

Youth:Work Mexico Launches Program in Ciudad Juárez

Young People Take the Lead in Turning City Around

A young woman in a wheel chair came up to the podium and told the assembled crowd: “Ciudad Juárez is a place full of opportunities to be an agent of change.” Her brave statement about the emerging role of young people in the city’s revitalization was greeted with wild applause from the more than 180 government, civic, and youth leaders attending the Youth Conference, held in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico on April 7-8, 2011. Such moments of surprise and inspiration would be repeated throughout the two-day event.

The Youth Conference served as the formal launch of the International Youth Foundation’s Youth:Work Mexico (YWM) program, which is working to address the enormous social and economic challenges facing young people living in two of Mexico’s most violent and crime-ridden cities, Ciudad Juárez and Tijuana. The three-year USAID-supported program aims to strengthen and expand after-school and summer programs, create safe spaces for vulnerable young people to meet, and prepare young people for viable futures through jobs or entrepreneurship training. A key strategy of the program is to leverage private sector resources and expertise to increase community involvement in youth-targeted activities.

“These are very tough communities where young people feel they have few alternatives other than joining a gang or becoming engaged in criminal activities,” says Bill Reese, IYF’s President and CEO. “This initiative will give them a chance to choose a more positive path

by staying in school, getting a job or starting their own business.” IYF expects to directly benefit 7,500 young people in Ciudad Juárez by the end of the program. Approximately 5,000 youth will attend after-school and summer camp programs; 2,000 will participate in life skills and citizenship training; and 500 will benefit from employability training, internships, job placement services, and entrepreneurship support.

To date, more than 3,000 young people have benefited directly from this first phase of Youth:Work Mexico, with 1630 attending summer camps and 1420 participating in after school programs over the past year. This summer, an additional 2500 youth will be gaining new skills and learning opportunities through their participation in this year’s summer camps, which start in July. The program has also been highly successful in raising additional funds and resources — leveraging \$4.78 for every \$1 invested in these programs.

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Photograph by Ariane Arze

Youth leaders brought their energy and ideas to the Youth Conference, held in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico.

ABOUT YOUTH:WORK

Youth:Work is a Global Development Alliance (GDA) Leader with Associates (LWA) assistance mechanism that USAID and other U.S. government agencies can utilize to access the youth employability programs, services and expertise of the International Youth Foundation (IYF).

Through the central Leader award, Youth:Work also promotes cross-project learning; targeted training and capacity building; rigorous monitoring and evaluation; support for partnership and leverage development; and other special initiatives.

USAID bureaus and missions may develop an Associate Award in a straightforward and rapid manner through the steps below:

- **Designate an Activity Manager** who will serve as AOTR when the award is signed;
- **Develop a Program Description**, in collaboration with IYF, as desired;
- **Clear the Program Description** with Youth:Work Leader AOTR (Patricia Flanagan, USAID/I&E, pflanagan@usaid.gov);
- **Send the Program Description** to IYF for proposal development (Missions may continue collaboration with IYF during process if desired);
- **Review and approve IYF’s proposal** and provide comments to the Agreement Officer. (Missions may continue collaboration with IYF during this process); and
- **Make an Associate Award to IYF.**

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The April Conference, which was hosted by IYF and Fundacion del Empresariado Chihuahuense, and supported by the US Mexico Foundation, served as a platform to showcase the accomplishments of YWM during its initial year. It also offered participants a chance to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the challenges facing the region's youth and learn about successful strategies to address them. Top leaders from the private, public and NGO communities led lively discussions around model youth development programs and best practices from the Latin America region. Key issues on the agenda were conflict transformation, employability and entrepreneurship, education, violence prevention, civic participation, and public policies.

The event also provided a rare opportunity for youth from across Ciudad Juárez to speak out on issues that impact their lives and to describe how they are working to create a brighter future for themselves and their city. Among their community projects: organizing street fairs for children to express themselves through art and dance; improving the delivery of emergency medical services in poor neighborhoods; and starting their own business and providing much needed jobs to their peers. With support from Youth:Work Mexico, a growing number of these community activists are more closely coordinating their efforts, starting the process of registering their NGOs, and joining a newly revitalized umbrella organization called the Youth Network.

