

Wayne Holden Remarks
TELUS Event– Global Center for Youth Employment
Guatemala City, Guatemala
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Good evening, I'm Wayne Holden, president and CEO at RTI International. Thank you for having me here today as we come together around our shared concern over the global youth employment crisis.

RTI International is an independent nonprofit institute providing a wide range of research, development, and technical services to government and commercial clients worldwide.

During the past year, our staff members discussed the greatest challenges facing our planet in the next few decades and how we might apply our talent, resources, and our colleagues working with us in the field to make a measureable difference.

Given the significant structural changes occurring in the global labor market and the disproportional impact on youth, we found the global youth employment crisis is a problem that reaches all corners of the

globe, both developed and developing countries. Thus, we identified it as a primary issue we would put more resources toward solving.

As you know, unemployment among young people has swelled into a veritable epidemic.

Around the globe millions of young people are not in school, in training or employed. Recent International Labor Organization data suggest that more than a quarter of all youth in Sub-Saharan Africa, a third of all youth in Central and Eastern Europe, and roughly one in seven youth in developed countries are neither in employed or in school.

While calls for urgent action have escalated, the scale and complexity of the crisis requires more than a series of disconnected and isolated initiatives. This Grand Challenge requires a new global imperative – safeguarding that youth around the world have a chance to contribute to and benefit from a global economy.

This agenda necessitates governments, businesses, and families work together to ensure that properly skilled youth are integrated into the global labor force.

According to the Global Agenda Councils, youth make up 17 percent of the world's population and 40 percent of the world's unemployed. Just a few years ago, in 2011, a youth's risk of being unemployed was three times higher than that of an adult. This is not a trend that is decreasing.

And Latin America is not exempt. In El Salvador the youth unemployment rate is more than 12 percent and almost one-third of youth are not employed, in education or training. In Honduras the youth unemployment rate is at 7.5 percent, but more than 40 percent of youth are not employed in education or training, which doesn't bode well for future unemployment rates.

Here in Guatemala, the numbers are slightly better with a 6.3 percent youth unemployment rate, but again 29 percent of youth are not employed in education or in training.

These examples underscore the pervasiveness of the youth employment crisis, which threatens not only our economies, but also our social fabric and our security.

We know that at-risk youth in Latin America report believing that vocational training can be the path to a good job and self-sufficient future. It is up to us to join together to help provide those education and training opportunities.

Solving the problem won't be easy. But I'm pleased to say that there is a growing focus on doing just that and more private businesses are joining the effort.

Last fall, to address this grand challenge of global youth employment, RTI International established a *Global Center for Youth Employment*. Through the center, we are working to leverage and promote empirical research and leading-edge, evidence-based and evidence-producing practices aimed at significantly impacting the worldwide employment of youth.

The Center is drawing upon expertise from within RTI and across partner organizations to create a bold and innovative team with outstanding capabilities. We are applying these capabilities to create labor market information systems, build education and workforce systems, and use data to assess and enhance learning and skills development.

RTI is investing in the backbone organization and managing this new virtual and forward-facing organization.

To date, the Center has established unprecedented partnerships with more than 30 organizations that include major corporations like Cisco and Land O' Lakes, universities, and donors – bringing together the wide spectrum of knowledge and capabilities that is needed to tackle the youth employment crisis from every angle.

Just this month, our partners came together for a two-day “Ideathon” event to begin identifying research needs and building a plan for action.

We are extremely excited to have TELUS join our list of partners and ultimately join us in this effort, given your commitment to youth employment and your innovative approach.

We are particularly looking forward to working with you as part of the center to provide scholarships for youth in relevant workforce skills so they can then be employed by participating partners.

By working with the private sector and organizations like TELUS to provide training and relevant skills, I believe we can begin to close the gap between market demand and education supply and successfully employ youth.

Thank you.