth integration.[36] Missions with significant youth-relevant funding are strongly encouraged to have part-time or full-time Youth Advisors.

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36 Agency Notice 0641, June 6, 2018.

Staffing *(continued)*	4. **Training:** All USAID staff should have a foundational understanding of effective youth development programming principles and resources. The Positive Youth Development 101 and 201 courses are highly recommended for all applicable Agency staff across all hiring mechanisms.[37] It is recommended that staff complete this training within one year of their start dates. USAID should continue to develop and offer advanced training that meets the needs of Youth Advisors and POCs.
Program Cycle Integration	1. ***New | Youth Analysis:** USAID Missions and OUs should ensure that they adequately assess the needs of diverse youth when conducting planning exercises. Missions should conduct stand-alone youth analyses or incorporate analysis adequately into an inclusive development or other analysis that includes intentional focus on dynamics affecting youth participation. Youth assessments provide a detailed understanding of the needs of the diverse youth population, including the identification of vulnerable and marginalized youth, the areas of greatest need, the conditions that may drive youth toward risky behavior, and the potential opportunity for impact. R/CDCSs, Strategic Frameworks and other country strategy documents, Project Development Documents (PDDs), Action Memoranda, and solicitations should integrate key findings of youth analyses. 2. **Country and Regional Strategic Planning:** The Results Framework and narratives of new R/CDCSs, Strategic Frameworks, and other country strategy documents should reflect priorities related to youth, inclusive development, and capacity-strengthening.[38] Development Objectives should describe integrated approaches, principles, and resources from various sectors and sources to achieve a common objective. OUs should engage youth in CDCS/RDCS consultations. 3. ***New | Activity Design and Implementation:** To ensure adequate youth consideration in all new youth-relevant activities, Mission Youth points of contact and/or Youth Working Group members should participate on activity design teams and/or be included in the clearance process. Design teams should reflect the relevant findings of the youth analysis in the different components of the solicitation.
Monitoring and Reporting	1. **Monitoring and Reporting:** *Relevant indicators should be age-disaggregated.* OUs must report on results related to youth realized during the reporting Fiscal Year through the Performance Plan and Report (PPR) including use of the Standard Foreign Assistance Youth indicators maintained by the Office of Foreign Assistance (F),[39] which are required, as applicable.[40] 2. **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.

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37   (a) all Agency staff who design, evaluate, or manage strategies and projects; (b) Agency staff (including Mission and Operating Unit Directors and Deputy Directors) who directly or indirectly supervise staff who design, evaluate, or manage strategies and projects; (c) all Contracting and Assistance Officers; and (d) Program Officers.

38   "Country Development Cooperation Strategies (CDCS): Results & Data," U.S. Agency for International Development, June 22, 2021.

39   "Standard Youth Indicators Reference Sheet," USAID, September, 2021.

40   All USAID's people-level standard and custom performance indicators should be sex-disaggregated and age-disaggregated.

Collaboration and Learning	USAID's youth programming should be intentionally integrated across sectors and coordinated with relevant actors at the Mission level through: 1. **Youth Consultations:** Missions and Bureaus should establish approaches to regularly solicit feedback from diverse populations of youth, such as through youth advisory committees or councils.[41] USAID should also consider how it can strengthen local youth spokespeople and youth-led organizations from marginalized populations, such as through ministries and local government as well as USAID's own programming. 2. **External Collaboration:** USAID will liaise with a wide range of key stakeholders to ensure that youth programming is coordinated and non-duplicative and reflects country priorities. This may include government and donor counterparts, civil society, youth-serving and youth-led organizations, educational institutions, foundations, and the private sector, including youth-led businesses. 3. **Interagency Collaboration:** USAID programs should be coordinated with interagency efforts (Peace Corps, State Department, and others), at headquarters and Mission levels, to ensure maximum efficiency of USG investments. At the headquarters level, collaboration and learning should occur across 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. • **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. • **Mission Youth Advisor and POC Coordination:** USAID will increase efficiency by coordinating learning across and within regions between youth working groups and advisors.

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 R/CDCSs, Strategic Frameworks, other country strategy documents, 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 PPRs. Part of this assessment will include structured engagement of youth representatives.

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41   Consult your General Counsel or Legal Office before establishing a youth advisory committee in order to navigate any legal constraints.

