

THE CHALLENGE

The majority of youth in the Caribbean face a future with limited prospects. With an educational system that fails to meet the needs of students for relevant skills suited to changing economies, many youth leave school without becoming functionally literate and with few opportunities to acquire the skills they need to secure employment. Growing social issues such as high unemployment, HIV/AIDS, and increasing prevalence of drug use and crime only add to the challenges facing the region's youth.

The situation is particularly acute for young males, who have lower enrollment and achievement rates than their female counterparts, and thus even fewer job opportunities. As a result, an increasing number of young men have lost hope in the future, and are drawn to the drug trade, gangs and crime—continuing a downward spiral into poverty.

THE INITIATIVE

In response, the International Youth Foundation (IYF) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) launched the *Caribbean Youth Empowerment Program* (CYEP) in 2008. Its goal: to provide young people in Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Jamaica, and St. Lucia with positive youth development opportunities that include the technical, vocational, and life skills they need to be successful in pursuing sustainable livelihoods.

The project targets young school leavers, ages 17 to 25, with particular attention given to young males, who are unemployed, under-employed, lack the skills to participate in the increasingly service-oriented economy, or are unable to successfully initiate and sustain small business enterprises. In addition to providing job training and placement services, the program supports youth in serving as positive agents of change in their community. Another important objective is to strengthen the capacity of youth-serving organizations to address the employability needs of vulnerable youth.

While CYEP was initially conceived as a two-year program, in 2011 IYF was awarded an additional US\$2.5 million from USAID to scale up the program through 2013 in Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, and St. Lucia. This second phase of the program is focused on expanding the menu of services offered, reaching an additional 1,100 youth, and forging alliances with public and private stakeholders.

CYEP is an initiative of *Youth:Work*, a global IYF program established in 2008 to assist USAID missions and bureaus to access IYF's youth employability programs.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

By the end of the program in 2013:

- 2,200 young people will have gained appropriate training that responds to the employment needs of selected high-growth industries such as tourism, music, entertainment, and arts and culture
- At least 40% of youth will be placed in quality jobs or in their own business start ups
- 50% of participants who have not completed secondary school at baseline will be enrolled in an educational training program or will have gained additional schooling credentials at the time of follow up
- 90% of employers will report satisfaction with their entry-level employees
- Partners will have strengthened their organizational capacity
- A sustainable network of stakeholders from the private and public sectors will be created

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RESULTS TO DATE

- 1,362 youth enrolled
- 1,003 trained
- Successful targeting of youth beneficiaries with 94% of participants being poor/extremely poor
- Learning platform and webinars series launched
- Five best practices and thematic workshops held
- Reproductive Health lessons adapted to the Caribbean context
- The development of a highly successful consortium model in St. Lucia
- Capacity of partner organizations to deliver quality training and job placement services strengthened

PARTNERSHIPS

Donors: U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF) of the Inter-American Development Bank.

Implementing Partners: In Phase 1, IYF is working with the Gilbert Agricultural & Rural Development Center (GARD Center) in Antigua and Barbuda; T.A. Marryshow Community College (TAMCC) in Grenada; Peoples' Action for Community Transformation (PACT) in Jamaica; and the National Skills Development Centre (NSDC) in St. Lucia.

In Phase 2, IYF is working with the GARD Center in Antigua and Barbuda; New Life Organization (NEWLO) and the Grenada Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC) in Grenada; and NSDC and the James Belgrave Micro Enterprise Development Fund (BELfund) in St. Lucia. To successfully execute this program, implementing organizations will work in a consortium with other key entities that provide training and/or focus on vulnerable youth, and will leverage partnerships with the private sector and national governments.

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PARTNERS

