

REMARKS OF PROGRAMME MANAGER DWYNETTE D. EVERSLEY
AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY FOR THE YOUTH AND RISK AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP WORKSHOP ON FRIDAY NOVEMBER 03, 2006,
ENTRPORT HUMAN RESOURCE CENTRE, CASTRIES, SAINT LUCIA.

Chairman, Honourable Minister, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, Investment, Tourism and Consumer Affairs, Mrs. Marva Bancroft and Dr. Siddhartha Dash, expert facilitators, colleagues from the Ministry of Commerce, Investment, Tourism and Consumer Affairs, colleague from the BELfund, Participants, other government and agency representatives, friends and well-wishers, members of the media, ladies and gentlemen .

I spoke earlier today with the Regional Director of the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre, Mr. Henry Charles, who has asked me to bring greetings to Minister Rambally, the Minister and colleagues at the Ministry of Commerce, Tourism, Investment and Consumer Affairs Ministry, and to all the young people who have been of this development workshop during this week.

CYP wants to place on record our profound appreciation to the Ministry of Commerce, Tourism Investment and Consumer Affairs for engaging us as a trusted partner in the development and implementation of this important social development programme for young people in Saint Lucia. The Ministry conceptualized this project to contribute to the social and economic of Saint Lucia by developing entrepreneurial awareness and competence in young people aged 18 to 35 who are marginalized and victims of social exclusion.

These goals of this project are relevant to the overall mission of the CYP and as Programme Manager responsible for youth enterprise and sustainable livelihood, I was very pleased to be able to work with SEDU in fleshing out the implementation of this activity, which we embarked on a pilot for Saint Lucia with a view to wider Caribbean adaptation and implementation.

Given the goal of the project that I outlined above, this pilot was designed to **introduce** the youth beneficiaries to the following:

1. Achievement Motivation Training – this allows participants to appreciate their own capacity for innovation, risk-taking and decision-making, handling conflicts and other entrepreneurial attitudes and values. It is a fundamental to identifying persons with a high propensity for success and a predisposition to entrepreneurship and as well to nurture requisite skills for success.
2. Life skills Orientation, which is a critical mechanism for unbundling the personal challenges and conflicts that prevent youth from setting goals, and developing the sense of self worth and self-esteem that they need to successfully manoeuvre life pitfalls. It is deeply cathartic and moving and empowering.

3. Understanding Business and Identifying Business Opportunities which exposes participants to entrepreneurship and the key success factors for the young entrepreneur. Armed with this awareness, participants are invited to brainstorm to identify marketable business ventures that they feel they can “own” and undertake in their communities.

This particular phase was intended for young people who are community advocates and facilitators who once trained, would be a position to:

- (i) Nurture a positive self-image and the motivation for achieving personal success
- (ii) Identify with entrepreneurship as a healthy and manageable form of social engagement / re-integration
- (iii) Access existing entrepreneurship programmes in St Lucia and receive follow-on training and financial support to be established as young entrepreneurs; and
- (iv) Orient and mobilize other youth at risk in the community for positive engagement through entrepreneurial activity.
- (v) Transition smoothly into existing entrepreneurship programmes that have been established by the GoSL including the Commonwealth Youth Enterprise Development Fund that is managed by the BELfund.

The main result was that adequately trained and empowered young women and men would become micro-entrepreneurs, income earners, better capable of providing for themselves, their families and to community development.

This week’s activity engaged 20 young people from different communities in SLU plus 3 of CYP’s national youth representatives from Dominica, Grenada and from Jamaica. From conducting our first interactive session, we realized that we needed to make some adjustments to this training delivery. Our main facilitators Marva Bancroft and Siddhartha Dash accordingly tailored this week’s interaction to meet the real needs on the ground as it were. For the results and what the youth actually got out of the session – you’ll hear in a little while from Kimberly MacPhee, who was selected by the group to share their experience.

Based on what these young people shared with us today and over the week, I am heartened that we have made a very good start towards changing mindsets about entrepreneurship, creating value for a culture of owning business, and creating sustainable livelihoods in the youth population and attacking social exclusion.

