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Youth and skills: Putting education to work

Youth and Skills in Latin America: Strategies, Programmes and Best Practices

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Youth and Skills in Latin America: Strategies, Programmes and Best Practices

Lucio Severo, 2011^{*}

The paper will explore skills development programmes in Latin America benefiting marginalized groups. It will deliver (1) a general overview on skills development and marginalization in the Region, (2) an analysis of formal and non-formal skills acquisition architecture focusing on institutional arrangements, donors initiatives and south-south technical cooperation, (3) an analysis of the relevance of post-primary education and, in conclusion, (4) the paper will identify best practices of programmes and vocational trainings with a focus on informal sector, urban areas and indigenous people.

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Introduction

The issue of skills development is becoming increasingly relevant in Latin America and crucial for youth employment and inequality reduction (ECLAC, 2010). At the same time, the academic and political interest in the Region for youth and skills has been growing in the last few years. Some scholars talk about a "boom" of studies on youth employment, mainly focused on vocational training, employability, youth entrepreneurship, policies for specific groups (e.g. indigenous people), labour legislation and social security (Chacaltana, 2009).

The paper will offer a general overview of skills development strategies and programmes in Latin America benefiting marginalized groups¹. It aims to provide analytical inputs, as well as examples of best practices to be included in the EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2012. Accordingly, the structure of this essay will follow the draft outline of the Report and the programmes identified do not represent a comprehensive review of the situation in Latin America, but they rather offer a regional perspective strictly related to the outline and contents of the EFA GMR 2012.

Firstly, the paper will deliver a general overview on skills development and marginalization in the Region. Secondly, it will present an analysis of formal and non-formal skills acquisition architecture looking at institutional arrangements, donors initiatives and south-south technical cooperation. Thirdly, the essay will consider and emphasize the relevance of post-primary education for skills development, looking at retention and reintegration strategies and programmes. To conclude, best practices will be presented focusing on urban, rural areas and indigenous people.

1 Youth and marginalization in Latin America

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), young people (15-24) in Latin America are around 104.2 million, of which 50 million are working or actively seeking employment and thus considered Economically Active Population (ILO, 2010). In addition, since the beginning of working life women have fewer opportunities to enter into the labour market than men and this difference is higher in rural areas (ILO, 2010).

In Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, the unemployed population under 30 represents close to 60% of total unemployment, while in Paraguay this totals 70%. The related vulnerability affects not only young people's capacity to achieve emancipation, but also their income stability if and when they decide to build a family. In addition to marginalization, youth participation in the labour market in Latin America has specific characteristics strictly related to inequality. Indeed, socio-economic segmentation and high levels of inequality make family characteristics an important factor in determining the labour performance of youth (UNDP, 2009).

Two out of every ten young people in the Region do not study or work. Moreover, youth represent between 60% and 70% of the total population living in chronic poverty in Mercosur (UNDP, 2009). A survey carried out for the Mercosur Human Development Report 2009-10 showed that youth from families at greater risk of social exclusion tend to remain caught in the mechanisms that reproduce inter-generational social exclusion. This risk depends on the trajectory of transition from poverty which in turn is affected by

¹ The review took into consideration relevant programmes in Spanish speaking countries and Brazil. Besides an extended literature and web review, the main inventories of programmes analyzed were PREJAL-OIT (last update September 2009), ECLAC/SIDA integration into the labour market project (2009), MDG Achievement Fund programmes and OAS database.

the critical decisions leading to adulthood, such as leaving home and having a family, as well as by the socio-economic conditions.

2 Mapping skills development architecture in Latin America

This section will analyse and present institutional arrangements, type of providers and programmes aimed at improving integration into the job market of marginalized groups.

2.1 Type of skills and structural/current issues for youth integration in the labour market

The structure of youth participation in the labour market in Latin America follows the work distribution patterns of adults according to the sector: the percentages of young people in primary (agriculture, livestock and fisheries), secondary and service sectors are 18%, 24% and 58% respectively, while in the case of adults these percentages are 17%, 22% and 61% (ILO, 2010). Of these sectors, employment opportunities are increasing in areas related to natural resources and manufacturing (Fasih, 2008).

Currently, Brazil and Mexico account for more than half of the entire employment in the primary sector in Latin America. In both countries, traditional and technical agriculture techniques coexist (ILO, 2010). In industry, the most frequent opportunities are in clothing and footwear sector or construction activities including painters, electricians and plumbers, often in the form of self-employment. Usually, these jobs have few entry restrictions, since required qualifications are minimal and most of young people enter as apprentices.

Regarding in-demand skills, the review of programmes in the Region reveals the importance of generic (soft) skills (e.g. leadership) for marginalized groups, as is the case of programmes focusing on youth in at-risk of violence. Indeed, the type of skills taught includes not only traditional specific (hard) skills but also forms of generic skills to facilitate social inclusion of marginalized youth (Rodriguez, 2011). Moreover, skills development programmes often increase self-esteem of graduates, as they perceive to “learn something worthwhile” and to acquire leadership skills (Baroni, 2009). However, if improvements in skills acquisition do not correspond to better working and social conditions in the short-term, a weak impact beyond the end of the programme is observed (Abdala, 2009a).

A survey in LAC countries shows that firms have some difficulties to find employees with desirable skills. Indeed, on average 31.5% of businesses consider insufficient qualifications of employees as a major obstacle for the performance of the company. The percentage varies between 10% in Mexico and the 69% in Brazil (Weller, 2011). Further, a recent study conducted in Costa Rica, El Salvador and Peru has shown that the “skills problem” is related to both specific and generic skills and is becoming increasingly due to a lack of soft skills (based on a comparison with the same survey conducted 5 years earlier). The research also identifies weaknesses in specific skills, in several areas but mostly in new technologies, while problems in generic skills are related primarily to attitudes (e.g. punctuality), values and learning capacity (Weller, 2011).

