

Caribbean Mobile Innovation Project (CMIP)

SNAPSHOT	
Organization(s)	World Bank Group
Project Name	Caribbean Mobile Innovation Project
Location	Jamaica (hub country); Trinidad & Tobago; Barbados; St. Kitts and Nevis; Dominica
Date(s) of Implementation	2014 – Present
Funding Amount	CAD 1,500,000
Partner(s) / Funder(s)	World Bank Group
Number of Youth Beneficiaries Trained	Total: 464 Women: N/A Men: N/A
Total Investment Raised	USD 473,666
Total Sales Revenue	USD 387,023
Type(s) of Digital Work	Digital Entrepreneurship
Source of Metrics	Internal monitoring & evaluation EPIC Progress Report EPIC Midterm Review

ABOUT CARIBBEAN MOBILE INNOVATION PROJECT

The Caribbean Mobile Innovation Project (CMIP) is a capacity building project which is regionally centered and internationally focused. The project employs a multifaceted approach designed to enable the growth of sustainable and competitive mobile enterprises. The CMIP provides a networking medium for mobile apps developers, entrepreneurs, industry players, angel and venture capitalists, national and regional governments, and mentors – all stakeholders in the mobile technology ecosystem, to position the Caribbean mobile apps sector as a global player.¹

The objectives of the CMIP are twofold:

- To strengthen the Caribbean mobile innovation ecosystem; and
- To enable growth-oriented mobile enterprises to rapidly grow.

CMIP targets aspiring and existing mobile application developers and entrepreneurs from the CARICOM region. The project model is based on supporting and coordinating activities in 4 hubs (locally based start-up ecosystem enablers; hereinafter called “mHubs”) throughout the Caribbean region. To do so, the CMIP engages with governments, academia, civil society, international donors, and investors to encourage their support of the project and the regional start-up ecosystem.

¹ CMIP is a sub-component of the Entrepreneurship Program for Innovation in the Caribbean (EPIC), the goal of which is to contribute to increased competitiveness, growth, and job creation in the Caribbean region through the development of a robust and vibrant innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Importantly, the CMIP also aims to increase gender responsiveness of the mobile innovation ecosystem and encourages meaningful participation of women in the project’s activities.

PROJECT DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION

Program Design	Supply-Side Components		Demand-Side Components	
	Training & Skills Development	✓	Improving Access to Finance for SMEs	✓
	Employment & Intermediation Services	✓	Capacity Building & Information Provision	×
	Subsidized Employment	×	Targeted Sector-Specific Approaches	×

ACTIVITIES

Lean Mobile Startup Development (LMSD) Course

All entrepreneur registered with the CMIP are offered training courses on start-up and product development. This training program is designed for entrepreneurs who seek to develop and grow their mobile app business. LMSD serves as a pre-accelerator training program for the PitchIT Start-Up Challenge, equipping entrepreneurs with the tools and mindset to increase their chances of success.

The course is supported by weekly webinars and coaching sessions, during which the entrepreneurs:

- Tested and validated their idea.
- Developed a prototype of their mobile app.
- Selected the right revenue model and develop their Go-to-Market strategy.
- Developed and designed a pitch deck and effectively pitched to investors.

In-person training was also provided re: how to pitch, how to master public speaking and how to manage one’s non-verbal communication and presentation of self in professional settings.

PitchIT Hackathon

Regional hackathons with participants from CARICOM countries which extend beyond the four mHub locales. Each mHub stages its own Hackathon with winners receiving automatic qualification to participate in the PitchIT Regional Bootcamps and the PitchIT Regional Start-Up Challenge.

PitchIT Regional Bootcamps

An intensive two-day in-person training bootcamp to prepare eligible entrepreneurs for the PitchIT Start-up Challenge. The bootcamp is specifically geared towards improving entrepreneurs’ pitch decks and presentation skills.

PitchIT Regional Start-Up Challenge

CMIP organizes a regional one-day pitch competition. Five winners are each awarded a coveted spot in PitchIT Caribbean mHubs based in Barbados, Dominica, St. Kitts & Nevis, and Trinidad & Tobago. Winners

also each receive: USD 5,000 each in seed funding to help develop their businesses; an all-expenses paid trip to an international pitching event; and access to online training. The acceleration services received include mentoring by business and technology experts, networking opportunities, working space and facilities, all expense-paid trips to international conferences and pitch competitions as well as intense product development and investor readiness training.

Regional mHubs

Business accelerators based in Barbados, Dominica, St. Kitts & Nevis, and Trinidad & Tobago, and the CMIP Central Office in Jamaica. Through the mHubs, CMIP offers a suite of services to growth-oriented mobile entrepreneurs, including: coaching on investment readiness and investor engagements; in-person networking events and mentorship; educational webinars offered by CMIP Central; opportunities to participate in global start-up competitions, conferences and bootcamps, including SLUSH Global. mHubs also assist entrepreneurs with applying to local, regional and global financing mechanisms, and help to match teams directly with potential investors. Mentors also offer business development support and career counseling.

OUTREACH TO FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS

“Being able to see other young women in the Caribbean be focused when it comes to their businesses and believe that they can achieve more than the average lifestyle, gave me motivation to be an ambassador to more women who may want to pursue the paths of male dominated arenas.”

