

# REGIONAL SEMINAR: “ADDRESSING THE EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES OF CARIBBEAN YOUTH IN TIMES OF CRISIS”

Organized by the Commonwealth Youth  
Programme Caribbean Centre

Hosted by the Government of Saint Lucia

With technical support of  
The ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the  
Caribbean

29-31 March 2012.

***FINAL  
REPORT***

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## **1. Introduction**

“*Addressing youth employment challenges in times of crisis*”, the theme of a regional Seminar organized by the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre (CYPCC), hosted by the Government of Saint Lucia and with technical support provided by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), is relevant to the challenging youth employment landscape from an international, regional and national perspective. The Seminar provided participating Governments, youth networks, Trade Unions, Employers Organizations and other relevant stakeholders with a priceless opportunity to reflect on pertinent issues related to the global, regional and national youth employment landscape with particular focus on the formulation of viable youth employment policies.

This report encapsulates the deliberations of the three day Seminar which took place during March 29 to 31, 2012 in Castries, Saint Lucia. The Report commences with an overview of the global economic and jobs crisis to highlight the global significance of issues related to youth employment and to assist in contextualizing the purpose of the Seminar. This is followed by a summary of the technical presentations and Seminar deliberations. Finally conclusions and recommendations are discussed.

## **2. Overview**

### **2.1 Global economic and jobs crisis**

The goal of sustainable employment remains a key development priority for member countries of the international community. In pursuance of this goal, Governments and other development partners have employed a multi-faceted menu of macro-economic and sustainable development strategies. However in 2008, the sudden collapse of some major financial interests in the United States spiraled into a global financial crisis which proceeded to plunge the world into a global economic and jobs crisis. The crisis spread rapidly across the globe, crippling economies, reducing enterprise capacities, and forcing millions of people out of work. In addition, many workers have fallen into more vulnerable forms of employment which in turn has worsened decent work deficits, precarious employment situations have swollen and the ranks of the working poor have increased.<sup>1</sup>

A critical element of the global jobs crisis is the struggle of young people to enter and remain in the labour market. Globally, young people are three times more likely than adults to be out of a job. For those who do have a job, the quality of jobs is often an issue. According to ILO estimates, of the total of 200 million people unemployed worldwide, 75 million, or about 40 percent, are young people. If the estimated 152 million young people living on less than USD1.25 per day were added, the number of youth in an extremely vulnerable situation would be 225 million. The global youth unemployment rate, at 12.7 per cent, remains a full percentage point higher than the pre-crisis level. The 2012 Global Employment Trends Report estimates 6.4 million young people have given up hope of finding a job and have dropped out of the labour market altogether. Even those young people who are employed are increasingly likely to find

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<sup>1</sup> 2010 ILO Global Employment Trends Report

themselves in part-time employment and often on temporary contracts. In developing countries, youth are disproportionately among the working poor. As the number and share of unemployed youth is projected to remain essentially unchanged in 2012, and as the share of young people withdrawing from the labour market altogether continues to rise, on the present course there is little hope for a substantial improvement in near-term employment prospects for young people.<sup>2</sup>

## **2.2 The Caribbean experience**

Expectedly the Caribbean like many other regions of the Commonwealth has been severely impacted by this pervasive global economic and jobs crisis. Similarly, young people in the Caribbean have been the ones most affected. It is reported that by the end of the first half of the previous decennium the favourable economic and employment growth rates the Caribbean region enjoyed since the mid-nineties tapered off. This slowdown was exacerbated by the Global Financial and Economic crisis which started in late 2008. Its impact was clearly felt as job growth stalled and unemployment rates in the region increased.

The Caribbean economies mirrored the performance of Europe and the USA, economies they are closely linked to. The economic and job recovery after the 2009 crisis has been fragile and slow especially in the tourism based Caribbean economies which depend on purchasing power in particularly Europe and the USA. As the fiscal space of a number of Caribbean Governments was exhausted in 2010, economic stimulus measures had to be discontinued and austerity measures were put in place. Consequently the recovery of employment growth has been less robust as was expected and currently unemployment, especially of youth, is a major challenge. As a result young people in the Caribbean are facing higher unemployment levels than other age groups and those who succeed in finding work are often hired in entry level jobs or become active in the informal sector.<sup>3</sup>

## **2.3 Some positive consequences**

Amidst all the expressions of justifiable concerns regarding the crisis in global employment there were some positive developments. The world witnessed an unprecedented display of cooperation among the major global development institutions and indeed a flurry of high level meetings. Another was the heightened level of advocacy among young people and their networks. In commenting on the crisis, the then Managing Director of the IMF, Dominic Strauss-Khan is quoted as saying that “One of the biggest achievements to come out of this crisis was that, for the first time, we had extensive coordination among almost all countries.”<sup>4</sup>

## **2.4 Global action**

This was evident by the series of high level international meetings resulting in the adoption of a range of policy recommendations and initiatives. Between 2008 and 2009 the members of the Group of Twenty (G-20) held three special summits. The Washington Summit on Financial

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<sup>2</sup> 2012 ILO Global Employment Trends Report

<sup>3</sup> CYPCC Concept note for CYP/Saint Lucia Government/ILO 2012 Regional workshop on youth employment

<sup>4</sup> *IMF Survey Magazine* interview; see: <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/survey/so/2009/INT091809A.htm>.

Markets and the Global Economy in November 2008 was the first Leaders' meeting of the group to discuss economic policies and to address the 2008 global financial crisis. The result of this summit was the *Action plan to implement principles of reform*.<sup>5</sup> The London Summit to review the action plan followed in April 2009 and Leaders pledged "...our global plan for recovery must have at its heart the needs and jobs of hard-working families...we have therefore pledged to do whatever is necessary to restore confidence, growth and jobs..." in order to "...build an inclusive, green and sustainable recovery". Furthermore, the G-20 communiqué from the London Summit called "upon the ILO, working with other relevant organizations, to assess the actions taken and those required for the future" to address the impact of the economic crisis on labour markets.

