

**YOUTH START PLAN**  
**EX-POST EVALUATION**  
**FINAL REPORT**

*Submitted by*  
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*(October 2001)*

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On July 11, 1997, the Government of Belize and the Inter American Development Bank signed an agreement granting non-reimbursable resources for technical cooperation for the Youth Start Plan. The programme objectives were to: implement an efficient labour market brokerage system, that could be replicated within the vocational training system in the country; and evaluate and execute strategies, methodologies, and procedures to help young people enter productive life, providing them with the specialisation and skill levels that the private sector demands. The project was carried out by Youth Start Plan Limited as the Executing Agency.

The IDB contracted Valiant Consulting Group Limited (*Valiant*) to undertake this ex-post evaluation of YSPL in July 2001 to determine what lessons can be learned from this project that can inform future development interventions. The exercise was conducted over the period: July to September, 2001.

### **Methodology**

The methodology employed involved a comprehensive review of all available, pertinent documentation; interviews with key stakeholders and analysis of responses received from an administered questionnaire in the dimensions of: project environment, project performance, organisational architecture and organisational capacity.

### **Project Activity**

In terms of activity, the project's initiation was slow, with the only institutional and administrative component in place six months after signing of the Agreement being the Board of Directors. Further slowing of the process was concern with project design in the context of the structure of YPSL as a limited liability company oriented toward private sector partnership but also presenting an image as another social support agency.

An essential output of the project was the creation of a demand-driven, labour market brokerage system that would be informed by a labour market survey. This deliverable has not yet been achieved. The survey, commissioned after a more than a year had elapsed, was submitted to the Board almost three-and-a-half years since the signing of the agreement. The initial draft was rejected by both the Board and the IDB. This major component of the project was therefore never developed, resulting in a vital information gap. In the absence of a labour market brokerage system, YSPL conducted its own ad-hoc surveys and used these as the information base to provide training programmes for approximately 150-190 individuals.

### **Pilot Testing**

No pilot testing was undertaken; such a programme would have identified some of the flaws and provided an opportunity for redesign/adjustment to suit local conditions.

### **YPSL Successes**

Notwithstanding these deficiencies, there had been some successes, YSPL estimates that between 250 and 300 individuals received training from programmes instituted since July

1998; approximately 90 of whom were trained between December 2000 and May 2001. A further 72 benefited from a creative placement incentive programme initiated by YSPL in February 2001.

### **Hospitality Training and Food Service Programme**

A Hospitality Training and Food Service Programme - the third training programme - was a joint endeavor between YSPL, the YWCA and the Centre for Educational Training . Some 30 students participated in this programme of hospitality management (food preparation) and training as waiters and waitresses. All but two of them graduated and were placed in jobs.

### **Placement Incentive Programme**

The Placement Incentive Programme was the most effective performance indicator of a useful partnership between YSPL and the private sector. This creative initiative undertaken in February 2001, saw YSPL initially contributing 50 per cent of an employee's salary if a participating employer accessed a young person recommended by YSPL. An overall target of 100 individuals to be gainfully employed by February 28, 2001 was almost achieved by April with 89 persons being placed. At the end of February the total number placed was 72.

Business owners indicate a willingness to continue participation in any similar programme as they felt that the programme provided them an opportunity to find good employees and offered several benefits: an opportunity to find a suitable employee in a relatively short time; a reduction in staff turnover rates; a chance to weed out unqualified applicants; and an opportunity to find individuals for positions that are not easily filled.

### **Entrepreneurship Programme**

Six persons participated in the Entrepreneurship Programme that produced life changing and life enriching results. Two of these beneficiaries are barbers living in the town of Orange Walk, while another is a new day-care owner living in Belize City. Other Beneficiaries were persons trained under a contractual arrangement between the YWCA and YSPL to train day-care providers through an intensive 6-month training programme. Of 20 persons who participated in the programme, 16 (80 per cent) completed it successfully and are all gainfully employed. This training programme has created opportunities for inter-institutional linkages between the YWCA and the Ministry of Education with the joint goal of developing a certification programme and standards for the industry.

### **Broadcasting**

Another initiative was in the area of Broadcasting where YSPL and the RSVL, Ltd. Group of radio stations contracted to develop a training programme for broadcasters. A total of 13 trainees participated in the programme, all of whom graduated. Twelve of them are still working in the broadcast industry with the thirteenth on a UNESCO scholarship at UWI, Mona preparing for a career in broadcast journalism.

### **TV Repair Programme**

Five graduates from the TV Repair Programme were very satisfied with the benefit they obtained from being involved in the programme.

**Board of Directors**

Stakeholders expressed different points of view regarding the structure and composition of YSPL's Board. The project called for a 7:3 ratio of private sector members to public sector members. Theoretically and ideologically, this arrangement made sense. Practically, however, it did not reflect present reality as there is a perception that the Board's composition resulted more from government nominations rather than from a concerted drive to recruit competent and committed individuals. Private sector members were not viewed in the most favorable light by their public sector counterparts. The view of the public sector members was that the Board was too heavily skewed towards private sector membership, who were not fully committed to assist with the development of the skills of the less fortunate.

**YPSL – A Limited Liability Company**

A number of stakeholders have intimated that as a limited liability company, YSPL was not only desirable but had the potential for being highly successful if the impediment perceptions of undue bureaucratic influence were removed. There are expressions of interest in further participation in YSPL or similar programmes.

