Microsoft

THE TRUST FOR THE AMERICAS

OAS More rights for more people

POETA DIGISPARK

Promoting digital inclusion and empowerment in Latin America

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Libro de Historias POETA DIGISPARK
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ABOUT THE TRUST FOR THE AMERICAS

The Trust for the Americas is a non-profit organization affiliated with the Organization of American States (OAS). Established in 1997 to promote public and private partnerships, The Trust has implemented projects in 24 countries and worked with over 1,000 organizations in the region. Our initiatives seek to promote educational and economic opportunities as well as government accountability and transparency.

Our unique alliance with the OAS allows us to have access to decision makers within the region. This foundational partnership is the basis through which we create strong networks across member states and the private sector. Through the evolution of our region, The Trust continues to endure by facing challenges through strategic partnerships that promote cooperation for sustainable results.

ABOUT POETA DIGISPARK

POETA DigiSpark is committed to empowering men and women through technology. From a wide range of training in digital, technical and life skills, POETA DigiSpark prepares its participants with the necessary skills to compete in the 21st century labor market, facilitating access to economic and educational opportunities, such as obtaining a job, a promotion, or an internship, starting or strengthening an entrepreneurship, or starting formal educational.

In partnership with Eidos Global, POETA DigiSpark also seeks to provide training in computer science and digital skills to teachers and facilitators of any discipline, with the aim of promoting the use of technology among new generations.

Through POETA DigiSpark, The Trust for the Americas continues to lead Microsoft's Global Skilling Initiative in Latin America, bringing training and mentoring to people affected by recent job losses or whose jobs are at risk of being replaced by automated processes. In order to bridge inequality gaps, POETA DigiSpark has a special focus on women, people with disabilities, indigenous people and Afro descendants and migrants.

IMPACT & REACH IN 2021

DIRECT IMPACT

15,115 **Trained Adults**

Completed 10+ hours of training

63% Women

7,633 **Trained Teachers**

Completed 10+ hours of training

85% Women

INDIRECT IMPACT

888,820
Indirect Beneficiaries

X3.5
Every trained adult shares knowledge, skills, and benefits with an average of 3.5 individuals: family members, colleagues or employees. *(Multiplier calculated based on the average household size in Latin America, according to international studies, and a person's work interactions.)*

X90
Every trained teacher strengthens their teachings and/or shares the skilling content with an average of 90 students in a year. *(The multiplier is based on research and surveys conducted by The Trust for the Americas and Eidos Global.)*

LINDA EDDLEMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE TRUST FOR THE AMERICAS

I am very excited to share these stories from 17 POETA DigiSpark participants who live in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. Our team has invested many hours into ensuring that women, at-risk youth, and people with disabilities have access to more and better economic opportunities. We are so pleased that as a result of the passionate commitment of our team, our local partners, and that of the participants, more than 40,000 beneficiaries are now change-makers in their families and communities.

Thanks to Microsoft's continued support, thousands of voices in the region are a testament that people can change their lives for the better by working together. This book is dedicated to everyone who has supported POETA DigiSpark over the past ten years.
At The Trust for the Americas, we will continue promoting inclusion and equal opportunities to empower the people who need it the most. I invite you to read these stories and be inspired!

PIERINA NEPOTE
POETA SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER

POETA DigiSpark is a special project. Anyone who has contributed to its implementation knows this. This is in part because POETA DigiSpark relies on the best of each of the parts that add to this regional effort, recognizing that the resulting whole is greater than the sum of its parts. POETA DigiSpark exemplifies the concept of working in partnership. The Trust, Microsoft Philanthropies, Eidos Global and local implementing partners contribute from our different strengths towards a common goal: to empower men and women in Latin America and the Caribbean to achieve more through technology. Together, we work to facilitate the development of skills that improve access to the opportunities we all deserve: from an internship that introduces us to the world of work, to the first job we all long for, from the inspiration to invest in our future at the expense of immediate reward, to the mentoring necessary to guide our entrepreneurship. The stories shared here are a testimony of these opportunities. And it is these stories that confirm to us, time and again, how our partnership can enhance the talent of our region. Thank you to Microsoft Philanthropies, Eidos Global, our local implementing partners and our participants for trusting POETA DigiSpark to be the catalyst of opportunities that it seeks to be in our region.

JORGE CELLA
REGIONAL DIRECTOR, MICROSOFT PHILANTHROPIES, LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Throughout the more than seventeen years that we have worked in collaboration with the Trust for the Americas, the world has changed. And we have found in the Trust, a fundamental partner to make Microsoft's mission a reality: "To empower every person and organization on the planet to achieve more." It has not been easy, and such change, accelerated by the recent pandemic and by technological advances, constantly puts us in the face of new challenges.

Together with the Trust for the Americas we continue to strive to genuinely transform people's lives, providing them with tools to achieve a better future, equipping them with skills so that they can face this new world, and motivating them to empower themselves so that they can move forward with dignity and optimism, taking advantage of the possibilities that open up every day in each part of our region.