The ILO has responded to the crisis with a vigorous advocacy campaign to focus the attention of its tri-partite constituents on the alarming impact of the global jobs crisis. At the 98<sup>th</sup> session of the International Labour Conference in June 2009 the tripartite constituents (governments, employers and workers) of the ILO's 183 member States adopted a resolution: *Recovering from the crisis: A Global Jobs Pact*.<sup>6</sup> The Global Jobs Pact mandated governments and other tri-partite constituents to collectively tackle the global jobs crisis through policies drawn from the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. The Pact recommended a fairer and sustainable globalization strategy, new global governance structures and more specifically an internationally agreed set of policy options designed as a guide to support national, regional and global action to stimulate economic recovery, generate jobs and social protection for working people and their families. Additionally the 2010 and 2012 Global Employment Trends Report has served as a useful advocacy and policy development tool for development partners.

## 2.5 The Commonwealth response

With many of its constituents being among the worst affected by the global economic and jobs crisis, the Commonwealth has been an active participant in and key contributor to global efforts aimed at addressing the crisis. At the 2009 Heads of Government meeting in Port of Spain, the Heads noted with concern "that the global financial and economic crisis is having significant negative effects on small states in trade, aid, tourism and remittances and that the crisis has exacerbated the challenges already faced by these countries by deepening unemployment and creating budgetary pressure in crucial social sectors."<sup>7</sup>

At the 2011 CHOGM in Perth Australia the Heads of Government re-affirmed their commitment to *Working together and with global partners to secure the global economic recovery and ensure a stronger, more sustainable and balanced global economic system that will benefit all Commonwealth countries*, and in this regard urged the G20 to take the necessary steps to address current economic instability and to take concrete steps to put open trade, jobs, social protection and economic development at the heart of the recovery.<sup>8</sup> In 2010 the Commonwealth hosted a series of regional meetings under the broad theme 'Investing in Youth Employment' to facilitate greater collaboration among youth stakeholders, governments and other development partners in

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<sup>5</sup> See: <http://www.pittsburghsummit.gov/resources/125137.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> See: [http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2009/109B09\\_101\\_engl.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2009/109B09_101_engl.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> 2009 CHOGM Communiqué

<sup>8</sup> 2011 CHOGM Communiqué

enhancing their respective youth employment policy initiatives. The Caribbean regional meeting was held in May 2010.

These regional meetings culminated in the first ever pan-commonwealth forum. Most notably the forum advocated for an asset-based approach to addressing the issue of youth unemployment by concluding “the situation of young people today presents the world with an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate growth and reduce poverty. Investing in their human capital could become the basis for sustained economic and social development.”<sup>9</sup>

## 2.6 Youth in action

Young people themselves have also been actively involved in the dialogue on the global economic and jobs crisis. For example the 7<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Youth Forum held in Port of Spain in 2009 concluded “*there are over a billion young people in the Commonwealth today. As consumers, entrepreneurs and taxpayers, we as young people are catalysts for economic growth. To maximise our economic potential we need improved access to financial information and tools, and to raise the level of financial education among young people,*” and proceeded to recommend:

- Financial education and entrepreneurship programmes should be institutionalised within formal and vocational education and continually supported and funded as these are catalysts for economic growth.
- Governments should create a more enabling process for youth to set up businesses and, where necessary, legislate to support youth entrepreneurship.
- Governments should work in partnership with National Youth Organisations, civil society and financial institutions to support young people to create web database(s) to raise awareness about existing financial opportunities for entrepreneurship.
- Establish a Commonwealth Youth Economic Society (CYES) to encourage youth to engage in discussion about economic issues and policies, including the development of alternative methodologies for economic analysis.
- Immediately we recommend that respective governments improve youth access to credit, advice, mentorship, technical training and service exchange partnerships. As the demand from the youth increases, a Youth Development Bank should be established.
- Governments should ensure the sustainability of social services delivery, particularly to youths at all levels, in times of economic crisis.
- Governments and the private sector should cooperate to strengthen research and investment in new areas such as green industries and other innovative sectors to create employment opportunities for youth.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Commonwealth Youth Programme – Investing in youth employment: policy making; partnership building and programming in action 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Commonwealth Youth Forum 7 *Invest in Youth Sustain the World* Communiqué Statement

### **3. Seminar Response**

#### **3.1 Genesis and objectives**

The May 2011 Regional Forum on Investing in Youth Employment, held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago by the Commonwealth Secretariat recommended creation of “the enabling environment to foster greater youth entry into the job market and for the inclusion of youth concerns and right-based solutions in employment policies and Youth Employment Action Plans.”<sup>11</sup>

Following up on this recommendation, the CYPCC seized the opportunity of the ongoing global discussion on policy responses to the Youth Employment Crisis, to organize this regional Seminar on the theme: “Addressing the employment challenges of Caribbean youth in times of crisis.” The Seminar was hosted by the government of Saint Lucia with technical support provided by the ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean. The Seminar was held at the Bay Gardens Hotel in Saint Lucia during the period March 29-31<sup>st</sup>, 2012 and provided an opportunity for tri-partite constituents and Caribbean Youth leaders to understand what issues should be considered in designing comprehensive youth employment policies and actions plans.

The Forum also provided an opportunity to discuss best practices in this area and formulate recommendations on further action at the national level. At the conclusion of the Seminar participants should have:

1. gained an initial understanding of the concept of employment policies and issues related to their design;
2. reviewed successful youth employment programmes in the Caribbean and related global tools and programmes;
3. discussed a set of recommendations to National Government, Business and Trade Union leaders and for regional youth governance networks.

The Seminar experience was expected to energize the relevant stakeholders, representative of an integrated national agenda on youth employment, to consider and undertake further action at the national and regional levels aimed at the design and adoption of youth employment policies that are relevant and responsive to youth needs.<sup>12</sup> The list of country delegations and participating agencies is appended.

#### **3.2 Leveraging comparative advantage to address youth employment**

The Seminar commenced with an official opening ceremony where Senior Officials of the Government of Saint Lucia, Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre (CYPCC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) were invited to address the participants. The speakers shared their organization’s perspectives on the global, regional and national youth

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<sup>11</sup> May 2011 Regional Forum on Investing in Youth Employment Report

<sup>12</sup> CYPCC Regional Employment Workshop Concept Note

employment. They also commended the relevance of the Seminar in the context of ongoing efforts at the global, regional and national level to formulate viable youth employment strategies.

