Global Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Analysis

Global trends and recommendations for Youth Excel

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Authors:

- Erika Rydergaard, IREX
- Hannah Spiers, IREX

The USAID-funded YouthPower Youth Excel activity is a five-year, cross-sectoral positive youth development activity. It is implemented by the Our Knowledge, Leading Change consortium, which includes the following partners: IREX (prime implementer); youth-led network partners Afrika Youth Movement, Tech Tribes, The Biz Nation, The Youth Café, and UNOY-Peacebuilders; regional partner ABAAD; and global partners Ashoka Youth Venture, Root Change, Search for Common Ground, and University of Minnesota.

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# Contents

Global GESI Analysis - Executive Summary vi

## 1. Introduction

## 2. Theoretical Framework and Analytical Tools

2.1 Positive Youth Development 2

2.2 Implementation Research 4

2.3 Gender Analysis 4

## 3. Intersectional Analysis of Gender Gaps

3.1 PYD Domain: Enabling Environment 7

3.1.1 Laws and policies 8

3.1.2 Norms and beliefs 9

3.2 PYD Domains: Contribution and agency 11

3.2.1 Youth self-esteem 11

3.2.2 Youth leadership 12

3.2.3 Civic engagement 12

3.2.4 Participation in the labor market 14

3.3 PYD Domain: Assets 15

3.3.1 Education and training 15

3.3.2 Digital participation and inclusion 18

3.4 Cross-Cutting 18

3.4.1 Implementation Research and related approaches 19

3.4.2 Development Cooperation 21

3.4.3 COVID-19 22
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Recommendations for Project Implementation</th>
<th>24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Partner and Youth Selection</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Youth engagement</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Capacity strengthening of youth-led and youth-serving partners</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Network building</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Dissemination of findings and tracking access</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Do No (More) Harm</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Implementation Research (IR) and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8 Country-specific or regional rapid Intersectional Gender Analyses</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Glossary of terms</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Bibliography</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 1: Youth Excel Theory of Change</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADS</td>
<td>Automated Directed System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAME</td>
<td>Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLA</td>
<td>Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFID UK</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>DV</td>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>EF</td>
<td>Global English Language Education Firm</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCDO</td>
<td>Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>G20</td>
<td>The Group of 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAO</td>
<td>United States Government Accountability Office</td>
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<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender Based Violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>GESI</td>
<td>Gender Equality and Social Inclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>HQ</td>
<td>Headquarters</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPV</td>
<td>Intimate Partner Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IR</td>
<td>Implementation Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IREX</td>
<td>International Research and Exchanges Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGBTIQ+</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEL</td>
<td>Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEET</td>
<td>Not In Employment, Education, or Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Nongovernmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>PwD</td>
<td>Persons with Disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>PYD</td>
<td>Positive Youth Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSEA</td>
<td>Protection Against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RGA</td>
<td>Rapid Gender Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAAP</td>
<td>Transforming Agency, Access, and Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ToR</td>
<td>Terms of Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ToC</td>
<td>Theory of Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund</td>
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<td>UNOY-Peacebuilders</td>
<td>The United Network of Young Peacebuilders</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>The United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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</table>
Global GESI Analysis - Executive Summary

Youth Excel aims to advance gender equality by using research, learning, and data to change systems and transform norms, shifting power differentials so that diverse youth—including youth of all genders in different age categories—influence development agendas and development decision making.

In late 2020, we conducted a Global GESI Analysis through desk research to (1) compile data and identify broad trends in line with Youth Excel’s work; (2) provide recommendations for Youth Excel activities.

Domains of Inquiry

1. Enabling Environment
   Communities, institutions, and decision-makers that encourage, support, and recognize youth assets, agency, and contribution.

2. Youth Contribution and Agency
   Youth with agency develop a positive self-identity to plan and persevere; and youth are engaged.

3. Youth Assets
   The resources, skills, and competencies that youth need to achieve their desired outcomes.

4. Cross-Cutting
   1) Implementation Research and related approaches; 2) Development cooperation and 3) COVID-19

---

1 Gender: Socially defined differences between women and men, gender diverse adults, girls and boys, and gender diverse children and young people. These differences may include economic, social, and political roles, responsibilities, rights, entitlements, characteristics, obligations, and power dynamics associated with sex and sexuality. The social definitions of what it means to belong to a certain gender may vary among cultures and change over time.
An intersectional approach brings the understanding that other factors within gender contribute to discrimination, marginalization, and inequities. These factors may include race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, age, gender identity, religious affiliation, sexual orientation and disability, among other factors.

In some cases, we could not access data which disaggregated beyond age and gender to apply an intersectional approach. We at times focus exclusively on gender analysis as a result, without the intersectional dimension.
## HIGHLIGHTED RECOMMENDATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Youth selection</th>
<th>Partner up with organizations led by youth from marginalized groups.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Convene intentionally diverse young people, in an inclusive, accessible and safe way.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Youth engagement</th>
<th>Promote youth role models, share success stories and show them as change makers, leaders, and professionals in nontraditional roles.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide suitable solutions based on the context (data plans, Wi-Fi, offline data resources).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Promote youth voices, and original work as virtual creators (not only users).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Capacity strengthening</th>
<th>Train and mentor young women and girls -and other marginalized groups- to strengthen their role as leaders.</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>Recognize skills and abilities acquired outside of formal education and provide opportunities for youth to use and strengthen existing skills.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Network building</th>
<th>Work with caregivers, families, schools, communities to provide opportunities for and encourage youth leadership, especially among youth from marginalized groups.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consider the continuous burden on marginalized groups to be the stewards of change, and encourage and enable all to promote equality and inclusion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Dissemination</th>
<th>Plan and budget to make materials accessible to different audiences, specifically targeting marginalized groups (such as minorities who do not speak the official language, youth with disabilities, and with low level of formal education). Adapt font, colors, and language for accessibility. Be transparent about limitations.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop comprehensive Safeguarding Policies to prevent and mitigate risks and abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults, and Invest in a project risk assessment and take measures to mitigate risks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consider the harm that language can do, and create inclusive glossaries for all applicable languages. Equip interpreters with the glossary to reduce harm of offensive and violent language.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>6. Do No (More) Harm</th>
<th>Collaborate with communities on what they want to learn, and make sure to adapt interventions to become more inclusive as well as effective.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Design inclusive research tools that consider the gender gap and other aspects that hinder access to higher education and to do research, such as socioeconomic status and ethnicity, in low income and upper middle-income countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Track progress on the inclusivity of program outputs and outcomes.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>7. IR and MEL</th>
<th>Regional/country/local research should be done by a team of researchers with extensive knowledge of the local context.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examine whether and how legislation and implementation adversely affect youth organizations that focus on young women’s rights, LGBTQ+ rights, environmental issues, or other marginalized groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**ACTION POINTS “CALL TO ACTION!”**

We have created a set of more than 40 different recommendations based on the findings. Now it’s your turn to convert these general recommendations into specific actions from where you are to make your work a more inclusive and accessible space for all. There are no limits to creativity! Create your own adaptations according to your experience and context and tell us more about it here: excelyouth@irex.org

We want to learn from each other!

- **Target PWD rights’ organizations when convening to have a diverse and meaningful participation**
- **Conduct a 2 hour workshop to develop a risk assessment in your community**
- **Offer data plans for youth to connect to your Zoom sessions in your invites**
- **Make space to talk about power differentials in your team**
- **Make a podcast with youth role models in your community**
- **Your ideas and actions HERE**

Click or follow this code to learn more about Youth Excel, ask questions or provide feedback
I. Introduction

About Youth Excel: Youth Excel is a five-year, USAID-funded global program that will empower young people and youth organizations to use implementation research to strengthen local, national, and global development solutions. Youth Excel will support young leaders and youth-led and youth-serving organizations around the globe to conduct quality implementation research; use data and learnings to improve their own cross-sectoral, positive youth development 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.

Youth Excel is implemented by the Our Knowledge, Leading Change consortium, which includes the following partners: IREX (prime implementer); youth-led network partners Afrika Youth Movement, Tech Tribes, The Biz Nation, The Youth Café, and UNOY-Peacebuilders; regional partner ABAAD; and global partners Ashoka Youth Venture, Root Change, Search for Common Ground, and University of Minnesota.

Youth Excel aims to advance gender equality by using research, learning, and data to change systems and transform norms, shifting power differentials so that diverse youth—including youth of all genders in different age categories— influence development agendas and development decision making. This intersectional gender analysis aims to:

- Identify broad trends to track the level of global gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in line with the Youth Excel Theory of Change (ToC) (see Annex 1);
- Help refine the research questions for Youth Excel’s upcoming country-level GESI Analyses;
- Establish principles and procedures to ensure that Youth Excel challenges existing inequalities in those communities in which it is active to generate equitable empowerment for diverse youth, through all its future activities and across geographic locations.

The report has two main parts. The first (Section 3) presents an analysis of gender gaps and inequities based on other identities - including how different identities interact to create additional marginalization. The analysis is centered on gaps and barriers that may impact the Youth Excel Theory of Change (ToC) and prevent the program from having an equitable impact. The second (Section 4) outlines recommendations for strengthening the inclusivity of Youth Excel activities and outcomes. It also presents recommendations for Youth Excel’s upcoming country or regional gender analyses, which will be key in helping to further refine our understanding of what this global analysis establishes. Each of those parts (Section 3 and 4) can be read on its own, depending on the interest and need of the reader.

This report was researched and written by Erika Hellsing Rydergaard and Hannah Spiers, employees of IREX in Washington, DC. We are both based in the United States and have an educational and professional background in North America, Western and Eastern Europe, and East Asia. Erika identifies as white and as an immigrant in the United States. Hannah identifies as white and is from the United States. Although it has been our intention to give a nuanced picture of barriers to equal participation for youth globally, our identities and life experiences may have influenced our research. In Section 4 of recommendations below, we include recommendations for steps the Youth Excel project may take to build a diverse team.