The POETA DigiSpark Training Centers are much more than a place to learn; they are a meeting point to find the extended team of the Trust for the Americas made up of its local partners, who are professionals in technical fields but who keep their humanity, empathy and motivation, qualities that we all need to advance and improve.

We congratulate and appreciate having the opportunity to work with you every day and to reach more and more people, igniting the spark of hope that we need so much.

AGUSTÍN BATTO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & FOUNDER, EIDOS GLOBAL

After more than ten years of bringing together regional partnerships to boost skill-building initiatives, Eidos Global had the pleasure of collaborating with The Trust for the Americas. The Trust and Eidos have a shared passion for promoting learning initiatives and a joint commitment to ensure that more teachers and facilitators thorough Latin America receive reskilling opportunities, especially needed in the complex context that our region faces today.

As a product of this great partnership, and with the support of Microsoft, we generated the Skills for the Future initiative, a train-the-trainers project seeking to ensure that more people can access personal and professional development opportunities, contributing to reducing the employment gap in the region. The Skills for Future initiative started in 2020 and has improved the employability skills of more than 350,000 people in eight countries.

We are convinced that the work we are doing is more relevant than ever, especially amidst this challenging context we are experiencing. Behind the goal of reaching three million people in Latin America is the shared determination of Eidos and The Trust towards democratizing the access to new opportunities and perspectives through technology and skill-building in this region.

Today, we celebrate the work of The Trust for the Americas and look forward to the projects to come, to continue transforming lives, and keep on building together the world we dream of.

ABOUT THE STORY BOOK

In 2013, POETA DigiSpark, initially POETA YouthSpark, was created with one goal in mind: to empower vulnerable populations through technology in order to facilitate their access to better economic and educational opportunities. During these nine years of consecutive implementation, POETA DigiSpark has continuously transformed, adapting to the new needs of its participants, and managing to train more than 38,000 people throughout the region.

Despite the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, POETA DigiSpark has continued to empower the greatest number of people through virtual training and mentoring. We want to acknowledge our tireless local partners and our generous donor, Microsoft Philanthropies, for making this possible.

This compilation of success stories represents the 18 local partners and six countries where POETA DigiSpark was implemented in 2021: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. Each of these testimonies highlights the diversity of backgrounds and challenges that come together in this project and exemplifies how the impact of POETA DigiSpark's training and mentoring translates into inclusion and access to better economic and educational opportunities.

From inspiring stories of resilient teachers and entrepreneurs, to inspiring young people and adults empowering their communities, the following pages give visibility to the achievements of our participants, the protagonists of this project and our inspiration.

Argentina

Our partnership [with POETA DigiSpark] gave us the possibility of reaching a great diversity of participants, promoting their initiatives for employability, entrepreneurship, or higher education; and making our actions visible to bring other partners.

Centro de Integración Libre y Solidario de Argentina (CILSA)

> The partnership with POETA DigiSpark allowed us to bridge the digital gap existing among vulnerable populations, restoring their right to access information and technology. Through our partnership, more than 1200 people have improved their living standards, and by bringing digital tools closer to educators, we will continue to generate more opportunities for the new generations.

Fundación SES

Claudia (48),
Santa Fe

OPENING UP NEW BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH ONLINE MARKETING

Claudia (48) lives in Santa Fe with her partner and her children. In 2020, she began taking courses at CILSA with the intention of learning about technology. At CILSA, Claudia took courses such as Introduction to web development, Cloud computing and Marketing and digital communication. Her journey inspired her and her partner to create "Setúbal Kayak's" - a company focused on offering group guided tours in kayaks suitable to all, including people with disabilities and people who are overweight.

Claudia currently uses the tools she learned through POETA DigiSpark to advertise her business on, among others, Santa Fe's official tourism website. Claudia shares CILSA and POETA DigiSpark gave her clear and precise guidelines on how to carry out her work in a more organized and agile way. Claudia shares she would recommend POETA DigiSpark not only to those looking for a new a job, but also to those currently employed. **"My personal achievements so far have been to set goals and carry them out with a lot of effort and constant work. One can propose a goal and develop a strategy, but teamwork is also essential".**

Catalina (21),
Buenos Aires

POETA DIGISPARK INSPIRED CATALINA TO ACHIEVE HER DREAM OF BECOMING AN ENTREPRENEUR

Catalina (21) is a woman from Buenos Aires, who has been self-reliant from an early age due to her mother's mental illness. When Catalina found POETA DigiSpark, she was working as a waitress at a bar, but she was keen to start her own bakery business: a pastry shop focused on chocolate volcanos. At Fundación SES, Catalina quickly enrolled in entrepreneurship courses to help her start her business through the design of a business plan. Catalina's commitment to learning and starting her own business was evident in her work and her engagement with her peers. **Through her training, Catalina was able to enhance her critical thinking and decision-making abilities.** Moreover, she learned about digital marketing and programs such as Canva to strengthen the content of her digital presence.

Upon completing her entrepreneurship courses, Catalina resumed her Sociology studies and started her bakery business called Volcamor. Catalina has enrolled in additional classes to support her new business and was recently hired as a Program Assistant to help pay the bills. Catalina is grateful to POETA DigiSpark as it has allowed her to improve her and her family's quality of life.