"We have seen here today how the young people of Ciudad Juárez are leading citywide efforts to stem the violence and promote peaceful and sustainable communities," Carlo Arze, Director of Youth:Work Mexico, told conference participants. "It is up to all of us to support them, so that together we can create a more hopeful city." In her remarks, Kay Freeman, USAID/Mexico Deputy Director, said that while the city faced many challenges, "It has what it takes to move forward, with committed citizens and strong young people who have the power to be agents of change." She commended the program for improving the opportunities for young people in their communities.

The city faces daunting challenges. A staggering 3,000 people were killed in Ciudad Juárez last year, and 85% of those who enter elementary school don't graduate from high school. Yet ironically, many young people say these challenges have only made them more motivated to improve their communities. "All of this drugs and violence has helped my dreams grow bigger, not smaller," says Alejandra Madero, 21, who is studying to be an architect and hopes to build environmentally friendly houses for the city's homeless. "Before all of this, my friends and I wanted to have fun, party, and follow a regular career; now we want to use our skills to help people



Photograph by Ariane Arze

With support from Youth:Work Mexico, 1420 children have benefited from after-school programs across the city of Ciudad Juárez.

and improve life in Ciudad Juárez."

For the next two years, YWM will place a greater emphasis on entrepreneurship and job skills training initiatives. While these programs will start in Ciudad Juárez, it is anticipated that by 2012 the program will expand its activities to Tijuana. YWM will also offer strategic and technical support to develop a Youth Development Strategy for Ciudad Juárez, and will work closely with the Youth Network to promote greater participation by youth as agents of change within their communities. In the words of Alejandra Madero: "Everyone needs to be involved."

PROGRAM UPDATES

YOUTHMAP

YouthMap

This four-year US\$ 10 million agreement aims to assess youth circumstances and support promising youth development programs and practices in Sub-Saharan Africa. Through YouthMap, IYF is conducting holistic assessments on the conditions of young people, including their circumstances, concerns and opportunities, as well as the status of youth-serving infrastructure in eight countries. Based on these findings, the YouthMap Innovation Fund will provide seed grants to replicate promising practices, address gaps in existing programs, and scale up innovations that are working for youth in the areas of education, employability, and workforce development.

IYF launched field work for the first two YouthMap assessments in Senegal and Uganda in January and April 2011 respectively. In Uganda, IYF partnered with Family Health International (FHI) which led the health and family planning component of the assessment. Assessment

reports will be widely disseminated through IYF's Website and partner network as well as through stakeholder events to be held in each country in partnership with USAID. The next assessment will take place in Mozambique, with preparations to get underway this summer.

YOUTH:WORK

trabajando con los jóvenes de México

Youth:Work Mexico

A three-year \$3 million Youth:Work Leader with Associates Initiative, Youth:Work Mexico (YWM) helps to build resilient communities of Ciudad Juárez and Tijuana by creating safe spaces for disadvantaged young people, strengthening and expanding after school and summer programs, and preparing Mexican youth for viable futures through jobs or entrepreneurship opportunities. A primary focus of these programs is to help at risk youth stay in school, while equipping them with the education and life skills necessary to become positive role models in their communities.

Over 3,000 youth in Ciudad Juárez have already benefitted through summer camps and after school programs. Most recently, over 200 people participated in a youth-led YWM Program Launch held April 2011. [See Spotlight article.] The youth led event was planned closely with the Youth Network of Juárez, which has been serving as an advisory board for the Program. The launch was seen as a turning point for effective youth participation in the city. For the remaining two years YWM will place greater emphasis on entrepreneurship and job skills training. While these efforts will start in Ciudad Juárez, it is anticipated that by 2012 programmatic activities will be expanding into Tijuana.

YOUTH:WORK Jordan

Youth:Work Jordan

Under Youth:Work Jordan (YWJ), USAID and IYF are working in partnership with the Jordanian Ministry of Social Development to implement a five-year holistic youth development program that creates an enabling environment with a greater capacity to more effectively serve youth at risk. YWJ seeks to equip youth ages 15-24 with the necessary skills to find employment, become active and positive agents of change within their communities, lead healthier lifestyles, and access public services that are both youth friendly and responsive to youth needs. YWJ hopes to engage over 4,000 youth in employability and civic engagement training programs by the end of 2011, and over 15,000 by the end of the program.