We thank the following contributors who provided substantial feedback to this report: Anthony Keedi, Jessica Choucair and Mackenzie Seaman of ABAAD, Saji Prelis of Search for Common Ground, and Brian Batayeh, Rachel Surkin, Tara Susman-Peña, Rosemary Manu and Zaira Lainez Carrasco of IREX.
This report is centered on gender analysis – with an intersectional lens - as a tool for identifying gender-based and other inequities that are relevant to Youth Excel. The Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework as well as the field of Implementation Research (IR) are important cornerstones to Youth Excel and have helped focus this gender analysis on aspects relevant to IR and PYD. Throughout this report, we use concepts and terms that may have different meanings to different people but that are important to understanding the report. The use of different words and descriptions varies across cultures and societal groups, and the definitions here are limited to this report. Accordingly, we have included a glossary of terms at the end of the report (Section 5). One universal rule to keep in mind is to always use the words or labels that someone asks you to use in reference to them. In this section, we present these tools and frameworks, including how they create the foundation for the analysis in this report.

Considering that Youth Excel is a development cooperation program funded by USAID on behalf of the people of the United States, it is important to acknowledge and take into consideration the enduring legacy of colonialism and post-colonialism in creating and exacerbating inequality globally. This report does not go into depth analyzing the effects of colonialism but recognizes and highlights the legacies in several places.

2.1 Positive Youth Development

Positive Youth Development (PYD) originates in the field of prevention. Prevention researchers and practitioners over time learned that youth who exhibit factors that are protective against adversity – factors such as family support, self-esteem, and engagement in community and school activities - will be more likely to experience positive outcomes.\(^1\) The focus on positive outcomes – such as taking an active role in society – emerged in part in response to the previous preoccupation with addressing risks and problems.\(^2\) Youth Excel currently uses the framework for PYD developed by the USAID-supported YouthPower Learning project which was created based on input from practitioners, implementers, researchers, and existing literature.\(^3\) Youth Excel works from the assumption that to contribute to healthy, productive, and engaged youth, PYD programs must focus on available assets, youth agency, youth contribution, and the surrounding enabling environment. \textit{Assets} refers to resources, skills, and competencies that youth need to achieve desired outcomes; \textit{agency} refers to the ability to employ those assets; \textit{contribution} refers to youth engagement, and \textit{enabling environment} refers to an environment that encourages and recognizes youth.\(^4\) Figure 1 below illustrates these aspects of PYD.

\(^1\) \textit{Youth.gov}, n.d.
\(^2\) Pittman, Karen Johson, Irby, Merita, Tolman, Joel, Yohalem, Nicole, & Ferber, Thaddeus, 2005
\(^3\) \textit{YouthPower}, 2020
\(^4\) For more information about the PYD Framework visit: \texttt{https://www.youthpower.org/positive-youth-development-pyd-framework}
Youth is a life stage, one that is not finite or linear. It is a concept that varies according to different contexts, as this life stage is also influenced by other identity markers (see intersectional approach below). Key multilaterals define youth as 15-24 years old 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. This life stage involves multiple and overlapping physical, cognitive, emotional, political, social and cultural changes. USAID defines youth as people between the ages of 10-29 (with recognition that those under age 18 are universally considered children and subject of numerous protections). Youth Excel has expanded this definition to include youth leaders in countries where the definition of youth extends beyond age 29, and defines youth as people between the ages of 10 and 35.

USAID Youth in Development Policy (2012)
2.2 Implementation Research

Implementation Research (IR) originated in the health sector. The focus was initially on learning about the implementation of treatment or prevention interventions, such as vaccines, at the level of the community. As a research approach, IR typically looks at contextual factors at play when that intervention is applied in a certain place, with a certain population, and at a certain scale.\(^5\)

For Youth Excel, Implementation Research (IR) is a specific type of research used to understand how and why programs work so that design, execution, and decision-making can be routinely informed and improved. Implementation Research is inclusive, participatory, and systematic.\(^6\)

Youth Excel is at the forefront of building out, testing, and iterating an IR approach for the youth development field while contributing to the body of evidence on the efficacy, cost-effectiveness, and scalability of youth development interventions in different contexts.

2.3 Gender Analysis

A Gender Analysis is a tool for analyzing gender-based inequities within a particular context, whether that be on a global, regional, country, community level, or other level. The analysis often informs program design and implementation to ensure that specific interventions are dually addressing the existing gender inequities and meet the needs of people of different genders.

We understand gender as socially defined differences between women and men, girls and boys, and gender diverse adults and children. These differences may include roles, responsibilities, rights, entitlements, characteristics, obligations, and power dynamics in different areas (economic, social, and political) associated with sex and sexuality. The social definitions of what it means to belong to a certain gender may vary among cultures and change over time (see Section 5. Glossary of Terms). We also recognize that gender goes beyond the binary and have sought to represent gender diversity in this report where possible.\(^7\) However, in many cases, global-level data is disaggregated by sex (see Section 5. Glossary of Terms) rather than gender.

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\(^5\) (USAID)
\(^6\) This definition was created collaboratively by the Youth Excel IR design team.
\(^7\) Often gender and sex data is only accessible as a binary representation due to how it was collected or cleaned. Additionally, reports by global institutions like the UN and INGOs appear to view gender and sex as binary and most often present findings only for girls and boys, women and men.
This analysis will take an intersectional approach, which brings into such analyses the understanding that other factors within gender contribute to discrimination, marginalization, and inequities. These factors may include race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, age, gender identity, religious affiliation, sexual orientation and disability, amongst other factors. The term and approach were originally developed by legal scholar and civil rights advocate Kimberlé Krenshaw. (Woodroffe & Daigle, 2017)

The analysis gathers descriptive statistics as well as analysis from secondary sources to describe existing gender inequality from an intersectional perspective in the domains laid out in ADS 205 (see text box) on a global level. Of these ADS 205 domains, we focus on data in those areas relevant to the PYD framework and IR field, as well as to the Youth Excel Theory of Change (ToC) (see Annex 1). In some cases, it has not been possible to access data which disaggregated beyond age and gender to apply an intersectional approach. We at times focus exclusively on gender analysis as a result, without the intersectional dimension.

The overarching research questions for this analysis are:

- What are the overall trends in gender equality or gender inequality that may influence youth’s access to the Youth Excel program – as well as its outcomes - and how do various social identities influence this access?
- How may Youth Excel mitigate the risks of identity-based inequality through adjustments to the program approach?

Below, we include a set of questions for each domain that will direct the analysis. These questions are also guided by themes relevant to not only the ADS 205 domains, but to PYD and IR. The domains are overlapping and interrelated (for example, gender norms influence gender roles), but have been presented as separate domains here to guide the reader.

1. **Laws, policies, regulations, and institutional practices:** Do any laws exist that inhibit research involving specific groups or specific groups disclosing their identity (e.g. LGBTIQ+)? Do any laws prevent the development of networks across any sensitive issue areas? Are there differences in how different types of organizations are regulated (for example women’s organizations and LGBTIQ+ organizations)? Are there any international norms that govern participation in relation to migration and how do states adhere to these norms? Are there any examples of positive legislative initiatives to address gender inequality among youth?

2. **Cultural norms and beliefs:** What are norms/beliefs around hierarchies of knowledge and research, and do they affect young women and men, girls and boys, gender diverse individuals, and other marginalized groups differently? What beliefs/norms might impede youth driving project decisions? What beliefs/norms might impede certain groups’ participation in formal youth organizations? What are norms concerning who can be a leader?

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This should not be taken to mean that identities that intersect with gender are not important or can be disregarded. We encourage the Youth Excel program to contribute to the availability of broad data that describe young people’s experience.
3. **Gender roles, responsibilities, and time use**: How do gender roles, especially women’s triple role\(^9\) (see Moser’s framework\(^{10}\)) impact young women’s civic engagement and participation in research activities, like unpaid work at a global level? What is the level of representation and inclusion at different levels in the field of research and in the field of international development cooperation? How might the COVID-19 context exacerbate or shift these roles?

4. **Access and control over resources**: What is the level of civic participation by gender? What is the level of school enrollment by gender? What is the level of secondary and tertiary enrollment by gender, and for what fields? How does migration affect access to education? How equitable is access to technology and digital literacy?

5. **Power and decision-making**: What are the current norms for donor and policy-maker decision making (vis a vis evidence and youth-led priorities)? Who has the power to influence decision making spaces towards more equality? Is there any evidence on the effect of inclusive participation on other development outcomes (e.g., data on youth and peacebuilding)? Are there differences/inequities in power and decision-making within youth-led organizations? Are youth represented in formal structures and if so, are they equally represented and what form does their representation take? Who decides what research questions are investigated? Who decides what youth development programs are implemented? Who controls access to research results?

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\(^9\) The triple role refers to three types of activities: reproductive, productive and community-managing.

\(^{10}\) (March, Smyth, & Mukhopadhyay, 1999)
3. Intersectional Analysis of Gender Gaps

Despite immense progress on the global level along many parameters of human development, inequalities persist along gender lines and age, exacerbated by intersectional lines of power, discrimination, and prejudice. To ensure that the report remains relevant to the Youth Excel program, this analysis of gender gaps is structured along the four aspects of PYD: the enabling environment, youth contribution, youth agency, and assets. Considering the close interrelation between contribution and agency, we have opted to combine these into one section. In addition, we have included two cross-cutting areas of inquiry that are of specific importance to the Youth Excel program – Implementation Research (IR) and Development Cooperation – as well as a section discussing the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality in PYD programing. The questions outlined above for each of the domains in ADS 205 are addressed under the relevant sections.

