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# youth

PARTNERSHIPS » EMPLOYABILITY  
FROM INNOVATION TO SCALE

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Lessons from *entra21* and *Obra*

WASHINGTON, DC

JUNE 21–22, 2011

Conference Report



## Highlights of the Youth Partnerships Employability Conference, Washington DC

The *Youth Partnerships Employability Conference: Lessons from entra21 and Obra*, held in Washington DC June 21-22 at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, was hosted by the International Youth Foundation in partnership with the Multilateral Investment Fund of the Inter-American Development Bank, the United States Agency for International Development, and the United States Department of State. The two-day event, designed to identify proven practices and innovative solutions from LAC around the issue of alliance building and youth employment and engagement, attracted over 160 leaders from the public, private, and NGO communities. There was significant participation from partner organizations, development experts and donors from Latin America and the Caribbean, and young leaders from across the region contributed valuable insights and recommendations to the proceedings.

The following is a summary of highlights from the conference, which we hope reflects the informative presentations and provocative exchanges that took place during the event. We have placed a particular emphasis on recording core lessons from IYF's work in the region over the past 10 years that will help shape and scale up the next generation of programs aimed at improving the work and life prospects of youth at risk in Latin America and the Caribbean.



June 21 2011

TUESDAY

**9:00-10:00 am: Introduction and Welcome**



**Guillermo Asiain and CEO Bill Reese open Conference**

The conference was opened by **Guillermo Asiain**, a youth leader from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico who was one of five young people from across Latin America and the Caribbean who were participating in the two-day event. “I had to be here so that I could talk to all of you about how to make a difference in young people’s lives,” he said. Guillermo then offered a spirited introduction to members of the first panel.

**Mark Lopez**, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean at USAID, **Nancy Lee**, General Manager of the Multilateral Investment Fund of the Inter-American Development Bank, and **Bill Reese**, President and CEO of the International Youth Foundation, welcomed the participants to the Conference. “Today is an invitation to work on best practices, and to do it together,” said Ms. Lee. “When you employ today’s young people, you get a better society.” Mr. Lopez exhorted participants to join forces to improve young lives, and emphasized the power of public/private partnerships to bring in additional resources and take effective programs to scale. “There are more chances for success with a broad range of stakeholders,” he said. “And because of the scarcity of resources these days,” he added, “we need to be as efficient as possible.”

Bill Reese articulated the main theme of the conference – to share lessons learned and best practices from ten years of work on the youth employability issue, with a focus on IYF’s *entra21* and *Obra* initiatives, in order to be able to scale up programs that are both effective and sustainable in the years to come. “If we do this right, we will see a return on our investments over the next 50 years, as those youth who are employed and engaged today continue to be productive citizens for years to come; and their children, too, will more likely be successful,” he said. “There’s a lot at stake here, if we get this right; and much danger, in terms of alienated, unhealthy, and unemployed adults if we don’t.” Please click [here](#) to view a photo slideshow of IYF projects in Latin America and the Caribbean at the end of the introductory remarks.

## 10:30- 12:30 pm: From Innovation to Scale: Strategies to Provide Youth at Risk with Access to Youth Employment Training and Services



Panelists, from left to right: Susana Barasatian, Hernan Araneda, Susan Pezzullo and Sandra Darville

**Agenda:** Looking at the evidence base from 10 years of work in Latin America and the Caribbean through IYF's *entra21* program, this panel examined innovative practices that are being taken to scale, how this is being done, and where to focus efforts in the future.

**Panelists:** Susan Pezzullo, Program director for Latin America and the Caribbean, IYF; Hernan Araneda, Director, Center for Innovation in Human Capital, Fundacion Chile; Susana Barasatian, National Director of Employment and Professional Development, Ministry of Labor, Argentina; Adriana de Almeida Mariano, Manager, Walmart Institute, Brazil; **Moderator:** Sandra Darville, Development Effectiveness Unit Chief, MIF.

**Discussion:** Starting off the conversation, **Susan Pezzullo** described Phase I of *entra21* as innovating in three areas: ensuring young people had access to training that promoted ICT skills; job placement services; and a focus on developing a tracking system and gaining employee feedback to learn what was accomplished. "We invited innovation from the beginning, and had the flexibility to experiment, learn from our mistakes, and make changes as needed," she said. "To do this successfully, you have to have a love affair with data." For Phase II, the question was how to bring the program to scale while working with more highly vulnerable youth. As a result of 10 years of learning and experimentation, the program has benefited 80,000 young people in 25 countries, working with 45 NGO partners.

