

CARIBBEAN ACTION PLAN



Investing in Youth Employment and Employability

**Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, May 24- 26,
2011**

Commonwealth Caribbean Regional Conference 'Investing In Youth'-Exploring Strategies for Sustainable Employment Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, May 24 to 26, 2011

1. Introduction

The Commonwealth Caribbean Conference *Investing in Youth: Exploring Strategies for Sustainable Employment* was held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago during May 24 to 26, 2011. The Meeting was held as a first step towards identifying critical roles and responsibilities for the range of government, private sector, development and other stake holding partners to enhance the economic participation of young people in the Caribbean, as well as the important linkages to be made for youth employment creation and employability.

The Meeting was made possible through the kind support and hosting of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

This Conference provided an opportunity for the CYP and Commonwealth Secretariat to advance strategic mandates as further elaborated by CHOGM 2009 and review and shape evidence-based responses for the four agreed priorities in relation to young people and employment namely:-

1. **Employment creation.** *Placing employment creation at the centre of macroeconomic policy*
2. **Employability.** *The education and vocational training needs of young people and improving the impact of those investments*
3. **Entrepreneurship.** *Making it easier to start and run enterprises*
4. **Equal opportunities.** *Ensuring young women and at risk or vulnerable youth have the same opportunities.*

The Conference will provided an opportunity for experts to indicate how they could use their competitive advantages and leveraging power more strategically to achieve sustainable youth employment and wealth creation policy and programmes at national and regional levels.

Participations were senior government officials managing youth development portfolios for their respective countries, managers of Youth business development services in the Region, members of the banking and private sector, young people owning and operating businesses in member countries of the region, representatives of development agencies proving financial and other support for youth employment creation, civil society partners and representatives of working in the area of enterprise, labour and technical and vocational training.

2. Opening Ceremony

The Opening Ceremony was addressed by the Honourable Anil Roberts, Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs and the Honourable Errol Mc Leod, Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, Trinidad and Tobago.

The Deputy Secretary General of the Commonwealth Secretariat, Mrs. Mmasekgoa Masire-Mwamba addressed the Opening Ceremony. She spoke on the context of Commonwealth Secretariat's role in youth economic participation in view of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment, the 2009 CHOGM mandate urging greater collaboration and investments in wealth creation for young people.

She also referred to CYP's comparative advantage as the key youth development agency in the Caribbean and our vested interest in ensuring that necessary policy and programmes and strategic collaboration and partnership provide greater benefits to young people's economic participation given the umbilical link to their holistic empowerment and wellbeing.

Mr. Ato Augustine, Deputy Chair of the Commonwealth Caribbean Youth Caucus and Representative for Trinidad and Tobago, also addressed the Opening Ceremony and challenged the gathering to invest in young people dreams as an investment in social stability and regional development.

3. Status of Presentations

The deliberations commenced with presentations from the ILO Caribbean Office with an overview of employment, labour market trends and YLP in the Region and a review undertaken by CYP of the provisions on youth employment and employability in National Youth Policies of the Caribbean. A presentation on the emerging policy of the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, Trinidad and Tobago, Government of Trinidad Tobago on small and micro enterprise development also provided scope for discussions on the extent to which policy provisions are successfully mitigating employment and employability concerns.

The Meeting considered the operations of youth business programmes in the Caribbean relative to their constraints and opportunities in order to suggest relevant benchmarks for a sustainable quality product. Presentations were made by the Youth Americas Business Trust (YABT), OAS, the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme, Barbados and Youth Business Trusts from Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, as well as Trinidad and Tobago's Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP).

Mr. Ian Chinapoo, Managing Director, First Caribbean International Bank provided banking sector perspectives on lending to small businesses and generated much discussion on what should be done to enhance youth access to financing and financial mechanisms and for creating trust and value-based strategic alliances with the financial and banking sector.

Emerging policy and programming for education and examination in Caribbean schools were elaborated by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) as a backdrop to discussions on how to enhance young people's employability skills and the ILO shared important ILO and UNESCO perspectives on employability skills.

Young people's concerns and recommendations were directly factored into the deliberations through presentations the importance of youth participation in workers organization. The results of an online survey and research by a Caribbean youth employment advocacy group were also presented as Caribbean youth perspectives on youth employment. Young business owners and operators from Barbados, Dominica, Guyana, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago also shared their stories and commented on measures for enterprise expansion.

Presentations were also made by CIDA, AusAid and VSO International on their current and planned support to the Caribbean in the area of youth development and youth wealth creation.