Brazil

The partnership with POETA DigiSpark is a redefinition of the present to expand the future of our participants.

Instituto Tecnológico Inovação (ITI)

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The achievement of a sustainable society is carried out through efforts in favor of promoting social inclusion. The partnership between POETA DigiSpark and UNILEHU is the representation of lives that transform, and lives transformed!

Universidade Livre para a
Eficiencia Humana (UNILEHU)

"

The partnership with POETA DigiSpark represents an opportunity to go beyond students' grades, with a differentiated approach, motivating us to continuously improve and guide our actions to measure the impact we can generate in people's lives.

Instituto para o Desenvolvimento
Tecnologico e Social (IDEAR)

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The partnership between POETA DigiSpark with the POETA Casa dos Sete Center signifies the union of bridges between knowledge, learning, economic and educational opportunities for the construction of a better, more equal, and democratic world based on digital and social inclusion.

Casa dos Sete

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Participating in POETA DigiSpark is an experience of continuously learning and overcoming challenges. We have received the support and encouragement to connect our beneficiaries with the technologies of the future.

Obras Sociais do Centro Espírita
Fraternidade Jerônimo Candinho

#25 Years Promoting Inclusion

Bruna (26),
São Paulo

POETA DIGISPARK HELPS BRUNA BOOST HER CAREER, FACE NEW CHALLENGES AND FOLLOW HER DREAMS

Bruna (26) is a woman from São Paulo. She has always been interested in technology, taking courses to become a Computer Technician, and studying Information Technology Management at the (Faculdadede Tecnologia de São Paulo) FATEC Institute in São Paulo. As the eldest of three, she has worked since she was 18 years old to support her family. This has meant that she has not always had the opportunity to prioritize jobs in the technology sector, at one point working as a manager in a bakery.

Bruna was working as an intern at the Instituto Tecnológico Inovação (ITI) when she found out ITI was implementing POETA DigiSpark and quickly enrolled. Through POETA DigiSpark, Bruna took the Eu Posso Programar, and SQL courses and she excelled thanks to her knowledge of Microsoft Visual Studio and her ability to work databases. However, **her most significant accomplishment was being promoted to Junior Systems Developer.** Bruna plans to complete her undergraduate studies and continue learning all about technology.

Ivanir (49),
Estado de Goiás

IVANIR IMPROVES HER SKILLS AS A TEACHER AND BOOSTS HER SALES

Ivanir (49) is a single mom who lives in a small town of 3,200 people in the state of Goiás. She has a degree in Distance Learning Pedagogy from the Education Faculty of Lapa and used to work as a teacher in two schools. Today, she only teaches at one, the Escola Espírita Jerônimo Candinho, where she oversees the kindergarten class.

During the pandemic, Ivanir started teaching online lessons through Zoom and preparing teaching materials using PowerPoint. She also started experimenting with video lessons through WhatsApp and YouTube. Before enrolling in an intensive course through the POETA DigiSpark program at OSJC, Ivanir only knew how to use PowerPoint and Word. But through her training, Ivanir was able to open an Outlook account, improve her Word and PowerPoint skills, and learn how to use Excel.