Examples of successful and sustainable scale ups: in Argentina, local governments have upgraded over 100 employment offices to provide youth with workshops, counseling and referrals; in Brazil, Walmart is using a curriculum developed through *entra21* in its retailing sales courses across the country. "If you take your innovation and link it to larger policies," Pezzullo said, "you can find the "wiring" in the infrastructure to get this done." Her words of advice: "If you want to go to scale, you need a strong product and proof that it works."

**Hernan Araneda** talked about the necessity of having the capacity to scale up projects. "What do you need to have to reach a critical mass?" he asked. The challenge is not to duplicate efforts but to coordinate them with the private and public sectors, and to be able to prove that programs are effective and practical. When looking at

scaling up programs, he noted dialogue and timing are key elements. Working with *entra21*, he said, allowed his organization to try out a job training model on a larger scale and be successful. A rigorous evaluation of these programs is critically important, he said, adding that pilot projects can't be run the same way full-fledged initiatives are. "It's like comparing apples and oranges!"

**Susana Barasatian** summarized the Ministry of Labor's efforts to help Argentine youth build skills so they can find decent work and be good citizens. She explained the Ministry's aims to provide youth with the skills and support they need so that they can get jobs in the private sector. To this end, strong partnerships between government, the business community and civil society must be built through real dialogue, a common vision and mutual trust and respect. This she believes has been achieved through IYF's partner, Fundación SES whose expertise in youth and experience working collaboratively has enabled this civil society organization to provide the Ministry's employment program with innovative approaches aimed at strengthening employment services for youth.

**Adriana de Almeida Mariano** reminded the group that in Brazil, 29% of Brazil's 54 million youth are not employed. Many face significant challenges getting their first job, including high rates of school dropouts and low literacy rates. "The private and civil society organizations have to take responsibility to address these issues," she said. "Young people need to be seen as part of the solution, not the problem." Elements for success include: having the three sectors of society working together to find a solution; developing proven-evidence-based projects; and ensuring that the training is based on the needs of the market.

Among the issues raised during the **Roundtable Discussions**: the need to invest in follow up studies and to create safety nets for young people who don't have jobs; develop more comprehensive training for youth to succeed in 21<sup>st</sup> century jobs; and engage the private sector from the beginning so they have a stake in the outcome. It was also noted that programs work with social media networks to try to find graduates of programs. Also mentioned was the need to design interventions to address the specific needs of different youth sub-populations such as, rural or disabled youth.

**2:00-4:00 pm: Alliances for Youth Development: The Power of Partnerships in Responding to the Needs of Youth at Risk**



Panelists, from left to right: Elena de Alfaro, Jim Thompson, Karen Hilliard.

**Agenda:** This session examined alliance-based approaches to positive youth development, what has been achieved through these approaches, and the untapped potential for creating synergies among civil society, public sector and businesses to respond to youth needs.

**Panelists:** Karen Hilliard, Mission Director, USAID, Jamaica; Pablo de la Flor, Vice President of Corporate Affairs, Antamina Mining Company, Peru; Elena de Alfaro, President, Fundacion Empresarial para la Accion Social, El Salvador; **Moderator:** Jim Thompson, Deputy Special Representative, Global Partnerships Initiative, U.S. Department of State.

**Discussion:** The State Department's **Jim Thompson** opened the discussion with a review of how USAID and State have sought to promote and "incentivize" the development of public private partnerships aimed at development, noting the dramatic growth in private sector investments overseas as compared to foreign aid. Noting that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was a key champion of such partnerships, he said the State Department's role is to be a "convener, catalyst, and a collaborator" to promote broad-based, effective alliances inside and outside of government. "We will continue to expand and build partnerships to advance our work," he said.

While Jamaica faces a range of challenges, including one of the highest homicide rates in the world, **Karen Hilliard** said that as a result of an increasingly strong partnership with USAID and other sectors of society that there is now a strategy in place to address the issue of "unattached youth" who are both victims and perpetrators of a large majority of crimes. With the number of "unattached" youth between the ages of 15 and 29 ranging up to 300,000, young Jamaicans are facing some very tough challenges, including high unemployment, violence linked to the prevalence of youth gangs, and street crime. The good news, she says, is that progress is being made through the development of effective alliances. "Youth development," she said, "is a matter of national security, and a groundswell is building, especially in the private sector, to support such development." The Obra program, she said, was the catalyst of progress in taking on this issue collectively, she said.

**Elena de Alfaro** noted that El Salvador is still suffering the consequences of 14 years of war, including the rise of gangs and crime across the country. “The private sector and the NGOs still need to work hard to address this rising level of crime and violence through alliance building,” she said. A decade ago, companies started engaging, and now public-private partnerships have caught on. Yet many programs are still not well coordinated and work in isolation, so we have some work ahead, she said. Effective partnerships are focused on improving education and ensuring young people have the skills and the opportunities to get better jobs.

