


The Youth Entrepreneurship Programme in Latin America and the Caribbean

Impact Report



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“Through YEP, the network evolved from one of sharing tools and practices with one another to solving problems together and co-creating effective solutions.”

Delil Athié

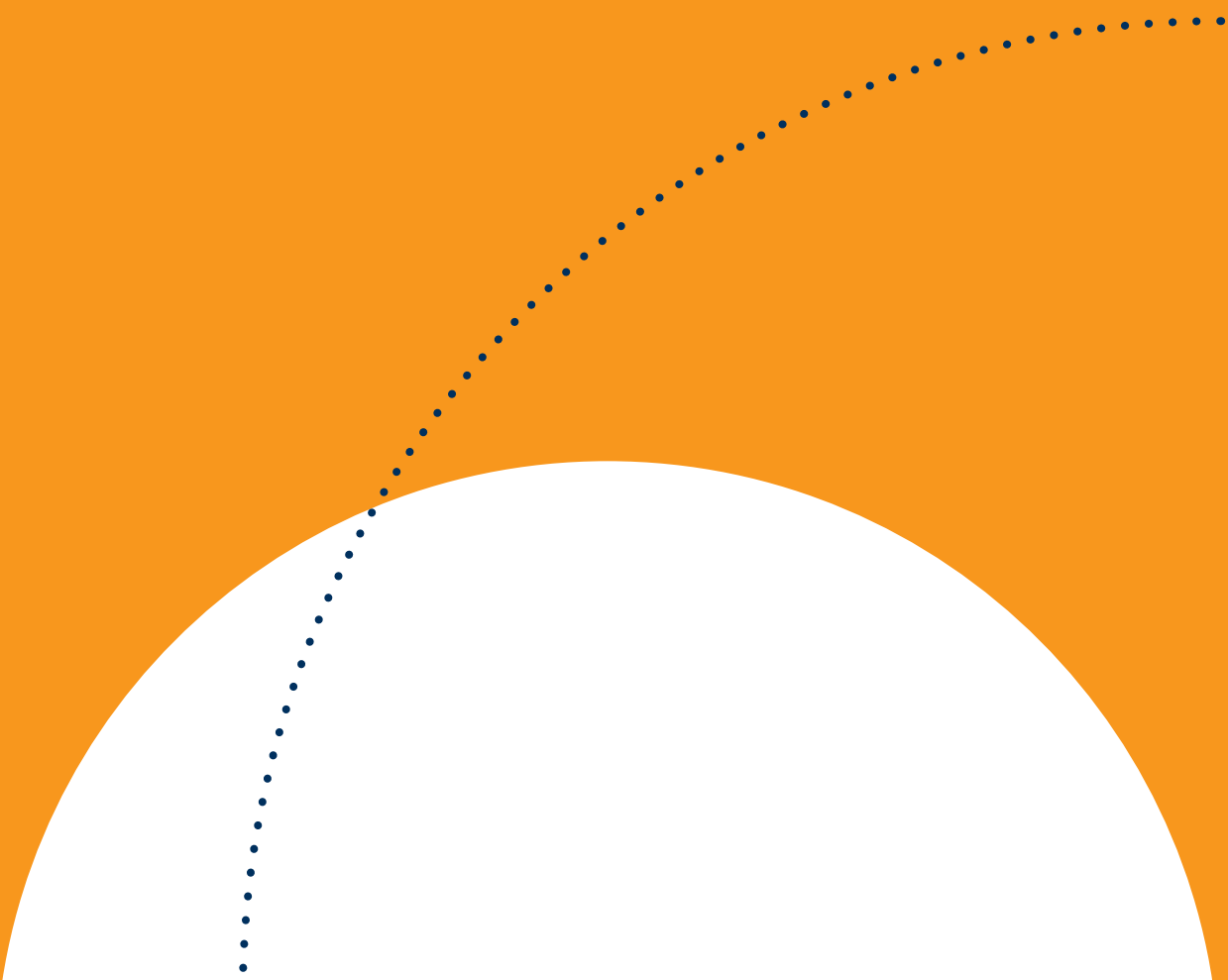
Yo Quiero Yo Puedo, Mexico

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Executive Summary

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Youth Business International (YBI) partnered with the Inter-American Development Bank's innovation laboratory, IDB Lab, to design and deliver a regional Youth Entrepreneurship Programme (YEP). The programme worked over six years (2013-2019) to address the challenge of high youth unemployment in Latin America and the Caribbean by expanding and strengthening entrepreneurship support services for vulnerable youth.

YEP supported underserved young entrepreneurs to start and grow a business, creating new jobs and shaping the local economy. In the process, it built a vibrant regional network which is well-positioned to reach and support many more youth in years to come.

Programme Reach: Through YEP, 64,000 youth were trained with entrepreneurship skills in partnership with YBI member organisations in ten countries.¹ Close to 20,000 businesses were started or strengthened, over 13,000 new jobs were created, and 86% of the businesses supported under the project had increased sales one year after receiving support. All ten local entrepreneurship support organisations report increased capacity to provide quality entrepreneurship services that respond to the changing needs of youth in today's digital economy.

Impact for Disadvantaged Youth: Behind the numbers are thousands of stories of youth whose lives were improved thanks to support received under YEP. Youth like Mayvelin in La Paz who, at 21, was struggling to find work and wanted to do good for her community. Thanks to support from the programme, she launched a pastry shop selling healthy sweets made from traditional Bolivian produce. Shaquille, meanwhile, overcame barriers of the hearing impairment he had since birth and established a successful business selling handmade sandals in Jamaica. All of the beneficiaries faced disadvantages in addition to their youth, due to their socioeconomic status, gender, cultural identity, disability, or distance from mainstream services. The majority were women (64%) and many came from rural and peri-urban settings.

