

Learning Series

No. 2

ENTERING THE WORLD OF WORK:

Results from six *entra 21*
Youth Employment Projects

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Preparando a los Jovenes para Entrar
al Nuevo Mundo del Trabajo



International Youth Foundation®

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International Youth Foundation™

International Youth Foundation (IYF)

IYF believes young people possess the power to shape the future. To learn, work, thrive, and lead, they need access to programs and resources that inspire and challenge them. IYF is a global nonprofit organization that makes this possible. Today in 70 countries, IYF collaborates with businesses, governments, and civil society organizations that share a common desire to improve the life conditions and prospects of young people. Together, IYF and its partners build effective, sustainable, and scalable programs that positively impact the lives of young people worldwide. Learn more about IYF at www.iyfnetwork.org.

Entra 21

An initiative of the International Youth Foundation and the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF) of the Inter-American Bank, IYF, *entra 21* was created in 2001 to improve the employability of disadvantaged youth in Latin America and the Caribbean and place them in decent jobs. *Entra 21* is a \$29 million matching grant program supporting 35 projects in 18 countries throughout the region. The program provides young people, ages 16 to 29, with comprehensive training in information technology and life and job-seeking skills, and job placement services.

Javier Lasida and Ernesto Rodriguez are the authors of *Entering the World of Work: The Results of Six entra 21 Youth Employment Projects*, an IYF publication from which this executive summary is derived. Susan Pezzullo, Learning Director for IYF, prepared the executive summary. This publication is made possible through the generous support of the MIF and the United States Agency for International Development.

Executive Summary

This meta-study, conducted by Javier Lasida and Ernesto Rodríguez, is based on six external evaluations conducted in 2005 of *entra 21* projects in El Salvador, Peru, Paraguay, Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Bolivia.

The *entra 21* program, an initiative of the International Youth Foundation, strives to improve the employability of disadvantaged youth in Latin American and the Caribbean, by equipping them with essential skills needed for the labor market. The Program is supported by the Multilateral Investment Fund, administered by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), as well as other donors such as the U.S. Agency for International Development, Lucent Technologies, Nokia, Microsoft and Merrill Lynch. To date, the Program has reached 19,332 youth in 18 countries, through 35 programs, for a total estimated investment of \$29 million.

The six projects studied are similar in their purpose and basic design; however they operated in different economic and social contexts. All six implementing agencies offered short-term training based on studies of labor market needs, particularly in the area of information technology. Youth received training over a 5 to 9 month period in an IT-related technical area, life and job seeking skills and did an internship. Some youth received remedial training in basic skills and managing their own micro-enterprise. Job placement services also were provided as required by the *entra 21* program.

Duration of Training Components

| | Duration in Months | Number of Hours by Component of Training | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|--|---------------------|-------------|--------------------|------------|
| | | Total Hours | Technical Component | Life skills | Job-Seeking Skills | Internship |
| DOMINICAN REPUBLIC | 7 | 705-733 | 277-292 | 78 | 6 | 344-357 |
| BOLIVIA | 9 | 333-410 | 132-200 | 45 | 45 | 120 |
| EL SALVADOR | 6 | 588 | 380 | 88 | 40 | 80 |
| PANAMA | 5 | 390 | 140+192* | 70 | 20 | 160 |
| PERU | 7 | 406 | 180 | 60 | 6 | 160 |
| PARAGUAY | 7 | 616-660 | 200-210 | 100 | 30 | 286-320 |
| *English classes | | | | | | |

All *entra 21* projects are evaluated by a local, independent consultant, using an evaluation guide and instruments developed by the International Youth Foundation. An external evaluation consists of a survey of a representative sample of graduates, focus groups with youth, and interviews with employers. The meta-study examines and compares the results of six external evaluations.

Description of the youth and projects

The six *entra 21* projects worked with 2,890 youth, more than half of whom were between the ages of 20 and 24 at the time they were surveyed, and a fourth were between the ages of 25 and 29. Males and females were equally represented in all six projects. The majority of the youth had completed secondary school or their first years of tertiary education at the time they started their *entra 21* training.

