



ENTRA 21

International Youth Foundation

Entra 21¹

Region	Global
Country	Argentina, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, Uruguay, Venezuela
Organization	International Youth Foundation (IYF)
Name	Entra 21
Category	Skills development
Start date	2001
End date	2011
Partners	Agencia para el Desarrollo Económico de Córdoba, Asociación Chilena pro Naciones Unidas, Centro Asesor para el Desarrollo de los Recursos Humanos de Honduras, Centro de Servicios para la Capacitación Laboral y el Desarrollo CAPLAB, Centro del Información y Recursos para el Desarrollo, Comfenalco Antioquia, Consejo del Sector Privado para la Asistencia Educativa, Fundación Chile, Fundación E-dúcate, Fundación Grupo Esquel, Fundación Indufrial, Fundación Leon 2000, Fundación Luker, Fundación Para la Infancia y la Juventud - Oportúunitas, Fundación Pescar Argentina, Fundación Sur Futuro, Fundación Sustentabilidad, Educacion, Solidaridad, Instituto Aliança com o Adolescente, Servicio de Promoción Integral Comunitario Juvenil, Tecsup
UN involvement	Non-UN
Contact	Susan Pezzullo; Regional, Director Latin America and the Caribbean s.pezzullo@iyfnet.org; +1 410 951 1500

1. Background and description²

From 2001 until 2011, the International Youth Foundation (IYF) implemented 'Entra 21', a programme which emerged in response to the increased rates of unemployed and underemployed youth in Latin America. More than half the population of Latin America and the Caribbean is under age 24 years and youth unemployment rates are on the rise in most countries in the region. On average, young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. This statistic, however, masks the even larger problem of low-wage

¹ Desk Review (May-September 2014); Inquiry Form (3 November 2014); Interview (19 November 2014); Write up (3 December 2014); Internal Validation (16 December-19 December 2014); Implementer validation (29 December 2014); Final validation (October 2015).

² Interview with Clara Ines Restrepo, 28 June 2014.



work performed by youth in the informal economy, a problem that is especially prevalent among the region's poorest families. Existing educational systems are failing to provide youth with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in a fast-changing marketplace. Businesses, on the other hand, have a growing need for workers equipped with the technical skills to contribute to the region's growing economy. Growing social issues such as HIV/AIDS and the increasing prevalence of drug use and crime only add to the challenges facing the region's youth.

Consequently, Entra 21 provided disadvantaged youth aged 16-29 years with employment training and job placement services to increase their employability. The programme was launched in 2001 with support from the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF) of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The Entra 21 model features: comprehensive training in life and technical skills as dictated by the needs of the labour market; internships for youth entrepreneurs (lasting from 80 to 357 hours, mainly in IT and business); job placement services and access to business advice and financing for entrepreneurs; and the active involvement of employers in the programme's design and execution. After a successful first phase (2001-2006), the programme was implemented in a second phase (2007-2011) and expanded to operate on a larger scale. This second phase included more vulnerable at-risk youth and youth from rural areas. The youth received training over a period of five to nine months in an IT-related technical area, life- and job-seeking skills, followed by an internship. Some youth received remedial training in basic skills and management of their own micro-enterprises.

Organization profile

The IYF was founded in 1990 "to prepare young people to be healthy, productive, and engaged citizens". IYF operates by building, from the ground up, an international network of organizations all working to ensure that youth anywhere on the globe can receive a quality education, learn the skills needed to get a job and ultimately become engaged in their communities.³ Based on the IYF mission and vision, hundreds of programmes have been funded to serve youth development-related organizations worldwide.⁴ Since 1990, IYF has mobilized over \$200 million to expand opportunities for the world's youth by helping to fund programmes and partnerships with 472 youth-serving organizations worldwide.



3 IYF Website: <http://www.iyfnet.org/iyf-history>

4 IYF Website: <http://www.iyfnet.org/iyf-programs>



2. Goal and objectives

2.1. Goal⁵

To combat the growing youth unemployment rates in the region by ensuring that more youth have access to the skills and knowledge necessary to find productive jobs and succeed in the workplace.

