

**TECHNICAL COOPERATION ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT**

**FROM THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY OF JAMAICA**

**TO THE MINISTRIES OF LABOUR OF BARBADOS,**

**GRENADA, SAINT KITTS & NEVIS AND SAINT LUCIA**

Kingston, Jamaica

10 – 14 September 2018

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**REPORT**

**Introduction**

Report on the on the Youth Employment from The Ministry of Labour And Social Security of Jamaica to the Ministries 0f Labour of Barbados, Grenada, Saint Kitts & Nevis And Saint Lucia held over the period 10 to 14 September in Kingston Jamaica.

**Background**

Jamaica through a series of youth programmes and initiatives addressing youth, such as Ministry of Labour of Labour and Social Security On the Job Training Programme, the Housing, Opportunities, Production, Employment (HOPE) Programme, the Youth Upliftment Through Education (YUTE), and specific efforts of the Human Employment And Resource Training (HEART) Trust / National Training Agency (NTA) have been recognized as some of the most promising efforts in the Caribbean to combat the high levels of youth unemployment. This was especially clear during the Regional Forum “Towards Concrete Solutions to Addressing Youth Unemployment in the Caribbean”, held in Bridgetown, Barbados on 06 December 2017, in the framework of the XX Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour (IACML) of the OAS.

As a follow-up to this Forum, the OAS selected a proposal submitted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Partnership Relations of Barbados to the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL), to learn first-hand, the Jamaica’s experience. Later and also as a follow-up to the Forum, the Ministries of Labour of Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Lucia were also invited to participate, thanks to the generosity and willingness to cooperation of the Government of Jamaica.

**Objectives**

The objective of the cooperation included: -

1. Engage those agencies that have created interventions and or programmes that are effective in bridging the transition between school and the world of work;
2. Examine any projections and labour market trends that influence the directions of studies/curricula for prospective young workers;
3. Understand the processes/steps used by Jamaica to determine how best these can be applied or adapted to each of the participating countries situations;
4. Engage policy makers and some persons from the business community that actively participate in youth employment interventions to discuss labour policies and linkages to education and youth policies with a view of revisiting and revising each country’s policies and creating plans of action for necessary adjustments by the various policy makers; and
5. Have a general discussion on how to create that buy-in and commitment to addressing those identified gaps in the various policies and or the needs of the various players—government, private sector employers and the youth.

**Agenda**

The Agenda included: -

* An overview of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security Manpower Service and the Planning Research and Monitoring Units. observational tours of operations who have undertaken intervention programme which promote youth employment or are bridging the gap that exists.
* Meetings with the Directors of Social Security and the Planning Institute of Jamaica, programmes such as Steps to Work, the Housing Opportunities Production Employment (HOPE), Youth Upliftment Through Education (YUTE), New Employment Opportunities for Youth (NEO), Human Employment and Resource Training (HEART) Trust / National Training Agency (NTA), Ministry of Education/TVET,
* A tour of Ministry of Labour and Social Security Electronic Labour Exchange (ELE)

Department to facilitate dialogue on the ELE’s approaches, its stakeholders who have assisted in alleviating unemployment and to provide solutions to challenges associated with the transition from school to work.

On site visits to selected companies participating youth employment programmes and discussions surrounding their involvement and participation

**Delegation**

The Technical Cooperation was initially planned for Jamaica to host the Ministry of Labour, et al from Barbados, because of the presentation made by Mr Lyndon Ford, Director of the ELE at the Regional Forum on Youth Employment in the Caribbean, in December 2017, several other countries indicated to RIAL their interest to learn more about Jamaica’s experience and as such RIAL with the cooperation of the Jamaican Government extended the cooperation to the ministries of Labour of Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis and Saint Lucia.

Representing St. Kitts and Nevis was Shernel James – Labour Commissioner (Ag).

**Activities & Findings**

The activities included a welcome and greeting aspect. The delegations were welcomed by Mr Lyndon Ford, Director of the Electronic Labour Exchange, the representative of the OAS in Jamaica, Mrs. Jeanelle Van Glaanenweygel and the Acting Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.

The delegates were introduced to the Directors of Labour Division, Industrial Relations and Allied Services, Manpower Services and the Planning Research and Monitoring Unit who gave an overview of their respective Divisions.

The delegations were asked to give an overview of any youth employment programmes available in their respective countries, their challenges and what they were expecting from the study tour.

**Planning Research and Monitoring Unit**

The delegates also met with of the Planning Research and Monitoring Unit who gave an overview of the unit and how the unit collaborates with the ELE by analyzing the data of the LMIS and carrying out surveys to determine hot jobs in Jamaica and youth employment.

**On the Job Training (Pilot) Programme**

On the Job Training Programme is a new initiative by the Government of Jamaica, designed for poor and vulnerable youth who would have successfully completed their secondary education and possess academic and or vocational certification, enhanced by training in Job Readiness Skills.

Interns are sent to several private sector organisations with the best reputations for investing in workforce development are engaged in the programme. The provide the opportunities for qualified young persons to acquire practical experience on the job, and where possible, offer them gainful employment after twelve weeks of on the job training. As they undertake their training, the interns are given a stipend to help cover daily expenses, such meals and transportation.

