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Lessons from Experience Series

Lessons Learned from Moving the Haitian Out-Of-School Youth Livelihood Initiative (IDEJEN) Beyond the Pilot Phase

Educational Quality
Improvement Program 3

Engaging and Preparing
Youth for Work, Civil Society,
and Family Life



Lessons Learned from Moving the Haitian Out-Of-School Youth Livelihood Initiative (IDEJEN) Beyond the Pilot Phase

Prepared by

Education Development Center, Inc.

Authors:

Melanie Beauvy

Ron Israel

Sarah Johnson

Marie Guerda Prévilon

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Introductory Letter

With some 1.7 billion 15–24 year olds globally, the cliché that “youth are our future” is proving to be a reality—a reality many find unsettling. Demographic analyses and projections show increasingly youthful populations on the horizon. Political appraisals warn of potential unrest arising from young people lacking skills and livelihoods. Workforce and education assessments predict the demand and supply dimensions of a generation poorly prepared for modernizing economies. Global health concerns rise with the knowledge that the new HIV infection rate is highest in the youth population.

Nonetheless, young people everywhere show remarkable strengths, often exhibit astonishing resiliency, and demonstrate optimistic responses to even the most daunting of circumstances. Rather than be seen as liabilities, young people can and should be seen as assets for community development. When appropriately engaged and adequately prepared for roles in work, family life, and civil society, youth often become key actors in the strengthening and transformation of their nations.

Much has been learned about how to build on youth’s positive attributes in initiatives and projects in many parts of the world. USAID’s Educational Quality Improvement Program 3 (EQUIP3) is designed to improve earning, learning, and skill development opportunities for out-of-school youth in developing countries. EQUIP3, a consortium of 13 organizations led by Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), is a mechanism through which USAID can access the expertise of these organizations to design and implement youth development programs. Perhaps more importantly, EQUIP3 provides the impetus and the platform for youth development organizations to learn from their experiences and to share their lessons.

As part of a series of publications summarizing what is being learned “on the ground” from projects in more than a dozen countries, this report is from the pilot phase of the first EQUIP3 Associate Award, the Haitian Out-of-School Youth Livelihood Initiative (IDEJEN). This document, which was written in 2007 and is being published in this format now, summarizes the lessons learned and makes recommendations for the IDEJEN project as it moved from a pilot phase with 650 youth to a large-scale national project serving 13,000 youth. The report examines the following aspects of the project: developing a knowledge base, nonformal basic education, life skills, technical/vocational training, livelihood accompaniment, capacity-building of local organizations, monitoring and evaluation, and partnerships.

Much has happened with the IDEJEN project, and in Haiti, since this report was written. The project did expand beyond the pilot phase; to date, 13,000 youth have participated in the program. More than 5,000 of those youth are still in training, and 6,479 youth completed the training and passed the final exams. Of those, 4,284 have gone on to further schooling, and 4,625 have found work opportunities or started a micro-enterprise. Haiti suffered from food riots and devastating hurricanes in 2008, and the recent earthquake of January 2010 has both literally and figuratively changed the landscape. When reading this report, it is important to remember the date it was originally authored; EQUIP3 is planning a second Lessons From Experience document from IDEJEN to examine the scale-up of the project.

Taken together with other documents in the Lessons Learned series, this report is meant to add substance to the growing attention being paid to youth issues in international development. We look forward to sharing more lessons from EQUIP3’s experience, with the goal of improving youth development programs around the world.

Erik Payne Butler

Director, EQUIP3

List of Acronyms

CBO	Community-based Organization
CEP	Certificat d'Etudes Primaires/Certificate of Primary Education
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
EDC	Education Development Center, Inc.
IDEJEN	Haitian Out-of-School Youth Livelihood Initiative
INFP	Institut National de Formation Professionnelle / National Institute for Technical and Vocational Training
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NFBE	Non-Formal Basic Education
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Project Background



The Haitian Out-of-School Youth Livelihood Initiative was created in the midst of a growing global concern about the estimated 1.3 billion youth in developing countries who currently face an extreme burden of poverty and socioeconomic hardships (World Bank, 2007, p. 3). A general lack of adequate employment and of formal education opportunities have resulted in large numbers of marginalized young people who are struggling to find hope for a promising future. The youth of Haiti are no exception to this bleak picture.

Young people in Haiti represent an increasingly large proportion of the country's population and face some of the most severe manifestations of poverty, socioeconomic despair, and political instability in the developing world.

Indeed, many Haitian youth are struggling to survive and forge viable livelihoods for themselves and their families in an environment marked by ecological devastation, persistent violence, and repression. Increasing numbers of the country's significant youth population are not connected to formal schooling, further diminishing their prospects for a viable livelihood and hopeful future.

Negative societal attitudes toward youth, coupled with broad economic constraints, have further inhibited young people's hopes for a promising future. An overwhelming pessimism and sense of despair permeate the Haitian workforce, due to years of economic crises, a scarcity of employment opportunities and local production, and deep hiring stagnation across all sectors of the economy. The challenge of finding employment has become especially difficult for young people; they make up a third of the workforce, but they lack the basic skills and experience required to survive in Haiti's troubled economy.

It is within this context of instability and limited socioeconomic opportunity that the USAID-funded Haitian Out-of-School Youth Livelihood Initiative (IDEJEN) project was created, with the objective of reintegrating youth into their communities through targeted educational services and, most recently, tying them to potential labor market prospects. Through a cross-sectoral approach and an integrative combination of educational objectives and livelihood accompaniment activities, the project strives to help youth develop the appropriate skills and networks they need to forge their own way toward a bright and sustainable economic future.

The IDEJEN program today is very different from where it started during the pilot phase. The knowledge acquired and lessons learned during the project's initial phases have informed the design, goals, and objectives of the project, and have guided the overall direction of the project into what it is today and what it aspires to be in the future. Examining these lessons learned will be important for people guiding current and future youth livelihoods programs (in and outside of Haiti) who aspire to reintegrate out-of-school and/or unemployed youth into society. With this in mind, it is necessary to briefly examine the project's *initial* goals, objectives, and strategies, in order to understand the lessons learned and the effect on the project's evolution.

Project Evolution from the Pilot Phase

The IDEJEN pilot phase began during a period of violent political turmoil. In January 2004, one month after project implementation began, Haiti was submerged in an intensive upheaval in which political violence between then-President Aristide and armed opposition groups had escalated sharply. By the end of February 2004, the political situation had deteriorated to such an extent that Aristide was forced to flee the country. Although the project encountered some delays, staff from the project's national coordination office continued to work with community-based organizations (CBOs) to develop the project, throughout even the worst periods of violence.

During its pilot phase, IDEJEN focused its efforts on out-of-school youth, ages 15–20, and conducted field studies, nonformal education, skills training, and livelihoods programming in six communities. The three communities initially selected for IDEJEN's pilot program in 2004 were Jérémie, an urban/semi-urban community in the Southwest; Mirebalais, a rural/semi-urban community in the Central Plateau; and Carrefour-Feuilles, an urban area in the capital city of Port-au-Prince. In October 2005, IDEJEN expanded its activities to include three new communities, all of which are located in urban areas of Port-au-Prince.

IDEJEN launched its pilot phase by conducting preliminary research, to better understand how to help out-of-school youth connect with educational and livelihood opportunities and contribute to their communities (Beauvy & Dart-Lincoln, 2007, p. 2). It used the findings to create a specific scope of work to respond to the real needs of out-of-school youth on the ground.

Once essential preliminary information had been acquired, IDEJEN could begin implementing specific pilot-phase activities. The project recruited 450 out-of-school youth and engaged them in intensive training in nonformal basic education, life skills, and technical training. IDEJEN implemented all of its activities and trainings through special Youth Centers that were managed by local CBOs.



In December 2005, an additional 200 youth began their training. In September 2006, the project was extended for two years, until 2008. During the extension, IDEJEN greatly expanded in terms of size, scope, capacity, and impact, as additional Youth Centers were created to assist a growing number of out-of-school youth (2,200) gain necessary education and skills. In addition, the extension period was marked by a shift in the project's focus, from an initial emphasis on nonformal education to its current focus on job/workforce readiness. IDEJEN introduced a new six-month Livelihood Accompaniment phase for graduates to further assist these young people in their transitions to the labor market or to additional education. With its latest extension until September 2010, the project will expand its services to reach a total of 13,000 youth.

In early 2008, the IDEJEN program model sought to:

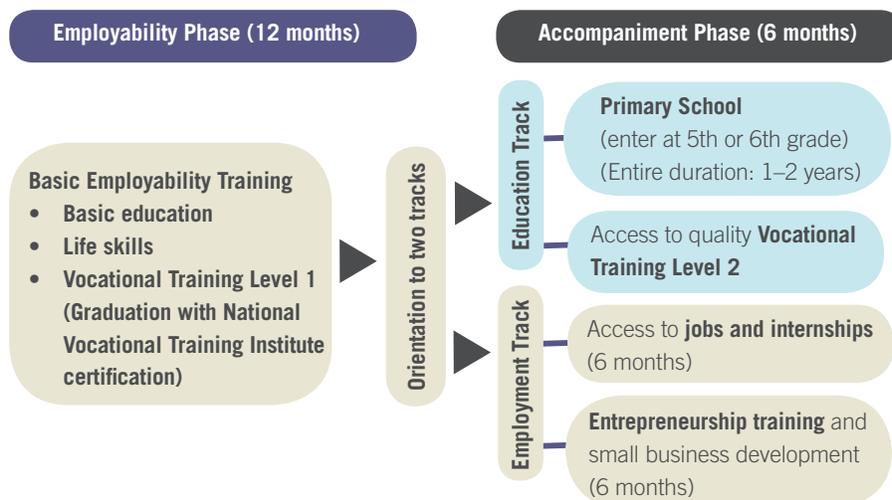
- Educate and train marginalized out-of-school youth to gain skills and competencies for successful socioeconomic reintegration into society
- Build the capacity of local CBOs as they implement educational and livelihood trainings for out-of-school youth
- Work with and support the Government of Haiti institutions as they adopt improved services for out-of-school youth
- Share HIV/AIDS prevention messages with youth and the community

In early 2008, the IDEJEN program was implemented by 31 Haitian CBOs through 44 Youth Centers (with plans to scale up to 100 centers by the end of 2008). Participating CBOs implement IDEJEN's 18-month instructional program, shown in Figure 1. The program includes two phases.