The table below shows the intersection between the PYD and the ADS 205 domains, as well as the cross-cutting areas relevant to this analysis. The items displayed within the table are the aspects that will be examined in this analysis. As said before, these items are overlapping and interrelated, but the separation made is for analytical purposes only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PYD Domains</th>
<th>ADS 205 Domains</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enabling Environment</td>
<td>Laws, Policies, Regulations, and Institutional Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Agency and Contribution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-cutting</td>
<td>IR, Development Cooperation and COVID-19 impact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1 PYD Domain: Enabling Environment

The enabling environment domain supports healthy, productive, and engaged youth by surrounding them with an environment that enables them to maximize their assets, agency, and contribution. The enabling environment can include such areas as prosocial norms, youth-friendly laws and policies, gender-responsive policies, and youth-responsive services. Considering the domains in ADS 205 (specifically “Laws, Policies, Regulations, and Institutional Practices” and “Norms and Beliefs”), as well as the availability of global-level data, we have focused on global trends in laws and policies as well as in norms and beliefs affecting PYD. Although many legal and institutional areas affect the equal participation of women and girls, men and boys, and gender diverse persons, we have limited the focus in the section on laws and policies to barriers to civic participation, which is important to the implementation of the Youth Excel Program.
Key data points:

- Age of majority laws in many places continue to enable child marriage – leading to risks to health, continued education, and career advancement.
- Globally, almost 1 in 3 women have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) or non-partner sexual violence.
- Only 56% of countries allowed LGBTIQ+ organizations to legally register as LGBTIQ+ organizations. In 28% of countries, organizations existed but could not legally register as LGBTIQ+ organizations, and in 16% of countries there were no organizations.
- Globally, 19.5% of males 15 years or older believe that it is unacceptable for women to work.
- Women and girls only made up 24% of the news subjects or sources monitored by the Global Media Monitoring Project in 2015.

### 3.1.1 Laws and policies

On the international level, the international and regional human rights framework encompasses and extends protections to the civil and political rights of youth. Within this body, children are specifically protected under international law. Whereas children up until the late 19th century were regarded as property in many contexts, the 20th century saw an expansion in the legally protected rights of children and young people, this includes the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of the Child 1959, the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, and a number of other international and regional instruments.\(^\text{11}\) In addition, several international instruments specifically address the rights of young people within larger bodies of law (U.N. Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006), young women and girls (U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women 1979), and indigenous peoples (U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007). The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families 1990 protects the civic rights of migrant workers but limits the right to political participation to cases where the State where they are employed grants them such rights. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995 relate specifically to gender equality and signify an international commitment to ending discrimination and advancing equality.

Despite advances in international legal norms and intentions around the right to voice and participation, youth often lack a formalized avenue for political participation, with many countries limiting parliamentary seats to those over the age of 25.\(^\text{12}\) While many girls and young women lack avenues for formal political participation, age of majority laws in many places continue to enable child marriage – leading to risks to health, continued education, and career advancement, among other risks. The incidence of child marriage is higher for girls than for boys, but boys may run into similar risks.\(^\text{13}\) Once married, girls and women face additional discrimination in many places, for example lacking the legal ability to be the head of household in the same way as a man.\(^\text{14}\)

In addition, in many places, civic participation continues to be curtailed, including the civic participation of young

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\(^{11}\) (International Law Library of Congress, 2007)
\(^{12}\) (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016)
\(^{13}\) (UNICEF, 2020)
\(^{14}\) (The World bank, 2020)
people. When civic rights are under attack, marginalized groups, such as women’s rights organizations,\textsuperscript{15} LGBTIQ+ organizations,\textsuperscript{16} and environmental organizations\textsuperscript{17} are often specifically under attack. A 2018 study of 194 countries by OutRight International found that only 56% of countries allowed LGBTIQ+ organizations to legally register as LGBTIQ+ organizations, whereas in 28% of countries, organizations existed but could not legally register as LGBTIQ+ organizations, and in 16% of countries there were no organizations. The report concludes that LGBTIQ+ civil society leaders face a double burden of discrimination and administrative barriers, and links the barriers LGBTIQ+ organizations face to overall trends towards a closing space or civil society.\textsuperscript{18} In addition, women’s rights organizations surveyed by the organization Woman to Woman in 2018 report on how growing nationalism and a focus on traditional gender norms hamper their opportunities and space for being politically active. The organizations and individual activists surveyed who went against the norm often faced additional risks of online and physical violence, and norms and laws that hamper civic participation often hit women and girls especially hard.\textsuperscript{19}

### 3.1.2 Norms and beliefs

Gender norms are standards and expectations for how people of different genders (men, women, boys, girls, and gender minorities) are expected to behave. They are different from personally held beliefs in that they are tied to behavior within a group. These norms differ between communities, places, and groups, but they exist in some form in all communities. In addition, there are often also norms in a community tied to identity markers such as a visible or perceived disability, perceived ethnicity, perceived religion or religious practices, or a person’s perceived sexual orientation. Some norms are harmful and addressing/changing them is an important part of working towards social justice. Norms may even work to erase certain identities – notably gender minorities and LGBTIQ+ identities – by placing them outside of what is considered acceptable, or even possible.

Another aspect of gender norms are those that govern the behavior of young boys, including norms associated with masculinity in different societies. For example, many boys experience violence at a young age, which normalizes it early on, and correlates with higher incidences of physical fights among boys than among girls. Harmful norms around what it means to be a man or a boy – including the need to appear tough, to use physical force to solve conflicts, and engage in risk-taking – increase the vulnerability of boys and young men to negative health consequences and even death, in addition to posing a risk to women, girls, and people of other genders.\textsuperscript{20}

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), violence against women is a major public health problem and a violation of women’s human rights. Globally, almost 1 in 3 women have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) or non-partner sexual violence. Most of this violence is IPV: globally, about 30% of women who have been in a relationship report that they have experience some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner.\textsuperscript{21}

Drawing from the implementation of Learning Grants under the USAID-funded the YouthPower Learning, the project team identified ways in which gender norms can influence PYD programming. First, just like in the wider society, those who implement PYD programs hold gender norms and biases that can affect their decision-making during program implementation. Gatekeepers such as parents, teachers, and others who may recommend youth for participation may also hold harmful and discriminatory gender norms. Second, the view of gender and sexuality as a binary is
a norm that, perhaps surprisingly, is pervasive even in programs that aim to be gender responsive. Considering the marginalization and violence experienced by gender-non-conforming and LGBTIQ+ youth, this is an omission that can potentially lead to harm. In addition, internalized gender norms may affect self-esteem as well as create pressure on boys and young men to engage in violence.\textsuperscript{22}

Harmful norms and biases affect development together with gender, with \textbf{biases against people based on their age, race, ethnicity, perceived sexual orientation, and other attributes} (including a combination of attributes) being common across cultures (for example, globally, 19.5\% of males 15 years or older believe that it is unacceptable for women to work).\textsuperscript{23} A person is likely to experience discrimination and prejudice based on multiple identities rather than just one (see “Intersectionality” in \textit{Section 6. Glossary of Terms}). For example, a survey-based study on the acceptance of migrants in urban areas of Kenya and Vietnam showed that many factors influenced the extent to which respondents were willing to accept a hypothetical migrant – including age (younger migrants were favored), sex (females were favored over males), and income (higher income was favored).\textsuperscript{24} Thus, older men who are migrants may encounter more prejudice and discrimination not only than women and girls, but also than younger men.

\begin{tcolorbox}
\textit{The role of the media in changing gender norms}

The role of the media in challenging gender norms is essential. Shifting who is seen – as reporters, sources, or subjects - on the news can shift gender norms, as well as norms related for example to young women and girls, young women with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. Unfortunately, although the number of women reporters is rising, in 2015 they only made up 39\% of those reporting on news monitored by the Global Media Monitoring Project. Perhaps even more alarming, women only made up 24\% of the news subjects or sources. Media simultaneously reflects and reshapes the social world – if the news covers a G20 summit, where most heads of state are male and older than 35, it also reinforces the norm of who can be a leader.

\hfill\textit{(Djerf-Pierre & Edström, 2020)}
\end{tcolorbox}

Importantly, personally held biases and norms cannot be decoupled from the structure in which they exist.\textsuperscript{25} Therefore, \textbf{without changes to opportunities and distribution of resources and power, addressing internalized gender and other norms among youth, program staff, and gatekeepers will not be enough without changes to the program and organizational structures}. For example, in addition to addressing norms that have a negative effect on who gatekeepers, such as teachers, select for participation, programs and organizations can also make it more difficult to apply biases by changing the structure of the application and admittance process, changing the prerequisites for participation, etc.

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{(YouthPower, 2020)}
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{(Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, 2019)}
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{(Spilker, Nguyen, Vally, & Böhmelt, 2020)}
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{(Lai, 2020)}
3.2 PYD Domains: Contribution and agency

Although contribution and agency are separate aspects of the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework, they are closely linked, and we have grouped them here to increase the readability of the report. To examine differences in young people’s sense of agency, we look at differences in self-esteem and leadership. Contribution is measured through youth civic engagement as well as young people’s participation in the labor market.

Key data points:

- 76% of girls and young women in a survey of 19 countries want to be leaders in their communities and 62% feel very confident in their ability to lead.
- Only 25% of the parliament seats across the 153 countries are held by women.
- Only 2.2% of members of parliaments worldwide are under the age 30, while over 50% of the world’s population is under 30.
- A 2019 study found that while 15% of people in the European Union (EU) have a disability, only about 1% of politicians do.
- Globally, women complete over three quarters of unpaid care work, and this number is even higher in Asia and the Pacific at about 80% – over four times the amount of unpaid care work as men.
- About 68 million youth are unemployed, and 267 million youth, or about 1 in 5, are not in employment, education, or training (NEET), the majority of which are young women.

