

THE INITIATIVE: OBRA

Obra is a two-year public–private partnership that ensures youth at risk are gaining increased access to services and programs they need to learn, work and lead. The program was developed in response to U.S. President Obama’s 2009 Summit of the Americas call for renewed and strengthened partnerships that promote greater opportunities among the region’s youth. Currently, *Obra* has three sub-regional partnerships, with hubs in Guatemala, Jamaica, and Peru.

OBRA’S MISSION IS TO:

1. Mobilize

- *Convene* leaders of civil society, public and private sector institutions to exchange information and work together in new ways across countries and regions, through exchanges, project site visits, workshops, learning events, and through the use of facebook, twitter and other social media.
- *Identify* “what works” in education and employment across Latin America and the Caribbean, document it, and make key information on such “best and promising practices” publicly available.

2. Innovate

- *Replicate* innovative ideas and strategies, bringing to scale the most promising programs in collaboration with governments.
- *Support* joint projects between public, private and civil society organizations — leveraging relationships, resources and expertise.
- *Deliver* high quality services to youth such as remedial education, technical and life skills training, internships, career placement support and access to professional opportunities.

3. Advocate

- *Raise* awareness on key issues such as quality education and employment, highlighting the value of youth as creative “change agents.”
- *Amplify* the voices of young people in policy dialogue and public debates.
- *Promote* public policies that prioritize youth and ensure better coordination of public services and programs.

BECAUSE OF OBRA

- All 11 Peruvian presidential candidates running in the recent 2011 election declared — on videos made public via the internet — how they would prioritize and expand support to youth, increasing the public debate and hopefully influencing president-elect Humala’s mandate as he takes office.
- Over 700 young people have received training and over 50 youth organizations and networks have joined together in a commitment to reduce violence in Guatemala.
- Over 1,000 at-risk Jamaican youth have received training in professional skills leading to internships and job opportunities.
- Over US\$ 3.5M has been leveraged in new commitments from diverse sources including the Australian government, the Bank of Nova Scotia, Citibank, and civil society organizations and businesses across the region.

CASE STUDIES

Caribbean/Jamaica

YUTE (Youth Upliftment Through Employment) is an *Obra*-inspired program created by the Caribbean Secretariat organization, Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica (PSOJ), to build on that partnership as well as its 200+ business member base, and create 2,200 decent jobs for at risk youth by 2013. Already, PSOJ is expanding the *Obra* innovation projects launched in 2010 which focus on youth skills-building, career support, entrepreneurship, remedial education and key life skills that include leadership and conflict resolution.

Central America/Guatemala

Civil society, government and private sector partners are directing their efforts toward building a National Agenda for Youth. That agenda seeks to positively change the perception (and self-image) of at-risk youth, generate healthy dialogue and consensus around key priorities for young people, sustain effective programs, and strengthen government services for out-of-school youth. The Secretariat, Instituto DEMOS, and other partners are also using their collective political capital with ministry and business leaders to push for such reforms — and have already influenced Guatemala's President to recently declare that his government will be taking steps to increase the sustainability of successful youth programs. The upcoming national elections are a valuable opportunity for the *Obra* partnership to engage candidates, obtain public commitments on youth issues and build new consensus among emerging leaders.

South America/Peru

This *Obra* partnership is focused on advocating with government leaders to improve coordination among youth-serving government ministries such as Education, Health, and Labor. The partnership, led by the civil society organization CEDRO, is strengthening and expanding a mapping process by the National Secretariat for Youth to chart out youth-related public services and facilitate increased communication between government agencies, with the aim of improving quality and coverage. It is also highlighting youth success stories and project ideas that have proved effective and is working to strengthen the network of NGOs providing youth services. In addition, *Obra* is creating a local fund to engage the public, private and civil society sectors to work jointly in identifying “what works” and then replicating promising initiatives and scaling them up.

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