Basic Employability Training: As a part of this 12-month training program, Youth Centers provide students with instruction in basic education, life skills, and technical/vocational education, through which participants master essential work readiness skills. Young people are equipped with specific trade skills that they can use to support their livelihood, as well as core skills that teach them how to learn a trade and be versatile in a very fluid market.

Livelihood Accompaniment: The Basic Employability Training is followed by a six-month Livelihood Accompaniment Phase, during which trained CBO staff provide bridging support, counseling, and other services as youth either return to school or seek employment in the formal or informal economy. For example, youth who wish to pursue their own small businesses receive instruction in essential entrepreneurship skills.

Figure 1: Phases of the IDEJEN Program



Lessons Learned and Recommendations



The lessons learned and recommendations presented in the following section are divided into five categories: *Development of a Knowledge Base*, *Learning and Training*, *Capacity Building of Youth-Serving Organizations*, *Monitoring and Evaluation/Central Management of IDEJEN*, and *Partnerships*. The lessons presented here are by no means exhaustive (indeed IDEJEN is continuing to learn and grow as it expands into new areas); rather they are intended to draw out some of the fundamental principles learned during the project's pilot phase, in order to foster knowledge-sharing for the advancement of youth livelihoods development in Haiti and similar developing countries.

1. Development of a Knowledge Base

Since its inception, the IDEJEN project has placed great emphasis on expanding its knowledge base. In order to design and implement appropriate livelihood activities from the start, IDEJEN relied on the findings of various research studies to guide its actions. Several key lessons learned throughout this process are outlined below.

Observation 1.1

In the initial phases of project design, IDEJEN carried out a series of preliminary assessments, to understand the situation of out-of-school youth, and to tailor its intervention strategy accordingly.

The research uncovered many important points about out-of-school youth in the initial three pilot communities. Being out-of-school was tied to many challenges: Not only were these youth barely literate (if literate at all), but also they were excluded from the social life of their communities and the meaningful social activities provided therein. Some reported feeling like “troublemakers” in the eyes of community members. These factors in turn affected their work prospects. Specifically, low levels of literacy limited their ability to enter many professions, and social exclusion prevented them from being able to obtain employment in the formal sector.

IDEJEN's research underscored that while the support of literacy is important, other barriers would also have to be addressed to prepare youth for socioeconomic reintegration. An integrative program would have to be designed that took into account the multiple and interrelated needs of out-of-school youth, as assessed through continued research activities.

Furthermore, early assessment activities also underscored the importance of mobilizing the community and working with youth-serving organizations, to help combat the severe, systemic exclusion of out-of-school youth in Haiti. IDEJEN realized that these local organizations could play a crucial role in offering out-of-school youth the chance to build the developmental assets they need for reintegration into society. The project therefore undertook plans to work directly with local community-based/youth-serving organizations for the implementation of its activities. IDEJEN believed that working with local CBOs would not only contribute to project sustainability, but would also be vital to building youth's assets through training, practical experience (in work as well as social and civic arenas), and guidance that recognized and cultivated talents. CBOs would also be helpful in leveraging existing community opportunities that

When working with out-of-school youth in Haiti, nonformal basic education programs should be complemented by additional services that can support youth in their acquisition of viable livelihoods.

could help youth (such as gaining support from entrepreneurs and/or community leaders). However, since most youth-serving organizations' abilities were impeded by the external environment and a lack of internal capacity and resources, IDEJEN staff realized the project itself would have to be instrumental in building CBO capacity to implement the various activities.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations 1.1

When working with out-of-school youth in Haiti, nonformal basic education programs should be complemented by additional services that can support youth in their acquisition of viable livelihoods. In order to understand which combination of services to provide, the initial stages of project formulation must include detailed assessments, to ensure that the program addresses the real needs of the target youth population.

In Haiti, programs that target out-of-school youth must recognize that this population faces problems that stem beyond a lack of literacy and numeracy. Out-of-school/unemployed youth face severe social exclusion that limits their possibilities for reintegration into society. Identifying and working with local community-based/youth-serving organizations to implement targeted youth services will be one way to help combat this exclusion and to leverage further opportunities for youth's reintegration.

Observation 1.2

"Youthmapping" activities played a critical role in IDEJEN's preliminary assessment phase, helping to better incorporate the context of out-of-school youth and their specific needs into the final project design.

Youthmapping activities are used to assess communities in order to collect valuable information on the socioeconomic conditions of out-of-school youth and the existing opportunities already in place for these young people. Both in- and out-of-school youth are recruited to take part in assessment (mapping) activities, data entry, and analysis, as well as in results dissemination.

Livelihoods programs should always remember to cater their activities to the specific context, the type of youth cohort at hand, and the perceived needs these young people identify for themselves.

Results from early mapping activities showed that the majority of out-of-school youth in IDEJEN target communities were actively working, mostly in the informal sector as self-employed merchants, earning wages that were barely adequate to meet their own basic needs. Few of their business strategies included any long-term planning, and the majority of young people were dependent upon their family and friends to acquire livelihoods ideas and financial support.

Faced with minimal opportunity and lacking essential marketable skills, these youth expressed the desire for a program that would improve their situation by providing them with the skills and business trainings necessary to get them jobs. *In particular, youth expressed a desire to learn a technical trade (and not merely basic education), in order to cultivate job skills that would allow them to address their needs* (Barton-Chery, 2006, pp. 3–4). Based on these results, IDEJEN began designing a holistic program that would provide out-of-school youth with life skills, technical/vocational training, and—most recently—an accompaniment phase to help support youth and continually steer them toward viable livelihoods.

Besides helping IDEJEN to understand the situation of out-of-school youth, it should be noted that mapping activities have also helped build a strong youth research cadre, including leaders and instructors who have remained closely linked to the

project. The trainings received by youth have granted them opportunities (otherwise unavailable) to learn and master marketable skills in a very hands-on learning environment. Today, youth mapping remains an essential element of the IDEJEN project, as it ensures that youth are engaged at all levels of project planning, implementation, and assessment.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations 1.2 Youthmapping activities are vital to the overall success of youth livelihoods programs because they provide relevant and up-to-date information on the socioeconomic realities of youth, while contributing to young people's increased participation in and ownership of the project. Indeed, livelihoods programs should always remember to cater their activities to the specific context, the type of youth cohort at hand, and the perceived needs these young people identify for themselves.

In the context of very fluid markets, youthmapping activities should be pursued regularly within target communities to assure that youth services continue to effectively guide young people toward feasible livelihoods.

In the context of very fluid markets, youthmapping activities should be pursued *regularly* within target communities to assure that youth services continue to effectively guide young people toward feasible livelihoods. Continuous mapping efforts will also help youth acquire additional literacy/numeracy skills, while they help the project identify new research questions. As projects grow in terms of size and scope, it will be important to consider expanding existing mapping efforts to incorporate more participants (such as instructors) and to include more in-depth questions (for example, regarding potential youth-employment opportunities).

Observation 1.3 Later in the pilot phase, IDEJEN commissioned a labor market study, to provide feedback and direction for the evolving design of the project.

Placing a focus on market-oriented research from the outset of a livelihoods project should be seen as a fundamental first step in program design.

As the project grew in terms of size and scope, it was becoming increasingly evident that IDEJEN needed to develop a deeper understanding of how to best help out-of-school youth make successful transitions to the labor market. The program lacked an adequate knowledge base pertaining to the specific skills and areas of training that best matched the local demand for labor.

With this in mind, further research was commissioned (in addition to the youthmapping activities) in order to identify more accurately the labor market and economic opportunities for out-of-school youth. It was also hoped that this information would help IDEJEN and other projects in Haiti to broaden the scope of the vocational trainings they offered. The findings of the study have contributed to the project's expanding knowledge base, especially in terms of program design and the types of youth trainings and activities that are offered.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations 1.3 Placing a focus on market-oriented research from the outset of a livelihoods project should be seen as a fundamental first step in program design. It is crucial that projects incorporate an understanding not only of the particular situation of youth (their perceived needs, desires, and contexts), but also of the livelihoods opportunities and skills that are most viable to help young people find jobs.

Further, market assessments and research should constitute integral and *ongoing* components of livelihood programs, in order to ensure that specific interventions and activities accurately represent and address the needs on the ground at any given time.

2. Learning and Training

a. Nonformal Basic Education

Observation 2.1

In general, the IDEJEN project was successful in implementing the nonformal basic education (NFBE) component during the pilot phase.

Success in implementing NFBE was manifested principally through the 78 percent pass rate on the standard exit test for the initial cohort of nearly 450 out-of-school youth. This should be con-

sidered a very noteworthy achievement, especially for a pilot project (Midling & Sassine, 2007, pp. 40–42). During this initial phase, the program’s NFBE component focused on providing youth with the basic literacy, numeracy, and life skills necessary to learn work skills. After only six months of participation in the program, youth were able to read small paragraphs, write basic sentences, and solve rudimentary math problems (things which they could not do before). Indeed, it is widely accepted that the NFBE component has been and continues to be the project’s strongest point.

In any given group of youth, there will be different levels of previous skill and preparation.



Table 1 shows success rates for various groups and centers. Although the success rates were relatively high overall, there were great differences among various groups of youth, specifically between youth with no prior schooling (“uneducated youth”) and youth with minimal prior schooling (having only reached the second or third-grade for example, or “dropouts”). Student assessment was based on an oral test in reading and life skills and written tests in mathematics and language. In general, lower pass rates were concentrated most heavily among youth with little or no previous education at the outset of the project. These students, tested at the fourth-grade equivalency, achieved an average pass rate of 64 percent (Midling & Sassine, 2007, p. 42).

