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**MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND**

**SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP RELATIONS**

**FINAL REPORT ON THE STUDY TOUR**

 **TO JAMAICA ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT**

**SEPTEMBER 10-14, 2018**

**SUBMITTED TO THE INTER-AMERICAN**

**NETWORK FOR**

**LABOUR ADMINISTRATION (RIAL)**

**ORGANISATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS)**

 October 12, 2018

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**Introduction**

The Ministry of Labour and Social Partnership Relations, Barbados was fortunate to have its proposal for bilateral cooperation selected for implementation. The proposal sought to focus on Youth Employment, and Jamaica was identified as the country from which a delegation from Barbados could visit to be exposed to best practices with respect to the types of programmes/interventions and activities that have been designed, implemented and are reaching their objectives in addressing youth unemployment.

The study tour was conducted during the week September 10 – 14, 2018. The officers selected to participate in the study tour were:

* Ms. Marva Howell - Deputy Permanent Secretary (ag.)
* Mrs. Yvette Walcott-Dennis - Director (ag.) Barbados Employment

 and Career Counselling Service (BECCS)

* Mrs. Tricia Browne - Administrative Officer I (ag.)

Given the importance of the bilateral cooperation and following on from the IACML Forum on Youth Employment in the Caribbean held in Barbados in December, 2017, three additional countries were invited to participate in the activity as follows:

**Grenada**

* Ms. Lima Frederick - Permanent Secretary,

 Ministry of Labour

 **St. Kitts & Nevis**

* Ms. Shernel James - Labour Commissioner (ag.), Ministry

 of Labour, Social Security and

 Ecclesiastical Affairs

**St. Lucia**

* Mr. Celestine Alexander - Employment Officer with responsibility

for local employment, Ministry of Infrastructure, Ports, Energy and Labour

Detailed below are the outcomes of this study tour.

1. **Brief description of the activity**

**Day 1**

**Welcome, Overview and Country Experiences**

The Permanent Secretary (ag.) and other staff of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of Jamaica welcomed the delegations. Greetings were also extended by an OAS Jamaica representative. Key representatives of the Ministry gave a comprehensive overview of its main agencies and their programmes. The participating countries were then given the opportunity to share their experiences with youth employment and the challenges faced.

**Presentations and Interactions**

Presentations were made on the roles, functions and synergies of the Electronic Labour Exchange(ELE) and the Planning Research and Monitoring Unit (PRMU) as well as that of the Labour Market Information Technical Advisory Committee.

The second half of the day was devoted to presentations which highlighted the work done to assist the vulnerable through public assistance and social intervention programmes. These sessions were facilitated by representatives from the Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH); Steps to Work Programme; the Housing, Opportunities, Production, Employment Programme (HOPE) and included an interaction with a number of the HOPE Interns who were working on an internship with the Social Security Agency.

**Day 2**

The delegations were taken on a tour of the Electronic Labour Exchange and took part in a demonstration of the use of the online Labour Market Information System. A presentation was then given by the National TVET Director on the role of Technical Vocational Education and Training in preparing young persons for the world of work. Immediately following was a presentation from the facilitators from the MultiCare Youth Foundation and New Employment Opportunities for Youth (NEO) Jamaica. Delegates were also able to meet with a number of mentors and mentees who shared their experiences and the impact of the programmes on them. A visit to the Dunoon Technical High School allowed the delegates to sit in on a class which was in progress. This Passport to Success programme provides soft skills training to vulnerable youth to aid in building confidence, reliability and teamwork skills thereby giving them a chance at success at school work and life in general.

The day ended with presentations from Project Coordinator, Lyndon Ford and IDB Consultant, Branka Minic on the transformation of the Labour Market System and its actors and School to Work Transition and International Policies and Practices, respectively.

**Day 3**

Meetings were held with the representatives of the HEART Trust and the National Training Agency (NTA) National Youth Service (NYS) which is in the final stages of a three-way merger. This agency is involved in the training of youth and adults to global standards, in preparation for the labour market.

Visits to a number of employers provided the opportunity to see and hear from both the employers and the young interns who were beneficiaries of the On the Job Training Programme (OJT). These employers included the City of Kingston Cooperative Credit Union (COK), First Heritage Cooperative Credit Union, and Celebration Brands/Red Stripe.

**Day 4**

A field trip was undertaken to the Jamaican Producers Factory to observe their processes and interact with the principals of the Company. The delegation subsequently met with members of the St. Ann Chamber of Commerce and the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association where delegates were able to observe varying views on and impacts of the programmes. Visits to the regional Parish Office and Jewels Paradise Cove Hotel were also included. With each employer visit the opportunity to interact with the beneficiaries was provided.

