The ConnectEd program, funded by the Alcatel-Lucent Foundation and implemented by World Education, Inc. and partners, aims to improve the learning, work and life outcomes of disadvantaged youth in five countries: Australia, Brazil, China, India and Indonesia. World Education believes that young people need foundation and generic job readiness skills rather than sector-specific skills alone. Partnering with local youth development NGOs, ConnectEd not only trains youth in technical and vocational skills and assists with job placements, but places a strong emphasis on the importance of life skills and pre-vocational skills training, which includes Information Communication Technology skills, financial literacy and knowledge about the world of work. In all ConnectEd countries, adult mentorship plays a key role in helping youth strengthen their foundation skills for the world of work.

Life Skills Prepare Youth for the Connected World

ConnectEd helps youth foster crucial skills such as decision-making, problem solving, communication skills, teamwork, planning, self-confidence, self-awareness and leadership. Interventions, curricula and training programs provide strong preparation for young people to enter into the working environment.

Life skills training for youth in Australia includes team building, cultural awareness, self-defense, empathy, anger management and conflict resolution. In Brazil, ConnectEd uses a specialized eight-month Workplace Preparation curriculum which includes Personal and Social Development training (life skills), Business Management, and Information Communication Technology (ICT). Similarly, ConnectEd China developed a World of Work course for migrant youth to provide occupation awareness and to improve goal setting and decision-making skills. ConnectEd India utilizes “Rishtaa” discussion sessions for thousands of disadvantaged youth, particularly girls, to develop work-readiness and life skills. These provide a safe place for discussion of future plans, practical life skills such as goal setting, problem solving and communication, and important topics such as sexual and reproductive health, hygiene, family, and abuse. Lastly, ConnectEd Indonesia youth experience workplace preparation through workshops that include learning about entrepreneurship, as well as how to deal with successes and failures. In Indonesia and elsewhere, these workplace-related life skills programs are accompanied by vocational training and practical work placements.

ICT Prepares Youth for the Connected World

The ConnectEd program recognizes the importance of possessing basic ICT skills for fostering inclusion, giving disadvantaged youth a better chance to bridge the opportunities gap and to access more and better employment options. ConnectEd not only provides young people with improved basic computer skills and literacy, but also uses technology to broaden their social capital and networks so that youth can increase their employability and find jobs.

ConnectEd youth are learning to use the Internet to garner information to support their job search. They are learning about employment opportunities, networking, finding and sharing information and seeking work. They are learning how to create their own resumes and job letters, as well as using job search engines to look for openings.

In Australia, ConnectEd youth gain ICT skills directly related to their Retail, Commercial Cookery and Hospitality certification courses; youth are trained to use the Internet to research best practices, products and processes, as well as learning how to utilize software for inventories, payroll systems and pay slips. Youth from Indonesia are being trained by local partner YABIM in data entry, multi-media and print-making, skills which are leading to new job opportunities. In China, young women are offered courses in word processing and stenography among other accredited skills training. These are providing newly-arrived migrant adolescent girls with job placements and safer transitions into their new lives in the city.
**Adult Mentors Prepare Youth for the Connected World**

One of the unique aspects of the ConnectEd program is the mentoring role that adults are playing in the lives of disadvantaged youth. The Alcatel-Lucent Foundation is not only supporting the program financially, but local Alcatel-Lucent employees in the five ConnectEd countries are also giving their time to provide career development support to young people in the program. They lead interview simulations, deliver workshops on how to write resumes and cover letters, and give motivational talks on topics such as “Women in the Workplace.” Through tutoring sessions in various school subjects and regular interactions with ConnectEd youth, Alcatel-Lucent employees in India and Indonesia have come to take on a mentoring role, providing not only academic support but also advice and moral support. In addition, Alcatel-Lucent has invited youth into their local offices to give them glimpses into daily corporate life, as well as to help students explore career choices and build employability skills.

In addition to corporate employee volunteers, ConnectEd staff in all of the program countries provide strong mentorship to ConnectEd youth. Facilitators provide individual attention and coaching to each student, providing feedback on performance and follow-up once youth are placed in jobs. In Indonesia, the same trainers who teach youth technical skills such as welding, printing and automotive repair also run their own businesses near the center and they are both positive role models as well as technical skills trainers to the students.

> “The interview [simulation] exceeded my expectations. This way of preparing people, bringing in professionals... shows us the importance of knowing how to act and helps to make you less inhibited.” - Jonathan, ConnectEd student

**Private Sector Partnerships Prepare Youth for the Connected World**

Local ConnectEd partners understand the importance of forging private sector partnerships to better connect youth with potential job opportunities.

In ConnectEd Australia, due to the status of local partner YWCA NSW as a Registered Training Organization and its relationships with corporations and social enterprises, ConnectEd Australia has trained and placed youth to work in hotels, catering services and retail. In Brazil, local partner Instituto Aliança map out potential employers in target areas and companies are contacted to forge relationships that lead to employment for ConnectEd beneficiaries. Companies are provided with files of the youth who are preparing for the world of work, and staff bring the youth to visit potential companies. As a result of their comprehensive job placement strategies and follow-up, ConnectEd Brazil places between 65% and 80% of their youth in jobs.

**Jeetendra: Prepared for the World of Work**

Like many other youth in India, Jeetendra was not receiving quality skills training in the local Government schools to prepare him for the world of work. Jeetendra joined ConnectEd to study English and ICT through local partner ABHAS, and ConnectEd was able to help him secure a job as a data entry operator in a local industrial area. The commitment of ConnectEd staff to mentor and follow-up with Jeetendra built a level of trust between the program and his family, and as a result, Jeetendra’s sister has joined the program and stayed in school as well.