Those students with some prior education were tested at a fifth-grade equivalency, and out of a total of nine centers, four provincial centers achieved 100 percent pass rates, and three urban centers achieved pass rates of between 92 percent and 96 percent (Midling & Sassine, 2007, pp. 40–42). Generally, it was observed that these young people could learn at a quicker pace, had more discipline, and grasped the concept of IDEJEN’s life skills component better than the uneducated youth.

Table 1: Nonformal Education Results by Group and Center

Zone	Center	Uneducated Youth			Dropouts			Total		
		No. of youth passed	No. Taking exam	Pass rate	No. of youth passed	No. Taking exam	Pass rate	No. of youth passed	No. Taking exam	Pass rate
Carrefour-Feuilles (Slums of Port-au-Prince)	CAD	14	23	61%	22	24	92%	36	47	77%
	CIDE	15	25	60%	24	25	96%	39	50	78%
	OPEPED	10	19	53%	22	24	92%	32	43	74%
	Total	39	67	58%	68	73	93%	107	140	76%
Jérémie	KIRO	10	17	59%	19	19	100%	29	36	81%
	ESSAIS	22	25	88%	17	24	71%	39	49	80%
	AJEBJER	17	23	74%	26	26	100%	43	49	88%
	Total	49	65	75%	62	69	90%	111	134	83%
Mirebalais	OFPM	17	21	81%	24	24	100%	41	45	91%
	Croix-Rouge	14	20	70%	24	24	100%	38	44	86%
	Mache Kana	2	16	13%	12	20	60%	14	36	39%
	Total	33	57	58%	60	68	88%	93	125	74%
Grand Total		121	189	64%	190	210	90%	311	399	78%

Given the discrepancies between groups of youth, IDEJEN would later create special classes for those youth who failed the standard exit exam, in order to cater to their unique needs and help them gain the level of comprehension and skill needed to progress forward alongside their classmates. These special classes have not yet been evaluated, as the Ministry of Education has not yet attained the capacity to do so.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations 2.1

When working with out-of-school youth, NFBE programs must remember to distinguish between characteristics of the youth cohort at hand. In any given group of youth, there will be different levels of previous skill and preparation. Given this fact, programs should consider:

1. Placing an appropriate emphasis on working with the most at-risk youth (often those with no schooling) and ensuring that their special needs do not go ignored. When evaluating their own success along these lines, NFBE programs would do well to remember that success truly is relative to where the youth began at the start of the program.

2. Strengthening the ability of the Ministry of Education (or other evaluating body) to evaluate special-needs cases and subsequently take action to address their unique concerns.

Observation 2.2

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, IDEJEN adapted an accelerated NFBE curriculum for out-of-school youth and began implementing it through a unique teaching approach.

Although NFBE programs may be designed to reach out-of-school youth and to open new opportunities for them, without a bridging support in place to connect them to further education or work opportunities, youth are only being set up for failure.

In designing its curriculum, IDEJEN took into account the realities of out-of-school youth and the need to reach them through less conventional learning methods. IDEJEN therefore adapted a flexible learning system that could meet these young people's needs, and instructed its educators on how to present the curriculum in relevant ways. The model emphasized flexibility and practical learning, as it started from where the youth currently were and made use of learning materials from their own environment, instead of relying on a book-based approach. It has been widely noted that this approach has contributed significantly to the number of youth who not only join the IDEJEN program, but also stay and complete the project cycle.

As the project progressed, IDEJEN realized that its youth would need to be provided additional support mechanisms, as they were continuing to face difficulties in reintegrating back into society. Specifically, the problem of introducing overage learners back into the formal education system needed more attention. With this in mind, the project began looking ahead toward working with the Ministry of Education to adopt a policy on NFBE that would help bridge the gap between nonformal and formal education.

Strategies for the Future: Bridging the gap between nonformal and formal education, and addressing the needs of out-of-school youth to fully reintegrate into society upon completion of the NFBE program, will be an ongoing process for IDEJEN. The project is currently working with the Ministry of Education to develop a national policy on NFBE that will help address some of the special needs of out-of-school youth and overage learners.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations 2.2

Although NFBE programs may be designed to reach out-of-school youth and to open new opportunities for them, without a bridging support in place to connect them to further education or work opportunities, youth are only being set up for failure. Although this is not an inclusive solution, projects should remember to engage in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education from the outset of the project to ensure that:

1. A standard of quality is attained within the curriculum itself. Indeed, as government capacity in developing countries is often weak, NFBE programs must remember to reinforce the Ministry's capacity to adapt an appropriate curriculum for out-of-school youth and to develop quality controls to be imposed on the training itself.

Nonformal basic education programs should remember to start where the youth are and to cater their services and teaching techniques to reach them in ways that formal systems might otherwise not be able to.

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2. The special needs of out-of-school youth are met in terms of easing their transitions back into society. Working towards establishing a national youth-oriented NFBE policy could be one pathway toward reaching this goal.

In addition, since out-of-school youth are a special population with very specific needs, NFBE programs should remember to start where the youth are and to cater their services and teaching techniques to reach them in ways that formal systems might otherwise not be able to. In Haiti, this has translated into maintaining a flexible, student-centered approach to learning.

Observation 2.3 In many cases, instructors of youth for NFBE have demonstrated an insufficient comprehension of the nonformal education approach, as manifested in their teaching techniques.

Although IDEJEN has acquired a cadre of very excellent instructors who have shown mastery of student-centered methods and the nonformal approach advocated by the project, an independent evaluation did show that some teachers have tended to mimic techniques of traditional classrooms, including rote memorization and teacher-centered pedagogy (Midling & Sassine, 2007, p. 32). However, this finding does not come as a huge surprise when one considers how new the concept of nonformal education is to teachers in Haiti.

IDEJEN realized the importance of building teacher capacity in this domain, as it became increasingly apparent that youth performance was directly linked to teachers' performance and their mastery of a learner-centered approach to NFBE. Where teachers had not mastered the approach, youth pass rates were generally low. In order to help teachers become competent, IDEJEN provided two weeks of initial trainings, which included one week of life skills training followed by classroom observation opportunities.

In order to monitor teacher performance, IDEJEN conducted evaluations (pertaining to the presentation of content, techniques used, classroom management, youth reactions, etc.) after the first two months and then again after six months. A report was then drawn up, detailing the various strengths and weaknesses of the teachers, followed by a two-day refresher course based on the results. Teachers were also granted opportunities to observe best practices of IDEJEN's most proficient centers and instructors.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations 2.3

Projects that implement nonformal approaches in their teaching must remember to adequately reinforce the capacity of their educators to execute the new techniques.

It is important to remember that teachers accustomed to traditional teaching methods will often find it difficult to change, and that projects must offer substantial support to help teachers acquire and properly implement new ways of thinking and teaching. Intensive pre-service training coupled with ongoing in-service training with master teachers and other pedagogical counselors might be one pathway to help assure that instructors can effectively nurture learning among youth (Midling & Sassine, 2007, p. 32).

It is important to remember that traditional teaching methods are often difficult to suddenly change, and will require that projects substantially support educators to acquire and properly implement new ways of thinking and teaching.

b. Life Skills

Observation 2.4

Results from an independent IDEJEN evaluation show that youth, parents, instructors, and other project partners have greatly appreciated the life skills component of the program. In fact, when asked to describe the courses they found most relevant, several youth pointed to life skills (Midling & Sassine, 2007, p. 34).

Life skills trainings have proven successful in equipping out-of-school youth with the information and skills necessary to help them face the challenges and realities of every-day life—both inside and outside the classroom. Within IDEJEN, the life skills curriculum has helped instill some fundamental values youth need to behave properly in the community, protect themselves, and solve their own problems. The curriculum has appropriately emphasized the areas of conflict resolution, oral French, health, and communication skills.

From the beginning, the IDEJEN life skills curriculum was presented in a very participatory manner, emphasizing active, student-centered learning and encouraging the use of various participatory elements such as role-playing, sharing life experiences, and frequent opportunities for feedback. Moreover, youth were aided in identifying for themselves the particular challenges they confronted and the reasons they were facing these problems, and were then guided in preparing action plans to solve these problems. As teachers refrained from telling young people what to do, the solutions came from the youth themselves. Youth realized that if they did not change their behavior, they would continue to lack essential acceptance and respect from the community and potential employers.

After engaging in the life skills curriculum, youth noticeably began to change and develop new attitudes about themselves and their potential. Many felt a new sense of empowerment and desire to be treated as regular citizens, not as social outcasts. Young people particularly appreciated being able to learn and practice oral French (some practiced during youth-mapping activities), as this brought them to the level of many of their peers, instilling a newfound sense of self-confidence. Other youth reported that their peers and parents began to believe in them for the first time. Communities as well began to see out-of-school youth through a more accepting lens.

When working with out-of-school youth, livelihoods programs should not overlook the empowering element of a participatory and relevant life skills curriculum.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations 2.4

When working with out-of-school youth, livelihoods programs should not overlook the empowering element of a participatory and relevant life skills curriculum. In Haiti, this has translated into making youth both the means and the ends of the learning process, drawing upon their unique abilities to stimulate positive change in their own lives.

The life skills component will be critical not only to changing youth perceptions of themselves, but also to how they are viewed by society on the whole. Further, out-of-school youth who receive appropriate guidance in life skills will be better prepared to advance their learning in a project's more technical-based curricula, progressing more efficiently through the system.

c. Technical/Vocational Training

Observation 2.5

IDEJEN worked with the National Institute for Technical and Vocational Training (INFP), a branch of the Ministry of Education, to develop 22 technical/vocational training curricula for youth with limited educational experience.

