

Learning Series

No. 6

TAKING YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY PROJECTS TO SCALE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This executive summary was written by Susan Pezzullo, Director of Latin America and the Caribbean at the International Youth Foundation (IYF) and based on the Spanish publication, “Llevando Proyectos De Empleabilidad Juvenil A Mayor Escala” written by Marcelo Pizarro Valdivia in collaboration with Miryam Yepes Salazar and Víctor Fernández González (Hexagon).
Santiago, Chile



Connecting Disadvantaged Youth
with Quality Employment

Entra21 Program

The *entra21* Program was launched in 2001 by IYF in collaboration with the Multilateral Investment Fund of the Inter-American Development Bank, to improve the employability of disadvantaged youth in Latin America and the Caribbean. *Entra21* with market-relevant training or to create decent work opportunities. Phase I of the Program, which ended in 2007, benefited 19,649 youth through a comprehensive set of training and job placement activities. 54% of those youth were found to be working six months or more after graduation. Due to the success of *entra21*, a second phase was launched in 2007, to benefit youth at higher risk from being un-or under-employed due to factors such as being rural based, disabled, or associated with violence. Additionally, Phase II works to scale up best practices validated in Phase I so youth employment training and services could be available to more youth. This phase will run through 2011 and benefit more than 50,000 youth.

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Taking Youth Employability Projects to Scale

Executive Summary

Introduction

As in many regions of the world, Latin America is facing significant challenges in meeting the needs and aspirations of its young people. More than 100 million young people are now living in the region. While more than half of them are economically active, some 10 million are unemployed, and another 28 million are underemployed in dead-end, low paying jobs. In addition an estimated 48 million are economically inactive and of these 22 million are neither in school nor working.

Although numerous programs have been implemented to boost the employment rates among Latin America's youth, few initiatives have had the necessary scale and impact to make sustained progress in this critical area. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), there have been a number of programs with very good results but with limited coverage -- and large-scale initiatives that have been carried out but had insufficient impact. "The challenge," argues the ILO "is to connect both dimensions."¹ For today's policy makers, donors, and program managers, the question remains: What have we learned over the past decade that will help to dramatically expand the number of youth who benefit from effective employability initiatives?

During the first phase of *entra21*, which ended in 2007, more than 19,000 disadvantaged youth took part in a comprehensive program offering training, internships, and job placement assistance. Due to the program's success (75% of graduates were working or back in school 6 months after leaving the program), a second phase was launched (2007-2011) with two goals: 1) to help youth at higher risk become employed, and 2) to significantly increase the scale of practices or methodologies validated in Phase I. To this end, IYF awarded grants to six NGO partners to increase the scale of their youth employment projects or practices.

Table 1: Executive Agencies Supported by IYF/*entra21*

Organization/Country	Number of Months	<i>entra21</i> Grant Size
Fundación Chile / Chile	39 months	US \$672,903
Fundación Sustentabilidad, Educación, Solidaridad / Argentina	31 months	US \$505,007
Instituto Aliança / Brazil	25 months	US \$204,646
Caja de Compensación Familiar de Antioquia / Colombia	22 months	US \$875,052
Agencia para el Desarrollo Económico / Argentina	15 months	US \$115,387
Centro de Servicios para la Capacitación Laboral y el Desarrollo / Peru	20 months	US \$384,700

¹ Translated from Spanish: *Informe Trabajo Decente y Juventud en América Latina*, pg. 17 (ILO, 2010).

In November 2010, IYF commissioned the Chilean research firm, Hexagon, to conduct a study of the six scale projects funded under Phase II of **entra21** to gain greater knowledge on how to increase the scale of practices and methodologies used in training and placing disadvantaged youth in decent work.

The study focused on projects in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Peru where the Foundation's partners had collaborated with their respective governments to transfer proven practices to institutions in the public and private² sectors.