Photo: USAID, El Salvador

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: A GLOBAL SNAPSHOT

Youth represent the opportunity of today and tomorrow. Their interests and skill sets are not bound by sectors—young people are already 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 to thrive. The PYD approach promotes cross-sectoral programming as the most effective method for holistically designing interventions with youth.[42] Across sectors, soft skills such as self-control, higher-order thinking, positive self-concept, and communication skills lead to improved outcomes. Interventions should incorporate as many of the seven key features of the PYD model as feasible: 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.[43] Youth is 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.[44] USAID will continue to address youth priorities in sectoral and cross-sectoral interventions. Examples of strategic sectoral priorities for youth are discussed below.

The Global Youth Development Index (YDI) is one composite index of indicators that tracks trends in key youth development priorities across regions and within countries, most recently measuring from 2010–2018. The figure below shows the worldwide results of the 2020 YDI, highlighting countries where USAID can make an impact. The countries in dark blue have very high levels of youth development relative to the rest of the world. Countries in the lightest blue have the most room for improvement on priorities including education, employment, civic participation, gender, digital engagement, and health.[45]

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42   "What Works in Cross-Sectoral Skills for Youth," YouthPower, n.d.

43   "A Systematic Review of Positive Youth Development Programs in Low- and Middle-Income Countries," YouthPower, April 27, 2017.

44   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.

45   "Global Youth Development Index and Report," USAID EducationLinks, August 1, 2021.

2020 Global YDI World Map[46]

Low   Medium   High   Very high   NA
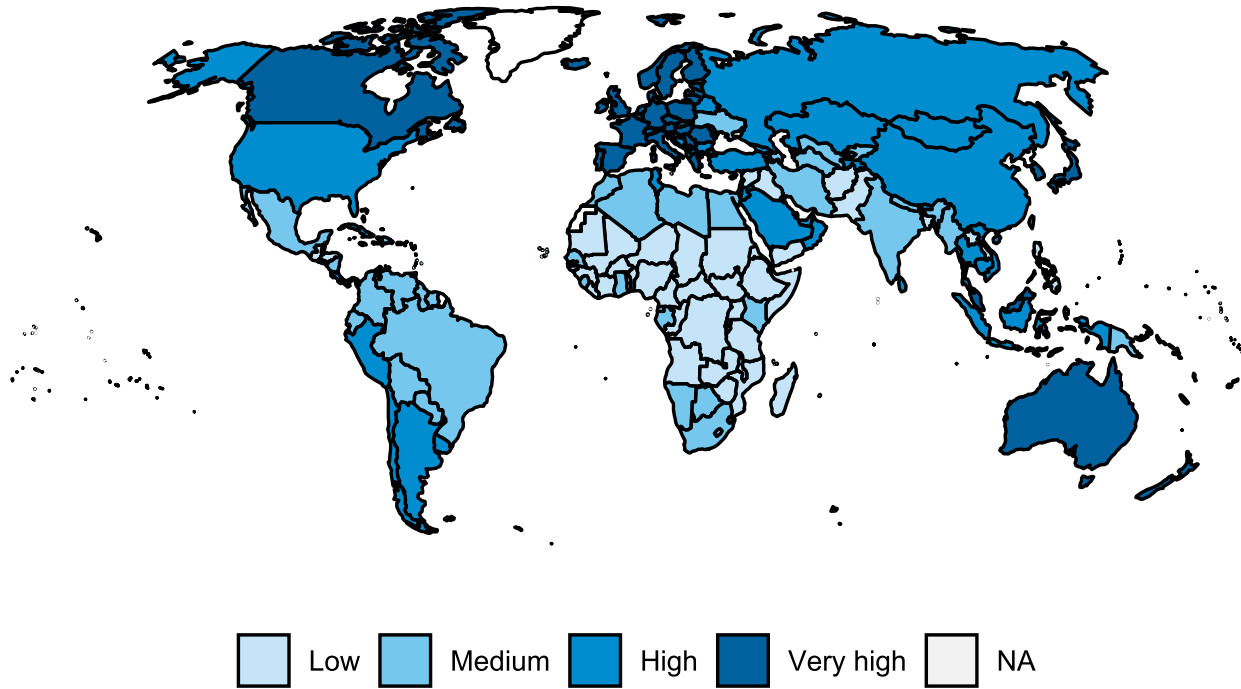
The following summary of Sectoral Strategic Priorities related to youth provides an overview of how USAID's Youth Policy intersects with sectors and regions across the development field. The sectoral subsections are not intended to be exhaustive but rather provide a high-level overview of USAID's approach for youth-inclusive and youth-focused programming in these areas.

46   Commonwealth Secretariat, 2021. *Global Youth Development Index and Report 2020*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat (p.19).

EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR ENGAGING YOUTH BY SECTOR AND REGION

Climate Action

Support behavior change and communications campaigns that help increase acceptance of young people's participation, activism, and leadership on climate actions. Amplify youths' role as agents of positive change with other climate stakeholders. Increase financial and technical resources to youth-led organizations and networks for climate action and expand opportunities for youth in the increasingly green economy.

Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance

Advance civic education in formal and non-formal settings, increase youth civic and political participation and representation, and bolster collective action and leadership to address issues across sectors that improve democracy, human rights, and governance outcomes, in particular, as part of increasing agency to engage meaningfully in the electoral cycle, tackle corruption, and strengthen civic spaces.

Education

Remove barriers to education and support high-quality inclusive education that matches market opportunities. 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.

Digital Technology and Innovation

Support digital literacy, skills, and opportunities (civic and economic) to maximize opportunities in today's digital age for all persons, especially those most affected by the digital divide.

Gender

Address issues of gender equity and equality for young women and girls, particularly in education, access to responsive health care, menstrual hygiene, economic empowerment, and prevention of gender-based violence, including child, early, and forced marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting.

Health

Support behavior change and communications campaigns to promote health-seeking behaviors.

Ensure access to high-quality health services and information, including but not limited to, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), reproductive health including voluntary contraception, HIV/AIDS, infectious diseases, malaria, and nutrition.

Humanitarian Assistance

Build the resilience and agency of youth in contributing to supporting disaster preparedness, mitigation, and response, while also providing tailored support to prevent and respond to protection risks and improve the safety and well-being of affected individuals and communities.

Inclusive Development

Promote activities to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion of all young people with particular attention to the most marginalized, especially those with intersecting identities, who face particular barriers (LGBTQI+, indigenous youth, youth with disabilities, etc.).

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Support de-stigmatization of mental health and expand access to appropriate mental health and psychosocial services, especially in multiple environments (family, school, and fragile situations).

Peace and Security

Expand young people's role in activities that advance the five pillars of UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security: participation, partnership, protection, prevention, and disengagement and reintegration.

Employment

Invest in inclusive economic growth addressing both demand and supply sides of job creation, particularly for young women and rural youth, by expanding economic opportunities and improving the quality of jobs available. Recognize that many of the viable opportunities for youth are in the informal or self-employment sector but also in growth sectors such as green jobs, the gig economy, and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields. Engage youth productively in youth-inclusive market systems and expand services for economic success such as financial services, access to appropriate technology platforms, and business mentoring.

Inclusive Agriculture-Led Growth, Nutrition, Resilience, and WASH

Increase young people's engagement and employment in resilient agri-food and water systems to sustainably reduce global hunger, poverty, malnutrition, and water insecurity.

REGIONAL PRIORITIZATION

Photo: Kimberley Anne Weller for USAID, Jamaica

Africa

Support equity and equality in education and health, support productive participation among the diversity of youth in their communities and societies, particularly in fragile environments, and bridge digital access issues to grow opportunities. Prevent and address gender-based violence, especially in relation to education, child, early, and forced marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting, and other forms.

Asia

Support an integrated approach that covers health, economic growth, and education as well as programming around maternal and child health and workforce development.

Europe and Eurasia

Support development of workforce readiness skills to mitigate high youth unemployment and outmigration, enhance opportunities for inclusive civic engagement, and improve media literacy.

Latin America/Caribbean

Support young people's education and workforce readiness while also engaging them in building safe communities as a means of addressing drivers of irregular migration.

Middle East/North Africa

Support social protection, high-quality education, employment, and skills and opportunities for engagement. Address 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.

Photo: Bikash Karki for USAID/Laxmi-ASIA

CONCLUSION

This Policy strongly encourages USAID to integrate critical priorities concerning youth into the mainstream of its programming; more aggressively seek and design effective, evidence-based youth programming; and increase the participation of young people in an effort to improve outcomes across all sectors and leverage the capacity of youth to help address global challenges that are the central to the national security and prosperity of the United States.

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 and youth partnerships should be more strategically and prominently featured in R/CDCSs, Strategic Frameworks and other country strategy documents. 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 for youth programming from existing resources is likely to increase, especially in high youth population countries. Strengthening the support of youth-led and youth-serving organizations at the sub-national level should be a key part of the Agency's localization strategy. 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 to improve development outcomes across sectors. The USAID Policy on Youth in Development is a critical step toward a fresh approach to development, one that proactively ensures youth can fulfill their dreams for prosperity, peace, and justice.

