

FOREIGN POLICY
Special Advertising Section

GLOBAL IMPACT

NGOs in the Field and Beyond

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Youth and Global Security

As we look to the promise of a new century, there's no escaping the fact that wherever we live, the quality of how we live will depend very much on the investment we make in young people today. With roughly half of the world's population under the age of 25, never have the stakes been so high. The implications are great for foreign policy, global security, economic development, and the globalization of markets.

Roughly 900 million children will be born in the next decade with 95 percent of that growth occurring in poor and developing countries—countries already struggling to educate, feed, house, clothe, and employ their existing populations. But the recent high school shootings in Littleton, Colorado also serve as a potent reminder that few communities today are immune from the escalating problems facing our young people—in countries rich and poor alike.

No doubt science, technology, and dramatic political developments have brought us to a unique point in history, but unless serious steps are taken to break the cycle of poverty and the so-

cial inequities that pervade so many nations, ordinary desires for peace and security, decent housing, nutrition, health care, education, and meaningful employment will remain faint hopes for vast numbers of people for generations to come.

The international community cannot afford to ignore the needs of its children and youth any more than in-

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dividual nations can. Such needs will shape their world and ours, as well as the prospects of future generations. Many programs worldwide give meaning and promise to young people's lives, but many others flounder for want of the resources to follow through.

Unfortunately, a disproportionate share of investment in youth

today is directed to new and novel start-ups that try to reinvent the wheel. The fact is, there are already many existing programs and initiatives that are effectively meeting young people's needs.

Our mission at the International Youth Foundation (IYF) has been to identify these existing "best practice" programs for young people and to

find local partners who will help bring them to scale, and further their sustainability.

One area that IYF has devoted considerable time and resources to over the last nine years is "making the case" for why youth development ought to be on the agenda and not just relegated to the margins as something "nice" to do.

For example, from IYF's point of view, any attempt to develop a comprehensive security strategy and a comprehensive development strategy must include a comprehensive youth development strategy. The same goes for global businesses as they work to open up and sustain new markets. In many developing countries where children and youth generally make up 60 percent or more of the population, this fact can't be ignored, but surprisingly it is.

We have also been collaborating with others to find creative, practical, on-the-ground methods of increasing the effectiveness, scale, and sustainability of proven approaches to meeting

young people's needs. Fundamental to IYF's philosophy is the concept of partnership—bringing together the public, private, and civil society sectors and leveraging our collective knowledge, resources, and expertise to achieve far greater results for young people. Our work with the World Bank in launching the Global Partnership for Youth Development and the interest from global companies that the initiative has generated to date testify to the timeliness of this type of partnership model.

As we prepare to celebrate the dawn of a new era, may we continue to reposition the needs of our young people from the periphery to center stage.



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