2.2. Objectives⁶

The programme had several phases, each with its own specific objectives:

Phase I:

- To provide 12,000 disadvantaged youth (16-29 years) in Latin America and the Caribbean with employment training and job placement services so that at least 40 per cent secure decent jobs and increase their employability.

Phase II:

- To train 50,000 youth and place 50 per cent of them in high-quality jobs in the formal sector by scaling up proven programmes.
- Adapt the Entra 21 model to reach highly vulnerable groups such as rural youth, potential gang members and displaced persons, and place at least 40 per cent of them in formal sector jobs or in rural enterprises.
- Carry out a rigorous learning agenda and evaluation of all programme activities in order to demonstrate impact, share learning, engage policymakers and disseminate results to business and government leaders.

3. Target group

3.1. Age group⁷

The programme benefited youth aged 16 to 29 years who were unemployed, underemployed, lacked the skills to participate in the increasingly service-oriented economy or were unable to successfully initiate and sustain small business enterprises.

3.2. Gender considerations⁸

The programme aimed to address males and females equally, although in the Caribbean, special attention was given to male youth because they were very hard to reach. Males in the Caribbean had much

higher rates of not completing secondary school, incarceration and other 'harder to hire' factors. One project in Saint Lucia worked directly with the Government to target incarcerated youths or those on remand. Others went directly to the neighbourhoods where the young men were hanging out to try to convince them to become involved in the project.

Overall, the programme succeeded in enrolling nearly equal percentages of males (46 per cent) and females (54 per cent).

3.3. Ethnic / disability considerations

Although persons with disabilities were included in the programme, they received no special consideration. However, a project that

⁵ International Youth Foundation, 2014.

⁶ Interview with Clara Ines Restrepo, 28 June 2014.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

specifically targeted youth with disabilities (CIRD in Paraguay) did tailor the training to the individual needs of the youth and the disability. Ethnic considerations were considered in certain contexts.

3.4. Targeting the most marginalized / most at risk ⁹

The programme was unique in having worked with disadvantaged youth in a wide range of organizational and economic contexts. In addition to addressing youth from low-income households, the programme targeted youth with additional risk factors that typically barred them from quality employment, such as having a disability, gang involvement, being single mothers or living in rural areas. In Saint Lucia, for example, the project included youth who were incarcerated and on probation.

3.5. Human rights programming

Through Entra 21, IYF promoted human rights and the dignity of adolescents and young adults by providing youth with quality and comprehensive services, ensuring that these services were youth-friendly (by allowing the youth to take part in the design) and by working with the most marginalized.¹⁰

3.6. Youth involvement

Youth were at the centre of all the initiatives. During the proposal development process, youth were involved in identifying their needs and designing the programme as one group of key stakeholders. During implementation, they were involved in different activities including skills expos, where youth showcase their skills (through internships) to the communities, and

volunteer activities. The projects used social media to build peer-to-peer support and connections.

Youth were consulted but were not responsible for carrying out the needs assessments. No specific evaluation was conducted regarding youth participation on the regional level, although certain project evaluations touched on this issue.

4. Strategy and Implementation

4.1. Strategies / theoretical approaches / methodologies

In order to prepare for the intervention, IYF undertook the following:

- Surveys of or interviews with businesses to determine what type of entry-level skills they were seeking and what, if any, issues they foresaw in hiring youth;
- Review of labour market studies or databases to learn about employment trends, where jobs were being created and what type of occupational areas were in greatest demand;
- Creation of an advisory group of business people and/or others who understood labour trends, to guide the executing agencies on how to research the market and use the data to plan programmes and stay current. Entra 21 worked with several executing agencies comprised of civil society organizations founded in their respective countries for a social or economic purpose. Of the 32 executing agencies, 30 were private, not-for-profit organizations and two were formal educational institutions, the University of Belize and the Institute of Agricultural Training in the Dominican Republic;

⁹ International Youth Foundation, 2014

¹⁰ International Youth Foundation, 2014

- Use of existing institutional capacity as training certification entities to design the training content to fit the requirements of the target population.

The strategies used to recruit the youth were:

- Selective channels: outreach to leaders of local community associations, churches, schools and civic organizations in a specific geographic area targeted by the project; tapping networks of schools and organizations known to the executing agency;
- Broader channels: use of mass media such as radio and TV spots and announcements in print media; posters or other materials at government employment offices; use of executing agency websites and others linked to job training; outreach to schools, NGO networks, etc..