ANNEX 1 – DEMOGRAPHICS ON YOUTH[47]

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

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

USAID Countries with Youthful Populations	% of Population Under 15 (2021)	% of Population 10–29 (2021)	Median Age (2021)
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
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

USAID Countries with Youthful Populations	% of Population Under 15 (2021)	% of Population 10–29 (2021)	Median Age (2021)
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
Niger	49%	31%	15.2
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

USAID Countries with Youthful Populations	% of Population Under 15 (2021)	% of Population 10–29 (2021)	Median Age (2021)
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 assessment[48] and subsequent analysis, the first iteration of the Policy helped USAID:

At the Agency level:

- Establish an **Agency Youth Coordinator**.
- Establish **the YouthCorps**, a formal structure of Youth Advisors and points of contact in all Bureaus and Missions.
- Increase the **integration of youth into the Program Cycle** by completing a record number of country youth assessments (approximately 50) that led to ensuring the issues affecting youth were meaningfully integrated into new Country Strategies and activity designs.
- Create accessible **youth-focused and youth-led central mechanisms** such as YouthPower,[49] Youth Excel,[50] Higher Education for Leadership, Innovation, and Exchange (HELIX),[51] and other funding streams that advance cross-sectoral youth mainstreaming in programming.
- Improve **professional development** of staff through Positive Youth Development Training to Agency, Mission, and partner staff.
- Increase **annual investment in youth-focused activities to over $400 million**, including the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).
- Develop **tailored guidance** for integrating youth into programming in specific technical sectors.
- Hire youth technical advisors for multiple Bureaus, Offices, and Missions.
- Develop four Standard F Indicators to track youth programming.
- Strengthen **Mission youth-focused and relevant programming** resulting in:
  - 100 percent of country strategies including recognition of the role of youth; 88 percent including youth at the development objective level, and 90 percent including youth at the intermediate results level.

48   "Assessment of the Implementation of USAID's Youth in Development Policy," USAID, July 2018.

49   "YouthPower," YouthPower, n.d.

50   "Youth Excel: Our Knowledge, Leading Change," IREX, n.d.

51   Lorena Marko, "USAID Releases New Higher Education for Leadership, Innovation, and Exchange (HELIX) Annual Program Statement (APS)," USAID EducationLinks, April 9, 2020.

With implementing partners:

- Expand implementing partners' understanding of **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, YouthPower2: Learning and Evaluation [YP2LE] and Youth Excel).

- **Promote and scale youth leadership and networking of youth** including networking more than 100,000 development professionals on **YouthPower.org** and 14,000 young changemakers on **YouthLead.org** and launching the **Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI)** in conjunction with the State Department to reach more than 20,000 youth, the **European Democracy Youth Network (EDYN)** with 230 members across 23 countries, and the Yes Youth Can initiative to coalesce more than one million Kenyan youth for actions such as income generation, community service, and engaging in arts.

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, and functional, as well as President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief [PEPFAR]); this represents a 134 percent increase over the FY 2013 allocation of $178 million.

- From FY 2013–2020, USAID youth programming allocations totaled approximately $1.56 billion.

- Programming Results (FY 2016–FY 2020): USAID tracked certain results across its youth cohort, notably Foreign Assistance Standard Indicators (including Youth Standard Indicators) starting in FY 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 FY 2020 on antiretroviral treatment for HIV
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
PRODUCTIVE ASSETS	34 percent	Of participants in programming designed to increase access to productive economic resources were youth

ANNEX 4 – STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT BY AGE BANDS

The stage of development along the lifespan will strongly determine the types of intervention selected.[52]

- **Early Adolescence (10–14 years):** This is a critical time to build on previous investments in child health, nutrition, and education and 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 dropout, early marriage, pregnancy, and sexual exploitation; expanding learning opportunities; and 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-responsive 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, such as peacebuilding, and enable youth to build assets and provide economic, health, and social support for family life (e.g., housing). In post-conflict situations, programs that provide accelerated learning opportunities to make up for lost years due to war and that provide psychosocial support are often needed.

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52 Developmental protection programming for those aged 10-17 years should incorporate guidance and adhere to the U.S. Government Action Plan on Children in Adversity.