All six case studies sought to increase coverage - to reach more youth with quality youth employment services through the transfer of innovations to existing programs or systems. For example, under Phase I, IYF's Colombia partner served 1,000 youth over a period of 4 years and by teaming up with the municipal government it went on to reach over 7,000 youth.³ The number of youth served through the project in Argentina went from slightly over 500 in Phase I to over 30,000 in Phase II.

In Argentina, the Sustainability, Education and Solidarity Foundation (SES) developed a methodology to increase the capacity of personnel in more than 80 municipal employment offices around the country. These offices trained personnel and taught them how to advise and assist youth - including how to provide follow-up support. Fundación Chile provided assistance to the government's "Bicentennial Youth Program" managed by Chile's National Service for Training and Employment (SENCE), with the aim of improving the way a network of public training institutes provide youth with career guidance and job placement services.

In Brazil, the Instituto Aliança (IA) transferred an educational methodology called Com.Dominio Digital to public schools in the states of Ceará and Pernambuco. The methodology was validated in Phase I of **entra21**. In Medellín, Colombia, methodologies which were also validated in Phase I of **entra21** were incorporated into a municipal youth employment program.

In Córdoba, Argentina, the Economic Development Agency (ADEC) is transferring a training and job placement services model, validated in the first phase of **entra21**, to the provincial government. Finally, Peru's Center for Labor Training and Development Services (CAPLAB), which had not participated in the first phase of **entra21**, seeks to validate a strategy for providing assistance to youth in rural areas in the areas of job placement and entrepreneurship.

² For example, transferring proven practices to privately operated training centers.

³ For more information on the scaling up process of the Colombia project, please refer to IYF's *Estudios y Reflexiones No. 7* (2011) available at www.iyfnet.org/work/entra21.

Table 2: Type of Innovation Scaled by Project

Project	Innovation or Enhancement	Official Counterpart/ Recipient	Operational Recipient
F. Chile	Holistic job placement services which combine virtual and face-to-face methods to identify job opportunities and labor trends and provide youth with tools to clarify their career goals, create e-portfolios and link with employers.	National Government: Ministry of Labor/SENCE	Vocational training institutes, Municipal employment offices
SES	Methodology to make municipal employment services more youth-friendly; includes creation of one-month workshop for youth to develop an educational, career and life plan; and the provision of referral and guidance services.	National Government: Ministry of Labor	Ministry personnel, Municipal employment offices, Training institutions
IA	Educational methodology that includes the development of a career plan combined with employment training focused on personal development and ICT and job placement services.	State Secretaries of Education (Ceará and Pernambuco)	Public schools
COMFENALCO	Job placement services.	Local government	Local government, Vocational training institutes indirectly
ADEC	Model for the delivery of comprehensive job training integrated with job placement services.	Provincial government	Provincial employment offices, Training institutes
CAPLAB	Methodology to link youth in rural areas with resources and training services that enables them to set up a productive enterprise and/or seek paid employment.	National Government: Ministry of Labor	Municipal employees, Instructors of technical training institutes

The study, which was conducted from November 2010 through March 2011, included in-depth interviews with key informants in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, i.e. IYF partners, government officials and school directors. The projects in Peru, Colombia, and Córdoba, Argentina were analyzed on the basis of secondary information and long distance interviews.

To reach a deeper understanding of the significance and scope of the concept of scale and how the process of scaling up can be maximized, the study adapted a definition developed by CORE group,⁴ which defines scale as the “extended attainment of impact at an affordable cost.”

⁴ *Scale and Scaling Up*, A CORE Group Background Paper on “Scaling-Up” Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Services (July 11, 2005), www.coregroup.org/resources/working - papers.

