obra
Partnerships for Youth

BUILDING ALLIANCES FOR YOUTH:
Lessons from *Obra*

November 2011

The International Youth Foundation (IYF) invests in the extraordinary potential of young people. Founded in 1990, IYF builds and maintains a worldwide community of businesses, governments, and civil-society organizations committed to empowering youth to be healthy, productive, and engaged citizens. IYF programs are catalysts of change that help young people obtain a quality education, gain employability skills, make healthy choices, and improve their communities. To learn more, visit www.iyfnet.org.

FOREWORD

Today, an estimated 100 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24 live in Latin America and the Caribbean. While such a large youth contingent has the potential to play a defining role in fueling growth and progress across the region, nearly half are considered "at risk" and live in under-served communities. One in four of these young people are jobless, many more have dropped out of school, and a growing number face rising violence in their communities. No single sector of society can effectively address such wide-ranging social and economic challenges. Mobilizing the resources of the public, private, and civil society sectors and working collaboratively toward common goals are the only long-term solutions.

For over a decade the International Youth Foundation (IYF) and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) have joined forces with businesses, civil society organizations, governments, and international institutions to identify young people's needs, broker key relationships, and generate new opportunities for youth at risk. One such multi-stakeholder effort is the *Obra* Program, a two-year initiative launched in 2009 by IYF, USAID and the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs of U.S. State Department. Its objective: to generate new educational and employment opportunities, address critical needs and inspire hope among vulnerable youth in Latin America and the Caribbean. Born out of President Obama's call to action at the April 2009 Summit of the Americas, the *Obra* Program and its results and lessons learned attest to the U.S. government's commitment to meeting today's challenges in partnership with key local stakeholders.

This document, *Building Alliances for Youth: Lessons from Obra*, outlines what we've learned over the past two years of *Obra* activities, offering insights on how to establish partner roles, develop collaborative strategies and influence public policies that positively impact the lives of young people. Key accomplishments include the engagement of over 60 businesses, public agencies and NGOs across the seven participating countries, and the documentation of more than two dozen "best practices" in education and employment. As a result of the groundswell of support—including *Obra*'s leveraging of nearly $4 million in new commitments—more young people are benefitting from job training, internships, and job opportunities, and youth issues are gaining greater attention among the region's policy makers.

The report also underscores that while partnerships are essential to addressing even the toughest challenges, they are not necessarily easy to build or sustain. To its

credit, this report not only highlights the rewards of such collaborations, but also the very real hurdles that need to be overcome. Such practical lessons around what works (and what doesn't) are always useful when sustaining existing alliances and creating new ones.

We believe this publication offers a useful look back at what has been accomplished through *Obra* over the past two years. More importantly, it provides valuable lessons for the future that can help strengthen our work together to expand opportunities among youth across Latin America and the Caribbean. We hope you will share it with your friends and colleagues in the development community.

Bill Reese
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International Youth Foundation

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Introduction

At the 2009 Summit of the Americas, U.S. President Barack Obama called for new and strengthened partnerships to create more opportunities for youth at-risk across Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). In direct response to the president's appeal and with support from the United States State Department and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the International Youth Foundation (IYF) launched the *Obra* initiative in November 2009.

> *Obra*, meaning "work" in Spanish, is a two-year initiative developed by IYF and USAID under the Youth:Work program. Designed to improve LAC youth's access to education, skills training, and employment opportunities, *Obra* brought together public, private and non-profit partners in three sub-regions and seven countries—leveraging resources and expertise and disseminating best practices in youth programming across the LAC region.

Built upon foundational IYF programs such as *entra21* and the Education & Employment Alliance (EEA)[1], the *Obra* initiative united partners across sectors and across three sub-regions to improve at-risk youths' access to the services needed for productive citizenship, work, and life. Over the course of the two-year program, *Obra*:

- Created three multi-sector partnerships[2] based in Jamaica, Guatemala, and Peru, with over 60 partner institutions, dedicated to increasing support for at-risk youth in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America.

- Provided over 1,500 vulnerable youth with life skills, employment and/or educational training through seven innovation grants.

- Leveraged USAID's initial $2 million investment with nearly $4 million in new contributions from *Obra* partners and other public and private sources.

- Served as a clearinghouse for sharing information, resources, and best practices in innovative youth programming.

- Increased political discourse and public awareness around youth issues, engaging political leaders, decision-makers, youth-serving organizations, and youth themselves in productive dialogue.

