

CHAPTER

4

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT



“I wanted to help people. **And I wanted to show other girls that there is no course they can't take.** If I had not received this training, I would have probably been at home farming [which] for now, isn't a good source of income. In this area, even some who have completed university have no job. But **if you take vocational training, it is hard to fail** in getting one.”

— Young woman, on deciding to train as an electrician with a scholarship from ChildFund's Youth Vocational Skills project in Kenya.

THE CHALLENGE

In 2020, more than **one in five** young people worldwide aged 15–24 was not employed, in job training, or in school — and two out of three of these were young women.¹

As a global issue, the highest rates (30% or more) of youth who are not engaged in employment, education or training are found in northern and southern Africa and southern Asia². It is also estimated that by 2030, in addition to the more than 250 million children and youth worldwide who are out of school, another 825 million children will not obtain the basic secondary-level skills — including life skills, socio-emotional skills, technical and vocational skills — necessary to support continued learning, productive employment and civic engagement³.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated employment pathways for young people worldwide, with youth employment falling by 8.7% in 2020, compared to 3.7% for adults⁴. Critical factors contributing to the pandemic's negative economic consequences on older adolescents and youth include disruptions in education and training, an increased lack of job opportunities — and mental health concerns for these youth⁵.

1 O'Higgins, N. (2019). Young people not in employment, education or training. Geneva: International Labour Organization (ILO).

2 O'Higgins, N. (2019). Young people not in employment, education or training. Geneva: ILO.

3 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (n.d.). Adolescent education and skills. Retrieved September 9, 2021, from <https://www.unicef.org/education/skills-development>.

4 ILO (2021). Statistical brief: An update on the youth labor market impact of the COVID-19 crisis. Geneva: ILO.

5 ILO (2020). Youth and the COVID crisis: Impacts on jobs, education, rights, and mental well-being. Geneva: ILO.





Photo by Jake Lyell

OUR GLOBAL PROGRESS

ChildFund’s programs target the development of skilled and involved youth, and prepare adolescents and youth to find work in safe environments, free from physical danger, sexual harassment, and exploitation. Overall, our work with adolescents and youth is designed to improve their economic, physical and social well-being. Thus, our programs also focus on providing them (and often their caregivers, educators, and other community members) with the social and emotional skills necessary to foster healthy and non-violent relationships in home, educational, and workplace settings.

Two of the core outcomes we seek through our programming for older adolescents and youth are for them to be employed at a living wage in non-exploitive work and be change agents in their family and community. We empower adolescents and youth to find their “voice” and to speak up about violence and other issues that affect them and their communities. In particular, we make efforts to reach out to marginalized groups such as youth with disabilities, youth from ethnic or religious minorities, and youth who identify with non-traditional gender or sexual identities to ensure that their voices are heard.

This chapter shares the progress we see in our global M&E data and our programming evidence in equipping youth with the skills they need to succeed in work and life — and transition into young adulthood.

Through our global M&E data collection, and in addition to reporting on knowledge and practices related to child protection (see Chapter 2), adolescents and youth ages 15 to 24 (Life Stage 3) share information on their participation in technical skills training and their civic engagement. Although data points are still relatively low at both a global and regional level, we do see progress in youth graduating from basic business and technical skills training — with only a small differential, in 2019, in the jobs training dropout rate for girls and boys (ranging from 2% to 6% regionally). For civic engagement, we were not able to examine temporal progress but do see, globally, over 1/3 of youth reporting participation in civic behaviors.

Youth participation in business and technical skills training

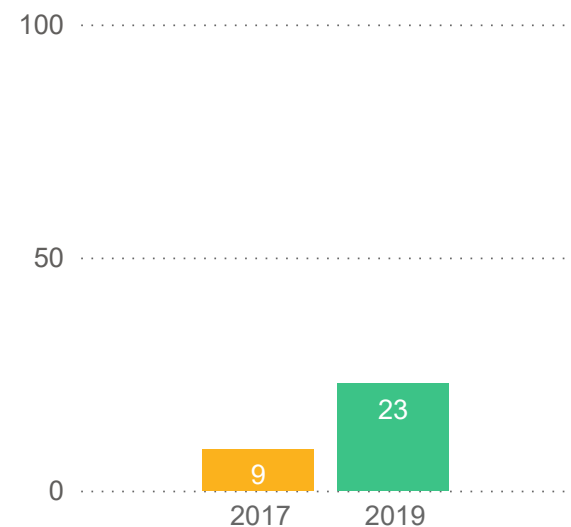
In 2017 and 2019, through our global M&E data collection, we assessed youth participation in, and completion of, training programs designed to help them find employment, a trade, or to start a business within the previous year.