ANNEX 5 – SEX- AND AGE-DISAGGREGATED STANDARD INDICATORS

Youth Standard Indicators and Other Sex- and Age-Disaggregated Standard Indicators

SPSD Category	Indicator Number	Indicator Title
Cross-Cutting Youth	Youth-1	Number of youth trained in soft skills/life skills through USG-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 civic engagement activities following soft skills/life skills training or initiatives from USG-assisted programs
	Youth-6	Number of youth who complete USG-funded leadership programs
Health	HL.7.2-1-a/b	Percent of audience who recall hearing or seeing a specific USG-supported Family Planning/Reproductive Health (FP/RH) message
Economic Growth	EG.3-2-f	Number of individuals participating in USG food-security programs
	EG.4.2-7-c	Number of individuals participating in USG-assisted group-based savings, micro-finance, or lending programs
	EG.6-11-j/k/l/m/n/o	Average percent change in earnings following participation in USG-assisted workforce development programs
	EG.6-12-g/h/i/j/k/l	Percent of individuals with new employment following participation in USG-assisted workforce development programs
	EG.6-13-w/x/y/z/za/zb/zc/zd	Percent of individuals with improved soft skills following participation in USG-assisted workforce development programs
	EG.6-14-w/x/y/z/za/zb/zc/zd	Percent of individuals who complete USG-assisted workforce development programs
	EG.6-16-g/h/i/j	Percent of individuals with improved perceived quality of employment following participation in USG-assisted workforce development programs

SPSD Category	Indicator Number	Indicator Title
Education and Social Services	ES.1-3-c/d/e/f	Number of learners in primary schools or equivalent non-school-based settings reached with USG education assistance
	ES.1-4-c/d/e/f	Number of learners in secondary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with USG education assistance
	ES.1-46-g/h/i/j/k/l/m/n	Percent of individuals who transition to further education or training following participation in USG-assisted programs
	ES. 1-54-w/x/y/z/za/zb/zc/zd	Percent of individuals with improved reading skills following participation in USG-assisted programs
	ES.2-2-ba/bb	Number of individuals attending higher education institutions with USG scholarship or financial assistance
	ES.2-55-c	Number of learners reached by USG-assisted higher education interventions
	ES.5-1-h	Number of USG social assistance beneficiaries participating in productive safety nets [IM-level]
Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance	DR.3.3-1-c	Number of individuals who received USG-assisted political party training
	DR.3.3-2	Number of USG-assisted political parties implementing initiatives to increase the number of candidates and/or members who are women, youth, and from marginalized groups
	DR.6.1-2-d	Number of human rights defenders trained and supported
	DR.6.3-1-d	Number of individuals from low income or marginalized communities who received legal aid or victim's assistance with USG support

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GLOSSARY

Accountability

Decision-makers/systems are accountable to youth. Mechanisms are in place to ensure youth understand the impact of their participation. Youth actively participate in learning, monitoring, and evaluation processes.

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, set their own goals, and act on those decisions to achieve desired outcomes without fear of violence or retribution.

Capacity

Youth have the necessary resources and skills to participate and achieve desired outcomes. Adults have the skills and knowledge to facilitate meaningful and respectful youth participation.

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.

Demographic Dividend

The accelerated economic growth that may result from a decline in a country's birth and death rate and the subsequent change in the age structure of the population, if a country makes the right social and economic policies and investments.

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

Gender equality concerns women and men as well as gender and sexual minorities. Equality involves working with all genders, including men and boys, and 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.

Inclusion

Specific measures are in place to support the participation of youth who may face greater discrimination and barriers to their full participation. There is a clear understanding of why youth may be marginalized, excluded, and silenced in the first place. Negative/harmful attitudes are addressed at both a societal and an individual level.

Inclusive development

The concept that every person, regardless of their identity, is instrumental in transforming their society. 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.

Intersectional

A term that refers to the overlap of social identities that contributes to the specific type of oppression and discrimination experienced by an individual.

Local system

"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."[53]

Mental Health Interventions

Interventions that address mental conditions through personalized care delivered to individuals or small groups with similar conditions. These include psychotherapy, psychoeducation to clients and their families, and pharmacology.

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."

Psychosocial Interventions

Interventions that focus on addressing stress through changes in the environment to make it less stressful (inclusive of the individual's physical environment and social environment), or by broadly applicable information and skills that can be easily disseminated to large groups or by media and are generally relevant to populations under duress.

Support

Obstacles that prevent youth from participating or being respected are identified and removed. Youth are surrounded by an enabling environment that maximizes their participation.

Systems

Local and national policies/laws/systems/budgets have been established (applying the principles of PYD) to institutionalize youth participation in services, practices, and policies relevant to them. Youth actively participate in monitoring and evaluating these systems/policies.

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 the world.

Youth

USAID defines youth to be people aged 10–29 years.

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

Youth-led organizations

Organizations that are led, managed, and coordinated by young people. Staff and members are generally below a certain age and work on a variety of issues from a youth perspective.

Youth-serving organizations

Organizations that are not exclusively led or managed by youth but provide youth with recreational, educational, cultural, social, charitable, political, or other activities or services.

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