**Management**

A significant proportion of stakeholders commented unfavorably on YSPL's ineffective managerial resources, a factor that adversely affected project administration, implementation and effectiveness. YSPL seems to have suffered from a poor fit between its management and the Board, a factor that contributed to governance problems between the Board and management, and management and staff.

**Organisational Capacity**

A number of factors strongly influenced YSPL's performance; one of the most important was the organization's capacity. The lack of a formal strategic plan and supporting operational plans and procedures impeded the nurturing of a sense of direction in terms of a mission, vision and strategic objectives. It is also suggested that YSPL's mission and vision were never fully articulated to all stakeholders.

Evidence suggests that inadequate physical plant contributed in some measure to the under-performance of the project. Insufficient and inappropriate office equipment, together with less than congenial surroundings, affected both worker morale and worker productivity. Further, the state of technology and the level of usage of that technology also contributed to the project's poor performance. The office often lacked the technological resources it needed to function effectively and efficiently. And in some cases where the technology was available, members of staff had not been adequately trained in its use. Moreover, inadequate technology prevented YSPL from maintaining a comprehensive database to support its ongoing activities.

Ineffective management resulted in low levels of confidence in the manager, reduced levels of enthusiasm for YSPL's mission, and low morale among staff. Management often failed to provide a clear sense of direction. As a result, many administrative decisions were undertaken

in an ad-hoc manner. In a number of cases, management failed to implement directives and meet targets specified by the Board.

### **Support Staff**

YSPL's success depended on a number of factors, not the least of which were the capacity of the staff, the quality of leadership available, and the resources provided. However, it appears that at no time during the life of the project did YSPL have the full complement of staff. Effective staff performance was further inhibited by the fact that individuals often lacked the requisite skills and knowledge base necessary to discharge the responsibilities of their jobs.

### **Summary Conclusions**

There is overwhelming evidence to support the view that the project provided immense benefits to members of the target population, who received much needed skills training. It expanded their horizons, impacted their psyches and improved their self-esteem. The project also sensitised stakeholders to the needs and issues affecting the target population. In some instances, new partnerships were forged and inter-institutional linkages developed. However, the project elements could have approached optimal impact and could have reached a wider base had the requisite structures, procedures and resources been provided. A number of beneficiaries, including members of the target population, the major training providers, and members of the private sector welcome, support and desire continuation of the project and the services offered with some retooling and redesigning. The suggestions emanating are listed below:

### **Summary Recommendations**

The Ministry of Education's (MOE) National Training Agency was identified as an alternative organisation to manage a redesigned project. The MOE has a programme in place to establish new Centers for Educational Training (CETs). The programme calls for the development and institutionalization of incubator programmes geared toward providing skills training, job placement and funding for young entrepreneurs. Given the successes identified in YSPL's entrepreneur programme, this is an alternative that merits consideration. However, since incubator programmes are part of the Government of Belize's development plan, the private sector may once again display a reluctance to become a partner to a government-sponsored and administered programme.

A second suggestion calls for consideration to be given to the idea of transferring some of YSPL's resources to a number of youth-related programmes such as the National Youth Cadet Services Corps, which targets 14 to 18, year old school dropouts and the unemployed. The programme provides them with academic and practical skills. Some of these resources should be channeled to the National 4-H Centre, another entity that seeks to impact the lives of young people with a track record. The private sector may again have some concerns about partnership with a government-run programme.

The conversion of the Board into an Oversight Committee and to give the Belize Chamber of Commerce or the Belize Business Bureau, which have structures and procedures in place, and which have the institutional capacity to provide financial and monitoring responsibility for the project. These two organisations are private sector based and, therefore, satisfy a major

component of the original YSPL Project's mandate. A related benefit is that since they are essentially private sector oriented, the partnership opportunities have a greater likelihood of being realized. Further, such an arrangement holds good prospects for project sustainability.

A fourth suggestion comes from the YWCA, whose administrators would like to see more funds allocated to the organization itself so that it may continue to provide increased numbers of training programmes in life skills, remedial education, job-specific, and other human resource-development initiatives.

## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 On July 11, 1997, the Government of Belize and the Inter American Development Bank, acting in its capacity as Administrator of the Multilateral Investment Fund, signed an agreement granting non-reimbursable resources for the technical cooperation for Youth Start Plan.
- 1.2 The purpose of the contribution was to cooperate in the financing and the expenditures required for the realization of a technical cooperation programme for youth training in Belize. The Programme objectives were to:
  - 1.2.1 Implement an efficient labour market brokerage system, that could be replicated within the vocational training system in the country; and
  - 1.2.2 Evaluate and execute strategies, methodologies, and procedures to help young people enter into productive life, providing them with the specialization and skill levels that the private sector demands.
- 1.3 The project was carried out by Youth start Plan Limited as Executing Agency.
- 1.4 Four years after the signing of the agreement, the IDB contracted Valiant Consulting Group Limited (*Valiant*) to undertake this ex-post evaluation of YSPL in July 2001. Given its commitment to development, the IDB wishes to determine, among other things, what lessons can be learned from this project that can inform future development interventions.
- 1.5 The exercise was conducted over the period: July 2001 to September 2001.



