**NEXT STEPS COMPONENT**

**PANAMA/BARBADOS RIAL COOPERATION ACTIVITY**

**Preparation for the World at Work**

It has been recognized that overall, the future for employment preparation and retention lies in the review of the current employment and Labour Market Policy and development of a well-integrated and coordinated national employment creation strategy; the overarching aim being to address the exploration of decent jobs in the informal and formal sector.

The Labour Department as part of respective planned Programmes, have committed to embarking on youth initiatives by way of several Training Seminars/Workshops on exposure to the World of Work and a Jobs Start Plus activity.

The Seminars on the World of Work will target school leavers providing information and guidance on Labour Legislation and rights and responsibilities in the working environment. The Industrial Relations Section of the Labour Department has committed to hosting a one-day interactive session for Senior Secondary Students and School Leavers, directly focusing on positive and negative attitudes and habits that could possibly impact the workplace. The objective of this seminar is therefore to educate the students on their roles and responsibilities in employment when they are eventually integrated into the workforce.

Additional areas of focus will extend to the definitions of work, the relationship of youth to the world of work, values related to work and economic realities,

The target number will be thirty participants and this activity will be funded solely by the Labour Department.

**Job Start Plus**

The Job Start Plus programme, relates to businesses and tradespeople partnering with the Ministry of Labour, to give young people between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four, an opportunity to get twelve months’ job experience in various business operations.

This is an initiative by the Ministry of Labour and Social Partnership Relations which is geared toward the youth between the ages of sixteen to twenty-four years of age, with the aim to provide those not in employment, education or training, with a year of full employment. This aim is to provide exposure to work, engender much needed on the job experience and assist in better positioning them for future employment opportunities.

Activity has already commenced with a one (1) week training programme which was designed to build capacity, develop soft skills and educate the participants on the world of work. Before the youths are assigned to employers however, employment inspections will be conducted by Officers of the Industrial Relations and Safety and Health sections of the Department, to ensure that all relevant provisions of the labour legislation are adhered to and safe and secure environments are provided.

This Job Start Plus programme is expected to accommodate approximately thirty-five hundred (3,500) young people in jobs extending to the retail, wholesale, tourism, manufacturing, construction and tradespeople sectors. A stipend will be paid per week to each participant, which will be jointly funded by the perspective employers and the Ministry of Labour.

**Linda Y. Bowen (Mrs) - Assistant Chief Labour Officer (Ag)**

**Judamay Williams-Bryan (Mrs) - Senior Labour Officer (Ag)**

**Alison Elcock (Mrs) - Senior Safety and Health Officer (Ag)**