One of the main issues for the integration of youth into the labour market is related to employability. In this regard, the design of programmes and policies to improve employability of young people should consider the following four relevant dimensions (Chacaltana, 2009):

- Access/equity: too many young people remain excluded from trainings, basic education completion and even more from advanced trainings for work;
- Financing: vocational education is an investment whose returns do not necessarily benefit those who made the investment.
- Relevance: skills acquired should be relevant for the labour market and improve employability.

- Transparency on quality: the quality of a skills development programme cannot be tested immediately. Programmes should have an impact on the medium-long term and should be evaluated more often by impact evaluations.

Latin American countries have responded to these problems in different ways, based on a variety of skills development policies and TVET (Technical Vocational Education and Training) models.

2.2 Mapping skills development initiatives in the Region

In Latin America in the last twenty years a large number of skills development programmes/initiatives have been implemented. They can be summarized in the following five main areas (Weller, 2009):

1. Post-primary formal education (see section 3);
2. Technical and vocational training (based on traditional Vocational Training Institutions); among the main vocational training institutes in the Region, it is possible to identify INTECAP (*Instituto Técnico de Capacitación y Productividad*) in Guatemala, INATEC (*Instituto Nacional Tecnológico*) in Nicaragua, INFOP (*Instituto Nacional de Formación Profesional*) in Honduras, SENA (*Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje*) in Colombia and SENCE (*Servicio Nacional de Capacitación y Empleo*) in Chile².
3. Youth entrepreneurship: support services to independent work (self-employment and micro-enterprises mostly informal). In Latin America, many young entrepreneurs are forced to work independently since they cannot find a job or because the wage they receive is too low and working conditions poor. These types of programmes for capacity building have been developed usually outside the formal education system, funded by development cooperation agencies. They represent an alternative to traditional skills development programmes by providing technical training with financial assistance to promote integration into the labour market. These programmes should be developed in an appropriate economic environment for micro and small enterprises.
4. Employment services: assistance to job-seekers (e.g. career counselling, direct job placement, classroom and on-the-job training, web portal).
5. Direct generation of job opportunities (e.g. for public infrastructures/services), usually short term opportunities.

2.3 Governance: national strategies and main providers

The strategies and provisions of governments for skills development in the Region have changed in the last two decades; initially monopolized by national vocational training institutes, they are currently managed by a broader and diversified set of stakeholders, both at the funding and implementation level.

The first generation of programmes mainly focused on apprenticeship, combining trainings and work experience and targeting young people who meet specific education qualifications (Rodríguez 2011). Indeed, these programmes usually required at least 9 years of basic education, excluding marginalized youth with low education levels. More generally, we can observe that in the previous decades there was a tendency to combine training and practical experience for youth that were relatively well educated and already integrated in the society.

The second generation was marked by the pioneering experience of the programme *Chile Joven*, which inaugurated the demand driven generation of programmes, with provision through a public-private partnership. Indeed, it seems that what really changed between the first generation and the new types of programmes is the coordination/interaction between the public and private sectors. The second generation of programmes, introduced between late '90s-early 2000s, has redefined the role of the State. The public sector is no longer fully in charge of the implementation, but it has started to outsource these services to private and even public organizations in an increasingly decentralized framework (Abdala, 2009). Moreover, new stakeholders have appeared besides traditional vocational training institutions. This new model of provision is based on market mechanisms and is mostly decentralized. It allows NGOs, community-based

² Note that the Plurinational State of Bolivia does not have a national vocational training institute.

associations, and small enterprises to provide vocational trainings, as traditional vocational institutes used to do (Abdala, 2009b).

Currently, new tendencies and strategies include forms of tax exemption for firms hiring youth, more advanced employment services, and other reforms of formal technical education and vocational systems. Reforms have also increased the quantity of apprenticeship contracts, though firms prefer to not fully use incentives to reach all potential apprentices (Rodríguez, 2011).

From the institutional point of view, Ministries of Labour have been increasingly engaged in the traditional primacy of vocational training institutes, while Youth Institutes do not play a relevant role in the implementation of skills development strategies and programmes (Abdala, 2009a)³. Broadly speaking, there is a tendency to strengthen the public sector, mainly by assigning a more relevant role to the Ministry of Labour, as well as through new reforms of technical and vocational education.

Unions often play a relevant role in skills development architecture contributing to the activity of national vocational training institutes, which are characterized by a tripartite management (public sector, employers, unions); this is the case of INTECAP in Guatemala, INATEC in Nicaragua, INFOP in Honduras and SENA in Colombia (Weller, 2009). In addition, in some cases, unions are the main provider of skills development programmes (e.g. agricultural programmes managed by the SENAR-PR in Parana, Brazil).

Social protection programmes are another way to promote skills development for youth by including a component on employability and youth integration into the labour market. In particular, the debate on Conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes/post CCT programmes and skill generation must be taken into consideration. Although this component initially was not meant to be part of that programmes, it was then included since the cash transfer itself was not sufficient to reduce poverty in short-medium term. *Chile Solidario*, a programme aimed at eradicating extreme poverty in Chile, seems to have introduced a new generation of social protection policies, beyond *Bolsa Familia*. It connects the marginalized with social workers to ensure they benefit from programmes including job training, education and housing as well as income support. Colombia and Peru have set up a similar scheme. These programmes are more complex and costly than conditional cash transfers but they might be more effective in the future, mainly in urban areas (Green, 2011). On the other hand, CCT programmes show that recipients generally do not enter into the formal labour market in a sustainable manner, as informal employment remains the most feasible option for them (Cecchini and Madariaga, 2011).

