

CONÉCTATE!

Preparing young people to succeed in the job market

THE CHALLENGE

Venezuela has approximately 27 million inhabitants, 30% of whom are youth, ages 15 to 30. Despite having the largest oil reserve in Latin America and the Caribbean, Venezuela has a poor distribution of income with 24% of the population living in poverty. The 2003 unemployment rate reached 19%, and slightly more than two-thirds of this group was aged between 15 and 30 years of age. Unemployment is higher yet for youth between the ages of 15 and 24, especially among young women. A study conducted by *Opportunitas* in 2002 showed that the main factors limiting youth employment are the cost of training new job entrants, companies' perceptions that young people are unreliable, and the fact that new job entrants' lack work experience and skills. This same study showed that having ICT skills is a decisive factor in whether an applicant is hired.

THE PROGRAM

The *Conéctate!* program will equip 500 disadvantaged youth, ages 18 to 29, from the greater Caracas metropolitan area, Anzoátegui and Carabobo with high quality training in ICT and in life and entrepreneurial skills. At least 50% of program participants are women. *Opportunitas* offers three levels of ICT training — Basic IT, Specialized IT, and Advanced IT — depending on the youth's skill level and his/her area of interest. As part of the eight-month training, all youth complete a two-month internship in their chosen field. Once completed, program staff assists the youth in searching for stable employment. *Opportunitas* works with four local partner organizations, training staff members at each to use a competency-based training model, never before used in the country. This model enables employees to adapt more quickly to changes in job requirements by looking at employer needs and breaking these needs down to specific job-related competencies.

OUTCOMES

In the long term, *Conéctate!* seeks to reduce unemployment rates among youth in Venezuela and train local partner organizations to use a competency-based training model. Key outcomes include placing at least 40% of program graduates in formal jobs and generating positive feedback and continued interest in the program among employers. Additionally, the goal is that participants will exhibit increased skills in creative thinking, critical thinking, decision making/problem solving, communicating with others, teamwork, and other key life skills.

THE PARTNER

Founded in 1998, *Opportunitas'* goal is to position child and youth development as a national priority and to improve the conditions of Venezuelan young people. *Opportunitas* works with an extensive network of local governments, businesses, and NGO partners in several locations of the country to connect these diverse sectors and to build a shared strategy that strengthens and expands best practices and programs that benefit children and youth.

RESULTS TO DATE

Initial results will be available in 2007.

PROGRAM: *Conéctate!*
PARTNER: *Fundación para la Infancia y la Juventud - Opportunitas*
PERIOD: 1 November 2005 – 31 October 2008
LOCATION: Caracas, Anzoátegui and Carabobo
REACH: 500 youth, ages 18-29
MODEL: Youth employment