

**BILATERAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR AND THE ST. KITTS AND NEVIS DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT**

Washington DC and Providence, Rhode Island, USA

06 to 10 November 2017

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**REPORT**

**Introduction**

Report on the St. Kitts and Nevis Department of Labour bilateral cooperation with the United States Department of Labour (USDOL) held over the period 06 to 10 November 2017 in Washington DC and Providence, Rhode Island, USA.

**Background**

Every year, during the months of January to March, the organization of American States (OAS) Inter-American Network for Labour Administration (RIAL) sends out a Call for Proposal for bilateral cooperation amongst member states.

The objective of “Bilateral Cooperation” under RIAL is to support institutional strengthening of the Ministries of Labour through direct technical cooperation among them. RIAL has funded nine-five (95) activities of this nature with excellent results that include the development of new services, the improvement of existing programmes, and the redesign of training activities, among other.

St. Kitts and Nevis participated in 2016 but was unsuccessful. During the Webinar held 16 February 2017 on the RIAL 10th Call for proposals for bilateral cooperation, Ms. Shernel James, Acting Labour Commissioner expressed interest in learning from countries that have strong experiences on promoting youth employment.    Ms. Chantenia Gay, Area Advisor for the Western Hemisphere, Office of International Relations, offered the assistance of the United States Department of Labour and Mrs. Maria Claudia Camacho who had knowledge of initiatives implemented by the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) at USDOL, thought it would be valuable for St. Kitts and Nevis to explore the possibility of collaborating.

The Department of Labour submitted a proposal on employment, especially in the area of youth employment and was successful.

**Bilateral Cooperation**

The cooperation took place under the auspices of the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL). RIAL is the cooperation mechanism of the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML) of the Organization of the American States (OAS). The objective of the cooperation was to facilitate bilateral and multilateral cooperation among the Ministries/Departments of Labour in the Western Hemisphere.

**Objectives**

The Departments of the United States and St. Kitts and Nevis exchanged information and best practices on youth employment programmes targeted toward the youths, the most vulnerable, and initiatives to promote youth employment. Staff training for youth employment officials was also an important part of the programme.

**Agenda**

The agenda was proposed by the USDOL and were vetted by RIAL and the Department of Labour via Go Meeting held on 14 August 2017. The Agenda included the following: -

* Information exchange with the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) on Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to include a focus on American Job Centers, youth employment programmes, and other USDOL initiatives
* Overview of the U.S. Department of Labour’s Job Corps Programme with a focus on Staff Training
* Overview of the U.S. Department of Labor’s Apprenticeship Programmes
* Overview of the U.S. Department of Labor’s Efforts to Support People with Disabilities
* Overview of the U.S. Department of Labor’s Job Corps Programme
* Roundtable with other government programmes serving vulnerable youth/persons
* Visit to the Rhode Island Department of Labour for practical experience on Youth Work Programmes, Apprentice Programmes, RIDOL netWORKri American Job Center, Exeter Job Corp Center.

**Delegation**

The USDOL requested that the St. Kitts and Nevis Department of Labour (SKNDOL) Delegation be headed by the Acting Labour Commissioner and include technical officers at a managerial or supervisory level. Therefore, delegation was comprised of the following: -

Shernel James – Labour Commissioner (Ag)

Deon Webb – Deputy Labour Commissioner (Ag)

Terrrel Storrod-Bass – Labour Officer - Unit Head Employment

Mr. Gary Liburd, Chief Labour Officer was expected to travel with the Delegation, but due family responsibilities was unable to travel.

**Activities & Findings**

**Washington DC**

The Bilateral cooperation took place over the period 06 to November 2017. On 06 November, the SKNDOL of Labour Delegation was briefed by the RIAL staff, Mrs. Maria Claudia Camacho and Ms. Aura Ospina.

**United States Department of Labour**

The Delegation then met with officials from the USDOL and RIAL and exchanged information on the American Job Center System, the Role and Responsibility of the US Employment Service and Youth Employment Investment.

The SKN Department of Labour Delegation was informed of the administration of these programmes. Introduced was the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Under this piece of legislation is the Workforce Development System, a public funded system in the United States. It is a local and business led network of federal, state, regional and local agencies and organisation that provide a range of employment, education, training, related services and support to jobseekers to secure food job while providing business with skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. Under the WIOA, the USDOL distributes over 3 billion dollars to states to operate skills training, education, apprenticeship programmes, etc.