Today, Ivanir uses her digital skills to prepare dynamic virtual classes and videos using PowerPoint and she now uses Excel to easily record student activity. In addition to being a teacher, Ivanir is also an entrepreneur. She sells homemade foods, such as sweets, vegetables, and legumes. **The tools Ivanir learned have also helped her entrepreneurial venture, as she now uses Excel to keep track of her sales and her budget.** Ivanir looks forward to taking more courses at the POETA Center to strengthen her teaching at the Escola Espírita Jerônimo Candinho and boost her sales through online platforms.
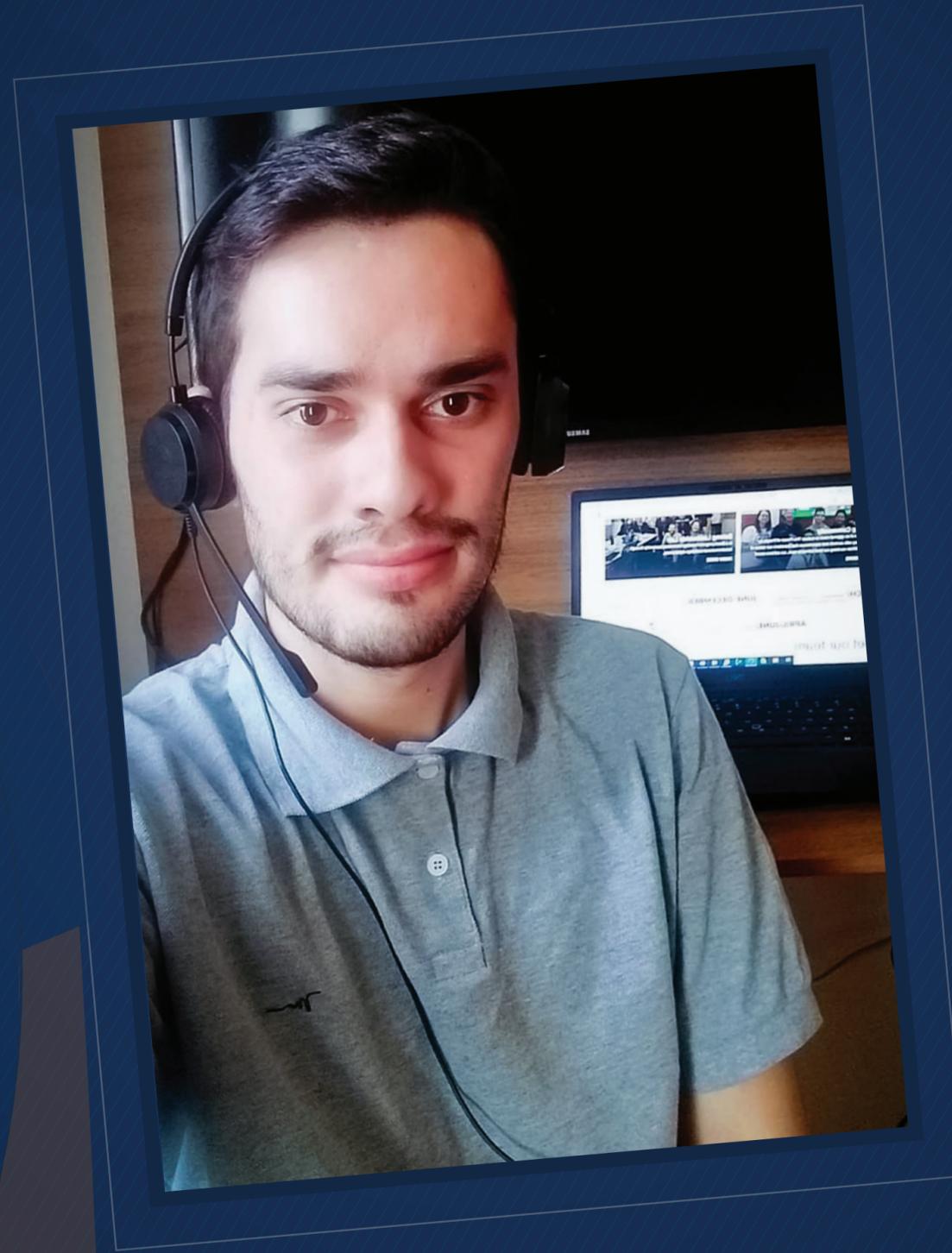
Matheus (22),
Curitiba, Paraná

MATHEUS GETS A JOB BY DEVELOPING DIGITAL AND TECHNICAL SKILLS

At the beginning of 2021, Matheus (22) arrived at the UNILEHU POETA Center in Curitiba/Paraná, looking for a job opportunity. Initially, he was under the impression that the POETA Center primarily offered introductory courses in business administration. He later discovered that, through the POETA DigiSpark program, the POETA Center also offered a variety of courses on digital skills. At the POETA Center, Matheus focused on computer science and business administration classes, as well as courses that taught him a variety of life skills.

With the support of UNILEHU, Matheus secured a job with ExxonMobil, a partner of the POETA Center, where he currently works as a Front-End Programmer. **He is currently pursuing a degree in Information Management Technology and credits the POETA Center for helping him secure his current employment and expand his professional network.** Through his training at the POETA Center and his job with ExxonMobil, Matheus is determined to continue his career in the computer science field. To do so, he continues to take courses at the POETA Center. He hopes to become a Full Stack developer and learn more about systems analysis.

Jackson (17),
Salvador de Bahía

JACKSON GETS HIRED AS AN INSTRUCTOR AND IS ABLE TO SUPPORT HIS FAMILY

Jackson (17) is a student who lives in a marginalized area, Barrio de la Paz, in Salvador de Bahia. During the pandemic, lots of young people in his neighborhood were left without studying nor working and therefore faced even higher levels of violence. Jackson's mother lost her job and was left without an income to support her three children, and so Jackson looked for ways to support his family. He decided to enroll in the POETA DigiSpark digital skills courses at Casa Dos Sete, where he was quickly hired as an instructor, since he was good at interacting with students, answering questions, organizing WhatsApp groups, and preparing presentations in PowerPoint.

Thanks to his job at Casa Dos Sete, he was able to improve his family's financial situation. **Jacskon shares it was very rewarding to be part of a team and perform tasks that will train him for future endeavors in his professional career.** In addition to learning a variety of digital tools and honing many of his computer skills, Jackson's job as an instructor taught him how to behave in a meeting, deal with his shyness, and act with leadership. As a result of his efforts, Jackson received two job offers from different companies, one as a salesperson and the other to work in a communication agency, but he chose to continue being an instructor at the POETA Casa dos Sete Center.

de continuar.