The study focused on four dimensions of scaling efforts:

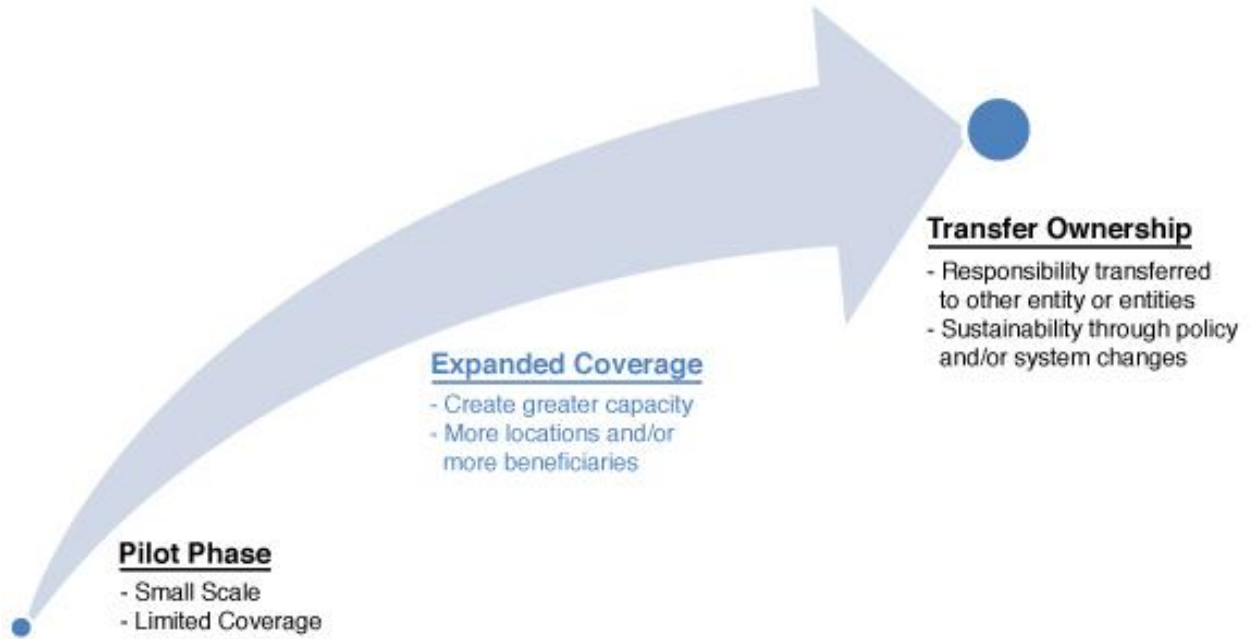
- The **innovation** the IYF partner offered to the public sector to enhance a public program or system and which allowed the NGO to scale up its practices or model;
- The **strategies** used to transfer the innovation to the recipients;
- The types of **partnerships** or arrangements established between the various players and their functions and roles; and,
- The **sustainability** of the methodologies, models, and processes which were scaled.

Innovations

Innovations, in the case of this study, are those models or methodologies the IYF partners introduced to a recipient entity that aim at improving a system, policy or program related to youth employment. The innovations introduced by IYF partners include methodologies, techniques and processes for identifying, selecting and training vulnerable youth; assessing the labor market; developing career plans; and connecting youth with jobs by linking them with employers. Table 2 provides a description of what IYF partners offered their respective governments.

To “sell” an innovation or enhancement to a public partner, its political viability is as important, according to the study, if not more important, than its technical viability or cost. The governments were as concerned about how the innovation would help their efforts to address a social issue, i.e. youth exclusion, and social and policy benefits of scaling up a practice or innovation. One surprising finding from this study is the relatively low importance evidence or hard data played in selling the NGOs’ innovation to government decision makers. Other factors such as the good reputation of the NGO and the ideological compatibility between the NGO and government leadership seemed much more important in cementing an understanding about the innovation to be scaled up.