- Inspired other small and large-scale collaborations including Jamaica's Youth Upliftment Through Employment (YUTE) program, an initiative led by the Private

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1   To date, *entra21* has provided more than 110,000 Latin American youth with the knowledge and skills they need to compete in the 21st century labor market. Through EEA, 320 multi-sectoral organizations in six countries together have improved education and employment opportunities and reached more than 30,000 youth.
2   Throughout this document, the words "partnership" and "alliance" are used interchangeably.

Sector Organisation of Jamaica. The program provides 2,200 unattached[3] Jamaican youth with basic skills, employment training, internships, and job opportunities.

An Overview of the *Obra* Model. USAID and IYF began partnering to create multi-sector alliances over a decade ago, recognizing that no single actor or sector could address urgent youth needs arising across the globe.

Over the years, alliance-building strategies have evolved and new practices emerged. Through *Obra*, IYF further developed the multi-sector partnership model by creating sub-regional alliances to address youth issues that transcended national borders (e.g., gang-related violence). With USAID support and 1:1 leveraging requirements, stakeholders in LAC countries were able to share ideas and expertise in innovative youth programming and alliance-building across borders and fund projects that would directly benefit youth in their home countries.

Obra's Secretariat Organizations

The secretariat organizations, selected for their institutional capacity to manage and their credibility to lead, were:

- **Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica (PSOJ),** an association of more than 200 businesses promoting a competitive private sector (*Obra* Caribbean).
- **DEMOS,** a non-governmental think tank in Guatemala focusing on youth and minority rights and awareness-raising (*Obra* Central America).
- **CEDRO,** a non-profit organization in Peru dedicated to combating drug use and addressing other issues facing children and youth (*Obra* South America).

*See last section of document for lists of partners.

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3   Unattached youth are youth who are unemployed, out of school and not otherwise engaged in their communities.

Obra was conceived as a sub-regional model in which one lead country in each of three LAC regions would serve as the focal point for partnership-building. Organizations in other countries in those regions (referred to as "alliance countries") would participate in the sub-regional partnerships, leveraging best practices and lessons learned in the lead countries.

Over its two-year time frame, *Obra* developed three sub-regional partnerships led by organizations in Jamaica, Guatemala and Peru. With a number of institutions from nearby countries participating, *Obra* later grew to include two local alliances led by Fundación Restrepo Barco in Colombia and the local Chamber of Commerce in St. Lucia. Arising from local interest and opportunities created by *Obra* as well as the challenges of fully engaging in sub-regional partnerships, these alliances were supported and advised by the sub-regional secretariats and IYF. [4]

Obra and the Sub-regional Model: Key Lessons for Future Alliances

This report summarizes the key lessons learned from the *Obra* alliance-building process in the three subregions. Framed around general principles identified through IYF's twenty-plus years' experience,[5] these lessons suggest ways forward for creating new alliances and sustaining growing partnerships such as those described here. (For country and project-specific lessons, please see the summary at the end of this report and additional *Obra* learning publications and materials available at: *www.iyfnet.org*.)

Selecting Promising Environments and Credible Leadership. Successful partnerships require both an environment receptive to collaboration and credible leadership. Widely recognized as a leader in youth development programming in the region, IYF had the regional knowledge to identify promising environments, the credibility to convene key participants, and the expertise to provide overall direction. IYF sought to

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4   Throughout this document, the term "lead countries" refers to Jamaica, Guatemala, and Peru. "Alliance countries" refers to St. Lucia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Colombia—countries invited to participate in their sub-region's partnerships. The term "local alliances" refers specifically to alliances created or under development in these alliance countries, namely Colombia and initiating in St. Lucia at the time of this publication.

5   For a more extensive discussion of principles in alliance building, please refer to *What Works in Public/Private Partnering: Building Alliances for Youth Development* (IYF 2002), part of IYF's What Works publication series on cutting-edge practices in youth development. Available at http://iyfnet.org/document/1106.

identify lead countries with critical youth needs and the **environment required for successful alliance-building,** including: a supportive public sector, a capable civil society sector, an engaged private sector, potential for leveraging local public/private resources, and USAID presence and support. Jamaica, Guatemala, and Peru were selected based on these criteria. IYF then selected Secretariat organizations in each of those countries with the capacity and leadership to manage the partnerships' operations and the credibility to attract additional participants and support. (See inset on Page 3 for description of Secretariat organizations.)