Innovation and Digital Transformation:

The focus of the programme's capacity building evolved over time to keep up with the changing digital landscape, and support organisations to incorporate digital into both the content of their training and the delivery mechanisms for their services. A Digital Accelerator developed roadmaps for increasing digital maturity, and an Innovation Challenge awarded grants to build new solutions that make entrepreneurship services more accessible, flexible and relevant for young entrepreneurs today.

Network Effect: By creating a community of practice built on shared challenges and trusted relationships, YEP has left a legacy of strong organisations that continue to work together to innovate and grow their services for young entrepreneurs.

Through YEP, YBI provided capacity building to improve training methodology, build thriving mentoring programmes, and improve monitoring and evaluation, communications, and management systems. An Online Community platform with a resource library and discussion groups is now in place to facilitate ongoing collaboration.

Looking ahead, YBI is building on the results of YEP, continuing to scale services for vulnerable youth in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as strengthening communities of practices in other regions. We are applying lessons and proven methodologies to scale our impact, addressing youth unemployment across our network and reaching more people by implementing digital solutions.



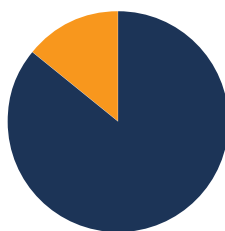
64,000

Youth were trained with entrepreneurship skills in partnership with YBI member organisations in ten countries



13,000

New jobs were created



86%

Of the businesses supported under the project had increased sales one year after receiving support



20,000

Businesses were started or strengthened



Unemployment in Latin America and the Caribbean

Youth unemployment has been a persistent problem in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) over the last three decades, with unemployment rates for youth consistently double or triple the national average.

In 2013, when the Youth Entrepreneurship Programme began, 13% of youth in LAC were unemployed, as compared to the overall unemployment rate in the region of 5%.² The situation has not improved, making the programme as relevant today as when it was designed. For 2020, the International Labour Organization (ILO) projected a youth unemployment rate of 13.8% globally, and 18% for LAC.³ The young people who do find jobs face a precarious job market, with three in every four employed youth working in the informal sector.⁴

Addressing the youth unemployment crisis is imperative, not only for the wellbeing of youth but also to ensure sustainable, inclusive growth and social cohesion. Empowering youth to succeed in running their own businesses is a critical part of the solution. Young entrepreneurs create new jobs and shape local economies.

Youth equipped with entrepreneurship skills are better able to navigate the challenges of today's rapidly changing job market.

Yet entrepreneurship is challenging in any context and especially in regions such as LAC where the ecosystem is not well developed. Many youth do not recognise entrepreneurship as a viable career option and often lack the skills or knowledge to start and grow a business. There is a widespread lack of access to high quality entrepreneurship support services, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Some services, such as start-up financing, are not available to youth because of their perceived risk profile. At the same time, youth from disadvantaged backgrounds do not have a network of friends and family who can provide early financing and support.



The programme

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As a response to the youth unemployment crisis, and to address the challenges of entrepreneurship as a path to employment, Youth Business International (YBI), in partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank, launched the Youth Entrepreneurship Programme in Latin America and the Caribbean in October 2013.

The project aimed to increase the number of low-income youth successfully starting and sustaining their own businesses and creating new jobs. It also aimed to make a long-term contribution to fighting youth unemployment by strengthening the entrepreneurship support services available across the region.

The core goal of the project was “the creation of a regional platform for the coordinated design of projects, formation of partnerships, and exchange of knowledge.”⁵ Through YEP, YBI grew its network of partner organisations in the LAC region, strengthened those organisations, and created a thriving knowledge community that continues to learn and work together for continual improvement and scaling of services.

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The programme met its goal through three specific objectives:



Direct Support

Provide direct support to underserved youth (aged 18-35) across ten countries in LAC to fulfil their entrepreneurial potential.



Capacity Building

Strengthen the capacity of local entrepreneurship support organisations to provide quality services to underserved youth.



Knowledge

Build knowledge on best practices for youth entrepreneurship and share that knowledge on an ongoing basis through a vibrant regional community of practice.

To deliver the programme, YBI worked with ten local organisations:

- 1 Aliança Empreendedora in Brazil
- 2 Acción Emprendedora in Chile
- 3 Barbados Youth Business Trust
- 4 Confecámaras in Colombia
- 5 Fundación Paraguaya in Paraguay
- 6 Jamaica Youth Business Trust
- 7 Manq'a in Bolivia
- 8 Perspektiva in Peru
- 9 Yo Quiero Yo Puedo in Mexico
- 10 Youth Business Trinidad and Tobago





64%

of the project beneficiaries
were women

Providing direct support to underserved youth to fulfil their entrepreneurial potential

In each of the ten countries, local entrepreneurship support organisations in YBI's network received a grant to evolve and deliver their core services for underserved young entrepreneurs. Each identified an aspect of their service that they wanted to test and develop, alongside strengthening their core service offering with support from YBI. Services provided to entrepreneurs included training in entrepreneurship and life skills, counselling, technical advisory services, mentoring, and access to finance. In several countries, services also included financial education and direct funding through seed grants or loans. YBI supported members to accelerate their adoption of digital solutions - several members provided services to entrepreneurs through online platforms and mobile applications developed during the project.

Although the project was designed prior to the release of the Sustainable Development Goals, its actions contributed specifically to addressing SDG8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

All country projects targeted underserved youth aged 18-35 years, spanning urban, peri-urban, and rural settings. Projects strove to ensure women were able to access services. Overall, 64% of the project beneficiaries were women. Several country projects targeted youth that were particularly vulnerable to social and economic exclusion, such as young migrants or those with a disability.

