

Effectively Global.

IYF Partner Network: A Growing Force for Change

By On the balcony outside a large hotel conference room in Istanbul, Turkey, a small group of leaders from youth-serving organizations in South Africa, Egypt and Pakistan carry on an animated conversation about how to secure private-sector support for their various job training programs for disadvantaged youth.

2008
US\$157.5 mil
756 grants

ONE OF THEM IS SCRIBBLING NOTES ON A NAPKIN. Between inhaling coffee and an occasional cigarette, they describe the failures and successes of their efforts and prepare to present them to the larger meeting of the International Youth Foundation's global partner network about to reconvene inside.

One of the most striking phenomena of the past 50 years has been the rise of citizen-based organizations and the resulting shifts of power and resources toward local communities and citizens worldwide. With this trend has come the dramatic growth of global networks where diverse organizations work together around a single mission or shared commitment.

These associations have enormous diversity — as communities of practice, knowledge and learning networks, advocacy-driven groups and service-delivery systems. Their shared interests run the gamut from HIV/AIDS prevention to saving the whales to pressing for greater investments in girls' education. While some are highly structured and managed from the top down, others are more horizontal, with grassroots leadership. The advent of new technologies has facilitated the development of "virtual" networks, yet many continue to function the old-fashioned way, collaborating directly with each other in the field.

Where does the International Youth Foundation's global partner network fit into this larger landscape? What does it seek to accomplish? Who are its members and what value does the network add to their work?

2002
US\$87.7 mil
422 grants

IYF's Global Evolution

At IYF, we believe those closest to the challenges facing young people in their communities are those best suited to address them. Our core strategy since IYF's founding in 1990 has been to work through well-known and highly regarded youth-serving organizations worldwide. Together, we collectively build our capacity to design and implement donor-funded activities.

In the first few years, IYF moved deliberately — building up its expertise, developing its donor base and establishing partner organizations around the globe. Since 1998 the tempo has shifted, with IYF greatly expanding its global partner network of solid, sustainable organizations.

Today the network covers 70 countries with IYF working with nearly 170 youth-serving organizations — recognized for their expertise in youth development and their commitment to best practices. Members include Thailand's national coordinating body for children and youth, a youth leadership organization in Nigeria, Peru's leading advocacy group to end drug abuse and a corporate foundation in India.

"Our partners are the heart and soul of IYF," says Peter Shiras, Executive Vice President at IYF. "They are an extraordinary group of leaders and organizations whose passion for the cause and expertise and professionalism in the field make this network such a powerful force for change worldwide."

1997
US\$38.6 mil
137 grants

1991
US\$346,500
3 grants

Since it was founded in 1990, IYF has grown its investment in young people by a whopping 450%. After just over a year in operation, IYF had issued 3 grants to 3 partners in 3 countries, totaling US\$346,500*. Seventeen years later, the numbers are impressive: 756 grants to 169 partners in nearly 70 countries, for a cumulative total of US\$157.5 million†.

*Cumulative grant statistics as of December 31, 1991 †Cumulative grant statistics as of December 31, 2008



Appropriately Local.

The Benefits of Membership

One of the core benefits of any network is the opportunity to share and apply the collective knowledge and innovations of its members to strengthen their ongoing programs and to help design new ones. For example, *entra21*, IYF's signature employability initiative in Latin America, is widely recognized by the World Bank and USAID as a model for successfully preparing underserved youth for the job market.

Today, organizations throughout the IYF network are using *entra21*'s model to launch similar job training programs in Africa, the Middle East and other areas. According to Andrew Kitwumbo, Regional Director of

the Vocational Education and Training Authority in Tanzania: "IYF's rich experience and knowledge about programs that its stakeholders have available, which are already researched and tested, means we don't have to reinvent the wheel."

The capacity to identify and build upon best practices is what also attracts leaders in the public and private sectors. "Why is the World Bank interested in what this partner network does?" asks Robert Holzmann, Sector Director for Social Protection & Labor at the Bank. "Because we need to know what's working and what's not working in the critical field of poverty reduction and issues like youth employability. IYF and its partners have so much knowledge that we can tap into."