What does this project have to do with addressing social exclusion and sustainable livelihoods? The evidence of available research shows that young people who are on the fringes of poverty and who are not in the mainstream of the country’s development are more likely to be drawn to its under-stream. This under-stream effects of poverty and exclusion are crime, drugs, and harmful lifestyles leading to pregnancy, substance abuse, HIV and AIDS and so on.

Creating sustainable livelihoods for young people has to do with developing and empowering them to take and maintain an active and fully participatory role in social, political and economic development in their own countries. This is what young people say that they want to have the opportunity to do; as excellently re-enforced by Mikey Bernard from Laborie in a frank feedback session yesterday afternoon.

What is the impact on society when young people do not have access to sustainable livelihoods? From a 2005 survey of governments and young people across the Commonwealth regions, the Caribbean results show us that the four most severe issues facing young people in the Caribbean are in order of priority:

- crime and violence
- unemployment and
- HIV/AIDS
- Substance abuse and sexual issues

CYP is using these results to streamline our programming support across all Commonwealth Regions more effectively, so that Governments can better roll out this type of empowering support to young people on a sustained basis.

I received permission from our clients – the young people who are graduating from the week's programme to communicate to the Minister of Social Transformation for the attention of Government several key issues they identified yesterday that they feel Government should focus on more to support the full development of young people in Saint Lucia. Minister, I took the liberty of clustering issues that came up in their discussions. These are:

1. Training for life, individual wellness and wellbeing (emotional, mental, physical) - life skills and personal development
2. Training and services for youth enterprise development, to address unemployment
3. Technical and vocational training and community sports programmes focusing on coaching and mentoring.
4. Centres/ services for ongoing support and development- counseling, teenage pregnancy, HIV and AIDS, family relationships, delinquency, conflict management, alcohol and drug abuse
5. Career counseling and counseling education
6. Strengthening youth groups and youth clubs
7. Training and opportunities to develop and showcase the arts and natural talents of young people.
8. Involving youth in environmental preservation
9. More /better opportunity to be part of actual governance and decision-making for national development

Where do we go from here? The unemployment or underemployment rate from the small group of participants involved in this week's training is approximately 80%. The percentage of participants who have been exposed to conflict, alienation, risky behaviour

and neglect is much higher. We touched just a microcosm in Saint Lucia and certainly for the Caribbean. While CYP is convinced of the value of the approach, methodology and content of the programme developed for youth at risk, we sought feedback from the young people themselves on what they would recommend. Their evaluations confirmed the robustness of the programme and they further recommended:

1. A longer training period, ideally 9 to 10 days so participants can work through, digest and internalize the new learning being transferred to them
2. Paying particular emphasis on in community work and work with young people in rural areas.
3. Repeated workshops to reach the widest target population

I want to re-assure you all today that CYPCC is very willing and committed to working with the Government of Saint Lucia to meet these and other development needs of young people. We are strongly committed to the continue to work with the Commerce Ministry and SEDU to train trainers and community facilitators for this programme, so that the majority of the issues identified above by the young people, towards making these empowerment programmes more accessible will be achieved and sustained over time.

We also look forward to continuing our very dynamic partnership with the James Belgrave Micro Enterprise Development Fund (BELfund) to achieve an expanded and more widely marketed youth micro-enterprise programme across all regions of St. Lucia. We recognize the need to give more structured support and encouragement to nurturing more youth business that are innovative, heritage-based and culture-oriented and we are prepared to provide special incentives for young people whose businesses fulfill select criteria in this regard.

I want to close by recalling the advice given to the participants on Wednesday by one of the youth entrepreneurs who recently graduated from the intensive personal development and small business programme that is a staple of the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) programme, sponsored by CYPCC and hosted by the BELfund. He advised: *“When you are doing a business, find something that you really like, that identifies you as a person. If you are really into it, you won’t give up easily.”* I want to reiterate his advice to all the participants for business they may go into and overall for how they live their lives. I also use it now as a means of re-confirming to you all that CYPCC has no intention of giving up on the youth of the Caribbean.

Thank you.