A snapshot of the country projects supported through the programme.

Manq'a

Bolivia



Manq'a is tackling social and economic injustice through a movement that begins with cooking schools. The schools train unemployed youth to become chefs specialised in cooking with traditional ingredients. This boosts the market demand for local farm products and promotes healthy eating, while also building youth skills. Through YEP, Manq'a incorporated entrepreneurship training and advisory services into its program. An entrepreneurial venture itself, Manq'a has an innovative business model that generates revenue through a restaurant, catering, and culinary tourism, and is in the process of becoming a social franchise.

Aliança Empreendedora

Brazil



Committed to entrepreneurship as a viable strategy for the millions of unemployed youth in Brazil, Aliança Empreendedora worked through YEP to expand its network of delivery partners across the country. It trained them in Aliança's innovative methodology - using design thinking processes and the effectuation method to guide anyone to become an entrepreneur, and develop and grow businesses in agile ways using the resources they have on hand. Aliança's dynamic approach to training was also applied to an online platform with instructional videos and a mobile app, to help reach other segments of the young population across the country.

Acción Empreendedora

Chile



Acción Empreendedora sought solutions to reach entrepreneurs across Chile in a cost-effective way that was also responsive to the emerging digital economy. They developed and tested virtual and blended approaches to delivering training and mentoring. Learnings from the project led to an evolution of their digital solutions and business model. While still providing in-person support to meet the needs of specific communities, as they have done for over 20 years, Acción Empreendedora now also has a broader reach through a digital platform, Acción País. This pulls together resources and makes connections for entrepreneurs to access e-learning, funding, mentors, and new markets for their products.

Confecámaras

Colombia



In the context of a country with a wide array of entrepreneurship services, the YEP project in Colombia worked to organise and strengthen the ecosystem and facilitate access to services for disadvantaged youth entrepreneurs. Focused on strengthening and growing existing businesses, the project was implemented by the national confederation of chambers of commerce, Confecámaras, through chambers in ten cities. These now continue to support young entrepreneurs. The ecosystem was mapped in each city and a digital platform was developed, through which entrepreneurs can assess their needs and connect with coaches and specific resources in their community.

Yo Quiero Yo Puedo

Mexico



Addressing the diverse needs of vulnerable youth in Mexico, Yo Quiero Yo Puedo developed a comprehensive support program through YEP, combining life and technical skills training alongside personalised coaching and access to finance. This programme provides entrepreneurship training as part of a process of intrinsic empowerment. This was proven through the project to lead to greater success rates for entrepreneurs, and to mitigate migration by building economic opportunities in local communities.

Fundación Paraguaya

Paraguay



Building upon well-established programs in microfinance, poverty alleviation, and entrepreneurial education, Fundación Paraguaya worked through YEP to develop a comprehensive programme for young entrepreneurs. The programme included training, business advisory services, mentoring and access to finance. Through local facilitators and mentors, trained by the Fundación Paraguaya team, the program was delivered across the country. To facilitate mentoring relationships for young entrepreneurs, a mobile app, Mentorem, was launched during the project and continues to evolve.

Perspektiva

Peru



After more than two decades leading the field of entrepreneurship for disadvantaged populations in Peru, Perspektiva sought to transfer its methodology to scale and sustain its impact through tertiary educational institutions and municipal economic development agencies. This involved systematisation of its methodology. This begins with an assessment of the entrepreneurial mindset. It then provides training courses, personalised technical assistance by advisors on location at local businesses, and financial support in the form of cash grants awarded through business plan competitions.

Barbados Youth Business Trust

Jamaica Youth Business Trust

Youth Business Trinidad and Tobago

Working collaboratively to develop the entrepreneurial ecosystem across the Caribbean, YBT members in Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad & Tobago, developed tools and materials applicable across the region, including a harmonized training curriculum and shared digital platform. These were supported by strengthened national programmes. Coordinated services continue through the Youth Business Caribbean network of six islands, allowing for economies of scale in the development of relevant content and opening the possibility for entrepreneurs to access markets across the Caribbean.



Strengthening the capacity of local entrepreneurship support organisations to provide quality services to youth


The capacity building support provided by YBI evolved over the course of the programme to match the evolving needs of the member organisations and youth they serve. Initially YBI focused on building core services and capabilities, including the design and delivery of entrepreneurship and life skills training, mentoring services, monitoring and evaluation, communications, and data management through organisational management systems. During the last two years of the project, the focus of capacity development shifted to supporting organisations to innovate their services and incorporate digital solutions.

YBI's network model of ongoing accompaniment and interaction helped to accelerate and embed learning.

Capacity building support was delivered through personalised workshops delivered in-country for each member, through regional workshops, global masterclasses, online webinars, and ongoing sharing of best practices and emerging trends.

Recognising the need to promote innovation and accelerate adoption of digital solutions to increase reach and impact, YBI partnered with Accenture and the IDB to develop a Digital Accelerator programme.

This aimed to support member organisations to innovate the ways in which they delivered services, and to enhance their internal operations and data management. It also supported them to explore how digital solutions could improve the relevance of their services to entrepreneurs in today's fast-changing digital economy.



“Through YEP, we (the implementing agencies) have gotten to know each other and see ourselves as partners rather than competitors.”

