

Conference Summary Report

Day 1 – June 25, 2013

Official Welcoming

Mr. Shiras highlighted the importance of this event, which brought key stakeholders to discuss what works in skills development, share experiences, and hear directly from young people. He shared the progress that IYF and its multi-sectoral partners are making in the Latin America and Caribbean region to ensure that youth at risk successfully transition from school to work and from inactivity to sustained involvement in the workplace and society. He emphasized that youth can be the engine of economic growth if they have the right skills to enter the job market or start their businesses. Ambassador Palmer highlighted that youth development is a key focus of USAID in the region and that building partnerships across sectors is critical. He noted that the conference was another opportunity to focus on youth, discuss challenges and identify pathways for success, and called on participants to be creative and opportunistic in their thinking. In closing, Ambassador Palmer reminded participants of the importance of encouraging and supporting young people to reach their full potential.

Keynote Address by the Honorable Dr. Kenny Anthony Prime Minister of Saint Lucia

The Honorable Kenny Anthony, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, opened the conference proceedings with an impassioned keynote address around the importance of improving the lives and prospects of the region's young people. "We must give youth real choices to get out of poverty; to remain proud and dignified; to embrace empowerment, enfranchisement, entrepreneurship, and education; and to give back to their communities." Noting that youth unemployment in the Caribbean is over 30 percent, he stated: "High quality education and training are essential to enable all individuals to acquire the skills that are relevant not only to the labor market but also for social inclusion and active citizenship." In closing, the Prime Minister called on all sectors of society to work together, adding: "I hope that the dialogue at this conference can help build up a different outlook that can project hope for the future."

Youth Presentation Film - CEPHAS

"[CEPHAS](#)" is a film produced by Ted Sandiford of A.C.I.D. Kreationz and a team of young actors. The film highlights how the choices young people make influence their future and that with the right support, they can achieve a great deal. In many ways, this film captured the themes discussed during the two-day conference: providing opportunities, building on young people's assets and supporting youth. This film won the People's Choice Award at the [RISE Saint Lucia Youth Film Festival](#) in April 2013.

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Plenary Session - Youth Trends and Challenges in the Caribbean

This session highlighted the close links between education, employment and security and the need for comprehensive and integrated approaches to respond to the needs of young people in these areas. Mr. Simons shared the employment trends in the region, which are characterized by slow economic growth and rising unemployment. He discussed the importance of addressing skills and job mismatch as barriers to youth entering the labor market and the need for short-term job creation programs, including those targeting youth. Ms. Wilfred shared the main findings of the 2012 Caribbean HD report, which focused on citizen security. The report underscored the high cost crime has on communities and that violence among Caribbean youth is linked to developmental issues. She concluded by sharing solutions to reduce risk and enhance resilience. Ms. Hobbs provided an overview of the main statistics and trends on education, including the changing skills set that the labor market requires. She emphasized that learning '21st-century skills' are directly linked to work success and the importance of supporting young people.

Poetry Reading

Graduates of CYEP presented their original poetry.

Plenary Session - Youth Voices: Perception and Realities

Four young people, three CYEP graduates and one youth mobilization specialist, shared their personal stories of challenges and successes particularly regarding their education and employment. The session touched on issues discussed in the earlier plenary session, "Youth Trends and Challenges in the Caribbean," and personalized those issues for conference participants. Mr. Charles spoke about first gaining notoriety in his community through violence and aggression and now having his community's respect through his job and by being a positive role model for youth. Ms. Charles spoke of the satisfaction she has helping other young people by informing them about programs available to provide them the assistance they need. Mr. Antoine told of a challenging period when he was institutionalized and decided to change his life. Mr. Biscette discussed participating in CYEP while incarcerated, as well as the support and motivation to succeed that he received from running and his team. The session ended with positive messages of encouragement to other young people.

