



**REGIONAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT  
WORKSHOP**

**UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES, CAVE HILL CAMPUS, BARBADOS**

**JULY 26TH-JULY 29TH. 2010**





The Regional Youth Leadership Development Workshop organized by the **Caribbean Council for the Blind (CCB)** and **Eye Care Caribbean** with the kind sponsorship of the Perkins International IDP Programs was held for the purpose of empowering youths with visual impairments to assume leadership roles in Organizations of/for the Blind across the Caribbean. The objective decided at the outset was to enhance the leadership capacity of young persons with visual disability in the Caribbean Region, in preparation for their assumption of future leadership roles.

In preparation for the event, potential Delegates were asked to submit three short (one or two pages) essays on the following topics:

1. What value would you bring to your inclusion into a Leadership Program for persons with visual disability in the Caribbean Region?
2. How would you describe your personal vision and what actions are you taking to achieve your goal?
3. What would you most look for in a Leadership Training Workshop that would add to the enhancement of your personal experience?

Along with these essays, Delegates were required to be between the ages of 18 and 30 years old; to have completed secondary school; and to have submitted a resume.

With all this in place, Non-Barbadian Delegates and Facilitators arrived on Sunday July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the day before the Workshop started.

### **Day 1: Monday July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010:**

The first day commenced with a number of introductory activities:

The introduction of the CCB Staff Members - Mr. Arvel Grant, CEO, and Mr. Frank Bowen, Project Development and Advocacy Services Manager;

Dr. W. Aubrey Webson, the main Presenter, from the Perkins International IDP Programs.

The introduction of the Delegates was done through an activity in which two lines were formed. They then randomly selected a partner, who, after ten minutes of interaction they had to introduce by telling three things about him/her that nobody else knew.

After the introductions and other preliminaries, a background on the **CCB** was done by Mr. Grant. This was followed by a couple of questions from the Delegates. Subsequent discussions surrounded initiatives such as: Vision 2020; Inclusive Education -- Education for All Children with Visual Impairments; the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the resulting and pending legislations in some Caribbean Territories.

Participants were then led into a discussion of their expectations of the Workshop and given a detailed overview of the activities that were to follow.

Besides the Workshop activities, Delegates were also given Orientation Tours to some strategic locations on the Campus, including the Cafeteria, the Workshop Venue, the Campus Mart, the Play-field, housing areas, etc. Delegates staying on Sherlock Hall had a wonderful time socializing into the wee hours of the next morning.

As expected, the first day was not without its challenges: breakfast being late; overly lengthy coffee breaks, due to the fact that Delegates had to leave the Workshop Venue and go to the Cafeteria; etc.

### **Day 2: Tuesday July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010:**

On the second day, we hit the ground running from the get go, as the morning opened with a discussion on the values that guide individual's decision-making in leadership. Further discussions on these issues surrounded leadership versus authority and styles of leadership, where participants were introduced to seven (7) different leadership styles, including: coercive, authoritative, affiliative, passive, democratic, coaching, continuous/adaptive management, etc. Some of the advantages and disadvantages of each style were also examined briefly, after which, participants were given group and individual activities to complete regarding their own leadership approach.

A point highlighted by the Facilitator was the fact that leadership has two basic aspects: the technical - technical knowledge and skills; as well as the emotional -having the capacity to make the difficult decisions. The Facilitator emphasized the emotional as the more important of the two aspects, although traditionally the aspect to which less emphasis has been given. He also went on to share some factors determining the effective handling of the emotional aspect, including self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, etc.

The latter part of the day was devoted to examining aspects of career development and how to properly construct a resume. Concerning the issue of career development, Delegates were asked to examine their goals in this regard - what these goals are; how they would go about achieving them; how far they were in achieving them; and what are some possible road blocks to their achievement.

The Facilitator introduced the session on how to properly construct a resume by pointing out that the primary purpose of the resume and cover letter are to market an individual, and the fact that a

properly formulated cover letter and resume are critical as they are the individual's first opportunity to impress the potential Employer ("first impressions last"). He also emphasized that a resume should be characterized by the following:

1. It should be as concise as possible;
2. It should be tailored according to each job requirement;
3. It should contain critical contact and biographical information which should include the following four sections:
  - a. A summary statement of who you think you are;
  - b. A list of your more prominent attributes;
  - c. An outline of your education and qualification; and
  - d. Past and present employment experience and achievements.

A resume should also include any noteworthy awards, co-curricular activities, and special interests. Contrary to the norm in some circles, Delegates were told that the stating of a career objective and the provision of references are not always critical, but should be provided if requested.