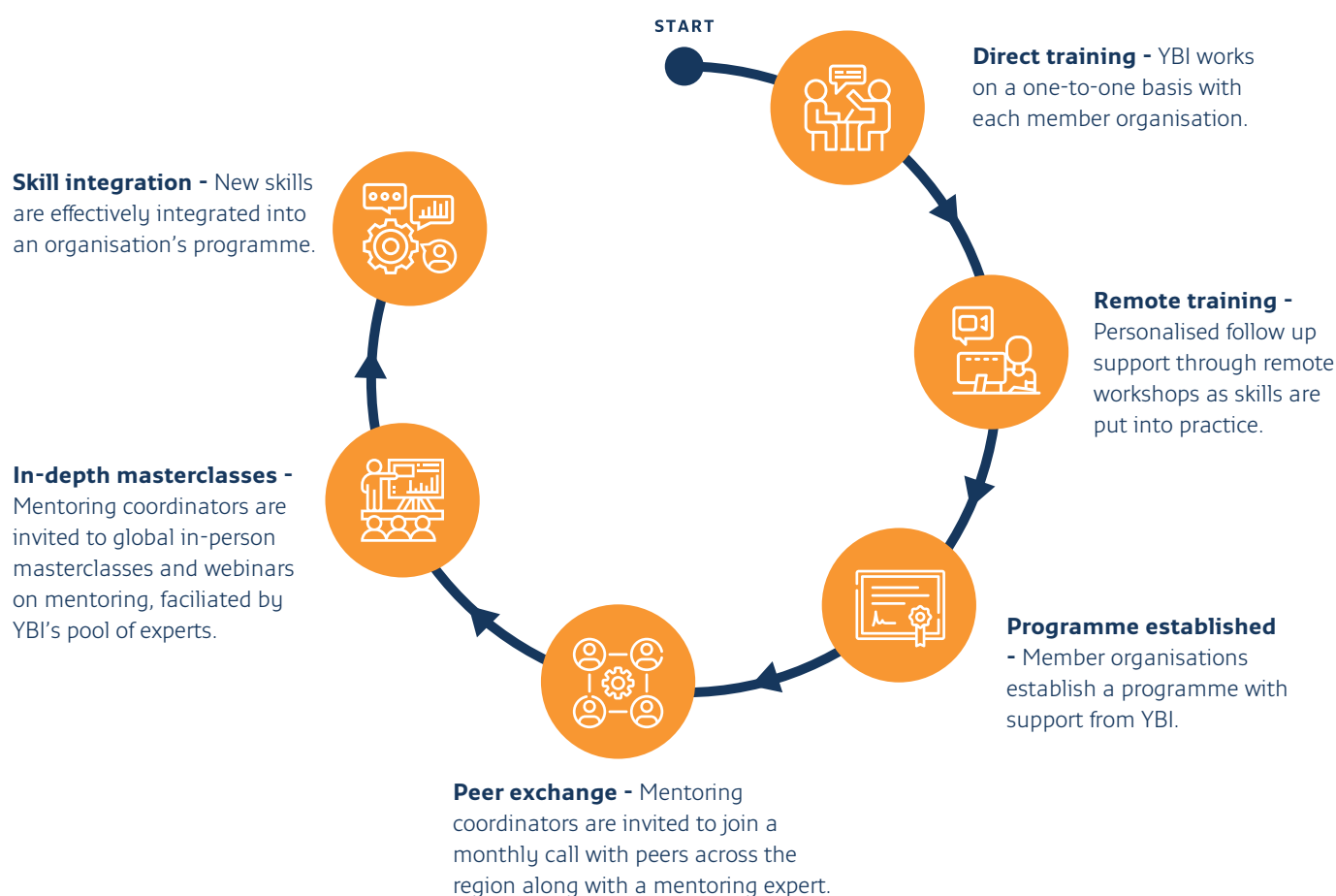
Aníbal Pinto,
Acción Emprendedora, Chile

YBI Capacity Development Model illustrated through Mentoring Services

The development and strengthening of mentoring programs for YEP members provides a good illustration of the capacity development model. YBI first worked on a one-to-one basis with each member organisation to build their service offer in this area, through an in-person workshop followed by remote support. Once a member organisation had established a programme, the organisation's mentoring coordinator was invited to participate in a monthly call with their peers from across the region, along with a mentoring expert, to address challenges as they emerged. In addition, global in-person masterclasses and webinars on mentoring facilitated by YBI's pool of experts covered emerging priority topics in-depth.



YBI Capacity Development Model



Accelerating Digital Capacity

To keep up with the new world of work and digital economy, YBI, together with Accenture and IDB Lab, developed and piloted a Digital Accelerator as part of YEP. This is a structured and systematic programme that helps participating organisations explore how they can use digital solutions to improve the reach and relevance of their services to entrepreneurs. Based on Accenture's FORM methodology, the Accelerator takes organisations through three phases:



A Discover phase

To understand the organisation's digital maturity, its aspirations, and the context of the entrepreneurs they serve



A Describe phase

To analyse digital solutions and develop a strategy for achieving aspirations and enhancing the user journeys of beneficiaries



A Co-Create phase

To begin user-testing of new or acquired digital solutions.

Focus areas, embracing digital approaches to support entrepreneurs, included digital literacy, digital teaching and learning, access to data, and future-ready businesses.

Building knowledge and a community of practice

Recognising the importance of fostering an enabling environment including quality programming for young entrepreneurs to thrive, the programme invested in creating and exchanging knowledge at national and regional levels. The aim was to spark innovation and inform the design of services.



A research and learning agenda was developed for the programme based on the needs and interests of the member organisations and the broader YBI network. Over 30 knowledge products were created.

- Publication series, *YBI Insights for Success*⁶ exploring different aspects of entrepreneurship programming. Topics included - the use of *effectuation theory in entrepreneurship training*, *different approaches to scaling programmes*, and the *digital landscape for youth entrepreneurs in LAC*.
- Global study on the *impact of mentoring*, including case studies from the programme
- *Practitioner handbook*, covering core elements of entrepreneurship support services and profiling specific methodologies, as well as learning from the programme, to support others in designing or evolving their own programmes.

