



International Youth Federation
الإتحاد الدولي للشباب
Federación Internacional de la Juventud
Fédération Internationale des Jeunes
Международная федерация молодежи
國際青年聯合會



IYF Global Strategy 2026–2030

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Empowering youth for a better world.

IYF GLOBAL STRATEGY 2026-2030

2026 AND BEYOND

FOREWORD



Young people today stand at the centre of a rapidly changing world. They confront rising economic pressures, accelerating technological shifts, climate-related instability, and widening inequalities. Yet this generation also holds extraordinary potential: they are more connected, more creative, and more determined to shape solutions than ever before. Meeting this moment requires a renewed strategic direction – one that responds to evolving challenges while unlocking the full power of youth leadership, innovation, and civic engagement.

In recent years, the International Youth Federation has expanded its presence, strengthened partnerships, and refined its operational model. Our experience confirms that when young people are equipped with the right skills, supported by responsive mechanisms, and included meaningfully in decision-making, they become catalysts for progress in their communities and essential contributors to national development. Governments and institutions increasingly recognise the need for youth-responsive policies and structures capable of delivering opportunities at scale – an imperative that anchors this strategy.

The IYF Strategy 2026–2030 presents a renewed vision rooted in our identity as a youth-led, globally networked organisation. It outlines our commitment to deepen youth leadership and representation, drive empowerment through innovation and skills development, and strengthen youth participation in policy and governance. These priorities reflect both the aspirations of young people and the realities they face, and stem from our belief that lasting change emerges from strong ecosystems where institutions, communities, and young people work together to build inclusive and resilient societies.

With an expanding network of over 180 accredited organisations operating across more than 90 countries, a maturing regional architecture, and our Strategic Solutions for Governments (SSG) framework, the IYF is uniquely positioned to help countries design and implement youth-responsive systems and programmes. Our role is both catalytic and supportive: empowering young people to lead, and enabling partners to create environments where youth can thrive.

This strategy marks a new chapter for the IYF – defined by clarity of purpose, strengthened systems, and the ambition to scale impact across regions. Investing in youth is not only a moral responsibility; it is a strategic necessity for building peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable societies. We invite our partners, governments, institutions, and young leaders worldwide to join us in advancing this mission.

Julia BLOCHER, PhD.

President, International Youth Federation

INTRODUCTION



This Global Strategy sets the IYF's direction for advancing youth empowerment and positioning young people as leaders, innovators, and contributors to sustainable development. It outlines how the IYF will leverage its global network, technical expertise, and programme delivery capacity to generate meaningful results for youth and their communities, strengthen youth policies, support Member States and partners, and mobilise broad multi-stakeholder engagement.

Evidence shows that when young people participate in civic life, innovate in local economies, or lead community initiatives, societies benefit through increased social cohesion, stronger institutions, and enhanced economic dynamism. Harnessing the demographic dividend requires meaningful investment in youth capabilities and leadership.

The strategy was informed by consultation with youth representatives across the IYF network, inputs from youth-led organisations, and insights gathered through programme reviews and regional dialogues, ensuring that youth voices directly shaped its priorities and direction. Guided by the principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Strategy recognises both the persistent barriers facing young people - such as limited education and employment opportunities, restricted civic participation, gender equality, digital divides, and climate action - and the significant societal benefits that arise when youth are empowered to lead and participate fully.

Amid growing global momentum for youth-responsive policies and participation, the Strategy draws on the upcoming IYF's Strategic Solutions for Governments (SSG) framework to reinforce the Federation's role as a technical partner. Through advisory services focused on the design and implementation of large-scale youth empowerment initiatives, capacity development, knowledge exchange, and cross-sector partnerships, the IYF supports governments and communities to build strong youth-serving institutions to unlock the potential of young people and accelerate progress on inclusive and sustainable youth development outcomes.

As a global convener and catalyst, the IYF brings together governments, youth networks, civil society, academia, and the private sector to champion youth leadership, strengthen accountability, and to drive youth-centered policy solutions. This Global Strategy sets out how the organisation will mobilise youth voices and create opportunities so that all young people can realise their potential and contribute meaningfully to their societies.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Global Youth Landscape



Today's world is home to 1.8 billion young people – the largest youth generation in history⁽¹⁾. Nearly 90 percent of them live in developing countries, with the fastest growth occurring in Africa and parts of Asia. While young people contribute significantly to innovation, community resilience, and economic vitality, their realities vary widely across regions.