Level of Education when Enrolled in *entra 21* Projects (%)

| | Bolivia | El Salvador | Panama | Paraguay | Peru | Dominican Republic |
|-------------------------|---------|-------------|--------|----------|------|--------------------|
| Primary Completed | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Secondary Not Completed | 13 | -- | 2 | -- | -- | -- |
| Secondary Completed | 48 | 65 | 35 | 39 | 2 | 58 |
| Tertiary Not Completed | 35 | 32 | 44 | 67 | 8 | 41 |
| Tertiary Completed | 2 | 3 | 19 | 4 | 90 | 1 |

The six projects succeeded in responding to a population that until now was not a priority for most youth employment programs in the region, namely secondary school graduates from lower income families. Lasida and Rodríguez contend that the projects demonstrate that a secondary school education is important, but not sufficient, for a disadvantaged youth to secure a job or to continue his or her studies. In their opinion, specific training and support are needed if these youth are to successfully make the transition from formal education to the world of work.

Job Placement Levels and Quality of Jobs

At the beginning of training, only 15% of the youth were working; when the same youth were surveyed at least 6 months after graduating, 54% were working. Between 80 and 90% of the interviewed youth worked more than 35 hours a week. In addition, 80% of the job positions were full-time positions and there were positive changes in the youths' perceptions of themselves and in their attitudes towards the labor market and the future in general. For those who were working when they entered the *entra 21* projects, their quality of jobs improved. For example, salaries doubled or tripled in three of the projects.

Employment Status at time of External Evaluation (%)

| PROJECTS | Working | Seeking Work | Not Seeking Work |
|---------------|---------|--------------|------------------|
| Bolivia | 50 | 39 | 11 |
| El Salvador | 60 | 26 | 14 |
| Panamá | 50 | 46 | 4 |
| Paraguay | 41 | 56 | 3 |
| Perú | 70 | 28 | 2 |
| R. Dominicana | 56 | 42 | 2 |

The majority of the graduates reported their participation in the project helped them in their job search and with their job performance. The graduates who were not working, ranging from 26% in El Salvador to 56% in Paraguay, reported they were strongly motivated to work and actively searching for a job. Lack of experience and contacts were the most commonly cited reasons by youth for not finding employment. Also noteworthy was the fact that a majority of those who were looking for work at the time of the external evaluation, had been employed at some point since they finished training.

There were differences across the projects in how well females and males did with regard to job placement. For example, none of the youth in Panama were working at baseline, but by the time they were surveyed, 70.6% of the males were working, compared to only 39.4% of the females. In Bolivia and Paraguay the disparities were not as great; males fared slightly better than female graduates in getting jobs (14% and 6% better respectively). In the Dominican Republic, on the other hand, females did slightly better than males.

Lasida and Rodríguez also examined the extent to which graduates used the IT skills gained through the *entra 21* projects in their jobs. Youth in Panama, employed primarily in call centers, and in the Dominican Republic where they were trained in business applications and web design, reported the highest use of their IT skills.

Use of ICT Skills in Current Job (%)

| | Bolivia | El Salvador | Panama | Paraguay | Peru | Dominican Republic |
|-------------|---------|-------------|--------|----------|------|--------------------|
| A lot | 39 | 24 | 52 | 39 | 15 | 53 |
| Quite a lot | 32 | 15 | 28 | 13 | 23 | 20 |
| Some | 11 | 12 | 12 | 21 | 23 | 5 |
| Not much | 11 | 15 | 8 | 8 | 19 | 10 |
| Not at all | 8 | 35 | 0 | 18 | 19 | 13 |

The employers surveyed reported being highly satisfied with *entra 21* youth and considered their job performance to be equivalent to or better than that of other employers in similar positions. They also reported that their motivation to hire *entra 21* graduates was based on their need for qualified personnel. For Lasida and Rodríguez this is an indicator of the credibility the projects garnered with local businesses and an important aspect of sustainability. A smaller percentage of employers said their motivation to hire *entra 21* graduates was due to their sense of social responsibility.

