# Youth Excel: Our Knowledge, Leading Change

## Stronger youth-led development through research and learning

**The challenge:** In today's digitally linked global landscape, many of the world's 1.8 billion young people are addressing the world's complex challenges through direct action, social movements, and networks, initiating dialogue and action to promote social justice. However, many youth still lack pathways to education, economic and civic engagement, access to health and mental health information and services, and opportunities to lead change. Youth who are leading change are often not taken seriously by decision-makers. COVID-19 has exacerbated distrust between youth and institutions, increased polarization and digital divides, multiplied dis- and misinformation, and increased exclusion and structural violence toward girls and women, minorities, and people with disabilities. Youth-led and youth-serving organizations lack resources and capacity to provide impactful services to young people across all sectors; and the development sector lacks sufficient information on what works in positive youth development programs, especially generated by young people.

## Youth Excel will strengthen youth-led, local development by

- strengthening capacity of youth-led and youth-serving organizations to conduct quality implementation research and offer stronger positive youth development (PYD) programs,

- advancing local development systems, development policy, and development decisions through knowledge and data, intergenerational dialogue for collaborative learning, youth-led advocacy, and partnerships

- strengthening youth-led and youth-serving networks and systems to improve local development outcomes

- synthesizing and disseminating context-specific evidence to support cross-sectoral positive youth development

### Youth Excel Consortium

*Lead:* IREX
Afrika Youth Movement
Ashoka Youth Venture
ABAAD
Root Change
Tech Tribes
The Biz Nation
Search for Common Ground
UNOY-Peacebuilders
University of Minnesota

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For more information, please contact excelyouth@irex.org

# What is Implementation Research (IR)?

☑ Links *data to decision making* for program strengthening and adaptation in *real-time*. It is iterative, participatory, and inclusive.

☑ Collects data to support decision making *within context*. Contributes more practical and nuanced information to the larger evidence base - shedding light on how and why implementation is working or not working.

☑ Explores dimensions such as *feasibility, relevance, adaptability, reach, effectiveness, and sustainability*.

☑ Done best as a *collaborative effort involving front-line practitioners* to clarify what is happening and support real-time adaptation. Shifts power toward organizations, allowing them to gather the data they need to make decisions for their work.

## Illustrative Learning Question and Strengthened PYD Outcomes

| ? Learning Question | 🔍 Domain | PYD and Implementation Research (IR) Outcomes |
|---|---|---|
| How might we scale this health awareness intervention to a new setting? | Feasibility, relevance, reach, adoption | Youth organizations apply IR to explore solutions before investing time and resources, making adaptations to ensure successful implementation within this new context. |
| How consistently is this civic education program being implemented across schools? How adaptable is this program? What intervention components are vital for program success? | Fidelity, adaptability, effectiveness | Youth organizations apply IR to explore solutions before investing time and resources, making adaptations to ensure successful implementation within this new context. |

## How can Youth Excel support your strategic goals?

**Improved PYD programs for better development outcomes.** Develop an implementation research effort to accompany a current or upcoming program or project. Help your program team iteratively learn and adapt efforts for better results, improved contextualization, effectiveness, or scale.

**Engage more youth-led and youth-serving organizations who are making a difference on the ground.** Help them strengthen their programs through research; channel more funds to local organizations, and build your bench of local partners.

**Engage new partners and test new partnership models.** Use research, learning, and data to engage development partners, including the private sector and other donors, in new ways. Test and iterate new partnership models that are based on mutuality and shared priorities.

## Technical sectors

✓ Education
✓ Employment
✓ Inclusion and Equity
✓ Civic engagement
✓ Peacebuilding
✓ Reproductive health
✓ Mental health
✓ Agriculture
✓ Technology
✓ Environment
✓ Water

## Consortium Global Reach



● Consortium Reach
● Consortium Presence
● Year 1 Activities
📍 IREX Offices
📍 Youth Excel Offices