A network can also serve its members by promoting standards of excellence in programming that strengthen organizational development. IYF dedicates significant resources and staff to building the capacity of its members as they seek to improve their own financial, operational and program-based best practices. This focus on capacity building, according to Ray Dean Salvosa, Managing Director of the Consuelo Foundation in the Philippines, has provided a model for how his Foundation was able to expand and deepen its work with Filipino youth.

"The Consuelo Foundation followed IYF's example and began to build relationships with more than 100 NGO partners across the Philippines, providing them with technical support, training and contract funds to co-develop programs for implementation." This strategy, he says, "enables Consuelo to act as a catalyst for change in the Philippines and have a far greater impact."

Amplifying the collective voice of a particular cause by raising the visibility of an issue and reshaping the public debate clearly benefits a network's membership. IYF seeks out a range of platforms to make the case for investing in young people. We played a key role in shaping and publicizing the 2007 *Development and the Next Generation*, the first such



Delegates of the global partner meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, make a site visit to Dreams Workshop, a program of the Nokia-IYF Global Youth Development Initiative.



PHOTO BY SHEILA KINKADE

report in the World Bank's history to focus exclusively on the challenges facing today's youth and the programs most effectively addressing them.

Similarly, IYF collaborates with the *Financial Times*, which publishes a Special Report every other year that raises public awareness around youth issues within the global business community. Speaking at international conferences also helps position IYF and members of the network as thought leaders in the field, whether that means keynoting a USAID employability conference in Washington, DC, or joining education experts in Qatar to explore innovative strategies for success.

The ability to bring additional funds and partners to the table is essential for any network to advance its cause and reach. A recent example of the leveraging power of IYF's network is the decision by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, working through IYF partner Finnish Children and Youth Foundation, to donate 1.7 million Euros [US\$2.25 million] in support of network members in Ecuador, Morocco, Paraguay and Peru. Over the years, IYF has served as a catalyst for mobilizing such funds — raising some US\$250 million to support partner-implemented programs around the world. Global companies and lending institutions value the global network for this ability to deepen impact on the ground. Says Akhtar Badshah, Senior Director, Global Community Affairs, Microsoft Corporation: "Microsoft chooses to work with IYF in many countries because it is an effectively global and appropriately local organization."

"IYF AND ITS PARTNERS HAVE SO MUCH KNOWLEDGE WE CAN TAP"

— Robert Holzmann, Sector Director for Social Protection & Labor, World Bank

Moving Forward

Like any alliance, the IYF global partner network faces a range of challenges as it looks to the future. How do we remain effectively engaged when there are insufficient funds to come together regularly as a group? How do we address language differences in a network that spans the globe? What are the best communication platforms? How can we become a more powerful force for change and help address the deeply compelling issues that divide communities across different cultures and beliefs?

IYF and its network members have grappled with such questions for some time and continue to seek answers. One solution with great potential is to develop more regional networks of practice — like the one created by IYF's Latin American partners — as a way to coordinate advocacy and action around a common regional issue such as youth unemployment.

Another tactic is for members to learn from each other in a more sustained way, through extended job shadowing in each other's organizations. Yet in the end, personal relationships built over time are the "glue" holding this network and so many others together.

After the final presentation at IYF's global partner meeting in Istanbul, the crowd spills out into the corridors. Dinner plans are discussed, hugs are exchanged. A separate meeting is scheduled to plan the launch of a new IT program in Africa. One partner from Morocco races off to the airport with a new recruitment strategy for her women's clothing cooperative. A program officer thumbs through a pile of recently collected business cards that he hopes will help him expand a health initiative in India. In the midst of it all, a few stop to contemplate what they've gained over the past three days.

"It's what we learn from each other, in small groups and over drinks and coffee," says one partner, "that makes this such an extraordinarily rich and meaningful experience." **Y**

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