In his *Welcome Remarks Mr. Victor Reid, Director of Youth and Sports*, Government of St. Lucia indicated that the Seminar was significant to the region. He stated that it was timely because most governments were engaged in policy dialogue related to the generation of employment opportunities for especially young people.

*Ms Dwynette D. Eversley, Programme Manager, CYPCC* expressed appreciation to the Government of Saint Lucia, in particular Honourable Shawn Edwards, Saint Lucia's Minister for Youth Development and Sports for accepting the Commonwealth Secretariat's invitation to host the seminar. She described the Seminar as a fortuitous collaboration between the CYPCC and ILO Decent Work Team and Office in the Caribbean. She also noted the CYPCC had collaborated with ILO in the past especially in providing technical support for the 'Investing in Youth' regional seminar, in May 2010.

According to Ms. Eversley, a major challenge in preparing for the Seminar were the constraints experienced by Youth Directors to gather the relevant data required to capture youth employment in the respective countries. This, she opined was reflective of a broader challenge regarding the availability and use of statistics and baseline data to track progress in youth development, generally. She indicated that while the Youth Empowerment Network (YEN) was established to facilitate and support the global commitment of developing and implementing strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work, the Caribbean had not made adequate use of this initiative.

She suggested that the proper engagement of relevant stakeholders in advancing national efforts to develop youth employment policies was critical and urged participants, during their deliberations to reflect on the following questions:

- Who is best positioned to lead the process of formulating a national youth employment policy?
- How should the actual policy design and implementation be undertaken?
- How to ensure an equal and value based role for young people?
- How can the comparative advantage of stakeholders be leveraged to move youth employment policy development forward?

*Dr. Giovanni di Cola, Officer in Charge of the ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean* thanked the Government of Saint Lucia and CYPCC for hosting the Seminar. He indicated the ILO remained committed to promotion of the decent work agenda. He reiterated that opportunities to connect young people with policy makers must serve as a platform to discuss and address issues related to decent work for young people. He further indicated it was the objective of the ILO Decent Work Team to address youth employment matters in a coherent manner. He also emphasized the importance of collaboration between Ministries with responsibility for Labour, Education and Youth to facilitate a more coherent policy environment at the national level.

*Mr. Felix St. Hill, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development and Labour*, spoke on behalf of the Honourable Minister who was unavoidably absent. He commended the Seminar as a positive approach by the Government towards creating the enabling environment to foster greater youth entry into the job market. He applauded the inclusion of young people in the process and the adoption of rights based approaches to the development of youth employment policies, in particular and youth development action plans, in general.

He indicated that while the Ministry of Labour's principal responsibility is the administration of Labour laws and policies to facilitate better working conditions. The Ministry remained cognizant of the need to support and advocate for greater investment in youth which would lead to greater employability. He concluded with an appeal for the redoubling of efforts to create job opportunities for unemployed youth through the implementation of world class professional and technical training that leads directly to career building.

*The Feature Address* was delivered by the Honourable Shawn Edward, Minister of Youth Development and Sports. The Minister gave a brief overview of the global youth employment situation and expressed concerns about what he described as the 'vexing issue of youth unemployment.' He indicated the Government of Saint Lucia was fully cognizant of the serious unemployment situation, especially among young people and that various initiatives were already in motion to help alleviate the problem.

Some ongoing job creation initiatives highlighted by the Minister included the development of new jobs in the creative industries (music production, drama, theatrical sound/lightening), establishment of the land bank for young farmers to get involve to high value agriculture along with financing arrangements. The re-establishment of the Short Term Employment Program (STEP), the initiation of a comprehensive Employment Activation Programme, emphasis on the green economy like solar, wind and geo-thermal energy and economic opportunities in ICT. He also reiterated the government's commitment to invest EC 100 million into job creating ventures. However he acknowledged that the development of a National Youth Employment Action Plan was of critical importance and made a passionate appeal for support from the ILO and Commonwealth in pursuing this objective.

Minister Edward concluded by re-affirming his government's support for the view that young people must be the building blocks of national development plan and consequently they must be engaged as strategic partners in the formulation and implementation of national development policies, including youth employment policies.

*Mr. Timothy Ferdinand, Vice President of the National Youth Council of Saint Lucia*, in his *Closing Remarks* re-iterated the view that young people did not want to be treated as mendicants but rather as strategic partners in development. He asserted that most young people fully understand that the world and region was in a period of crisis. However, they are even more convinced of the time was opportune to foster an enabling environment for them to participate in governance, become employable and become employment providers as well. He stressed the importance of partnering with government and other relevant stakeholders, as well as the synchronisation of efforts to address the issue of youth employment.

### 3.3 Technical Presentations - Youth Employment: A Global Picture

The primary aim of the Seminar was to serve as a platform for further action at the national and regional levels aimed at the design and adoption of youth employment policies that are relevant and responsive to youth needs. It was therefore necessary for participants to engage in an analysis of the Global and Caribbean youth employment situation; identify the salient characteristics and review existing policy responses as a precursor to the formulation of new and more effective strategies.

#### 3.3.1 The Global Youth Employment Situation

An overview and analysis of the global youth employment situation re-emphasized the complex nature of the current global employment crisis and indeed some disturbing trends regarding youth employment. Some of the salient features highlighted were:

1. Young people seem more vulnerable to unemployment and poverty
2. Young workers are disproportionately represented in the global unemployment figures
3. Transition from school to work has become longer. (First time employment seekers experience difficulty finding decent work due to lack of job experience)
4. Evidence of rising discouragement and labour market withdrawal among many young persons as hopelessness increases.
5. In many instances mainly poorly paid jobs are available to young people.
6. Decline in the quality of jobs available to young people.
7. Average job search period for most young people has increased.
8. Growing evidence of discriminatory practices against young workers.
9. National strategies do not always establish strong links between growth and jobs. This usually engenders economic inequality and may fuel social tension

*“Neglecting youth is a loss of human capital” – Houtan Homanyonpour, ILO Geneva*

It was revealed that in response these challenges and other consequences of structural unemployment the ILO has promoted a new paradigm which seeks to encourage the adoption economic growth strategies with built-in incentives for youth employment. It has also championed the need for the adoption of specific intervention strategies for disadvantaged young people. At the June 2012 Global Conference on Youth Employment the ILO is expected to make a presentation which will explore multiple pathways to secure decent work for young people. Further the ILO promotes partnerships and an integrated approach as the best option to tackle the crisis of youth unemployment.<sup>13</sup>

*“Combine employment oriented strategies with intervention strategies for disadvantaged youth”  
Houtan Homanyonpour, ILO Geneva*

<sup>13</sup> Houtan.H – ILO Youth Employment Programme, ILO H.Q

### 3.3.2 The Situation in the Caribbean<sup>14</sup>

The unemployment situation in the Caribbean seems to have worsened in 2007. However, the situation assumed crisis proportions in 2008 and was exacerbated in 2009. In 2010, there was a further rise in unemployment figures. It can be said that in the Caribbean employment trails economic growth so that even where some countries may have recorded improvement in their GDP performance, this did not translate to increased employment.