Session B - Youth Entrepreneurship: Promoting Enterprise Development and Job Creation in the Caribbean

Addressing the challenges and opportunities in advancing youth entrepreneurship and job creation in the region, a panel of training and banking experts presented perspectives on the culture of entrepreneurship in the region and best practices for training aspiring youth entrepreneurs. The training models highlighted were holistic, including career guidance, mentorship and life skills, in addition to small business management. The importance of accessible financing for youth and the

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ability for youth entrepreneurship to create growth and help sustain national and regional economies were underscored. Recommendations generated in small group discussions included improving entrepreneurship curricula and instruction in schools, engaging diverse stakeholders in the planning stages of training projects, and building support networks beyond training for young entrepreneurs.

Session C - Career Guidance: Preparing Youth to Navigate the World of Work of the 21st century

This session presented the key aspects of career guidance and different models for providing this critical support. Ms. DeFreitas provided an overview of career guidance, including its importance for public policies related to labor policy and social equity, different contexts in which it should be provided including schools as well as outside formal education, and the importance of using tools that facilitate access to information on the labor market and careers. Dr. Mason presented the CYEP model for providing career guidance to youth at risk, which includes IYF's Passport to Success® life skills curriculum, life plan development, career assessment including the Career Key®, professional plan development, job readiness and educational development workshops, and one-on-one career coaching. Dr. Parris-Seales shared Trinidad and Tobago's National Training Agency's model for providing career guidance through a bus, run by career coaches and counselors who support people in mapping their abilities to the realities of different occupations, share with them relevant vocational training options and present to them career maps to illustrate paths for advancement within particular fields.

Day 2 – June 26, 2013

Plenary Session: From Pilot to Scale: Alliance Building for Youth Employability

Representatives from USAID and private, government and civil society sectors in the Caribbean discussed the importance of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in supporting and scaling up youth employability programs. Mr. Doetsch provided the framework for the discussion by sharing USAID's model, which is to create broad-based alliances that deepen the scale, impact and sustainability of development programs. This approach generates co-investment in the public good and in services benefiting the public, private and civil society sectors. Ms. Duncan-Price shared the experience of YUTE, a youth employability program, which was developed by the private sector and includes partnerships with civil society and the government of Jamaica. Ms. Alfred highlighted the role governments can play as facilitators, enablers and initiators of PPPs, and presented various government programs that collaborate with the private sector and NGOs. Dr. King presented the alliance model in Saint Lucia, which brings together governmental institutions, NGOs and the private sector as partners who contribute their skills, expertise and other resources in the implementation of CYEP.

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Session D - Tailor-made Training: Meeting the Needs of Specific Industries

This session examined three different examples of private sector engagement in the skills development of youth: Sandals' in-service training, in particular its Hospitality Training Program; company-tailored training in yacht maintenance developed by Woodstock Boatbuilders, the Gilbert Agricultural and Rural Development Center (GARD Center) and members of the Antigua and Barbuda Yacht Workers Association; and integrated training for the retail sector developed by Walmart and IYF partner Instituto Aliança (Aliança) in Brazil. With respect to each company's incentive for supporting skills development of youth, panelists described their motivation as being the commitment to corporate social responsibility, the opportunity to develop a pool of qualified potential employees for their respective industries, and the desire to share one's passion for his/her industry with a new generation of workers. In small groups, participants discussed meaningful ways that youth-serving training organizations can best engage potential employers. These included appealing to their bottom line, getting their input on program management, and engaging the Chamber of Commerce and industry associations.

Session E - Supporting Youth at Risk from Training to Employment: Meeting their Psycho-Social Need

Counselors, educators and employers discussed the great need for psycho-social support for youth during schooling, training, and employment. Disadvantaged youth come from environments with broken structures of social support and have been impacted by drugs, violence, and abuse. Training staff, especially instructors, oftentimes become that support system, playing the roles of friend, parent, mentor, coach and psychiatrist, even outside the hours of training. Employers highlighted that when supervisors take the time to nurture youth and provide support for their personal and professional development, they develop loyal, committed, teachable and motivated employees. Key conclusions of the group discussion included the need to provide more mental health support in schools and integrate mental health support into training programs. Participants also emphasized the importance of not giving up on even the most difficult youth, but rather creating partnerships to develop programs and services that respond to their needs.