Delegates were then given individual assignments to chart their life course for the next two and five years.

In light of Mr. Grant's early departure from the Workshop proceedings (Wednesday July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010), the second day closed with him being asked to leave some last words with the Delegates, resulting in his proposal of the following:

1. The development of an acronym to describe the Group;
2. The selection of three persons to keep the group together and functioning effectively;
3. The setting up of an E-Group with the e-mail addresses of all the persons involved;
4. The writing of a report on the Workshop; and,
5. The implementation of a Workshop of a similar nature in each country represented.

In addition to the Workshop activities, female Delegates met with Senator Kerryann Ifill, a lady with a visual impairment who currently serves in the Senate of Barbados as the Deputy President of the Senate; as well as, there was morning exercise involving two Delegates and two Facilitators.

**Day 3: Wednesday July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010:**

The third day kicked off with Delegates being given an activity to examine their career goals for the next two to three years. This examination included a statement of individuals' goals, possible obstacles, and the steps that will be taken toward the achievement of these goals and the mitigation of the possible obstacles. Delegates had to then share the outcome of this activity, which in some instances fueled vibrant and interesting discussions. In a number of cases, the Facilitator had to assist some Delegates with clarifying their future plans.

An extensive discourse on executive life skills followed. In this discourse, much emphasis was placed on the arrangement of meetings. Regarding this, areas covered included: doing the necessary research and ensuring that proper preparations are made beforehand. For example, if a team of persons will be participating in a meeting, plans should be made before-hand to clarify who will say what and at what point; effectively following up after meetings; as well as the maintenance of contacts, as these can often come in handy for future endeavours. Additionally, Delegates were told that they should always try to bring something to the negotiating table, as the mutual benefits derived from collaborative efforts usually prove more effective and are often viewed more favourably.

Another specific area examined was the understanding of processes: e.g. in the writing and submission of proposals, some critical things to know are: the time when the necessary submissions are to be made; the criteria for the funding; who (persons and agencies) are involved in the approval process; etc.

The third point of emphasis was on understanding the decision-making process: “the who, the how, and the when” of the process.

The remainder of the day was spent on discussing effective social presentation of self as well as issues of etiquette. Among the areas covered were:

1. Banking;
2. Dress—the importance of effective colour coding, the importance of appropriately dressing for different occasions, as well as other tips;
3. Eating—the importance of being able to use the knife and fork, and taking cues from your host where you may have uncertainties;
4. The avoidance of “blindisms”— weird or unusual behaviours such as holding down your head during a conversation or squeezing a pimple in public; as well as,

5. The cultivation or adoption of acceptable behaviours such as proper posture, appearing focused, effectively shaking hands, appearing engaged in meetings (making eye contact with the person speaking), etc.

The Facilitator also impressed upon Delegates the importance of sensitizing their hosts on how to treat them. He also left with Delegates the fact that persons make their greatest impression within the first four minutes of meeting, and therefore, it is important to always make a good impression - one of being assertive, confident, and clear, as opposed to coming across as being clumsy or lacking in self-confidence.

After the Workshop, there was interaction with the Barbadian Delegates who visited the accommodation.

#### **Day 4: Thursday July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010:**

The fourth and final day of the Workshop included presentations by Senator Kerryann Ifill, Senator Andre Worrell, and Mr. Curtis Padmore, a local Entrepreneur; a session looking at some technologies that can aid persons with visual impairments; the setting up of a three-man Executive to ensure continuity after Delegates went back to their daily routine; and a summary of the week's events.

Although the day was shortened and the Workshop ended at lunch time, the presentations were very good. Mr. Padmore delivered a presentation on professionalism, highlighting that we need to make it a way of life - integrating it into everything we do. He also told us of his movement into entrepreneurship as a Software Developer; and being that we are in the age of ideas and information, for those present, the sky can be the limit, in this regard.



Senator Worrell spoke of his work as a Human Resource Consultant and provided the session with some of the current trends in the labour market, such as renewable energy, manufacturing, etc.

Senator Ifill charted her path from when she worked in the NGO Sector to her appointment to the Senate. She told us of some of the changes she had to make in order to become more independent and accepted, and in order to change the perception of those around her - things as simple as learning to do her own make-up and stop relying on others to go about with her. She also told us of how she has been able to improve her functionality through the use of technology - although she cautioned about some of its drawbacks.



These presentations were followed by a brief interactive session, where the Presenters answered questions from the Delegates.

The presentations were followed by an examination of some of the available technologies developed to improve the functionality and independence of persons who are blind or visually impaired, including:

1. A variety of Assistive Software;
2. The Pen Friend - used for labeling items;
3. The Victor Reader Stream—a Talking Book Playback Device; and
4. A Money Identifier; etc.