The highest unemployment rate is evident after 3 years of the crisis and the number of countries recording unemployment rates of 20% and above is alarming. In most countries, the youth unemployment is usually twice the national unemployment rate. Young people increasingly less integrated in the economy. Youth unemployment rate and the adult rate are worsening in a number of countries including major economies of the region. Underlying reasons are still unclear. For a significant number of young people, their first job is in the informal sector. Yet reliable data on the informal sector remains a challenge.

The population in the region has been falling and is also ‘graying’ within the past ten years. The percentage of youth in the working population is declining. For economies facing major challenges, things may get worse before it get better as many governments now have less maneuverability to continue implementing stimulus policies.<sup>15</sup>

*“Governments may resort to more contractionary fiscal policies as international financial institutions become less lenient” -Dr. Reynold Simons, ILO Caribbean Office*

### 3.3.3 Role of employment policies; some issues in policy design and formulation

Employment policies are not a substitute for sound macro- economic policy. Consequently the best employment policy may not positively affect employment creation unless is an integral component of the broader macro-economic development strategy.

Some key principles of a credible employment policy are:

- It should be rights-based. Recognizing that everyone has a right to decent work, favorable conditions of employment and protection against exploitation and unemployment.
- Recognizing that employment contributes to productivity, creation and distribution of wealth.
- Recognize that employment contributes to social mobility psycho-social development of the individual.
- Seek to mitigate social costs of both structural and social economic shocks.
- There should be special programmes to enhance the labour market performance for disadvantaged groups.

<sup>14</sup> Main Technical Paper on Employment and Labour Market Policies made by Dr. Reynold Simons, Senior Specialist, Employment and Labour Market Policies, ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean

<sup>15</sup> Simons. Reynold, ILO Decent Work team and Office for the Caribbean

An employment policy is described as a set of objectives or outcomes adopted in response to identifiable employment issues that are related to the broader macro- economic policy framework. It is intended to optimize the quantity and quality of employment. The instruments, incentive systems and resources adopted to achieve these outcomes are considered to be the operational aspect of the policy.

In formulating employment policy, consideration must be given to the several factors such as: Is it going to be a structural policy, which may necessitate institutional change or capacity building? Which economic sector will be the focus your unemployment policy or will it be a multi-faceted approach? Are the existing formal or legal frameworks adequate to support the policy? Is there a need to revise the existing or enact new legislation? The mandate and responsibility for the policy should be assigned a specific agency supported by a proper framework for inter-agency collaboration.

The employment policy objectives should be broadly stated, such as:

- To stimulate economic growth and development;
- To raise living standards;
- To satisfy manpower requirements; and
- Overcoming unemployment and underemployment.

Additionally, policies related to population, labour, migration, technology, informal sector, micro and small enterprise, public sector investment policies must be duly considered and factored in.<sup>16</sup>

*"The general rule of thumb is that employment policy objectives should be related to the broader economic and social development objectives" R. Simons, ILO Caribbean*

### **3.3.4 Reforming Technical and Vocational Education and Training<sup>17</sup>**

The purpose of education is to assist in the development of responsible and productive citizens. It should also empower people to help solve problems in the community. Technical and vocational training (TVET) must be a key component of an employment policy. However there must be properly established principles of education and training as it relates to TVET. Good quality TVET requires a relevant curriculum, TVET programme articulation, coordination and accreditation, trained technical instructors, adequate resources /financing, up to date equipment, entrepreneurial skills and work based training opportunities. The TVET curriculum must include core skills, Communication, Mathematics, Interpersonal, Technical, Computer literacy- use of ICT, Teamwork, Problem solving/decision making and language.

<sup>16</sup> Presentation by Simons. R- ILO Caribbean Office

<sup>17</sup> Main Technical Presentation made by Dr. Hassan Ndahi, Senior Specialist, Skills and Education, ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean

Most Caribbean countries are yet to develop holistic TVET policies. However it would appear both, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) have grasped its relevance to employment policy. They both have developed TVET policy in place. Perhaps Governments can draw upon this resource to help strengthen national TVET policies. In developing national TVET policies in the Caribbean the following factors must be taken into consideration: 1 TVET policies can be implemented.

- The need to generally, change attitudes about TVET being for ‘dumb’ students?
- There are key stakeholders such as parents and policy makers who still harbor negative views on TVET.
- That there may be need to enact effective legislation in support of a TVET. To get to policy we should aim for a legislative level in order to get the policy done because policy can be circumvented.
- Financing education especially TVET is very challenging.

*“Governments alone cannot fund proper national TVET programmes” H. Ndahi*

Some of the critical success factors for an effective TVET programme are:

- Labour market involvement such as: Internship/practicum, Work based learning, Job shadowing and Apprenticeship
- Industry certified and demand driven training course.
- Re-branding TVET to minimize stigma and negative labels.
- Access to updated equipment and technology.<sup>18</sup>

### **3.3.5 Enterprise development is support of youth employment policies<sup>19</sup>**

The International Financial Crisis has savaged the economies of most Caribbean countries resulting in spiraling rates of unemployment and increasing poverty and indigence among young people in particular. The working poor include 152 million young people living in households earning US \$1.25 a day. 22 million people of these are in LAC are neither studying nor working. 47 % of youth are unemployed in Saint Lucia and 27.3 % in Bahamas. A direct consequence is the increasing vulnerability of young unemployed persons to various forms of social deviation and risky behavior. Therefore there is a compelling necessity to provide decent work for young people.