> IYF has learned over the years how much the success of a partnership relies on our partners' strong leadership qualities as well as the depth of their commitment to working with all sectors of society to improve the lives of young people.
>
> — *William S. Reese,*
> *President and CEO, IYF*

> *Lessons learned: Selecting two NGOs and a leading business association as secretariats allowed IYF to observe that one type of organization is not inherently more effective than another in leading partnerships. Selecting a business membership association such as the PSOJ as secretariat for* Obra *Caribbean, for example, facilitated entry to the private sector, but did not on its own ensure increased private sector involvement. The NGO-led alliances in Peru and Guatemala experienced similarly modest levels of success in private sector recruitment.*

> *In supporting alliance leadership, the* Obra *experience suggests that, regardless of organizational type, secretariats require additional support in developing private sector recruitment strategies and identifying where existing inter-sectoral biases affect recruitment. (Discussed further in the next section.)*

Identifying and Cultivating Founding Partners. A strong core of founding partners representing all three sectors facilitates successful alliances. To recruit such partners for *Obra*, IYF conducted an institutional mapping exercise in each lead country, identifying more than 100 public, private, and civil society organizations already working with youth. IYF then held a series of in-person meetings with approximately two dozen of the most promising organizations in each country to cultivate interest at the highest possible leadership levels. As a result of this groundwork, over forty potential partners from the lead countries agreed to attend the *Obra* launch held in Kingston, Jamaica in April 2010, and subsequently formed the core of the three partnerships.

> *Lessons learned: Comparatively more successful NGO engagement during the cultivation phase eventually set the stage for higher NGO representation and lower private sector representation in each partnership than desired.[6] The*

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6   Overall, 58% of *Obra* partners were from civil society, 21% private sector and 21% public sector, although civil society representation reached has high as three-quarters in Peru. See the final section for lists of partners by type.

Obra *experience stresses the need for having a detailed strategy for engaging the business sector from the very outset. Such a strategy should include: identifying business sectors with a vested interest in youth employability and other issues, conducting targeted outreach in those sectors, recruiting private sector "champions" to promote the partnership, and clearly defining the partnership's cost/benefit proposition to all sectors (discussed later in this document). Future alliance builders may also wish to consider strategies for identifying inter-sectoral biases or factors that may inhibit partner recruitment.*

Preparing the Foundations for a Successful Partnership: Awareness, Trust, and Cohesion. Through the April 2010 Kingston Launch and follow-up support, IYF staff worked with founding and potential partners to develop the foundations for effective collaboration: an awareness of the common issues their youth face locally and regionally; recognition of the need for a multi-sector approach to address those issues; and an understanding of each partner's work, viewpoint, potential contributions, and intersecting interests in youth.

By the conclusion of the launch event, 27 founding partners had identified goals and objectives, brainstormed on initial ideas for their respective Partnership Action Plans[7], and committed to forming multi-sector alliances with sub-regional hubs in Jamaica, Guatemala and Peru.

Total *Obra* "membership" across three sub-regions grew from this initial core of 27 partners to a total of 67. Partners cited several keys to *Obra*'s success in building mutual trust and raising awareness, including the launch event, project visits in the field, and sub-regional learning conferences. NGO partners especially cited the increased access to key public and private organizations gained through these activities.

7   Partnership Action Plans state the detailed goals, objectives, and strategies for each partnership. These plans as well as each partnership's accomplishments are briefly described in the final section of this report.

Lessons learned: The launch event provided a successful model for similar learning events throughout the program, providing a structure for: sharing program experiences and best practices, forming connections between experts and practitioners in the field, identifying commonalities between initiatives and factors for success, and discussing youth issues in broader contexts. Based on the enthusiastic feedback of partners, the Obra *experience strongly argues for investing the time and resources necessary to host a comprehensive launch event and to support subsequent learning conferences. (For detailed information on the* Obra *launch event, visit the IYF website).*

> At the heart of *Obra* is working together in organizationally creative ways to overcome challenges faced by youth. *Obra* has enriched our knowledge in forming partnerships between government agencies, businesses and local NGOs; starting with a cohesive base, building confidence, formulating strategies and producing concrete results.
>
> — Karen Towers, Obra AOTR/Education Advisor, Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, USAID

Defining Clear Partner Roles and Contributions.
Though role definition is a cornerstone of alliance-building, it is often cited as one of the most difficult tasks. As a sub-regional model, *Obra* faced the added challenge of defining the role of partners in alliance countries.

Despite efforts to define roles during *Obra*'s launch and through Memoranda of Understanding, Partnership Action Plans, and ongoing IYF staff support, partners' roles within the three lead alliances were not sufficiently clear. While Partnership Action Plans were written broadly enough to accommodate alliance country participation, inclusion of these countries may have created confusion about *Obra*'s overall role among prospective partners—that is, raising questions as to whether *Obra* was a sub-regional alliance or a country-based alliance. (Although *Obra* was in fact sub-regional by design, for practical purposes development efforts focused on the lead countries with local alliances developing more slowly.)