Less Social Exclusion and Greater Social Inclusion

Lasida and Rodríguez construct trajectories or scenarios to describe four different sets of outcomes with regard to work and education; these are 1) youth who are only working; 2) youth who are working and studying; 3) youth who are only studying; and 4) youth who are neither working nor studying. The percentage of youth in the last category dropped dramatically from 69% at the start of training to 24% 6 or more months after finishing training. For Lasida and Rodríguez, this finding demonstrates an increase in youths' social integration. In addition, the evaluation data also reveal that most of the youth who were neither working nor studying at the time of the external evaluation indicated that they plan to look for work in the near future.

The trajectory analysis also shows that levels of education improved among graduates. When youth were interviewed for the external evaluations 6 months post-graduation, participation in formal education had more than doubled, with 42% of the graduates studying compared to only 20% at the beginning of the course. In addition, 22% of the youth were both working and studying.

The meta-study includes an analysis of the complex trends in Latin America with regard to higher education—who enrolls, who discontinues their studies and which youth graduate. The (re)enrollment in higher education by *entra 21* graduates is seen as an important benefit in the context of the overall trends presented by Lasida and Rodríguez.

The authors also examine the findings from the six external evaluations from a personal development perspective. Throughout training, youths' personal development and social integration were reinforced through interactive teaching methods, group activities and personalized attention. The evaluation data indicate youth strengthened their self-esteem and capacity to define and work toward personal and professional goals after having participated in the six projects. At the same time, youth reported they felt more connected and integrated into society at a critical point in their lives when they were assuming adult roles.

Principle Lessons and Innovations

The design of this regional program was based on best practices from prior youth employment programs and includes a series of enhancements, according to the meta-study's authors.

One such enhancement was its focus on providing youth with an integrated package of services, including ones aimed at developing positive attitudes and skills for the world of work. For youth from low income families, especially those which lack a culture of working, this is particularly valuable.

Understanding and responding to employers' needs was a feature reinforced by the *entra 21* model and exhibited in the projects evaluated. Courses were designed (and adjusted) in response to market information. Internships also helped the NGOs gauge employers' requirements and enabled them to collaborate with companies on a concrete activity. Through the internships, the implementing NGOs become better acquainted with businesses. At the same time, business leaders were able to witness first-hand whether or not the projects were effective. Although each implementing agency had different levels and types of relations with the private sector when they began the project, they all developed relationships with companies that were critical to their success in identifying internship opportunities and helping youth find employment.

Internships were a valuable component of the training process and some projects innovated by alternating the internship with classroom instruction. The majority, however, scheduled the internships so they occurred when the classroom phase of training was completed. The meta-study found no correlation between the number of hours of internships (they ranged from 80 to 357 hours) and job placement rates. The researchers conclude that 80-hour internships are probably sufficient to acclimate the youth to world of work; however they recognize that employers' requirements and youths' particular educational needs have to taken into account in determining the length of the internships.

The implementing NGOs took advantage of their respective institutional strengths to design and implement the projects. Each NGO relied on a network of relationships with other NGOs, training institutes, and, in some cases, certifying entities to offer an integrated package of services and supports to the youth. Having flexibility in how the implementing agencies structured these relationships was important to their success in providing high quality training and job placement services.

Another innovative component, according to Lasida and Rodríguez, involved the services offered to youth in how to find a job, both during and after training. Job placement supports and services included providing coaching on how to do a CV or conduct an interview, organizing job fairs, scheduling interviews, and increasing access to information on job opportunities.

While most jobs documented in the meta-study were in the formal sector (75-90%), the evaluated projects also offer examples of successful youth-led micro-enterprises, particularly in El Salvador and Peru. Given the fact there are so few success examples of youth micro-enterprises in the region, this is aspect of the *entra 21* experience, according to Lasida and Rodríguez, is noteworthy.

For a complete version of the meta-study in Spanish, *Entrando al Mundo del Trabajo: Los Resultados de Seis Proyectos entra 21*, Serie de Aprendizaje No. 2, please visit www.iyfn.net.org.



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