

CONÉCTATE!

Equipping youth with employment skills

THE CHALLENGE

Nearly half of Bogotá's seven million inhabitants live below or near the poverty line and are considered marginal to its economic, political, and social life. The city is home to approximately 1.6 million youth (ages 14-26), of whom 42% are from low income households. According to official statistics, Colombia has an estimated 1.5 million internally displaced persons (unofficial statistics put that figure at between 2 and 5 million). Bogotá, in particular, continues to receive a steady stream of displaced residents each year from rural, war stricken areas due to the violence that has gripped the country over the last four decades.

In recent years, Bogotá has experienced major growth in service sector jobs. The areas of fastest growth have been communications, and social, financial, and business services. The growth in communications is due largely to the expansion of telecommunications, especially mobile technology. Despite Bogotá's steady economic growth rates, unemployment is high. Youth under the age of 30 represent 54% of those unemployed.

THE PROGRAM

The *Conéctate!* program equips youth, ages 16 to 21, with the knowledge and skills they need to enter the workforce. Participants, selected from several disadvantaged communities of Bogotá (with displaced youth accounting for 10%), undergo an intense 11-month training, through which they acquire life and workplace skills. As part of the training, all youth complete an internship in their chosen field. Once completed, program staff assists the youth in searching for stable employment.

OUTCOMES

In the long term, *Conéctate!* seeks to reduce unemployment among youth in Colombia. Key outcomes include placing at least 40% of program graduates in formal jobs and generating positive feedback and continued interest in the program from 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. *Fundación Empresarios por la Educación (ExE)* also plans on scaling up the program in up to 11 additional locations in Colombia.

THE PARTNER

Established in 2002, *Fundación Empresarios por la Educación's* mission is to improve the quality of basic education in Colombia and make it accessible to all Colombian youth, regardless of race, religion, or political affiliation. With headquarters in Bogotá, it has 12 chapters throughout the country and manages a wide variety of regional projects in Colombia, which work along with local governments to strengthen and improve municipal school systems. ExE has also created a national database of education and private sector partners, coordinates a business committee to support education, and published an operations manual for private sector collaboration with government education offices and projects.



RESULTS TO DATE

Initial results will be available in 2007.

PROGRAM: *Conéctate!*
PARTNER: *Fundación Empresarios por la Educación (ExE)*
PERIOD: 1 October 2005 – 31 March 2008
LOCATION: Bogotá
REACH: 475 youth, ages 16-21
MODEL: Youth employment