YWJ currently works with three national coordinating NGOs and 22 community-based organizations across six communities and will expand activities into three new communities by July. Over 1700 young people have benefited from YWJ employability interventions to date, and nearly 1900 youth have started to implement community service activities that have benefited themselves and their neighborhoods.

Leverage and outreach activities continue in support of YWJ's aim to build public-private partnerships to scale and sustain YWJ's youth interventions. The Ministry of Labor along with the Development and Employment Fund have agreed to provide nearly US\$ 1 million in small loans to entrepreneurial ventures being established by YWJ youth. In addition, IYF forged an agreement with Starbucks to establish a youth leadership institute, build a network of young change makers in Jordan, and support 45 youth-led, social innovation projects through small awards funds.

With the heightened focus on the needs and potential of youth in the Middle East, the YWJ program was featured at a number of high profile events. At a round table discussion with His Majesty King Abdullah II, YWJ Country Director Rana Al Turk discussed how the program capitalizes on the needs of youth and their potential. In addition, a youth gathering was held with Michael Posner, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Labor, and Human Rights.

Youth:Work Associate Award Kyrgyzstan

A US\$ 3.2 million USAID-supported initiative under the global Youth:Work framework was recently launched in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. In response to the disengagement of youth and inter-ethnic tension in the country, the program is partnering with local organizations to engage youth in civic

engagement activities, promote skills in entrepreneurship, and work to foster and support a positive environment for youth policy development in the country. These activities are based on findings from the Investing in Youth Design & Assessment project, also a Youth:Work initiative, and include life skills training and youth community service and social entrepreneurship projects to showcase the power of youth to create a new Kyrgyzstan. An additional US\$ 1 million grant will help expand the scope of the program and provide life skills and other support to Kyrgyz orphans.

The first major activity under the program will be a Summer School of Democracy, to be held July 31-August 6. Youth leaders from across the country will be invited to engage with social and political leaders to cultivate new leaders for Kyrgyzstan. The official launch of the Kyrgyzstan program, which is planned to take place during the Summer School, will include the participation of the US Ambassador and USAID Country Director for Kyrgyzstan.

CARIBBEAN YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Caribbean Youth Empowerment Program (CYEP)

Launched in 2008, CYEP equips vulnerable youth, ages 17 to 25, with the technical, vocational and life skills needed to develop sustainable livelihoods. A US\$ 2.5 million Youth:Work program, CYEP continues to expand its youth employment focus in the Caribbean, with programs in Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Jamaica and St. Lucia. By September 2011, the initiative plans to deliver job training to 1,100

young people across the Caribbean, and place at least 40% of them in quality jobs. Building on the projects' achievements, in November IYF expanded the projects agreement by one year for Antigua and Barbuda, and in February for Grenada to train an additional 210 youth. An external evaluation is currently being conducted on the Jamaica project that was concluded in January.

In March, as part of its efforts to promote learning and facilitate program exchanges, IYF launched two exciting learning initiatives:

- The CYEP Learning Platform, which allows partners to easily access information, share experiences, pose questions and engage in discussions
- The CYEP webinar series, which shares information on topics of relevance to the partners, drawing on the expertise of IYF staff and CYEP partners

From April 26-29, the CYEP Program Coordinators attended a forum organized in the Dominican Republic by the *entra21* program to discuss the use of technology to improve the delivery of services, and tools to ensure that youth at higher risk are job ready. CYEP partners also visited the job placement center of the local *entra21* project.

In April, 26 CYEP participants in St. Lucia celebrated the successful completion of their life skills training – a particularly significant benchmark as these trainees are youth who have been involved with the law, including several who are incarcerated. One student, Che Dabreo, 21, described his experience: “This training has been the chance I have been looking for and I want to take full advantage of the opportunity I have been given.” Dr. Karleen Mason, Executive Director of C.A.R.E, the entity responsible for this training, noted in her address: “This is the first time that this program (CYEP) has been on this island and I can see that it is needed and its effect is great.” Turning to the



Youth participants in a CYEP training program in Jamaica.

graduates, she said: "You are agents of change and each of you has the capacity to be that change that you seek and that our country needs."

YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT | برنامج تعزيز القيادة الشبابية

Palestine Entrepreneurship Program

The Youth Entrepreneurship Development program (YED) is a four-year, US\$ 15 million program supported by USAID that aims to improve employability and entrepreneurship opportunities for young Palestinians. Strong emphasis is placed on partnerships with local public, private, and civil society sectors to build local capacity for effective youth programming and ensure local ownership. IYF expects the program to benefit 10,000 Palestinian youth by improving their economic livelihoods through training in employability, entrepreneurship, and service learning.

The program was formally launched in March 2011 with more than 150 stakeholders including Palestinian and international NGOs, universities, government, the private sector, and the media in attendance. Private sector stakeholders in Palestine continue to express significant interest in partnerships to support activities that help better prepared youth for success in the workplace.

In April 2011, YED awarded "rapid grants" to three Palestinian organizations: Sharek Youth Forum, Bethlehem University, and INJAZ Palestine to build program momentum and visibility and to provide youth with internships and business start-up support. In June, YED began implementing a highly participatory Capacity Strengthening Process (CSP) which will enable Palestinian youth-serving institutions to improve the quality of their services.



Youth host Ms. Nermeen Rafat Al-Qadi speaks at the launch event for the YED program on March 16 in Ramallah.



Tanzania Youth Scholars

In May 2011, the newest Youth:Work Associate Award was finalized for a five-year, US\$ 3.5 million project in Tanzania. The Tanzania Youth Scholars project seeks to equip 1,800 orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) with educational scholarships and livelihood opportunities to help them reach their full potential.

Under the program, IYF will partner with Tanzanian organizations to recruit and provide training and four-year scholarships to beneficiaries, ages 14 to 24. Activities include training and job placements in carpentry, masonry, welding, plumbing, computer maintenance and food production. The Youth Scholars' program will also strengthen systems for data collection and coordination for tracking scholarship information for a Tanzania Implementing Partners Group working on Orphans OVC programs that includes the Tanzanian Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. The program launch event will be held in late summer 2011.



Obra

Obra is a two-year public-private partnership initiative that ensures youth at risk are gaining increased access to services and programs they need to learn, work and lead. Currently, Obra has three sub-regional partnerships, with hubs in Guatemala, Jamaica, and Peru. Highlights from each are described below:

Caribbean/Jamaica

A major success of the Caribbean partnership has been the creation of YUTE (Youth Upliftment Through Employment), developed by the Caribbean Secretariat organization, Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica (PSOJ). YUTE's goal is to build on the Obra partnership to create 2,200 decent jobs for at risk youth by 2013. PSOJ has received over US\$ 3 million in pledges from more than a dozen private and public sector



Participants from the RISE Employability Training Program in Jamaica take part in a team building activity.

organizations. This investment will help expand the Obra innovation projects launched in 2010, which focus on youth skills-building, career support, entrepreneurship, remedial education and key life skills.

Central America/Guatemala

The Obra Secretariat, Instituto DEMOS, civil society, government and private sector partners are directing their efforts toward building a National Agenda for Youth in Guatemala. That agenda seeks to positively change the perception (and self-image) of at-risk youth, generate healthy dialogue and consensus around key priorities for young people, sustain effective programs, and strengthen government services for out-of-school youth. As a result of their collective influence, Guatemala's President recently declared that his government will be taking steps to increase the sustainability of successful youth programs. The upcoming national elections are a valuable opportunity for the Obra partnership to engage candidates, obtain public commitments on youth issues and build new consensus among emerging leaders.

South America/Peru

The South America Obra partnership, led by CEDRO, is advocating with government leaders in Peru to improve coordination among youth-serving government ministries such as Education, Health and Labor. The partnership is strengthening and expanding a government mapping process to chart youth-related public services and facilitate increased communication between government agencies. It is also working to strengthen the network of NGOs providing youth services. A local fund has been launched to engage the public, private and civil society sectors in identifying and scaling up promising youth initiatives.