## **2.0 Terms of Reference**

- 2.1 The Terms of Reference for this exercise, required the Consultants to travel to Belize and conduct a series of field activities with the Youth Start Plan's (YSPL) authorities and staff; training providers; representatives of the local business community and former trainees to:
- 2.1.1 Seek to establish the project's efficiency during execution based on the activity and component level. Assess if:
- a) activities were organized in the most appropriate manner;
  - b) inputs were supplied and managed; and
  - c) activities and inputs were conducted at the least cost to produce the expected results.
- 2.2 Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the project based on the extent to which goals and purpose were achieved. The consultant will seek to establish if:
- 2.2.1 outputs were as expected;
  - 2.2.2 the outputs achieved led to fulfillment of purpose; and
  - 2.2.3 purpose realization contributed to the project's goal.
- 2.3 Review the project to gauge its impact and effect, both planned and unplanned consequences. Evaluate why anticipated effects and impacts were not achieved.
- 2.4 Review and analyze the extent of participation of private firms and individuals; entrepreneurs in the programme as employers, mentors, financial intermediaries and contributors to demand driven skills training approach. Cite possible reasons for results.
- 2.5 Evaluate the progress to set in place the Labour Market Brokerage System geared toward better placement of young work force entrants into wage earning

- jobs and income generating schemes and in following trainees performance in their work places and businesses.
- 2.6 Review the functioning of the Board, its impact on the project and the Board's role in the project's execution.
  - 2.7 Evaluate achievement of number of youth trained, trainees' placement and disbursement targets. Also evaluate the number and achievements of trained persons in small/micro-enterprise self-employment fields.
  - 2.8 Assess steps taken to implement recommendations of mid-term evaluation and possible impact on the Project's final achievement.
  - 2.9 Evaluate identification and selection process of training providers to conduct set training programmes. Also appraise Youth Start's capacity to monitor and evaluate execution of training programmes and to provide administrative, financial management and other technical assistance to training providers.
  - 2.10 Evaluate the progress made establishing a partnership between Youth Start Plan and collaborating training providers by means of promoting their abilities for identifying training opportunities, developing training programmes and conducting them, and complementing them with a placement scheme.
  - 2.11 Delineate and expound on lessons learned from the project with regard to:
    - 2.11.1 relevance;
    - 2.11.2 performance and the achievement of its objectives;
    - 2.11.3 utilization of resources; and
    - 2.11.4 usefulness of project.
  - 2.12 Assess Youth Start Plan's technical and organisational capacity to accomplish objectives and targets set in the programme. Also propose a possible new structure as the project evolves to address new objectives.

### **3.0 Deliverables**

- 3.1 A final report including the results of the findings and comments raised by parties involved in the programme. The report should also include a set of recommendations for a proposed way forward and the immediate future of the Programme.

### **4.0 Methodology**

- 4.1 In order to inform the evaluation, *Valiant* undertook a three-level approach to the data-gathering component of this exercise:

#### **4.2 Desk Review**

- 4.2.1 A comprehensive desk review was undertaken. This entailed securing, studying and reviewing all desk material on the project, including the original project plan, the mid-term review, the minutes of Board meetings, and all available and accessible reports and documents from YSPL and the various stakeholders.

#### **4.3 Interviews with Key Stakeholders**

- 4.3.1 A list of stakeholders interviewed in connection with this study is presented at Appendix B. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with various stakeholders, including board members, government officials, IADB representatives, staff members, training providers and beneficiaries. These interviews took the form of individual (one-on-one) and focus group sessions. The interviews followed a structured format to elicit detailed information about the running of the programme.
- 4.3.2 The approach sought to identify as many stakeholders, as possible so as to ensure the information gleaned was from a representative group and

only to be a public or government entity but more importantly, to be subject to interference. This perception would prevail and was seen as inhibiting the development of the desired private sector partnerships - a critical success factor.

- 5.2 Another impediment was that of location. YSPL's offices were located on the ground floor of the building that houses the office of the Department of Youth Affairs away from the main centre of business activity. A further drawback was the condition of the physical facilities, which lack basic infrastructure. E.g. air - conditioning and internal toilet facilities.
- 5.3 A number of stakeholders expressed the view that the first executive manager of YSPL was not a good fit for the organisation. Members of staff, for example, expressed their frustration at the level of difficulty experienced in gaining access to some of the programme's resources, including the project's automobile. This proved to have a negative impact on the start up phase of the operations, a factor that impinged heavily upon the project's ability to fulfill its mandate over the life cycle.
- 5.4 A significant number of stakeholders contend that the project had a design flaw evident in a conspicuous absence of any local input. The environment within which the project was being implemented reflects a society in which there are significant challenges regarding the skills level and the aptitude of the target population. Targeting marginal groups in society for non-traditional training without building into the project a provision for remedial training and life skills proved to be dysfunctional. A component that would provide for such remedial training would have a higher probability of yielding the expected outcomes. Further, a number of stakeholder groups, such as the Chamber of Commerce and the YWCA, already had the institutional capacity to address some of the concerns and could have played a facilitative role in furthering the project's objectives. The development of strategic alliances with these organisations could

have provided significant and substantive organisational and institutional resources into YSPL in the pursuit of the project's objectives.