Our data show that, globally, around 1/3 of youth attend skills training (28% in Africa, 21% in the Americas, and 34% in Asia).



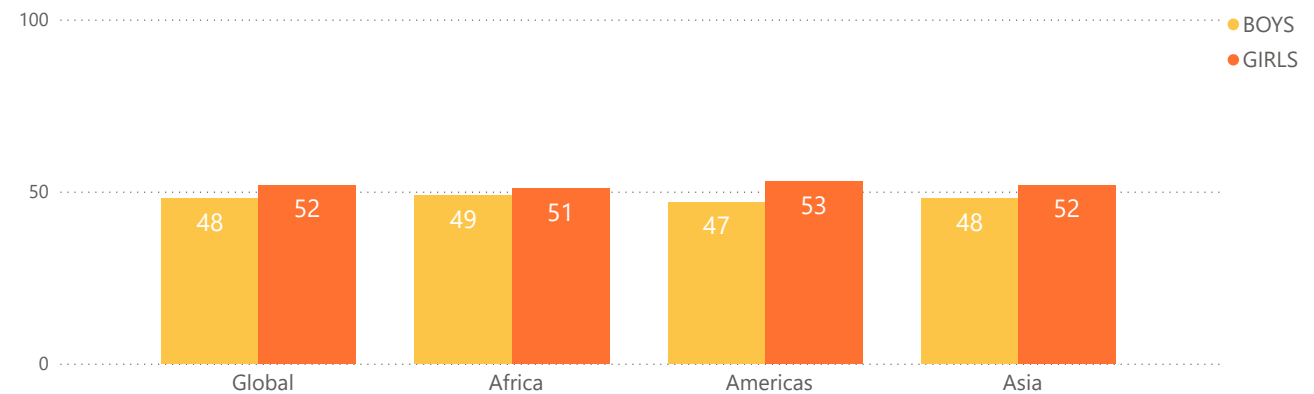
From 2017 to 2019, **we saw a positive change in youth who graduate from basic business and technical skills training** — increasing from 9% to 23% — a **14% increase** (see Figure 4-1).

Figure 4-1. Percentage of Youth Graduating from Skills Training: 2017 vs. 2019 (Global)



Across all regions (see Figure 4-2) in 2019, we find that girls were slightly more likely to drop out of skills training programs than boys (51%, 53%, and 52% of those who dropped out in Africa, the Americas, and Asia, respectively), even in Asia where the majority (55%) skills training program participants are girls.

Figure 4-2. Percentage of Youth Dropping Out of Jobs Training (2019): Girls vs. Boys



A closer look at country-specific differences (based on 2019 data) shows that:

- In Africa, Guinea has a low proportion of youth starting jobs training, and the highest drop-out rate; with 21% of youth starting jobs training programs, and only 42% graduating. A similarly high percentage of youth in Senegal do not complete training programs, with only 55% graduating.
- Youth in Zambia and Sierra Leone were more likely to complete business skills training; among the 22% and 39% of youth respectively who start business skills training, fewer than 20% dropped out.
- Compared to youth in Africa and the Americas, a larger proportion of youth in Asia have access to training programs; 39% and 36% of youth in the Philippines and Indonesia have attended jobs training programs. They are also less likely to drop-out, with over 80% graduating in India, Indonesia, and the Philippines. In Sri Lanka, about 30% of youth drop out before completing training programs.
- Youth in the Americas are more likely to complete jobs training programs relative to the other regions. In Ecuador, among the 33% of youth who start jobs training programs, 86% graduate; in Honduras, 26% attend jobs training with 90% graduating; and in Guatemala, 21% of youth enroll in jobs training, with 92% graduating.