The following is an example of a selection process used by COSPAE in Panama:

- Stage 1: Written application reviewed by COSPAE followed by a short orientation session for preselected applicants. Youth who expressed interest in the programme are invited to stage 2;
- Stage 2: Aptitude and personality tests administered (10 per cent and 40 per cent of total score respectively);
- Stage 3: Individual interviews with youth who passed stage 2 (50 per cent of total score);
- Stage 4: Youth with score of 70 or higher invited to enroll in the project. (Those who scored lower than 70 could re-apply for another training cycle or another course (other than Entra 21) with COSPAE.)

Preceding the recruitment, IYF would conduct the needs assessment in each

region and then collaborate with the national organizations (executing agencies) in each community to begin the stages of recruitment, implementation and evaluation. It is important to note that each executing agency customized the curriculum according to the community's market need and also tailored it to the beneficiaries' needs.

4.2. Activities

The training covered technical skills (generally IT/business skills), life skills, job-seeking skills and, in some cases, basic skills (literacy, mathematics), in addition to an internship which was part of the training.

Across Entra 21 projects, training cycles varied in duration from 154 hours to a maximum of 1,920 hours and were offered over a period of approximately 2-12 months. Internship hours are included in the calculation, as it is considered part of training. The length of training in terms of contact hours depended on a variety of factors, such as:

- The type of training provided, particularly for development of ICT skills, and the time needed to integrate life skills with technical training;
- Requirements imposed by employers regarding minimum internship hours;
- Certification requirements as set by the executing agencies;
- The youths' levels of education and marginality, the latter to be determined by looking at the additional risk factors that contributed to their not being able to successfully finish school and find a job, such as no secondary education, a disability, being a single mother, etc.

Phases I and II of Entra 21 and the Caribbean Youth Empowerment Program



(CYEP) (refer to replicability section) were implemented in 22 countries (59 projects). In Phase I (2001-2011), 'hard skills' (technical skills) constituted 46 per cent of total hours and 'softer' skills (job-seeking, life and basic skills) another 26 per cent, with internships accounting for 28 per cent of the time.

Because this programme concentrated mostly on improving IT and business skills, all students took a basic IT course after which they specialized according to their interests. However, the executing agencies had the right to redirect the youth to other courses or specializations if the youth were not suited for the specialization they preferred.¹¹

The following is an example of specializations in five different projects of Entra 21 :

The life skills most commonly developed across the 59 projects were:

- Creative thinking;
- Working in groups;
- Interpersonal communications;
- Self-confidence;
- Taking responsibility;
- Ethical behaviour;
- Personal hygiene/appearance for work;
- Conflict management.

Others included time management, personal health, gender awareness, workers' rights, citizenship skills and violence prevention. Additionally, all projects devoted part of the curriculum to developing youths' job-seeking skills (e.g., how to research job vacancies on the Internet, in newspapers and through job listings in government

offices; how to write a CV; and how to conduct themselves during an interview). Entra 21 offered the youth enrolled in classes job placement services which included:

- Setting up interviews, coaching youth on the interviews;
- Maintaining or linking with a database(s) on job listings and employers, assessing existing job banks;
- Providing youth with career counselling and individualized assistance in their job search, CV formatting, etc.;
- Conducting follow-up calls or instant messaging to see how their job searches were progressing;
- Providing a venue for job seekers to discuss problems, share experiences and gain support from other youth;
- Creating an online roster of youths' CVs.

4.3. Innovativeness





In tackling youth employability, Entra 21 uses a dual approach by taking into account the opinion of both the market and the youth regarding their employability.

4.4. Cost and funding

Overall, IYF received \$20 million from the MIF. IFY received an additional \$69 million from multiple corporations, foundations, and bi-laterals.

4.5. Sustainability

All executing agencies were required to contribute 25 per cent of the cost of the programme so they were not totally dependent on IYF, making institutionalization easier when the funding ended.

The countries (or more accurately projects) were selected due to their ability to respond to the call for proposal and where funding was available (donor interests).