Thais (41),
Maracanaú, Ceará

THAIS FINDS A JOB THANKS TO THE SKILLS SHE DEVELOPED THROUGH POETA DIGISPARK

Thais (41), a housewife from Maracanaú/Ceará, arrived at IDEAR after learning about POETA DigiSpark through social media. She had dedicated the last few years to her family and was ready to start looking for a professional opportunity. Thais arrived to IDEAR looking for opportunities without knowing where to start. She initially took a Data Processing class, which inspired her to further develop her digital skills. Thais moved on to an introductory computer course, where she was exposed to Microsoft Office 365. She complemented these classes with courses focused on building a resume, preparing for a job interview, and learning how to search for jobs.

Thais shares that her time at IDEAR broadened her horizons and gave her many opportunities at a time when she did not know if she would find any. She now works as a Telemarketing Operator with the BS Company in Maracanaú/CE and attributes her success to the skills she gathered through courses she took through POETA DigiSpark.

Chile

Thanks to POETA DigiSpark in Chile thousands of entrepreneurs, students, and teachers have received free training and certifications. The partnership between Innovacien and The Trust for the Americas has helped us become more professional at what we do.

Innovacien

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Generating social impact is the reason why we exist. POETA DigiSpark is the corroboration of our mission, which is to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of thousands of people.

Fundación LACE Educación

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POETA DigiSpark is the added value that supports and drives our mission at CDI Chile, with the aim of making technology a tool for up skilling and professional improvement.

Comité para la Democratización de la Informática (CDI) Chile

María Eugenia (41),
Chile

MARÍA EUGENIA STRENGTHENS HER COSMETICS BUSINESS THROUGH DIGITAL SKILLS

María Eugenia (41) is a housewife, has two daughters and studies podiatry. To promote her cosmetic services, she uses a Facebook page called "Kenita Cosmética Natural", therefore she wished to improve her digital skills, so she approached Innovacien, where she took Wordpress and Excel workshops. María Eugenia shares that, thanks to her teachers, she has learned a lot, even how to create a website. **Learning about computer science, technology and digital tools gave her a new perspective on life and the strength to dare to pursue her business ideas.**

María Eugenia notes that technology has transformed her life, providing her with useful information and creative ideas which she has transformed into tangible results, including an increase in her sales. She also notes an increased efficiency in completing tasks, thus allowing her to spend more time with her family. María Eugenia has also developed her socio-emotional skills: **"I have taken a big leap – Now I can express myself and I am not ashamed to communicate anymore. I am more confident in the way I lead my life in. I am more positive, full of energy, and I have an open mind to create, change and grow. I am empowered and not afraid of being wrong – I am changing my limiting beliefs".** Today, María Eugenia has the goal of selling through Mercado Libre and setting up a cosmetic laboratory where she can sell natural cosmetics of Chilean origin.

Tamara (46),
Santiago de Chile

HER NEW KNOWLEDGE ENCOURAGES TAMARA TO DELIVER A MORE ENGAGING TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Tamara (46) is a math teacher from Maipu, Chile, who lives in Santiago. As a teacher, she faced the challenge of adapting her lessons to an online setting. Besides the challenge of finding enough time to adapt and prepare her lessons, Tamara struggled with student participation. Tamara had heard about Fundación Lace Educación and POETA DigiSpark and decided to enroll when she started facing these challenges. Through her trainings, Tamara learned how to use Classroom to develop her own teaching portfolio. This tool allowed her to prepare dynamic lessons more easily in less time. Through Classroom, Tamara is now able to design lessons, develop student lists, post grades and store resources. She now encourages other teachers to use Classroom to improve the virtual teaching and learning experience.

Tamara is happy to see how tools such as Classroom can not only make it possible for her to continue reaching her students, but also help her offer an engaging learning experience. **Tamara's efforts were recognized by her employer, who provided her with a salary increase. Tamara is motivated and looks forward to sharing her knowledge and experience with her peers to replicate best practices across different courses.**

Mariangela (27).
Chile

MARIANGELA BECOMES A DATA ANALYSIS MENTOR AFTER ENROLLING IN POETA DIGISPARK

Mariangela (27) is a Venezuelan migrant who moved to Chile looking for better opportunities. Due to economic constraints brought by COVID-19, Mariangela was concerned about finding a job after graduating as an industrial engineer. Indeed, limited job opportunities led Angela to move from Talca, a small city in Chile, to Santiago, where she came across CDI Chile and its reskilling and upskilling programs. At the CDI Center, Mariangela enrolled in POETA DigiSpark, where she took classes in Digital Marketing, Customer Service and Tools for the Workplace. She heard about the Data Analysis Bootcamp and, although a bit hesitant, decided to enroll. **At first, Mariangela was intimidated by the content of the Bootcamp, but thanks to the close mentorship and encouragement from CDI Chile's facilitators, she overcame her fears and enrolled in the Bootcamp.**

At the Bootcamp, Mariangela improved her Excel skills and learned how to use Tableau. She also learned how to use Zoom and Microsoft Teams, which she now uses on a daily basis. "Thanks to my experience in the Bootcamp, I realized I am able to overcome any challenge I may face." she shares. Upon completing the Data Analysis Bootcamp, **Mariangela was able to secure a job as a Data Analysis Mentor at CDI Chile and is currently guiding participants from the Bootcamp cohorts. In the future, Mariangela wants to continue developing her mentoring skills and train students on data analysis.**

Colombia

POETA DigiSpark is the opportunity that brings different populations closer to ICTs, seeking to boost their entrepreneurship or strengthen their job skills, through the use of platforms, tools, and applications useful for value-generating activities.

