



Youth Drive Future Economic Growth

Harnessing Youth's Creativity and Energy

ACDI/VOCA strives to harness the creativity and energy of young people to tackle the urgent challenge of building a more prosperous and stable future for themselves, their families and communities. ACDI/VOCA supports young people so they can develop the skills they need to be successful as the future leaders and drivers of development. A few examples of how ACDI/VOCA engages with youth follow.

Youth as 'Learning' Employees Iraq, Community Action Program

ACDI/VOCA has helped expand economic opportunities for young people in Iraq since 2003 through learning-by-doing methodologies as part of the USAID-funded Community Action Program.

- » One initiative created more than 3,750 days of short-term employment for unemployed local youth hired to support infrastructure projects (road repairs, irrigation repairs, etc.)
- » Another initiative provided hands-on job skills development through the creation and support of economic youth cooperatives, including a heavy plastic sheeting cooperative and an ironwork cooperative.
- » In 2005 ACDI/VOCA introduced the Apprenticeship Program in six Iraqi provinces to provide practical, on-the-job training for recent high school and college graduates in accounting, graphic design, hotel management, engineering and veterinarian medicine. Paid apprentices have been placed in over 200 private companies, government agencies and nongovernmental organizations. The majority of participants (99 percent) report that their technical skills improved because of the program.

Quick Facts:

- » Over 1.5 billion young people, ages 10 to 24, live in the world today.
- » 1.2 billion young people will enter the working-age population in the coming decade.

Source: UNFPA

Youth as Partners

India, Growth Oriented Micro Enterprise Development (GMED)

Through the GMED program, ACDI/VOCA developed sustainable and scalable approaches to job creation by fostering the growth of micro and small enterprises in India. ACDI/VOCA pioneered the Village Extension Agent Model to expand private agricultural extension services while providing employable skills to local youth. Underemployed farm youth from within a vegetable production cluster were recruited; trained in the rudiments of crop, soil, water and pest management; and stationed in their home villages as junior extension agents. This innovative program created a partnership with a large multinational company and created opportunities for young people to improve their skills and help their communities.



“My aim is to use what I’ve learned in my degree to help solve these problems and support farmers in my community. I also want to take forward initiatives to generate employment, to create jobs in farming for people in the community because people who are unemployed often turn to illegal logging and deforestation.”

» Johnny Ramírez, Bolivia, Agronomy student and scholarship recipient from the Integrated Community Development Fund, speaking of his plans after graduation

Youth as Citizens Serbia, Community Revitalization through Democratic Action (CRDA)

ACDI/VOCA strengthened economic linkages across communities and promoted reconciliation among different ethnic and religious groups in Serbia by creating and strengthening community boards to design and implement projects that revitalized essential infrastructure, created income-generating opportunities, and addressed crucial environmental and social problems. CRDA supported young people to become active participants in the democratic process and take control of development in their communities through the following 2001-2007 initiatives:

- » The Youth Program, which promoted the participation of young people in CRDA projects and helped them participate in the democratic process at the local level. CRDA funded 20 municipal youth task forces, which designed more than 150 projects.
- » Junior Achievement and Youth in Business programs, which reached more than 5,000 students with training in economics and through a business simulation in which students created and managed their own company.

Youth as Leaders Bolivia, Integrated Community Development Fund (ICDF)

ACDI/VOCA works to meet basic human needs and alleviate poverty in Bolivia by improving social and economic conditions through the USAID-funded Integrated Community Development Fund. ICDF operates a scholarship program for under-privileged students to attend local, national and international uni-

versities and holds leadership training workshops for graduating high school students. ACDI/VOCA has trained more than 600 recent graduates (362 men and 251 women) in the following areas: personal development and leadership tools, leadership styles, leader responsibilities, conflict resolution and consensus building. Trainees also received vocational guidance for future skills development. These investments respond to short-term community needs and help ensure sustainable, long-term community stability and development by investing in future community leaders.

Youth as Tomorrow’s Workforce Liberia, Agriculture for Children’s Empowerment (ACE)

Through the USAID-funded ACE project, ACDI/VOCA strives to reduce children’s vulnerability by fostering economic growth. In FY2009 ACE served 5,442 young people with:

- » school demonstration gardens to strengthen farming skills and provide additional income
- » market simulation games to introduce youth to the challenges of running an agricultural business
- » an internship program that worked with the country’s top vacation resort to help youth build skills and introduce students to new job opportunities in such areas as stewarding, food production, landscaping/gardening and housekeeping.

For more information on ACDI/VOCA’s work with young people, please visit www.acdivoca.org/youth.