IDEJEN recognized from the beginning that the provision of technical/vocational training would be essential to helping out-of-school youth reintegrate into society. This idea was further reinforced through the attitudes of the youth themselves, who considered the learning of trades to be of utmost importance, even above nonformal education. However, out-of-school youth faced a particularly

Since many developing countries do not have in place vocational training systems designed to meet the needs of disadvantaged youth with minimal education, programs should begin by working with the appropriate ministry to adapt a curriculum that can best serve the needs of these young people and provide them with proper certification.

harsh reality. Under the current educational system, there was no formal technical/vocational curricula in place for young people who had not earned their CEP (sixth-grade primary school certification). Moreover, many of Haiti's vocational training schools required that young people have at least a ninth-grade education in order to be admitted.

Based on these facts, IDEJEN recognized that it would have to help make Haiti's vocational education system more receptive to the needs of out-of-school youth.

IDEJEN therefore began work with the Ministry of Education, specifically the INFP, and an outside consultant to develop accelerated curricula in eight vocational fields for youth with limited educational experience. The curricula was based on key competencies (or areas of learning including reading, writing, and basic math) that were INFP requirements for out-of-school youth to receive certification.

IDEJEN realized that obtaining this certification, or official endorsement from the Ministry of Education, would be essential to helping out-of-school youth gain the recognition and respect they need to advance in Haiti's educational system (including the possibility of entering the INFP vocational training programs) or to find employment. Youth and parents themselves understood this same need, especially in terms of gaining credibility and trust amongst the community and potential employers. IDEJEN then began implementing the curricula with its out-of-school youth at the initial Youth Centers.

Moreover, during its initial phases, IDEJEN's strategy was to respond to the perceived needs and desires of the youth with respect to the type of technical/vocational training they were provided. However, results from an independent evaluation did show that the choices of trades offered were limited in scope and potentially concentrated in areas where there was a diminishing demand for labor (since trades had to be INFP approved) (Midling & Sassine, 2007, p. 33). As IDEJEN began observing the labor market for itself and searching for potential jobs for its youth, it soon realized that, in certain areas, it had oversaturated the market in one specific niche. For example, youth from one area who were all trained in plumbing would have to compete against each other for a limited number of plumbing jobs. IDEJEN would need to diversify the types of training offered to foster healthy competition and maximum opportunity for employment amongst its graduates.

Realizing that technical fields needed to be linked to the labor market in any given area, IDEJEN began organizing meetings with community leaders to assess the local market, existing resources, and potential areas on which to focus its technical trainings. IDEJEN's current strategy includes changing the technical trades offered in each center after each cohort, based on continual reassessments of market demand.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations 2.5

When working with out-of-school youth, livelihoods programs should remember to capitalize on the package of services that youth both need and desire most. This provides great incentive for young people not only to join a program in the first place, but also to stay and complete it. In Haiti, this has translated into providing training in a practical trade that youth can use to find immediate employment. Since many developing countries do not have in place vocational training systems designed to meet the needs of disadvantaged youth with minimal education, programs should begin by working with the appropriate ministry to adapt curricula that can best serve the needs of these young people and provide them with proper certification (making certain their achievements are officially recognized and endorsed, thereby facilitating their reintegration into other types of education or training institutions).

The technical trades taught should be driven by the demand of the local labor market, in areas where youth can access immediate employment and even have the potential to advance in their careers.

Moreover, programs should carefully consider the types of vocational trainings they will offer youth. The technical trades taught should be driven by the demand of the local labor market, in areas where youth can access immediate employment and even have the potential to advance in their careers. Along these lines, programs might consider not only training youth to become proficient in a specific skill, but also helping them learn general, transferable skills. With the fluid nature of many of the world's markets, it is important for young people to be able to learn a *new* trade, thereby increasing their marketability and mobility.

Finally, when providing youth with technical/vocational training, programs should make sure that youth within a certain geographic area are trained in diversified fields in order to give each young person the greatest chance to find employment.

Observation 2.6

Results from an independent evaluation of the IDEJEN project have indicated that technical/vocational trainings for out-of-school youth have been successful in terms of low drop-out rates and respectable overall pass rates (Midling & Sassine, 2007, p. 42).

Table 2 shows vocational outcomes for various groups. Overall pass rates for vocational education were only slightly lower (72.3%) than for NFBE, with occupations tending toward traditional gender divisions (i.e., more girls pursuing baking/arts/sewing and more boys pursuing driving/vehicle maintenance, etc.) Girls had a significantly higher pass rate (82%) than boys (62%), but it has been noted that this could be due to differences among the various trades in terms of the level of proficiency needed to learn a specific skill (for example, baking requiring less time and skill to master than auto mechanics) (Midling & Sassine, 2007, p. 42).

When providing youth in a certain geographic area with vocational training, be sure that youth are trained in diversified fields in order to give each young person the greatest chance to find employment.

Table 2. Vocational Outcomes by Center, Gender, and Field of Study

MIREBALAIS	Fields	Total Tested	Total Cert	Girls Cert	Boys Cert	% by Track	% by Center
OFPM	Cooking / Baking	38	36	36		95%	
	Sewing	13	10	10		77%	86%
Croix-Rouge	Hotel Service	20	5	2	3	25%	63%
	Baking	25	25	20	5	100%	
Mache Kana	Motorcycle Maintenance	19	14		14	74%	87%
	Decorative Art	20	20	20		100%	
JEREMIE							
AJEJBER	Sewing	21	15	4	11	71%	86%
	Cooking / Baking	22	22	20	2	100%	
KIRO	Artisanry	19	11	5	6	58%	
	Sewing	16	9	3	6	56%	57%
ESSAIS	Ag. Transformation	50	48	17	31	96%	96%
CARREFOUR-FEUILLES							
CAD	Auto Mechanics	27	20		20	74%	87%
	Sewing	6	6	5		100%	
CIDE	Painting	15	9	1	8	60%	54%
	Artisanry (cases)	12	3	3		25%	
	Decorative Art	17	13	9	4	76%	
	Bracelets	6	0			0%	
OPEPED	Auto Driving	14	4		4	28%	43%
	Woodwork	21	7		7	33%	
	Artisanry (Macramé)	19	13	9	4	68%	
TOTAL		400	289	164	125	72.3%	72.3%

While the overall pass rates were quite acceptable and even commendable for a pilot project, it did not take long for IDEJEN to observe the gender discrepancies. IDEJEN realized that the traditionally female-oriented trades, to which girls tended to gravitate, were not providing them with truly viable opportunities for economic sustainability. The project learned that it needed to push for more gender sensitization and encourage female participants to learn and master the same trades as their male counterparts (plumbing, mechanics, masonry, etc.) Overall, the community has shown general acceptance, openness, and even curiosity related to seeing young women assume traditionally male-dominated roles. As this is still a new and ongoing strategy for the project, IDEJEN hopes that communities will continue to be open to the idea.

Furthermore, results from the evaluation also showed that there were considerable variations between the pass rates of different centers. In centers with weaker pass rates, low scores were concentrated in specific subject areas. There could be numerous reasons for this discrepancy, including the possibility of inappropriate teaching of specific courses (Midling & Sassine, 2007, p. 42).

Finally, it is important to take note of how the learning approach that IDEJEN adopted contributed to the success of its technical/vocational trainings. The project made certain to take an approach that catered to the youth and their minimal levels of education and experience. It realized the type of youth at hand would need to learn by seeing, doing, and practicing, and not by theory alone. Along these lines, IDEJEN began implementing a strategy referred to by the INFP as “training by competency.” Instead of learning a whole trade in its entirety, youth would learn and become proficient in one aspect of it. This approach proved beneficial, as it catered to the needs of youth who wanted to learn something very quickly and use that knowledge to generate immediate income. Once youth realized that they could master a skill and not waste their time, they were further motivated to stay in the program and work hard.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations 2.6

When providing technical/vocational training, youth livelihoods programs should carefully take note, early on, of any gender discrepancies in the different trades being pursued. When female participants gravitate heavily toward traditionally female-oriented trades, programs should evaluate whether, within their given socioeconomic context, these trades will provide real economic opportunities.

Furthermore, programs that offer services to youth across varying centers or regions should consider how to ensure that any weaknesses in programming at individual learning centers are identified early on. This will help to ensure consistency in educational outcome for youth across the centers. The development of a system of quality control would also help to assure that all trainings in a given trade meet certain minimum standards.

Finally, when working with out-of-school youth, technical/vocational-training programs should remember to adopt a learning approach that will help their specific target youth grasp the necessary material, given their existing levels of skill and knowledge. In Haiti, this has translated into an approach that emphasizes *learning by doing* and *training by competency*, allowing youth to learn a specific aspect of one trade in a quick and efficient manner for immediate employment.



When providing technical/vocational training, youth livelihoods programs should carefully take note, early on, of any gender discrepancies in the different trades being pursued.

d. Additional Support—Livelihood Accompaniment

Observation 2.7

IDEJEN realized that although youth were benefiting from the program's pilot phase activities and trainings, many were still having trouble after graduation in moving from the safety net of the center into jobs or further education.

IDEJEN's initial pilot phase proved successful on various levels. It not only helped out-of-school youth gain important skills for livelihoods development, but also afforded the project many opportunities to learn, evolve, and tease out key areas for needed improvement and change. More specifically, IDEJEN realized that, given the minimal economic opportunities and networks available to its youth, it would need to provide additional and more structured support to young people after graduation.

For IDEJEN graduates who sought to pursue further schooling, difficulties centered around identifying appropriate educational institutions, getting placement therein, and accessing funds to pay school fees.

For IDEJEN graduates who sought immediate employment, several stumbling blocks also became apparent. To begin with, many youth were unsure of what career paths to choose and how to go about procuring work. Thus, IDEJEN realized that additional mentoring and counseling services would be needed to help youth make the transition to the working world. Moreover, IDEJEN had to come to terms with the realities of the surrounding economic environment, especially with respect to the minimal opportunities available for youth in the formal/private sector. Not only did the sector lack absorptive capacity, but also employers therein continued to manifest a strong distrust in the youth population, labeling them as troublemakers and associating them with violence (particularly in light of past security issues in the country).