Youth as change agents

Our global M&E data collection also asks a series of questions to determine whether youth are actively engaged as agents of change in their families and communities. We determine the proportion of youth who engage in civic behaviors, which we define as participation in activities such as attending community meetings, participation in projects within their communities, and voting in elections. We also identify youth who engage in advocacy.

- Globally, as shown in Figure 4-3, 29% of youth feel empowered by their communities, 36% of youth are actively participating in the civic process, with 22% also advocating before public authorities.
- The level of civic engagement varies across regions, with 39% of youth in Africa engaged, relative to 32% of youth in Asia and the Americas. A higher percentage of youth in Africa (35%) feel empowered by their communities, compared to 30% in Asia and only 13% in the Americas. However, only 20-22% of youth in all three regions are engaged in advocacy.

Figure 4-3. Youth As Change Agents: 2019 (%)

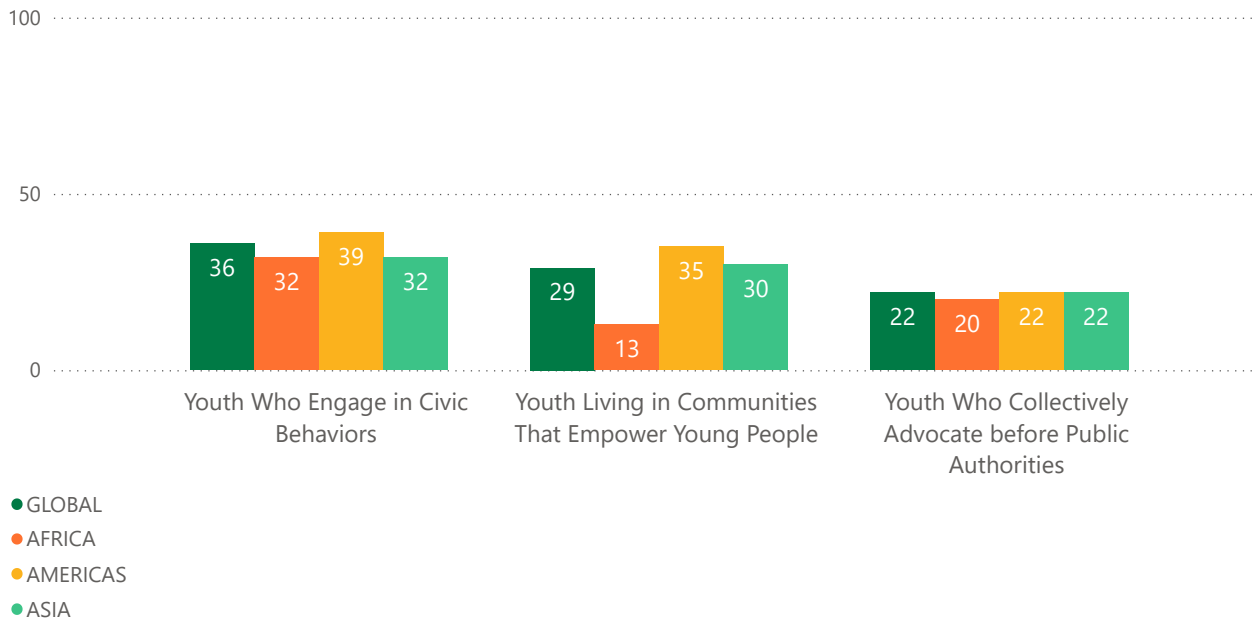


Photo by ChildFund



“Leading for me is already natural because **people have invested in my skills** so that I could recognize my rights, my strength, and understand that I can represent other girls! **[Through ChildFund activities] I was able to recognize the value of my voice and my actions to transform my reality and that of my community.**”

— Youth leader sponsored since childhood and an active participant in ChildFund Brazil initiatives, including Voice Now! and Infoteen.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

OUR PROGRAMMING EVIDENCE FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

36 of our evaluated programs targeted skills development outcomes, including youth work readiness skills (10 programs), critical life skills (16 programs), and youth agency — empowering them to be agents of change in their communities (18 programs).

Photo by Caitlin Woodward

Where are we contributing to positive change for skills development outcomes?

As shown in Figure 4-4, our evaluated programs have enabled adolescents and youth in 13 countries (6 countries in Africa, 3 countries in the Americas, and 4 countries in Asia), to enhance social skills, decision-making skills, critical thinking skills, and/or job preparation skills.