During the week the delegates met with a number of establishments and trainees who were participating in the Programme. What was most satisfying was the testimonies of both the employers and trainees, heralding the success of the programme.

The staff of the Ministry of Labour ensures that the interns are prepared for their respective on the job training and constantly monitoring them during the period of internship.

Such a programme is a best practice initiative. St. Kitts and Nevis has a similar programme called the Skills Training Empowerment Programme (STEP) but is not solely designed to youths. The Programme encompasses all by providing training to assist in the development of the requisite human resource capabilities and entrepreneurial skills, which will facilitate participants’ smooth integration into the work-force. This programme is not administered by the Department of Labour but the National Skills Training Programme (NSTP). The Department assists by offering job readiness skills to participants.

It is my hope that the Department of Labour could initiate the On The Job Programme but at the end of the training offer certification to all participation that will enable them to build their resumes and find gainful employment.

**Steps To Work Programme**

The Steps To Work Programme is designed to help families on the Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH) become gainfully employed. The programme provides them with training, it also covers a training stipend to cover training expenses and connect employers with trained and competent workers. The Programme also seeks participants to establish their own micro-business. The programme collaborates with skills training intuitions who offer marketable vocational skills.

The Programme also partners with educational institutions to offer a Second Chance Education Programme to help ambitious young people to compete their training sit the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examinations.

The Programme also offers training in Entrepreneurship and offer micro-enterprise support through assistance in developing business plans, technical support and grants to help start-up the business.

**Electronic Labour Exchange (ELE)**

The Delegates were given a tour of the Electronic Labour Exchange (ELE) Unit. This unit deals with employment of the Labour Market Information System. The delegates were given a tour of this unit and given the opportunity to observe the LMIS and how the electronic system brings workers and employers in the exchange of labour (employment). This section was most useful as it offered best practices in the labour market exchange that would be beneficial to St. Kitts and Nevis.

**Housing Opportunities Production Employment Programme (HOPE)**

The Programme is an initiative of the Prime Minister of Jamaica to support and assist at-risk youth between the ages of eighteen (18) to twenty-four (24) who are not employed or enrolled in a school or programme of training. It Programme is coordinated by Lieutenant Colonel Martin Rickman who is on secondment from the Jamaica Defence Force and is managed under an apprenticeship framework of the National Apprenticeship Act.

The basic premise of the Programme is that all participants will be trained in a core of life skills, cultural awareness, volunteerism and mentorship, and then be given the specific skills training, after which they will be allowed to work in that skill area for a stipend with a savings component. The programme is designed to build the lives of these at-risk youths helping them to become productive citizens.

**Multi-care Youth Foundation and New Employment Opportunities for Youth (NEO) Jamaica**

The New Employment Opportunities for Youth orNEO is a regional initiative dedicated to improving the quality of the workforce and the employability of poor and vulnerable youth in Latin America and the Caribbean. NEO is led by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) – through the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF) and the International Youth Foundation (IYF).

The Delegates met with the Executive and Management of NEO Jamaica. In this meeting was youth interns, past and present spoke about the success of the programme. Through public/private partnerships, at risk youths are trained, acquiring skills that are then put into through internships.

The delegates were afforded the opportunity to see the transfer of skills and knowledge of youths on the programme when they visited the Dunoon Park Technical High School. The delegates also spoke with one successful intern of the programme who flew in from the Turks and Cacaos Islands (TCI) where he was now employed in the field of computer technology.

**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. Using the concept of the Jamaica’s Steps to Work Programme, plans are currently in place to implement a Youth Summer Internship Programme for 2019. The programme is geared to school leavers who would be continuing on to tertiary education and is designed to bridging them from the world of school to the world of work. This is a three-year programme dubbed “Upward Bound”. This will be a public/private partnership and will the Ministry of Education and
2. Further rebranding and improving of the Department of Labour Employment Agency to specialize the officers in area of career development, job placement and jobseekers’ orientation. In 2019, the Unit will host an orientation every month for job-seekers to assist them in job readiness skills.
3. Seek assistance from the ILO for the development of an Employment Policy for St. Kitts and Nevis.
4. Brainstorming that will lead to the implementation of a Steps To Work Programme and the On the Job Training (Pilot) Programmefor St. Kitts and Nevis.
5. 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 Labour was grateful in being given the opportunity to once again participate in a bilateral cooperation on Employment and Youth Employment. The Department gained a fount of information during its bilateral cooperation with the United States Department of Labour; however, this study to Jamaica has given the Department of seeing best practice youth employment programmes that is more suited to the culture and social development of St. Kitts and Nevis.

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 (Study Tour) with Jamaica’s Ministry 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. Only one recommendation is being offered, that is

1. More time should be given for the completion of the Country’s Cooperation report.

**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. Jamaica’s Ministry of Labour and Social Security
3. Mr. Lyndon Ford and the members of the Electronic Labour Market Exchange (ELE)
4. Mr Jermaine Jackson, Driver, Ministry of Labour and Social Security
5. The Government of St. Kitts and Nevis
6. Hon Vance Amory, Senior Minister and Minister of Labour et, al
7. Mr Ron Dublin-Collins, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour (St. Kitts)
8. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (St. Kitts and Nevis)
9. 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