

Youth Education & Livelihoods



We seek to increase the number of low-income youth, ages 13-25, with the skills needed to complete secondary school, become employed in a living wage job, start their own business or obtain postsecondary education

More than 90% of the world's 1.1 billion youth, ages 15-24, live in the developing world¹. This is the largest youth population in history and governments and communities are struggling to provide them with high quality and relevant education and economic opportunities that support their financial inclusion and enable them to become productive members of the community. The recent economic crisis has only exacerbated these challenges with waves of young people being forced to rely on their families and the informal job market because of the lack of accessible academic and formal employment opportunities available to them. In fact, according to the International Labour Organization, this has been the sharpest increase in youth unemployment ever recorded and today there are over 81 million unemployed young people in the world².

Recent research and on-the-ground experience suggest that there are a number of key policies and program areas that are essential to improving learning opportunities and economic outcomes for youth. These include: providing young people with the transferable skills needed for the 21st century economy such as communication and personal finance; breaking barriers to complete secondary and postsecondary education; and providing young people with access to the financial or employment resources needed to succeed. The most successful youth programs are those that address the market context and link education and training opportunities with the needs of the local labor market.

For systemic changes to occur in this field there is a need to promote cross-sector approaches to livelihood creation that address the interconnected nature of education, economic opportunities and financial inclusion. There is great value in forming alliances and partnerships—with educational leaders, policy makers, families, community members, the private sector, local government and academia—as a means to increase success rates and establish program sustainability. Through our partners and investments, we have learned that there are different pathways for young people to successfully acquire the skills and resources needed to start their own businesses, become employed in a living wage job or obtain a postsecondary education. These pathways depend on the market context and the specific needs of the target group.

Our Strategy

In 2010, the Citi Foundation invested more than \$5 million in programs that support Youth Education and Livelihoods programs outside the U.S. With these investments, we support educational and training opportunities that lead to improved employment prospects for low-income youth, ages 13-25, increasing their ability to contribute to the economy. The programs that we support around the world address the specific local needs of the youth population in each country. In markets where the key consideration is the integration of out-of-school youth, we fund programs that provide them with entrepreneurship training and access to financial resources to start their own businesses. In countries where successfully completing secondary school is an important milestone, we focus on efforts to help these students gain the 21st century skills to set them on the path to economic success. In countries where obtaining a postsecondary degree is critical, we focus on increasing the number of low-income students who enroll and complete postsecondary education and increase their earning potential. The most effective programs are designed with a clear understanding of the factors that influence youth and supplement increasing their basic skills with access to educational, financial or employment resources.

¹United Nations Population Division. "UN Population Division Policy Brief." United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, March 2009.

²International Labour Organization. "Global Employment Trends for Youth: Special issue on the impact of the global economic crisis on youth." Geneva: August 2010.



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Examples of Our Leadership



Expanding Youth Entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa

The Citi Foundation has partnered with Junior Achievement Worldwide (JA)—a partnership between the business community, educators and volunteers—for more than three decades to build young people’s entrepreneurial skills through real-world business experience. In 2010 and 2011, we are investing in JA to build its capacity to hone young Africans’ entrepreneurial skills through business experience. Specifically, the Citi Foundation’s support is being directed toward the redesign of JA’s Company Program, assisting JA in brokering relationships with microfinance organizations that will enable young people to go beyond just developing skills and actually accessing the resources needed to create a livelihood. Over the next five years, the modified program will be offered to 1.5 million marginalized in-school and out-of-school youth, providing them with training, skills and access to opportunities to get jobs or start their own businesses. With additional support from Citi volunteers, JA will also create and strengthen partnerships with organizations serving at risk young people across the continent.



Pre-employment Program

In Brazil, the poor quality of the public school system combined with a lack of access to professional opportunities makes it exceedingly difficult for low-income young people to find work opportunities. Founded in 2004, with major support from the Citi Foundation, Instituto Profissionalizante Paulista (IPP) is a pre-employment center that combines basic academic and professional training with hands-on experience for low-income secondary school students living in Sao Paulo. The program prepares low-income youth for the job market and increases access to career opportunities, enabling them to generate income and become productive members of the community. This model aligns closely with the Brazilian government’s policy to reduce unemployment by helping young people build skills to obtain their first job.



Market Aligned Skills Training (MAST) Program

The Citi Foundation began supporting the American India Foundation’s (AIF) Market Aligned Skills Training Program (MAST) in 2011. The program seeks to provide unemployed low-income youth, predominately from urban slum communities in India, with the training and support needed to access service-sector jobs. AIF has built strong partnerships with government, the private sector, and civil society and in collaboration with these institutions, developed MAST in 2008, which has, to-date, provided over 65,000 low-income youth with the knowledge and skills needed to enter the formal economy and secure gainful employment. It is estimated that 90% of India’s youth will drop out of school before completing their secondary education. The majority of these young people will be limited to low paying job opportunities in the informal sector. At the same time, India’s rapidly growing economy has resulted in an increased demand for skilled workers. However, the country’s capacity to meet this demand lies at less than 30%. The MAST program seeks to address this gap by training unemployed youth for jobs in high growth service sector industries. Importantly, before a new program area is implemented, AIF conducts thorough market research into that community to determine the employment need and recruits and trains the target group to acquire the skills needed to fill those employment opportunities.