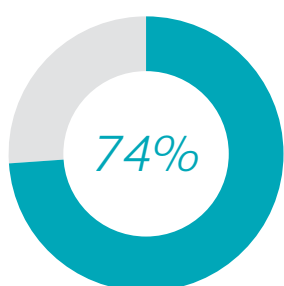


Learning exchange was facilitated through in-person and virtual interaction with peers and subject experts. Face-to-face interactions, such as regional summits and masterclasses, helped build trust and understanding which sparked virtual collaboration.

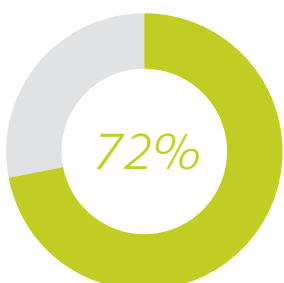
YBI's Online Community platform, developed during the project, offers a space where member organisations access and contribute to a resource library, engage in discussion, read about sector trends, and follow updates from other members.

The Impact of Volunteer Business Mentoring

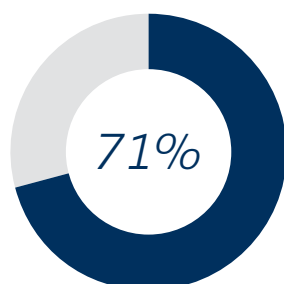
A two-year study demonstrated that mentoring relationships using YBI's well-structured methodology help youth to develop confidence and resilience, better equipping them to navigate the challenges of today's rapidly changing job market. Nearly three quarters (74%) of young entrepreneurs were more confident in running their business and 72% felt they had stronger decision-making skills through the support of their mentors. Personal levels of confidence also grew during the programme - 71% of entrepreneurs in the study felt they had learned significantly more about their personal strengths and development areas.



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Scaling Impact

The enormity of the youth unemployment problem requires not only high-quality services but also the scaling of those services to reach greater numbers of disadvantaged youth. For this reason, YBI commissioned a review of experiences and success factors in scaling development programmes. The report provides case studies of models for replication together with a scaling framework and a set of recommendations covering key approaches to scale, including:



building strategic alliances



harnessing digital solutions



diversifying business models



promoting innovation and impact

Experience of two YEP projects are highlighted in the report. Aliança Empreendedora in Brazil is expanding its reach across the country through a network of partner organisations that Aliança trains and supports to implement its proven methodology. Perspectiva in Peru incorporated its entrepreneurship training and technical assistance process into the curriculum approved by educational authorities for public technical training institutions (CETPROS, Centro de Educacion Tecnico Productiva).



Programme achievements

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Among the programme's significant achievements, 64,000 youth have been equipped with entrepreneurship skills through training, over 20,000 youth-led businesses have been created or strengthened, and over 13,000 jobs have been created.

Positive changes for underserved young entrepreneurs

YEP supported thousands of youth across the region to set up and grow a business, creating jobs and contributing to the personal development of the youth themselves, as well their families and communities.

This includes young people like Shaquille in Jamaica, whose disability made it difficult to find a job but who, with support from Jamaica Youth Business Trust, has built his own sandal business that today sells in shops across the island and employs other youth with disabilities. And Eva, a Venezuelan migrant who brought her family to Paraguay but was struggling to make ends meet until Fundación Paraguaya helped her improve her business selling both typical Venezuelan food and items commonly eaten in Paraguay. And Jhon Manuel who brought new opportunities to his rural community in Peru through his business that transformed a local, traditional food into a commercial product sold across the country.

As well as these positive changes for young entrepreneurs and their communities, the programme has had an impact on entrepreneurship support organisations and the broader ecosystem.

Furthermore, the initial funding provided by IDB Lab and other partners has laid the foundations for YBI to continue to grow the scale and impact of its work for youth in the region.



"We were able to test new methodologies and develop new tools, for example regarding mentoring and strengthening our training platform."

Tatiana Rogovschi
Aliança Empreendedora, Brazil

Jhon was awarded YBI Global Entrepreneur of the Year award for his business that highlights the power of entrepreneurship to revive a community living in poverty. Through product innovation and a unique business model, he created an entire production chain around locally raised cuyes. He renewed a cultural tradition and energised the community by creating employment and stimulating production and trade. Jhon arrived at YBI member Perspektiva with a business idea. Perspektiva supported him to put it into action with training, technical assistance and mentoring. He says, “I thank [Perspektiva] for the opportunity they gave me and the confidence placed in my project so I could meet my objectives”.

Jhon Manuel Lezama
Proacos Nuggets de Cuy – Peru



This 24-year-old entrepreneur was born without a right eardrum and lost most of the hearing in his left ear at 13. He knows the struggles and frustrations others like him face in society and is determined to succeed. He set out to prove others wrong about his perceived limitations and set up Yadz Sandals, which specialises in handcrafted products including sandals, shoes, bags and belts. With support from the Jamaica Youth Business Trust, the sandals are now sold in stores across Jamaica. He says, “After leaving high school, I found it hard to get a job. No one wanted to hire me, mainly because of my disability. It hurt but I decided that I was going to make something of myself on my own terms and, in the process, help others like me.”

Shaquille Anderson
Yadz Sandals – Jamaica

Daniela was shocked to discover that there are more than 10,000 people in Chile in need of prosthetic limbs. Most of these people don't have the money to buy prosthetics and almost half are living in impoverished communities. Daniela decided to set up Fundación Prótesis 3D, a non-profit focused on addressing this challenge. Acción Emprendedora provided critical support, which included connecting Daniela to a mentor and delivering training in communications and social media. She says, "Find what you want to do and fight for it. All the experience will make you better".