Microempresas de Colombia

The partnership (with POETA DigiSpark) allows us to share the message of entrepreneurship, innovation, and technology to those who seek to contribute to society and improve their quality of life.

ParqueSoft Nariño

Education is the key to success, and access to technological tools is one of its fundamental pillars. The partnership between POETA DigiSpark and Politécnico Superior generates opportunities to access technology.

Institución Politécnico de Occidente

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POETA DigiSpark is a project that has generated positive impacts by contributing to the digital transformation of the Laudes Infantis Foundation and of those who access it, allowing us to reach more people.

Fundación Laudes Infantis

Yasmin (56),
Medellín, Colombia

YASMIN GROWS HER BUSINESS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY AND SHARES HER KNOWLEDGE WITH OTHER MIGRANTS

Yasmin (56) is a Venezuelan migrant who lives in Medellin with her elderly parents, two sisters and her daughter. She started her own business –Yexi's Cakes– to support her family. Yasmin is also a founding member of a non-profit organization which helps Venezuelan refugees and returning Colombians escaping the Venezuelan crisis. Due to the pandemic, Yasmin's sales plummeted, and so she turned to social media to expand her business. At Microempresas, Yasmin took Financial Education and social media for Business courses. She learned how to use Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp Business. These platforms allowed Yasmin to strategically advertise her business and therefore increase her sales. Yasmin highlights how the teachers and facilitators at Microempresas created a supportive and collaborative environment where she and her peers developed important life skills. **Yasmin now has more confidence in herself and her ability to promote her business. POETA DigiSpark not only provided Yasmin with the tools to grow her social media presence, but also empowered her to share her knowledge through her non-profit, as she now helps Venezuelan refugees create email accounts to request legal refugee status in Colombia.** Through her networking efforts on social media, Yasmin is determined to continue growing her business, identify new commercial partners and, one day, own more than one bakery.

Marino (20),
La Caldera, Cundinamarca

MARINO USES HIS DIGITAL SKILLS TO TEACH OTHERS AND TRANSFORM HIS COMMUNITY

Throughout 2020, Marino (20), from La Caldera, Cundinamarca, was an intern at the Center for Digital and Technological Entrepreneurship in Pasto. With the support of ParqueSoft Nariño, Marino joined POETA DigiSpark curious about computer science courses. In 2021, he took a Web Systems course, focused on the development of applications through Firework Laravel PHP. Marino's hard work earned him a job at ParqueSoft Nariño as a web developer. In his role, he has been able to take on new challenges and explore topics that catch his attention: interactive chatbots, web portals, e-commerce platforms, and automation using Microsoft 365 tools. **Technology positively impacted Marino's and his family. As a result of his efforts, Marino earned a scholarship to study Software Engineering at the University of Colombia in Pasto.**

Thanks to POETA DigiSpark, Marino found his vocation of service to others and learned to see information and communication technologies as tools to accelerate the development of his community. Today, Marino is committed to using his skills to spur innovation and contribute to the digital transformation of his community. Marino hopes that others around him will be interested in learning and developing similar skills. Through his example, Marino teaches us those difficulties become small when passion is great.

#25 Years Promoting Inclusion

Alejandro (18),
Cali, Colombia

DESPITE THE CHALLENGES, ALEJANDRO SECURES AN INTERNSHIP AND IMPROVES HIS LIFE

Alejandro (18) first arrived to the Instituto Politécnico de Occidente (IPO) POETA Center after graduating high school. He lives with his widowed mother and two younger sisters in the Otún neighborhood, a marginalized area in Cali. Alejandro's mother, a health worker, bears the financial responsibility of the family, which made it difficult for Alejandro to consider continuing his education at a university. Nonetheless, with the support of his mother, he decided to join POETA DigiSpark. Two months into the program, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, forcing Alejandro to take classes from his home, through his phone, as he did not own a computer. This did not stop Alejandro, who was determined to complete the courses of Programming, Analysis and Formatting of Software, Hardware Analysis and Repairs, and Customer Service.

Alejandro states POETA DigiSpark has had a positive impact in his life, as he feels more comfortable participating in class, and believes the program has brought out his more extroverted side. Furthermore, Alejandro obtained a paid internship with a multinational company and provides technical support within his community. These two jobs allow Alejandro to support his family. Alejandro shares he feels motivated and looks forward to the future. Not only does he want to specialize in IT, but he also wants to develop his graphic design skills. Alejandro is thankful for everything he has learned and hopes to continue improving his and his family's quality of life.