At the conclusion of the programme (i.e., when funding ended), not all executing agencies were able to sustain the exact same projects. However, elements or methodologies learned during Entra 21 persist and a sustainable network of private and public sector stakeholders was created.

4.6. Replicability

The Caribbean Youth Empowerment Programme (CYEP)¹² was developed as an extension/replication of the Entra 21 programme from 2008 to 2013. The CYEP targets vulnerable youth (i.e., youth who have been subjected to poverty, low levels of education, teen parenthood and those with criminal records) aged 17-25 years, paying special attention to young males who are unemployed, underemployed and who lack the training, skills and experiences

desired by employers. CYEP offered these vulnerable youth opportunities to change the course of their lives by training them in a specific vocation develop entrepreneurial skills or receive in-depth career guidance. Participants received job training and placement services and were supported in serving as positive agents of change in their communities. Youth had an opportunity to choose from a different array of tracks:

- Vocational track: training for entry-level jobs in specific vocations, e.g., computer maintenance and networking, beekeeping, fiberglass (boat) repair, construction, culinary arts and tourism;
- Entrepreneurial track: exploring self-employment by equipping youth with the skills to initiate and manage their own successful micro-enterprises. As their peers undertook internships and sought formal employment, entrepreneurial youth learned how to develop successful business plans and identify resources for financing, and received business support to operate and grow their enterprises.

In addition to the above, youth who enrolled in the vocational or entrepreneurial tracks received remedial education to ensure that they had sufficient proficiency in language and math skills. Because computer use is part of nearly every job, CYEP youth also received computer literacy training, including in Microsoft Office applications. Other support services, such as assistance with child care and transportation, aimed to remove barriers to completing the programme.

- Career guidance: Youth who enrolled in this track were encouraged to pursue



their interests, talents and dreams. They received clear information about local job markets and viable opportunities to earn their livelihoods through vocational or entrepreneurial activities. Youth in this track learned how to plan for the future: they developed a career plan, including any education or training needed to qualify for their chosen careers, and they were assisted in taking their next steps.

5. Evaluation of effectiveness¹³

An evaluation plan was decided upon before the start of the intervention and was conducted by locally based, independent evaluators who used an evaluation guide and standardized questionnaire developed by IYF for the programme. Project evaluations were based on one cohort or graduating class and not all of the youth who went through a project, due to cost and time constraints. The evaluators used baseline and exit data, captured by each project through standardized questionnaires, and compared changes in employment status, job quality and educational outcomes. Overall, employment rates were 14 points higher than expected. More detailed results can be found below.

As mentioned above, Entra 21 took place into two phases, with Phase 1 acting as a pilot phase to assess and evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes and see what could be improved or amended for Phase 2.

During Phase I (2001-2007), the programme exceeded all target objectives:

- More than 19,600 youth benefited from the comprehensive training and job placement services;
- Job placement rates averaged 54 per

cent across 35 projects, with the number of youth who re-enrolled in formal education nearly doubling;

- The majority of employers surveyed rated the graduates they hired as having better than average competencies in a variety of areas. Such areas could be their technical skills, IT skills, how they worked with others in the workplace, etc..
- Follow-up studies were completed for the 24 projects supported under Phase II, of which three included control groups to assess impact. Most of these studies were results-based follow-up evaluations, conducted six to nine months after youth graduated from the programme. A random sample of youth was interviewed by an external evaluator hired locally to collect and analyse the data. A few projects had impact evaluations, although due to the very specific target populations, this was not always feasible.

During Phase II (2008-2011), the programme met the following objectives:

- Over 116,000 disadvantaged youth enrolled in the programme in 18 countries; of those, 95 per cent completed their training cycle, which included classroom instruction and an internship;
- Job placement rates averaged 42 per cent, and projects specifically working with the harder-to-hire youth exceeded their targets, with 48 per cent employed six months after graduation;
- Projects that worked at a greater scale, in terms of objectives to be met, increased activities and the inclusion of rural and at-risk youth, faced increased challenges in placing youth in quality jobs due to the



economic crisis, changes in government and natural disasters; the average rate of employment was 41 per cent.