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Daniela Retamales

Fundación Prótesis 3D – Chile



Marian managed to open her own pub with her family. "It was not easy at all," she says. "And the fear of failing at something I had started by myself was always at the back of my mind." At Fundación Paraguaya, Marian underwent training and learned about accounting, administration and how to be a responsible business owner. She was then matched with a mentor. Since becoming an entrepreneur, Marian has become more engaged in her community. In particular, she is working to make sure the neighborhood stays clean and safe. She says, "I wanted to own something for myself, to be a self-employer. Fundación Paraguaya helped me to achieve that goal when I was feeling overworked doing what I loved."

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Marian Balmaceda

La Casa de Mojito – Paraguay

Growing up in Trinidad and Tobago, Kerron showed entrepreneurial spirit from a young age. He was inspired by his grandfather's orange-tree-covered property to set up his delivery service business, at first selling oranges to friends and family and then a wider variety of fruit and vegetables in the greater Trinidad area. Real progress, however, arrived only with the support of Youth Business Trinidad and Tobago, which provided Kerron with agripreneurship training, coaching and access to a network of local entrepreneurs. He says, "I've made some major sacrifices to be where I am today... balancing time, finances and relationships. But I believe in serving the people and leaving a lasting impression."

Kerron Modeste

Modeste Home Growers – Trinidad and Tobago



Kimberly's passion for taking care of others, together with Barbados' lack of senior care services, helped shape her vision for Trusted Care Providers - a private nursing and senior care agency operating nationally. When she was setting up her business, Kimberly received support from Barbados Youth Business Trust, including business development services. The real turning point for her was attending one of BYBT's young women entrepreneur retreats. As she says, it was there that she realised "starting a business is not just about crunching numbers and having a great business plan. It is about understanding and managing yourself." Today her business is flourishing and she has opened a new branch in London, UK.

Kimberley Sandiford

Trusted Care Providers Inc – Barbados

Anna has always had a passion for healthy eating. When her son was born, she wanted to give him the best possible nutrition but soon realised that organic products were not readily available for most Brazilians. Determined to change this, she developed Muda Meu Mundo, which benefits both farmers and consumers. Farmers get trained and certified to supply their organically and sustainably grown produce to popular mainstream supermarkets across Brazil, while consumers get access to affordable, organic food. Anna says “I was born to change the world, I want to cause this transformation.” Anna wants to change the food we consume every day by making pesticide-free produce available to everyone. With entrepreneurship training and mentoring support from Aliança Empreendedora, Anna has been able to successfully establish and grow her business. In 2017, she won YBI’s regional Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

Anna Priscilla Veras
Muda Meu Mundo – Brazil



27-year-old Melissa established her business, Dolcetti Postres, as the leading handmade confectionery business in her hometown of Pereira in Colombia. She says, “I dream of having a franchise and establishing my business as the artisanal confectionery par excellence regionally and nationally.” With support from Confécamaras Colombia, Melissa was able to identify the real cost of production and become more competitive. Today her venture provides work for three other people.

Melissa Cardona
Dolcetti Postres – Colombia

Aged only 19, Ricardo developed a mobile application that connects customers (both businesses and consumers) to local street markets in Mexico, allowing them to source fresh, healthier food online. While talent and passion are key qualities for success, it took the support of Yo Quiero Yo Puedo to help him take his venture to the next level. He says: “When I first started out, I did not understand the word entrepreneur. I was afraid I would not be able to do it. But after receiving help and support from Yo Quiero Yo Puedo, I learned about entrepreneurship and I am no longer afraid to get out there.”

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Ricardo Escobedo
Abarrote – Mexico



Committed to the idea that you can eat something sweet that is also healthy, Mayvelin is building a pastry business that uses nutritious native Bolivian foods as the basis for her creative and delicious desserts. She’s making her mark with treats like truffles made of plantain and cañahua, a grain similar to quinoa and considered a superfood for its high nutritional content. Using the knowledge acquired in the Manq’a cooking school and entrepreneurship classes, combined with support from a mentor, Mayvelin has grown her business to include fulfilling special orders from steady clients as well as selling in her pastry shop. At age 21, she feels she’s on her way to achieving her vision as an entrepreneur to change the culture in society, teaching that nourishing oneself is not eating just any food. “The passion with which you realise every dish is important because it can change someone’s life,” she says.

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Mayvelin Mamani
Meyvis Pateleria con Toque Nativo – Bolivia



Positive changes for local entrepreneurship support organisations

In the YEP programme's final evaluation, all member organisations report increased capacity to provide quality services to youth.⁷ Through the programme, the ten organisations evolved their entrepreneurship training service and established or evolved a mentoring service. All but one had a new Organisational Management System built using the Salesforce platform. Member organisations also report improving core organisational capabilities, such as better understanding of monitoring, evaluation, learning (MEL) and communications, and the use of digital tools.

Thanks to YEP, YBI has grown its membership in the region and invested in member capacity. This investment in organisational capacity will enable member organisations to reach and support more youth in years to come.

In addition to strengthened curriculum and methodology for supporting entrepreneurs, participating organisations also now have a road map for their digital journeys. New digital tools are in use and several members are working together to develop longer term solutions.

Paraguay has a mobile app, *Mentorem*, that facilitates the connection between mentors and young entrepreneurs. Brazil, Chile, and the Caribbean members have e-learning platforms, the latter utilising a new harmonised curriculum developed under YEP, allowing consistent training across the Caribbean. Colombia has an online platform, *Emprendelo!* that maps the ecosystem players across the country and allows entrepreneurs to assess their needs, identify resources in their local communities, and connect with coaches at local chambers of commerce.