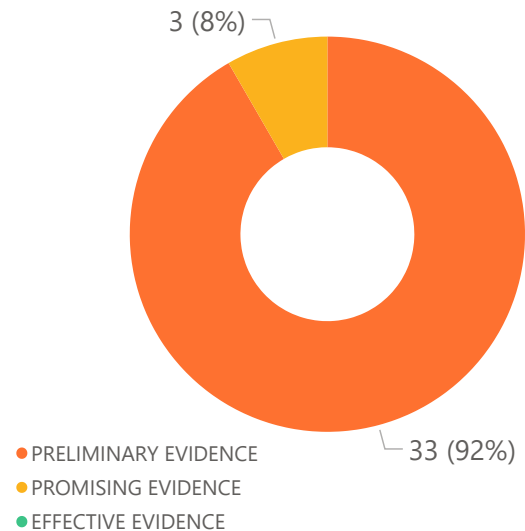
Figure 4-4. Skills Development Contributions by Region and Country



What levels of evidence and types of change are we seeing for skills development outcomes?

As shown in Figure 4-5, 3 (8%) of the evaluated programs have generated promising evidence and another 33 (92%) have generated preliminary evidence for contributions to skills development outcomes.

Figure 4-5. Evidence for Positive Change in Skills Development Outcomes



■ **PROMISING** — The **Child Development Program in India**⁶, that sought to enhance overall child development across all three ChildFund life stages, delivered life skills education reaching 47% of children in the intervention area compared to 18% of children in the control area, and 29% of youth in the intervention area participating in awareness programs on career opportunities compared to 8% in the control area.

■ **PROMISING** — The **Lifelong Learning Project (Read and Learn)**⁷ delivered in the Western Highlands region of **Guatemala** extended alternative basic education and workforce training opportunities to out-of-school youth and offered opportunities for meaningful youth civic engagement and service in their communities. The project contributed to positive changes in youth self-esteem, self-confidence, and the ability to work with adults.

6 Ganesh, P. & Innacy Saint Rock, Q. (2018). *Outcome evaluation of ChildFund India supported child development program*. Cape Town: Centre for Social and Scientific Research (CSSR) and QLA Solutions.

7 DevTech Systems, Inc. (2016). *Lifelong learning project midterm performance evaluation report*. Arlington, VA: Author.

■ **PRELIMINARY** — In **Zambia**, the **Nurse and Life Skills Training Project**,⁸ funded by the Mastercard Foundation, offered life skills training to e-learning nursing students (ages 15 to 24) to improve their interpersonal and relationship skills, communication skills, and critical thinking and decision-making skills. In terms of interpersonal skills results, 77% of students indicated that they always showed respect for diversity such as cultural, ethnic, spiritual, and emotional differences in individuals, 64.5% showed the ability to respect other people's opinions even when different from their own, and 55% reported effective participation in teamwork. In addition, 75% indicated that their relationships were free from any form of violence and 67% said they never did things to please others when they knew they were wrong.

■ **PRELIMINARY** — The **Preventing Irregular Migration in Central America and Mexico (PICMCA)** project which focused on adolescents

8 Kaima, M.C. (2017). *Survey to track the acquisition and application of lifeskills by first and second year elearning student*.

and youth in **El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Nicaragua**⁹ contributed to youth employability by providing 875 youth with scholarships for technical training and/or alternative education, and linked 962 youth with formal internships, jobs, and/or apprenticeships.

■ **PRELIMINARY** — In **Uganda**, the USAID-funded **Deinstitutionalization of Vulnerable Children in Uganda (DOVCU) project**¹⁰, developed and tested a package of services at the community level in order to prevent the separation of children from their families and facilitate the reintegration of children back into family-based care. Using a participatory approach, formal and informal stakeholders from all levels of governance were engaged in skills building and training activities. The project helped to reduce psychosocial distress in children who had been separated from their families, and raised community level skills and knowledge to effectively manage psychosocial conditions and stress among these children.

■ **PRELIMINARY** (see also Evidence Snapshot below) — In **India**, the **Developing Youth as a Change Agent program**¹¹ contributed to youth having increased leadership and confidence to share their issues and address them, advocating for changes in their communities, and collectively linking with the local governance structures for larger community benefits — with 90% of youth representatives engaged in community local governance.

