



Serving Communities / Microsoft YouthSpark

Turning opportunity into action



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International Youth Foundation (IYF)

IYF prepares young people to be healthy, productive, and engaged citizens. Its programs are catalysts for change that help youth learn, work, and lead.

In September 2013, we released “Opportunity for Action,” a report commissioned by Microsoft to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the company’s YouthSpark initiative. In the report, we analyzed the potential of recent trends in youth entrepreneurship, second-chance education and training, and advanced skills related to information and communications technology, including coding and programming, to turn the global “youth bulge” into an economic and social asset.

The report comes at a critical time, as voices around the globe are echoing an urgent call for action on youth employment. Far too many lack the resources, skills, and opportunities to stay in school, obtain and keep a decent job, and become constructively engaged in their community.

The benefits of youth entrepreneurship and employment are clear. A “youth bonus” could pay out dividends for decades by making people’s lives more productive; contributing to thriving families, communities, and local economies; and building a more peaceful and equitable society.

In “Opportunity for Action,” we emphasize the need for concerted, organized action that will lift us beyond today’s array of pilot youth development programs to a place where significant investments are made in proven practices and programs. Fortunately, corporations like Microsoft are increasingly stepping to the fore, taking the lead in forging public-private partnerships with other corporate, government, and civic leaders to support youth development worldwide.

We’re proud to work with Microsoft on building these multi-stakeholder alliances. Together, we can mobilize the resources to confront poverty and close the opportunity gap for the world’s largest-ever youth cohort.