Through an alliance with other companies, **Pablo de la Flor** explained, a “trust” fund has been established as a percentage of corporate profits to implement anti-poverty efforts in Peru. While the government sets objectives and priorities, he said, there is significant local input into what gets done and where funds go. “We have set our objectives and they have been met,” he says, “so we’ve shown that this model can work.” There are 40 NGOs working with the company to carry out the programs, which focus on health and nutrition, education, entrepreneurship and social infrastructures. One success: over the past ten years, the Fund, working with the government, has helped to reduce chronic malnutrition. However, he added, we need better indicators to measure the impact of these efforts.

#### 4:15-4:50 pm: Reflections on the Day



Reflecting on the day: Guillermo Asiain, Maxsalia Salmon, Peter Shiras

**Agenda:** To share youth leaders' reflections on what they heard and learned from the first day of the conference

**Panelists:** Maxsalia Salmon, Youth Leader and Co-Founder, M&N Foundation for Aspiring Youth, Jamaica; Guillermo Asiain, Youth Leader and Youth Liaison, Todos Somos Juarez, Mexico; Peter Shiras, Executive Vice President, IYF.

**Discussion:** **Maxsalia Salmon** indicated she appreciated the focus on measuring impact by following up on the beneficiaries. She added: "Young people need to be involved in shaping these programs and setting public policies too, and we need to be there every step of the way." She suggested that organizations consider using innovative strategies relating to sports, which so many young people are interested in and follow. She also called on Conference participants to utilize the creative thinking of young people to make their programs more effective. **Guillermo Asiain** mentioned that it is still a real challenge to figure out when a program is ready to go to scale. "Should it be now or later, and how do you know?" he asked. He agreed with Ms. Salmon that to be successful, programs need to ensure young people help design strategic plans. Mr. Asiain also said that in building these coalitions and alliances, "you need to trust each other. And sometimes, we're just not speaking the same language." His final message to the group, inspired by his soccer coach: "Play smart, play hard, play together." Concluding remarks from **Peter Shiras** to the youth leaders: "You motivate and inspire us; you make our work worthwhile."





June 22 2011

WEDNESDAY

8:30 - 8:50 am: Introduction and Welcome



Luis Mendoza shares the youth perspective with participants.

Introducing the second day of the conference, **Luis Mendoza**, Youth Leader and Liaison with Pacto por Juarez, Mexico offered a thorough review of highlights from Tuesday's sessions on scaling up best practices and the role of partnerships to make a difference. Among them: the importance of building local ownership as a first step to improving government policies; ensuring follow-up procedures to be able to document outcomes; having a good product that people want before scaling up a program; and the importance of having effective leadership at the top in order to make progress. "Today," said Luis, "we will continue to squeeze out your secrets so we can keep learning about valuable experiences and best practices."

**Robert Winchester**, Alternative Representative of the Organization of American States (OAS), referred to the Summit of the Americas in 2009 when President Obama spoke about developing a new partnership based on mutual interest and respect and made a commitment to work together to support at-risk youth. "Our partnership with IYF is about successful workplace development, and providing training that matches market needs," he said. "I want to thank USAID and IYF for developing an important part of President Obama's vision for supporting youth in the Americas."

## 9:00-10:30 am: Concurrent Sessions

### Session I: Engaging the Private Sector in Youth Employability

**Agenda:** Panelists presented different models of private sector engagement, exploring lessons learned, incentives for businesses to support youth, and what is required from the private sector to increase employment opportunities for youth at risk.

**Panelists:** Sandra Glasgow, CEO, the Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica (PSOJ); Silvia Rueda de Uranga, Director, Fundacion Pescar Argentina; Karine Gruslin, Director, Empresarios por la Educacion, Peru; **Moderator:** Awais Sufi, Vice President for Programs, IYF.

**Discussion:** To start off the conversation, **Silvia Rueda de Uranga** identified a few key elements in a successful partnership with the private sector including: established good relationships with the private sector; teamwork between NGO and private sector partners; champions within companies who promote the initiatives internally among staff and externally to media and other stakeholders; and support – both financial and in-kind such as curriculum development, co-facilitation of training modules, mentoring and volunteering by company staff. “We also need to have a common objective to ensure those who drop out of school not only have the skills but the ability to adapt to changes,” she said. “The ongoing changes and innovations in ICT force us to adapt and to be self sufficient.” Ms. Uranga also emphasized that to work successfully with the private sector, it was necessary to carry out market studies to ensure the needs of the marketplace are met, and to invite feedback from corporate client as to the effectiveness of the training.