Governments are hugely challenged to meet those demands in the context of their fiscal constraints. Fiscal deficits are prevalent in the region and many countries have recorded over 100% debt to GDP ratio.

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<sup>18</sup> Ndahi, H – ILO Caribbean Office

<sup>19</sup> Main Technical Presentation made by Mr. Kelvin Sergeant, Senior Specialist, Senior Specialist, Sustainable Enterprise Development, ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean

SMEs are therefore considered a viable employment creation option. ILO Convention 189 recommends SMEs as a viable job creation option for youth. However the youth enterprise development strategy should be anchored in the broader national youth employment policy. Also the promotion of Enterprise development for youth should entail private and public partnerships.

*“SMEs contribute to 70% of jobs in the Caribbean”*

*Kelvin Sergeant*

The youth enterprise development strategy should consider the following issues and fundamentals:

- Availability and access to funding;
- Management of businesses;
- Relevant business acumen;
- Availability, access to and use of relevant data;
- Monitoring and evaluation of programmes;
- Accessing best practices and models;
- Effective mentorship and other relevant support initiatives.<sup>20</sup>

### **3.3.6 Youth Employment Programmes: Best Practices and Case Studies**

#### *.1 Some ILO initiatives and perspectives*

The International Labour Organization continues to play a lead role in the global action to address issues related youth employment. In this regard the organization has compiled wealth of policy tools, strategies and guidelines to support national employment policy initiatives. More specifically they continue to advocate for greater youth involvement in the formulation of national youth employment policies. Following are some of the policy initiatives:

- Guidelines and draft framework to assist governments in the formulation of national youth employment action plans;
- Providing a platform for young people to advocate on issues related to employment. One such initiative is a youth forum in Geneva at the end of May 2012. Another is a Video contest for young people – 18 to 29 to articulate the challenges their face in the labor market. Winners will be invited to attend the forum in Geneva in May;
- Technical assistance is provided to member countries to support development of National Employment Policies and to review policies and institutional frameworks ;
- The ILO has assisted member countries develop a database of key stakeholders to facilitate better coordination and sharing of information.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Sergeant.K –Specialist, Sustainable Enterprise Development and Job creation, ILO Caribbean Office

<sup>21</sup> Houtan.H- ILO H.Q

## *.2 Tips for successful youth employment strategies*

- Are there youth employment objectives? Is there progress? If there is no development strategy plan, is there a youth employment manual/policy? If there is a policy, monitor and adjust it accordingly. If there is no policy, create one and promote it. Create awareness on why it's so important to have a youth employment policy. If not, young people will be forgotten and not included on an international level in the action plan.
- What are the problems and how to address them based on the research that has been done? Develop policies and strategy programmes and then implement them. Ensure that you have relevant dialogue with major stakeholders
- No particular employment programme is a panacea
- The employment strategy or policy should be sustainable
- Sufficient data is needed to set up youth employment projects
- The programme must be linked with the private sector for sustainability
- Establish a database of key stakeholders.
- Integrate employment programmes into national budgetary process.
- Short –term employment programmes should be treated as part of Social protection strategy.
- Encourage industry leaders to support the process.

## *.3 TVET and national youth employment action plans that work*

- 70, 000 youth benefited in Indonesia; around 65% of youth that attended the skills training sessions were employed
- In Latin America there was a joint effort with the private sector that was also successful and was initially set up for 4 or 5 years but has been going on for 10 years. 17,000 disadvantaged youth were trained
- Peru – Youth employment action plan for 2009-2012 assisted more than 260,000 disadvantaged youth in finding jobs

### **3.3.7 Country perspectives on existing youth employment strategies**

Following upon presentations on some of employment programmes and strategies currently employed by some countries, such as NEDCO and CEPEP in Trinidad and Tobago, Small and Micro- Enterprise Development Agency of Jamaica, and examples of cases from Chile, Germany and Malay, participants engaged in a lively discussion, sharing their perspectives and providing invaluable information on their respective country's experience. A synopsis of the discussions is captured below.

- **Grenada** – employment scheme gives young people between 16 and 25 an opportunity to engage in on-the-job training in public and private sector organisations. A finite number of persons are employed; approximately 1400 persons can be accommodated at a time. The employment scheme has created some changes in employment practices where permanent employees are made redundant and replaced by the programme beneficiaries. This scheme attracted young persons who subsequently secured permanent employment in the public and private sector. There is also a rehabilitation component that incorporates an enterprise development and small business training.

- **Saint Lucia** – The Short-Term Employment Programme (STEP) was established in 1997 to bridge the gap between providing immediate short-term relief and the creation of more sustainable employment opportunities. The government recognised there was a significant number of unemployed young persons and felt there needed to be a bridge between that situation and creating more long term employment. A database of persons needing employment and willing to participate in the programme was created and was used to facilitate job placements. The government contributed 50% of the salaries or stipend up to a maximum of 1000EC a month for a period not exceeding 6 months. The initial intent of the programme was to provide employment for 1000 persons over a period of one year. The programme eventually lasted for 18 months and provided employment for over 3500, of which approximately 65% were young people. While there is evidence to suggest many persons become permanently employed there was no formal tracer study or proper impact assessment done. Ironically the most difficult persons to place were not those without certificate or skills but rather persons who had partially completed secondary school or completed it with only 2 or 3 CXC's. One of the factors was that the expectation level of those persons far outweighed their eligibility to meet the job market requirements. There were not visible examples of employers replacing their permanent employees. However Private sector support was not always optimal.
- **The Bahamas** – Members of Parliament are given a sum of money to develop special projects in their constituencies. These funds are used to generate short term employment opportunities or skill training for their constituents. Although, the young people have an opportunity to get a jump start on career and skills building, there are concerns about sustainability of the initiative. Additionally, The Chamber of Commerce provides opportunities for young people to benefit from training in specific business related skills and competencies.
- **Barbados** – Does not have a dedicated short-term employment programme but there exists many opportunities for skills training development of job market competencies.
- **Dominica** – Developed training programmes to facilitate employment creation. One program was developed to provide technical training and skills for young people. There is a 2 month job placement component where participants are paid a small stipend to defray personal costs. Similar to programmes geared towards providing temporary employment for people, in The Bahamas and Saint Lucia, the Government established a programme called the Constituency Employment Programme where parliamentarians are allocated funds to service their constituency. However, there are concerns regarding the sustainability and integrity of the programme.
- **Trinidad & Tobago** – There are a number of initiatives geared towards youth employment. However, there is need for greater collaboration among the providers to make the programmes viable.