- 5.5 Many stakeholders expressed their concern with at the design of the project from the point of view of the form of organisation. YSPL was designed to be a limited liability company. In part, this was in keeping with the stated orientation towards private sector partnership, mentoring, and development. At the same time, however, its image was that of another social support agency, like many other multilateral aid programmes. There was some confusion as to whether the project was a business masquerading as an aid programme or vice versa. This lack of clarity proved to impede implementation due to ideological differences between those who viewed YSPL's objectives as more conducive to public sector policies and those who viewed it as being more amenable to private sector initiatives.

## **6.0 PROJECT PERFORMANCE**

- 6.1 As indicated above, the environment in which the project was implemented resulted in the loss of the first year of its life cycle, a development that severely reduced its chances for success. The loss of this year produced a domino effect in terms of the critical deliverables of the project. This point of view seems to be widespread among all stakeholder groups.
- 6.2 An essential output of the project was the creation of a demand-driven, labour market brokerage system that would be informed by a labour market survey. This deliverable has not yet been achieved. The labour market survey, which was commissioned after a more than a year had elapsed, was submitted to the Board only toward the end of December 2000, almost three-and-a-half years since the signing of the agreement. The initial draft was rejected by the Board and by the IDB. This turn of events meant that a major component of the project was never developed, resulting in a vital information gap.

- 6.3 The Project documentation identified the provision of non-traditional training. This was interpreted to include: child-care, computer repair, electronics, construction and broadcasting. Further, no provision was made for pre-training interventions to prepare targeted trainees with the behavioural skills that would equip them to adapt to the formal training environment and benefit from the intended transfer of skills and abilities.
- 6.4 No pilot testing was undertaken. A pilot programme would have identified some of the flaws and would have provided an opportunity for redesign/adjustment to suit local conditions.
- 6.5 Notwithstanding the deficiencies described above, there had been some successes, YSPL estimates that between 250 and 300 individuals received training from programmes instituted since July 1998, approximately 90 of whom were trained between December 2000 and May 2001. A further 72 benefited from a creative placement incentive programme initiated by YSPL in February 2001. Table I lists details of training courses conducted under the first three programmes and the number of beneficiaries.

**Table 1: Training Courses and Trainees**

<b>Training Courses Offered</b>	<b>No: of trainees</b>
Audio Technician	9
Barbering	25
Auto Mechanic	2
Monitor and PC Repair	7
Culinary Arts	8
Hospitality Management	21
Diesel Mechanics	16
PC Repair	10
Survival Skills 2000	21
Small Business	29
Construction	9
Daycare	18
Broadcasting	13
TV/VCR Repair	13
Computer Networking	16
Entrepreneurs	6
<b>Total Trained</b>	<b>223</b>

### **6.7 Ad-hoc Market Survey Driven Training Programmes**

In the absence of a demand-driven, labour market brokerage system, YSPL conducted its own ad-hoc surveys, which was used as the information base to provide training programmes for approximately 150-190 individuals. Some of the training courses are shown in the table above.

## **6.8 Demand-Driven Training Programmes**

The second training programme was considered to be demand-driven because it was informed by the outputs of the commissioned labour market survey. Some 50 to 60 persons were trained under this programme; however, only 35 to 40 per cent of the graduates were placed in jobs. This was due to the contractual arrangements between YSPL and the training providers and to the absence of placement opportunities at the end of the training period. This sample of training programmes does not seem to accurately reflect labour market needs in the economy, it therefore raises validity and reliability questions about the usefulness of the survey as a decision support tool in its present form.

## **6.9 The Hospitality Training and Food Service Programme**

The third training programme indicated a joint endeavor between YSPL, the YWCA and the Centre for Educational Training (CET). A total of 30 students participated in this programme of hospitality management (food preparation) and training as waiters and waitresses. All but two of the students graduated from the programme and were placed in jobs.

## **6.10 Placement Incentive Programme**

6.10.1 The most effective performance indicator of a useful partnership between YSPL and the private sector was a creative initiative undertaken in February 2001: a Placement Incentive Programme. Under this programme, YSPL contributes 50 per cent of an employee's salary if a participating employer accesses a young person recommended by YSPL. YSPL targeted to recruit 50 businesses for this special programme, with the expectation that each business would hire two persons. An overall target of 100 individuals to be gainfully employed by February 28, 2001. (See Table 2. for programme summary data)



The target population was aged between 16 and 29. The mechanics of the placement incentive were as follows:

- a) The Placement Officer contacted businesses to determine their immediate staffing needs and encouraged them to participate in the programme.
- b) The Placement Officer solicited and reviewed the applications of prospective employees, assessing their skills, and seeking to match those skills with the stated needs of the prospective employers.
- c) The successful applicant is then assigned to the prospective employer, as agreed. If the employer is satisfied with the employee's performance at the end of the probationary period, the employer is expected to retain the employee's services and absorb the cost of full salary.

6.10.2 A total of 237 individuals coming from all six districts in Belize and representing 3.8 per cent of the country's unemployed labour force registered with YSPL to participate in this programme. During the same period, a total of 66 businesses registered; however, only 40 actually utilized the placement programme. A total of 125 vacancies were identified by businesses during this period. By the end of February 2001, a total of 72 were gainfully employed and by April 2001, the incentive programme had enabled a total of 89 persons to find employment as masons, clerks, cooks, shop-assistants, carpenters, drivers, messengers, mechanics, teachers, technicians, welders and electricians. 17 persons benefited from the programme despite the fact that they failed to enroll before the deadline. Only 5 persons were unable to complete the 12-week work period resulting in a total of 67 persons who remained gainfully employed following the end of the probationary period. Table 2 refers.

