

SEMINAR ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

INTER-AMERICAN NETWORK FOR LABOR ADMINISTRATION (RIAL)

Rio de Janeiro, May 20-21, 2008

SEMINAR'S SUMMARY – MAIN ISSUES AND LESSONS LEARNED

All information on the Seminar, including presentations, summaries and other relevant documents, is available in the RIAL website at: www.sedi.oas.org/ddse.

This document contains the main issues and lessons learned identified during the discussions, which were presented by moderators at the end of the Seminar. We invite all participants to send us their comments or ideas to complement them via e-mail to mcamacho@oas.org

Panel: “Encouraging partnerships aiming at decent and productive employment generation for youth: strategies, experiences and results”

- The need to have strong partnerships for youth employment appeared as a cross-cutting issue throughout the Seminar. Partnerships were recognized as an important condition to guarantee the effectiveness of policies and programs that seek to promote youth employment.
- Successful partnership models may include governments, workers' organizations and the private sector, as well as relevant civil society organizations, as appropriate to the program/project objectives (community based organizations, religious bodies and youth organizations or councils, among others). They also may include various levels of government (municipal, state and federal) and promote inter-sectoral coordination, as highlighted by the experience of Brazil on its ProJoven program.
- Partnership involvement was deemed valuable in the design, implementation and follow-up of programs, however, it depends on each partner's role.
- Specific partnerships between governments and non-governmental organizations working with vulnerable youth could have positive results not only in terms of youth employment but also community development, as showcased in the ISUS experience.
- Agreements between training institutions and the education sector with employers are valuable in terms of creating precise feedback between the productive and educational sectors to satisfy the demand for both qualified workers and well-paid jobs, as was stated by CEATAL. These agreements or partnerships allow training agencies to have updated information on employers' needs and design their curriculums accordingly.
- The private sector can also play a very important advisory role in initiatives that promote youth entrepreneurship, such as business incubators and SME development.
- Collective agreements between unions and enterprises can promote youth employment by contemplating clauses setting out a commitment to hire young people, as was mentioned by COSATE.
- Some of the key elements of effective partnerships mentioned during the presentations and dialogue are: a sound commitment by all parties involved; development based on each party's needs and

strengths; clearly defined objectives; a legal framework to support the pursuit of its goals; stipulating the resources needed for implementation, defining performance indicators, and identifying expected results. It is important to evaluate success from each partner's perspective.

- Engaging youth as partners in the process can improve program effectiveness.

Panel: “Developing and encouraging comprehensive policies, strategies and services.”

- The dialogue focused in two dimensions: the horizontal dimension that included policies, strategies and programs which are inclusive of multiple sectors of the federal/national, state, and provincial government and private sector funders such as foundations (i.e. labor, education and economic development); and the vertical dimension that included a rich mix of policies, strategies and programs from within the employment and training sectors.
- The United States, Brazil and Chile all cited examples of federal government-led efforts to increase collaboration and policy integration across government and sectors.
- All of the country examples provided by panelists during the discussion demonstrated a rich mix of policies and strategies focused on increasing educational, work-readiness and vocational skills outcomes. Policies and strategies included: employability training to help youth understand workplace expectations; providing internships and stipends to youth who are in authentic workplace settings; active development of linkages with employers; developing training and preparation for in-demand jobs; entrepreneurial activities and curriculum development; and follow-up and retention services for students and participants who completed training.
- Areas that were touched upon during the discussion and are key areas for future discussion topics include: implementing policies that allow successful strategies and programs to be taken to a national scale; teacher training as a way to ensure quality and relevant instruction to students; developing comprehensive funding streams that weave together both public and private resources and priorities; and the evaluation of policies and programs in order to ensure a return on investment.

Panel: “Youth entrepreneurship: creating alternative means for productive and decent work.”

- Youth entrepreneurship may be encouraged and incorporated into the training of young people, as an attempt to alter the prevailing culture of employment based on wages. In order to achieve this, there is a need to recast the traditional educational system adapting it to the entrepreneurship and focusing on the development of skills and capabilities.
- Training, focused on entrepreneurship coupled with alternative forms of financing and formalization of enterprises, can be a determining factor for reducing the mortality of enterprises and generating jobs and income.
- Stimulating entrepreneurial associations, through, for example, networks of enterprises, productive arrangements or clusters, and production and supply chains can provide gains in competitiveness and reduce costs, contributing to the sustainability of enterprises and opening up new markets.
- The government initiatives and non-governmental organizations could take into account not only the inclusion of young people into the labor market, but also their particular needs and aspirations. The young entrepreneurs could have greater participation in the definition of policies and programs.
- Entrepreneurship may be seen as a national policy, given its importance as a driver of economic growth and social cohesion, for the contribution to the generation of jobs, the introduction of new

products, processes and management models of innovative business, with positive reflections across the socio-economic structure.

- Construction of a favorable and simplified business environment that encourages the creation and expansion of enterprises will facilitate the process of growth of youth entrepreneurship.

Panel: “Labor market inclusion strategies for disconnected youth”

Previous panels presented a wide range of policies and programs addressing the needs of young people in their search for a place in the labor market. They mostly addressed the needs of youth and labor in situations where there is some stock of social capital that provides the pillars on which policy makers can act – community support, strong family ties.

This last panel addressed labor training for young people in more vulnerable settings that may lead to risky behavior and social exclusion. These presentations highlighted a sample of successful strategies of prevention, correction and reinsertion to provide disconnected youth a chance to reestablish their social ties and to do so in a sustainable way. Strategies and mechanisms discussed included:

- (i) the development of initiatives that reflect this population’s culture and interests, providing the opportunities for the integral development of young people;
- (ii) the role of alternative education models;
- (iii) the importance of providing training that respond to needs of self-expression and reflect the changing characteristics of today’s labor market;
- (iv) the importance of addressing not only the needs for formal training (to eventually get a job) but also the personal dimension, including attention to job readiness and strengthening self-esteem and sociability;
- (v) the importance of providing economic opportunities as viable options to illegal behaviors; and,
- (vi) the involvement and commitment of civil society and the government to reach out to these young people, to attract them to initiatives that contribute to changing the course of their lives.

The need for strong public/private partnerships in conducting these initiatives: the initiatives presented in this panel are all, in a sense, small scale. In order to scale them up, it is paramount that governments, civil society and the private sector join forces: Governments can act as promoters of an institutional environment conducive to private sector involvement in the creation of alternatives for the social and economic inclusion of this segment of the population.