With these factors in mind, IDEJEN began preparing for the inclusion of the *Livelihood Accompaniment* phase, as an additional component to its program. For six months after graduation, trained staff and mentors would provide youth with bridging support, counseling, and other services as they either returned to school or sought employment in the formal or informal economy.

For those youth desiring to pursue formal schooling, IDEJEN would consider providing partial scholarships and placement services to get graduates into appropriate educational institutions.

For youth seeking employment, it became apparent that IDEJEN would have to focus on two key issues: rebuilding linkages and a sense of trust in the private sector (identifying and working with influential private-sector *champions*, locating internships/facilitating employment connections) and building youth employment opportunities in the informal sector (building networks therein, fostering entrepreneurial/small-business development opportunities for youth). It should be noted that this is a relatively new concept in IDEJEN's strategy and that results will need to be assessed in the coming years.

A more detailed discussion of IDEJEN's livelihood accompaniment strategies appears in a later section.



Young people will need additional support systems and accompaniment services as they make the transition to the world of work or further education.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations 2.7

When supporting out-of-school and other severely marginalized youth in developing countries, livelihoods programs must remember that the greatest challenge often lies *after* the provision of initial education and skills trainings. When working with the most disadvantaged youth, programs must realize that the necessary networks, linkages, and general know-how related to finding job opportunities (and then getting hired) are often lacking. Young people will need additional support systems and accompaniment services as they make the transition to the world of work or further education.

Generally speaking, youth will benefit from accompaniment services such as additional counseling, mentoring, networking with relevant sectors or agencies (including internships), entrepreneurship training, and job-placement assistance. However, careful analysis of the local socioeconomic context in which a program operates is essential, as it determines which sectors, niches, agencies, or even employers will be most beneficial to work in/with to improve livelihood accompaniment for the youth. For Haiti, this has meant capitalizing on opportunities for youth in the informal-sector (where the most opportunity lies), as well as establishing the appropriate linkages and networks with the formal/private sector, in order to give youth the greatest chance to break into this highly difficult and closed-off sector of the economy.

3. Capacity Building of Youth-Serving Organizations

Central to IDEJEN's initial strategy was to establish working partnerships with local youth-serving organizations that could facilitate the socioeconomic reintegration of out-of-school youth. This soon translated into the establishment of direct partnerships with CBOs, which IDEJEN recruited to implement its everyday youth activities; each CBO is now managing one to three Youth Centers.

a. Training and Monitoring

Observation 3.1

In its initial stages, IDEJEN realized that many of the CBOs with whom it chose to work lacked the basic organizational, leadership, managerial, and financial capacities necessary to provide effective services to out-of-school youth.

With these and other factors in mind, IDEJEN began to dedicate a substantial amount of time and resources to strengthening the capacity of local CBOs to deliver effective youth-oriented services in the following domains:

Youth-Programming Standards: Central to its strategy, the project began training CBOs in “Key Elements for Youth Programming,” a set of standards aimed at helping youth-serving organizations improve their youth-development activities. CBOs were also trained in an accompanying “Self-Assessment Tool” that helped them to assess their progress in youth programming. Finally, CBOs engaged in additional pre-trainings on the elaboration of individual work plans.

Teacher Training: IDEJEN trained its educators in nonformal teaching techniques, relevant curricula (including NFBE, vocational, and, later, entrepreneurial), and appropriate evaluation tools. As a form of indirect capacity building, IDEJEN also engaged in a “Training of Trainers,” where pools of local trainers were instructed on how to train new CBOs and youth educators in IDEJEN's teaching techniques and curriculum.

Communication and Leadership: As the project evolved, IDEJEN recognized that although young CBO leaders and educators were showing strong organizational management skills and delivering generally effective services to youth, many younger directors tended to lack strong leadership and communication skills and to have weaker links to their own organization and community.

IDEJEN understood that communication and leadership skills at the center-level would be essential to ensuring that center directors improved their own organizations, promoted their projects, and raised the profile and image of their work within their communities. Strong and capable youth-serving organizations (backed by capable staff and educators) would be a great catalyst for successful activities and outcomes.

The project would therefore have to provide additional trainings as well as close monitoring to ensure that CBOs were learning to manage youth projects effectively. In terms of leadership, the project initiated a successful seminar in 2006 for center directors, with the sole intent of building leadership capacity (identifying the characteristics of leaders, and empowering/improving individual performance). Initiatives like this began to raise the proficiency level for many of IDEJEN's local implementing bodies.

Financial/Managerial Capacity: IDEJEN observed early on that it would have to provide significant support to center leaders. In its initial stages, the project engaged the CBOs in pre-trainings on financial management, to help them administer USAID funding. Later, the project organized workshops to address key weaknesses that were made apparent in this domain and also utilized practical management guides that were distributed to local CBO financial managers. Field observations showed that those persons who underwent IDEJEN training workshops and who received IDEJEN's easy-to-use management guides attained a solid grasp of fundamental financial accounting and managerial procedures.



When working with community-based organizations, close monitoring and capacity-building trainings should be considered vital to ensuring the overall effective management of youth projects.

Since the pilot, CBO capacity has been bolstered considerably, as has the ability of instructors to assist youth in improving their educational as well as life skills and employment outcomes.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations 3.1

When working with CBOs, close monitoring and capacity-building trainings should be considered vital to ensuring the overall effective management of youth projects.

Dedicating significant time and resources to training leaders and educators should be seen as a high priority for projects, worthy of the time and resources expended. In Haiti, a focus on instilling communication, leadership, and financial/managerial skills, coupled with trainings in key youth-programming standards, will be especially important in terms of the types of capacity-building services provided. This will be especially important where younger, less experienced leaders are in place.

In addition, it is important to recognize that capacity-building efforts will often be a long-term process, especially when the goal is to build progressively self-sustaining structures for delivering youth services. Programs should ensure that tight monitoring and appropriate follow-up support become integral parts of the work plan.

b. Sustainability

Observation 3.2

Many of the CBOs who were selected to work with IDEJEN during the pilot phase were small, less-experienced organizations with weak organizational structures.

It did not take long for IDEJEN to realize that these weaker CBOs had less capacity, not only to deliver effective youth-oriented services, but also to attain increasing levels of financial sustainability—a fundamental element of IDEJEN's strategy. Indeed, ensuring that individual Youth Centers were able to independently generate adequate funds proved essential, not only to overall project sustainability, but also for the fulfilling of immediate needs such as the provision of equipment and materials for the project's various training elements. Moreover, increasingly self-sustained centers would attain greater acceptance and status in their mission to become recognized as mid-level professional/technical schools by the INFP.

With this in mind, IDEJEN required that each CBO running a Youth Center submit a sustainability strategy along with its proposal for funding. During the pilot phase, this often took the form of an income-generating activity that the Youth Center would run in parallel with the youth training. IDEJEN believed, that within a designated period of two years, that these CBOs could develop into sustainable centers. For its part, IDEJEN provided training, technical support, and mentorship to the Youth Centers for the start-up of their income-generating activities.

In general, however, these income-generating activities at the center-level were not successful, despite a small number of limited successes in a few Youth Centers. Small CBOs, without adequate infrastructure, leadership, or managerial capacity, needed more time to find sources of funding. And due to the prevailing macro-economic environment, marked by economic stagnation, these weaker Youth Centers were simply not able to generate sufficient revenue or effectively compete for business in their local areas. The few centers that did succeed after two years did so based on their previous level of experience coupled with very tight monitoring, training, and monetary support provided by IDEJEN. (This was marked by monthly field visits, which provided CBOs with explicit instructions on what to do and how to do it.)



Programs should consider placing an emphasis, from the beginning, on supporting mainly those community-based organizations that show the greatest potential for succeeding, becoming increasingly self-sustainable, and setting an example of excellence for other community organizations.

IDEJEN realized, as the project grew in terms of size and scope, that it would have to reevaluate its criteria for deciding which CBOs to recruit to implement project activities. The experience during the pilot taught IDEJEN that it was not beneficial to continue working with very small CBOs, because they did not have the prior level of capacity to be carried toward financial sustainability (without expending significant amounts of IDEJEN's time and resources). Further, as the project noticed an increasing lack of initiative on the part of CBO managers, IDEJEN made the decision to stop directly paying their salaries, but instead to emphasize the benefits of voluntary, community participation. IDEJEN discovered that as communities took greater ownership over the project, general managerial capacity increased and centers were taking upon themselves the initiative that they needed to achieve success and sustainability.

Strategies for the Future: Income-generation at the center-level is possible, but will require that individual centers develop a deeper understanding of the changing labor markets in their specific communities and identify those organizations who can become reliable partners, capable of developing business and marketing plans for sustainable organizational growth.

For example, tapping into local community networks might prove effective in terms of promoting fundraising activities, obtaining resources (equipment, volunteers, etc.), and identifying new development opportunities within the community. Diversified funding sources, which mix combinations of government support, donor funds, private-sector involvement, community support, and youth participation, have also been effective means of income generation used by other sustainable youth livelihoods initiatives.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations 3.2

In Haiti, projects that work with community-based organizations must realize that finding sources of funding and ultimately achieving sustainability takes time. Programs should consider placing an emphasis, from the beginning, on supporting mainly those CBOs that show the greatest potential for succeeding, becoming increasingly self-sustainable, and setting an example of excellence for other community organizations. Further, delegating increasing authority and responsibility (to those CBOs that are equipped for this) will help foster a greater sense of community-ownership over the project.

Observation 3.3

Once the project adopted a monitoring and evaluation framework, it began training CBOs to implement essential monitoring techniques.