6.10.3 The Placement Incentive Programme experienced a dropout rate that ranged between 3 and 6 per cent. One reason for this was that there was a mismatch of expectations of the position in terms of job description, remuneration and job status.

6.10.4 Business owners indicate a willingness to continue their participation in any similar programme. Their interest is not driven by the financial incentive but by the fact that the programme provided them an opportunity to find good employees. The programme offers several benefits:

- a) An opportunity to find a suitable employee in a relatively short time;
- b) A reduction in staff turnover rates;
- c) A chance to weed out unqualified applicants; and
- d) . An opportunity to find individuals for position that is not easily filled.

**Table 2 - Placement Incentive Programme**

<b>Employers Registered</b>	<b>Employers interested in Programme</b>	<b>Gainfully employed beneficiaries</b>	<b>Employed persons who were part of Programme</b>	<b>Persons unable to complete Programme</b>	<b>Placement out of Programme After (sign-up) deadline</b>
66	40	89	72	5	17
<b>Finance</b>					
<b>Budgeted</b>			<b>Utilized</b>		
<b>\$100,000.00 (Bze) - IDB Funds</b>  \$90,000.00 (Bze) for Placement Incentive Programme - contribution toward salaries of employees.  \$10,000.00 (Bze) promotions, recruiting and monitoring and evaluation.			<b>\$64,626.51 (Bze)</b>  \$57,429.51 (Bze) for Placement Incentive Programme - contribution toward salaries of employees.  \$7,197.00 (Bze) promotions, recruiting and monitoring and evaluation.		

- 6.10.5 Business owners indicate that they are willing to pay a fee for this type of service especially since it eliminates the paper work and search time required to fill vacancies.
- 6.10.6 The Placement Incentive Programme could have been more successful had the age range of participants been widened. A number of prospective employees wanted more mature individuals. For example, a number of jobs are available off shore on the Cays. These positions require that the employee be away from his/her family for weeks at a time. A number of the younger prospects did not seem prepared to make this adjustment. Any future programmes should take this point into consideration.

### **6.11 Entrepreneurship Programme**

- 6.11.1 Table 1 shows that six persons participated in the Entrepreneurship Programme, three of whom were interviewed during the field exercise and in all three cases, the programme produced life changing and life enriching results. Two of these beneficiaries are barbers living in the town of Orange Walk, while the other is a new day-care owner living in Belize City.
- 6.11.2 The first tangible benefit of the training manifested itself in increased earnings. By acquiring the skills and learning to provide barbering services to a wider ethnic mix, both barbers are now able to attract a larger and wider client base, resulting in increased revenues. Another factor contributing to the increased level of patronage is the credentialing gained through certification.

- 6.11.3 The two barbers interviewed stated emphatically that the training has provided them with business skills and knowledge that they did not possess previously. Based on their training and the assistance they received in developing their loan proposals, they can now draw up a business plan and can confidently approach the bank for a loan. They both are up-to-date in their loan repayment schedules with the Small Farmers Business Bank, the financial intermediary secured by YSPL.
- 6.11.4 A third beneficiary received training in day-care provisioning and day-care management. Subsequent to her training programme, she, with the assistance of YSPL's staff, developed a loan proposal, and was successful in negotiating finance to open her own day-care establishment. The Bank's manager pointed out that he was most impressed by the details of the loan proposal in terms of its comprehensiveness, including the rationalization and justification for the submission. It was clear to him that the applicant had researched the industry, identified a niche, and proposed to undertake a series of measures to publicize the business and its unique offering.
- 6.11.5 It would appear that, notwithstanding the lack of statistical support from a labour market brokerage system, the entrepreneurial component of YSPL's project had the potential for success. The provision of training to develop young entrepreneurs is clearly one positive outcome of the project.

## **6.12 Other Beneficiaries**

- 6.12.1 The YWCA was contracted by YSPL to train day-care providers and delivered an intensive 6-month training programme. The modules included general education, human development, business management

and life skills. A total of 20 persons participated in the programme and 16 (80 per cent) completed it successfully. Upon completion, one secured a loan to open her own business and hired two of her fellow graduates. Another graduate underwent the training in order to assume managerial responsibilities at a new day-care centre. The rest of the graduates have all been placed.

6.12.2 As a result of the programme, the YWCA plans to conduct a 6-week training course in day-care management — the business side of the service — in October 2001 in Belize City and throughout the rest of the country. The YWCA is also creating a nationwide registry of day-care providers, which will serve as brokerage for families seeking day-care services.

6.12.3 The training programme has also created opportunities for inter-institutional linkages between the YWCA and the Ministry of Education with the joint goal of developing a certification programme and standards for the industry.

6.12.4 A focus group session with five beneficiaries of training in day-care provision reveals a highly successful programme that has produced dramatic and profound changes in the lives of participants. The positives are clearly discernible in changes in attitude, modes of dress, self-discipline, punctuality and self-esteem. Features largely absent at the beginning were clearly discernible by the end of the programme. The graduation ceremony and the presentation of certificates was psychologically most rewarding for the trainees because it was the first time that many had ever received an award for any achievement or accomplishment. Individuals feel that they possess a marketable skill, which has imbued them with a newfound sense of confidence. The training and the acquired skill provide an opportunity for gainful

employment, self-reliance and providing a much needed community service.