To conclude, from a legal point of view, the overall strategy of recent TVET programmes for youth in Latin America is based on a centralized normative and regulatory role of the state and a decentralized implementation open to private sector, through public tenders and bidding processes (Abdala, 2009a). More in detail, some countries in the Region have passed a law of first job (*Mi primer empleo*), consisting of a legal mechanism to encourage the recruitment of young people, by reducing certain costs of recruitment. These schemes currently exist in Mexico and Chile (in Mexico by subsidizing the social security contributions and in Chile as a direct subsidy to the remuneration). In Paraguay, although a dedicated law has been passed, its implementation has been slow and difficult (Chacaltana, 2009). Moreover, some governments have reformed internships and promoted ad hoc funds and programmes for youth entrepreneurship (Rodríguez, 2011). This is the case of the *Fondo Emprender* in Colombia, the *Bono Emprender* in Peru, *Chile Emprende* and the “Youth Entrepreneurship Success” (YES) in Trinidad y Tobago in 2004 (Chacaltana, 2009).

2.4 International Cooperation for Skills development in the Region

The financing of skills development programmes in Latin America receives the contribution of International cooperation. Donors, in particular bilateral agencies (GIZ, AECID and SIDA have relevant programmes) and multilateral organizations: World Bank (WB), Interamerican Development Bank (IADB), the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF), the Organization of Latin American States (OEI), the International Labour

³ Exceptions can be identified: *Instituto Juventude Brazil* and *Instituto de la Juventud Chile*.

Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are extremely active. There are also private actors including churches (mainly the Catholic Church), as well as NGOs, foundations and enterprises that provide cooperation either with their own funds or through bilateral or multilateral financial channel. The main credit providers are the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank. Not all the stakeholders involved share the same approaches and strategies, nor do they promote the same kinds of relations between donors and recipients (Jacinto and Sassera, 2008). In the design and implementation phases, these programmes also involve various sectors of production, business, academia, religious organizations, local authorities, health sector, tourism corporations, families, foundations, as well as NGOs specialized in human rights, education and skills development (Messina et al., 2008).

It is also worth mentioning some of the main regional initiatives on skills development programmes for youth: a) the *Programme for Promotion of Youth Employment in Latin America (PREJAL)* promoted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) b) the "window" on "*youth employment and migration*" of the *UN MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F)* sponsored by the Spanish government⁴, and c) the *Entra 21*, the programme of the International Youth Foundation and the Multilateral Investment Fund (FOMIN)⁵.

⁴ Established in December 2006 with a contribution, over US\$ 700, from the Spanish Government to the United Nations, the MDG Achievement Fund is an international cooperation mechanism aimed at accelerating progress on the MDGs worldwide. The Fund has demonstrated a clear commitment to gender equality and has provided significant financial and technical support to 50 countries through eight thematic 'windows' (130 joint programmes) linked to the MDGs.

⁵ The Entra 21 programme was established to improve the employability of youth in Latin America and the Caribbean and give them more opportunities to find a job. The objective of the programme is to tackle the growing youth unemployment rates in the Region by ensuring that more youth have access to the skills and knowledge necessary to find productive jobs and succeed in the workplace.

Case study 1: Brazilian South-South Cooperation in education

The total of Brazilian funds annually assigned to international organizations, including technical and humanitarian assistance, as well as scholarships for foreign students has grown by 129% between 2005 and 2009, from US\$158 to 362 million (IPEA, 2010). In particular, Brazilian international humanitarian assistance has increased between 2005 and 2009 — from US\$488,000 to 43.5 million (IPEA, 2010). In terms of recipients, Africa and Latin America are the main targeted areas. Mercosur countries receive the equivalent of 15% of Brazilian technical cooperation in science and technology, while portuguese-speaking countries receive 27% (IPEA, 2010). Yet, humanitarian assistance is mostly directed to Haiti.

Brazilian South-South cooperation is inspired by the concept of diplomatic solidarity (*diplomacia solidária*), by which Brazil makes its expertise available to other countries. The Brazilian Government promotes South-South cooperation and exports technical cooperation in sectors where the country has gained specific expertise. This is the case for agriculture, health, and education, particularly vocational education. The provision of experts and know-how from each sector is based on institutional partnerships: with *Embrapa* on agriculture research, the Ministry of Health (MS) and *Fiocruz* (Oswaldo Cruz Foundation) on health, the Ministry of Social Development (MDS) on social protection and with the National Service for Industrial Learning (SENAI) on vocational training (Cabral and Weinstock, 2010). These organizations do not have a specific budget for cooperation and they mainly contribute with experts, while the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) mobilizes resources from its own budget.

Education is a relevant sector of Brazilian South-South technical cooperation, which has reached 12% of the total technical cooperation between 2003 and 2010 (Brazil Federal Government, 2011). The main area is the granting of scholarships, including bilateral programmes at doctoral/research level. Indeed, a growing number of Brazilian cooperation programmes in higher education involves several countries, mainly in Latin America (mostly Argentina) and Portuguese-speaking African countries. In addition, Brazil implements bilateral programmes with Timor-Leste and initiatives with regional organizations, such as the Mercosur (IPEA, 2010).

SENAI is one of the major Brazilian players in South-South cooperation. With the Brazilian Ministry of External Relations, SENAI is responsible for the implementation of technical and vocational training centers in Latin America, Africa (Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé e Príncipe) and Asia (Timor-Leste). In 2010 the projects in Africa accounted for more than US\$20 million and 10 new vocational training centres have been built (ABC, 2010; Brazil Federal Government, 2011). SENAI has also been invited by traditional international cooperation partners (e.g. Germany and Japan) to design and implement triangular projects in Latin America and Africa. For example, in Angola the “Vocational Training Centre of Cazenga” has been in place since 1998 and more recently another centre has been built in Viana (Luanda) in partnership with Japanese Development Cooperation Agency (JICA). In Latin America, one of the best practices of Brazilian South-South cooperation is the “Vocational Training Centre of Hernandarias” in Paraguay. Since 2002, the centre, in partnership with SENAI, has organized 600 courses and trained 10000 people (Brazil Federal Government, 2011). In Asia, a best practice has been identified in Timor-Leste, where The Vocational training centre in Becora provides training services in different areas including furniture, electricity, planer, carpentry, masonry, computer, sewing (Brazil Federal Government, 2011). To conclude, recently SENAI has expanded its South-South cooperation activities in MENA countries, mainly Morocco and Saudi Arabia. In particular, SENAI has signed an agreement with the “Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC)” to provide professional training to Saudi managers and teachers (www.anba.achanoticias.com.br).