3.2.1 Youth self-esteem

Survey studies have found significant gender differences in self-esteem: men and boys tend to have higher self-esteem than women and girls (non-binary adults and youth were not mentioned in the studies reviewed for this assessment), but there also seems to be a gradual growth in self-esteem with age. A study of 985,937 internet users between 1999 and 2009 showed that the gender self-esteem gap differed among countries. To the authors of the study, the persistence of higher self-esteem among men globally speaks for the universality of gender norms favoring men over women, while differences in the gendered self-esteem gap indicates that gender norms also differ among countries and cultures. In the evaluation of YouthPower Learning grants mentioned above, the evaluation team also noted how norms and biases can be internalized by youth themselves and affect their sense of identity. However, programs also found that when young women get a chance to lead research, they may also change their sense of self towards more confidence and self-awareness. It is important to recognize the impact of internalized gender norms, but also PYD interventions must challenge gender norms to achieve its own stated aims.

26 (Bleidorn, Wiebeke, et al., 2016)
27 (YouthPower, 2020)
According to a survey with 10,064 participants in 19 countries conducted by Plan International, 76% of girls and young women wanted to be leaders in their communities and 62% felt very confident in their ability to lead (the report did not include data on gender-diverse young people). However, the respondents also noted women in leadership face barriers such as criticism and lack of support, having to work harder than their male peers, and being treated worse because of their sex. The report also emphasizes the importance of support from families and others in the community, as well as of seeing other female leaders who can be role models. This support may be crucial for young women in politics. A report from the Inter-Parliamentary Union from 2016 showed that young women parliamentarians were under more risk of threats and violence on social media, whereas their counterparts in older age spans felt that their age insulated them. Additionally, belonging to a minority group or to the political oppositions also increased the risks of violence.

Leadership remains unequal along gender lines, but other aspects of a person’s identity also impact access to leadership positions. Although we have not been able to identify data on leadership opportunities specifically for young women with disabilities, the overall representation of women with disabilities in official leadership positions appears to remain low. In national machineries for gender equality in seven out of twelve countries in the Asia and Pacific region, none of the members were women with disabilities. In five other countries surveyed, on average 9% of the representatives in these bodies were women with disabilities.

### Civic engagement

Based on the 2020 Global Gender Gap Report, women’s political empowerment remains the most unequal of the four major subindexes. Women’s inclusion in government impacts what is funded, how policy is created, and who is benefited. Women’s political participation is both impacted by and impacts societal norms and plays a major role in representation and encouraging young women and girls to take similar risks like becoming politically active. Women’s underrepresentation in politics is a global phenomenon. Only 25% of the over 35,000 parliament seats across the 153 countries included in the report are held by women and over half of the countries have never had a woman head of state. Additionally, only 2.2% of members of parliaments worldwide are under the age 30, while over 50% of the world’s population is under 30.

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28 In this section, leadership refers to a more traditional position for decision-making, due to the availability of information on leadership at the global level.
29 (Plan International, 2019)
30 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2016)
31 Key mechanisms for the advancement of gender equality, established as the central policy coordinating until ensuring that governments are accountable for their commitment made in the CEDAW Convention and Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA).
32 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018)
33 (World Economic Forum, 2020) Subindexes include: Health and Survival (gender gap 97% closed), Educational Attainment (96% closed), Economic Participation and Opportunity (58% closed), and Political Empowerment (25% closed).
34 (UN Women, 2019)
35 (George, 2019)
36 (World Economic Forum, 2020 i)
37 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018)
the proportion for males under 30 is 1.2% and for females under 30 it’s 0.9%.38 However, although the proportion of young men in parliament has gone up faster than the proportion of young women, the gender gap is smaller among the youngest in parliaments worldwide.39 While the gender gap is smaller in younger cohorts of parliamentarians, it is worth noting that among parliamentarian cohorts ages 21-30 and 31-40 years there are nearly double the number of men vs. women.40 Among the 41-50 year cohort the number of men to women is almost triple, among the 51-60 years cohort (the largest cohort) it’s over triple, and among the 61-70 years cohort there are nearly five times more men than women.41

Studies have found that governments that more closely represent the composition of society as a whole have more stable policies.42 However, the reality is often very different. A 2019 study found that while 15% of people in the European Union (EU) have a disability, only about 1% of politicians do.43 In the U.S., while the number of LGBTQ+ representation increased by over 20% between June 2019 and June 2020, the Victory Institute found that 22,544 more LGBTQ+ people would need to be elected to reach equitable representation. While there are major global gaps in the data concerning how in additional intersectional identities manifest in political representation and civil engagement within gender identities, (for example data on the number of female-identifying parliamentarians under 30 who identify as having a disability), we can deduce that the intersectionality of multiple marginalized identities only multiples the lack of representation and participation.44

It comes to no surprise that women – including young women – face diverse and multilayered forms of barriers against their participation in the public, political sphere. For many women, men, and youth from underserved or marginalized populations, poverty and other inequalities make political engagement and participation in democratic processes a luxury on which they cannot afford to focus their time or energy. Across the globe, women universally spend more time than men on unpaid work, which frequently takes the form of household or care work or volunteer work, in no country does men’s time on unpaid work even equal that of women’s.45 Globally, women complete over three quarters of unpaid care work, and this number is even higher in Asia and the Pacific at about 80% – over four times the amount of unpaid care work as men.46 There is a negative relationship between women’s time spent on unpaid domestic work and economic

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38 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018)
39 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018)
40 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018), pgs. 17-18.
41 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018), pgs. 17-18.
42 (Mollmann, 2011)
43 (Schippers, 2020)
44 (Victory Institute, 2020)
45 (World Economic Forum, 2020 i)
46 (Women do 4 times more unpaid care work than men in Asia and the Pacific, 2018)
Youth civic engagement has been increasingly recognized as a means of personal development, reducing risky behavior, and increasing youth engagement and belonging in the social fabric of the community. The UN World Youth Report on Youth Civic Engagement looks at youth economic, political, and community engagement trends. On the one hand, the report highlights new developments such as digital activism and the role of youth in political transition processes (for example during the “Arab Spring”). On the other hand, inequities in access to digital and other resources as well as risks of gender-based violence and harassment means that participation remains unequal. Research has shown that youth perceive their participation in civic engagement is not valued by society, in turn making them less likely to engage or feel they have any influence. There is also the argument that youth, especially those from low-income backgrounds, are conditioned to believe that they are not able to have positive impact on society. One conclusion from the report is that although youth find ways of informal or novel involvement, it is important to also ensure inclusion in formalized political processes such as political parties and representative bodies.

3.2.4 Participation in the labor market

Youth also face disproportionate employment insecurities. Compared to adults, youth are three times more likely to be unemployed, about 68 million youth are unemployed, and 267 million youth, or about 1 in 5, are not in employment, education, or training (NEET), the majority of which are young women. Women are significantly more disenfranchised and working in insecure informal work. Women and youth face greater barriers to employment and are disproportionately affected by work insecurity and instability. External factors like climate change and natural disasters increase women and girls’ vulnerability and intensify existent insecurities.

Migration, internally and internationally, also impact youth capacity to engage in society and find stable work, as they may face discrimination based on religion or ethnicity; are at increased risk of exploitation; have little to no bargaining power; and often lack access to proper social and health services. The World Migration Report 2020 revealed that in 2017 there were 164 million migrant workers worldwide, representing 59.2% of all international migrants and 70.1% of those of working age (20 -64 years), being male migrants the majority (58%) of migrant workers. In general, migrants have more difficulties in accessing employment than non-migrants, however, there are substantial differences between countries and groups, depending on the socioeconomic situation and policies of each country; as well as on migrants’ demographic and individual circumstances and characteristics (age, gender, language skills or qualifications).

Youth unemployment has many dimensions, driven by both a lack of jobs and lack of adequate or matching skills to fit the jobs. Additionally, youth, even those with higher levels of education, face significant wait periods as they transition from education to work, with the global average being 13.8 months. Young men, youth with higher education, and those from higher-income backgrounds are more likely to find stable jobs faster. Many protests and demonstrations for change have been led by youth movements who feel disillusioned by traditional political structures and that politics and policy is not working for them. Youth are well placed to lead positive social change, the 2020 UN World Youth report points

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47. (World Economic Forum, 2020 i)
48. (UN, 2016)
49. The term NEET refers to a person who is unemployed and not receiving any education or vocational training.
50. (International Labor Organization, 2020)
51. (Osman-Elasha, accessed on December 18, 2020.)
52. (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016)
53. (IOM, 2020)
54. (UN, 2016)
55. (International Labour Organization, 2018)
56. (International Labour Organization, 2018)
out that with **young people being prone to “creativity, risk-taking, resilience, adaptation and inquisitiveness (the desire to learn)” as well as other factors such as digital skills, youth are well placed to take on social entrepreneurship.** Inherently, youth with access to technology, quality education, healthcare, and those with less destabilizing external environment factors like corruption, are more empowered to take on social entrepreneurship.

### 3.3 PYD Domain: Assets

The **assets** domain defines a broad range of necessary resources and skills that youth need to achieve their desired outcomes. In this analysis, we have focused on aspects that are highly relevant to the Youth Excel ToC and where there is readily available data on the global level: access to education and training together with digital participation and inclusion. Digital access and participation have emerged as key during the current global COVID-19 pandemic, when most Civil Society Organizations (like IREX) have strict limitations on in-person events and activities.

#### Key data points:

- About 90% of girls 15-24 are literate as compared to about 93% of boys.
- In 2018, there were 31 million displaced children.
- 41% of women and 36% of men who graduated secondary school attend university.
- Out of the 58 million children who were out of school in 2015, one-third (1/3) had a disability.
- As much as 40% of the world’s population doesn’t have access to education in a language they speak or understand, with ethnic minority populations hit hardest by lack of access to education in their own language, with girls and women more affected.
- Less than one-third of women and girls choose to study in fields like math and engineering in their higher education. Globally, only 3% of students attending information and communication technology (ICT) courses are women.
- There is a strong connection between gender parity in internet usage and gender parity in tertiary enrollment.