Karen (24),
Colombia

KAREN EARNS AN INTERNSHIP AND DEVELOPS GRAPHIC DESIGN, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND CONTENT DESIGN SKILLS

Karen (24) always dreamed of becoming a TV host, and so she decided to study Social Communication at the Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios (UNIMINUTO). Thanks to the partnership between Laudes Infantis and UNIMINUTO, Karen found out about POETA DigiSpark and took several Computer Science trainings. Her commitment earned Karen an internship with Laudes Infantis supporting POETA DigiSpark's communication and training activities. Through her internship, Karen learned design skills with Adobe programs such as Illustrator, Photoshop, and Studio Creator. She also supported the creation of technology microlearning contents and social media efforts by researching weekly fun facts about technology.

Karen has taken full advantage of her training and has learned to design educational content with a technological approach. She now appreciates the importance of developing technological skills in her profession. In addition, **Karen has started a tourism entrepreneurship called "Route 40" on Instagram.** Plus, through Laudes Infantis, **she works to raise awareness in the communities of Ciudad Bolívar and Usme on issues related to Women, Communications and Education Technology.** Karen will finish her studies in 2021 and is certain that the skills and experience she has gained will allow her to add value to her first job.

Mexico

Thanks to POETA DigiSpark, the UTSC offers vulnerable people the opportunity to receive training to develop competencies and skills which will allow them to access better job opportunities.

Universidad Tecnológica Santa Catarina (UTSC)

POETA DIGISPARK

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By empowering more people with new skills through our partnership with POETA DigiSpark, ICATCAM overcame the challenge of training in the new normal.

Instituto de Capacitacion para el Trabajo de Campeche (ICATCAM)

Joaquín (35),
Monterrey, México

JOAQUÍN RELIES ON ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGIES TO CONTINUE FACILITATING VIRTUAL CLASSES FOR HIS STUDENTS

Joaquín (35) is a professor from Monterrey, Mexico, who has a visual disability. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Applied Linguistics with a focus on Translation. At UTSC, he is responsible for supporting students with visual impairments through braille impressions, and screen-reading software. Due to social distancing measures in Monterrey, Joaquín had to migrate his classes and mentorship sessions to a virtual setting. To do so, he decided to join POETA DigiSpark to upgrade his teaching and digital skills. Through the UTSC POETA Center, Joaquín took a course on Digital Tools for Teachers, through which he learned how to use Kahoot, Excel, Outlook, Forms and Asana for teaching purposes. He also completed a course on Microsoft Teams. The biggest challenge he faced was learning to use technology despite his visual impairment through specialized tools such as a screen reader. **Thanks to the skills Joaquín learned at POETA DigiSpark, he was able to renew his contract with UTSC. One of Joaquín's biggest takeaways is that the use of technology can provide job opportunities and bridge professional gaps.** He is committed to continue improving his teaching and digital skills to strengthen academic content and improve the delivery of his classes.

POETA
DIGISPARK

Peru

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The partnership with POETA DigiSpark is the power that helps us promote and boost initiatives for technological empowerment. It is the motor that drives change when facing complex developmental processes. And it is sharing experiences and working side by side, generating social well-being and opportunities to build a society that includes everyone.

Fundación para el Desarrollo Solidario
(FUNDADES)

#25 Years
Promoting
Inclusion

David (26),
Lima, Perú

THETRUSTFORTHEAMERICAS.ORG
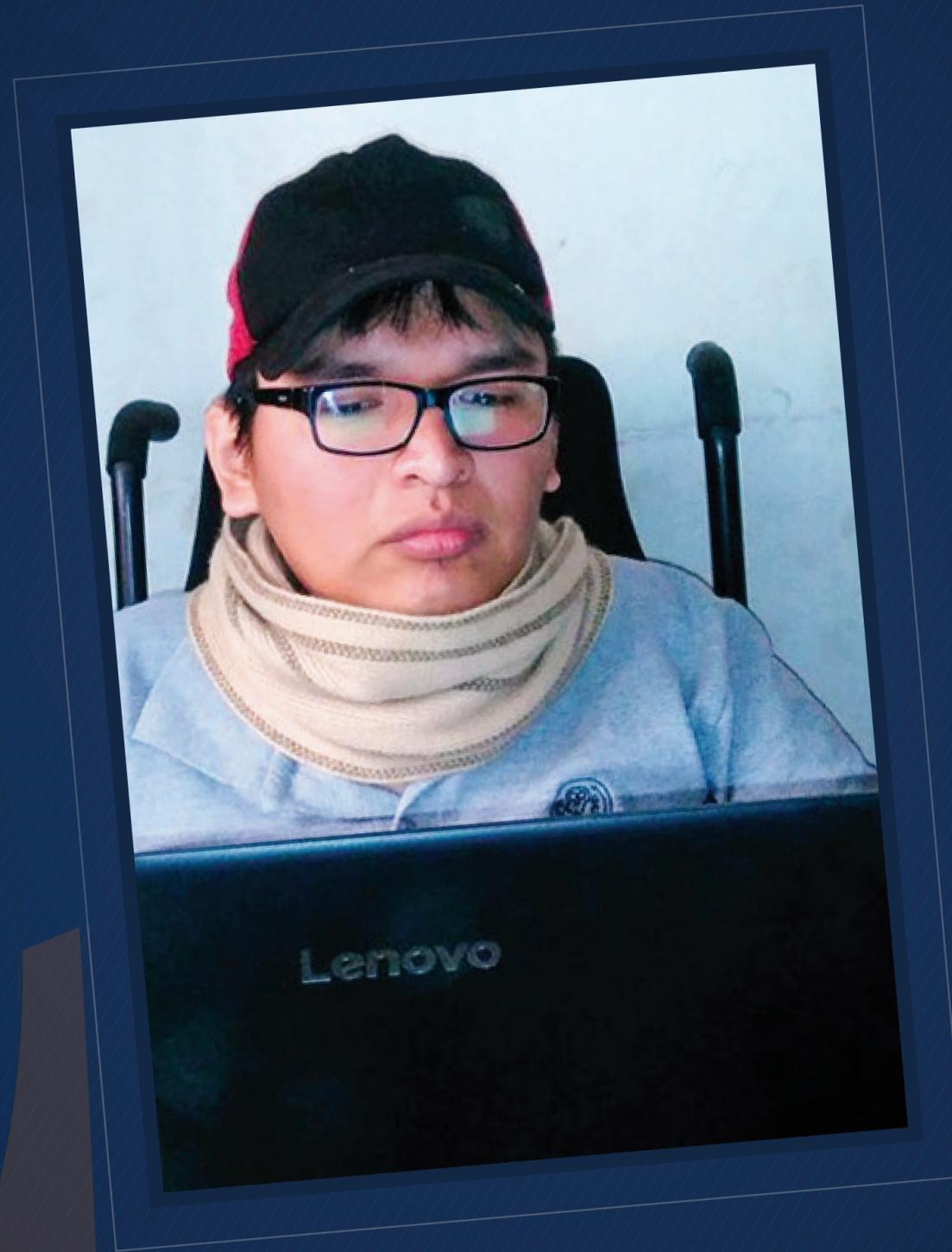
THROUGH POETA DIGISPARK, DAVID SECURES A JOB AND INCREASES HIS CONFIDENCE