Rapid population growth in Africa and the Middle East contrasts with ageing societies in Europe and East Asia, while climate-vulnerable small islands face acute environmental pressures. Despite these differences, young people everywhere are increasingly connected, urban, and engaged – shaping social movements, digital trends, and national development priorities.

Several structural trends are reshaping the environment in which young people grow, learn, and transition into adulthood. Digital transformation accelerates opportunities and divides simultaneously: more than 70 percent of youth are online⁽²⁾, yet millions remain without meaningful connectivity or digital skills. Climate change represents a defining challenge, with over 1 billion young people living in countries at high climate risk⁽³⁾. Economic instability continues to impact youth disproportionately: young people remain three times more likely to be unemployed than adults⁽⁴⁾. Conflict and displacement persist, with youth comprising around 40 percent of the world's displaced population⁽⁵⁾. Meanwhile, inequalities – gender, disability, geographic, socio-economic – continue to shape unequal access to opportunity, reinforcing the need for resilient and inclusive youth systems.

(1) UN DESA, World Population Prospects 2022.

(2) ITU, Measuring Digital Development 2023.

(3) UNICEF, Children's Climate Risk Index 2021.

(4) ILO, Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022.

(5) UNHCR, Global Trends 2023.



Young people continue to face entrenched obstacles that hinder their full participation in society. 263 million children and youth remain out of school ⁽¹⁾, and many who are enrolled fail to acquire the skills demanded by future labour markets. Women and girls, rural youth, youth with disabilities, displaced youth, and youth from other marginalised or structurally excluded groups face heightened barriers to education, employment, leadership, and participation. Access to youth-led entrepreneurship capital remains limited, with fewer than 10 percent of young entrepreneurs accessing formal financing ⁽²⁾.

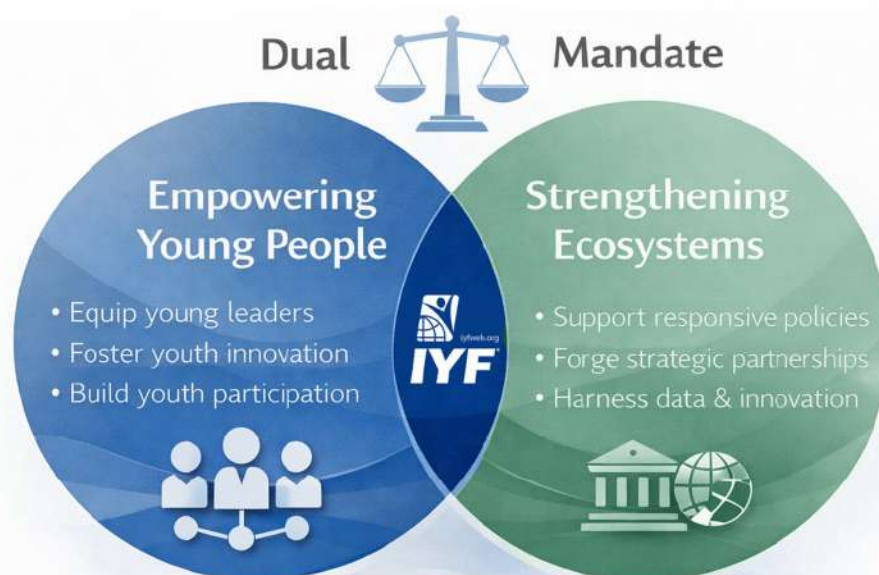
Yet, opportunities are expanding. The digital and green economies are projected to create millions of new jobs globally ⁽³⁾. Youth-led climate action, innovation hubs, and civic initiatives are flourishing across regions. More governments are adopting youth policies and institutional mechanisms for participation. Evidence continues to show that when systems are strengthened, youth do not simply benefit from development – they drive it.

(1) UNESCO, Out-of-School Youth Global Report 2022.

(2) UNFPA/UNDP Youth Employment Insights, 2021.

(3) ILO, World Employment and Social Outlook 2023.

