



Partnerships for Youth

Obra is a two-year public-private partnership initiative in Latin America and the Caribbean that ensures youth at risk gain increased access to services and programs they need to learn, work and lead. The program was developed in response to U.S. President Obama's 2009 Summit of the Americas call for renewed and strengthened partnerships that promote greater opportunities among the region's youth. Currently, Obra has three sub-regional partnerships, with hubs in Jamaica, Guatemala and Peru.

Obra's mission is to:

1. Mobilize

- Convene leaders of civil society, public and private sector institutions to exchange information and work together in new ways across countries and regions, through exchanges, project site visits, workshops, learning events, and through the use of Facebook, Twitter and other social media.
- Identify “what works” in education and employment across Latin America and the Caribbean, document it, and share key information on such “best and promising practices” with the development community.

2. Innovate

- Replicate innovative ideas and strategies, bringing to scale the most promising programs in collaboration with governments.
- Support joint projects between public, private and civil society organizations—leveraging relationships, resources and expertise.
- Deliver high quality services to youth such as remedial education, technical and life skills training, internships, career placement support and access to professional opportunities.

3. Advocate

- Raise awareness on key issues such as quality education and employment, highlighting the value of youth as creative “change agents.”
- Amplify the voices of young people in policy dialogue and public debates.
- Promote public policies that prioritize youth and ensure better coordination of youth-focused public services and programs.

As a result of Obra...

- 11 Peruvian presidential candidates running in the 2011 election declared—on videos made public via the internet—how they would prioritize and expand support to youth, increasing public debate and influencing the newly elected President's mandate as he took office.
- Over 1,500 young people have received prevention training and over 50 youth organizations and networks have joined together in a commitment to reduce violence in Guatemala.
- More than 1,000 “unattached” Jamaican youth have received training in professional skills leading to internships and job opportunities, bringing the total to over 2,000 young people trained in second chance education and employment projects across the region.
- Nearly \$4 million has been leveraged in new commitments from diverse sources including the Australian government, the Bank of Nova Scotia, Citibank, and other public agencies, business and civil society organizations.

Case Studies

“Obra is a program that goes beyond traditional assistance, and builds and strengthens those alliances which will provide long-term, sustained support.

— Bruce Williamson, US Deputy Chief of Mission to Peru

Caribbean/Jamaica

YUTE (Youth Upliftment Through Employment) is an Obra-inspired program created by the Caribbean Secretariat organization, Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica (PSOJ), to build on that partnership as well as its 200+ business member base. Its goal is to train and place 2,200 youth at risk in decent jobs by 2013. To date, PSOJ has received over \$3 million in pledges and commitments from more than a dozen private and public sector organizations. Already, PSOJ is expanding the Obra innovation projects launched in 2010 which focus on youth skills-building, career support, entrepreneurship, remedial education and key life skills that include leadership and conflict resolution.

Central America/Guatemala

Obra's civil society, government and private sector partners are directing their efforts toward building a National Agenda for Youth. That agenda seeks to positively change the perception and self-image of youth at-risk, generate healthy dialogue and consensus around key priorities for young people, sustain effective programs, and strengthen government services for out-of-school youth. The Secretariat, Instituto DEMOS, and other partners are also using their collective political capital with ministry and business leaders to push for such reforms—and have already influenced Guatemala's newly-elected President to declare that his government will be taking steps to increase the sustainability of successful youth programs such as the widely renowned Escuelas Abiertas. The partnership viewed the 2011 electoral process as an opportunity to engage candidates, obtain public commitments on youth issues and build a new consensus among emerging leaders.

South America/Peru

This Obra partnership, led by the civil society organization CEDRO, is focused on advocating with government leaders to improve coordination among youth-serving government ministries such as Education, Health, and Labor. The partnership is strengthening and expanding a mapping process by the National Secretariat for Youth to chart out youth-related public services and facilitate increased communication between government agencies, with the aim of improving quality and coverage. It is also highlighting youth success stories and project ideas that have proved effective as well as working to strengthen the network of NGOs providing youth services. In addition, Obra is creating a local fund to engage the public, private and civil society sectors to work jointly in identifying “what works” and then replicating promising initiatives to scale them up.

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This publication was made possible in part by the generous support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under Associate Cooperative Agreement No. EPP-A-00-08-00006-00.

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