David (26) a man from Lima, who holds a degree in Systems Engineering and has experience working in electrical engineering and telecommunications. However, due to his physical disability, David has difficulty mobilizing across Lima, Peru's largest city. This led him to leave his last job, which became a source of worry, as he could no longer help his mother pay the bills and could barely afford his therapy sessions. David found out about POETA DigiSpark and the Fundades POETA Center in Comas through social media and was quickly intrigued by the customer service and call center courses. **He hoped such courses could provide him with practical skills that could help him to find a new job.** David found the technical side of the course easy enough, but was challenged when interacting with his peers. David is grateful to his teachers and peers, who helped him navigate these challenges by making him feel included and comfortable.

Today, **David feels more confident in his technical and social skills, as well as in what he can bring to a group. After his time at POETA DigiSpark, David was able to secure a stable job as a Customer Service Consultant for the company Konecta.** He is particularly happy his new position offers health benefits and his new supervisors make him feel welcomed and appreciated. David is once again able to help pay the bills and is excited to continue taking classes that might help him secure a promotion.

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

VERÓNICA PHILIPPE
PROJECT MANAGER, POETA DIGISPARK

The growing demand for digital skills in the 21st century labor market and the onset of a COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the need to increasingly migrate our daily activities to digital spaces. In this context, POETA DigiSpark, in collaboration with Microsoft Philanthropies and Eidos Global, assumed the enormous challenge of continuing to bring skilling opportunities and digital tools to vulnerable communities in Latin America to equip them with the necessary skills the market labor demands.

These efforts would not be possible without the dedicated and immense work of POETA DigiSpark's 17 local partners who have brought skilling content to more than 16,000 trained adults and teachers in 2021. We want to thank our network of local implementing partners for being the key connectors that allow us to empower our communities. Through these partnerships, we have managed to promote the proactive and strategic use of technology as the key to generating economic and educational opportunities that open doors to a better quality of life.

Likewise, we want to thank Microsoft Philanthropies for their trust and support. Our joint efforts translate into empowerment opportunities so that people in vulnerable communities, such as those included in this book, can become agents for the creation of innovative and resilient communities. Thank you for making these and many more success stories possible, all of which continue to inspire us every day.

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- **Alexander Figueroa** – Chief Oparting Officer (COO)

POETA DIGISPARK TEAM

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- **Verónica Philippe** – Project Manager
- **Ariana Ferrer** – Project Accountant
- **Luz Marina Correa** – Regional Coordinator
- **Maite Capra Puertas** – Regional Coordinator
- **Fátima Galeazzo** – National Coordinator – Brazil
- **Lourdes Serrano** – National Coordinator – Mexico
- **Diana Andrade** – IT Systems Coordinator
- **Víctor Vergara** – Monitoring and Evaluation Officer
- **Mónica Delgado** – E-Learning Coordinator
- **María Alejandra Barrios** – Communications Officer
- **Adriana Rueda** – Project Officer
- **Karen Priscila Castro** – Project Officer
- **María Camila Guerra** – Project Officer

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- **Carlos Escalante** – Communications & Digital Transformation Specialist
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