**Karine Gruslin** emphasized partnerships with the private sector can provide resources and expertise which NGOs need to build their capacity to positively impact young people’s lives. Among the key elements in a successful collaboration: participation by the national and regional governments; support from the educational community and young people, with clearly defined functions and roles; a vision for supporting sustainable programs; and the ability to address the demands of the labor market. “Unfortunately, schools stay in their comfort zone and teach what they know; we need to look ahead to see how IT and other forces are shaping our efforts,” she said. Ms. Gruslin also said that teaching “soft skills” to young people was important, particularly to help them succeed at their first jobs.

**Sandra Glasgow** described how her organization developed YUTE, a job training program for 2200 vulnerable youth, and how Obra provided a good model for a tri-sector partnership. Key to the program’s success was \$11 million funding support; taking six months to design an effective program; committed young people and NGOs to work with; and Obra support and guidance. In her organization’s approach to potential private sector donors, she emphasized giving them a “value” proposition that the program would bring about positive returns on their investments. “We also gave local companies the chance to gain visibility through a big marketing campaign, so our partners, including the government, saw value in what they were doing.” Summing up the need to make significant progress in expanding employment opportunities for today’s youth, in the face of the problem of violence in Jamaica, she said: “If we have business as usual, then we will have no business at all.”

**Awais Sufi** underscored the need to have a dual client assessment so our programs address the needs of employers/companies and youth. In his summary, Awais urged all present to continue this conversation around how make our environments more enabling for companies, NGOs and government to collaborate for the benefit of youth employment. He announced that IYF will publish a series of publications on many of these topics in the months ahead.

## Session 2: School to Work Transition



Carlos Herran and Liliana González respond to questions.

**Agenda:** Experts in the field gave their perspective on how to create better bridges between the classroom and the world of work so that youth are better prepared to find decent work.

**Panelists:** Cynthia Hobbs, Senior Education Specialist, World Bank Jamaica; Liliana González, Executive Director, QUALIFICAR, Colombia; Carlos Herrán, Education Lead Specialist, Education Division, IDB; **Moderator:** Wendy Abt, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Bureau of Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade, USAID.

**Discussion:** Cynthia brought the labor market perspective; Carlos education systems reform angle with a focus on what can be done in the urgent, and short term while educational reforms are achieved in order to reach out to at risk youth (usually served under remedial, second chance programs); and Liliana presented Colombia's concrete experience of educational system reform.

Looking at youth employment through the lens of the labor market, **Cynthia Hobbs** described the situation of youth at risk in the Eastern Caribbean, where youth unemployment is disproportionately high, in part because employers often complain that they cannot find qualified youth candidates for the jobs they are offering and subsequently do not hire them. Youth unemployment leads to lost human capital, deviant behavior and economic costs. The demand is high for skilled workers in the medical, professional and ICT enabled services that have literacy, numeracy, and life and job readiness skills. However, currently 68% of unemployed youth do not have these academic or job readiness qualifications. Ms. Hobbs added that assessments of employers show that they consider life skills (soft competencies) very important, with honesty, integrity and work ethic rated highest (86%), followed by problem solving and efficiency (82%).

**Carlos Herrán** shared that 50% of youth in Latin American do not complete high school, and those who do stay in school do not receive the basic skills to prepare them to enter the workforce. He defined youth at risk as youth who either do not complete secondary education, or have completed but do not have basic commands of math, reading and other social skills, and are therefore ill-equipped to be employed. Youth who do gain employment often find themselves in precarious jobs which have negative consequences for their future employment. "It is a

political and social time bomb that we are sitting on,” he said. He explained that the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), led by the OECD, provides data showing the status of Latin American youth. Policy implications from these assessments include the need to find ways to reduce high school dropout rates improve quality and relevance of secondary education, measure and promote non-cognitive skills (integrity, communication, etc) and provide second chance programs and work education. Mr. Herran also noted that internships are key to building those skills. He stressed the need for an articulated approach between education and training policies with effective second chance programs for youth, rather than the current situation where school systems continue to pump out ill-prepared youth and social programs attempt to address those young people’s skills gaps to increase their employability.

**Liliana González** shared Colombia’s initiative for improving young people’s transition from school to work through the consolidation of a national system for competency-based job training. The Colombian government has passed legislation to incorporate general labor competencies in the formal education system as well as in training entities. This is facilitating lifelong learning and helping youth transition between second chance or non formal education programs to formal education programs. At the center of this process is dialogue between employers and the school system to improve curricula. Also, efforts are underway to incorporate technical criteria into the training procurement processes by state agencies or private organizations, both national and international, particularly for vulnerable population, including youth at risk.