4. Key Findings

The expert deliberations at plenary and working group sessions contributed to some key thematic findings and highlights:-

Youth Employment Creation

- Prepare effective labour market analyses and collect appropriate data for employment policies. This should include the analyses into emerging markets and markets for which we have a distinctive advantage.
- Gather labour market information on youth labour participation, emerging market trends and relevant skills and develop indicators and benchmarks on YLP. This would avoid Governments investments in programmes, skills and infrastructure for industries that sound “exciting” but for which there is no evidence of a viability base.
- Provide special pro-labour and 1st time job seeker programmes for young people. The mass of young people who are unemployed cannot be catered to through entrepreneurship.
- Include youth concerns and right-based solutions in employment policies must Youth Prepare/develop Youth Employment Action Plans.
- Create the enabling environment which fosters greater youth entry into the job market. Provide incentives to private sector to ensure a designated percentage of their work force are youth.
- Mainstream internships and apprenticeships programmes across the public and private sectors. Develop and apply standards to ensure quality, equity, relevance and impact of these programmes.
- Ensure the closer collaborative efforts of Ministry Departments in relation to the exchange of information regarding their respective sections;
- Create more youth-friendly and accessible platforms for matching job supply and demand in countries as dedicated programming for Labour Department with Youth Departments.
- Explore possibilities of exporting labour and entering into tax treaties to ensure some level of return on the investment.
- Revise and implement current employment and labour as applicable.
- Ensure right-based and youth asset-based implementation strategies for bringing about the desired outcomes.

Employability

- Promote volunteerism widely as a mechanism for / service connecting youth to the world of work and necessary work experience.
- Introduce entrepreneurial education and skills at all levels, which would not only benefit youth seeking to become entrepreneurs, but provide enterprising skills for youth to be effective and resourceful labour force participants.
- Ensure employability skills development coincides with research into deficiencies in labour market and emerging market needs.
- to inform the needs identified e.g. (Ministry of Labour, Private sector and other youth development agencies)
- Make employability skills part of the curriculum at all levels and teach them in a robust, timely, comprehensive and consistent manner.

- Lobby the leaders to review and address the gaps within the educational system
- Make curriculum and training relevant to match the needs of industry
- Implement new measurement tools to ensure employability skills are being taught to students through teaching training programmes
- Develop appropriate reward systems to recognize students who model and demonstrate excellence in employability skills as a means of helping them to value such
- Encourage and provide parenting education as a means of promoting values which support the development employability skills
- Implement programmes that train teachers how to teach
- Develop educational curriculum and skills programmes with stakeholder /client feedback.

Equal opportunities

- Ensure Caribbean labour laws and regulations have a youth focus.
- Educate and sensitise youth about their rights to create avenues for them to be active agents for rights-based employment;
- Ensure youth leadership and other training includes capacity building about labour rights and social protection issues
- Ensure youth employment policy is gender sensitive
- Promote partnerships between trade unions and youth networks to ensure trade unions are more aware of youth labour issues and are able to represent youth interests effectively.
- Ensure YEPs address occupational health and safety issues, protection from abuse, and actively enforce the framework for “decent work”.

Entrepreneurship

- Implement a streamlined and simplified structure for the holistic development and nurturing of entrepreneurial talent as an alternative to traditional employment within the Caribbean.
- Develop gender and inclusive National Policies on Youth Entrepreneurship:
- Create programmes to foster entrepreneurship awareness among stakeholders - young people, community, support agencies, private sector, and governments.
- Recognise and promote the successes of entrepreneurs to stimulate participation and acceptance and bring new thinking and quality to entrepreneurial development.
- Use Language to create a recognised brand and entrepreneurial / professional attitude
- Build central hub or portal for entrepreneurship information, populated by young people, beneficiaries and support agencies.
- Advocate strengthening the sectoral viability for small business financing with attention to harmonizing policies between the commercial banking sector and the development banking sectors.
- Support ideas or innovation banks that protect start up and business expansion proposals and projects of young /potential entrepreneurs
- Strengthen support systems and groups to develop comprehensive programmes and for young entrepreneurs relating to: mentoring, counseling, life skills and personal development, business

development, access to markets and networks, advocacy and finance as grant, debt, equity, and young entrepreneurs' fund.

- Develop industry standards for youth mentorship programmes, ensuring a role for young entrepreneurs.
- Develop discrete packages of services and infrastructure for enterprise expansion to move youth entrepreneurs from survival stages to small scale economic activity.
- Engage in research and development at the macro (agency) and micro (entrepreneur) levels to stimulate growth and sustainability of entrepreneurial activity and inform policy and programme development by support agencies.
- Establish monitoring and evaluation systems to determine impact & effectiveness and inform policy.
- Adopt best practices and establish benchmarks from models of regional/international entrepreneurial development systems
- Provide opportunities for young entrepreneurs to network, learn from each other, keep abreast of industry updates, and emerging market requirements and be a source of business support to each other.
- Encourage establishment of youth entrepreneur associations and/ or strengthen youth participation in Caribbean small enterprise sector.

Participants agreed on the need to develop a framework for action on youth employment and employability and proposed a responsibility matrix and schedule as a tool for action by the Commonwealth Secretariat, Governments departments, regional government bodies, youth business trusts and schemes, private sector associations, training and academia, the banking and financial sector, labour interests and young people and their networks.

The matrix is attached as an Annex.