IDEJEN recognized the importance of training CBOs to be able to take charge of the monitoring and evaluation of their own organizations. However, at the outset of IDEJEN's trainings, some key concerns were raised. Namely, IDEJEN realized that the concept of monitoring was very new and hard to grasp for many of the smaller and weaker CBOs. Their managers lacked certain fundamental capacities to carry out basic monitoring practices (e.g., many were not accustomed to writing simple reports). However, with the tailored trainings provided by IDEJEN, these CBO personnel were able to learn the necessary monitoring techniques, improve their writing ability, and gain an increase in overall organizational capacity.

IDEJEN then noticed that CBO managers were taking on more initiative and assuming better leadership roles. They began transferring newly acquired skills into other domains that were ultimately improving the sustainability of the CBO. For example, managers were now taking it upon themselves to procure diversified sources of funding from donors, establish viable income-generating activities, and properly manage the acquired funds. It has been observed that without the initial training in monitoring techniques, these CBOs would not have been able to do these things.

When working with community-based organizations, providing training in monitoring techniques not only helps transfer additional authority and responsibility to these organizations, but also can contribute to the acquisition of new skills that can be used to support project sustainability in other, related domains.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations 3.3

When working with CBOs, providing training in monitoring techniques not only helps transfer additional authority and responsibility to these organizations (contributing to overall project sustainability), but also can contribute to the acquisition of new skills that can be used to support project sustainability in other, related domains. Possible outcomes of the initial training include improved communication, leadership, and the ability to take initiative in procuring additional sources of funding.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation/Central Management of IDEJEN

a. General Approach

Observation 4.1

As a pilot project, IDEJEN did not commence its activities with a formal monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework in place.

With no formal requirements for a monitoring component during its initial phases, IDEJEN began carrying out its different activities. In the beginning, the project's Chief of Party took it upon herself to implement some basic monitoring elements, but as the project grew, this task soon became too difficult to manage alone with no formal M&E framework or tools. IDEJEN staff also grew aware of the importance of having an appropriate M&E mechanism in place, especially when working with youth and CBOs. The project needed to be able to communicate the various successes it was having with the youth, as well as to uncover information concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the implementing CBOs. IDEJEN desired to use this information to adapt its programming and implementation strategies to cater to the needs of youth and individual centers. IDEJEN therefore began to introduce key monitoring methods into a number of project areas; eventually it advocated for and adopted a formal M&E framework. IDEJEN could then begin training its CBOs in the appropriate monitoring techniques.

Having a monitoring and evaluation plan established from the outset of a project is vital to ensuring its overall success.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations 4.1

Having a monitoring and evaluation plan established from the *outset* of a project is vital to ensuring its overall success. Although M&E is a crucial aspect of any development program, it is especially so for those that work with community-based and other youth-serving organizations to implement their day-to-day activities. Making sure these organizations are equipped with the proper monitoring tools from the beginning will help the project avoid major weaknesses and pitfalls later on. More specifically:

1. *The monitoring system itself* can help steer the program toward areas of needed improvement and change, in addition to identifying major accomplishments and successes.
2. As previously discussed, *training of CBOs in monitoring techniques* will build their capacity as they learn to implement new techniques and skills, applicable not only to monitoring, but also to other aspects of management, leadership, communication, outreach, and funding—ultimately contributing to project sustainability.

Observation 4.2

In general, IDEJEN adopted a successful, structured, and efficient approach to monitoring and evaluation. During the pilot phase, IDEJEN realized the importance that monitoring and evaluation would play in its overall success and therefore proceeded to adopt and implement a strategy. This strategy included using Field Agents (usually young men who were recent university graduates) to conduct weekly monitoring visits of the different sites in their zones. Their tools consisted of educational monitoring forms (to comment regarding the general functioning of Youth Centers), weekly monitoring forms (to use with center monitors and youth themselves), qualitative reports (related to Youth Center management and activities), and financial forms (documenting weekly financial matters with center accountants) (Midling & Sassine, 2007, p. 37). The project also maintained several databases, which stored much information related to participating youth and their profiles.

While these efforts deserve applause for being carried out in a generally organized and diligent manner, certain problems and weaknesses in the system soon became apparent. Namely, the strategy and tools in place were becoming too complex to use, while the resulting information was not concrete enough to translate into meaningful feedback to guide the project forward. Results from an independent evaluation underscored these ideas, specifically noting that weekly monitoring techniques were inducing repetitive and less-than-useful information-gathering, and that Field Agents did better when asked to provide more qualitative assessments (instead of having simple questionnaires, for example, in which responses rarely changed from week to week). Moreover, the databases in place were so large that staff members were having difficulties using them (Midling & Sassine, 2007, p. 39).

IDEJEN realized that it needed to revise and simplify its current monitoring system in order to collect the information needed to support its activities and to report accurately to its donors. Tools needed to be reworked and streamlined to ensure that the most concrete information was extracted—information that would actually help the project reach the needs of more out-of-school youth. Finally, the acquired information needed to be accessible and easy for each sector of the project to interpret and manage.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations 4.2

Although monitoring and evaluation efforts alone are an essential first step in the overall success and progression of development projects, the *manner* in which the M&E framework is structured and implemented is equally important to project success.

Development programs (specifically, for our purposes, youth-related programs) will benefit from streamlining their monitoring processes upfront, (simplifying their tools and means of data acquisition) in order to highlight the most fundamental and relevant information needed for accurate evaluation and reporting procedures.

Programs should keep in mind that the ultimate goal is not monitoring and evaluation in and of itself, but the ability M&E has to translate into *usable and practical feedback* that can guide the project toward reaching the needs of more disadvantaged youth.

Programs should keep in mind that the ultimate goal is not monitoring and evaluation in and of itself, but the ability M&E has to translate into *usable and practical feedback* that can guide the project toward reaching the needs of more disadvantaged youth.

b. Central Management and Oversight of IDEJEN

Observation 4.3

Despite the prevalent security concerns in Haiti during the pilot phase, IDEJEN continued to operate its Youth Centers and implement the activities therein.

Faced with an extremely difficult and sensitive security situation during the summer of 2005, IDEJEN found that the relatively decentralized grassroots approach to program implementation allowed the Youth Centers to continue functioning. Although monitoring visits by the field staff were limited to a minimum during this period, the Youth Centers continued to operate, due to the great sense of ownership that the community felt for the project. IDEJEN recognized the importance of transferring as much autonomy as possible to the local centers and to staff themselves.

An evaluation of youth learning achievements for this time period revealed, however, that although the Youth Centers continued to operate, the level of achievement in certain centers was lower than in others that were less affected by security issues. In response to these findings, IDEJEN realized it would have to develop a more flexible approach to its accompaniment phase and evaluation processes, adjusting for youth from urban areas that would need additional training in order to succeed during the accompaniment phase.

Programs and organizations that provide education and training within communities can continue to work and function under conditions of conflict or political unrest

Lessons Learned and Recommendations 4.3

Programs and organizations that provide education and training within communities can continue to work and function under conditions of conflict or political unrest (Midling & Sassine, 2007, p. 50). As illustrated in Haiti, this process was aided by the power of a confident, local staff that was delegated authority and had the capacity to keep activities running on its own. Likewise, where the community takes ownership over the project, activities will have the greatest chance of flourishing, even in an uncertain environment.

Moreover, when working with out-of-school marginalized youth, programs should remember that maintaining a flexible approach that caters to the special needs of youth (in times of conflict and of peace) will help assure that no young person falls away and misses out on essential services and support. Programs might consider adopting flexible time schedules, extra/special trainings, or second-chance/make-up opportunities for youth who may have missed out on an essential programmatic element.

5. Partnerships

a. Partnerships with the Ministries of Education and Youth, Sports, and Civic Action

Observation 5.1

IDEJEN's partnerships with the Government of Haiti (Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Civic Action, Ministry of Education and Technical Training) have been successful and have allowed mutual reinforcement between the parties.

One of IDEJEN's goals from the pilot phase was to establish relationships with those institutions that could further advance the reintegration of out-of-school youth. The project quickly realized that leveraging support from relevant government institutions would be essential for facilitating this process. From its initial collaborations with the government (namely with the

Ministry of Education—in the adaptation of the vocational training curriculum for out-of-school youth), IDEJEN recognized how beneficial the cultivation of these types of partnerships could be, especially in contributing to the sustainability of project activities (specifically its training and accompaniment activities for out-of-school youth).

With the Ministry of Education: During the pilot phase, IDEJEN realized that a large majority of its youth eventually wanted to return to formal schooling upon graduating from the program. It became evident that the project would therefore need to continue working with the Ministry of Education (in addition to its work with curriculum adaptation) in order to most effectively support the youth in their desires. While the Ministry could help support the project through endorsing its goals, enhancing project visibility/exposure, and involving other public entities in its scope of work, IDEJEN learned its own part would be to substantially help the Ministry with the appropriate support and capacity building necessary for translating these goals into concrete actions to meet the needs of marginalized youth.



A specific focus should be placed on working with government institutions, such as the Ministries of Education and Youth, in the establishment of mutually reinforcing partnerships.

Taking this lesson from the pilot phase, IDEJEN has most recently begun working with the Ministry of Education on developing a strategy for nonformal basic education that will help out-of-school youth reintegrate back into the school system. The partnership has proved to be so productive and mutually beneficial that the Ministry has even started integrating IDEJEN strategies into its own structures (through their *Centres d'Education Familiales*, or evening education programs).

With the Ministry of Youth and Sports: From the pilot phase, IDEJEN also learned that the Ministry of Youth could be a powerful force for advancing project goals. This became clear as the Ministry began facilitating and coordinating fundamental pilot activities, such as youth mapping. IDEJEN also recognized how the Ministry's provision of various cultural and sport activities for youth in the different communities was contributing to the social reintegration of out-of-school youth (for example, by providing them with exposure to other peers their age).