9 Children Believe, ChildFund International & EDUCO. (2020). *Year 4 annual report: Preventing irregular child migration in Central America and Mexico (PICMCA/CON-FIO) D-002443*.

10 Severinsson, A.N. (2018). *Endline performance evaluation of the project: Deinstitutionalization of orphans and vulnerable children in Uganda (DOVCU project)*. Minneapolis: Maestral International.

11 ChildFund International. (2019). *Developing youth as a change agent: Findings of participatory peer review by Asia review team*. Washington, D.C.: Author.



WHEN: 2017 to 2020

WHERE: Lampung, Indonesia

CHILDFUND LIFE STAGES: 2 (6-14 years old) & 3 (15-24 years old)

REACH: 2,427 adolescents/youth, 300 caregivers, 120 teachers, 120 other community members

SUPPORTED BY: ChildFund Korea

IMPLEMENTED BY: ChildFund Indonesia, Yayasan Pembinaan Sosial Katolik (YPSK)

EVIDENCE LEVEL: Preliminary

GOAL(S): Empower adolescents (ages 12 to 15) with critical life skills as well as financial and social skills to be confident and active participants in their community.

HOW WE STUDIED THE PROGRAM: • One-group pretest-posttest study design. • Data were collected with focus group discussions with key stakeholders.

¹² Hukom, G. (2019). 3rd year final report: Adolescent confident in thinking, valued in life and empowered (ACTIVE) project. Jakarta: ChildFund Indonesia.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Primary intervention strategies** included information sharing, communication, and training through workshops.
- Adolescents were included in the community consultation process.
- At the end of the program, adolescents and youth showed:
 1. **Improved social skills**, with 50% understanding what bullying is.
 2. **Enhanced life skills**, with 70% able to understand their strengths and weaknesses through an increase in self-confidence and diligence.
 3. **Increased financial skills**, with 90% of adolescents have a savings habit (compared to 0% at baseline) and understand the concept of savings through planning and budgeting.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Parents, teachers, and facilitators should play a key role in encouraging children to save their money. Most parents give their children an allowance, but often forget to remind them to save some of it.

SDG CONTRIBUTIONS



“After participating in an ACTIVE session every week, the **children are more enthusiastic** about going to school, **more confident** in expressing their opinions, confident in **being involved** in social and financial activities in the village especially at the Market Day... Children who were shy and did not recognize their talents, nowadays, they are able to **show their talents** at the art performance in Paswitan and get extra money for their group activities from **selling their handycraft.**”

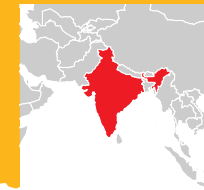
— ACTIVE facilitator



Photo by Oscar Siagian



Photo by Daytona Lee Niles



WHEN: 2018 to 2019

WHERE: Villages in the Kaushambi district of Uttar Pradesh

CHILDFUND LIFE STAGE: 3 (15-24 years old)

REACH: 400 adolescents and youth in 15 villages; 109 families benefitted from the project's youth collectives.

SUPPORTED BY: Centre for Learning and Excellence in Child Development (CLECD)

IMPLEMENTED BY: ChildFund India, Grameen Seva Sansthan (GSS)

EVIDENCE LEVEL: Preliminary

GOAL(S): Empower youth leaders by helping adolescents and youth develop leadership attributes and actively contribute to their community's development.

HOW WE STUDIED THE PROGRAM:

- One-group posttest study design.
- Focus group discussions with key stakeholders.

