Case Study – Youth Entrepreneurship Program

Background

The future of democracy and free markets in Country A rests on the shoulders of today’s young people; a demographic between the ages of 15 to 29 that represents nearly 30 percent of the country’s current population. While Country A has experienced a decade of sustained economic growth, the impressive results are not always reflected at the micro level, especially in areas outside of the capital area and among youth. Roughly 18 percent of youth are unemployed, and those that do have work remain underemployed in jobs that do little to foster their talents. This failure to create an environment of opportunities for youth leads this generation of citizens to doubt the democratic model. Ultimately the country is wasting an opportunity to harness the economic and leadership potential of this demographic.

One of the main challenges is that the education system, both public and private, tends to teach citizens that the state will provide for them, rather than encouraging initiative and promoting civic participation. As a result, each year a fresh crop of students finish university and look to someone else to provide them with a job. Although they are equipped with more education than previous generations, there are simply not enough jobs available. One way to lessen citizens’ dependence on the state and create more opportunities for young people is through the promotion and teaching of entrepreneurship.

CIPE has worked with Partner X since 2008 to implement a youth entrepreneurship and leadership program. By bringing together university students from every region of Country A to learn about the benefits of democracy and the free market economy, as well as receive training in entrepreneurial and leadership skills, the program has become a tool to diminish inequality in Country A by providing an economic alternative and encouraging civic engagement.

Through this new proposal, CIPE plans to continue its partnership with Partner X to encourage young entrepreneurs from the interior of the country to develop business initiatives and serve as model democratic leaders within their communities. Partner X will capitalize on the achievements of the past years and look for new opportunities to promote the program and share its values. In particular, the project team will organize the Annual Alumni Conference to keep program alumni engaged and active in their communities. In addition, some educational modules will be restructured to better highlight the importance of democracy and citizenship, innovation, and talent development.

Objectives

- To develop strong leadership and entrepreneurship skills among young leaders from the Country A countryside and foster their support for democracy, the rule of law, and a market economy
- To stimulate entrepreneurial activity and civic participation among young leaders from the Country A countryside to serve as examples to others in their regions

Proposed Activities
1. Marketing the Program

- **Media:** Partner X will work closely with the student alumni to promote the program in their regions. Alumni will appear in local television and radio.

- **Universities:** There will be a large promotional campaign held in every major regional university. Selected program alumni from all the past years will carry out this campaign.

- **Social Networks:** Partner X will use Facebook and Twitter to promote the program.

- **Corporations:** Partner X will establish relationships with local and multinational corporations. Project staff will seek to be present in major corporate meetings and forums to give the program exposure and to develop partnerships.

2. Selection of Candidates

Based on academic achievements, soft-skills and entrepreneurial characteristics, students under the age of 25 will be selected for the program. 125 fellows will be selected for the program.

3. Educational Program

The educational program will consist of 110 hours of classes, conferences, and workshops held at University X. The program will be divided into three sessions lasting two and a half days each. The three sessions will occur within a four-month period. The program is 100% free for students – an unusual opportunity for young people from more rural regions of Country A. Students who fully complete the program will receive a certificate from Partner X.

The following modules will be taught at the University X:

- Democratic Institutions and Market Economy (20 hours)
- Leadership in a Democratic Society (30 hours)
- Business Plans (60 hours)

Some outside-the-classroom activities that will be part of the education program include site visits to commercial banks, the largest brewing company in Country, and cultural nights where the students can learn about the cultural richness of all the regions of the country. Other activities will include the alumni night at the first and third sessions, where the ex-fellows who won the alumni contests will showcase their businesses, follow-up workshops, volunteer initiatives and promotional activities. Partner X will also organize an Entrepreneurial Fair in order to show participants the range of volunteer projects in Country A.

4. Certificate System

The tiered certification system assesses students based on quantitative scores assigned to their deliverables and qualitative feedback from conversations and observations throughout the program. Upon completion of the program, each student will be awarded a certificate based on their level of participation. The four certification tiers are:
• Diploma of Excellence – signifies punctuality and high levels of involvement in program deliverables; going beyond minimum requirements for each task; recognition for effective teamwork; and overall excellent performance throughout the educational sessions and workshops.

• Diploma of Satisfactory Performance – signifies that they met all of the requirements of the program and participated in the development and presentation of all deliverables; attendance at all sessions.

• Certificate of Participation – signifies inconsistent participation in completion of program deliverables; attendance at all sessions, but minimal participation.

• No Graduation – signifies a failure to attend all three educational sessions or to participate in developing and presenting program deliverables.

5. Alumni Activities

CIPE and Partner X will convene the Annual Alumni Conference, a two-day event, so that the students from the past five years can attend. Partner X will also lead other activities, including hosting alumni contents, and engaging them on Facebook.

Evaluation Points

1. To develop strong leadership and entrepreneurship skills among young leaders from the Country A countryside and foster their support for democracy, the rule of law, and a market economy

   • Partner X will assess and analyze application rates, as well as graduation rates and tiers of students completing the program
   • Partner X will have participants take a pre- and post-test examination to measure progress made in their concepts and attitudes towards democracy and the market economy
   • Partner X will monitor the number of alumni actively taking part in regional alumni activities and record the number of activities held by the network

2. To stimulate entrepreneurial activity and civic participation among young leaders from the Country A countryside to serve as examples to others in their regions

   • Partner X will track the number of businesses started by students and alumni

Data Collection

• Partner X received 4,192 applications from students all over Country A. This represented a 54 percent increase in the number of applications received for the 2013 edition of the program.
• Alumni promoted the program heavily using social media
• The graduation rate was 92 percent (118 out of 128 fellows), an increase from the 86 percent graduation rate achieved during the 2013 program. As has been the case in each of the previous projects, several participants were unable to complete the program due to work or university time conflicts, or family matters.
• 31 participants received “diplomas of excellence”, meaning they enthusiastically participated in the program above and beyond what was required, while 77 received “diplomas of satisfactory performance”.

• During the pre-test at the beginning of the program, 30 of the students agreed or strongly agreed that “sometimes, authoritarian government is preferable to democracy”. However, in the post-test, only 5 fellows agreed. At the beginning of the program, 73 of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “Country A is a democratic country.” This number dropped to 53 during the post-test. Moreover, during the pre-test, 40 fellows agreed or strongly agreed that “the benefits of informality are wider than those of formality”, while in the post-test only 12 agreed with this statement.

• In total, 62 alumni stopped by educational sessions to share their experiences as an entrepreneur with the program. 22 of these alumni served in a greater capacity as coaches for the fellows’ business plans.

• At the annual alumni meeting, 122 registered and 93 attended the event.

• CIPE and Partner X sent out a survey to all alumni. Of the 122 respondents, 84 are not currently involved in their own business ventures, but have plans to do so. 17 have already founded social initiatives in their regions and 21 have founded companies.

• Total business/ventures started by past students and alumni: 22 new businesses and 6 new social ventures, and 1 student assumed political office.