#### 3.3.1 Education and training

Globally, steps toward achieving educational gender parity have made massive strides in recent decades. According to the Global Gender Gap Report, 35 countries have achieved full educational attainment parity, with at least one country in each of the regions surveyed. Of the 35 countries that have achieved parity: “nine are in Western Europe, another nine are in Latin America, eight are located in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region, three in Sub-Saharan Africa, two from East Asia and the Pacific, two from North America, and one each in South Asia and Middle East and North Africa.”

Gender parity is more common across higher levels of education with global secondary levels nearly at gender parity and women surpassing men in tertiary education. However, enrollment in secondary and tertiary education for

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57 (UN, 2020)
58 (World Economic Forum, 2020) Of the 35 countries that have achieved parity: “nine are in Western Europe, another nine are in Latin America, eight are located in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region, three in Sub-Saharan Africa, two from East Asia and the Pacific, two from North America, and one each in South Asia and Middle East and North Africa.”
59 (World Economic Forum, 2020)
Girls and boys remains low globally at around 66% secondary enrollment (boys and girls). Only around 41% of women and 36% of men who graduated secondary school attend university. These enrollment rates differ greatly across countries, education level, and area of study – in many countries the opposite is true, with literacy and primary school gaps closing but secondary and tertiary education gaps remaining substantial. In addition, global data suggests that there are bigger differences in educational achievement between developed and developing countries than along gender lines, indicating global differences in the quality of education.

The advancement of women and girls in the area of education comes at the same time as boys start falling behind – at least in developed countries. It appears that the school system in many countries have not developed pedagogical practices that meet the needs and interests of many boys. However, boys tend to pick up skills later in life, once they are in a real-world setting.

In addition to the (shrinking) gender gap in education, young people with disabilities continue to face barriers to accessing quality education. Global education experts have estimated that out of the 58 million children who were out of school in 2015, 1/3 had a disability. In addition, data is lacking on best practices for inclusion of children with disabilities and on the return on investment in their education. Furthermore, data analyzed by UNESCO indicates that girls with disabilities are slightly more at a disadvantage than boys with disabilities in educational enrollment.

Migration can play a highly varied impact on boys’ and girls’ education. Understanding how variables like age of migration, gender, internal vs. international migration, country of migration, and whether children migrate with their guardian(s) is very complex, as migration has a multitude of economic, psychosocial, and educational impacts on children. A study of Mexican immigrants to the U.S. found that international migration of the father only, had a statistically significant increase of 0.73 years of schooling for girls, while there are also studies that argue that a lack of paternal presence more negatively impacts boys than girls. Remittances may enable youth to postpone entering the workforce, continue education, attend better schools, and even perform better. However, there are also studies that find a negative correlation between school attendance for boys and girls with the migration of their parents and increased domestic and care burdens placed on older siblings and other family members who remain. Migrant children, those migrating alone or the children of migrant workers, may be faced with major barriers to education access “due to social and cultural isolation, strenuous and hazardous work, extreme poverty, poor health conditions and language barriers.” In 2018, there were 31 million displaced children according to UNICEF.

When looking at certain sectors and areas of study, there are global trends in gender saturation across areas of education and training. Overall, women are greatly under-represented in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects. Less than one-third of women and girls choose to study in fields like math and engineering in their higher education. Gender saturation levels in STEM differ across sectors and areas of study. Three-quarters of women and girls study in fields that are less technology intensive and 90% of STEM-related labor is held by men and women. Cultural norms and practices underpin the higher education degree specialization of men and women and are a key driver of occupational segregation.
countries. Globally, only 3% of students attending information and communication technology (ICT) courses are women. In a study of 20 leading economies, females made up only 26% of workers in the Data and AI field, 15% in Engineering, and 12% for Cloud Computing roles. Men and women’s preferences for areas of work and skill sets are influenced by expected and experienced inclusion and diversity. Perceptions of “men’s” and “women’s” fields of studies, reinforce and mutually support gender saturation levels and representation in these sectors and reflect gender roles and norms discussed in this report.

As much as 40% of the world’s population does not have access to education in a language that they speak or comprehend. Studies show that students who do not speak the language of instruction at home score significantly worse on national exams than students who do. Poor performance due to language comprehension not only has serious negative impacts on the individual’s educational success and opportunities; but is reflective of greater societal ethnic and language injustices and reproduces these patterns of disadvantage and injustice. Language of instruction is frequently linked to lasting impacts of colonization and power structures, which continue to disadvantage indigenous and marginalized populations. Educational injustice and disadvantages are intensified by factors such as gender and poverty, with poverty often linked to other aspects of marginalization, such as belonging to an ethnic minority or residing in a marginalized region.

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69 (World Economic Forum, 2020 ii)
70 (World Economic Forum, 2020 i)
71 (UNESCO, 2016)
3.3.2 Digital participation and inclusion

Access to technology and agency to maneuver the digital spaces are rights for all, regardless of gender. Bridging the gender digital gap is crucial to ensure that women and girls are not left facing an even more unequal future as the world and global economy become even more digital. In two-thirds of countries worldwide, men are more likely to be internet users than women. Gender digital divides are largest in Sub-Saharan Africa, Arab States, and South Asia. Additionally, gender divides are higher where overall access is lower. In the least developed countries, one in seven women use the internet as compared to one in five men. However, youth are increasingly online. In the least developed countries, those aged 15-24 make up 35% of internet users, compared to 13% in developed countries.\(^{72}\) Whereas the mobile phone ownership gap is biggest in South Asia, the internet access gap is largest in Africa.\(^{73}\)

Interestingly, there is a strong connection between gender parity in internet usage and gender parity in tertiary enrollment. The only region where women’s participation on the internet is higher is the Americas, where counties also display high levels of gender parity in tertiary education.\(^{74}\) Digital literacy is needed to fully capture the benefits of being connected to the internet, advancing in careers, and accessing opportunities that may not have been previously present for women.\(^{75}\) In addition, the online space needs to be free from violence and threats to ensure equal online participation. It is important to recognize that online gender-based violence is an offshoot and tightly connected to offline violence. Sometimes, online anonymity may encourage harassment, but equally important is offline violence that continues in the online space, such as stalking and bullying. When implementing programs online or with a digital component, it is essential to recognize and address barriers to digital inclusion such as gender-based violence and internet access.

3.4 Cross-Cutting

In addition to the PYD framework, there are several concepts that are relevant to the implementation and outcomes of the Youth Excel Program and its potential impact on gender equality and social inclusion. Youth Excel will specifically work in the field of Implementation Research (IR). This section addresses inequalities in the area of IR and academic research. We also include a short section to highlight inequality in access to tertiary education – which provides the most solid foundation for people to conduct IR. In addition, considering the funding source (USAID), the program operates within the Development Cooperation sector. The report briefly addresses inequality on the level of state development cooperation agencies but does not go into detail with regards to the enduring legacy of colonialism and post-colonialism in the sector.\(^{76}\) Finally, since this report is written at the height of the global COVID-19 pandemic, we assess the potential impact of this global event on inclusion in relation to the Youth Excel program.

\(^{72}\) (International Telecommunications Union, 2017)
\(^{73}\) (Plan International, 2018)
\(^{74}\) (International Telecommunications Union, 2017)
\(^{75}\) (Plan International, 2018)
\(^{76}\) The International Development Cooperation sector operates within a context of post-colonialism, current colonial practices, and other power relations on the global level.
Sciences as often practiced at academic institutions have claimed a monopoly on knowledge at the expense of marginalized groups, excluding alternative methods of inquiry and limiting access to knowledge.

Less than 30% of staff in research and development are women.

International development cooperation partners and funders suffer from internal inequities along gender and racial lines. The field has roots in colonialism and is still grappling with post-colonialism.

Mental anxiety due to COVID-19 was identified in 90% of youth with 1 out of 6 youth having lost their jobs and over 1 billion youth being impacted by school shutdowns associated with the pandemic.

As many as 24 million learners risked not going back to school after the COVID-19 disruption.

There is a lack of data on barriers to inclusion of non-binary and gender-nonconforming youth in general, and especially in these cross-cutting areas.

3.4.1 Implementation Research and related approaches

Implementation Research belongs within both the sphere of academic research and the sphere of evaluation. In both areas, practitioners and contributors have voiced criticism over the hierarchy of knowledge and offered alternative routes towards a more inclusive view of the ways that knowledge is created.

Rajesh Tandon and Budd L. Hall – Co-Holders of the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education at the University of Victoria, Canada – have introduced the idea of “knowledge democracy” as a tool to decolonize knowledge. In their view, modern science – largely the knowledge of white men – have claimed a monopoly on knowledge at the expense of groups such as persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and those affected by colonialism. A knowledge democracy instead highlights the importance of different ways of knowing and of different ways of representing and communicating knowledge. They also point to the importance of making knowledge accessible to those who need it – especially for those that act through social movements, including social movements for the rights of marginalized groups.

In addition, knowledge of English has become a point of privilege in many fields, including tertiary education and in academia. For example, according to research by Global English Language Education Firm (EF), there is a strong correlation between the average proficiency in English in a country and the number of scientific publications. Interestingly, the EF study finds that women who take the company’s English proficiency test worldwide are slightly more skilled than their male counterparts. On the other hand, as much as 40% of the global population do not have access to even primary education in a language they speak or understand. Thus, students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds as well as minority students who do not speak or do not speak well the language used in higher education start out at a more challenging position.

As a counterweight to the unequal tendencies of academic research, researchers and practitioners have initiated and

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77 (Hall & Tandon, 2017)
78 (Education First, 2019)
79 (UNESCO, 2016)
tested alternative approaches that take a more inclusive and participatory approach, and that seek to challenge existing power relations. These alternative approaches include for example Empowerment Evaluations\(^8\) – an approach which empowers a community and its members to monitor performance themselves - and Community Based Participatory Research\(^9\) – an approach to working together with the community at all stages of the research process.

