

CARIBBEAN YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

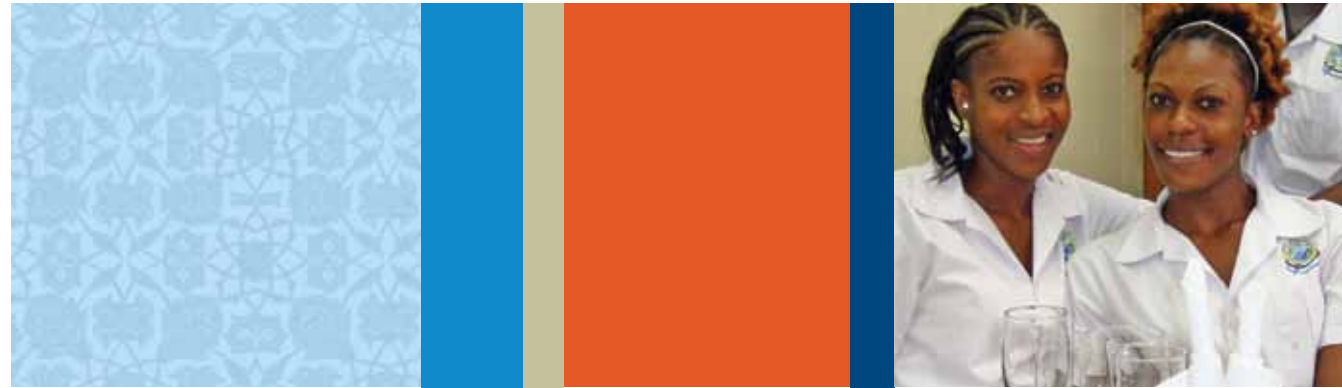
A YOUTH:WORK PROJECT



Saint Lucia

CYEP





The Challenge

In Saint Lucia, young people face significant barriers to reaching their full potential as productive and engaged citizens. Nearly 30% of the population lives below the poverty line, with children and youth under the age of 30 making up the vast majority of that population. Over a third of the country's youth ages 16 to 30 are unemployed, due in large part to an education system that neither meets the needs of today's labor market nor supports a successful transition from school to work. As a result, a growing number of young people in Saint Lucia have lost hope in the future. With few opportunities for a productive life, these marginalized youth are too often drawn into the drug trade, gangs and criminal activities—thus continuing a downward spiral into poverty.

The Initiative

In 2008, the International Youth Foundation (IYF) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) launched the *Caribbean Youth Empowerment Program* (CYEP) to improve

the job prospects of under-served young people in Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Jamaica, and Saint Lucia. The program offers market-driven training in areas such as life skills, information technology, remedial education, and vocational and entrepreneurship skills, along with internships, job placement services and business support. In addition to building the capacity of youth-serving organizations to address the employment needs of vulnerable youth, CYEP works to strengthen alliances with public and private stakeholders to further expand job training and other opportunities for the region's vulnerable youth.

In its initial phase, CYEP benefitted over 1,000 young people through skills training and additional support services, with 92% of employers reporting satisfaction with CYEP-trained interns and employees. With additional funding in 2011, the program is reaching an additional 1,100 youth across the region with an expanded menu of services that includes career guidance and entrepreneurship training.



Learning at the NSDC was a real eye-opener; it showed what is needed to be successful in the world of work. It was more than just learning about a job, it was learning how to operate better in life, how to become a better person.

— Latoya Delice, CYEP office administration trainee

Who Do We Serve?

CYEP 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, the program supports youth serving as positive agents of change in their communities through its service learning component.

In Saint Lucia specifically, the project targets youth from vulnerable communities that include Anse-La-Raye, Canaries, Dennery, Choiseul, Soufriere, Laborie, Micoud, Vieux Fort and urban Castries. Priority is given to those who have a previous court record, are single mothers, or have dropped out of school.

CYEP's Approach

CYEP partners utilize a market-driven approach to its employability training, which is viewed as critical to secure partnerships with employers for

internships and job placement. Such a strategy helps young people launch micro-enterprises that reflect local needs and ensures vocational training is relevant to labor market trends. CYEP partners also engage employers and successful entrepreneurs as mentors for the program's youth and hold skills expos and other events to showcase youth's competencies.