IYF's UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION

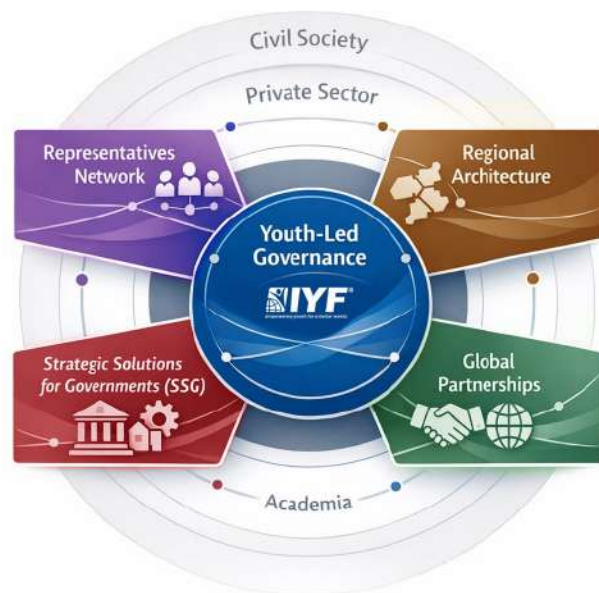


The International Youth Federation (IYF) occupies a distinctive and influential place within the global youth-development ecosystem. As a youth-led, globally networked organisation, the IYF aspires to serve as a trusted global convener, technical partner, and advocate, shaping inclusive youth systems and amplifying youth leadership at scale. With a presence across the globe and more than 180 accredited organisations, the IYF represents a movement powered by young people and supported by institutional partnerships that extend across civil society, the public sector, and the private sector.

The IYF serves as a global convener, technical partner, and advocate for youth empowerment. Through national teams, youth representatives, and regional structures, it connects young people with governments and partners to advance youth-responsive development. Working across skills development, governance & policy action, climate action, and digital transformation, the IYF ensures youth voices shape national agendas and mobilises evidence, innovation, and partnerships that drive sustainable improvements in youth outcomes.

At the heart of the IYF's value proposition is its youth-led governance model, which ensures that young people act as decision-makers and catalysts for change. This youth-centric architecture – reinforced by the Representatives Network and regional administrations – enables programmes and advocacy efforts to remain grounded in the lived realities, aspirations, and challenges of young people worldwide. This structure strengthens trust, authenticity, and community ownership across diverse contexts.

The IYF offers a scalable programme ecosystem that integrates leadership development, innovation, civic engagement, and institutional strengthening. Flagship initiatives like the Young Leadership Development Programme (YLDP) provide pathways for youth to develop the skills, confidence, and values needed to contribute meaningfully to society. Meanwhile, the Strategic Solutions for Governments (SSG) model positions the IYF as a unique technical partner to governments – supporting policy development, institutional capacity, youth participation mechanisms, and system-wide reforms. This dual mandate – empowering youth while strengthening national systems – sets the IYF apart from volunteer-based organisations and conventional training providers.



The IYF also possesses a diverse partnership ecosystem which amplifies impact, offering unparalleled visibility, youth engagement opportunities, and global reach. These collaborations provide access to technology, expertise, and resources that enable the co-creation of youth-led solutions aligned with SDG 17 on Partnerships for the Goals. This combination of youth legitimacy, institutional partnership, and scalable delivery positions the IYF as a bridge between youth movements and public systems.

LESSONS LEARNED

The previous Global Strategy (2021–2025) set an ambitious agenda to position the IYF as a more agile, innovative, and impactful organisation capable of strengthening youth systems, supporting institutions, and mobilising young people at scale. The 2026–2030 Strategy builds on this progress and draws on programme reviews and consultations with governments, youth organisations, civil society, private sector partners, and IYF teams across regions. Key lessons shaping this strategy include:

- **The IYF's mandate remains highly relevant.** Demand for youth empowerment, leadership, and participation continues to grow and aligns strongly with national priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Integrated approaches drive impact.** The IYF's ability to combine youth mobilisation, policy support, and institutional capacity development has proven to be a distinctive institutional strength and should remain central to its delivery model.
- **Partnerships must become more strategic and outcome-oriented.** While the IYF's convening power has expanded, future partnerships require clearer prioritisation, stronger coordination, and shared accountability for measurable results.
- **Youth challenges are increasingly complex and interconnected.** Conflict, displacement, economic uncertainty, climate change, and digital divides demand more adaptive programming, stronger data use, and integrated risk-informed approaches.
- **Expansion requires stronger systems and more inclusive programming.** Growth in the IYF's geographic presence highlighted the need for clearer operational standards, improved monitoring, and more intentional strategies to reach marginalised youth, including young women, displaced youth, youth with disabilities, and those affected by poverty.
- **Sustainable growth depends on stronger institutional capacity and financing.** Rapid organisational expansion underscored the need for modernised systems, strengthened governance and compliance mechanisms, and more diversified, predictable funding sources to support long-term impact.