All participating organisations now have improved social media presence and virtual communication channels for staying connected with their entrepreneurs.

Following the Digital Accelerator, YEP members began the design of a new digital solution that supports blended learning (e-learning and face-to-face) with an emphasis on practical application of entrepreneurial and life skills and honing decision-making ability. This tool has the potential to bridge the technology gap and reach a larger number of young entrepreneurs in different contexts.

Partnerships also enabled innovation, with many of the local delivery partners testing new models and approaches to service delivery. For example, in Chile, Acción Emprendedora was able to test various approaches to delivering e-learning and connecting entrepreneurs with mentors online.

In the end, it was able to draw on those lessons to develop a new multi-faceted platform, Acción Pais. This has eight microsites, each dedicated to facilitating access to existing resources in the areas of training, access to finance, and access to markets, among others.

The Brazilian member, Aliança

Emprendedora, won an Innovation

Challenge grant under YEP to develop its mobile app, Mão na Massa. The app adds components of practical exercises and gaming to e-learning content developed as online platform Tamo Junto.

Soft Skills Curriculum

To thrive in today's digital economy and in the future, young entrepreneurs need more than just 'hard' business skills and sector specific technical knowledge. They also need the 'soft' skills that shape how an individual interacts with others and achieves their goals. There is growing consensus on the importance of soft skills but limited guidance on what they are or how to develop them. YBI therefore undertook a scoping study that outlined a framework for the soft skills young entrepreneurs need, and developed a new soft skills curriculum piloted by YEP members.



The curriculum supports development of 12 skills organised in four skills groups:

- **Intra and Inter Personal Skills** - positive self-concept, emotional and social intelligence, persuasion and negotiation, and working with others
- **Create and Action Skills** - ideation and creative thinking, decision making, and action focus
- **Information, Opportunity and Risk Management Skills** - VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) skills, and maximising opportunities
- **Growth Mindset Skills** - grit, future orientation, and agility.

The curriculum is designed to provide core content but allow for flexibility to adapt the curriculum to local contexts and cultures.

Positive changes for the entrepreneurship ecosystem

The programme's commitment to knowledge creation and exchange has fostered a vibrant regional community of practice amongst the member organisations. Indeed, networking, information sharing, and exposure to new approaches in entrepreneurship support were reported by all of the member organisations as key programme outcomes that will be sustained. YEP has served as a platform to convene organisations, share challenges, learn from on-going interventions and methodological approaches, collaborate on future business engagements and strategies, and overall forge relationships with YBI and between members.



Activities that contributed to building an active community included;

- Four YEP regional summits
- A global summit
- Virtual mentoring support facilitated by experts
- Regional workshops related to the Digital Accelerator
- YBI's Online Community available for all YBI network members
- Masterclasses on mentoring and training methodologies
- Learning exchange visits between members.



Several of the research studies created through the programme have already been used to inform the design and delivery of entrepreneurship support in the region and beyond. For example:

- The study on the effectuation model used in Brazil has provided useful support to members in Europe keen to integrate this approach.
- The study on scaling has helped inform a new pilot initiative supporting YBI members to innovate their business models to support sustainable growth.
- The impact study on mentoring has generated useful monitoring and evaluation tools.

In addition, a wealth of communication material was developed to disseminate the regional programme, country interventions, and specific cases. This included country briefs, field stories, blogs, newsletters and videos.

Cross-sector partnerships enabled member organisations to introduce new services, as well as scale and better ensure the sustainability of existing services.

For example, in Brazil, Chile and Peru, partners scaled their services by working with local government institutions and partner organisations. In Colombia, the local chambers of commerce committed at the end of the programme to continuing project activities at their own cost. And in the Caribbean, the tools and lessons from this project are being applied now across six islands that continue to coordinate their work.



Ongoing Virtual Learning Community

YEP members stay connected with each other and other entrepreneurship support organisations through YBI's Online Community and active WhatsApp group. The Online Community, built and launched during YEP, allows member organisations to connect with others in the network, engage in thematic groups, research specific topics in the knowledge library, download tools, ask questions of peers, explore topics through discussion groups, and keep up with relevant news and events.



Learning and Insight

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The programme has generated valuable insight and learning. Here we highlight four key areas.

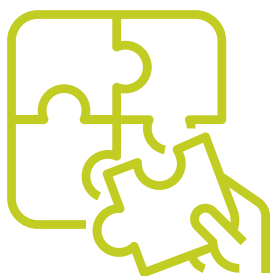


1. Integrated services lead to better outcomes for young entrepreneurs

While each country project operated in a distinct context with a slightly different methodology, it seems that *delivery of an integrated package of services, including not just entrepreneurship training but life skills training and some form of post-training support, is critical to success*. The type of follow-up support that is most appropriate ranges from occasional workshops to coaching and mentoring.

Members found that youth who completed their training courses often struggled in putting what they had learned into practice. But after participating in additional post-training services, young entrepreneurs' businesses began to grow, and their confidence increased.

The impact study on mentoring confirmed this insight, showing better outcomes for youth that had a mentor.



2. Capacity building of local entrepreneurship support organisations should be practical and support sustainability

Capacity-building is most effective when designed to be applied in a practical way and when supported over time.

Learning occurs during the months after a training course or workshop, as an organisation adopts the new approaches or tools and embeds them into their daily work. This requires experts and peers to be available over a period of time so member organisation staff can ask questions, share experiences and problem-solve together.