Lessons learned: As a recurring challenge in alliance building, role definition itself may need to be re-examined as a process. The Obra *experience in Jamaica made it clear that roles cannot be completely defined at the beginning of a partnership when partners are still becoming aware of each other's work, capacities, and partnership needs. Recognizing that partnerships mature and partner roles evolve over time, alliance builders should 1) help partners set realistic expectations, recognizing the development cycle of partnership; 2) prepare partners to participate actively and continuously in defining their roles and contributions; and 3)*

> *Obra*'s accompaniment and support helped me increase my self-esteem, and relate better with my peers and my community. I learned to develop myself, overcome fears and accomplish things I never would have thought of…
>
> — Gerardo Morales, 18-year-old Guatemalan youth

make ongoing role negotiation a standard item on the partnership agenda.

When implementing a complex sub-regional partnership such as *Obra*, local alliances' roles in the broader partnerships need careful consideration. To ensure their inclusion regionally and their success locally, alliance countries and local alliance leadership need clear communication, support, and leadership from lead country secretariats. Sufficient time, resources, and commitment are required within the secretariat organizations to ensure local success and strengthen ties across borders.

Adapting for Local Context. To succeed, partnerships must adapt projects and processes to the unique needs of the youth in each country. Equally important, they must factor in the country's political and social environment and its historical relationships between sectors.

With a common awareness of their region's youth needs, each *Obra* partnership adapted for context and focused on the most pressing issues.

- **Jamaica** With high youth unemployment, widespread gang violence, and up to 300,000 "unattached" youth ages 15 to 29, Jamaica's project work focused on skills development and employability for unattached youth.

- **Guatemala** Facing high levels of violence following 36 years of armed conflict, alliance members in Guatemala focused their efforts on violence prevention and employment and training opportunities. Offsetting a standing political practice of cancelling even proven projects when government administrations change, alliance members advocated for institutionalizing and "regime-proofing" the highly respected *Escuelas Abiertas* program, creating a National Youth Agenda, and supporting the establishment of the *Dirección de Educación Extra-Escolar* (DIGEEX) as a vice-ministerial office.

- **Peru** Also facing high youth unemployment, youth violence, and drug trafficking, Peru's project work placed a priority on entrepreneurial training, life skills, conflict resolution, and school drop-out prevention. With little institutional coordination of youth services nationally, the alliance also engaged public agencies to improve coordination among youth-serving government ministries such as Education, Health, and Labor.

In adapting to political and inter-sectoral contexts, the alliances faced some significant challenges that are instructive to future alliance builders. For example, election cycles

Obra *partners from the three sub-regions at the Central American launch event in Guatemala.*

affected *Obra*'s work in both Peru and Guatemala. In Peru, public sector responsiveness to alliance issues slowed as government youth offices took a "wait and see" approach to election results. In Guatemala, expectations for private sector involvement in *Obra* were tempered by hopes that a change in administrations would improve relations between government and the business sector. In both countries, the partnerships adapted to these challenges by focusing on what was achievable in the near-term and planning to steadily "chip away" at long-term issues—a reminder of the long-range nature of advocacy work and the commitment required to sustain those efforts.

In retrospect, some of *Obra*'s advocacy goals (such as establishing DIGEEX as a vice-ministerial office) were overly ambitious for a two-year project. However, such efforts contributed to raising the profile of youth issues and provided partners with valuable collaboration and advocacy experience. Shorter-term goals resulted in clear gains for youth. For example, *Obra* efforts prompted the incoming government of President Perez Molina to declare the government would take steps to improve the sustainability of youth programs such as *Escuelas Abiertas*.[8] In Peru, *Obra* helped raise the profile and visibility of youth issues in the 2011 Lima municipal and also presidential elections.

> **Lessons learned:** *The* Obra *experience in Peru and Guatemala highlights the need to carefully factor political realities into setting partnership objectives and defining success. Partnerships need on-the-ground expertise in political culture and inter-sectoral history and strategies for working within those contexts. Taking a lesson from the pragmatic approach in Peru and Guatemala, alliance builders should recognize both advocacy and partnership building as a long-term process that often yields incremental benefits.*

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8   Incoming Guatemalan President Perez Molina declared as a candidate in October 2011 that he would continue *Escuelas Abiertas* and even create a Ministry of Social Development, under which he would house this important program along with other key youth-focused initiatives.