VISION STATEMENT

A world where every young person is empowered, included, and equipped to shape sustainable, just, and thriving societies.



Leadership and dialogue capacity-building workshop organized by the IYF Country Team in Kuwait, in collaboration with the Youth Public Authority, empowering young leaders with practical skills in communication, civic engagement, and constructive dialogue to strengthen inclusive youth participation.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. Advance Youth Engagement and Leadership

Strengthen young people's leadership capabilities and expand meaningful engagement and representation across community, national, regional, and global platforms. This objective amplifies youth voices and builds the leadership base that enables youth to shape institutions, innovation, and governance systems.

2. Accelerate Youth Empowerment through Innovation and Skills Development

Equip young people with future-ready skills, digital literacy, entrepreneurial capabilities, and innovation pathways that enhance employability, resilience, and economic participation. Listen to youth's needs and priorities to encourage and support innovation that addresses these.

3. Strengthen Youth Participation in Policy and Governance

Help gather, channel and amplify youth perspectives, needs and priorities towards decision makers for youth-informed public debate and decisions. Embed structured and sustained youth participation within public institutions, national policy frameworks, and governance processes, while strengthening governments' capacity to design youth-responsive systems.

RESULTS FRAMEWORK

The results framework translates the IYF's strategic objectives into measurable outcomes and indicators to guide implementation, accountability, and learning over the 2026–2030 period.

Strategic Objective 1: Advance Youth Leadership and Engagement

LEVEL	RESULT STATEMENT	KEY INDICATORS
Outcome 1.1	Youth leadership capacities strengthened	• Number of youth completing IYF leadership programmes • % of participants reporting increased leadership confidence and skills
Outcome 1.2	Youth representation mechanisms expanded and institutionalised	• Number of youth platforms, councils, or committees supported • % of IYF Representatives engaged in national, regional, or global decision-making processes • % of country and global initiatives informed by substantial youth consultation
Outcome 1.3	Youth engagement in communities deepened	• Number of youth-led initiatives or community actions supported • % of youth reporting meaningful opportunities to influence community decision-making, by country, region, and gender

Strategic Objective 2: Accelerate Youth Empowerment through Innovation and Skills Development

LEVEL	RESULT STATEMENT	KEY INDICATORS
Outcome 2.1	Foundational and future-ready skills improved	• Number of youth completing skills training (digital, vocational, green, entrepreneurship) • % of participants reporting improved employability or readiness for income generation
Outcome 2.2	Youth innovation and entrepreneurship enabled	• Number of youth-led innovations, enterprises, or prototypes supported • Number of youth accessing seed funding, mentorship, or incubation opportunities
Outcome 2.3	Digital access and learning opportunities expanded	• Number of youth accessing digital learning platforms or programmes • % of participants demonstrating improved digital literacy or digital safety competencies
Outcome 2.4	Innovative and feedback-driven youth engagement mechanisms established	• Number of structured feedback and co-creation processes implemented • Evidence of programme adaptation based on youth input

Strategic Objective 3: Strengthen Youth Participation in Policy and Governance

LEVEL	RESULT STATEMENT	KEY INDICATORS
Outcome 3.1	Youth-inclusive policies and frameworks strengthened	• Number of countries supported to develop or update national youth policies • % of supported policies incorporating youth participation standards or recommendations
Outcome 3.2	Institutional capacities for youth engagement enhanced	• Number of institutions receiving technical assistance, tools, or training • Number of governance or coordination mechanisms strengthened
Outcome 3.3	Youth participation in governance processes increased	• Number of youth participating in civic or governance processes supported by the IYF • % of youth reporting improved ability to influence policy or decision-making • Number of consultative processes enabled to inform policy initiatives • Number of youth participating in consultations

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK (2026–2030)



IYF President Julia Blocher speaks at the Climate Mobility Pavilion, contributing to a high-level dialogue on climate resilience, sustainable mobility, and youth leadership in advancing inclusive climate action. Photo credit: Jaclyn Licht/Global Centre for Climate Mobility



Theory of Change

If governments, institutions, and communities establish effective policies, systems, and capacities to meaningfully engage young people,

and if young people have equitable access to skills, opportunities, resources, and platforms to lead and participate,

then young people will act as drivers of innovation, resilience, and inclusive development across their societies.

This transformation will be advanced through four mutually reinforcing pathways:

1. Strengthening youth systems and governance

Supporting governments and institutions to develop policies, coordination mechanisms, and institutional capacities that enable structured and sustained youth engagement.

