

## **RIAL SEMINAR ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT**

Rio de Janeiro, May 20 and 21, 2008

### **Panel 4 – Presentation Summary of Young Entrepreneurs Association of Jamaica (YEA)**

Jamaica has long demonstrated a distinct propensity for high levels of entrepreneurship among its citizens. The most recently published Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Jamaica Report has classified Jamaica as having one of the highest levels of entrepreneurial activity in the world. The report identified that 17 percent of Jamaica's adult population were actively planning or had recently established a new business.

Although Jamaica's overall rate of entrepreneurial activity compares favorably with countries such as New Zealand, (2005 – 28.26%) considered among “the world's most entrepreneurial countries”, it is a country's ability to translate early stage entrepreneurship into established business activity that will result in meaningful progress in job and wealth creation and by extension economic growth and development.

In 2005, of the 35 countries ranked by the GEM, Jamaica was 28<sup>th</sup> among the 35 countries in terms of the extent to which early stage entrepreneurship translated into full fledged business activity.

This is significant as the data would seem to suggest that Jamaica; although having a high incidence of early stage entrepreneurial activity, does not have a good enough record in transforming this into established business ownership

Even as the crucial role, played by entrepreneurship in driving economic development and job creation, is increasingly understood, there has not been commensurate effort placed on looking at entrepreneurship from a youth perspective.

Young people are mostly subsumed into the general adult population, ignoring their particular entrepreneurial potential and talents as well as their critical contribution to economic and social progress.

There are too few employers and hence too few job opportunities in the world. However it is a fact that cumbersome procedures and regulations hamper the start-up of new businesses.

Of course Jamaica has been affected by this paradigm, and as a result, has had to review, rethink and reorient its legal and institutional framework for business to make it easier for its citizens to start and run their own enterprises.

Businesses in the start-up phase often cannot afford to pay for business support services. A lack of adequate business mentoring, the absence of support networks and business contacts are serious constraints, impeding young people from getting into business.

The Young Entrepreneurs Association of Jamaica was formed in January 2006, through an initiative led by the Jamaica Employers' Federation as a direct response to the mounting challenges that beset young entrepreneurs in Jamaica. Its mandate was identified as being to provide a forum for young Jamaican entrepreneurs to learn from each other's experiences and to take advantage of peer mentorship as they grow their businesses.

It since has provided the ultimate community for young entrepreneurs across Jamaica who want to increase their chances of business success.

Not only has this organization begun to transform the Jamaican mindset through the promotion of innovation and creativity, but the YEA has also sought to affect public policy in order to improve the Jamaican business environment.

This presentation will seek to explore the current Jamaican situation with respect to Youth Entrepreneurship; the challenges, the Government's response and will critically examine the role that the next generation of entrepreneurs has to play in securing Jamaica's future.