Female entrepreneur, Dominica

Recognizing a strong need to foster greater involvement of women in tech entrepreneurship, the CMIP took specific action tailored to create more gender equity in this space. In January 2016, CMIP held the *2016 PitchIT Caribbean Breakfast for Women Tech Entrepreneurs*. CMIP partnered with Entrepreneurship Department at the University of Technology (based in Jamaica), who committed to referring more than 10 female students for admission to the training. The event was designed to:

- Encourage participation of women tech entrepreneurs in the CMIP by engaging and educating enabler organizations regarding the benefits of the CMIP project.
- Engage and educate women tech entrepreneurs brought in by the enablers regarding the benefits of the CMIP project.
- Directly recruit women tech entrepreneur attendants for the CMIP training program.
- Become the focus point within the mobile innovation ecosystem that facilitates discussions on issues of engagement and tech enterprise development for under-represented groups.

The discussions that ensued indicated the high level of interest in the project by women and have helped to initiate the positioning of CMIP as a gender-responsive facilitator of the mobile innovation ecosystem.

BENEFICIARY EXPERIENCES

"I learned about becoming an entrepreneur. I learned how a business is run and met other entrepreneurs. It challenged me on views of what I wanted to do. [...] I got coaching on presentations and pitching. I would participate in something like this again."

PitchIT Competitor

The CMIP entrepreneurs reported that the information received from their respective mHubs was useful and enhanced their businesses. The majority of program participants are confident that they were now a part of the large network of CMIP entrepreneur peers who are actively engaged and available, creating a supportive community and forum willing to help in problem solving, trouble shooting and idea generation.

Female entrepreneurs, in particular, have indicated that the CMIP program were effective and relevant to supporting their business needs, and that support to start-ups was effectively delivered. They also reported learning new skills, gaining new knowledge around business management and leadership, and reaping professional benefits through networking with peers, consultants and facilitators.

EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

36
commercial products
launched

USD 473,666
investment
raised

USD 387,023
sales revenue
generated

Since roll-out of CMIP activities through the mHubs in 2015, there has been a steady increase in awareness and participation by digital entrepreneurs. Through the financial, professional and personal support provided by mHubs, CMIP entrepreneurs have commercialized 36 products during the program, and have achieved a cumulative total of USD 473,666 in investment raised with USD 387,023 of additional sales revenue.

PitchIT Caribbean Challenge 1.0 (June 2016)

The inaugural PitchIT Caribbean Challenge held in Montego Bay, Jamaica in June 2016, showcased 25 high-potential mobile startups representing seven territories throughout the Caribbean region. The teams pitched to a panel of regional and international judges in front of an audience of investors, entrepreneurs, public and private sector organizations and other entrepreneurial interests. They participated in a rigorous selection process and workshops with expert

PitchIT Caribbean Challenge 2.0 (December 2016)

Following the success of the Breakfast for Women Tech Entrepreneurs, CMIP implemented several activities under the PitchIT Caribbean Challenge 2.0, including training courses, hackathons and the start-up challenged. 219 entrepreneurs applied for the training program, of which 44% were women. 207 applicants from 13 countries were selected to participate in the online training course (47% were women).

Ultimately, the PitchIT Caribbean Challenge 2.0 received 44 applications, and 25 teams from 10 countries were selected to participate. The five winning teams were each granted USD 5,000 in seed funding. All 5 winners were women.

PitchIT Caribbean Challenge 3.0 (June 2017)

PitchIT Caribbean Challenge 3.0, held in June 2017, saw the launch of the Caribbean Lean Mobile Startup training course. 111 participants completed the course. Four hackathons were held, with a total of 29 teams participating in Barbados (7), Dominica (7), St. Kitts and Nevis (5), and Trinidad and Tobago (10). The PitchIT Caribbean Challenge 3.0 received 54 valid submissions and featured 25 mobile startups from 9 countries. The top 5 entrepreneurs each won a package valued at USD 15,000, including: USD 5,000 seed funding; a trip to an international pitching event; online training; and placement in a PitchIT Caribbean business accelerator in the region. 4 of the 5 winners were women.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1. Prioritizing business development led to more cohesive ecosystem for mobile entrepreneurship.** While the initial focus of the program was on assisting entrepreneurs first with the technical aspects to first develop their apps and then to help them develop their business, this sequence has been reversed and entrepreneurs are now invited to first focus on business development, to follow with the technical aspects of their business. The UWI team indicated that this slight change makes a positive difference as approaching business development first aligned with the notion of taking a more holistic capacity development approach.
- 2. Differences in levels of maturity of national ecosystems created challenges to the design of a relevant regional program.** For example, entrepreneurs found inconsistent access to business development services as they tried to scale regionally. As a result, each mLab was given the autonomy to prioritize different accelerator services according to the country context.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Ensure sustainability plans for future project implementation are informed by entrepreneur feedback on services for which they would be willing to pay.** Feedback obtained in a December 13, 2017 project debrief meeting has already ascertained that entrepreneurs would be willing to pay for esteemed mentors who would provide them one-on-one guidance over a certain period. Honing such a funding model is critical as it would ensure that the future implementation of the CMIP has viable funding sources to meet with project execution expenses. With such a structure in place, the framework would be set for the growth of continued digital job creation for the region's youth.
- 2. Connect young entrepreneurs with the financial opportunities to leverage their skills.** Skills training and capacity building initiatives are insufficient to forming sustainable businesses. Programs must ensure that participants are not only equipped with crucial knowledge and skills to run their own businesses, but are also provided with assistance and guidance for accessing capital. These challenges can be addressed by: establishing regional partnerships and crowd-in private sector investment; providing connections to potential financing sources to enabler clients; and/or considering more formalized linkages to development finance institutions, such as the IFC).

- 3. Develop program components addressed to under-represented population segments.** This is of particular importance if the program does not have specific targeting strategies in acquiring youth and/or women entrepreneurs. Programs should explore opportunities to collaborate with similar programs within the region, or reach out to stakeholders embedded in diverse communities.