5. Closure

The Conference concluded with an Address by the Interim Director of Youth Affairs Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat and remarks by spokespersons for each sector represented.

The Delegates expressed their appreciation to the CYP for their foresight and timeliness in convening the Conference, and to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for their excellent support, and hosting arrangements.

Annex

CARIBBEAN YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	LEAD INSTITUTIONS	MILESTONES
Evidenced-based youth employment policy and training and skills development	Labour market analyses Youth labour statistics	ILO and Governments. OECS to develop pilot	ILO /YEN to support data collection and indicators. CYP to support regional capacity building with YEN and ILO
	Youth employment indicators	ILO	
	Data on emerging markets and competitive markets.	ILO support for Caribbean market research	Completed by 2013
	Youth Employment Plans	ILO/YEN with the OECS	CYP to include for YEN support to OECS in new programming cycle
Quality standards for internships and apprenticeships	Compile good practices and draft regional standards	Governments supported by ILO	Regional draft standards for CYMM 2012
Youth people have ready access to information on the job market and skills and experience required.	Youth-friendly employment repository	National Steering Committees of Youth, Labour Depts. and other stakeholders	OECS pilot
Rights-based youth employment policies, incentives and pro-labour programmes are enacted	Advocacy, mainstreaming and strategic partnerships	Governments, CYP and youth networks advocacy and guidelines for youth mainstreaming	CYP to incorporate IYYE findings in reporting to Heads of Gov't; , Labour, Youth and other Ministers w.e.f CHOGM 2011
Youth gain necessary work experience and employability skills	Community-based, national, regional and global volunteerism / service opportunities to be promoted and widely encouraged.	VSO International CYP All Governments NGOs Youth networks The Award Private sector	
	Quality apprenticeships programmes target agreed nos. of youth annually.	Business Trusts OECS CYP Governments Private Sector	CYP to begin from September 2011 Youth Departments to reintroduce programmes/ broker new partnerships for apprenticeship and report by CYMM 2012
Wider access of youth to entrepreneurial education	Youth workers training in entrepreneurial education.	ILO and UNESCO Standards	CYP to complete EE in its competency framework for youth workers by June 2012
	CXC encouraged to introduce entrepreneurial education in curriculum	Government advocacy CXC	
Education sector reform	Employability skills in school curricula to meet needs of current and emerging sectors	Governments CXC	Advocacy and lobbying for reform at the Commonwealth Forum of Ministers of Education w.e.f October 2011.
	Implement programmes that train teachers how to teach	TVET Councils	

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	LEAD INSTITUTIONS	MILESTONES
	Develop educational curriculum and skills programmes with stakeholder /client feedback.		
Youth Councils and networks are effective agents for youth labour rights	Capacity building on youth rights and labour rights Educate and sensitise youth about their rights to create avenues for them to be active agents for rights-based employment	CYP / Commonwealth Human Rights Division and Trade Union Sector	Regional Programme for June 2012 cycle.
Implement a streamlined and simplified structure for the holistic development and nurturing of entrepreneurial talent as an alternative to traditional employment within the Caribbean.	Develop gender and inclusive National Policies on Youth Entrepreneurship	YEN with CYP, CYBTs private sector	OECS Model by May 2012
A mentorship model to guide regional industry standards	Consolidate good practice and ensure widest role for youth entrepreneurs to ensure quality advice, guidance and wellbeing issues, ethical practices and robust business development.	CYBTs and regional business schemes	Steering Committee to be established and report by
Youth have ready access to information and services and networks for enterprise expansion	Build central hub or portal for entrepreneurship information, populated by young people, beneficiaries and support agencies.	OAS UTT CYBT Governments CYP	
	Develop discrete packages of services and infrastructure for enterprise expansion to move youth entrepreneurs from survival stages to small scale economic activity.	ILO OAS Governments	CYP to convene youth entrepreneurs forum with private sector to as starting point by June 2012
	Support ideas or innovation banks that protect start up and business expansion proposals and projects of young /potential entrepreneurs	National and regional business programmes Governments	
	Advocate strengthening the sectoral viability for small business financing with attention to harmonizing policies between the commercial banking sector and the development banking sectors.	Banking Sector	Small Steering Committee to be established. CYP to work with First Caribbean
Young entrepreneurs network, learn from each other, keep abreast of	Support establishment of youth entrepreneur associations and/ or strengthen youth	CASME CYBTs National Schemes	

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	LEAD INSTITUTIONS	MILESTONES
industry updates, and emerging market requirements and are a source of business support to each other.	participation in Caribbean small enterprise sector.	Youth Departments Private Sector Caribbean Expo UWI UTT	
Entrepreneurial development in the Caribbean adheres to robust quality global standards	Establish monitoring and evaluation systems to determine impact & effectiveness of national and regional programmes	CYBTs OAS ILO CIDA	
	Adopt best practices and establish benchmarks from models of regional/international entrepreneurial development systems		

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