**Wendy Abt** began the Q&A session by stating that we need to take simpler and smaller steps to test things rigorously in order to build the type of evidence we have gained in early education. Mr. Herran said the earlier you start with education, the better. He compared the issue of untrained/unprepared youth to cancer: if we deal with these problems early on, we will be able to handle them. Ms. Hobbs responded that Jamaica data shows that a large majority of youth drops out between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade and even if they stay in school, by the time they get to 6<sup>th</sup> grade they are still illiterate. There has to be a very strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills at an early age and youth need a clear path from education to their career so that they do not get lost in the transition. Ms. Gonzalez said it is important to develop a common language of general and career-specific competencies to communicate between economic sectors. She urged participants to consult with companies, trade unions and industry. “They need to be involved in the discussion and design phase of youth workforce training.”

### Session 3: Creating an Evidence Base for Youth Employment Programs and Policies



Panelists, from left to right: Maria Laura Alzua, Susan Pezzullo, Maria Elena Nawar

**Agenda:** This session discussed methods by IYF and others to measure youth employability and promote learning among youth-serving organizations.

**Panelists:** Maria Laura Alzua, Director, Center for Distributive, Labor and Social Studies (CEDLAS) Universidad Nacional de la Plata, Argentina; Mattias Lundberg, Senior Economist, Social Protection Unit, World Bank; Susan Pezzullo, Program Director, Latin America and the Caribbean, IYF; **Moderator:** Maria Elena Nawar, Senior Specialist, Development Effectiveness Unit, MIF.

**Discussion:** The dialogue began with **Maria Elena Nawar** referring to MIF's long history with IYF and *entra21* and that during Phase I it implemented a solid monitoring and evaluation effort that showed strong results. For Phase II, a decision was made to not only serve more vulnerable youth but also to add robust impact evaluations so as to have concrete evidence that the program was responsible for the impact and progress made. **Discussion:** The dialogue began with **Maria Elena Nawar** referring to MIF's long history with IYF and *entra21* and that during Phase I it implemented a solid monitoring and evaluation effort that showed strong results. For Phase II, a decision was made to not only serve more vulnerable youth but also to add robust impact evaluations so as to have concrete evidence that the program was responsible for the impact and progress made. The MIF will be publishing a review of its youth employment portfolio, according to Ms. Nawar which will be important in helping define its youth agenda.

**Susan Pezzullo** emphasized the importance of reaching the highest level of rigor possible when developing an evidence base. She posited that organizations can learn from all types of information and whenever possible we should try to combine qualitative and quantitative methods. IYF has tried, wherever possible, according to Ms. Pezzullo to do controlled studies however lots of management and program design issues have forced her foundation to abandon impact studies and rely on good pre to ex post studies combined with employer interviewers. She explained, "When we started *entra21* all of the partners had very weak monitoring and evaluation systems. Over time we've built their capacity and they now are using reliable data to make decisions and improve their programs...that's progress." She also acknowledged we need to be intentional in using data to communicate with our key audiences—starting with youth and their families and not just donors.

**Maria Laura Alzua** who is conducting an impact study of an *entra21* project in Argentina, said among the challenges they faced was the sample size – which was smaller than ideal because of higher than expected attrition; and the fact that the project was being implemented in collaboration with the government – and those negotiations caused delays. There are also significant challenges with creating and managing control groups including: 1) attrition (she cautioned the audience to create the sample with that in mind and start with as big a sample as you can); 2) contamination [the longer you follow a control group the bigger the chance that the results are affected by what else they do during the time you are tracking them]; and 3) doing randomization in cases where the government is sensitive to turning away youth and making sure communications are clear—however she noted it also means selection is by lottery so it's more transparent.

**Mattias Lundberg** offered insights based on his work in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. He noted, for example, that while people have raised ethical questions around use of control groups, that one way to address that is to roll out your program over time, ensuring that control group members eventually benefit. Among the learnings he has identified over the past few years: 1) Monitoring is essential; you have to know what you are producing; 2) you need to move beyond learning whether the program works or doesn't work to know why – the pedagogy, methods, response effects, and length of treatments; and 3) we may need to design programs specifically for those who would normally drop out – and the learning can inform that. Mr. Lundberg also suggested additional resources on this topic, including World Bank studies and 3IE – a clearinghouse for methods, tools, protocols and funding ([www.3ieimpact.org](http://www.3ieimpact.org)).