Gender representation in tertiary education globally is an important datapoint, which also illustrates the difference in needs between regions and countries. In low income and upper middle-income countries, women aged 25-29 are less likely than men to have completed at least two years of higher education, whereas the reverse is true for upper middle-income countries\(^9\). Less than 30% of staff in research and development are women\(^\)\(^9\). In addition, there are socioeconomic, ethnic, and other differences in access to tertiary education. As an illustrative example in one of the Youth Excel target regions, access to higher education in Kenya is unequal along socioeconomic, regional, ethnic, and religious lines, whereas the gender gap is smaller. For example, 24% of respondents of Kikuyu ethnicity in a 2014 household survey had attained at least 2 years of higher education, whereas the number for respondents of Kuria ethnicity was only 1%\(^\)\(^9\).

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\(^8\) (Fetterman, 1994; Miller & Campbell, 2006)
\(^9\) (Balazs & Morello-Frosch, 2013)
\(^9\) (UNICEF, 2020)
\(^\)\(^9\) (World Economic Forum, 2020 ii)
\(^9\) (UNESCO, 2020)
There have been many calls to increase diversity in the development cooperation sector, as well as in the related non-profit and international diplomacy sectors. We look at a recent (2017/2018) diversity and inclusion report by the UK Department for International Development (DFID, now part of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office - FCDO) as well as the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on diversity at USAID from June 2020. Both agencies include data only on their domestically employed workforce, creating a data gap when it comes to locally hired staff members.

In the case of USAID, the GAO report notes that although both the proportion of women and ethnic minority employees at USAID rose between 2002 and 2018, the “glass ceiling” persists for both groups (the data excludes foreign nationals and contractors). The proportion of both ethnic minority and women employees decreases with the rank of the employee. For example, the proportion of ethnic minority employees in the Civil Service portion of the USAID workforce was 75% at level GS-11 or below, whereas the number was 39% for the Foreign Service portion of the workforce. At Executive level, the number was 33% in the Civil Service portion of the workforce and 17% in the Foreign Service portion. For women, the picture was slightly less bleak. The proportion of women in the Civil Service portion of the USAID workforce was 75% at level GS-11 or below, and 55% for the Foreign Service portion of the workforce. At Executive level, the number was 43% for civil servants and 48% in the foreign service. In addition, according to the GAO report, the agency has failed to adequately plan for, and address identified issues in relation to diversity and inclusion.

Data from the DFID workforce show similar trends to those at USAID, although women are slightly overrepresented at the agency, they are slightly underrepresented at the Senior Civil Service level (the highest grade level). Similarly, out of all pay grade groups, Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) are least represented at the Senior Civil Service Level, with the same being true for persons with disabilities. The number of staff members under the age of 25 is also low as compared to their overall share of the working age population.

Although we are lacking data on local staff members of international development organizations, the lack of diversity and persistent glass ceiling at the level of domestic hires is an indication of the lack of representation and equity in the sector. This lack of representation in some cases filters down to the level of implementation. For example, evidence from the Peace Building sector indicates that better gender representation leads to more sustainable peace agreement, but that women overall are severely underrepresented in peace negotiations. Apart from equity being an ethical imperative, there may also be practical imperatives suggesting that a more representative and equitable sector will lead to better development outcomes.

Better gender representation leads to more sustainable peace agreement, but women overall are severely underrepresented in peace negotiations. Apart from equity being an ethical imperative, there may also be practical imperatives suggesting that a more representative and equitable sector will lead to better development outcomes.

Many international development organizations are not yet transparent about challenges they face around diversity, equity, and inclusion of their staff. The authors recommend that all Youth Excel team members, international and local organizations, share the challenges they face in relation to diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as information about their actions to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion whenever it is safe, legal, and appropriate to do so.

85 (Development, Department for International, 2018)
86 (United States Government Accountability Office, 2020)
87 (Bachelet, 2014)
3.4.3 COVID-19

The direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19 have impacted nearly every individual on the planet, reaching across continents, cultures, and creeds. While no one is invincible to the virus or its consequences, the scope and depth of the pandemic’s impact is immensely varied between and among groups of peoples. Research has already projected the many ways that we will observe the lasting effects of COVID-19 in the decades to come. For marginalized, disadvantaged populations and other groups facing social injustices, the pandemic is further deepening and expanding inequalities. The full range and impact of the virus will only be understood through time. From an intersectional lens, COVID-19 is another factor exacerbating preexistent inequalities tied to sex, gender, race, sexuality, and other marginalized identities.

The COVID-19 era is approaching one year. Since the beginning of the global reaction to COVID-19, as quarantines, travel restrictions, shutdowns, and states of emergencies began to be enacted in the spring of 2020, the pandemic has made explicit racial and gender injustices. In the U.S., Indigenous and Hispanic Americans experienced nearly three times the rate of cases as compared to white Americans, while Black American death rate doubled those of white and Asian American deaths. Globally, gender-based violence (GBV) rates have risen. In some U.S. states, reported domestic violence (DV) upticks of up to 35%. In Iraq, 65% of survivor service provider points surveyed in April and May of 2020 noted increases in one or more type of GBV, and of these 94% reported an increase in DV or intimate partner violence (IPV). A Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) for COVID-19 focused on the East, Central and Southern Africa noted that women and girls are at increased risk of IPV and other forms of GBV during the pandemic due to existing gender role expectations, income loss and limited mobility.

Due to restrictions on movement, situations where survivors of domestic violence are quarantined with their abuser, and fear of retaliation, some GBV services have noted decreases in reporting. Jagori, an Non-governmental Organization (NGO) in Delhi, experienced a 50% decrease in calls to its support hotline, despite growing numbers of GBV incidents. COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on youth mental health as well, in the U.S., a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 1 out of 4 young adults reporting that they had thought about committing suicide in the past 30 days at the time of the survey. Globally, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental anxiety due to COVID-19 was identified in 90% of youth with 1 out of 6 youth having lost their jobs, and over 1 billion youth being impacted by school shutdowns associated with the pandemic.

Migrants are especially vulnerable to the stressors that have resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, children of migrants are less likely to have access to a computer at home, and their parents have fewer resources than native parents to help them during remote schooling. In addition, migrants have been hit hard by economic downturns and changes to the labor market.

88 (Center for Disease Control, 2020)
89 (Mittal & Singh, 2020)
90 (World Health Organization, 2020)
91 (CARE, 2020)
92 (Mittal & Singh, 2020)
93 (Wan, 2020)
94 (WHO, 2020)
95 (OECD, 2020)
For the fields of PYD and IR, the digital divide risks further reducing access when data collection, services, and opportunities for participation move online. UNESCO estimated in July of 2020 that as many as 24 million learners risked not going back to school after the COVID-19 disruption, with factors such as lack of resources, increased responsibilities at home, early pregnancy and marriage having a potential effect on the back-to-school ratio. Risk factors may include poverty, gender-based inequalities, lack of services and infrastructure, and lack of access to distance learning during the pandemic.\textsuperscript{96}

\textsuperscript{96} (UNESCO, 2020)
4. Recommendations for Project Implementation

Based on the analysis of gender gaps and other markers and identities, as well as barriers to equitable outcomes of Youth Excel, we include a list of recommendations for the program’s design and implementation for consideration by the team that makes up the Youth Excel Consortium (IREX, international and local partners). In some cases, the recommendations come directly from or coincide with recommendations in the literature that has been analyzed for this report. Where appropriate, we cite the source of the recommendation. In other cases, the recommendations are based on our analysis of available data and knowledge about IREX approaches. The recommendations are organized along eight thematic areas to help the reader.

4.1 Partner and Youth Selection

1. Considering the multiple difficulties for participation in activities outside the traditional ones or assigned to young people, Youth Excel should make an effort to openly and by various means convene diverse young people, in an inclusive, accessible and safe way, and considering each context.

2. Considering the opportunity to contribute to transformation of harmful internalized gender-based and other norms, Youth Excel should consider seeking partnerships with organizations led by youth from marginalized groups, including women’s groups and groups led by gender-diverse youth.\(^{97}\)

3. In many countries, CSOs that are led by or focus their work on marginalized groups have a harder time getting an official registration. Invest in finding ways to support and collaborate with un-registered organizations\(^{98}\).

4. Considering the unequal access to primary, secondary, and tertiary education, as well as lack of access to education in native languages for many young people, Youth Excel should consider budgeting for translation of application materials into applicable languages as well as translation of future reports. The program should also make information and application materials accessible through adapting font, colors, and language for accessibility.

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\(^{97}\) (YouthPower, 2020)  
\(^{98}\) (Wassholm, 2018)
5. Consult available resources and invest in relevant staff training to enhance the reach of the program and increase accessibility. One resource available free of charge to the project is the National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange (implemented by Mobility International USA, [https://www.miusa.org/ncde](https://www.miusa.org/ncde)).

6. Research by Save the Children indicates that children should to the extent possible, be elected by their peers to engage in participatory processes instead of being selected by adults. Selection processes led by adults are perceived to favor children who are academically successful or who are popular at school.  

### 4.2 Youth engagement

1. Considering the multiple difficulties for participation faced by diverse young people, Youth Excel should ensure the conditions necessary for an autonomous participation (online and in person), in an inclusive, accessible, and safe way, and considering each context.

2. Lack of inclusion in programming could reinforce gender roles and perceptions. Youth Excel should work to promote youth role models – especially youth success stories and women, girls, and gender non-binary people’s action as change makers, leaders, and professionals in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and other nontraditional roles.

3. Similarly, Youth Excel should share successes and benefits of participation with parents and guardians to encourage youth engagement – especially of marginalized youth - as well as parent buy-in.

4. To ensure inclusion and engagement of all youth, the program should consider cultural and regional contexts and safety of youth participants. This could entail measures such as mentorship or co-leadership, which could make youth and their parents more comfortable with their participation.