Session F - Monitoring & Evaluation: Creating an Evidence Base for Youth Employability

In this workshop-style session, the participants heard the experience of an NGO, the GARD Center, in implementing and using an M&E system. As Ms. Williams noted, this system, combined with an online platform she presented, was key in improving the project by providing critical and timely data, which allowed the entity to make informed decisions. It also gave the organization a greater level of credibility by providing accurate data on the project's results and impact to share with prospective donors and other key stakeholders. Dr. Peart then walked the participants through the process of conceptualizing the development of an M&E system, emphasizing that it all starts with a well designed

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project. He further noted the importance of monitoring both inputs and outputs and of understanding M&E as a way to ensure that project goals and targets are met and to make adjustments during implementation. Dr. Peart concluded by highlighting other key elements that contribute to the success of a program, of which M&E is one aspect.

Plenary Session - Building Life Skills: A Foundation for School to Work Transition and Workforce Development

Following a demonstration of IYF's Passport to Success® (PTS) curriculum, a panel discussed the importance of life skills training for youth. Ms. Ramos-Romero described PTS, including that it has been tested with over 73,000 youth in 28 countries, is adapted with input from local experts to ensure cultural relevancy, is based on experiential learning, and prepares youth for the workplace. Ms. D'Auvergne made a strong case for the integration of intensive life skills training into career guidance in secondary schools to better prepare students for the transition from school to work, as it would instill in them a better attitude towards work and allow them to make better choices about their careers. Mr. Chastanet highlighted the soft skills that employers in the hospitality sector look for in entry-level employees, including self-esteem, hygiene, cross-cultural communication, language skills and respect. He noted, however, that in Saint Lucia many youth lack these skills, in part due to the disconnect between educational authorities and government institutions responsible for planning for economic development.

Plenary Session - Reintegrating Youth in Conflict with the Law into the Economy: The Saint Lucia experience

The session opened with His Honor John providing an overview of the justice system in Saint Lucia, and the need to operationalize the Parole Act so as to facilitate the reintegration of incarcerated youth, thereby contributing to reduced recidivism. His Honor John concluded by noting the need to provide services such as halfway houses to ease the transition. Mr. Victorin gave a summary of the CYEP vocational project which focuses on youth in conflict with the law, including the services provided to the youth and key ingredients for success. Ms. Alcide spoke of the successful partnership the prison developed with NSDC and highlighted the various decisions and adjustments the prison had to make to allow the youth to take part in the program. She concluded with an impassioned appeal to the participants to support incarcerated youth and provide them with a chance to successfully reintegrate into society.

Closing Remarks: Moving forward - Where Do We Go From Here?

A panel closed the conference, sharing their recommendations for advancing youth employability in the Caribbean. Mr. Husbands called for the promotion of programs like CYEP, since employers are looking for well-rounded people, and he stated that fathers should be more involved in their children's

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lives. Mr. Gutzmer urged youth-serving entities to see youth as “assets to be developed instead of problems to be solved” and engage young people from the design of programs rather than prescribing programs for them. Ms. Eversley advocated for the integration of youth policy agencies into youth employability programs and the establishment of a repository of youth development initiatives in the Caribbean. Mr. Doetsch noted the need to examine the important role of families and communities in supporting youth to reach their potential. Also, during open discussion, Mr. Blackwood encouraged youth-serving entities to come together to share the costs in continuing successful programs and to learn from the best practices of program models. He also informed participants of the launch of the CBSI Knowledge Sharing Platform (www.cbsiksp.org).



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