Just as with the Ministry of Education, IDEJEN saw the importance not only of leveraging support from the Ministry of Youth and Sports, but also of reinforcing its capacity to meet the needs of marginalized youth. IDEJEN's most recent collaborations with the Ministry of Youth and Sports have included supporting them in the development of a National Youth Policy, training Ministry trainers in youth-related techniques, and providing other financial and technical assistance.

Indeed, it can be said that promoting these types of mutually reinforcing partnerships has been a critical element of IDEJEN's progression since the pilot phase. Without the express support of strong and capable government institutions, IDEJEN's work in building educational and livelihood opportunities for marginalized out-of-school youth in Haiti would undoubtedly remain at a standstill.

Thus far, the project's work has shown that continuing to establish linkages with various authorities in the field will be essential to enhancing current and future youth-serving education and livelihood agendas.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations 5.1

Successful youth livelihoods programs cannot operate in isolation. They must ensure that they solicit third-party collaboration from the outset of the project.

A specific focus should be placed on working with government institutions, such as the Ministries of Education and Youth, in the establishment of *mutually reinforcing partnerships*. As projects support and guide the ministries through various capacity-building efforts, ministries will be able to develop and implement those youth-friendly services and policies that will ultimately advance the project's goals (and youth development on the whole).

b. Other Partnerships

Observation 5.2

Aside from partnering with government institutions, IDEJEN has pursued further collaborations with other entities, both public and private, in the field.

Realizing that the project could not work in isolation if it was to grab hold of additional resources, help, and expertise in the field, IDEJEN began to partner with an array of non-governmental agencies, both at the broad international level (with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and UNICEF for example) and at the local level.

At the local level, collaborations with some employers, entrepreneurs, and other organizations have provided select IDEJEN youth with unique work and learning experiences. (Partnerships with private agencies and employers were, however, quite limited, due to the status of Haiti's formal private sector.) For example, the National Institute for the Development and Promotion of Sewing, a cooperative organization that helps organize local artisans into large national organizations, began facilitating the participation of at least two IDEJEN Youth Centers. Moreover, the Haitian Partners for Christian Development also began working with IDEJEN on the concept of enterprise incubators (as IDEJEN was looking ahead to implementing its Livelihood Accompaniment strategy). Collaborative linkages were also established with other local organizations such as the Rotary Club, the Red Cross, and the Foundation for Reproductive Health and Family Education. Some local entrepreneurs even began providing internships for a few youth—at a local hotel, a low-cost restaurant operated by the Red Cross, a baking business, a printing house, and a gas station (Midling & Sassine, 2007, pp. 29–30).

Strategies for the Future: Through further collaborations with other agencies in the field, IDEJEN has strengthened its own institutional capacity and has been able to further assist out-of-school youth achieve socioeconomic reintegration. However, with its new emphasis on workforce development, IDEJEN has realized the importance of establishing partnerships with institutions in the economic growth sector in addition to those in the education sector.

As it begins its expansion, IDEJEN must therefore remember to forge equally productive partnerships with key institutions in both the education and the economic development sectors, with an emphasis on economic development. Expanding its linkages with these entities will be vital to building a larger knowledge base about labor-market opportunities and to fostering the development of a national policy to support the changing needs of out-of-school youth (Midling & Sassine, 2007, p. 64).

Lessons Learned and Recommendations 5.2

Continuing to establish partnerships with an array of related and reputable organizations in the greater community will be essential to helping livelihoods initiatives

1. Create an ever-expanding knowledge base for the implementation of future project activities (for example, through the sharing of ideas, past successes and lessons learned, and current research agendas/findings)
2. Leverage additional support and networks for linking youth to potential employment opportunities
3. Increase their project's overall sustainability, recognition, and reputation

Within Haiti, working with and seeking out those public-sector partnerships has proven particularly beneficial; it would be an essential area for livelihoods programs to capitalize on, given the limitations in the formal/private sector.

c. Partnerships with Communities and Families

Observation 5.3

Since its initial phases, IDEJEN has placed emphasis on fostering community partnerships and regular collaborations with community and family members alike.

Role of the Community: As previously discussed, IDEJEN's beginning stages underscored the importance of working with community-based organizations, to combat systemic exclusion of out-of-school youth and to build their fundamental development assets through various training opportunities. Furthermore, as described earlier, having a general sense of community ownership over the project allowed Youth Centers to continue to operate even under a particularly difficult security situation. It should also be noted that the project made use of local advisory groups (from the community) during the pilot phase, to help organize and implement youthmapping activities and to reach out to potential Youth Centers.

These initial efforts were encouraging and helped the project realize that its own efforts to help out-of-school youth would fall drastically short without the express support and involvement of the community. IDEJEN saw that, especially in the harsh and often unforgiving socioeconomic environment, the community had to be convinced that the project was their own, or it would not survive and be seen as a credible, valuable pursuit.

More specifically, within its CBOs, IDEJEN saw the value of recruiting Field Agents to help carry out project activities with the youth. It did not take long for the project to understand the vital role Field Agents would play in terms of its overall success and sustainability. Recruited from the community itself to work directly with the youth, Field Agents could provide IDEJEN with essential information on the youth (their specific needs, reasons for entering/leaving the program, their whereabouts after leaving the program, etc.) and thus play a unique role as a bridge between the community and IDEJEN. In select Youth Centers, old students have even returned to work as Field Agents themselves. As



Working through local community-based, youth-serving organizations is an essential mechanism for implementing project activities and for ultimately linking the project's goals with the community's goals.

a result, the linkages between the community and the project have been further strengthened, while youth are simultaneously allowed the opportunity to witness success stories and have real-life role models to guide them.

Role of the family: Besides reaching out to the community, IDEJEN also began reaching out to the families of its youth. From early on, IDEJEN saw that the general attitude and support of parents would directly influence project outcomes. More specifically, parents had to be extremely motivated and truly understand/believe in the project—that it was in the best interest of their children and the family (especially in light of the many opportunity costs involved in sending a child to school)—or they would not push for their child’s attendance.



**Enlisting
familial support of
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attendance.**

Maintaining transparency about its goals and activities and collaborating with family members for the well-being of their children proved to be a fundamental strategy of the project. While IDEJEN agreed to provide education and training completely free of charge, parents needed to commit to having their children attend the program regularly. To facilitate this process, one particular IDEJEN Youth Center took it upon itself to make visits to the homes of students who were experiencing particular problems or had acquired a large number of absences. This center noted that as parents gained trust in the project, they began to relay important information back to the Youth Center, pertaining to any special needs or circumstances of their children, frequent absences, etc.

Although on the whole IDEJEN has worked effectively with its students’ families, an independent evaluation did observe that encounters with parents have generally involved information-sharing about the project more than encouraging actual parental participation therein (Midling & Sassine, 2007, p. 30).

Lessons Learned and Recommendations 5.3

Youth livelihoods initiatives must never overlook the importance of working directly with the community to ensure overall project success and sustainability. Specifically, working through local community-based, youth-serving organizations is an essential mechanism for implementing project activities and for ultimately linking the project’s goals with the community’s goals. With a common vision, an adequate transfer of power to local authorities, and the express involvement of parents, projects can foster a sense of community ownership that is essential to ensuring their survival amidst the insecurities that are prevalent in the developing world.

Finally, if livelihoods initiatives hope to be effective in reaching youth, they must find a means to ensure their full participation and regular attendance in the program. Enlisting full parental/familial support of the project—for example, through regular informational meetings and/or home visits—can help foster the motivation that parents need to push for their children’s attendance. Moreover, livelihoods initiatives might consider not only remaining transparent with family members concerning the project, but also finding ways to involve them in actual activities, thereby enhancing their trust in and ties to the project.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned

The results of IDEJEN's various pilot activities have been promising and have helped steer the project toward areas of success by identifying avenues for change and improvement. Specifically, the pilot phase demonstrated the importance of:

- **Developing an ongoing knowledge base** from the outset, in order to guide the formulation and design of livelihoods programs and, subsequently, to continually steer them in the right directions during the course of activity implementation.
- **Providing an integrative package of learning services** that can meet the holistic needs of youth—affording them opportunities that expand beyond literacy and numeracy—to include life skills, technical/vocational training, and appropriate accompaniment services once youth leave the safety of the classroom. Presenting the material through flexible approaches and participatory techniques that cater to the needs of target youth will also be important.
- **Identifying and working with local community-based/youth-serving organizations** in order to promote project sustainability, community ownership, and effective delivery of youth services. Making sure these organizations receive appropriate capacity building and support from the beginning, as well as singling out/working with those organizations that have the potential of becoming strong “poles of excellence,” will also be helpful for sustainability and successful outcomes.
- **Implementing a streamlined monitoring and evaluation framework from the beginning** of the project, one that is both user-friendly and able to report the most essential information for contributing to project improvement.
- **Building an array of mutually reinforcing partnerships with government and non-government entities in the field** in order to foster an environment conducive to helping out-of-school youth reintegrate into society, as well as to leverage specific opportunities for youth employment and practical experience with the community.

IDEJEN Strategies for the Future: Livelihood Accompaniment Activities

IDEJEN's pilot phase brought with it many noteworthy successes, real challenges, and an array of lessons learned that can be used to advise the field of youth livelihoods development today. Indeed, the IDEJEN model today is very different from what it started out as in the pilot phase. In many ways, its evolution has been the result of the practical application of these many lessons learned.

As the project moves forward in its current extension, with a new emphasis on livelihood accompaniment and workforce development, it must identify those pathways along which it can further accompany out-of-school youth in their transitions to the world of work or continuing education. Examining these areas can likewise serve to guide other livelihoods programs that currently confront similar programming issues. So where does IDEJEN go from here?

Further Labor Market Research

One of the key lessons learned from the pilot phase was the importance of understanding the contours of the local labor market and tailoring intervention strategies and services accordingly. This lesson will become increasingly important as IDEJEN moves forward. As a critical first step, the project must expand upon its initial efforts in the pilot phase and continue to identify the most viable economic opportunities available to its youth.