### **10:45-11:00 am: Reflections and Commentaries from Concurrent Sessions**

**Panelists:** Maxsalia Salmon, Youth Leader, Co-Founder ML&LN Foundation for Aspiring Youth, Jamaica; Luis Mendoza, Youth Leader, Youth Liaison, Pacto por Juarez, Mexico; Cristina Ramirez, Youth Leader, Juventud Agraria Rural 7 Católica del Peru.

Acting as journalists reporting live from CNN, these youth leaders gave a creative “report out” on the morning sessions. Among their observations: we need to redefine youth who are at risk; how discouraging it is that young people who do stay in school still don't get jobs and how important it is to promote job-related skills in school; and the need to engage young people in the design of these programs.



Cristina Ramirez “reports out” on the conference.

11:00 am – 12:30 pm

## Plenary Session: Overcoming Barriers for Harder to Hire Youth to Become More Employable



Panelists, from left to right: Martin Dellavedova, Mario Rivera, Mark Hannafin

**Agenda:** Looking at the experience of *entra21* Phase II, this session examined whether, in fact, the youth targeted were “harder to hire” and whether through second chance programs they became more employable.

**Panelists:** Martin Dellavedova, Director, Monitoring and Evaluation Systems, Argentina; Mario Rivera, Director, Asociacion Promotora de Institutos Tecnologicos Superiores (TECSUP), Peru; Mark Hannafin, Director and Senior Conflict Advisor, Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation, USAID; **Moderator:** Wendy Cunningham, Director, Youth Unit, World Bank.

**Discussion:** To start off the discussion, **Wendy Cunningham** provided a brief slide show describing “harder to hire youth” – and the many categories of challenges they face. They have difficulty joining the workforce, she said, because they have less experience, less knowledge, and fewer resources. Ms. Cunningham showed a drawing of the “ideal” path from school to work – a straight line compared to the “actual” path – a maze of complex arrows going in all directions. “These harder to hire youth have an especially tough time in this transition, given household duties, few opportunities for jobs particularly in rural areas, and physical attributes, such as tattoos – that scare off employers.”

**Mario Rivera**, speaking from his organization’s experience implementing an *entra21* project working with school drop outs, identified some key components of a successful program for vulnerable youth: 1) that it is business oriented; 2) follow up with youth after graduation; 3) improved methods adopted from previous experiences. Among some of the changes made in the program to address the more harder to hire youth: curtailed the hours of training so they had time to study; a lot of flexibility from the outset; going to young people’s homes and meeting with their parents to get them on board with the program; a range of support systems such as mentors, social workers, psychological support. The biggest outcome is enhanced employability – their lives are changed forever.

**Martin Dellavedova**, whose comments were based on the findings and learnings from a study he conducted commissioned by *entra21*, highlighted the social benefits of second chance programs on youth at risk, such as an

increased desire to work; rise in self esteem; young people able to take charge of their lives; the resumption of studying; increased social interaction; and improved parent/child relationships. He said after the training many more youth would not give in to negative peer pressure and would seek out better alternatives on their own. The study also confirmed that the youth at risk enrolled in the *entra21* projects studied were in fact “harder to hire.” Panelists agreed that mentorship for this group was essential; as was life skills training. Partnering with parents was also seen as a key ingredient for success.

**Mark Hannafin** noted this Conference came at a particularly useful time, when USAID was developing a youth policy to help guide its approaches and investments in the years ahead. “We want to make sure we can get our best ideas coming out from organizations like IYF and its partners,” he said, adding that USAID wants to work cross sectorally on youth issues. “So this is very advantageous for me to hear these discussions,” he said. USAID hopes to work directly with NGOs working with at risk youth – not through intermediaries, and recognizes the need to work with the communities that surround these youth. “It does take a village,” he said, “to raise a child.” Mr. Hannafin also underscored the need to engage youth in the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of these programs. “They need to be at the forefront” of the process.



## 2:00-3:30 pm Concurrent Sessions:

### Session 4: Pathways to Scale – Lessons from *entra21*



Panelists, from left to right: Norma Añaños, Clara Ines Restrepo, Elena Heredero

**Agenda:** This session looked at how under *entra21*/Phase II civil society organizations formed partnerships with their respective governments—at the municipal, state or national level-- to scale up best practices aimed at improving youths' employability. Experiences from Peru, Colombia and Chile were shared.

**Panelists:** Clara Ines Restrepo, Deputy Director, *entra21*, IYF; Norma Añaños, Executive Director, Centro de Servicios para la Capacitación Laboral y el Desarrollo, Perú; Marcelo Pizarro, Director, Hexágono, Chile; **Moderator:** Elena Heredero, Senior Specialist, MIF

**Discussion:** Highlights of this session included the need to identify incentives for the private sector to get actively involved in youth employment programs and scale them up; we can't address youth employment issues without looking at deficits in the content and delivery of the education system; we need to help the public sector see the added benefits of this alliance-based approach and help them secure resources from the private sector to scale up successful programs. When scaling a central theme is the planning for the transfer process which is a technical action and a political process if you want to permanently institutionalize the new service or program. So involving the partner from the design is key to ensure appropriation and sustainability.