### **6.13 Broadcasting**

6.13.1 YSPL and the RSVL, Ltd. Group of radio stations contracted to develop a training programme for broadcasters. A total of 13 trainees participated in the programme, all of whom graduated. Twelve of them are still working in the broadcast industry. RSVL's receptionist achieved the highest performance rating on the course and was subsequently promoted to broadcaster. LOVE-FM with UNESCO providing a scholarship for her to attend UWI, Mona to pursue a programme in broadcast journalism.

6.13.2 RSVL Group, which led in market share prior to the programme, continues to maintain that lead and remains the choice among listeners for news and music. Surveys indicate improvement in quality of broadcast and programming. The training programme has also fostered an inter-institutional linkage between RSVL and UWI School of Continuing Education in Belize. The goal is to develop a certificate programme in broadcasting.

### **6.14 T.V. Repair Programme**

6.14.1 Five graduates of this programme were available for interviews. They all expressed the enormous benefit they obtained from being involved in the programme. One participant indicated that he had no knowledge of the subject when he started and at the end he was able to repair a Television set, which he had bought at a profit, and use that as seed money for tools. The trainees were all high in praise of the tutor who

delivered not only in the technical skills are but also taught them life skills and work ethics.

## **6.15 Organizational Architecture**

### **Composition of the Board**

- 6.15.1 Stakeholders expressed different points of view regarding the structure and composition of YSPL's Board. The project called for a 7:3 ratio of private sector members to public sector members. The thinking seems to have been that while the project was skewed to private sector partnering, a Board that was heavily weighted toward private sector participation and input would in all likelihood contribute more effectively to the project's success.
- 6.15.2 Theoretically and ideologically, this arrangement made sense. Practically, however, it did not reflect present reality. As mentioned earlier, the perception is that the Board's composition resulted more from government nominations rather than a concerted drive to recruit competent and committed individuals. For example, some of the private sector members of the Board felt that their public sector counterparts were not committed to the project. The suggestion was made that some of these individuals saw Board meetings as merely opportunities to get a break from their offices. Moreover, when they attended meetings, not only were they often late, but their participation was minimal.
- 6.15.3 Private sector members were not viewed in the most favorable light by their public sector counterparts. The view of the public sector members was that the Board was too heavily skewed towards private sector membership, who were not fully committed to assist with the development of the skills of the less fortunate. They argue that remedies for a social problem — the development and empowerment of

## **7.0 Organizational Capacity**

- 7.1 A number of factors strongly influenced YSPL's performance; one of the most important was the organization's capacity. The lack of a formal strategic plan and supporting operational plans and procedures impeded the nurturing of a sense of direction for the organisation in terms of a mission, vision and strategic objectives. It is also suggested that YSPL's mission and vision were never fully articulated to all stakeholders.
- 7.2 YSPL did not access the consultancy support of a project advisor as was available under the terms of the project document. The proposals received were considered too costly and did not clearly lend themselves to traceable transfer of skills to support future sustainability.
- 7.3 Evidence suggests that inadequate physical plant contributed in some measure to the under-performance of the project. Insufficient and inappropriate office equipment, together with less than congenial surroundings, affected both worker morale and worker productivity. Further, the state of technology and the level of usage of that technology also contributed to the project's poor performance. The office often lacked the technological resources it needed to function effectively and efficiently. And in some cases where the technology was available, members of staff had not been adequately trained in its use. Moreover, inadequate technology prevented YSPL from maintaining a comprehensive database to support its ongoing activities.

### **7.4 YSPL's Management**

- 7.4.1 The general impression given is that YSPL's executive management appointees were not a good fit. For example, the first general manager also performed as a campaign manager for a candidate in the General elections and his activities impinged negatively on his ability to pursue



YSPL's objectives. In another instance, the manager was technically competent in the programme areas of the project but did not possess the requisite level of organisational and managerial skills. In yet another instance, the manager was said to possess the requisite organisational and managerial skills but did not have the technical competence and was unwilling to seek advice and support from those who had the requisite competencies.

- 7.4.2 Ineffective management resulted in low levels of confidence in the manager, reduced levels of enthusiasm for YSPL's mission, and low morale among staff. Management often failed to provide a clear sense of direction. As a result, many administrative decisions were undertaken in an ad-hoc manner. In a number of cases, management failed to implement directives and meet targets specified by the Board.

## **7.5 Support Staff**

YSPL's success depended on a number of factors, not the least of which were the capacity of the staff, the quality of leadership available, and the resources provided. However, it appears that at no time during the life of the project did YSPL have the full complement of staff. For example, there were times when YSPL often did not have a Training Officer and a Placement Officer on staff at the same time. Both officers were necessary to complement each other's activities and, consequently, ensuring the smooth running of the project. In a number of cases, a period of approximately six months elapsed before a vacancy was filled. Effective staff performance was further inhibited by the fact that individuals often lacked the requisite skills and knowledge base necessary to discharge the responsibilities of their jobs.