**Day 5**

A field trip to the Montego Bay area which included a tour of the Historic sites at Falmouth, gave way to a meeting with employers from the Hilton Rosehall Team as well as the opportunity to interact with their interns who were impressive. A visit to the Fontana Pharmacy also afforded the same opportunity for interaction with both interns and employer representatives.

The Study Tour was brought to an end with a closing ceremony where the participants and hosts were able to share their observations and highlights from all of the information shared over the week.

1. **Main results and findings**

Participating in this bilateral cooperation has allowed the delegation to observe the operations of the coordinating unit, and to be exposed to the strategies used to address youth unemployment in Jamaica. The main results and findings are as follow:

* Adequate resources must be applied to the problem – human resources, physical outlay and financial resources. Jamaica has been able to capture and mobilize the necessary resources and support and this has been the main catalyst in the advancement of their labour market (LM) framework.
* Likewise, there is a synergistic acceptance of the importance of all the parts working together to tackle the problem of youth employment. This appears to be the result of the main players in the game throwing their support behind the cause for example, the political directorate, education leaders, employers, etc.
* The need to have the right skills, qualifications and competencies on the job is important. The commitment, teamwork and the apparent fit of staff of the Ministry and the LM agencies is evident. The staff have been selected to execute the programmes under their purview based not only on their qualifications and skills but notably with emphasis placed on their attributes. It is glaringly apparent that they are committed to the youth who they seek to empower.
* Jamaica has a well-organized, well-staffed and dynamic research and planning unit which ably supports the Labour Market with their targeted studies. Adequate Labour Market information is paramount in order to attempt the transformation of the LM System. The growth areas are highlighted. The demand areas are clearly established on an ongoing basis. This is the intersection where employers and training institutions meet to create the dynamic environment in the Labour Market. This pushes the demand for change and reform.
* The Labour Market Information System is well advanced with up to date real time data, a dedicated online presence, and is functioning effectively to provide job seekers access to available jobs.
* The involvement of the employers in the orientation sessions is an excellent idea to create buy-in for their internship and mentorship programmes and the Ministry of Labour has been successful at getting active participation and buy-in from employers. They have built and nurtured relationships with employers to the extent that they are able to recommend the best fits from their pool of young persons for those organizations.
* Government fully finances three months of on the job training which in turn garners more participation from employers who are not expected to provide remuneration.
* It is mandatory for employers in Jamaica to pay a contribution of 3% into the budget HEART Trust (the national training agency).
* The Ministry along with its partners and stakeholders have a myriad of remedial interventions but a developmental approach has also been embarked upon where the world of work experience, inclusive of the introduction of the necessary soft skills, is being provided in schools to help prepare youth for the world of work.
* There is a clearly defined marketing strategy to get the buy-in from all the players.
* The idea of incorporating Technical Vocational Training from early childhood throughout the life of a student and up to adulthood is a useful foundation on which to build lifelong learning and to ensure that each child has a skill to fall back on. Of significance, a policy directive has been given that every school leaver should have a vocational and marketable skill. This is in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals, (SDGs) 4.4, 4.5, 8 and 12.
* There is an appreciation of the need for administering numeracy and literacy training where possible.
* The collaboration between the PRMU and the Planning Institute of Jamaica is instructive. Their research is coordinated to prevent duplication.
* The importance of the psycho-social support being given to youth has been realized and case management features prominently in the Ministry of Labour’s programmes.
* The extension of the ‘Steps to Work Project’ from two to five years speaks to the success of the project where the international lending agency is willing to extend funding. A strong relationship has been developed with the IDB consultant. The consultant is based in Miami but visits Jamaica on a regular basis to assess, to offer encouragement and ensure that targets are being met.
* Despite some progress, there is still need for greater collaboration between the education, youth and labour policy makers to encourage that translates into smooth transitioning from school to work.

The above are believed to be useful considerations and strategies that should be incorporated into Barbados’ approach to transforming its labour market. Accordingly, we will certainly make these recommendations to our decision makers and apply them where it falls within our ambit to decide.