**Marcelo Pizarro** described the study he conducted of *entra21* Phase II's scaling up efforts. Among key lessons learned: the linkages for scaling up with and through the public sector are facilitated if the NGOs bring to the table prestige and expertise, access to local and international networks, as well as additional funding for important activities that are usually not covered by their budget execution rules. It is also important to show the public sector that NGOs have strong ties to the private sector, given that, in the scale projects studied, the value added to major government programs was the job placement aspect of the program. Additionally, the study found that, since the size of the grants IYF provided to NGOs implementing these scale projects were very small compared to the large investments of the governments with whom they were working. Having a champion within government was important in helping public sector partners to appreciate the value that NGOs add, namely know-how and technical expertise in youth employability.

**Norma Añaños** joined the conversation indicating that her organization's current experience under *entra21* scaling successful practices from urban to rural areas has left them a number of questions including: how do you transfer to the rural areas an essentially urban experience? But the experience has also left them good lessons: when transferring methodologies and products to a greater scale four conditions need to be met: they should be efficient; transparent; sustainable; and of quality.

**Clara Ines Restrepo** talked about *entra21*'s experience in Medellin, Colombia to scale a project implemented in previous phase of the program. A major positive factor: a mayor who saw that we could prove the effectiveness of our program and who became a champion for the scale up and provided significant resources to do it. The challenge: a change in government has made our work more difficult. She also said that working on a much larger scale offered other challenges, and we didn't plan the scale up the way we do now. "We need to enhance our lobbying, outreach, and negotiating skills, and plan better for the transfer of those good practices and models we want governments to scale" she said.

## Session 5: Helping Youth Associated with Violence Reintegrate into Community Life

**Agenda:** Panelists drew from their experiences in helping youth make the transition from violence to positive engagement so they can take full advantage of second chance employability programs such as Obra and *entra21*.

**Panelists:** Padre Jose Mantecón, Executive Director, Red de Niños, Adolescentes y Jóvenes (RedNAJ) Peru; Claudette Richardson-Pious, Executive Director, Children First Agency, Jamaica; Mauricio Figueroa, Executive Director, Fundacion Quetzalcoatl, El Salvador; **Moderator:** Paloma Adams-Allen, Senior Advisor, Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, USAID.

**Discussion:** Violence has become the norm across Latin America and the Caribbean, noted **Paloma Adams-Allen** at the beginning of the session, and needs to be a priority for government, the private sector, and civil society. She asked each panelist to share what they have been doing and learning around this issue. **Claudette Richardson-Pious** said that murders, gang violence, violence against children, women and girls, homicides, rapes and shooting are part of life in Jamaica. While the flow of violence is reportedly decreasing, there continues to be a lot of violence especially where drugs, guns and recruitment of youth combine. **Mauricio Figueroa** underscored that the region of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador is characterized as the most violent region in the world, with violence closely linked with organized crime and youth gangs. Both victims and perpetrators are primarily youth between the ages of 15 and 34. The challenge in Peru, says **Padre Mantecón**, is that the violence is linked to years of political violence and lack of opportunities.

In all three countries, the *entra21* or Obra programs are being implemented in areas where youth are living these realities, and where profiles of at-risk youth tend to be similar. The three panelists agreed that having a comprehensive youth program is essential to success, and should include life skills and psycho-social support. However, they also agreed it is important to adjust the programs to local circumstances and the needs of the particular group. Other key elements include long term interventions, providing personal and group support and facilitating connections/re-connections to the larger community. In his closing remarks, Mr. Figueroa said: “Employment for youth can sometimes mean the difference between living or dying; between being a victim and being a protagonist in charge of their own lives.”

A question was asked how programs to help such youth could expect to compete with drugs in attracting youth out of the drug trade and into a job, a licit livelihood. Mr. Figueroa answered that it most often is a change in someone’s life – he has a child, she falls in love, he gets tired of that lifestyle – that produces the change. Also, many feel trapped in the gang lifestyle – they cannot leave their small home base for fear of being targeted by rival gangs – and freedom from that comes at a cost that many are willing to pay.

## Session 6: Role of Technology in Helping Youth at Risk Gain Access to Information, Skills and Technology

**Agenda:** This panel discussed how to adapt and apply lessons learned through practice and research to ensure technologies are used more effectively in equipping youth with critical skills and knowledge to make a successful transition to work.