Case study 2: The MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F) Thematic Window for Youth, Employment and Migration

The MDG Achievement Fund seeks to support interventions that promote sustainable productive employment and decent work for young people either at national or local level, including through a better management of both the negative and positive effects of migration and by enhancing local capacities to develop, implement and monitor effective policies and programmes in this area.

The thematic window is supporting 14 UN joint programmes (partnership UN agencies-national governments) with an allocation of US\$80 million. The programmes aim to (i) make youth employment a national priority and mainstream employment and decent work, especially for young people, into national development plans and frameworks; (ii) identify, develop and implement measures to help young people access and remain in the labour market, with an emphasis on disadvantaged and vulnerable youth, including youth in post-conflict contexts and in areas with high levels of armed violence (gangs); (iii) strengthen innovative interventions in countries of origin, to maximize the positive impact and minimize the negative impact of migration, particularly on youth; (iv) strengthen and/or develop and implement innovative interventions to address/reverse rural-urban migration, with special emphasis on youth; (v) strengthen institutional capacity to effectively deliver employment, youth and migration interventions (MDG Achievement Fund, 2007).

Mid-term external evaluations have identified Peru and Paraguay as the most successful programmes in the Region. Out of Latin America, the programmes of China (“Protecting and Promoting the Rights of China’s Vulnerable Migrants”) and Serbia (“Support to National Efforts for the Promotion of Youth Employment and Management of Migration”) are considered successful experiences (Boase, 2010; MDG-Fund, 2011).

In Peru, the joint programme supports the *MINTRA Certi Joven* pilot programme, helping young job-seekers to prepare and present necessary documents. The programme also promotes the pilot initiative *Wawa Wasi Laboral* which consists of trainings for young mothers on three topics: sexual and reproductive health, advice on job search and entrepreneurship. To facilitate their attendance to workshops, the programme promotes child care services. This is an innovative measure as it is aimed not only to provide time for work, but also for study and training and therefore contributes to women empowerment with a multi-sectoral and holistic approach. Another important achievement is the support to the Youth Employment web Portal, which has received more than 16 thousand visitors in two months. Moreover, the Peruvian programme is funding the youth entrepreneurship programme *Pro Joven Emprendedor*, by which 600 youths were trained in 2009 and 700 in 2010 in Trujillo, Lima and Huancayo. The programme has also organized trainings on self-employment and entrepreneurship for civil servants, as well as meetings to promote and discuss a new law on Self-Employment (Privat, 2010b).

In Paraguay, the programme has increased the capacity for employment and income generation of vulnerable young people, including advocating for targeted public policies (e.g. incorporation of Youth Employment in the Economic and Social Strategic Plan 2008/13; promotion of the youth employment law). In addition, UN Women and UNDP have jointly helped the Global Eco Association to develop a model of technical training for vulnerable young people, particularly women domestic workers and to implement pilot vocational training programmes with a gender perspective for 500 young people. The programme also promoted Integrated projects targeting disadvantaged youths (e.g. *incubadoras de empresas*) (Privat, 2010).

An innovation is considered the Integrated Production System (SIP), which serves as a tool for stakeholders coordination - both public and private – to promote production at rural level. SIP is a new methodological approach aiming to strengthen the organizational structure and production at community level where informal activities are prevalent (Privat, 2010).

To conclude, the programme is creating more favorable conditions for the productive use of remittances and to help potential migrants access information (Privat, 2010).

3 Post-primary education – reducing patterns of exclusion

This section will analyse the relevance of post-primary education for skills development as a way to build a bridge to the labour market. Solid patterns of post-primary education delivery and secondary school completion reduce risky behaviours among youth (World Bank, 2009). In addition, the effectiveness and results of TVET programmes strictly depend on the quality of the basic education system (Weller, 2009).

The relevance of the transition from school to work can be defined as the end, willingly or not, of studying in the education system and the start of integration into the labour market. Formal education is one of the main factors determining the integration of youth into the labour market, though it is not sufficient. In Latin America some countries face problems of both coverage and quality of the education system. A high percentage of young people between 15 and 19 years old do not go to school. In particular, in Guatemala and Honduras the dropout rate has reached almost the 50%, while in Nicaragua 40%. This situation is especially serious in the three Central American countries (Weller, 2009).

Access and quality of education in the Region are still strongly influenced by social and economic stratification (UNDP, 2009). At the same time, high dropout rates and a low quality of education are likely to result in limited development of basic competencies and skills among youth (Jacinto, 2010). At regional level, the cost incurred from non-completion and the uncertainty in the labour market represent interconnected issues of the same relevant problem (UNDP, 2009).

3. 1 Retention and reintegration best practices and the importance to improve access to post-primary education and training

Latin American countries have developed strategies and programmes to increase retention and reintegration in the formal education system. At the same time, governments have been trying to strengthen the quality of formal education, mainly primary and lower secondary, and to promote training for teachers and investments in infrastructure.

In the case of those who neither work nor study, which are of greatest concern, the best policy solutions mostly come from outside the labour market (e.g. the reform of educational system and policies for the reduction of dropout rate, or targeted programmes for vulnerable young people) (Chacaltana 2009).