Furthermore, capacity building is an ongoing process of continuous learning and improvement as both the needs of beneficiaries and the tools to serve them continually evolve. Therefore, it is important to draw on evolving sector trends, facilitate sharing of new approaches, and incentivise innovation.



3. Fostering a vibrant network is a key ingredient for success

Investing in a regional approach was key to success. Instead of implementing a series of national level projects, the programme focused on building a strong community of practitioners in ten countries who committed to learning from and with each other. As the programme director of a member organisation noted near the end of the project, the network “evolved from a group of organisations that shared tools and methodologies, to one that works together to solve common problems.” What enabled this evolution? Frequent opportunities for interaction and well-organised project teams that supported organisations to work together online were critical.

Bringing member organisations together for face-to-face meetings at least once a year helped people to connect on a social as well as professional level, building trust and capacity to work together virtually. Ensuring meetings resulted in joint actions for members to continue to work on together was also important to maintaining momentum.

In addition, the use of virtual tools, including a WhatsApp group combined with YBI’s Online Community platform, encouraged members to share their achievements and ask questions.



4. Digital acceleration and innovation happens best when guided by experts and catalysed through incentives

As in any sector, civil society organisations need to ensure their services respond to the rapidly changing needs and interests of the people they serve. The programme promoted a shift in members' approach to take on an innovative mindset and used tools such as human-centred design, value proposition canvas, and others that support organisations to review their services and products in light of the actual needs of the people they serve. We designed an Innovation Challenge that not only awarded prizes for innovation but also provided expert consultancy on how to structure an innovation process.

In addition, we learned that organisations keen to adopt digital solutions need support to understand their current level of digital maturity and develop a clear strategy that incorporates the organisational structure and resources needed to develop and maintain digital tools.

Those that develop products without that support find their success and sustainability difficult. The Digital Accelerator process builds a digital strategy and uses a lean approach to testing potential digital solutions before significant resources are committed.

Innovation and digital acceleration are key to ensuring organisations maintain relevance and increase reach. But training in the processes that drive this are essential, especially to ensure capacity becomes embedded within an organisation.





What's next?

The programme helped YBI lay the foundations upon which to grow its impact in the LAC region and across our global network. Thanks to YEP, a thriving network of entrepreneurship service organisations has been created spanning ten countries in LAC. This network continues to grow its services for vulnerable youth and promote supportive ecosystems for young entrepreneurs in the region. Recognising the successes and strengths of this model, YBI is now replicating the regional approach in communities of practice in Africa, Europe, Central Asia, and Asia Pacific.

Building on the work carried out under YEP, YBI is poised to grow our impact and innovate from a solid base of strong programmes providing integrated support services. Beyond the end of the YEP partnership, YBI and our members continue to invest in outcomes and learnings realised through our community of practice in LAC. Together, we are developing digital solutions that enhance the reach and efficiency of our programs without losing the personalised attention to each individual youth's journey. We are exploring and supporting innovations in business models to sustain scaling of services.

This will ensure that, when members have tried-and-tested models, they are well-placed to bring these successfully to scale. We are rolling out our new soft skills curriculum and supporting members to adapt the material to local contexts. We are continuing to evolve our proven mentoring methodology and connect increasing numbers of young entrepreneurs with trained volunteer business mentors.

From programmes for young entrepreneurs with disabilities in Jamaica, to soft skills training for aspiring chefs in Bolivia, YBI is keen to learn from the most innovative approaches across the network. Working with members and partners, YBI is committed to ensuring that more and more youth from every corner of the globe have the tools to become successful entrepreneurs.

If you'd like to find out more about YBI's work and collaborate to reach more youth entrepreneurs;

visit **www.youthbusiness.org**
or email **info@youthbusiness.org**.

About Youth Business International

Youth Business International (YBI) is a global network of expert organisations supporting underserved young people to turn their ideas into successful businesses, creating jobs and strengthening communities. Our vision is that youth entrepreneurship is recognised for driving sustainable economic development, and that all young people who want to set up a business are able to fulfil their potential. We believe in the power of a network approach, connecting our members across regions and globally to share expertise and collaborate on solutions to common challenges.

www.youthbusiness.org



About IDB LAB

IDB Lab is the innovation laboratory of the IDB Group, the leading source of development finance and know-how for improving lives in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

The purpose of IDB Lab is to drive innovation for inclusion in the region, by mobilising financing, knowledge, and connections to co-create solutions capable of transforming the lives of vulnerable populations affected by economic, social or environmental factors.

Since 1993 IDB Lab has approved more than USD2 billion in projects deployed across 26 LAC countries, including over USD300 million to develop the venture capital industry in the region.

www.idblab.org

- 1 These were: Aliança Empreendedora in Brazil; Manq'a in Bolivia; Acción Emprendedora in Chile; Confecámaras in Colombia; Yo Quiero Yo Puedo in Mexico; Fundación Paraguaya in Paraguay; Perspectiva in Peru; Barbados Youth Business Trust; Jamaica Youth Business Trust; and Youth Business Trinidad and Tobago.
- 2 ILO. Global Employment Trends for Youth 2013: A Generation at Risk. Geneva. 2013.
- 3 ILO. Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Technology and the Future of Jobs. Geneva. 2020.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Youth Entrepreneurship Program Donors Memorandum. MIF/AT-1248. July 2013.
- 6 See YBI's Insights for Success series here (1) (2) (3)
- 7 YEP Final Evaluation Report. September 2019. Gerrit Ribbink and Patricia Santa Maria, Palladium Europe.

“One of the main achievements of the regional YEP project was the support received for the creation of a digital strategy and the application of new resources not only in the field of entrepreneurship but in the organisation’s business model and the inclusion of new actions.”

Ariel Tito
Manq’a – Bolivia

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