**Panelists:** Troy Etulain, Senior Advisor for Media Development, USAID; Javier Lasida, Director, Department of Education Management and Policies, Catholic University of Uruguay; Marco Castillo, Executive Director, Grupo CEIBA, Guatemala; **Moderator:** Chris Coward, Director of Technology & Social Change Group, Information School, University of Washington.

**Discussion:** **Javier Lasida** shared key findings from a study commissioned by IYF of three *entra21* projects in Chile, Colombia and Ecuador: 1) Facebook was the best tool for youth and project staff to share feedback and provide information on internships and job opportunities because cell phones are unreliable (Ecuador); 2) technology allowed youth to learn at their own pace (Colombia) however in the case of Ecuador where youth had less education than Colombia, youth needed more time with instructors and were less able to learn through digital tools; 3) on line portfolios (*portafolio virtual*) allowed youth to create a dossier with their resume, certifications, recommendation letters, etc. facilitated contact with potential employers (Chile).

Among panelists, there was agreement that ICT motivates youth, meets the needs of employers and helps youth hold a job because they are computer literate and can communicate with others. **Marco Castillo**, who works with high risk youth and former gang members in Guatemala, said he put computers in 17 poor communities and not one of them was stolen – because youth recognize technology helps them move up in society. **Chris Coward** called technology “the 21<sup>st</sup> century’s soccer ball” - a hook to get young people involved. It also allows youth to work at their own pace online, and when the internet is not available, CDs can be the alternative so they can continue learning. **Troy Etulain** added that USAID provides a program that trains people in Microsoft programs – to increase access to unconnected areas. It is not only training students but also connecting them with people of similar interests and experiences. He cited examples of technology connecting people living with HIV/AIDS to form a mutual moral support group allowing youth in Afghanistan to participate in online exchanges.

Questions from participants expressed concerns about potential negative effects of technology, such as the loss of face-to-face contact and the loss of spelling competency. Mr. Lasida cautioned participants not to replace too many elements of the training process with technology, expressing that “face-to-face contact is irreplaceable.” Technology complements face-to-face interactions essential to youth employability programs, such as job counseling and mock interviews. As for the youth’s use of acronyms and abbreviations in text messages and social media, Mr. Castillo pointed out that this is today’s youth language; young people created their own “language” even before social networks, and adults complained about not understanding it then. Education and training programs need to reinforce youth’s spelling and reading skills, but adults should not expect that this will prevent young people to continue communicating in this way.

#### 4:00-4:50 pm Closing Remarks: Where do We Go From Here?



Youth delegation after providing closing remarks.

**Participants:** Juana Barrera, Youth Leader, DEMOS, Guatemala; Guillermo Asiain, Youth Leader, Todo Somos Juarez, Mexico; Fernando Jimenez-Ontiveros, Deputy Manager, MIF, IDB; William S. Reese, President and CEO, IYF.

**Juana Barrera** said she and the other youth leaders were grateful for the opportunity to participate in the conference and felt proud to be representing all the young people who many of the participants worked with every day. As much as she learned from listening to the conference proceedings, she noted there was not enough talk about gender issues. “Do you think this is no longer a problem? Yes it is!” Juana said she hoped issues of gender discrimination -- particularly against young girls – would be on the agenda in the future.

**Guillermo Asiain** thanked the group and the IYF team for giving them the chance to be part of the discussion and make recommendations. Youth need “great warriors” like this group who are willing to support young people around the world. Underscoring the need for cooperation and coordination among all stakeholders, he said: “We need to share the road” to progress.

“I feel like family here. We’ve been partners with IYF and many of you for so many years,” said **Fernando Jimenez-Ontiveros**. He was particularly pleased that the youth leaders were such a vital part of the conference. “We all need good translators to explain what we are doing, and there is nothing more attractive than when young people talk with their peers and share what they know,” he said. “Youth must be protagonists and need to participate in developing the solutions.” He affirmed that youth development is a “priority” for the MIF and the IDB, and reflected on the need to keep these conversations alive so we can all help shape “a new generation of projects” with IYF and all of you.

Wrapping up, **William Reese** recalled one of the first IYF partner meetings held in Oaxaca, Mexico, and the resulting brainstorming meeting with the MIF in DC that would help define and launch the *entra21* program. “We all recognized the dignity, liberty, autonomy, and freedom that come with a job,” he said. “This has been a rich

conversation over the past two days,” he said, urging participants to continue to share learnings among our partners and beyond our network. “I also want to recognize and validate the work of our young leaders here today, whose contributions are proof positive that their voices are needed. “Without you,” said Mr. Reese, “we simply can’t make the right decisions.”