## **8.0 Summary Findings**

### **Institutional Profile**

8.1 There is overwhelming evidence to support the view that the project provided immense benefits to members of the target population, who received much needed skills training. The programme expanded their horizons, impacted their psyches and improved their self-esteem. The project also sensitized stakeholders to the needs and issues affecting the target population. In some instances, new partnerships were forged and inter-institutional linkages developed. However, the project elements could have approached optimal impact and could have reached a wider base had the requisite structures, procedures and resources been provided. A number of beneficiaries, including members of the target population, the major training providers, and members of the private sector welcome, support and desire continuation of the project and the services offered with some retooling and redesigning. The suggestions emanating are listed below:

8.1.1 The Ministry of Education's (MOE) National Training Agency was identified as an alternative organisation to manage a redesigned project. The MOE has a programme in place that will establish new Centers for Educational Training (CETs). The programme calls for the development and institutionalization of incubator programmes geared toward providing skills training, job placement and funding for young entrepreneurs. Incubator programmes are geared toward private sector development and, therefore, are consistent with the aims and objectives of YSPL. Given the successes identified in YSPL's entrepreneur programme, this is an alternative that merits consideration.

8.1.2 The one drawback to this suggestion relates to the prospective partnership opportunities with the private sector. As was determined, the perception of significant levels of bureaucratic interference with

YSPL contributed to the lukewarm relationship between YSPL and the private sector. Given that the CETs and the incubator programmes are part of the Government of Belize's development plan, the private sector may once again display a reluctance to become a partner to a government-sponsored and administered programme.

- 8.2 A second suggestion calls for consideration to be given to the idea of transferring some of YSPL's resources to a number of youth-related programmes such as the National Youth Cadet Services Corps, which targets 14 to 18, year old school dropouts and the unemployed. The programme provides them with academic and practical skills. Some of these resources should be channeled to the National 4-H Centre, another entity that seeks to impact the lives of young people with a track record.
- 8.2.1 A note of concern might be raised by the private sector against a partnership with the National Youth Cadet Corps on the basis of it being a government-run programme.
- 8.3 The conversion of the Board into an Oversight Committee and to give the Belize Chamber of Commerce or the Belize Business Bureau, which have structures and procedures in place, and which have the institutional capacity to provide financial and monitoring responsibility for the project.
- 8.3.1 There are several advantages to this suggestion. Firstly, the fact that these two organisations are private sector based and, consequently, satisfies a major component of the original YSPL Project's mandate. A related benefit is that since they are essentially private sector oriented, the partnership opportunities have a greater likelihood of being realized. Further, such an arrangement holds good prospects for project sustainability. If this alternative is selected, a decision will have to be taken as to which of these organisation is the most favoured partner.

Views have been expressed favourably for both organisations perhaps the fit in organisation.

- 8.4 A fourth suggestion comes from the YWCA, whose administrators would like to see more funds allocated to the organization itself so that it may continue to provide increased numbers of training programmes in life skills, remedial education, job-specific, and other human resource-development initiatives.

## **9.0 Lessons of Experience**

### **Relevance**

- 9.1 In the developing world, a significant number of projects fail to meet their stated objectives while there is growing pressure to use resources as efficiently as possible. It is essential that projects are examined at the end of their life cycle to determine the factors and their ranking which contributed to success or failure. A limitation is the absence of baseline information at the start of the project. Four variables will be used as indicators in assessing the project outcomes. The variables are relevance, performance and achievement of objectives, utilization of resources and usefulness of the project. The project memorandum listed Belize as eligible for Multilateral Investment Fund Financing. This eligibility was cited as due to the high rate of unemployment especially among young people. The project therefore had a high level of relevance to the country's existing socioeconomic conditions. While the target number of trainees was not achieved those who were exposed benefited through the acquisition of new skills which impacted the quality of life.

programme conducted over the period February to July represent value for money as the results tabulated at Table 2 show.

### **Usefulness of the Project.**

- 9.4 The project demonstrated that the labour situation in Belize could be impacted positively through appropriate partnering using demand driven mechanisms:
- Placement incentive programme
  - YMCA training;
  - TV/ VCR repair;
  - Positive moves for certification by trainers; and
  - Participation/partnering by entrepreneurs, financial intermediaries, employers, and trainers, private sector and government. What is left to be achieved is the development of appropriate governance and administrative mechanisms to support sustainability without duplication of existing systems.

## **10. Conclusions**

It seems that there is a clear way forward for benefiting from the lessons learnt. This can be achieved through an orderly transfer of the assets of the Youth Start Ltd. to the management of a non-profit organisation like the Chamber of Commerce/ Belize Business Bureau with representatives of the existing board and IADB officials having oversight responsibility to convert to a full fee for service placement and training organisation after a reasonable period.

## **Performance and the achievement of the objectives**

9.2 The project had two key objectives:

- To implement an efficient labour market brokerage system and
  - To evaluate and execute strategies, methodologies, and procedures to help young people enter into productive life, providing them with the specialization and skills levels that the private sector demands.
- Targets were set, key among them being the training of 400 persons in pre-employment wage earning skills and the training of 100 persons in small micro enterprise fields. The volume of trainees were not met in each case but based on the change in quality of life, business skills of those who participated the program can be deemed to have had some positive outcomes and impacts in the area of the Youth Training. However, the goal of the labour market brokerage system has not been achieved. This is the greatest area of under performance. The preliminary results made available suffer from design flaws in the area of user access and retrieval . In an environment where no recent labour market diagnostic studies existed, the survey represented a quantum leap. A less sophisticated and less costly method of providing the data as an interim system would have been more feasible. Moreover, the survey process should have been piloted for one sector, tested for utility before the grand project was embarked upon. The experience and positive results of the pilot Placement Initiative bear testimony to this approach.