Through analyzing local labor market studies and soliciting the efforts of labor-market specialists, IDEJEN hopes to single out those specific sectors that offer the greatest potential for economic growth. It will use this knowledge to identify the most relevant technical trades to be taught in its youth centers as well as the areas for IDEJEN's young entrepreneurs to focus on as they start up their own small businesses. IDEJEN must consider certain factors including which labor market activities will provide for *quick-income generation*, be *collection-based* (not requiring substantial equipment or start-up capital), and be *sustainable* enterprises (economically and environmentally). Although this will be an ongoing process, certain preliminary research has already begun to steer IDEJEN in the right directions. For example, a USAID-funded Workforce Gap Analysis (ResCare, 2007) was conducted in Haiti in 2007 in order to shed light on some key issues. The report highlighted several areas as priorities for Haiti.

- The economy has a need for specific skills in the following sectors: food products sale/food production (restaurants); construction and the related professions of building and infrastructure repair (plumbing, electricity, cabling, metal work, furniture making); telecommunications (selling services and installing cables/towers); small commerce and client service /micro-enterprises (formal and informal sectors); and the larger business market (agriculture and animal husbandry or fishery/factories and industries for assembling and transformation), which will only be successful, however, if there is an increase in investment first.
- The report emphasized that the greatest employment potential lies in the informal market (80 percent of Haiti's economy), through micro-enterprises (offering the most promise for short-term job openings), and in the construction sector (a great opportunity for young people with minimal skills, especially since there is a current need for national-scale construction projects). IDEJEN is already working with a partner organization to initiate youth employment opportunities in the construction sector.
- The report also emphasized the types of competencies most demanded by the market, including generalized skills (social competencies and personal skills, overall business and financial management training, market analysis, and budgeting) as well as cross-cutting skills that will allow youth to be mobile and learn new trades once in the labor market.

Once IDEJEN gains a more complete understanding of the most promising labor market opportunities for its youth, it can begin to test these hypotheses against the local economic environments within specific intervention communities, thoroughly mapping out/assessing local contexts and opportunities. Based on these results, IDEJEN can then begin to establish the most appropriate linkages and social networks that will facilitate youth's integration into the labor market.

Linking Youth to Jobs

For IDEJEN youth who graduate from the program and seek immediate employment, the project has proposed several key strategies. Indeed, the pilot phase taught leaders that youth would need substantial additional assistance in order to break into the labor market. IDEJEN will therefore provide further assistance by helping youth identify and start on relevant career paths; and it will facilitate opportunities for internships and short-term employment experiences. The project will also provide youth with continued mentorship and monthly experience-sharing meetings, create linkages with the informal and formal private sectors (including private sector *champions* who can set an example in hiring IDEJEN graduates), build networks within the informal sector, leverage other relevant USAID projects in the country, and develop partnerships with government ministries that can access jobs for IDEJEN youth (including local government institutions where labor-intensive services are needed).

Implementing Vehicles: Youth Career Centers

As a primary vehicle for helping youth break into the labor market, IDEJEN has proposed the creation of Youth Career Centers. In addition to its regular Youth Centers, these unique centers will serve as connectors between IDEJEN graduates and the market economy—linking youth to jobs and/or providing small business start-up support (ResCare, 2007, p. 4). Whereas CBOs will focus more on facilitating short-term work opportunities that arise locally, Career Centers are designed to have a more regional focus, identifying longer-term work opportunities for youth.

Youth Entrepreneurship

Existing research suggests that the greatest economic potential for out-of-school youth in Haiti centers on self-employment and micro-enterprise development. IDEJEN therefore plans to facilitate youth opportunities in the following areas:

Small-Business Development: IDEJEN will provide youth with practical skills and knowledge (entrepreneurship training in savings, business plan development, etc.), assist them in making informed choices about employment, and provide income-generation and entrepreneurial opportunities (with the help of start-up grants). The project will also look at reinforcing key partnerships with projects and organizations that could open doors for business development, including linkages with a USAID-financed project, and with microfinance products adapted to the young micro-entrepreneurs IDEJEN is supporting (ResCare, 2007, p. 4).

However, there is still a need to identify the right combination of tools necessary for helping young micro-entrepreneurs start their own businesses. There is an even greater need for research regarding how to best track, monitor, and provide coaching/ follow-up support to these young people once their businesses have been launched.

Youth Microfinance: IDEJEN has identified youth-inclusive microfinance as one important pathway to addressing youth unemployment. As the current field of research provides little guidance in this realm, IDEJEN has looked to some key models that have shown the effectiveness of building bridges to help the poorest of the poor “graduate” from highly subsidized survival programs (where they are purely grant recipients) into a sustainable micro-credit program (where they become full-fledged microfinance clients) (Consultative Group to Assist the Poor, 2006, p. 5). IDEJEN is looking to adapt this concept to the situation of its out-of-school youth and has identified three possible entry points for youth.

The first entry point would target the most disadvantaged youth without any assets or opportunities. The intervention program would work with a micro-finance institution to provide safety-net services for these young people (in the form of cash grants and short-term employment creation) while providing them with essential training and information to help them progress.

The second entry point would target disadvantaged youth who had some assets or engagement in a livelihood activity of sorts (the group most resembling IDEJEN’s youth). The intervention program would provide savings mobilization, enterprise-skills trainings, internships with informal/formal sectors, and subsidized loans, in order to help youth save and build assets in preparation for regular micro-finance opportunities.

At the third entry point, youth could graduate to regular micro-finance services, as they would have received prior training in savings and entrepreneurship and shown effective management of grants or loans. IDEJEN is currently looking at providing savings mobilization services and loans to its youth, in partnership with a micro-finance institution, in addition to its already existing services (Beauvy & Dart-Lincoln, 2007, p. 7).

Linking Youth to Further Education

For IDEJEN youth who wish to return to vocational training or formal primary schooling at the fifth- or sixth-grade levels, IDEJEN, through its Youth Centers, is working to facilitate youth’s transitions by providing partial scholarships, placement services, and helping youth maintain a healthy school and study routine (Education Development Center, Inc., 2007, p. 7).

Practical Implications and Concluding Remarks

Practical Implications

The lessons learned from the IDEJEN project, as described in this paper, are intended to serve as practical guidelines for youth-livelihoods programming in Haiti and in the developing world. In addition to the specific lessons and recommendations previously discussed, it is also helpful to consider the broader implications.

The case of IDEJEN has shown that effective youth livelihoods programming can, and indeed should, merge readiness and access-oriented services, especially when working with out-of-school and/or unemployed youth. In other words, a multi-faceted approach combining nonformal basic education, life skills, and demand-driven technical/vocational training, coupled with relevant workforce development skills and livelihood accompaniment services, constitutes a foundation necessary for these marginalized young people to find promising futures, whether through employment or the pursuit of further education.

Moreover, a holistic program that also stresses the capacity building and full participation of its key actors and participants, mutually reinforced relationships with influential partners, and the continual development of a knowledge base to guide activities, will be crucial for success. The benefits of such a program are twofold: It educates and prepares youth to become qualified workers and active contributors to society, thus strengthening the socioeconomic environment of developing countries; and it gives youth who previously had little hope of earning a livelihood the skills they need to support themselves and their families (Previlon, 2004, p. 4).

Since the pathways to sustainable livelihoods development will differ depending on the youth cohort and the given socioeconomic context, programs should always shape their design and intervention strategies accordingly. The case of IDEJEN has demonstrated that out-of-school and/or unemployed youth constitute a particularly destitute target group with unique needs. These needs will require that programs dedicate substantial additional time and resources (more so than other interventions targeting youth with a secondary education for example) to ensure they can successfully reintegrate into society.

Further, since livelihoods programs cannot easily change the prevailing macro-economic environment in the places they work, they must help youth gain the greatest chance to compete within frequently hostile economic surroundings. The IDEJEN project has highlighted the importance of working with those sectors that are available and most accessible to its youth (even if this means the informal economy), and helping youth to foster viable and decent work opportunities there, while simultaneously working to repair fragile or broken pathways to relationships with other sectors. It may very well be necessary for programs to “think outside the box,” in developing solutions and alternatives where none are in place (such as initiating youth-entrepreneurship opportunities, youth-targeted micro-finance services, or “Career Centers” for example).

Finally, local and national government bodies should be involved throughout the entire process of planning and implementing programs. Government support is fundamental to the creation of essential youth-serving policies that will guide specific livelihoods activities forward (such as national policy on nonformal basic education), and it is crucial for programs that build the capacity of governments to develop and carry out these policies. Collaborating with government stakeholders from the outset will set in place a key element of sustainability that will ensure long-term and far-reaching effects for marginalized youth.

Concluding Remarks

These lessons, among others, have proven invaluable to the IDEJEN project. As it moves forward in its mission to reach even more out-of-school youth, it will continually apply these lessons, and most certainly accumulate an additional array of insights that will help guide the field ever forward.

But perhaps most of all, the IDEJEN project has demonstrated, with notable success thus far, that it is possible to work with the most marginalized of youth and provide real opportunities for livelihoods development, even in a precarious socio-economic and security environment. Through trial and error, IDEJEN has surmounted a substantial learning curve and has shown that with the right strategies, attitudes, and combinations of services, a process of change *can* truly be ignited in the lives of out-of-school youth in the developing world. Livelihoods programs *can* foster these young people's reintegration into society, facilitate their acquisition of viable livelihoods, and in the process offer the potential for a more promising future.

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About EQUIP3

The Educational Quality Improvement Program 3

(EQUIP3) is designed to improve earning, learning, and skill development opportunities for out-of-school youth in developing countries. We work to help countries meet the needs and draw on the assets of young women and men by improving policies and programs that affect them across a variety of sectors. We also provide technical assistance to USAID and other organizations in order to build the capacity of youth and youth-serving organizations.

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