### **3.3.8 Summary of Country Contributions on Technical Presentations**

- Short term employment programmes are pivotal to help engage young people in meaningful activity. Therefore they should not be dismissed as trivial. These programmes may facilitate the entry of otherwise unemployed or under-employed persons into the labour market and can enhance their skill set.
- The short term employment strategies are necessary but not sufficient to enhance sustainability. Therefore there is a need to find ways to ensure the viability of the programmes.
- Employers should be integrally involved in the planning and implementation of apprenticeship programmes.
- Youth unemployment has been and continues to be a challenge for the region. Data reveals for the last 10-15 years youth unemployment has been consistently and persistently high.
- Employability skills must be enhanced through appropriate technical and vocational training.
- Governments should consider implementing innovative models of national youth service to assist in the development of responsible and competent young citizens.
- A financing mechanism for education and training of young people must be sustainable.
- Research on youth employment will give stakeholders an indication of the challenges and opportunities as they relate to youth development.
- Employment policies along with sound macro-economic policies should reflect a good mix of TVET, SME and micro-enterprise development, public sector investment and work programmes.
- A multi-partite approach involving stakeholders such as the Employers Federations, Trade Unions and NGOs is recommended.

### **3.3.9 Country Case Work and National Policy Mapping**

Preparatory to the Seminar, all countries were requested to prepare a National Youth Employment Report (NYER)<sup>22</sup> as a means of identifying youth employment challenges at national level and to support building awareness and interagency collaboration on a national response. The main output of the final day was consolidated group work to review the NYER prepared and received from four countries, namely, Saint Lucia, The Bahamas, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago.

Given that the majority of the participating countries were unable to complete their NYERs, it was decided that to place delegates into four groups<sup>23</sup>, each one supported by a case country report and challenged as a group to:

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<sup>22</sup> Template for NYER Reporting provided by the ILO

<sup>23</sup> GROUP 1 Trinidad & Tobago, Barbados, Antigua & Barbuda, GROUP 2 Guyana, Bahamas, Grenada  
GROUP 3 Jamaica, St. Kitts, Belize GROUP 4- St. Lucia, Dominica, St. Vincent

- i. Review and list the (Youth) Employment challenges. If possible by specific section/group of young people. Include challenges to make a diagnosis, design and implement a National Youth Employment Policy if relevant
- ii. Present an overview of the major policy responses of the most relevant government and programmes/projects being implemented by government and NGOs

The group work was challenged to reflect on the work of the country focal point for the National Youth Employment Report, the input of the tripartite delegation and reach overall consensus in their reporting, paying attention to the (i) the mix of Policy Instruments and (ii) actual projects that would be best suited to address these challenges in the case country, further specifying.

- i. If this would be a temporary or ongoing programme
- ii. Any specific institutional provisions (institutional reform/changes, interagency collaboration) that are necessary to implement the policies
- iii. Monitoring and evaluation information necessary to guide implementation

The group reports are included as appendices to this Report.

#### **4. Seminar Conclusions and Recommendations**

In this section some of the pivotal issues and challenges relative to young people's participation in the Caribbean labour markets are addressed. The report concludes with pertinent recommendations for future action on youth employment in the region.

##### **4.1 Young people in Caribbean Labour Markets**

- i. There is a long term trend showing that young people, particularly in some countries, are participating less in the labour market. In part this trend is explained by young people staying longer in the education and this is a positive trend because this may enhance their preparedness for the world of work. But considering the magnitude and other clearly visible challenges, this statistic also reflects young people withdrawing from the labour market because they don't believe they can find a suitable job. The disillusionment of young people in long term unemployment or in informal work relations has major social impacts including crime and violence.
- ii. High levels of unemployment (20 to 50%) among youth are telling signs of the magnitude of the employment challenges in the Caribbean. In some countries these conditions persisted for decennia and as a result of the crisis, worsened in recent years.
- iii. In some major countries of the region the unemployment rate for youth people is well above the often cited mark of twice the adult rate. In 2010 the youth unemployment rate was 3.1 times the adult rate in Jamaica and in Trinidad and Tobago it was 3.2 times. This indicates that in several labour markets of the region youth compared to adults find it harder to escape unemployment.

- iv. The aforementioned trends (items 1 to 3) reflect the typical and structural features of Caribbean economies and labour markets. Long term, innovative policies are needed to address these issues.
- v. Informality in the labour market affects young people more and for many youngsters their first job is in the informal sector. Some labour markets in the region are highly informal. Since informality will seriously affect the feasibility of many programme designs the policy makers are urged to take this into consideration.
- vi. Several Caribbean Labour Markets suffered serious job losses during the Global Economic Crisis of 2009/10 as in particular the tourism sector suffered and many employees became redundant. The rate of job creation the Caribbean countries has dropped significantly and the prospects in the current global environment. In the USA and Europe, the major markets for Caribbean tourism and other products the recovery is slow and therefore the prospect for economic and employment growth in our countries is grim.
- vii. Long standing weaknesses in our education and TVET systems result in Caribbean Youth facing serious challenges in the labour market as a result of inadequate employability skills. Urgent and sustained action is required in this area..
- viii. Industries providing jobs that young people are particularly interested in often do not get enough support or special facilitation. In addition, there are not enough programmes to prepare young people for the occupations in these industries.
- ix. Migration is another key factor in the Caribbean youth employment challenge characterised by:-
  - a. Brain drain. Highly talented and skilled young people are often pushed into migrating to the USA, Canada and Europe in search of recognition, reasonable wages and other opportunities
  - b. Migrant Labour- An increasing influx of migrant workers from Asia and Latin America have an significant impact as they are better positioned to take up the limited numbers of new jobs created in Caribbean Labour Markets.
- x. Some groups of young people in the Caribbean face specific challenges including:
  - a. Young people with disabilities face a multitude of challenges but in particular the lack of facilities in work places that would allow them to take up employment
  - b. Rural youth are particularly vulnerable in Caribbean Labour markets as they have no access to most labour market programmes and facilities (TVET, Employment Services or Enterprise Development programmes) which are usually concentrated in urban centres
  - c. Young Mothers face major challenges in completing their education, , accessing second chance education facilities or taking up employment opportunities