Identifying Attractive Cost/Benefit Propositions for Partners. To justify involvement in the time-intensive task of developing partnerships, each potential partner must perceive a **positive cost/benefit relationship**. In the case of mission-driven, often resource-constrained civil society and public sector agencies, multi-sector alliances tend to be an "easy sell." However, the more bottom-line driven private sector often requires more courting with a carefully framed cost/benefit proposition.[9]

Across all three subregions, *Obra* was in fact an "easy sell" to NGOs and to a slightly lesser extent most government youth agencies. NGOs in Peru were so eager to participate that CEDRO eventually had to temporarily close membership to focus on its government and private sector engagement efforts. Although business involvement throughout the three alliances was not as high as hoped, private sector representatives seemed well aware of their critical stake in addressing youth issues. Progressive gains were made through concerted recruitment efforts with one to two businesses, for example, coming onboard in each of the partnerships in the latter half of the program.

> *Lessons learned: With an attractive cost/benefit proposition often cited as key to private sector involvement, it is also important to consider other complex factors affecting that engagement. In the* Obra *experience, the greater deterrents may have been strained relations between current government administrations and the private sector as well as mutual distrust between the civil society and private sectors. When dealing with a legacy of mistrust between sectors, it may be useful to recruit a consultant knowledgeable about political conditions "on the ground" to advise the partnership. Improving private sector engagement may also require more training and support of the secretariat in framing the private sector cost/benefit proposition.*

Communicating for Success both Internally and Externally. Effective communication is essential to any alliance's success. Internally, *Obra* employed a range of tools to facilitate its work:

- Regular meetings of the three secretariat organizations enabled the three subregions to learn from one another's alliance-building experiences and innovative programming. These meetings also strengthened each alliance's understanding of the cross-regional nature of their youth issues.

- Partner meetings within each sub-regional alliance facilitated agreement on joint efforts, relationship-building, and sharing of best practices, resources, and programming expertise.

- Learning visits to project sites connected partners to the youth being served and

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9   For helpful tools on private sector recruitment, see *Conducting a Multi-Sector Alliance Assessment: A Framework for Developing Alliance Strategies and Programming*, USAID 2010. Available online at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnadw153.pdf.

their issues, intensifying the partners' sense of purpose and helping to disseminate best practices throughout the partnership.

- The *Obra* website facilitated the exchange of information and best practices in youth programming.

Externally, *Obra* alliances leveraged technology and social media to engage youth, promote the alliance and recognize partners, and advocate for youth. Tools used included the website, partnership Facebook pages, and YouTube testimonials from direct youth beneficiaries. *Obra* South America stands out for its success both in tapping partners' communications expertise to raise awareness of youth issues and in supporting other partners who lacked access to such expertise. In short, *Obra* South America's communications approach demonstrated the strength of the alliance-building concept itself—leveraging partners' expertise to advance key issues and strengthen the partnership.

> *Lessons learned: As hoped when* Obra *was conceived, sub-regional alliances were strengthened by shared communication with one another—both in alliance-building and programming capacities. Projects executed in one sub-region sparked innovations in others. Alliance-building techniques tested in one country were adapted to another. Given that this internal communication process produced some of the most significant gains of the sub-regional model, future alliance builders should invest time and effort in planning such strategies.*
>
> *To support effective external communication, future alliances should develop methods for identifying and mobilizing needed partner expertise in communications, marketing, and social media. Based on* Obra *South America's successful experiences, particular attention should be given to developing effective social media strategies for advocating for youth.*

Supporting a Balanced Partnership. As already noted, unequal representation between sectors created challenges. However, partners also expressed concern about inclusion, points of entry for their own involvement, and founding member/new member integration challenges. For example, Jamaican government youth agencies were eager to be involved but reported difficulty "finding their place, their contribution." As mentioned earlier, CEDRO temporarily halted NGO enrollment to focus on engaging specific public and private sectors partners to develop greater balance within the partnership.

> *Lessons learned: Achieving and maintaining balance in a successful partnership is an ongoing challenge. As they mature, partnerships need to re-visit their criteria for partner eligibility based on potential contribution, the maintenance of a reasonably balanced representation, and the ability to achieve stated goals. To ensure the effective inclusion of new partners, partnerships need to develop an orientation process and possibly a mentoring program for new members.*

Sustaining Alliances Over Time. With only a two-year funding commitment, the *Obra* alliances came with a built-in expiration date. Each alliance began exploring sustainability options in year two. Notably, partners were as interested in how to maintain their new *Obra* relationships as they were in maintaining the *Obra* institutional structure. Consequently, discussions emerged regarding whether to maintain partnerships "as is" and/or "spin off" certain highly valued aspects. Options discussed for continuing the partnership model included housing the coordinating role with an existing institution, seeking financial support through increased private sector participation or public and private donors, or creating a dues-paying member organization. To maintain specific, valued services, partners discussed creating project "showcases" to share best practices and subgroups devoted to, and accountable for, specific issue areas.