Reaching a clear understanding of and commitment to the “nucleus” of the innovation - its core components, principles and processes - is vital in the researchers’ opinion, if the quality of the innovation is to be preserved as the context shifts. In almost all the cases studied, there were no substantial changes made to the design of the innovations transferred. Further, the study found the more compatibility there is between what the “sending” organization seeks to scale up and the receiving program or system, the greater the chances the model or methodology would be preserved. For instance, Fundación Chile tried to introduce an integrated package of services into a program with a relatively fragmented set of processes to recruit, select and enroll youth into a vocational training program. Although, for the most part, services were transferred, their integrated nature was not.



Strategies

Scaling up an innovation meant the IYF partners had to work on two levels. On the political level in order to establish mutual agreement on the value and purpose of the innovation with key authorities; and on the operational level in order to manage the mechanics of transferring know-how to schools and teachers, training institutes and instructors, municipal employees, and others.

The strategy for ensuring an innovation was meeting either the social or policy objectives of the public sector partner was not well defined in all of the cases. To ensure the scaling up process has the necessary support from key government authorities and is sustained, this strategy needs to be clearly laid out. Along with the strategy, NGOs and their government counterparts need to agree on a strategic management structure to monitor progress, make strategic adjustments and examine any policy implications.

The technical or operational transfer strategy, on the other hand, was clearly delineated in the majority of projects, including details on capacity building activities with public sector personnel, the design and creation of training materials, and the provision of technical assistance. Typically these strategies were directly tied to providing more youth with better quality career counseling, training and/or support to find good jobs. Strategies for transferring know-how to service providers included the training of trainers, teachers, and municipal workers; development of job descriptions and competencies for new positions required to implement the scaled program; mentoring and coaching for municipal employment officers, schools' and vocational institutes' staff members in the use of the new methodologies or models; and the development of a host of training guides, tools, and standards.

In all cases, the strategies for scaling up were modified, especially with regard to timeframes. Overall, the partners, IYF and recipient agencies underestimated the time required to transfer an innovation from an NGO to a public sector agency. In Chile, for example, it required 32 months to negotiate agreements with SENCE and a network of training institutes, to prepare manuals and to transfer the F. Chile methodology - far longer than originally proposed in the agreement with IYF. Fundación Chile had to learn to adapt to the priorities of its government partner, SENCE, and its procedures for selecting youth, which caused significant delays. In addition, there was a change in SENCE leadership during the process of transferring F. Chile's model which also affected the scaling up process.

Partnerships

In the scale study, three central actors were identified: transferring agencies (IYF partners), government counterparts, and a variety of service providing entities such as technical training institutes [Argentina], schools [Brazil] or local organizations [Peru].

The fundamental relationship established for transferring and scaling was between the implementing agencies and the governments that received the innovations. The study established that the quality of these relationships was critical to increasing coverage, transferring ownership to the public sector, and sustaining the “new” model or program. While informal relationships between the implementing agency and the public agency proved effective in developing ideas on what and how to scale up, more formal relations where outcomes, roles and responsibilities are clearly defined were seen as critical. This was true in order for the scaled services or model to have a greater chance of becoming formally adopted by decision makers.

According to Hexagon, when relations are first established with the government partner, whether it be the ministry of labor, a national training service, or a municipal government, a significant challenge was developing a shared vision of the purpose and process of the scale effort. This was best achieved in cases where there was mutual trust and respect. Making these partnerships work meant IYF partners had to understand governments' needs and ways of thinking, and learn how to recognize and overcome bureaucratic obstacles. Many times the IYF partners had to adjust to staffing changes within the technical teams assigned to work with them and in schedules and government procedures. In one country, for example, a new process through which the government procured training services from local vocational centers, significantly affected the ability of IYF's partner to develop timelines and implement capacity building activities with vocational institutes.