## 4.2 Existing employment and labour market programmes

- i. In many countries in the region there is structural unemployment and job creation is depressed. Apart from special youth employment programmes there is a need for successful macro-economic and development strategies that lead to economic and employment growth.
- ii. In some countries there is a multitude of programmes/projects with the same or very similar objectives and there is a need for more and better coordination. In general the various (youth) employment programmes should be coordinated and the agencies implementing them should collaborate more so young people can benefit more.
- iii. The design of programmes/projects for youth should be regularly evaluated to allow adjustment so they answer better to the needs of specific target groups.
- iv. Youth employment programmes must offer better solutions to young people making sure that these programmes offer practical support to acquire:
  - a. The skills needed to get job opportunities that actually exist in the labour market
  - b. The required work experience
  - c. The soft skills employers expect
- v. In general there is a lack of continuity in youth employment programmes sometimes as a result of changes in government or due to re-alignment of Ministerial portfolios.

## 4.3 Recommendations

- i. Countries should consider the development and implementation of macro-economic and development strategies that will elevate our societies out of the trap of stagnant economic and employment growth.
- ii. Youth Employment policies should be integrated into macro-economic and development policies to ensure that these development plans are employment centred. Youth employment policies must also facilitate coordination of the various (youth) employment programmes/projects and stimulate collaboration amongst the varying implementing agencies.
- iii. Education and TVET policies and programmes must be improved to increase opportunities for young people in the Caribbean job market. Two specific recommendations were to:
  - a. Create better synergy between Education and TVET programmes and labour market demands.
  - b. Expand and strengthen the capacity of apprenticeship and internship programmes through enhanced collaboration with employers.
- iv. Youth employment programmes in the Caribbean must be designed to enhance responsiveness to the needs of young people, thereby improving effectiveness. In support of this objective policymakers should consider:

- a. Involving young people as early as possible in the design and implementation process
  - b. Include effective communication mechanisms to facilitate meaningful dialogue between youth people and other relevant stakeholders engaged in the process.
  - c. Establish relevant administrative and management mechanisms to facilitate more effective monitoring and evaluation of programmes.
- v. Forging and maintaining effective partnerships are essential to the quality and sustainability of youth employment programmes. Therefore, adequate consideration must be given to the strategic engagement of all relevant partners in the design and implementation process. In this regard priority attention must be given to:
  - vi.
    - a. Strengthening existing partnerships between Ministries with responsibility for Labour and Youth Development.
    - b. Establishing sustainable Private-Public partnerships to enhance the quality and sustainability of youth employment interventions
  - vii. Periodic review and analysis of the operations, performance and impact of youth employment programmes is an essential tool to facilitate sustainable youth employment policies. Countries are therefore strongly advised to establish appropriate review mechanisms as an integral component of their youth employment policy framework.
  - viii. Most countries in the Region have implemented some form of special short term employment programme for young people. The significance and impact of such programmes especially in the current economic environment must not be discounted. However, there is a prevailing perception that the integrity and effectiveness of some of these programmes are compromised. Consequently, among the several options to improve public perception and enhance the effectiveness of these programmes are proposed:-
    - a. Integrating these short term employment programmes into national or regional development plans. It is felt that such linkages with longer term national or regional development objectives can assist in strengthening sustainability and development impact
    - b. Strengthening of existing policy or enactment of appropriate legislation to ensure transparency, equal opportunity and facilitate continuity.
    - c. Inclusion of NGOs and other partners in the implementation process.
    - d. Implementing proper Marketing strategies for these programmes.
    - e. Establish more effective accountability and reporting mechanisms.
  - ix. Priority attention should be given to updating and completing the preliminary National Youth Employment reports prepared by The Bahamas, Jamaica, St. Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago and having these published.
  - x. Member countries, which have not yet done so should advance their NYER preparation and finalisation.

- xi. All countries should explore the possibility of producing and updating national research and work on youth employment and policy development working through the ambit of a national intersectoral (tripartite) committee and seek the technical support of the ILO and the Commonwealth Secretariat according to their areas of expertise.

#### **4.4 Concluding Comments**

Mr. Reynolds Simons thanked the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre and the Government of Saint Lucia for coordinating and hosting the seminar. He stated that the meeting represented one of the most important youth employment policy discussions to date; especially considering the diversity of sectors participating. He encouraged countries with draft NYER to complete and publish these. Other countries were also urged to prepare their NYER. He re-emphasized the importance of data collection analysis in the process of formulating Youth Employment Policy. Mr. Simons emphasized that ILO was willing to provide assistance in finalizing the draft reports.

Ms Dwynette Eversley re-iterated her profound appreciation to the Government of Saint Lucia, the team from the ILO Caribbean Office and Headquarters in Geneva for their support in hosting the very successful regional Seminar. She expressed satisfaction with the wealth of information which had been generated during the Seminar and encouraged member countries that were in the process of reviewing or formulating national youth employment policies to make optimal use this invaluable resource. Ms. Eversley was particularly appreciative of the active participation of Youth Networks, Trade Unions and Employers Organization in the process. She urged youth ministries to continue engaging them as stakeholders at the national level and urged for national working teams with all the essential partners to be formed to advance work on youth employment policy research and development. Ms Eversley concluded with expressions of special expressed gratitude to the host country support team and to representatives of other development agencies whose work could be also tailored to support youth employment policy development based on the directions agreed at the Seminar.

**Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre**  
**Employment Policy Seminar, Saint Lucia**  
 29<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2012

<b>Day 1: Thursday 29 March</b>		
<b>Youth Employment Policies: issues in policy formulation, policy instruments and the process of designing and adopting National Employment Policies</b>		
0830	Registration	
0900	Official Opening Ceremony	<i>Government of Saint Lucia</i>
09:45 – 10:00	<b>Introduction and Background</b> <i>Dwynette D. Eversley, Programme Manager, CYPC</i>	
10:00 – 10:30	<b>Youth Employment: A Global Picture</b>	
10:00 – 10:10	<i>The Global Youth employment Situation</i> <i>Mr. Homayounpour Houtan (HHN), ILO-HQ-Employment Department/Youth Employment Programme (ILO-Head Quarters-Employment Department/Youth Employment Programme ED/YEP)</i>	
10:10 – 10:20	<i>The Situation in the Caribbean</i> <i>Mr. Reynold Simons (RSS), Senior Specialist Employment and Labour Market Policies, ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean (ILO-DWT/O-PoS)</i>	
10:10 – 10:30	Discussion	
10:30 – 11:00	Youth Employment in the Caribbean, the role of Employment policies and issues in policy design and formulation: <u>Major issues dealt with:</u> <i>The centrality of employment; Labour Market and Employment Policies; Formal or legal framework; Mandate for Employment policies; Employment Policy Objectives; Policy Coordination; Labour Market Information; Principles when setting employments policy objectives; Employment Policy Instrument; Designing an Employment Policy; Global Employment Policy Initiatives</i>	<i>RSS, ILO-DWT/O-PoS</i>
11:00 – 11:30	Discussion	
11:30 – 12:15	How to ensure that the Technical Education and Training System and Education provides Young People the skills they need be successful on the Labour Market <u>Major issues dealt with:</u> <i>(Hassan please specify); Importance of skills policies: Access to quality TVET; skills anticipation/curriculum development; adequate and up-to-date teaching resources; qualified technical instructors; importance technical, soft and language skills; Work-based: learning-Apprenticeship/internship; industry/qualification certification; Career/Vocational Guidance, and Vocational Students Organizations; Transition from school to work programmes.</i>	<i>Mr. Hassan Indahi (HNI), Senior Specialist, Skills and Employability, ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean (ILO-DWT/o-PoS)</i>
12:15 – 12:30	Discussion	
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch	
13:30 – 14:15	Enterprise Development in Support of Youth Employment Policies <u>Major issues dealt with:</u> <i>(Kelvin please specify); Entrepreneurship; Mentor support, YES Programme; Job creation through SMEs; Finance; Grants; Loans; Shared Workspace or Business Incubators; Support Networks; Business Expansion Support; Multifunctional Youth Enterprise Agencies; Other Enterprise Development Policies.</i>	<i>Mr. Kelvin Sergent (KST), Specialist, Sustainable Enterprise Development and Job Creation, ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean (ILO-DWT/o-PoS)</i>

14:15 – 14:45	Discussion	
14:45 – 15:30	Other important policy instruments in designing Youth Employment policies: <u>Major issues dealt with:</u> <i>Employment Services (counselling, mentoring and job brokering services), Local economic Development, First time jobseekers and other transition to the world of work programmes, labour based programmes and other short term employment programmes for youth; youth (networks) and other youth empowerment initiatives.</i>	RSS, ILO-DWT/O-PoS
15:30 – 16:30	Summary discussion on employment policies with Panel of ILO specialists	
<b>Day 2: Friday 30 March</b>		
<b>Best practices in Youth employment programmes in the Caribbean and global programmes and tools. Two cases of success stories in the following areas (Presentation and discussion):</b>		
<b>Enterprise Development</b>		
8:30 – 8:45	Presentation on NEDCO the Small and Micro Enterprise Development Agency in Trinidad and Tobago	
8:45 – 9:15	Discussion	
9:15 – 9:30	Presentation on ---- the Small and Micro Enterprise Development Agency in Jamaica	
9:30 – 9:45	Coffee break	
10:30 – 10:45	Discussion	
<b>Reforming Technical Vocational Education and Training</b>		
10:45 – 11:00	Skype Presentation: “Tackling Youth Employment through Apprenticeships: the cases of Chile, Germany and Malay	
11:00 – 11:30	Discussion	
11:30 – 11:45	Presentation on the Barbados TVET Council Youth Policies and Programmes	
11:45 – 12:15	Discussion	
12:15 – 13:30	Lunch	
<b>Local Economic Development and Short term youth labour market programmes</b>		
15:30 – 15:45	<b>Short term youth labour market programmes: The CEPEP Programme in Trinidad and Tobago</b>	
13:15 – 13:45	Discussion	
13:45 – 14:00	<b>Short term youth labour market programmes in Caribbean</b>	
14:30 – 14:50	<b>Youth employment policy programmes at the global level (includes list of available specialised tools)</b> <u>Major issues dealt with:</u> <i>An overview of the on going youth employment programmes and key actors at the global level; the (global) Youth Employment Network; including success stories</i>	HHN, ILO-HQ/ED/YEP
14:50 – 15:30	Discussion	
15:30 – 16:00	Summary discussion on Best practices in Youth Employment programmes/projects with the Panel of ILO specialists	

**Day 3: Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> March****Working Sessions on four National Youth Employment Policy Reports (countries that completed the draft report)**

Working group sessions: presentation and discussion on the completed Country report and the Youth Employment Policy

8:30 – 10:00	Major issues working groups will report on:	<i>ILO Resource person</i>
	1. Country case/group 3: St. Lucia (initial 45 Minutes Plenary session)	<i>RSS, ILO-DWT/O-PoS</i>
	2. Country case/group 1: The Bahamas:	<i>HNI, ILO-DWT/O-PoS</i>
	3. Country case/group 2: Jamaica:	<i>RSS, ILO-DWT/O-PoS</i>
	4. Country case/group 4: Trinidad and Tobago	<i>KST (ILO-DWT/O-PoS)</i>
10:00 – 10:15	Coffee Break	
10:15 – 11:00	Plenary: Conclusions on further work at the regional level	
11:00 – 11:30	Closing Session	
12:00- 13:30	<i>Optional: there is the opportunity for Country delegates to discuss policy issues with ILO Specialists</i>	

**COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PROGRAMME (CYPCC) SEMINAR ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT POLICY***March 29 to 31, 2012 Bay Gardens Hotel, Saint Lucia***DELEGATES AND SECRETARIAT LISTING**

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