It is not only important to improve access to post-primary education, but also to improve the content of secondary education. In Latin America, the mainstream secondary education is usually too focused on the preparation for higher education and not on other options. However, governments are trying to identify specific policy measures to improve the transition from school to work. For instance, in Colombia a project led by the Ministry of Education (*Proyecto de competencias laborales, Formacion para el Trabajo y Pertinencia de la Escuela Media*) supports the formulation and implementation of vocational training plans in secondary education and the development of closer linkages with productive activities (Vera, 2009).

In some cases, programmes provide different types of scholarships to support households and give incentives for retention and reintegration into the education system. This is the case of the Programme to support lower secondary education in Honduras (*PRAEMHO*), which provides scholarships (“work for study”), as well as other types of grants to youths from marginalized ethnic groups with limited economic resources. This programme is targeting secondary education students between 15 and 18 years old. It places special emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and on the most vulnerable groups of students. In terms of results, 4,340 teachers have been trained in vocational and technical training skills; 1,446 students have benefited from grants guaranteeing their access to training and entry into the labour force. In addition, 33 Workshops, 42 laboratories and 18 classrooms in 19 secondary schools have been built (European Commission, 2011). One of the main innovations and strengths of the programme has been the attempt, through scholarships, to reach and support various marginalized groups (including indigenous). However, it was difficult to support young people living in extreme poverty, as often they do not attend secondary education (Ochoa Herrera, 2009).

Integrated programmes also include retentions strategies. This is the case of *Chile califica* (Carrillo et al., 2011; GUERNICA consultores, 2009; Santiago Consultores Asociados, 2009) and the *Seguro capacitación argentina*, which improve relevance and opportunities for reintegration.

Conditional cash transfers programmes and mechanisms also address basic and secondary education. In some countries this has been realized by strengthening traditional conditional cash transfer programmes. This is the case of Mexico, for example, *Jóvenes con Oportunidades* or *Becate* (OIT, 2009; World Bank, 2009). On the other hand, in Colombia *Familias en Acción* programme has increased school attendance in children between 12 to 17 years. More recently, the *ProJovem* programme in Brazil also includes retention policies (Cecchini and Madariaga, 2011; Gonzalez, 2009; Lidiane Silva et al., 2011). The programme aims to combine vocational training components to improve employability with efforts at the reduction of the school dropout. Initially, in 2005, the target group was identified as young people from 18 to 24 who have not completed basic education; in 2007, the year limit was extended to 29. While promoting the integration of youth into the labour market by offering a traditional training component, the programme also grants a one year scholarship to young people in order to complete basic education (Gonzalez, 2009). Moreover, retention policies include programmes for schools with evening classes for students-workers.

Technical education is considered an essential part of the formal education system in order to prepare students for the integration into the labour market by offering the in-demand practical skills. Countries like Honduras have developed technical education, creating a network of numerous technical schools. However, the high costs of infrastructures, the low value/recognition of the degree obtained in the labour market, the lack of curricula modernization and institutional coordination problems didn't allow for the full development and impact of technical education in the Region (Weller, 2009). The programmes managed by the *Don Bosco Institute* constitute a best practice in the area. In Bolivia, for example, Don Bosco Institute has been promoting technical education to help youth integrate into the labour market since 1968. The programme is located in El Alto, a city with a high percentage of indigenous population (Farah, Sánchez and Wanderley 2009).

To conclude, alternative approaches have been adopted to promote reintegration in urban areas. The *Project Axé* (<http://www.projetoaxe.org.br/>) in Bahia (Brazil) has been in place since 1990. The main objective is to encourage at-risk young people to return to school by helping street kids and other at-risk children overcome educational, family and community exclusion. The organization works in a wide range of artistic fields, including music, dance, capoeira theatre, circus performance, fashion design and the visual arts. In terms of results, most of graduates have returned to the education system and the project has produced a high number of professional artists.

4 Skills development in urban areas

The incidence of informal employment has increased during the recent crisis. From 2000 to 2007 indicators on youth employment have improved, while during the period 2007-2009 there was an increase in informal employment in all youth segments, 15-19, 20-24, male and female (ILO, 2010, p. 84).

Several programmes in urban areas promote youth entrepreneurship and micro-enterprises. For instance, in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, CARE international has been implementing since 2006 the *programme EMPRENDER*, in partnership with the private organization PRODEPE, which is specialized in training and support to enterprises. The location is el Alto, an Andean city with a high number of informal microenterprises, poverty and indigenous people. The main objective is to strengthen entrepreneurial skills mainly for young people and women, who already have an economic activity or an idea/interest in a new business. In this regard, the programme offers trainings on entrepreneurial leadership to be applied in business management; other beneficiaries are technically assisted and advised in finding a job or in improving their working conditions. Furthermore, another component aims to establish a platform for

public-private dialogue that will have an impact on public policies for the development of the business sector. The programme offers vocational trainings in production, services and trade. The results show that 80% of participants already have their own economic activity, of which 20% are entrepreneurs, while 50% has been inserted in other activities due to the lack of economic resources to open their own business (Farah, Sanchez and Wanderley, 2009).

Recent programmes in urban areas not only focus on youth entrepreneurship but they implement different types of vocational trainings. For example, still in the La Paz/El Alto area and in other Bolivian cities, *Mi Primer Empleo Digno*, offers vocational trainings implemented by selected training institutes (ICAP) and enterprises where graduates can gain the practical experience during the internships. Essential is the partnership with the NGO FAUTAPO, which has a long experience in the provision of vocational trainings. The main objective is to improve the employability of low income youth between 18 and 24 years old, who have completed the 2nd grade of secondary education (Dirección General de Empleo Boliviana, 2009).

The pilot phase of the programme seems to have improved employability and integration into the labour market of beneficiaries. 2562 young people have been trained and, thanks to new funds provided by the Spanish Cooperation Agency (AECID), the programme has developed an expansion phase in other municipalities, including rural areas (Ministerio de Trabajo y Prevision Social, 2010).