¹³ ChildFund International. (2019). *Developing youth as a change agent: Findings of participatory peer review by asia review team*. Washington, D.C.: Author.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- **A key intervention strategy was the formation of “youth collectives”** — an organized group of adolescents and youth residing in a village; each collective engaged in community sensitization, awareness building, and capacity building.
- **15 youth collectives were formed** — one per village — and they formed a federation, Yuva Jagriti Manch Kaushambi, with elected member officials.
- After receiving training in videography, 7 youth collectives filmed documentaries on social issues affecting their communities.
- Youth collectives painted and shared 400 social messages through intensive wall writing campaigns focused on mobilizing support for community issues.
- **Youth collective members voiced that they felt empowered** through the process of receiving skills development support — and mobilizing themselves as a group into action.
- Youth, caregivers, and Government stakeholders all identified that **the project contributed to increased awareness of gender discrimination** — the integration of girls and boys and the elimination of “girls-only” and “boys-only” issues.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- When it comes to engaging youth and empowering them, there needs to be a conscious effort to intentionally involve and give voice to those youth who participate less and/or are not represented or missed (e.g., LGBTQI, youth with disabilities).

SDG CONTRIBUTIONS



“

“The project has taken a bold approach and **challenged community norms**, with good results! The biggest result is the **youth’s transformative leadership qualities, especially of girls**, that emerged during the team interactions.”

— ChildFund India Staff Member

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Since skills development is the major focus for our Life Stage 3 (ages 15 to 24) programs, **we see progress in our contributions to enhancing youth work readiness and critical life skills.** As more adolescents and youth graduate from business and technical skills training, we can see that more than 35 programs show at least preliminary evidence of positive change for skills development outcomes across all three regions where ChildFund works.

The main **SDG** contributions of this body of work are:

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



Specifically, the contributions of our programs in the area of youth skills development further the realization of **SDG targets**:

- **4.4** to “increase the number of youth who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills”
- **8.6** to “reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training”

Although our work in this area largely focuses on older adolescents and youth, through our cross-life stage programming we are committed to ensuring a safe transition through adolescence — and to addressing the increased challenges for youth training.

Young woman displays a dish she made in her small restaurant. She benefits from a ChildFund-supported youth entrepreneurship training program which teaches business and entrepreneurship skills to economically vulnerable youth, and provides them equipment and loans to begin a small business.

LIFE STAGE

2

FOR OLDER CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADOLESCENTS (LIFE STAGE 2), we observe positive changes in youth self-esteem, self-confidence, and other social skills. Looking ahead, as we seek to strengthen young people's interpersonal skills and resources at earlier ages, we will continue to:

- Equip children, adolescents, and youth with the social and emotional skills to build healthy relationships and thrive in all areas of their lives; and
- Implement and test standard packages of intervention strategies, such as our **School-Based Violence Prevention (SBVP)** program model¹⁴ designed for children ages 9 to 12, that integrates proven social and emotional skills building curricula into standard sets of intervention strategies (i.e., program models) that can be delivered globally; in this way, we build upon young people's skills and resources to contribute to their lives and communities.

¹⁴ Nelson, J. (2021). *Adapting School-Based Violence Prevention (SBVP) program activities during COVID-19 for child well-being*. April 26-29: Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) 65th Annual Conference.

LIFE STAGE

3

FOR ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH (LIFE STAGE 3), gains are noted in workforce training and preparation, life skills acquisition, and increased sense of empowerment to become active participants in their community. As future and current parents and potential leaders, involving youth is critical if we are to bring about lasting change, reducing the vulnerability of the next generation of children. Moving forward, we will continue to:

- Design, implement, and evaluate programs that provide job training to adolescents and youth as they make the transition from school to employment, ensuring equal access to both boys and girls;
- Design tailored programs that address the deep-rooted gender inequality that defines the life experiences of girls and young women, advocating for their right to make decisions about their lives (including their education);
- Facilitate opportunities for meaningful civic engagement and advocacy in their communities for adolescents and youth, including through our **Civic Participation, Transformation and Opportunities (PACT)**¹⁵ program model, currently being implemented in the Americas;
- Proactively engage with young people to solicit their feedback, ideas, and solutions concerning the challenges of greatest importance to them, through initiatives like our youth-centered design methodology, **Voice Now!**¹⁶, which has included an online adaptation because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁵ PACT focuses on building youth leadership and advocacy as well as entrepreneurship and employability skills so that young people may improve their living conditions and gain economic independence.

¹⁶ Voice Now! is ChildFund's global effort to gather feedback, ideas, and solutions directly from adolescents and youth (ages 15 to 24) around the challenges of greatest importance to them in their communities; the initiative uses a youth-centered design methodology to leverage ideas and build solution prototypes that could be scaled into replicable program models and/or community-based activities.