In Saint Lucia, CYEP is working with a consortium of key private and public stakeholders to expand the program's impact across the country and ensure its long term sustainability. Consortium members include:

- *Centre for Adolescent Renewal and Education* (C.A.R.E.) — providing career guidance and support
- *National Skills Development Centre* (NSDC) — offering vocational training and job placement services
- *The James Belgrave Micro Enterprise Development Fund Inc.* (BELfund) —



This training has been the chance I have been looking for and I want to take full advantage of this opportunity that I have been given. The teachers here have helped me to understand what it takes to be successful, to be understood.

— Che Dabreo, CYEP computer repair trainee

- providing entrepreneurship training, loans and business support services
- *RISE (Saint Lucia) Inc.* — mobilizing youth for participation in CYEP and providing youth access to its Youth Drop-in and Resource Centre and computer labs
- *Saint Lucia Chamber of Commerce* — providing valuable labor market information, obtaining feedback from employers and businesses, and advising on the training offered to youth to ensure its relevance to the demands of the market

Supporting Long-term Change

Working together, CYEP partners in the region seek to maximize their institutional capacity and strengthen their services, thereby positioning themselves to secure additional funding and new partners to replicate and expand this successful model. The further development of multi-sector partnerships ensures that a network of collaborating agencies and organizations is actively advocating for a national youth employment

agenda that is focused on the most vulnerable and at risk members of that population.

In Saint Lucia, the CYEP consortium has become a recognizable authority on youth employability, building a foundation for sustainability and advocacy strengthened by its support from government agencies and the private sector. Activities such as career days and partnering with job placement agencies connect employers to beneficiaries as well as enhance program visibility. These linkages also help build a framework for sustained pathways to employment for youth across the country and ultimately the greater Caribbean region.

CYEP in Saint Lucia: Results to Date

- 272 youth enrolled in program
- 215 trained in life and employability skills
- 41% of graduates employed
- 5% returned to school
- Successful targeting of at-risk youth beneficiaries; 74% identified as poor or extremely poor



The exposure that the students (CYEP trainees) had to real world job skills made them distinctly different than other new staff members coming in. They had an easier time fitting into the workflow. It was incredibly valuable for my department to have a student from this program.

— Lucilia Simon, medical secretary, St. Jude's Hospital

- Strengthened capacity of partner organizations to deliver quality training and job placement services

Join Us

CYEP is working in Saint Lucia to improve the lives and prospects of its vulnerable youth. The projects' ability to leverage in-kind support and financial resources and build multi-sector alliances is critical to its success. CYEP partners have already formed strategic alliances with public and private sector entities, such as the Ministry of Social Transformation, the Saint Lucian Development Bank (SLDB), the Bordelais Correctional Facility, Construction and Industrial Equipment (CIE),

For more information on CYEP activities in Saint Lucia, please contact appropriate members of the consortium:

BELfund
P. O. Box 6327
Sans Soucis, Castries
Tel 451-6069/8858
Email belfund@candw.lc
Web www.belfundstlucia.com

C.A.R.E.
P.O. Box 156
Castries
Tel 451-1510
Email carepb@candw.lc

NSDC
Bisee Industrial Estate
P.O Box Rb 2411
Rodney Bay, Gros Islet
Tel 458-1677 / 451-8030
Email mail@nsdcslu.com
Web www.nsdcslu.org

RISE Inc.
Gablewoods Mall
P. O. Box GM 711
Castries
Tel 451-RISE (7473)
Email rise.saintlucia@gmail.com
Web www.risesaintlucia.com

Saint Lucia Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture
P.O. Box 482
Vieille Bouetteille, Castries
Tel 452-3165
Email info@stluciachamber.org
Web www.stluciachamber.org

Saint Lucia Electrical Services, and Saint Lucia Planned Parenthood.

Examples of in-kind support received include delivery of complementary training for specific courses, facilitation of contact with potential employers for internships and job placement, mentorship of youth entrepreneurs, and event sponsorships. More support is needed, however, from local companies, government agencies, and civil society organizations if we are to have a significant impact on the lives of this country's young people.

International Youth Foundation

32 South Street
Baltimore, MD 21202 USA
Phone: +1 410 951 1500
Fax: +1 410 347 1188
www.iyfnetwork.org

The International Youth Foundation (IYF) invests in the extraordinary potential of young people. Founded in 1990, IYF builds and maintains a worldwide community of businesses, governments, and civil society organizations committed to empowering youth to be healthy, productive, and engaged citizens. IYF programs are catalysts of change that help young people obtain a quality education, gain employability skills, make healthy choices, and improve their communities. To learn more, visit www.iyfnetwork.org.

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