



TITLE:
CARIBBEAN YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT (PHASE 2)

GENERAL INFORMATION

Country: Saint Lucia

Coordinating Institution: National Skills Development Centre (NSDC)

Other institutions involved: Rise Saint Lucia Inc, Centre for Adolescent Renewal & Education (CARE), James Belgrave Micro-Enterprise Fund (BELFUND), Saint Lucia Chamber of Commerce

Duration of the experience: Eighteen (18) months

Funding Agency: USAID through the International Youth Foundation (IYF)



1) Objectives

The project's main goal is to contribute to the creation of opportunities for vulnerable youth in St. Lucia to engage in sustainable livelihoods. The project will train 150 youth in conflict with authority, such as those incarcerated, on probation, who have a criminal record, have been expelled from secondary school, or are involved in illegal activities but have not been charged, between the ages of 17 and 25 years, in vocational areas in demand by the labor market, with at least 40% placed in decent jobs.

2) Relevance

In an effort to tackle the growing problems of youth unemployment and poverty in the Caribbean, the Caribbean Youth Empowerment Program (CYEP) was established in October 2008. CYEP is an initiative designed to provide at-risk youth, ages 17-25, access to the job market and sustainable livelihood pathways that will prepare them to play positive roles within the workforce, their families and their communities. Now in its second phase in St. Lucia, CYEP will continue implementing a vocational training project with the National Skills Development Centre (NSDC) and fellow Consortium members the Centre for Adolescent Renewal and Education (C.A.R.E.) and RISE (Saint Lucia) Incorporated, in addition to implementing an entrepreneurship project with the James Belgrave Micro Enterprise Development Fund Inc. (BELfund) and a career counselling project with C.A.R.E.

This project had two very unique features; it was the first time in Saint Lucia's history that the Consortium Model had been used to implement a youth employability project, and it was also the first time that a youth employability project had deliberately targeted "highly vulnerable" youth on the island.

The initiative's unique features coupled with the guidance and support of an International Non Governmental Organization (IYF), which has a history of implementing youth employability projects around the globe; made the experience of implementing the project one that was rich with learning and also very interesting.

In designing this Phase 2 project, the Project Team reviewed the results and challenges from the initial project, examined the target groups of existing skills training programs of a similar nature and government's social policy in relation to youth who have been involved in conflict with authority, in order to define and refine the strategies and activities to improve the project in this second phase. The review focused on capitalizing on the accomplishments and addressing the challenges in order to refine and consolidate the model. Additionally, the Project Team identified multiple challenges that Saint Lucian youth face which include: a high youth unemployment rate of 34% for youth ages 16-30, the island's high rate of recidivism, increased exposure to violence, increased involvement in illegal and socially unaccepted activities such as drug pedaling and prostitution, exclusion of youth in conflict with authority the formal labor market, and the needs of today's labor market and the transition from school to work.

3) Concrete activities and actions

- **MANAGEMENT** - The NSDC's efforts to implement this project will be complemented by the contributions of four other integral executing agencies: C.A.R.E., RISE, BELfund and the Saint Lucia Chamber of Commerce. The signing of an MOU among these four institutions will formalize this relationship. These organizations will be responsible for the implementation of the CYEP projects in Saint Lucia and will work as a consortium.
- **PROMOTION & SELECTION OF YOUTH** - The project's implementing agency, NSDC, along with two of its partner organizations, C.A.R.E and RISE, will be responsible for identifying 300 youth in Saint Lucia who have been in conflict with authority, from which 180 will be selected for enrolment in the training program.
- **TRAINING** - Trainees will have access to vocational training, life skills, job readiness, remedial education, information and communications technology (ICT), an internship and job placement services.
- Each participant will have access to the following training: Life Skills, Job Readiness, ICT, Remedial Education, Vocational Training, Internship
- **JOB PLACEMENT SERVICES** - Establishing partnerships with the private and public sectors is of strategic importance.

4) Achievements and results

The achievements of this project testify to the power of thorough planning and monitoring, the consortium implementation approach, and the commitment of all the parties that were integrally involved in the project's implementation. The most relevant results have been the partnership with the key stakeholders to the project, collaboration with public and private sectors, partnership with institutions involved with vulnerable youth, internship partnerships and financial support from key agencies such as the National Community Foundation.

5) Sustainability

Sustainability of the project can be viewed from two perspectives: economic and financial, as well as social and cultural.

Economic and Financial Sustainability

The project's viability will be ensured because of the following factors:

- The Government of St. Lucia has made youth skills development and youth employment a priority as indicated by both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education at a

conference of tertiary level educators in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) held in March 2010. As such, it is expected that budget allocations will be made accordingly.

- Collaborating Agencies—governmental and business—are positioned to offer assistance. For example, the Community Action Programme for Safety (CAPS) has access to funding sources geared towards youth/community development. Also, the St. Lucia Development Bank has recently launched a Youth Enterprise Equity Fund (YEEF) specifically to facilitate business development among youth ages 18 – 36 years. The bank has partnered with other agencies to provide necessary training to young entrepreneurs. Both NSDC and C.A.R.E. have signed Memorandums of Understanding with the bank for trainee access to the funds. The bank initially supports the young person for up to seven (7) years.
- NSDC already has sustainability measures in place through the offering of night classes at its various centres and also its income generating Choiseul restaurant and its craft component.

6) Lessons Learned

Strength of Consortium Model

One of the key factors which played a critical role in the successful implementation of the project was the strength of the collaborative effort, which was built on the Consortium approach. This approach brought together three organizations (NSDC, C.A.R.E. and RISE) with complementary expertise and resources. This allowed the members to take advantage of the value added that each Consortium member brought to the project and to fill the gaps that arose by relying on the other members.

Importance of Extra Curricular Activities

Interventions to better support the trainees and minimize the dropout rate

Enhanced communication among Project Team

Building more strategic relationships with the private and public sectors

The Mentorship Program

The use of mentors, both private sector employers and select project staff, is an area that the Project Team would like to further explore in Phase 2.

7) Capacity for the exchange of this experience

Cooperation modality	Cooperation modalities the institution can provide to others	The institution may be able to provide this cooperation to others by
Information Sharing	X	2015
Conference Calls	X	2015
Videoconferences	X	2015
Workshops	X	2015
Technical and Experts Visits	X	2015

8) Author of this story

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