Under the *mi primer empleo* scheme, other programmes have been implemented in the Region. A good example is the *Mi primer empleo Honduras* (Republica de Honduras Secretaría de Trabajo y Seguridad Social).

Regarding apprenticeship, one of the most famous examples in the Region is the *apprenticeship contract* in Colombia, created in 1959 and recently modified in 2003 when it has been recognized at a legal level as a non-working condition. The Government considers the contract a successful practice that in 2007 was able to reach 90000 graduates (Farné, 2007). Still in Colombia, the programme *Jóvenes en acción*, managed by SENA, is focusing on urban areas by providing vocational training, as well as practical experience, to unemployed poor young people (age 18-30) living in urban areas, with priority given to displaced persons and afrocolombians. Beneficiaries can also have access to the *Fondo Emprender* (Farné, 2009). Moreover, in the capital, Bogotá, the Institute for Social Economy (IPES) is implementing the programme *Misión Bogota*. The initiative aims to assist with vocational training and education marginalized youth (age 18-26) living in poor areas, including victims of armed conflict. The distinctive feature of the programme is that, in the first phase, participants combine the vocational training component with practical activity as tourist and civic guides in the city, while, in the second phase, they work as apprentices in the companies that sponsor the programme. Recently, awareness activities on sexual and reproductive rights have been introduced in the training phase.

Microcredit services are another way to help marginalized groups integrate into the labour market in urban areas. The programme *CONMIGUAT (Coordinadora Nacional de Microempresarios de Guatemala)*, funded by ILO, though initially providing micro-credit services and vocational training, currently includes only the training component. Despite some implementation problems, the programme represents a best practice in terms of reaching vulnerable groups. Indeed, most of graduates are self-employed within the informal sector. In addition, when needed, trainings are provided in indigenous languages (Baroni, 2009).

Another interesting experience is the *UPAVIM (Unidas para Vivir Mejor)* programme for women in Guatemala City. The programme promotes an integrated approach to self-employment, including provision of textile equipment, vocational trainings, and microcredit services, as well as a Children's center, which includes the daycare and the school, and partially subsidizes the pharmacy and medical clinic. The programme has been positively evaluated, mainly for its holistic and integrated approach (Baroni, 2009). To conclude, a famous programme targeting women is the Bolivian *PROMUJER*. The programme has provided women with microcredit services, as well as education, health and trainings, using an integrated approach. An external evaluation has shown positive results in terms of income, savings, empowerment and self-esteem (Farah, Sanchez And Wanderley, 2009).

4.1 Urban areas, violence and skills development programmes

Many gangs (*pandillas*) operate as systems of social integration in urban areas at micro level. This reflects, reinforces and compensates social disintegration at macro level (UNDP, 2009). According to CEPAL (2008), violence has grown in most of the Region in recent years and young people are overrepresented in the incidence and severity of this trend, both as victims and perpetrators (Patrinos and Skoufias, 2007). In addition, according to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO-WHO), the average number of homicides Latin America is three times the global average and is the main cause of death among young men (Chacaltana, 2009).

Several programmes have been implemented to address this problem, especially in Central America. For instance, a positively evaluated programme is the *Programa prevencion de la violencia juvenil en cinco barrios de la ciudad de Managua* (Secretaría de la Juventud Nicaragua, 2006). In addition, in Honduras a national programme for the prevention and reintegration of youth belonging to gangs (*PNPRRS, Programa Nacional de Prevencion y Reinsercion Social de Personas vinculadas a Maras o Pandillas*) adopts, as a main reintegration strategy, the creation of opportunities for the integration of beneficiaries into the labour market. The programme is led by the Presidency of the Republic (Ochoa Herrera, 2009).

In Colombia the programme *Jovenes Pandilleros*, managed by the Institute for the Protection of Children and Youth, has the main objective of rescuing youths (between 15 and 23 years old) belonging to gangs, by offering vocational training and the creation of job opportunities and psycho-social counseling. The programme is located in Bogotá and has been in place since 1970; it also offers 960 hours of remunerated practical experience during the working week (Farné, 2009).

4.2 Indigenous people and skills development programmes

The indigenous population of Latin America has reached around 30 million people of which no less than 12 million (about 40%) live in urban areas, though differences between countries are high. In Guatemala and Mexico about one out of three indigenous individuals lives in urban areas, while in the remaining three countries (Bolivia, Brazil and Chile) over half of the indigenous population live in cities. There are high levels of urbanization among all the five main peoples in Bolivia and the eight peoples recognized in the census in Chile. (Del Popolo et al., 2007; Patrinos and Skoufias, 2007).

However, regional skills development programme do not seems to take indigenous groups into high consideration, and broadly speaking, the intercultural dimension (Messina and Pieck, 2010). While most of the programmes, especially on large scale, do not target specifically indigenous groups they are among the beneficiaries of programmes addressing poor areas and low income households/youths, both in the urban and rural areas. However, indigenous groups are sometimes a prioritized target group. For example, the programme *Jóvenes en acción* (Youth in action) managed by SENA in Colombia offers trainings as well as access to the *Fondo Emprender*, prioritizing displaced persons and Afro-Colombians. Other programmes provide special translation services (*COMINGUAT*). In rural areas, the programme *Joven Emprendedor Rural y Fondo de Tierras (JERFT)* in Mexico is developing the School Project in indigenous languages and adjusting the programme to local indigenous communities. Moreover, some programmes are trying to promote youth entrepreneurship in specific “indigenous regions”. This is the case of the programme funded by GIZ in the Bolivian Chaco region, which offers vocational trainings to micro-entrepreneurs and promoted the creation of the young entrepreneurs organization of Chaco (Weller, 2009).