- The continuation programme, CYEP (2008-2013), also underwent a process evaluation:
- The programme exceeded its target of 2,200 by reaching 2,644 young men and women through technical, vocational/ entrepreneurship and life-skills training needed to build their marketable assets and secure livelihoods;
- External follow-up studies conducted six to nine months after graduation showed that, on average, 49 per cent of CYEP youth were working or studying;
- With a baseline of 20 per cent, an average of 35 per cent of graduates were employed at the time of the evaluations (across all countries and through two phases), with some countries showing employment rates as high as 60 per cent. These numbers were dependent on a number of factors including the seasonal nature of many of the jobs in the Caribbean, the economic crisis, etc.;
- The seasonal nature of employment in the tourism/hospitality sector, one of the main areas to offer employment opportunities, affected employment results for the vocational training graduates surveyed during the low season. Among those working, 84 per cent were in wage jobs and 16 per cent were self-employed.

The evaluation data were disaggregated by sex, age, geographic region and socioeconomic status. With this disaggregation, the results showed that there were differences across the projects in how well females and males did with

regard to job placement. For example, in Phase I of Entra 21, none of the youth in Panama were working at baseline but by the time they were surveyed, 70.6 per cent of the males were working, compared to only 39.4 per cent of the females. In the Dominican Republic, on the other hand, females did slightly better than males. Explanations about why males and females fared differently were, in general, very project-specific. Therefore it is not feasible to provide an accurate explanation for why this occurred overall.

6. Strengths and opportunities

- The utilization of the market data in order to customize the curricula according to the needs of the market;
- Maximization of the number of national entities involved in the implementation and design of the project;
- The ability of the programme to control dropout rates by:
- Careful selection processes that gauged youth's motivation and aptitudes;
- Provision of stipends to defray the costs of transportation, food and other expenses;
- Personalized attention for youth who showed signs of problems (missing classes, not completing work, family issues);
- Course content that matched youths' interests.

7. Challenges

Implementation:

- Translating the information from English into Spanish. IYF worked with the executing agencies in their native languages, primarily Spanish, although Portuguese and English were used for particular projects.

Evaluation:

- Most of the partners did not implement any monitoring and evaluation techniques prior to participating in Entra 21.
- Electronic systems were challenging as all the forms were online. Executing agency staff interviewed the youth using paper forms and uploaded the data.

8. Next steps and the way forward

New Employment Opportunities (NEO), a 10-year initiative launched in 2012, as well as other donors, leverage the unique knowledge and experience from the Entra 21 programme and collaborates with the MIF and IDB to generate knowledge and influence practice and policy in 10 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The NEO operates in 10 countries in the region. Learning from Entra 21 has already been shared outside of the region.

9. Lessons learned and recommendations

- Improve the capacity and quality of the service providers prior to the implementation of the programme;
- Have public alliances instead of a single implementing partner to deliver the services, to work at greater scale and have more impact;

- An internship is the key to job placement. Youth have a better chance to get a job at the same site where they do the internship. However, not all working youth were employed by their internship providers. Of the youth who were working at follow-up, 36 per cent were employed by the same firms in which they had served their internships;
- Assess the economy and needs of the market, in order to place the youth at risk in a job that would be suitable for them.¹⁵

10. Components to consider for scale-up in MENA

- The model as it addresses employability is relevant to the MENA context: scaling up through the transfer of a model from one city to another is possible; however, it took much longer than anticipated to create the systems, capacity and relationships for a successful transfer.

With regard to these systems, executing agencies needed to work closely with other stakeholders such as the government to work at scale. In order to do so effectively and ensure cooperation, systems needed to be put into place. Capacity refers to the resources available which allowed the programme to work with 500 to 5,000 youth;

- Aspect of the Entra 21 model are already in place in MENA, e.g., the Youth for the Future in Jordan.
- The creation of a network comprised of civil society organizations, training centres, private sector entities and businesses facilitating the training and transfer of the model.

¹⁴ <http://iyfnet.org/neo>

¹⁵ Restrepo (2014).



11. Resources

- Final Report of the Entra 21 programme Phase I: 2001-2007, 2009;
- Market survey and youth assessment tools;
- Aptitude and personality tests administered;
- Executing agencies' curricula

All public information is available in the IYF library (iyfnet.org).

12. References

Inquiry form received by IYF on 3 November 2014

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