5. Considering the requirement on some young people to either contribute to the family income, or provide for themselves, the program may consider compensating youth for the time they contribute to Youth Excel – time that cannot be spent on income generating activities or necessary household chores.

6. With growing digital engagement there are opportunities to close digital inclusion and literacy gaps. Youth Excel should consider the barriers certain groups may face and provide suitable solutions based on the country context, such as providing data plans, portable Wi-Fi, or offline data resources to youth. If existing infrastructure poses limitations that the program cannot solve, this should be acknowledged up-front. The program should also strive to promote youth voices, thoughts, and original work as virtual creators, not only participants or users, and to engage youth in presenting research results in new and creative ways.

7. Youth Excel should seek to understand more online harassment and violence increasing trends so that prevention and responses can be adequate and appropriate.

8. Use an intersectional approach to understand how other factors within gender contribute to discrimination, marginalization, and inequities. These factors can include race, socioeconomic status, ethnic origin, age, gender identity, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and disability, among others. This recommendation applies to all of the thematic areas.

9. Considering the key roles and the impact of men’s attitudes and actions in both private and public spheres, contemplate the positive masculinity approach and work with boys and men as critical contributors to the empowerment of girls, women, and gender nonconforming persons. Ensure that girls, women, and gender nonconforming persons are equipped to negotiate their relationships with boys and men as power relations shift.

99 [Save the Children International, 2020](https://www.savethechildren.org)
100 [Plan International, 2019](https://www.plan-international.org)
101 [Plan International, 2018](https://www.plan-international.org)
102 [Power, 2020](https://www.powerglobal.org)
103 [Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2018](https://www.gatesfoundation.org)
4.3 Capacity strengthening of youth-led and youth-serving partners

1. Similar to the urgency of funding organizations led by marginalized youth, it is important that Youth Excel invest specifically in training and mentoring young women and girls to strengthen their role as leaders, and to build the capacity of other young people from marginalized groups.

2. Similar to the need for Youth Excel staff to be trained to ensure more inclusive approaches, the program should also invest in providing relevant inclusion training for leaders, staff, and volunteers at participating youth organizations. The training should be designed and led by local trainers and/or trainers with in-depth knowledge of the local context, preferably in the local languages.

3. When selecting youth for capacity building opportunities, keep in mind the conclusions drawn by Save the Children – cited above – that in many cases, children prefer being elected by their peers to being selected by adults.

4. Strive to recognize skills and abilities acquired outside of formal education and provide opportunities for youth to use and strengthen existing skills.

4.4 Network building

1. To support intergenerational engagement, adults must be trained in and convinced of the value of meaningful youth participation. Adults that participate in the program must also be trained in how to ensure equitable participation and dismantle existing barriers.

2. Work with caregivers, families, schools, communities to provide opportunities for and encourage youth leadership, especially among youth from marginalized groups.

3. Consider the continuous burden on marginalized groups to be the stewards of change. Encourage and enable all participants in the network to promote equality and inclusion.

4. At a minimum, the Youth Excel team (including partner organizations as well as staff) should develop practices for holding meetings and managing working relationships in an inclusive and welcoming way. The program also has the opportunity to research and develop guidelines and tools for designing interactions that examine and challenge existing power and social norms. One point of departure is the network members’ own identities and a reflection on how these might influence their role and work.

5. Considering the lack of diversity in headquarters (HQ) hires of international donor organizations, the Youth Excel program may consider taking targeted action to hire a workforce that will balance this lack of representation. The program should advertise positions specifically targeting ethnic minorities and other underrepresented groups and should consult recruitment specialists to design an application process that invites and considers diverse candidates.

4.5 Dissemination of findings and tracking access

1. Considering the barriers to knowledge created by paywalls, language, format, and other factors, Youth Excel should choose channels for dissemination that have the potential of making findings accessible to those that are concerned. Consider choosing several different ways of dissemination that target different groups.

2. Youth Excel should consider planning and budgeting to make materials accessible to different audiences, specifically targeting marginalized groups (such as minorities who do not speak the official language, youth with disabilities, and with low level of formal education). This can be done by adapting the font, colors, and

104 (Save the Children International, 2020)
105 (Plan International, 2019)
language for accessibility. The program should also be transparent about limitations.

3. Consider the digital divide and ensure that online events to share results are complemented by offline or asynchronous modes of participation.

4. Continuously monitor who accesses and uses the project’s findings and products, disaggregating for relevant groups, and adjust the strategy to meet shortfalls.

5. We recommend that Youth Excel engage with the media in ways that consider underrepresented groups representation in a way that challenges and transforms gender norms.

### 4.6 Do No (More) Harm

1. Invest in a thorough project risk assessment and take measures to mitigate risks that have high or medium impact and likelihood.

2. Develop comprehensive Safeguarding Policies to prevent and mitigate risks and abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

3. Assess and consider the capacity of project partners to develop and implement safeguarding protocols. Partners with the capacity and desire to develop, implement, and monitor safeguarding, child protection, and protection against sexual abuse and exploitation (PSEA) policies should be engaged. Youth Excel should work to build their existent strengths and capacities as needed to support a mutual, cross-country learning.

4. Considering the harm that language can create (and has created), support partner organizations in creating inclusive glossaries for all languages in which Youth Excel will work. Equip translators and interpreters with the glossary to reduce harm of offensive and violent language.

### 4.7 Implementation Research (IR) and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)

1. Train youth in collecting and analyzing data\(^{106}\) – with an intersectional approach, especially gender data, and other data on marginalized groups relevant for each context - and identify areas of research that will enable them to advocate for their interests and for the interests of their peers.

2. Considering that giving leadership roles for young women in research may change their sense of self towards more confidence and self-awareness, girls, women, and gender nonconforming youth should be intentionally provided opportunities for leadership in Youth Excel research.

3. Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) principles should be embedded throughout the program and MEL activities. Youth Excel should collaborate with communities on what they want to learn, integrate learning processes throughout, and make sure to adapt interventions to become more inclusive as well as effective.

4. Consider developing an approach to inclusive, equitable knowledge gathering and sharing that balances the need for acceptable “international” standards of rigor with a democratic approach to epistemology.

5. Youth Excel should design inclusive research tools that consider the gender gap and other aspects that hinder access to higher education and to do research, such as socioeconomic status and ethnicity, in low income and upper middle-income countries.

6. Ensure that the perspectives and experiences of all youth are represented in the data. Some advice for creating inclusive surveys include providing multiselect checkboxes or open-ended questions for self-identification gender and other questions, allowing respondents not to answer demographic questions, and soliciting feedback on survey questions from the community\(^{107}\).

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106 (Save the Children International, 2020)
107 (Kaplowitz & Laroche, 2020)
7. Track progress on the inclusivity of program outputs and outcomes through both ongoing monitoring of performance indicators and period evaluation and learning of specific aspects of the program.

8. Ensure that language used in surveys and other relevant tools is culturally sensitive and does not create or exacerbate harm. A local language review can address some risks in this regard.

### 4.8 Country-specific or regional rapid Intersectional Gender Analyses

Youth Excel is planning to analyze gender-based as well as other inequities and barriers on the regional and/or country level. This level of analysis is necessary to adapt the program to local needs and contexts, and to tap into transformational or innovative approaches on the regional or country level. Based on the conclusions in this report, we make the following recommendations for country or regional gender analyses:

1. The country or regional analysis should be done by a team of researchers with extensive knowledge of the local context in the region or country. If Youth Excel opts for a regional study, the expertise of the research team should be as representative as possible of the regional diversity or of the diversity within the country. The Terms of Reference (ToR) should take into consideration the strengths of local youth-led organizations and ensure that the scope is within their capacity.

2. For this global study, we have not been able to conduct key informant interviews. For the country or regional studies, the research team should have enough time to consult with key informants, such as community organizations working with marginalized groups as well as academic and policy experts.

3. The country or regional analyses should align with ADS 205 and should at least cover the domains mentioned by USAID. The analyses can also use other relevant frameworks – such as the Moser framework – that are relevant to the local context.

4. We recommend that the Youth Excel country/regional analysis specifically examine whether and how legislation and implementation adversely affect youth organizations that focus on young women’s rights, LGBTIQ+ rights, environmental issues, or other marginalized groups.

5. The following is a non-exhaustive list of questions that can be further explored through the regional or country analyses, based on the conclusions of this global analysis. The questions are also designed to address barriers to equal PYD outcomes and equal participation in research. We include them here based on areas that were identified as especially important in the global analysis, or areas where global data is lacking.

- **Laws, Policies, Regulations, and Institutional Practices:** Do any laws exist that inhibit inclusive participation in research and advocacy (e.g. age, gender barriers)? Do any laws exist that inhibit research involving specific groups or specific groups disclosing their identity (e.g. LGBTQI+)? Do any laws prevent the development of networks or CSO across any sensitive issue areas? Are there differences in how different types of organizations are regulated (for example women’s organizations and LGBTIQ+ organizations)? Are there any positive legislative initiatives to address gender inequality or other aspects of inequality among youth? Are there gender protective laws, policies and practices, and are those implemented or considered? Is the State an ally to gender equality and social inclusion (currently and historically)? What historical variables may impact current inequalities?

- **Cultural norms and beliefs:** What beliefs / norms might impede youth driving project decisions? Are those norms different for youth of different genders or youth from marginalized groups? What beliefs / norms might impede certain groups’ participation in formal Youth organizations? What formal/informal institutions influence these gender norms? Are norms and beliefs different between youth themselves and adult caregivers or gatekeepers? What are norms concerning who can be a leader and how do different groups of youth view leadership and their own leadership potential? What are norms around the value of different types of knowledge? How can Youth Excel harness diverse knowledge resources?
Gender roles, responsibilities, and time use: How does women’s triple role impact young women’s civic engagement? What is the level of representation and inclusion in the field of research and civil society organizations? Are roles in CSOs and in the research field different along gender, age, or other lines? How might the COVID-19 context exacerbate or shift these roles?