In terms of institutional arrangements and strategies, in Guatemala the National Institute for training and productivity, INTECAP, provides specific trainings to indigenous people, who represent 29% of beneficiaries. A survey conducted among Indigenous beneficiaries emphasized that trainings on soft skills (e.g. leadership, self-esteem) are considered particularly relevant and useful (Baroni, 2009).

A recent review of vocational education programmes addressing intercultural matters have identified the main trends (Messina and Pieck, 2010):

- only a few programmes include an intercultural dimension;
- most of the programmes are on a small scale and from civil society and indigenous organizations;
- when programmes have an intercultural component, they come from organizations working in the field of intercultural education or human rights, not from vocational education sector;

- vocational education usually is not the main objective of these programmes;
- most of the “intercultural programmes” focus on primary education in rural indigenous areas; and the most successful experiences are integrated/intersectorial programmes, combining productive activities and education.

5 Skills development in rural areas

This section will present in detail four programmes implemented in rural areas: 1) *Jóvenes Rurales Emprendedores (JRE)* – Colombia; 2) *Programme Joven Emprendedor Rural y Fondo de Tierras (JERFT)* – Mexico; 3) *Programme Formación de Jóvenes Agricultores-Empresarios (FORJA)* – Guatemala; 4) *SENAR and Projovem Campo* – Brazil.

Programme 1: Jóvenes Rurales Emprendedores (JRE) - Colombia

The Rural Youth Entrepreneurs programme (JRE) started in 2003 with a pilot project in 167 municipalities and was then broadly developed reaching in 2009 all the departments (1091 municipalities). In 2006 the programme already trained 77000 young people and at the end of 2009 more than 257000. The programme was created by SENA to consolidate new enterprises starting from productive, innovative and viable projects in rural areas, through vocational trainings and technical assistance. The objective is to provide vocational training in strategic and high demand labour areas to unemployed young people, in order to have a positive impact on their employability and integration into the labour market. In addition, trainings include a component on entrepreneurship and management to strengthen the entrepreneurial skills of beneficiaries.

The JRE programme provides vocational trainings and promotes productive projects from agricultural agribusiness initiatives to services and industry. Beneficiaries are rural unemployed young people between 16 and 25 years old, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups (e.g. displaced persons, indigenous groups). The programme is implemented by the Vocational Training Centre of SENA and through strategic partnerships with local, regional governments and unions. Productive projects can rely on “seed capital” which is a fund for SMEs and young entrepreneurs managed by the Presidency of the Republic of Colombia. At the same time, Young entrepreneurs can access funds from *Banca de las Oportunidades*, *Fondo Emprender* (SENA, 2011) and *Economía Solidaria* and are assisted by the entrepreneurial units of the vocational training centers (SENA).

Main results: achievements and challenges (FEDESARROLLO, 2010):

- According to the impact evaluation findings, the JRE programme has a positive effect on labour income per hour of graduates. In particular, there was an increase by 5000 COP in daily income, which is relevant comparing to the entry income (\$ 8179 COP). In addition, leavers are between 13 and 14% more likely to find a job compared to the control group.
- A survey among participants shows favourable perceptions about the course: almost 88% of graduates affirm that the course met their expectations. In terms of entrepreneurial skills, 74% of the beneficiaries state that the course has concluded with a productive project.
- It can be observed that there is an increase of between 75% and 88% (comparing to the control group) in the probability of starting a new business. In addition, after completing the course, it is 50% more likely to hire someone engaged in entrepreneurial activity.
- The course seems to provide administration and management skills. Indeed, through the programme, beneficiaries have access to more reliable clients (punctuality of payments) than in a business out of JRE network. Moreover, courses have increased the capacities of employees to maintain an adequate portfolio turnover and customer management, have promoted networks among JRE beneficiaries and have reduced conflicts with partners and suppliers.
- To summarize, evaluation findings reveal the positive impact of JRE in capacity development and enhancing the entrepreneurial spirit of beneficiaries (i.e. leadership/management skills, new contacts with potential customers, conflict solving and, in general, a greater propensity for entrepreneurship) (SENA, 2010).

Programme 2: Joven Emprendedor Rural y Fondo de Tierras (JERFT) - Mexico

The Young Rural Entrepreneur Programme and the Land Fund (JERFT) was created in 2004 to increase rural youth access to land and to promote agribusiness projects. The programme is managed and implemented by the *Secretaría de la Reforma Agraria* (SRA) and the *Dirección General de Política y Planeación Agraria*. The need for this type of programme was identified in an assessment showing the lack of access to land for youth as well as the need of a new generation of young rural entrepreneurs.

The overall objective of the programme is to allow beneficiaries to create their own sustainable and remunerative agribusiness in order to increase their income, promote generational change in rural areas and boost economic growth of national agriculture. The target group is defined as “subjects living in agrarian and related highly marginalized areas (ZAP: *Zona de Atención Prioritaria Rural*) between 18 to 39 years old, who are interested in agribusiness”. In addition, the programme is characterized by two main tools: (1) direct support in purchasing fixed assets (infrastructures, material) assisted by a tutor; (2) provision of financial guarantees to young people to facilitate access to credit for their own project. The financial agent is the *Financiera Rural*, whose main role is to provide direct support by granting loans “guaranteed” by the Programme.

From 2004 to 2006, JERFT operated with three components: 1. School Project; 2. Land Fund (In coordination with FIFONAFE); 3. Incentives for Adults. The design has been adjusted several times and is currently organized in (A) School Project, and (B) Agribusiness Project. The first stage includes vocational training and the provision of specific hard skills as well as entrepreneurial skills for a productive activity (including both production and administration), with the support of a specialist (tutor). The second stage promotes agribusiness, in coordination with the *Financiera Rural*.

