

Yo quiero Yo puedo: leading entrepreneurship with vulnerable youth.



➤ SUMMARY

Since 2016, Yo quiero Yo puedo (Mexican Institute for Family and Population Research- IMIFAP) has been strengthening the culture of entrepreneurship and productivity with 15-29 year old youth in the State of Mexico, Guadalajara and Hidalgo. Through a new, unique model of training and support for low-income entrepreneurs, based on life skills, financial education, savings culture and business management, the “I want, I can... be an entrepreneurial agent of change” program has increased the number of successful ventures started by youth, their income and their empowerment. The program is part of the regional Youth Entrepreneurship Program and is supported by the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF) of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Group and 16 other partners.



Facilitating human, social and economic development



“Yo quiero Yo puedo was one of the most important decisions in my life because –as an engineer– one uses a very rigid, very technical approach”, said engineer Erick Hazel Cruz Saria, from Ecatepec, Mexico, who today is one of more than one thousand participants in Yo quiero Yo puedo’s entrepreneurship program. Erick –a specialist in the automotive industry and in hydraulic, electrical and pneumatic installations– develops technology that does not substitute the workforce but instead optimizes workers’ skills and development.

▾ PROBLEM

In Mexico, **25%** of the population is youth between 15 and 29 years of age. It is estimated that during the next 20 years, about half of Mexico’s population will be of working age. However, today, only **35%** of youth have jobs and **50%** of them live in poverty. They are studying in a poor public education system and have severely limited possibilities to develop skills that foster personal growth.

The Global Index of Entrepreneurship reports that the skill levels and aspirations of entrepreneurs in Mexico are falling.

At the same time, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are very important for Mexico’s economy. They generate **72%** of all jobs and are a key contributor to national production and international trade. However, the Global Entrepreneurship Index reports that in Mexico, the skill levels and aspirations of entrepreneurs are decreasing. Fear of failure and a lack of necessary capacities are holding Mexicans back from wanting to start their own businesses.

80% of new businesses created by people between the ages of 12 to 29 fail in the long term. Too often, the ideas and start-ups of youth embody only low levels of innovation, and are guided by poorly

prepared teams, making the businesses unsustainable. National entrepreneurship programs too rarely support startups, and are not aimed at vulnerable communities. Young entrepreneurs particularly require greater intrinsic empowerment and personal agency, as well as training to increase their entrepreneurial spirit and improve their leadership skills.

“The situation in this country is that many youth do not get the opportunity to start a company or do something more with their lives. And that makes it complicated for youth to understand that they have to look beyond their current way of life,” said engineer Luis Antonio Dominguez, Erick’s mentor in the “I want to, I can” program. Luis is a Project Manager at AFM and, previously, was Vice President of Talent Management at the National Polytechnic Institute’s AIESEC and Director of Public Relations at AIESEC IPN.



Youth entrepreneurs attending a program conference

➤ SOLUTION

Since 2016, the “I want to, I can ... be an entrepreneurial agent of change” program, aimed at strengthening the culture of entrepreneurship and productivity in youth between 15 and 29 years of age, has been implemented through workshops, specialized consultancies and mentorships in the State of Mexico, Guadalajara and Hidalgo. The core of the program is focused on building human development, personal agency (so that people can positively influence their community) and intrinsic empowerment (the conviction that changes can be achieved through one’s own actions); these are the key pieces for the consolidation of the entrepreneurial spirit.

“I believe that the “I want to, I can” program is the cornerstone to building a better society, because the program allows us to open our eyes to a different panorama, show us a new way of living and doing things, and generate results that really impact society in a global way. And that’s what I - and I think all the entrepreneurs in the program - appreciate most,” said Erick.

The “I want to, I can ... be an entrepreneurial agent of change” program consists of five phases, depicted to the right.



Stage 0:

Selection, recruitment and formation of groups



Stage 1

Financial education training



Stage 2

Business skills and leadership training



Stage 3

Business consolidation and strengthening



Stage 4

Linking with the entrepreneurial ecosystem



Entrepreneur fair

ERICK TELLS US ABOUT THE PROGRAM AND HIS BUSINESS

Before the “I want to, I can” program, I did not have a business vision. After having taken part in the program, I felt more confident about myself. I knew that I could project that confidence so that others would trust me. Luis’s mentoring taught me what I had to do in order to close deals and to create strategic partnerships. He told me that the most important thing was to define what I require, what the other person requires and to see how we complement each other, and, in that way, build partnerships. For example, he has great people-skills, in how to present projects, solutions and business deals. Because of my engineering background, I was very closed and cold, but Luis enabled me to see the way in which business can be done.

I have always wanted to leave my mark on the world. I wanted to improve the life of honest people, but I did not have the resources, the means, nor partners. I didn’t have a business focused on that. Currently, technological developments are frequently replacing people or automating processes. In contrast, the focus of my business is to develop technology and teaching equipment for the advancement of human skills.

