

AIYD – International Youth Development Policy Review and Call to Action

A Sustained Youth Imperative

85% of the world's young people live in developing countries. AIYD believes in an enduring youth imperative in global development and diplomacy today. Our foreign assistance investments can best advance U.S. and global economic and national security interests if this youth imperative is accounted for. Youth comprise a large share of the population worldwide, but remain marginalized where instability and terrorism take root, creating a national security imperative. As the 2017

U.S. National Security Strategy states "Societies that empower [women and youth] to participate fully in civic and economic life are more prosperous and peaceful. We will support efforts to advance women's equality, protect the rights of women and girls, and promote women and youth empowerment programs."¹ If the U.S. and development partners do not sufficiently "support, protect, prepare and engage" youth as the USAID Policy on Youth in Development advises, our adversaries will – and we may not like the outcomes or youth choices that result from their influence over ours. Furthermore, the economic imperative of youth is underscored by the fact that investments in human and physical capital of a young population can generate a significant economic payoff adding hundreds of millions of people to the global labor and consumer base. If education, economic growth and trade investments fail to equip or enable young workers and entrepreneurs to thrive, then this dividend may not be realized.

Toplines: Call to Action: Encourage, empower and incentivize closing the gaps between what policies say and what an agency or organization does by taking the following actions:

- **Increase Awareness:** information, education and leadership to prioritize the youth imperative
- **Increase Impact:** training and evidence to improve effectiveness of youth programs, mainstreaming and operations in priority areas
- **Increase Resources:** financial and human capital for youth programs and initiatives
- **Increase Partnership:** diversification, innovation, leverage and collective action with and for youth

An Opportunity for Renewed U.S. Leadership

AIYD believes augmented US leadership could capitalize on growing global commitments and mobilize needed investments to respond to global trends concerning youth. USAID released its inaugural Youth in Development Policy in November 2012 with two main objectives: (1) Strengthen youth programming, participation and partnership in support of Agency development objectives based on seven guiding principles, and (2) Mainstream and integrate youth issues and engage young people across Agency initiatives and operations. Following USAID's lead, other donor agencies and organizations, including DFID and UNDP, have since released new strategies or policy statements elevating and cohering their commitments and practices with youth. Mark Green was sworn in as USAID Administrator in August 2017. As we² reflect on the Policy in the context of the enduring youth

¹ National Security Strategy of the United States of America, White House, December 2017
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905-2.pdf>

² AIYD Members contributing to the policy review include: Chemonics International, FHI360, International Youth Foundation (IYF), Education Development Center (EDC), Research Triangle International (RTI), Global Communities, IREX, Plan USA. Dr. Nicole Goldin, AIYD Senior Advisor, led the review.

imperative in development, we believe that policy-makers, donors and practitioners must all act now by investing in intentional quality program design and impacting the key systems and policies.

Turning Policy into Practice

AIYD believes existing US policy raises many important points and provides a useful and robust conceptual framework that has elevated the importance of considering youth in development, as well as improved the design or implementation of projects.

AIYD believes USAID's policy has informed and encouraged our organizational practice especially in terms of youth engagement, innovation and participation in project design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. While the development landscape, conditions in-country and lived experience for young people change rapidly, the seven Guiding Principles for youth programming set out in USAID's policy continue to

provide a useful baseline of best practice. AIYD believes heightened attention to youth safety and security and "do no harm" is warranted, as is increased attention to youth-led and -related local solutions.

At the same time, policy implementation has yielded success alongside unmet expectations.

While AIYD encourages explicit policy engagement on youth issues from all diplomatic and development agencies, the USAID policy has led to welcome successes including: increased youth participation; award of the *Youth Power* mechanisms for Learning and Implementation whose work has improved the Agency and implementer's knowledge and capacities of Positive Youth Development and has benefitted thousands of young people in several countries where projects and operations are taking place; and the installation of the Agency Youth Coordinator to elevate, connect and align activities.

These achievements notwithstanding, several limiting factors have undercut progress. These challenges include: the lack of specific strategic guidance for sectors or regions, the lack of interagency leadership and government-wide "lift," a dearth of expertise and deep technical knowledge vis a vis youth development among USG diplomatic corps and development officers, inadequate architecture that leaves youth largely lost organizationally in a sector- and regional-oriented bureaucracy that tends to operate in silos, and earmarks and budgetary silos that make it difficult to utilize funding for youth-specific programming. AIYD also believes the US can show more leadership in catalyzing and leveraging global partnerships.

Guiding Principles in USAID's Policy on Youth in Development

- *Youth Participation is Vital:* engaging youth in all phases of the program cycle and decision-making
- *Involve and Support Mentors, Families and Communities:* engaging adults and intergenerational stakeholders, and ensuring all are prepared to interact with youth
- *Pursue Gender Equality:* accounting for differing expectations, constraints, vulnerabilities, and opportunities among young men and women
- *Account for Commonalities and Differences Among Youth:* identifying and acting on the diversity factors that affect youth resources and opportunities
- *Invest in Assets that Build Youth Resilience:* strengthening youths' ability to avoid risky behaviors and overcome trauma or shocks
- *Provide Second Chances:* ensuring youth who miss development milestones have access to remedial and "catch-up" opportunities
- *Embrace Innovation and Technology By and For Youth:* including ICT integration, affordable access, showcasing and incubation support

AIYD's mission is to educate, advocate and activate youth development around the world.

Recommendations

AIYD believes we need to encourage, empower and incentivize closing the gaps between what policies say and what an agency or organization does. To build on momentum, increase reach, and see greater results in responding to the youth imperative, AIYD recommends that USAID, United States Government, and other donors, partners and stakeholders should:

- **Increase Awareness by**
 - articulating and disseminating data driving the youth imperative; and
 - deepening education, providing training for professionalization of staff and partners on youth development and engagement to help advance flexible policy and programming options that promote self-reliance and respond to contextualized, targeted youth needs.
- **Increase Impact** in priority areas by
 - strengthening bureaucratic structures;
 - identifying evidence gaps and increasing research and data collection to fill gaps, generate new knowledge, and ask and answer forward-looking questions;
 - placing more emphasis on sustainable systems and institutions to lastingly deliver at scale;
 - strengthening and evaluating youth participation mechanisms and activities to ensure they are even more deliberate, planned and representative, including at institutional levels; and
 - prioritizing at-risk, vulnerable youth who are often the hardest to reach yet most in need.
- **Increase Resources by**
 - allocating higher levels of financial and human capital
 - incentivizing and enabling financing and implementation of youth-serving, cross-sectoral and place-based programs by more easily mixing funding streams and drawing upon a wider range of budgetary accounts
 - exploring alternative, innovative financing instruments (such as impact bonds) to leverage market-based tools and mobilize funders, impact investors, and non-traditional donors to the support youth.
- **Increase Partnership by**
 - engaging a broader range of stakeholders across the private and public sector in policy debate, advocacy, programs and projects;
 - strengthening coordination among donors, governments and implementing organizations to maximize resources and minimize redundancy.
 - collaborating with the business sector to invest in current and future young employees, managers, suppliers, clients and customers.

In line with our mission to advocate, educate and activate, we at AIYD stand ready, willing and able to work with The White House, Executive agencies, Congress and fellow development partners and implementing organizations around the world to ensure that our foreign assistance resources are not only improving lives and communities abroad, but best serving American taxpayers and our economic and security interests at home. We know investing in youth promotes effectiveness at both these urgent goals.

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