Main results: achievements and challenges (FAO and SRA, 2010):

- In 2007 and 2008 beneficiaries have improved their income in the first year by 21% comparing to the entry level (baseline).
- Agricultural activities or livestock contributed to 67% of total revenues (revenues from supported projects, wages paid and income from Rural Production Units). The activities not linked to the agricultural sector contributed to 33% of the total. The positive effect of the increase in income is clearly reflected in the increasing number of young people with a personal income level above the poverty line: from 65% to 78%.
- Around 62% of companies involved in agribusiness projects had profits. On average, group projects did better than the individual ones. 78% of new entrepreneurial activities are collective and 31% have established three or more partnerships with suppliers, buyers and other.
- In terms of sustainability, 90% of 461 companies created by the programme (between 2007 and 2008) continue to operate.
- The monitoring system includes an indicator of innovation. For 66% of graduates the production activity realized was new. 59% of companies have implemented a significant innovation. Innovations have been introduced not only production technology but also in administration, including a reduction of procedures costs and in marketing, selling directly in the market without local intermediaries.
- The programme complies satisfactorily with the participation of the indigenous population by developing the School Project in indigenous languages, as well as by adjusting the programme to indigenous communities. However, it was recommended to increase the participation of women and indigenous people during entrepreneurial activities (CONEVAL, 2011).
- The main challenge is related to project quality and the fact that providers of professional services (PSP) (who hire graduates to formulate the projects) try to take personal gain from the programme. Indeed, the payment for the PSP services is a proportion of total project cost (incentive to present more expensive projects).
- In 2011 the programme has been trying to better identify the beneficiaries with specific skills and interest to run an agribusiness project. The programme has also made progress in a more focused selection of target groups and beneficiaries (CONEVAL, 2011).

Programme 3: *Formación de Jóvenes Agricultores-Empresarios (FORJA)* - Guatemala

The Programme *Formación de Jóvenes Agricultores-Empresarios (FORJA)* run by the National School of Agriculture and Helvetas Guatemala, provides scholarships and training to young farmers.

The objective is to provide an opportunity to young people who could not continue their studies or formal education. The programme and the financial support lasts 2 years: with the first year focused mainly on vocational trainings in, and the second year on the development of individual entrepreneurial activity. Beneficiaries are young people from 15 to 20 years old, with a minimum of 6th Grade of schooling, interested in agricultural activities, and supported by parents or a person in charge. They also must guarantee the availability of land to run their own mini-project and they must be a resident in one of the following departments: Chimaltenango, Sacatepequez, Guatemala, Escuintla, Santa Rosa.

The programme implements “dual” vocational trainings with a focus on skills development combined with the support to individual micro-projects. (1. Preliminary courses; 2. Dual trainings: trainings and apprenticeship in rural development (agriculture, livestock, forestry) and agro-business lasting 10 months; 3. Preparatory course for micro-projects; 4. Entrepreneurial introduction and development of micro-project).

Participants spend the first year of the programme in an institute where they receive free food, accommodation and vocational training meant to strengthen their entrepreneurial skills. At the end of the courses, participants receive a loan to start their own agricultural activity.

Main results: achievements and challenges (INBAS, 2010):

- The phase evaluation shows that the programme did not fulfil its planned objectives, though it was well structured. The main problems are related to: high turnover of staff which has weakened the quality of training courses and the technical assistance to micro-projects; lack of entrepreneurial skills and interests of some participants (the selection process does not include motivational interview/statement); a poor functioning credit system; and weak partnerships with the private sector. In addition, the evaluation recommended suspending the planned extension of the programme to the new areas.
- An ECLAC study conducted in 2009 emphasized positive aspects of the programme, mainly the quality of the courses (thanks to Helvetas experience in the sector), the length of the programme and the focus on the entire productive cycle (Baroni, 2009).

Programme 4: SENAR and *Projovem Campo* – Brazil

In Brazil the national service of rural learning *SENAR (Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Rural)* provides vocational trainings and services to rural youth. The SENAR is characterized by a highly decentralized structure at State level. In particular, the SENAR-PR in Parana was initially meant and developed based on partnerships with the Federation of Agriculture of State of Parana (FAEP) and Rural Employers' unions at local level, assigning them the responsibility for the mobilization and registration of participants, to better plan the activities of the year (SENAR, 2011b). The organization is currently offering different types of programmes and training; among them, *the Programa Jovem Agricultor Aprendiz* (Young Apprentice Farmer Programme) targets rural young people from 14 to 18 years who are involved in agroforestry activities (i.e. from a family of farmers or agricultural workers). The courses offer basic contents (management skills) as well as more specific trainings related to agroforestry activities (SENAR, 2011a).

At the national level, in recent years the *Projovem Campo* has gained increased attention. The programme consists of vocational trainings and formal education for rural youth farmers from 18 to 29 years old who have not completed basic education. The program aims to increase access and quality of education for marginalized groups. Some scholars have emphasised the need to increase the number of beneficiaries and presence of the programme in all the states (Ferreira and Alves, 2009).

Conclusion

The paper has identified a number of relevant skills development programmes in Latin America, as well as public policies and key public-private stakeholders.

Unfortunately, still a few programmes can rely on external evaluations, but there is evidence of successful programmes promoting youth entrepreneurship, mainly in rural areas. However, it is not clear if these programmes can have an impact in the medium-long term. Sustainability of programmes should be taken into consideration by governments at the time of designing and implementing skills development strategies.

In terms of type of skills taught, some programmes targeting marginalized groups include trainings on generic skills as a way to improve their integration into society and labour market. Most of these programmes have also have been positively evaluated by graduates.

To conclude, recent intergral-multisectorial programmes have adopted a multidimensional approach which goes beyond employability when targeting marginalized groups. Although there are still implementation problems (e.g. lack of coordination among Ministries/organizations involved), some programmes, including *Projovem*, *Chile Califica* and, to some extent, the *Programa de Atención Integral en Generación de Ingresos* that targets displaced persons in Colombia, can be considered a model for future programming in this area.

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