Right now, we are focusing on finding a large customer to whom we can sell the products wholesale. Luis put it to me in the following way: “How can you sell as many pieces in the shortest possible time? Developing a product takes time, but if one piece is made to sell to one person, a lot of time is being invested and little is earned.”

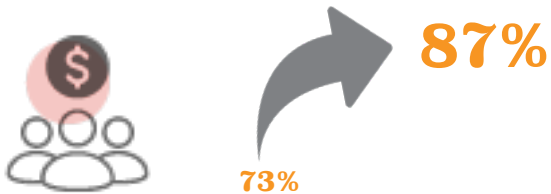
The importance of Yo quiero Yo puedo, which differentiates it from the rest of the world, is that it allows people to see other realities, a new way of doing things, a new way of living. It shows them what they are capable of doing.



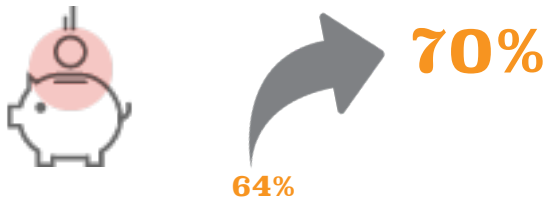
RESULTS

Below are some of the program's key impacts on poverty reduction, which have been achieved after one year.

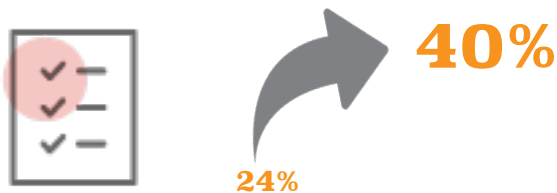
1. Percentage of participants who have a weekly income



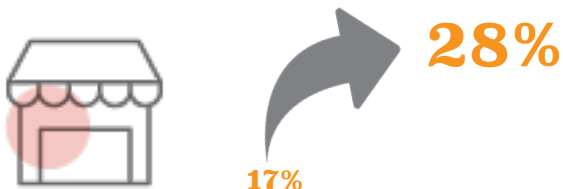
2. Percentage of participants who save



3. Reasons to save: establish or improve a business



4. Percentage of participants who have their own business



"It is very enriching to meet other entrepreneurs or people who want to start their own business, because you learn from others. We also begin to do things differently: how to plan or, more specifically, make a business plan, which is fundamental for the development of a business. And, in addition to seeking the profitability of a company, we also have to look at the human aspect, primarily keeping the client front and center; in other words, how to offer the client something beneficial, know the what and how of what we want to offer her", Erick Hazel Cruz Soria.



Mentors in action

What happens when life skills, and Yo quiero Yo puedo's Framework for Enabling Empowerment are added to entrepreneurship programs?

Evaluation results showed a significant increase in the level of life skills, personal agency and intrinsic empowerment of the youth who participated in the full program when compared with both a group that only received technical training in entrepreneurship and a control group that did not receive any training.

↳ LESSONS LEARNED

The program has had positive impacts on youth entrepreneurs thanks to several factors:

1. Targeting human development through life skills training differentiates the program from others that support entrepreneurship. Particularly with vulnerable youth, it is necessary to meet the needs of these youth taking into account their context, and not only focus on the success of the business.
2. Entrepreneurial projects linked to the entrepreneur's life plan are more likely to be sustainable. The development of a life plan and its clear connection with the entrepreneurial project are indispensable both for a person to decide to start a project as well as for it to be sustainable.
3. Developing and testing an "MVP" (minimum viable product) as soon as possible increases the chances of a successful entrepreneurial project getting launched. Youth who take a long time to define their product and test it with potential clients, tend to abandon their ideas or delay their development.

4. Include alternative financing options for youth's start-ups. Though community banks are an important financing option for entrepreneurs, crowdfunding, launching of cooperatives, among others, are important alternatives.

↳ CONCLUSIONS

The "I want, I can ... be an entrepreneurial agent of change" program has created a new model that is demonstrating the importance of including skills that strengthen both human development and technical expertise. The first years of the program have shown that with this model, participants' interest in becoming an entrepreneur increases, as does their entrepreneurial spirit, life skills, personal agency and intrinsic empowerment. In addition, accompaniment and advising by mentors has been fundamental for the launch and continuation of youth's start-ups.

"I consider now, after a long time, that life is about leaving a legacy. Leaving something that really inspires and motivates people, and that shows them a way. To tell them: 'How can you live a life well, passionately, abundantly, without worries and without fears?' We all have fears and insecurities, but we also have passions and dreams. Sometimes what we need is a push to show us that we can, that if 'I want to, I can', literally," concluded Erick.



Entrepreneurs explain their products and pitch for sales at the fair

Yo quiero Yo puedo has reached more than 1,120 youth entrepreneurs. Help us continue to create success stories like Erick's and those of many others.



Since our creation in 1985, we have designed, implemented and evaluated programs with the aim of fostering personal development and reducing psychosocial barriers so individuals become agents of change in their own lives as well as in their families and communities.

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