> *Lessons learned: Sustainability and long term success need to be considered from various perspectives. To partners, maintaining and growing "Obra-built" relationships and momentum is at least as important as maintaining the*

institution of the Obra *partnership. If Obra "spins off" into more targeted, flourishing sub-groups across the region, partners and youth alike benefit from sustained institutional relationships and a model that evolved to meet the region's specific needs and daily realities. If the partners choose to support and sustain the* Obra *model "as is" and incorporate lessons learned to-date,* Obra *and similar initiatives should be able to grow across the LAC. In either case, President Obama's mandate and USAID's investment in sub-regional youth strategies will have fostered relationships and innovations that will continue to improve the lives of LAC youth in the years ahead.*

Conclusions and Reflections on the *Obra* Model

Envisioned as a sub-regional model, *Obra* achieved its original goals to: mobilize expertise across countries and sectors; disseminate innovative ideas; and build multi-sector partnerships in regions with comparatively limited track records in inter-sectoral collaboration. In addition to the lessons cited above, the *Obra* experience suggests certain broad strategies in developing sub-regional alliances in the future:

- To facilitate creation of local alliances outside the lead country, focus initially on building a strong nucleus of partner institutions in alliance countries rather than attempting to integrate individual partners into the sub-regional partnership. Ensure secretariats prioritize cultivating alliances of this nature in other countries. Allocate additional resources to the effort.

- To maximize sub-regional impacts, articulate partnership goals at both the sub-regional and country levels. Recognize that partners are driven by concerns within their own borders and the sub-regional cost/benefit proposition must be clear.

- To create more effective, balanced partnerships, focus initial partner cultivation on the private sector.

Finally, on subsequent pages summaries of the three partnerships are presented: leadership, membership, objectives, accomplishments, challenges and lessons learned.

We would also like to thank Susan Glenn for her significant contributions to this report.

OBRA CARIBBEAN (JAMAICA): CREATING POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTH

Led by the PSOJ, *Obra* Caribbean's Partnership Action Plan focused on: increasing employability and employment opportunities for youth at-risk; promoting entrepreneurship; influencing public youth policies; raising public awareness of the effects of social exclusion; and positively impacting perceptions of youth.

Caribbean Partners[10]			
• Agency for Inner City Renewal • Area Youth Foundation • Children First • Jamaica Council of Churches • Jamaica Youth Advocacy Network • Junior Achievement • Kingston Restoration Company • Operation Friendship • People's Action for Community Transformation (PACT) • RISE Life Management Services • St. Patrick's Foundation • Violence Prevention Network • Youth Opportunities Unlimited	• **<u>Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica</u>** • **Jamaica National Foundation** • **National Commerce Bank Foundation** • **Sandals Foundation**	• *HEART/National Training Agency* • *Jamaica Foundation for Lifelong Learning* • *National Center for Youth Development* • *National Youth Service*	• Rise St Lucia • **St Lucia Chamber of Commerce**[11] • Fundación Sur Futuro (Dominican Republic)

10   For all three partnerships listed on this page as well as subsequent pages: civil society partners are in normal text, **private sector in bold,** *public sector or intergovernmental agency in italics*, and <u>Secretariat is underlined</u>. All partners in lead country except ones listed in last column.
11   At the time of this writing, the partnership in St. Lucia has not been formalized.

Partnership Accomplishments	Challenges	Lessons Learned
Alliance Building and Leverage • 24 public/private partners joined, nearly $3 million leveraged in non-US government resources for YUTE Program which focuses on skills development, internships and job placement for 2,200 "unattached" youth (out of school, out of work). • Strong NGO and public sector participation and private sector leadership through the PSOJ secretariat were invaluable. • Four discussions and roundtables were held with key stakeholders regarding youth policy in Jamaica. • Awareness was raised through more than two dozen newspaper articles, radio spots and documentaries/television reports. • With limited prior multi-sector collaboration, partners recognized *Obra* as a key platform for learning. **Youth Benefits** • 319 youth received life skills, employability skills, remedial education, vocational and/or entrepreneurial training through three innovation grants. • 600 youth at-risk have begun employability training through the *Obra*-inspired YUTE program. **Alliance Sustainability** Options being considered include: • Building the current capacity of the National Center for Youth Development to include a formalized multi-sectoral partnership coordinating mechanism based on the *Obra* model. • Creating an umbrella NGO association (or incorporating *Obra* partners into an existing one), and join PSOJ, potentially have a seat on its Executive Committee.	**In lead country (Jamaica)…** • Jamaica's limited prior multi-sector collaboration required significant "bridge-building." • Despite PSOJ leadership, private sector engagement was limited. • Partner roles and responsibilities were not always sufficiently clear. **In local alliances…** • The number of potential partners in small alliance countries is limited, increasing costs and inefficiency recruitment efforts. • Local leadership has not been able to capitalize on PSOJ's experience in local alliance-building and constructing an initiative to address at-risk youth. • Local alliance partners cited the short time frame of *Obra* as an inhibiting factor.	**In lead country (Jamaica)…** • As a partnership matures, roles and responsibilities need to be continually clarified and articulated. Role definitions that seem clear at launch may become less clear as the partnership evolves and as projects coalesce. • Though a business association can provide entree to the private sector, a clear business engagement strategy is still required to ensure active involvement. **In local alliances…** • PSOJ leadership was instrumental in initiating interest among potential local alliance members, demonstrating the importance of Secretariat leadership committed to this sub-regional approach. • Fully engaging alliance countries in the sub-regional partnership requires additional time and resources.