### **Utilisation of Resources.**

9.3 The project adhered to the bank's guidelines for procurement as this was closely monitored .The resources consumed for the procurement of training achieved some measurable results. However, the Placement incentive

## **Appendix A**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

#### **A - PROJECT ENVIRONMENT**

1. How did you first become aware of the existence of YSPL?
2. How did you first receive information about YSPL and from what source?
3. Based on your knowledge of the local condition in Belize, what is your view of the likelihood of the YSPL achieving results as constituted:
  - a. At start up
  - b. 2 years after start up
  - c. During last 12 months

#### **B – PROJECT PERFORMANCE**

1. How did YSPL go about identifying training needs?
2. How did YSPL identify users of its Labour Market Brokerage System?
3. How did YSPL identify candidates for entrepreneurship training and support?
4. Comment on present and previous partnerships between YSPL and employers, financial institutions, funding sources, training providers, NGOs and other volunteer agencies.
5. What methods did YSPL utilize to assess the effectiveness of its training programme, its placement system and its entrepreneurship programme?
6. Did YSPL conduct Tracer Studies?
  - a. If yes, please explain what (types of) Tracer Studies were used?

**ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY**

1. Was YSPL's mission and vision clearly articulated and understood by and shared with all stakeholders?
2. How were programme decisions made and information disseminated?
3. Were decisions made and information disseminated in a timely fashion?
4. Were impacts of decisions measured?
5. How did YSPL recruit staff?
6. What type of internal controls existed?
7. Were programmes reviewed?
8. Were continuous periodic assessments of programme activities done, e.g. *Value For Money* audits?
9. Did the Organization have the appropriate information, management systems and architecture to support its operations, e.g., baseline data on labour statistics, skills requirements and skills database?
10. How did YSPL establish partnerships?
11. Were these relationships supportive or dysfunctional?
12. Which aspects of YSPL's activities were seen as successful by:
  - a. Youth?
  - b. The private sector?
  - c. The Government?
  - d. The Board?
  - e. The Staff?
13. Has YSPL pursued external linkages adequate to support its performance?
14. To what extent has the technology platform affected YSPL's performance?
15. Are the Organization's facilities adequate to support its performance?



## **Appendix B**

### **Persons Interviewed**

Shawn Gill, Director of Youth, YSPL Board member, and former YSPL staff member  
Kevin Herrera, Director Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry  
Nancy Namis, CEO Ministry of Economic Development, and Board Member,  
Shaun Finnerty, Board Chair, Sylvia Cattuse, Board Member  
Julian Castillo, Former Chairman of the inaugural Board,  
Consuelo Godfrey, Board member, Youth Rep, Women's Issues Network  
Jose Novello, Board member (longest serving) Director, Belltrade  
Sylvia Catuse, Board member, Lecturer, Dept of Business, University of Belize.  
Dr. Zabaneh, Advisor to Minister of Finance.  
Hugo Sousa, IDB Country Representative  
William Neal, IDB Project Officer  
Evan Cayteno, Former Project Officer for Youth Start  
Reuben Perdomo, General Manager, Small Farmers Business Bank Ltd.  
Herbert Haylock: Consultant  
Cindy Castillo: Administrative Officer YSPL  
Monica Martinez, Part-time Office Assistant YSPL  
Miguel Usher, Placement Officer YSPL  
Sandra Bradshaw, former training Coordinator.  
Kenroy Ellis, Former Executive Director.

Cecil Reneau, Chief Education Officer, Government of Belize  
Edicta Ciego, Administrative Officer, Ministry of Tourism, Broadcasting and Youth.  
Myrtle Humes, Financial Officer and CEO. Ministry of Tourism Broadcasting and Youth  
Sonia Lenares, Executive Director, YWCA

Julia Carrillo, Administrative Officer RSVL, Ltd  
Mrs. Garcia Palacio, WorldCom Technologies Limited

Jaime Briceno, Business Partner  
Aldo Munez, Entrepreneur (Barber)  
Enrique Cal, Entrepreneur (Barber)  
Joan Burrell, Entrepreneur (Daycare Owner)  
Delise Flowers, Entrepreneur (New Daycare Owner)  
Celia Wills (New Daycare Manager)  
Stephanie Norales, Angela  
Magdaleno Cuthkelvin  
Elenor Cuthkelvin.  
Felix Mia, Broadcaster  
Elroy Tucker., TV/VCR repair  
Miguel Lara, TV/VCR repair  
Rick Sosa, TV/VCR repair  
Raymond Crown, TV/VCR repair

## Appendix C

### Value Commitments of Stakeholders

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Beneficiaries</b>	<b>Board /Staff</b>	<b>Private Sector</b>	<b>Training Providers</b>	<b>Funding Agencies</b>	<b>Govt. Reps.</b>
Sustainability	Enlargement of the placement programme	Strategic Visioning	Organisation capacity	Post Training follow up and placement	Value for money	Community Impact
Lessons of experience	Provision of supporting soft skills/life skills	Project design	Reduced bureaucracy	More emphasis on certification	Future design influences	Wider catchment group
Governance		Improvement of relationships	Skewed towards government members		Procurement procedures	Allocation of resources
Infrastructure	More central location.	Improved technology	More central location	Labour force statistics		Communication links