Access and control over resources: What is the level of civic participation by gender? What is the level of school enrollment by gender? What is the level of secondary and tertiary enrollment by gender, and for what fields? To what extent is quality education accessible for persons with disabilities? How equitable is access to technology and digital literacy? What language is primarily spoken in CSOs and academia in the country/region? What additional languages should Youth Excel develop material in?

Power and decision-making: What are the current norms for decision making in formal (for example government) and non-formal (for example youth groups) contexts? Are there differences/inequities in power and decision-making within youth led organizations? Are youth represented in formal structure and if so, are they equally represented? Who decides what research questions are investigated in academia in the country/region? Who decides what youth development programs are implemented? Who controls access to research results?

6. The analysis should also include recommendations for how Youth Excel can work towards more equitable outcomes and processes in the target region or country. Recommendations should align with the Youth Excel theory of change and can include the areas covered in this report as well as additional areas depending on the local context.
5. Glossary of terms

In this report, we use concepts and terms that may have different meanings to different people but that are important to understanding the report. The use of different words and descriptions varies across cultures and societal groups, and the definitions here are limited to this report. One universal rule to keep in mind is to always use the words or labels that someone asks you to use in reference to them.

This list has been adapted from work done by the IREX Securing Access to Free Expression Program, which in turn drew heavily on the Transforming Agency, Access, and Power (TAAP) toolkit which IREX co-developed. The Youth Excel program may develop its own glossary and adapt it to the contexts in which the program works.

**Bisexual**: Sexual orientation that describes a person who feels emotionally and sexually attracted to people of their own gender and people of other genders, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way, or to the same degree.

**Child**: In this report and following the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we consider any human below the age of 18 to be a child. However, in different contexts where Youth Excel will work, the age of majority may be earlier.

**Displaced persons**: People forced to flee their homes due to persecution, natural disasters, conflict, violence, or human rights violations. This category includes internally displaced people (seeking safety in other parts of their own country) as well as asylum seekers and refugees (people seeking safety and international protection in other countries).

**Equality**: A broad concept and a goal for development. It is achieved when individuals and groups have equal rights, freedoms, conditions, and opportunities for realizing their full potential and for contributing to and benefiting from economic, social, cultural, and political development. It means society values all members equally for their similarities and the diverse roles they play. It signifies the outcomes that result from gender equity strategies and processes.

**Equity**: The process of being fair to different individuals and groups. To ensure fairness, measures must often be available to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent individuals and groups from otherwise operating on a level playing field.

**Gay**: Sexual orientation that describes a person who feels emotionally and sexually attracted to people of their own gender. It can be used regardless of gender identity, but it is more commonly used to describe men.

**Gender**: Socially defined differences between women and men, gender diverse adults, girls and boys, and gender diverse children and young people. These differences may include economic, social, and political roles, responsibilities, rights, entitlements, characteristics, obligations, and power dynamics associated with sex and sexuality. The social definitions of what it means to belong to a certain gender may vary among cultures and change over time. Although the primary unit in this analysis is gender, available data is often disaggregated only by sex, which can be noted as a limitation in the analysis (for a definition of sex, see below).

**Gender identity**: The internal sense of a person of being man/woman, both, none, or another gender.

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108 See [https://www.irex.org/project/safe-securing-access-free-expression](https://www.irex.org/project/safe-securing-access-free-expression).
109 Collins-Foley, Ghorkhmazyan, Godfrey, & Whatley, 2018
110 Adapted from ADS Glossary of Terms (USAID, 2018)
111 Adapted from ADS Glossary of Terms (USAID, 2018)
112 Adapted from (Collins-Foley, Ghorkhmazyan, Godfrey, & Whatley, 2018)
Inclusion/Social inclusion: The process of improving the ability, access, dignity, and opportunity of people who have been disadvantaged based on their social identity, to take part in society. This process requires changing systems and challenging norms.

Intersectionality: Interaction of an individual’s identities (race, gender, disability status, age, and other aspects) in ways that can intensify the inclusion or exclusion they experience. Intersectionality is the understanding that a person may enjoy advantages, or suffer disadvantages, based on multiple identities rather than just one.

Lesbian: Sexual orientation that describes a person who identifies as a woman and feels emotionally and sexually attracted to other women.

LGBTIQ+ Persons: People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex plus other sexual or gender identities. This is a broad inclusive term for populations whose perceived or real sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or sexual characteristics do not conform to commonly accepted norms.

Marginalization: Dynamic processes resulting in a group or class of people excluded from power and access to resources and relegated to a secondary position due to a) underdevelopment, lack of resources, distance; b) oppression; c) lack of cultural integration, lack of adaption to norms; or a combination thereof.

Marginalized communities: Those who have traditionally been excluded from power and access to resources, and may include indigenous peoples, tribal peoples, other minorities, LGBTIQ+ populations, women and girls, youth, individuals with disabilities, or other groups.

Microaggressions: Microaggressions are everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target person based on their marginalized group membership. They represent an expression of power, often based on internalized assumptions about social hierarchies.

Norms: Informal rules that govern behavior in groups and societies. Norms vary between groups and over time.

Persons with disabilities (PwD): Individuals who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments and may be hindered from achieving full, equal, and effective participation in society.

Queer: Broad term used by some to describe people who think of their sexual orientation or gender identity as outside of social norms. Some people see the term queer as more fluid and inclusive than traditional categories for sexual orientation and gender identity. Because of its history as a derogatory term, the term queer is not accepted or used by all members of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Racial, ethnic, and indigenous identities: Those who identify as a member of a group that may share some of the following elements: culture, race, language, or place of origin. Although we believe that cultural identities should be defined as ethnicities or ethnic groups, we have chosen to retain the term racial alongside ethnic and indigenous identities because in some countries the term race is still used to refer to cultural diversity. There is no biological evidence to support the existence of distinct races, but the use of the term race acknowledges that practices of racism and racial discrimination nevertheless persist and need to be combated.

Religious identities: Those who identify with a set of beliefs that relate humanity to the spiritual world. Religious identities may or may not be part of an organized system and participate in religious activities. Often such identities intersect with political and ethnic identities and may be hard to distinguish from them. It is important to create space for diversity within religious identities. Some may be strict adherents to the core tenets of a religion, others may be less strict and identify loosely. In some contexts, particularly those with one dominant religion, a person who does not identify with any religion should be considered a minority with inclusion needs.

113 (Department of State, 2020)
114 (USC Diversity & Faculty Development, 2014).
Sex: A legal, anatomical, and/or biological distinction, typically using the categories male, female, and (sometimes) intersex. In many cases, the descriptive statistics presented in this report.

Sexual harassment: Any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, especially when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment. It is the person on the receiving end of the behavior who decides if it is unwanted and offensive, regardless of what the other person’s intention is. Sexual Harassment is not about sex, it is about power.

Sexual orientation: The way in which a person characterizes their emotional and sexual attraction towards others.

Transgender: A general term to describe a person who has an identity or expression of gender other than the gender that was assigned at birth.

Youth: Youth Excel defines youth as people between the ages of 10 and 35. USAID defines youth as people between the ages of 10-29. Youth Excel has expanded this definition to include youth leaders in countries where the definition of youth extends beyond age 29.
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## Theory of Change

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<tr>
<td>Youth drive project decisions including IR themes and utilization of learning.</td>
<td>Youth are inspired/engaged by the power &amp; potential of co-creation, learning, and data and empower other youth to lead.</td>
<td>Youth programs adapt and (when appropriate) scale based on learnings</td>
<td>Youth outcomes &amp; cross-sectoral development outcomes improve</td>
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<td>Gender-responsive, PYD IR tools, competencies, approaches, and resources are co-created with youth. (1.1, 1.3, 3.1)</td>
<td>Inclusive youth-led IR surfaces data, evidence &amp; insights to improve PYD programming</td>
<td>Local YL/YS programs are more evidence-based and more impactful</td>
<td>Systems change – policy: YL/YS-produced knowledge informs local-level policy</td>
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<td>Youth, YL/YSGs, and young researchers conduct IR, build capacity in IR, PYD programming, and leadership, and are linked to each other. (1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.2)</td>
<td>Research findings are synthesized, disseminated, and incorporated into programming</td>
<td>More donors and policy-makers engage with youth in development initiatives</td>
<td>Systems change – norms: Adult decision-makers co-lead with youth (in programming and policy decisions)</td>
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<td>Networks and HEIs offer IR, PYD programming, and leadership tools and resources to their members/communities. (1.2, 1.4, 2.2)</td>
<td>YL/YS initiatives achieve greater impact on key issues by aligning efforts (working collectively).</td>
<td>Networks amplify youth learnings, priorities, and voice.</td>
<td>Youth leverage knowledge from IR to shape local, regional, global development agendas</td>
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<td>Policy-makers, decision-makers, authorities, and influencers engage with YL/YSGs and ‘buy-in’ to youth-led learning. (1.3, 1.4, 2.1, 2.3)</td>
<td>More donors and policy-makers engage with youth in development initiatives</td>
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<td>Knowledge, learning, data, and evidence is disseminated broadly (strategic communications &amp; collaborative advocacy) (3.2, 3.3, 3.4)</td>
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**Assumptions & Definitions:** *Youth* are age 10-29 or may fall within the definition of their country of residence. *All project activities incorporate gender and intersectional identities in proactive and constructive ways. *Adult decision-makers* may be public or private sector or donor representatives who control decisions about policy and/or resource allocation. *Learning/data captured in compelling ways including stories.

**Risks:** *Youth lack adequate support to produce quality research/data or to navigate trauma *Adult decision-makers/other groups are threatened by youth-led data/learning surfaced, youth experience threats. *IR will not be relevant to major stakeholders (youth, decision-makers) nor utilization-focused. *Power differentials among youth themselves does not shift. *Dissemination strategies are not effective to achieve policy change.