OBRA CENTRAL AMERICA (GUATEMALA): FORMULATING A NATIONAL AGENDA FOR YOUTH

Led by DEMOS, *Obra* Central America sought to develop a cohesive national agenda for youth by: consulting with young people throughout the country; convening diverse sectors of society to discuss critical youth issues; building alliances to strengthen youth programs, projects, and policies for creating job opportunities and preventing youth violence; and documenting best practices in youth employment and violence prevention. This work included efforts to institutionalize the *Escuelas Abiertas* Program[12] and promote *Dirección de Educación Extra-Escolar* (DIGEEX) to vice-ministerial status.

Central American Partners			
• Instituto DEMOS • Alianza Joven • Grupo Ceiba • Interpeace	• **American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM)** • **COMDALSA**	• *Escuelas Abiertas* • *DIGEEX: Dirección de Educación Extra-Escolar (Ministry of Education)* • *UNICEF*	• Fedisal (El Salvador)

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12 *Escuelas Abiertas* is a government program providing sports, cultural and job-training opportunities on weekends to more than 230,000 youth throughout Guatemala. Institutionalizing the program refers to ensuring it survives changes in political administration.

Partnership Accomplishments	Challenges	Lessons Learned
Alliance Building and Leverage • 10 public/private partners joined, leveraging over $390,000 for project and alliance efforts. • *Obra* partners influenced incoming President Perez Molina as well as the President of Guatemala's Congress to declare their intention to increase the sustainability of successful youth programs, especially *Escuelas Abiertas*. • 1,500 young people were consulted and formulated municipal and national level Agendas for Youth—the culmination of a year-long process—presenting plans and advocating directly with outgoing President Colom and Members of Congress in Guatemala. • A strategic alliance was formed with CIEN (Centro de Investigación Económicas Nacionales) to provide the new government with key recommendations on youth development. **Youth Benefits** • 864 vulnerable youths were enrolled through *Escuelas Abiertas* were provided with: ICT training, psycho-social support, and/or practical violence prevention strategies. • A manual on "12 Strategies for Prevention of Youth Violence" was developed. • Eight best practices in youth programming were documented and disseminated. **Alliance Sustainability** • At the time of this writing, partners are exploring expansion of the Innovation Grant to continue improvement of the *Escuelas Abiertas* model as well as to support Alliance activities.	In lead country (Guatemala)… • Private sector involvement was hampered by public sector membership in the *Obra* partnership, and the current government's strained relationship with the business sector. • Partnership growth was limited by lack of institutional trust in general, inter-institutional bias, and little experience among institutions in alliance-building. In local alliances… • Frequent violence and natural disasters reduced time and resources available for alliance building in Central America.	In lead country (Guatemala)… • Empowering the partnership to select innovation grant recipients helped strengthen the alliance. Overcoming the private sector's historic reluctance to work with the public sector may require new, intensified strategies. • Greater initial private sector involvement and identification of private sector "champions for youth" could facilitate overall recruitment. • In setting objectives, partnerships must be realistic about its potential impact on processes which may be of a political nature and must take into account expectations of key stakeholders, including USAID, IYF, partners, and the government. • Relationships formed through *Obra* facilitated better-coordinated responses to several crises arising during the program period, demonstrating a potential benefit that should be identified, valued and communicated when creating future alliances.

OBRA SOUTH AMERICA (PERU): INCREASING THE IMPACT OF YOUTH INTERVENTIONS

Led by CEDRO, *Obra* South America's primary goal was to increase the impact of successful youth-focused interventions via replication, scaling up and advocacy. To that end, its Partnership Action Plan focused on: highlighting successful scalable experiences focused on youth; increasing the cohesion and reach of youth-focused networks; creating a culture of collaboration; ensuring that youth issues figure prominently in national priorities; supporting the mapping of public services to youth; and creating an Innovation Fund.