Being cognizant of the asymmetries of power between the public sector agencies and the IYF partners was important in all six cases. These asymmetries are natural, given that the government has the authority to determine policies, manage resources, and establish the framework in which these relationships develop. In this regard, the study underscored the importance of defining decision making mechanisms at the strategic or policy and the operational or programmatic levels so that as conditions change, needs shift or the scaling up process evolves, the NGO partner can have a voice and be better prepared to make adjustments. Being part of the strategic and operational management of the transfer process, therefore, can help NGOs mitigate the power imbalances. Also helpful was the presence of external support and funds (IYF) and the NGOs' reputation and expertise.

Sustainability

By the time this study was completed, the process of transferring the methodologies or practices to teachers, instructors, municipal workers, etc. had occurred in four of the six projects and in the case of two (Córdoba, Argentina and Peru) the process was almost completed. The process of political transfer, whereby the government agrees to sustain the “new model”, on the other hand, was still underway. Thus, the study is only able to provide some early indications of how well a longer- term process is faring.

Table 3: Strategies to Promote Scale and Sustainability

	Key Conditions	NGO's Strategies or Actions
Internal	Engaged leadership of the public sector counterpart (i.e. a state secretary of education) and with capacity to make decisions regarding policy and sustainability.	++ Create mechanisms for formal coordination + Participate in strategic management of scaling up / transfer process + Participate in efforts to make policy or system changes to increase the likelihood that the project will be transferred and sustained
	Ensuring technical capacity of the entities delivering services to youth (i.e. a public school).	+++ Definition of standards of quality +++ Training and creation of manuals and other materials, technical assistance ++ Coaching to help personnel implement methodology or service more independently
External	Opinions of relevant third parties (i.e. teachers union, parents, youth, companies).	++ Strategic communications + Dissemination of results + Monitoring of changes in public policies. ++ Participation in debates on related topics.

Use of strategies: +++ Frequently used; ++ Moderately used; + Seldom or Never used.

SES presented the clearest signs of sustainability at the time the study concluded. Its scaled up practices are being sustained due to a combination of factors: the decision by the Ministry of Labor to adopt SES practices as part of a national employment program which is fully funded through 2013, and the current government's efforts to pass a new law around youth employment. Instituto Alianca scaled up its educational methodology in dozens of public secondary schools as an extra-curricular activity but with no clear commitment on the part of the schools to continue the program. Recently, however the secretary of education of Ceará state in Brazil asked IA to integrate its employability model into the regular school curriculum so that it can be re-tested and made part of the state curriculum. SENCE is considering sustaining several components of F. Chile's package of innovations. In the other two cases, the likelihood of sustainability was difficult to determine since ADEC was still in the process of transferring its methodology to the provincial government and

CAPLAB was testing and transferring its rural employment resource centers to various municipalities.

Sustaining a model or methodology is facilitated when it is clearly aligned to the mission and strategic goals of the public partner. Finding this goal or mission fit is critical in mobilizing the support of people within the public sector with enough political clout to advocate for the adoption of what has been transferred as “the new way of doing business”. Based on these cases, the researchers recommend articulating how the “new” program would be sustained and who would be responsible for ensuring its quality and ongoing management.

The study also cautions against relying too heavily on resources or assets which are difficult to predict or control for a sustainability strategy. In this regard, the role of a political champion needs to be managed wisely. While champions can be critical in creating the conditions for innovation and partnerships as was the case in Colombia, it is important to plan ahead for when the champion or the resources are no longer available. The study offers two basic ideas, 1) identify early in the scaling up process resources (people, funds, programs, etc.) which are unlikely to be available throughout the transfer process and prepare for that eventuality; and, 2) develop a plan with the public partner on how the innovations transferred will be sustained in terms of financing and ownership.

Interestingly, in discussions about if and how the governments would sustain the innovations transferred by IYF partners, evidence and hard data appear to have played a minor role. Other factors appear to be more important such as having a shared ideology and a positive point of reference about the NGO, and trust in its credentials, and its ability to work with the private sector, civic organization networks, etc. Finally, the availability of external funding to implement the innovation; and the participation of an external party, in this case IYF, was also noted as important.



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.iyfnet.org

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