Palmipilos: Employment and Educational prospects for young people

THE INTERVENTION, AT A GLANCE

The Palmipilos program offers a solution to the problem of youth unemployment and the lack of access to higher education for young people in Palmira, a city in southwestern Colombia, by designing a curriculum for public secondary schools that offers students the skills required in the local labor market. To do this, the intervention provides the students with relevant technical competences and tools to enter the labor market upon graduation or to continue their studies through the transfer of high school-level credits for higher education.

WHAT IS THE CONTEXT?

Palmira is a medium-sized city in Colombia, surrounded by six sugar mills that generate employment. The city hosts multiple institutions offering technical, technological, and professional training. Compared to other cities in the country, Palmira obtains higher scores in the standardized tests measuring math, language, and other basic skills in K-12. This contrasts with the high youth unemployment rates (33% in 2020, which is 6 percentage points above the national rate), low enrollment in secondary education (48%), and a very low percentage of high school graduates entering higher education (12%). Palmira is, therefore, a favorable scenario to implement a relevant technical training pilot designed in coordination with the private sector and higher education institutions to ensure a smooth transition to continuing studies or accessing the labor market.

WHAT DOES THE INTERVENTION CONSIST OF?

• Design innovative technical programs that respond to human capital needs of the sugar agricultural value chain, offering internship opportunities at the companies that support Palmipilos, and the possibility of credit transfers for students interested in continuing their higher education.

• Implement these programs in 8 secondary schools in Palmira and offer lessons learned from the process to inform the scaling up to the rest of the schools.

• Promote dialogue and articulation between the demands of the productive sector and the curriculum content offered in public secondary education.

• Articulate the technical content with anti-dropout strategies, socio-emotional and socio-occupational skills development, and structured internships.

AUTHORS OF THE SUMMARY

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INNOVATIVE ELEMENTS

• Relevant technical training pilot based on the needs of the sugar agricultural-industrial value chain.

• It improves the employment trajectory of recent high school graduates by offering programs in accordance with the needs of the sector.

• Lays the groundwork for developing the skills of the fourth industrial revolution, especially in software development and use of the Internet of Things (IoT).

PARTNERS

Local Government of the city of Palmira (Office of the Mayor), Chamber of Commerce of the city of Cali, leading companies and associations from the sugar cane industry -Cenicafé, Asocaña, Procaña and Ingenio Manuelita-, National ONGs-, Luker Foundation and Corona Foundation- and Colombia’s National Learning Service (SENA).
Ensure program sustainability by strengthening pedagogical strategies, adjusting institutional educational projects and training teachers with training the trainers approach.

Adapt and equip laboratories in schools to transform them into learning spaces for software development and the Internet of Things (IoT).

WHO DOES WHAT?

The Mayor’s Office of Palmira promotes dialogue with the stakeholders and the adjustment of the educational offer of its secondary schools.

The Cali Chamber of Commerce becomes the main ally to identify the human capital needs of sugar companies.

Universities will offer technical programs and will be responsible for training students as they complete secondary education.

Associations such as Asocaña, Procaña, Cenicaña and Ingenio Manuelita will support the implementation of the project, through the provision of inputs that will allow strengthening interventions, or by offering internships to graduates.

The experience of SENA, the Luker Foundation, and the Corona Foundation in technical training from secondary education will serve as a guide for the implementation of the project.

WHAT ARE THE EXPECTED RESULTS?

Approximately 48 teachers trained in pedagogical strategies and socio-emotional skills across the 8 schools.

Formalized partnership with higher educational institutions. Developed strategies and programs to strengthen technical training across the 8 beneficiary high schools.

Anti-dropout strategy implemented across the 8 schools.

Complete the adaptation and provision of laboratories as learning environments across the 8 focal schools.

Technical training programs launched.

Internship programs initiated at partnership companies.

600 students graduated from Palmipilos.

Broadcast of lessons learned during the design and implementation of the intervention.

Reduced dropout rates of benefited students.

Higher expected employability of youth by enhancing students’ skill sets, aligning them with the local productive sector’s needs.

WHY IS THIS INTERVENTION RELEVANT?

This intervention will improve the quality of life of young people recently graduated from secondary education in the city of Palmira, since it will offer them the opportunity to advance their higher education studies, and graduate with the skills, knowledge and competencies required by one of the most important economic sectors with the greatest projection in the Valle del Cauca region.