South American Partners			
• Centro de Educación e Información para la Prevención del Abuso de Drogas (CEDRO) • Asociación para una Feliz Infancia • Asociación para la Inclusión de la Mujer (AIM Perú) • Centro de Investigación Social y Educación Popular—Alternativa • Asociación Negra de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos (ASONEDH) • Centro de Servicios para la Capacitación Laboral y el Desarrollo (CAPLAB) • EnseñaPeru • Gobierno Coherente • Grupo Gea • Juventud Agraria Rural Católica del Perú • Junior Cámera International—Perú • Red Jesuita para la Inclusión de la Infancia y la Juventud—RedNaj • Instituto SASE • Taller de los Niños (TANI) • TECSUP • Un Techo para Mi País	• **Ferreyros** • **Empresarios por la Educación** • **Instituto Peruano de Acción Empresarial** • **El Comercio**	• *Ministerio de Educación—Oficina de Coordinación con Instituciones de la Sociedad Civil* • *Ministerio de Educación—Secretariado Nacional de la Juventud*	• Fundación Antonio Restrepo Barco[13] • Fundación Metroagua • Fundación Para el Desarrollo Microempresarial • **Cámara de Comercio Santa Marta** • **Asociación Hotelera y Turística de Colombia (COTELCO)** • **Asociación de Empresarios "Santa Marta Siglo XXI"** • *Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA) Magdalena* • *Acción Social* • *Gobernación Magdalena* • *Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar* • *UN Development Program*

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13   FRB is the local secretariat in Colombia. This activity is relatively new as of this writing, launching in the latter half of 2011.

Partnership Accomplishments	Challenges	Lessons Learned
Alliance Building and Leverage • 22 partners in Peru joined forces to improve youth education, employment and healthy living, and ensure the prominence of youth issues in national priorities. • A local alliance was launched in Colombia with 11 founding partners. • Significant cross-pollination of knowledge and resources, including: shared knowledge resources, launching of two joint projects locally, monthly field presentation of best practices. • Youth issues were brought to the forefront of municipal and national elections in Peru through candidate interviews posted on the internet. • *Obra* engaged incoming President Humala's Transition Commission on Education for new administration, drafted/submitted recommendations on strategic directions of National Youth Secretariat going forward. • Alliance members provided substantial information and ideas to SENAJU to populate and shape the Observatorio / government mapping of support to youth effort **Youth Benefits** • 330 youth were provided with conflict resolution and entrepreneurial training, psychological, and/or prevention support. • 14 best practices in youth programming were documented/disseminated. **Alliance Sustainability** • Partners are proactively seeking local donors to support the *Obra* model "as is" and also considering a dues paying membership model. • The alliance is also exploring implementing an *Obra*-like innovation fund through the Lima Municipality, with administration fees to support secretariat and alliance activities.	**In lead country (Peru)…** • Elections in April 2011 hindered the partnership's work as public offices postponed decisions regarding youth. • Inclusion of new partners later in the *Obra* lifecycle presented integration challenges as well as new opportunities. **In local alliances…** • Significant distances between countries in South America strained resources for supporting local alliances.	**In lead country (Peru)…** • Maintaining a more balanced representation between sectors as the partnership grows may require more selective admission criteria and limiting membership. • Integrating new partners effectively requires an orientation process, mentorship, and inclusion mechanisms **In local alliances…** • Additional financial resources are needed to facilitate support of local alliances when geographic distances are great. • For institutions interested but not yet able to participate in a formal alliance, additional mechanisms are needed for keeping those institutions informed.

1. Youth participants from the RISE innovation grant participate in a retreat; Obra Caribbean partnership.

Jóvenes participantes del fondo para la innovación RISE toman parte en un retiro; Obra: Alianza del Caribe.

2. Jim Thompson, Deputy Special Representative from the Global Partnerships Initiative, US Department of State; and Karen Hilliard, Mission Director, USAID Jamaica participate in a panel discussion on Alliances for Youth Development at IYF's June 2011 Youth-Partnerships-Employability event in Washington, DC.

Jim Thompson, Representante Especial Adjunto del Global Partnership Initiative del Departamento de Estado EEUU y Karen Hilliard, Directora de la Misión de USAID en Jamaica participan en un panel sobre Alianzas para el Desarrollo de la Juventud en el evento sobre Juventud-Alianzas-Empleabilidad de la IYF, celebrado en junio de 2011 en Washington DC.

3. Jamaican and Peruvian youth participate at the Obra South America launch and learning event in Lima, Peru, November 2011.

Jóvenes de Jamaica y Perú participan en el evento de lanzamiento y aprendizaje de Obra: América del Sur, en Lima, Perú, noviembre de 2011.