1. **Next Steps**

The delegation from Barbados proposes to take the following next steps and actions:

* Inform the Cabinet of Barbados of the outcomes of the study tour.
* There is a need to develop better partnerships with technical and vocational education training institutions. In Jamaica, it is mandatory that every secondary student has at least one vocational and marketable skill. Labour market research is conducted to identify skills areas and training standards and programmes are designed and offered. Too often in Barbados it appears as if adequate labour market research and analysis is not conducted, information is not readily available and training institutions always lament on the lack of human resources and other resources as the reason for their inability to offer courses in some specific demand areas.
* There is a need to strengthen the Manpower Research and Statistical Unit of the Ministry of Labour and Social Partnership Relations
* The development of a marketing strategy and brand for BECCS to solicit needed trust from employers and jobseekers where BECCS becomes the preferred public employment service. This would involve the design of a promotional campaign to better advertise the services of the Government’s Public Employment Agency BECCS, where it is intended, that employers would be encouraged to approach/contact BECCS first to either advertise their vacancies, or, to obtain prospective applicants for interviews from BECCS, and, or, ask BECCS to send workers to their organizations.
* The development of partnerships between the training institutions and employers. This could be facilitated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Partnership Relations.
* Where public training institutions are unable to offer courses due to capacity issues, discussions will have to be held with private sector training institutions to provide these courses even on a subsidized basis. Discussions will also be held with training institutions on giving consideration to using vacant schools or community centres at off peak hours to deliver training and in this way, expand their student intake.
* There is a need to continue to revisit and revise as required the processes of BECCS.
* The identification of the programmes and responsibilities to be handled by BECCS and other existing agencies need to be finalized after consultation.
* BECCS will seek to obtain a similar type of technical assistance such as that given to the ‘Steps to Work Project’ to aid in the strengthening of the agency. Attempts will be made to ascertain what possible forms of assistance are available and how we can access it.
* The Ministry of Labour and Social Partnership Relations needs to actively engage the government’s recruiting agency to select the right type of persons with not only the right qualifications and skills but also the right attitudes and aptitude to facilitate the staffing of BECCS. This needs to be done as a matter of urgency. Justifications are being made in this regard.
* Equally important are capacity building activities for the current staff who hold a wealth of institutional knowledge. One example of this kind of capacity building is the Master training for soft skills which was extended to persons in Jamaica who are being used to train the youth in their “Passport to Success” programme being delivered in schools.
* Ensure that the structure and the contents of the orientation provided by BECCS in the preparation of new workers into the world of work is enhanced to enable workers to be properly equipped with the right attitudes and skills to be successful at work and that employers are satisfied with the caliber of new persons entering the workforce.
* The importance of having access to real time data requires that the metrics for the evaluation of the impact of the interventions and the return on investment must be selected carefully. Care must be taken to avoid the numbers game at the risk of losing sight of the real goal – that of helping people. This needs to be reinforced in our future activities.
1. **Evaluation of the activity and recommendations**

Overall, all the objectives of the technical cooperation were met. By the level of exposure to the activities, policies and strategies they employ, the Ministry of Labour has shared with the visiting delegation quite a lot that Barbados can learn from and would do well to emulate. The interaction of the delegates from St. Lucia, Grenada and St. Kitts and Nevis, also added to the richness of the exchange. The opportunity to see the participants of the programmes in their work environments and to engage them and the employers was extremely useful, as was hearing from the Ministry’s teams on how they were able to get the strong support which was evident from all stakeholders especially the employers. Noteworthy was the employers’ cooperation and willingness to engage the delegations and to provide candid perspectives. The impact on the lives of the beneficiaries was also profoundly evident.

The Barbadian delegates will propose the following:

* Greater collaboration between other Ministries/Departments that primarily offer programmes to youth, primarily the Ministry of Youth and Community Development and the Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training with an aim to where necessary, redesign programmes/interventions which will ensure that the programmes better meet the needs of the unemployed youth and employers who participate in the interventions;
* A team approach between the Ministries of Youth and Community Development and Labour and Social Partnership Relations with respect to engaging employers on offering youth on the job training/attachments.
* Engagement of the relevant players to open discussion on whether employers should assist in the funding of the Barbados Vocational Training Board (BVTB) and the Samuel Jackman Prescod Institute (SJPI).
* The feasibility of using a system such as the On-the-Job Training Programme which is funded for three months by the government after which employers determine whether the interns will be contracted should be examined and consideration given to giving a rebate to employers based on their uptake and retention of the students

In conclusion, commendations must be given to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security team in Jamaica for organising and executing a thorough and comprehensive study tour. We wish to express our appreciation for their willingness to provide insight into the programmes and activities that will inform Barbados’ own efforts to address youth employment. It is especially heartening to be able to draw from the expertise of our Caribbean Labour counterparts, whose commitment and seemingly effortless teamwork made this activity a success.

1. **Additional Comments from the Providing Institution**

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Jamaica is encouraged by the fact that the Barbados delegation chose to come to Jamaica under the auspices of the RIAL Cooperation mechanism, rather than perhaps seeking to study the experience of for example, a more developed country. Deputy Howell comments on the synergy that was displayed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security team members, this did not go unnoticed by the members of staff and they were extremely motivated as a result. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Jamaica stands ready to render any further assistance when called upon with regards to strategies to promote youth employment and assisting the transition from school to work.