We were also told of some other devices such as Trekker - used to navigate the physical environment, among other things.

After the excitement generated by the exposure of the Delegates to the various technological innovations for persons who are blind and visually impaired, attention was turned to effecting the recommendations made by Mr. Grant before his departure.

Three persons (Felicia Balgobin (Barbados) - Chairperson; Vivian Blake (Jamaica) - Secretary; and Antoine Munroe (Bahamas) - Communications Person, were elected to keep a network going after the activities of the week ended.

The Acronym decided upon for the **Youth Network** was **YNEAA—Youth Network for Empowerment, Advocacy, and Action**. Delegates from the different countries identified specific issues which they would champion on their return home:

- For Jamaica, the issue was Braille Literacy;
- For Barbados, a lobby for the School for the Blind to start making CXC available to all the students;
- For Dominica, it was the identification and documenting of all the youth who are blind or visually impaired; and
- For the Bahamas and St. Lucia, it was various Advocacy Initiatives.

Regarding the E-group, Mr. Blake, the Secretary, promised to send some information on setting up a Yahoo Group to Mr. Munroe; while he himself would be responsible for the drafting of a final report with the input of one page reports from all the Delegates.

The Workshop closed with a summary by Dr. Webson, the Facilitator.

Delegates and Facilitators left the Campus on Friday July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

Most (if not all) found the Workshop to be helpfull, using words such as informative, interesting, enlightening, educational, empowering, and beneficial to describe their experiences. First, though, to gather the information for the report, the Secretary drafted and circulated an outline which included the following headings:

1. Expectations;
2. High-points;
3. Low-points;
4. Improvements; and
5. Lessons.





**Felicia Balgobin -Barbados :**

*“I was blown away when I heard what was going to be done...it was the first time I was surrounded by so many educated, brave, empowering, no-nonsense persons who were visually impaired or blind who meant business, and I loved it.” She also reports she felt empowered as a result of hearing from Senator Kerryann Ifill, and concludes: “I have come out of this Workshop feeling that I am prepared for the task ahead. It has encouraged me so much that I have decided to join an Organization which would allow me to be creative, fight for our rights, birth new ideas as well as learn new things and ways.”*

**Lisa Williams - Barbados :**

*“The Workshop proved to be very beneficial for me personally.....the highpoint for me was to see persons who have the same disability as me being able to operate Power-Point presentations and generally conduct classes as independently as other colleagues who are sighted.”*

Ms. Williams also highlights the session that Senator Kerry-Ann Ifill had with the women as particularly enlightening, and concluded that as a result of the Workshop, she was seriously considering further education: *“It was inspiring to hear of the challenges and triumphs of colleagues who are at present studying at the University of the West Indies, and it has challenged me to think seriously about furthering my education.”*

**Tacita Forde - Barbados:**

*“The leadership workshop was very educational” . She recounts a number of learning outcomes achieved over the four days, including the identification of her leadership style and her learning what effective leadership is. Besides improvements in the management of time, Ms. Forde expresses satisfaction with all other aspects of the Workshop, hailing them as meeting her expectations; and found the sharing of the participants particularly inspiring: “Hearing the other persons who were visually impaired like myself share their different experiences and challenges was extremely encouraging and motivating.” She concludes: This Workshop really catered to my needs as I have now finished school, and learning how to plan my future is a very essential tool in how my tomorrow is formed.”*

**Sharmalee Cardoza - Jamaica :**



*“Overall, this Workshop was an experience I will never forget. Upon completing the four-day Workshop which was held at the Solutions Center at the UWI Cave Hill Campus, I must say that all my expectations were met.”*

*Ms. Cardoza also highlights a number of learning achievements, namely the acquisition of knowledge in areas” such as:*

- 1. Leadership (the group activity being highlighted as being especially fulfilling), “I gained additional insights into the different leadership styles which each leader possesses...”;*
- 2. New perspectives on resume writing, “The session on resume writing was an eye opener”;*
- 3. The widening of her network, “I have developed a network with other persons who are Blind and Visually Impaired across the Caribbean.”*

**Vivian Blake - Jamaica**



*“In most, if not all areas, the Caribbean Council for the Blind/Eye Care Caribbean Regional Leadership Development Workshop for Youths Who are Blind or Visually Impaired exceeded my expectations by some distance.”*

*“I did have fun. The Training Sessions were quite informative, interesting and interactive; the people that I met were warm and sociable; and I did meet and hear peoples’ experiences in leadership that have left me feeling that ‘the sky is the limit’.”*

For Mr. Blake, the climax of the Workshop was the sessions on Executive Life Skills and Technology. *“These represent two areas, which, if optimized in my life, can make me a much more effective person.”*

Regarding low-points - *“I don’t know if I can single out any low point except on the second day when it was reported to us that the authorities on the Campus wanted documents signed to indemnify themselves against the possibility of anything happening to any of the participants. Also, I really would have loved to have visited the Botanical Gardens and the Caves.”* He said.