The programme that made an impact was the Youth Summer Programme, whereby youth are offered summer work helping them to bridge the gap between the world of school and the world of work.

The SKN Department of Labour intends to implement a similar programme in 2018 and the information garnered was very useful for the planning and implementation of same.

The following day, the Delegation met with the USDOL staff and were given overviews on the US Apprenticeship Programmes, USDOL’s Efforts to Support Persons with Disabilities, Programmes Serving Vulnerable Youth and Occupational Safety and Health as it pertains to youth workers.

The SKN Department of Labour was grateful to receive additional information on OSH which will be used as a best practice for the Department.

The Delegation also met the US Department of Health and Human Services who gave presentations on Adolescence Pregnancy Prevention Programme and Youth and Family Services Programmes. This session was very interesting as the Delegation was given information that will best help in the implementation of various youth work programmes.

Four critical pieces of advice given were: -

1. Ensure that the necessary laws and policies are in place which will give legality and guidance to the programmes;
2. That these programmes must be included in the Department’s budget;
3. Private sector buying is critical for the sustainability of the programmes; and
4. Ensure that whatever youth programmes that will be implemented in St. Kitts and Nevis that there be inter-ministerial cooperation between the Departments responsible for Youth, Child Services and Education.

**Rhode Island**

The visit to Rhode Island was beneficial to the bilateral cooperation. It was in Rhode Island that the Delegation saw legislation and policies in action.

**Department of Labour & Training Rhode Island**

The Delegation first met with the Director, Department of Labour and Training, Mr Scott Jenson and was briefed on the Rhode Island Workforce Strategy which is a partnership between government and the private sector to creating job and advancing the workforce by seven thousand (7000) workers by 2019.

**RIDOL netWORKri American Job Center**

The Delegation visited the RIDOL netWORKri American Job Centers are Rhode Island's One-Stop Career Center System. The *net*WORKri centers assist jobseekers and employers in being matched through quality employment programmes and services. Whether it is the jobseeker looking for just the right job or an employer looking for qualified workers. The centers have all the resources to make it easy for them at no cost.

Mrs. Terrel Bass, Unit Head Employment, found this activity very useful. The information obtained from this tour will help the SKNDOL Employment Agency in its rebranding effort and its Youth Employment Programme.

**Youth Build Providence**

The Delegation also met Anthony Hubbard, Director Youth Build Providence. Youth Build provides pathways at risk youth from low-income families, giving them the opportunity to unleash their positive energy to rebuild their communities and their lives, breaking the cycle of poverty with a commitment to work, education, family, and community.  The Delegation dialogued with successful alumni of the programme; as well as, toured one of its construction projects.

**Apprenticeship Rhode Island & Building Futures**

The Delegation attended Apprenticeship Rhode Island Panel Discussion on Innovative Healthcare Apprenticeships: Showcasing Best Practices. This was one of the activities organised to celebrate National Apprenticeship Week 2017.

After the Panel Discussion, the Delegation met with Mr Andrew Cortes, Director of Building Futures and Apprenticeship Rhode Island. Mr Cortes gave the Delegation insightful information on how to successfully implement apprenticeship programmes which included: -

1. Apprenticeship is structured employment designed and driven by employers, which included classroom instruction combined with on the job learning. Also, it is customized by employers for specific needs.
2. It is a structured on the job training job-related education, includes wage progression and earned valued credentials.
3. Apprenticeship programmes can be implemented in the public sector but is driven by the private sector. Without private sector buy in, the programme will fail.
4. Policy and legislative guidance is paramount.
5. Trade Union plays an important role as many of the apprentices are unionised.
6. Start with a pilot programme with skills in construction or manufacturing and expand annually.
7. Partnership with national skills programmes, the Department of Education and TVET is important not only for certification but obtaining a pool of certified skill workers.
8. He explained that is what Building Future is all about, training workers for participating in apprenticeship programmes.

The Delegation was also given a tour of Building Futures Skills Programmes which caters to young men and women ages eighteen (18) to thirty-five (35) in construction technology. The mission of the programme is to meet employer and industry current and future need for skilled labour, while creating family-sustaining through opportunities for low-income, diverse residents.