2. Expanding equitable access to opportunities

Ensuring young people – especially those facing structural barriers – can develop relevant skills, access services, and participate meaningfully in economic and social systems.

3. Amplifying youth leadership and voice

Creating and strengthening platforms through which young people influence decision-making at community, national, regional, and global levels.

4. Leveraging partnerships, innovation, and data

Mobilising multi-stakeholder collaboration, innovative approaches, and evidence-driven learning to scale impact and strengthen accountability.



Outreach activity by the International Youth Federation Country Team in Lebanon during the 8th NGO Social Fair at Notre Dame University – Louaize, engaging students on the Sustainable Development Goals and youth leadership opportunities. Photo: IYF Lebanon



Overarching Strategic Outcome

An empowered generation of young people contributing to resilient, peaceful, and prosperous societies.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These principles define how the IYF will operate across all regions and programmatic areas.

- **Youth-Centred and Youth-Led** – Young people are partners and decision-makers, not beneficiaries.
- **Equity and Inclusion** – Programmes prioritise youth facing structural barriers, including young women, rural youth, displaced youth, and youth with disabilities.
- **Institutional Strengthening** – The IYF reinforces sustainable systems, policies, and institutions rather than isolated interventions.
- **Sustainability and Resilience** – Youth development efforts support long-term institutional and community resilience, including climate-conscious approaches.



Capacity-building workshop titled “You Can Be a Peacebuilder”, organized by the IYF Country Team in Morocco, bringing together young leaders and changemakers to strengthen dialogue, civic engagement, and community-driven peace initiatives.

OPERATING MODEL (2026–2030)

The IYF’s operating model translates strategic priorities into coordinated action across global, regional, and national levels. Delivery is anchored in youth leadership, institutional partnerships, and scalable programme models that strengthen youth systems while expanding opportunities for young people.

To maximise impact, the IYF will be supported by a set of cross-cutting enablers that strengthen organisational effectiveness, learning, and sustainability across all areas of work. These enablers provide the organisational foundations required to deliver the strategy effectively and at scale.



Participants of the IYF-administered Young Leadership Development Programme in Sudan celebrate the completion of a six-day Protocol Management training, receiving their Certified Protocol Officer certificates following intensive sessions on diplomatic protocol, precedence systems, and VIP event management. Photo: IYF Sudan

Strategic Enablers

- Global Partnerships:** The IYF will cultivate diverse and results-oriented partnerships with governments, civil society, academia, and the private sector to deliver youth development outcomes at scale. These collaborations will align expertise, resources, and innovation to accelerate progress toward national and global youth priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Innovation:** Innovation will be embedded across programmes to strengthen the adaptability and effectiveness of youth-serving systems. The IYF will promote youth-driven solutions, digital tools, and new delivery models that respond to emerging challenges and opportunities.
- Learning and Knowledge Management:** A strong culture of learning will ensure that evidence, experience, and youth feedback inform continuous improvement. The IYF will strengthen knowledge-sharing platforms, documentation practices, and peer learning across its global network.
- Organisational Agility and Governance Effectiveness:** To operate effectively at scale, the IYF will continue strengthening its governance structures, leadership systems, and internal processes. Streamlined procedures, clear accountability frameworks, and responsive decision-making will enable the organisation to adapt to evolving youth needs and partnership models.
- Financial Sustainability and Resource Diversification:** Long-term impact requires predictable and diversified funding. The IYF will strengthen financial management systems, expand its funding base, and develop innovative financing partnerships to ensure sustainable growth and resilience.
- Communications, Visibility, and Public Engagement:** Strategic communications will amplify youth voices, strengthen the IYF's global positioning, and expand engagement with partners and the public. Clear and compelling storytelling will reinforce the value of youth leadership and institutional collaboration.



Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

The Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Framework is designed to keep the IYF Strategy 2026–2030 continuously evolving through real-time evidence, youth feedback, and structured learning cycles. Continuous monitoring at national, regional, and global levels provides an ongoing flow of data on programme performance, participation, digital engagement, and partnership activity.

This information feeds into regular review moments – monthly or quarterly risk monitoring and performance checks, semi-annual programme reviews, and annual organisational reporting – allowing the IYF to adjust priorities, refine delivery models, and respond quickly to emerging needs or risks. Youth voices, gathered through surveys, consultations, and the Representative Network, play a central role in shaping these adjustments, ensuring that strategy implementation remains grounded in lived experience.

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