*“I definitely hope to utilize all that I have learnt at the Workshop.; in the short term, I am planning to improve my skills in using knife and fork; I am planning to obtain a jacket, and already, I am trying to be more assertive in setting and following up on appointments, as well as paying more careful attention in planning for meetings, etc. I also intend to do some further reflection on some of the issues discussed at the Workshop with a view of further improvements personally and professionally.”* He concluded.

### **Orlando Alcide - St Lucia:**

Mr Alcide recounts that although at the outset he had mixed expectations about the Workshop, it turned out to be a worthwhile endeavour.

*“Initially, I had different expectations for the programme, but things turned out better than I’d thought, it was a great experience...”*

Among Mr. Alcide’s more noteworthy accomplishments are the new friendships he was able to develop and the knowledge gained.

*“ The Workshop was very informative and rewarding; much was learnt, for example:*

- 1. The proper way to prepare a resume, i.e. the content--what should and should not be included;*
- 2. The various styles of leadership;*
- 3. The importance of professionalism;*
- 4. The qualities and attributes one should possess (as a leader).”*

He notes, as an area for improvement, that information on the critical areas taught should have been provided in various formats to the participants for future reference, especially as not everyone was able to take notes.

### **Stacia Jules - St. Lucia:**



She recalls not really having any expectations going into the Workshop; and confesses:

*“I was pleasantly surprised at the volume of information.” While recounting a number of the learning outcomes (gaining knowledge on leadership, resume writing, and professionalism).”*

For her the high-point of the Workshop was the session on Technology:

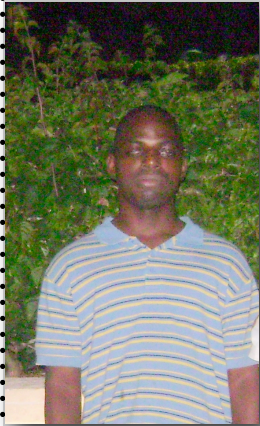
*“The real highlight came for me on the final day of the Workshop when we discussed Technology. I am fascinated by all that is being created and developed to keep us feeling capable and a part of society .” She said.*

Ms. Jules also reports benefitting from the activity where Delegates charted their future, resulting in her taking the decision to pursue studies in Physiotherapy.

Overall, though, Ms. Jules reports that the experience was great: *“It was a great experience...”*

*And, “the Workshop went really well in my opinion and we gained a wealth of knowledge. However, there is always room for improvement...”*

**Antoine Munroe - The Bahamas**



*“The Youth Leadership Workshop provided the qualities I expected to obtain, which are better time management and organizational skills; strategies for becoming creative; meeting management skills; marketing skills; networking, and sustainable leadership skills. Also, this Youth Leadership Workshop gave me the opportunity to meet young adults from across the Caribbean who are blind and visually impaired.”*

*I had an exciting time, and I look forward to the next Youth Leadership Workshop. I would like to say thanks to the President and Executive Team of the Bahamas Alliance for the Blind and Visually Impaired for selecting me to represent the Bahamas at this Workshop. I would also like to say thanks to Mr. Arvel Grant and the Caribbean Council for the Blind for inviting the Bahamas to be a part of the Workshop.”*

**CONCLUSION**

Delegates noted the following as areas that are in need of improvement.

- Time Management: The fact that on the first two days Delegates had to go to and wait at the Canteen for the coffee breaks, resulted in a lot of time being wasted.
- Internet Access: The unavailability of internet access, especially in the initial stages, was very inconvenient for both Delegates and Facilitators.
- Training Equipment: The two or three Brailers provided by the Organizers were insufficient, especially where Delegates were given individual activities.
- The Provision of the Workshop content in a form for later use: although the Workshop provided ample opportunity for the internalization and retention of the information presented, making the information available in a documented form (Braille, Large Print, Electronic) and/or a list of the original sources from which the information was derived would have been helpful.

From all recollections, the Workshop was a major success, providing participants with a wealth of information, which if diligently utilized should result in effective leaders and a bright future for the various Organizations serving persons who are blind and visually impaired in the Caribbean and the World.