**Exeter Job Corp**

The Delegation visited the Exeter Job Corp Center in Rhode Island which offers free-of-charge education and vocational training to young men and women ages 16 to 24.

The Team met with the Director and officials from the US Department of Labour for a brief overview of the Corp. This was followed by a tour of the facility and meet and greet with the trainees.

The Corp although it is a great youth employment initiative will require extensive human and capital resources and will take several years to be implemented. Also, it will require a multi-sectorial approach in order for Department to bring such an endeavour to fruition.

**Next Steps**

On the return of the Delegation to St. Kitts and Nevis, and after a review/evaluation was conducted, the following steps will be taken: -

1. Review and update the St. Kitts and Nevis Apprenticeship and Tradespersons' Qualification Act - Chapter 18.03 to include other forms of occupations that are not named in the Act. The National Tripartite Committee is presently consulting on a new labour code for St. Kitts and Nevis this review of the Apprenticeship and Tradespersons' Qualification Act - Chapter 18.03 is a priority.
2. Update and rebrand the Department of Labour Employment Agency.
3. Liaise with other Governmental Departments (Education, Skills Training Empowerment Program (STEP), Advanced Vocational Education Centre (AVEC) and the Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College Technical Wing, the private sector and workers representatives and consult on the creation of a youth apprenticeship programme. The Department anticipates this will take at least three years or more before implementation.

1. Consult with Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TEVT) for the certification of all apprentices.
2. Implementation of a Youth Summer Internship Programme dubbed “Upward Bound” to assist high schoolers to bridge gap between the world of school and the world of work.
3. Consult with the Ministry of Education to include into its high school curriculum, subjects such as ‘work ethics’ and ‘preparation for the world of work’, equipping school graduates (youth jobseekers) with soft skills that will give them an advantage upon entering the world of work.

**Evaluation and Recommendations**

**Evaluation**

The St. Kitts and Nevis Department of welcomed the opportunity to have participated in the Bilateral Cooperation with the US Department of Labour, our host.

The experience has helped the SKN Department of Labour gain more knowledge with regards to youth employment programmes, concepts of apprenticeship and other employment areas; whereby, the Department of Labour could upgrade the services it offers to jobseekers, most specially youth, the disabled and vulnerable persons.

The expose to different models and concepts were very useful to which the Department of Labour will take the best practices and use them to boost its youth employment programme and rebranding of its employment agency.

**Recommendations**

The Bilateral Cooperation with the US Department of Labour met its main objective of imparting best practices on youth employment programmes targeted toward the youths, the most vulnerable, and the initiatives to promote youth employment. However, a few logistical issues need to be reviewed; thus, the SKN Department of Labour recommends the following: -

1. That timing for the cooperation should be more than one week and so that the officers be given more hands-on experience as such would have been more beneficial.
2. The schedule should be more flexible to allow the participants adequate rest and digestion of knowledge gain.

**Acknowledgement**

The SKN Department of Labour wishes to express its sincerest thanks to the following persons and institutions: -

1. Mrs. Claudia Camacho and Ms. Aura Ospina of RIAL and the Organization of American States
2. United States Department of Labor
3. Ms. Chantenia Gay and Ms. Ethel Moreno and officers of the USDOL in Washington D.C.
4. Mr. Scott Jensen and staff of the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training
5. Mr. Anthony Hubbard, Director Youth Build Providence
6. Mr. Andrew Cortes, Director of Building Futures and Apprenticeship Rhode Island
7. Mr. Bernie Trimmel of the Maine Department of Labor
8. Officers of the US Department of Health Human Services
9. Director, staff and students of the Exeter Job Corps Center
10. The Government of St. Kitts and Nevis
11. Hon Vance Amory, Senior Minister and Minister of Labour et, al
12. Mr Ron Dublin-Collins, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour (St. Kitts)
13. Mr. Wakely Daniel, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour (Nevis)
14. Mr Gary Liburd, Department of Labour (Nevis)
15. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (St. Kitts and Nevis)
16. Ms Kimoy Liburd Chow of the St. Kitts and Nevis Permanent Mission in Washington, DC.

This report is hereby respectfully submitted for the attention of RIAL and the US Department of Labour.



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Shernel C. James (Ms.)

Labour Commissioner (Ag)



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Deon Webb (Mr.)

Deputy Labour Commissioner



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Terrel Storrod-Bass (Mrs.)

Employment Unit Head