

Innovations in Youth Employment: Insights from the NEO Initiative

BIOGRAPHIES

Viniolis Aquino Mieses

Electrical engineering student, Technological University of Santiago, Dominican Republic

Viniolis Aquino Mieses studies electrical engineering at the Technological University of Santiago and electrical controls and industrial maintenance at the Institute of Industrial Technology (ITI). She has earned certifications in industrial and electrical security, customer service, and total quality management from the Institute of Technical Professional Training (INFOTEP). She graduated with honors from the Hainamosa Polytechnic Institute's residential and industrial electrical installation program, where she worked as an electrical technician for the electromechanical contractor CRINSA JR SRL through the Job Placement and Internships Office. In addition to her university studies, Viniolis currently works as an engineering and industrial security assistant, providing services to internationally recognized Dominican companies.

Germán Barragán Agudelo


Education and Work Manager, Fundación Corona, Colombia

Germán Barragán is the Education and Work Manager at Fundación Corona (Corona Foundation) in Colombia. On the Foundation's behalf, he participates in various public-private alliances that focus on the education and employment of disadvantaged populations and work with local and federal governments, private companies, non-profit foundations, and allied organizations from various regions of Colombia. Germán has more than ten years of experience with initiatives aimed at integrating disadvantaged populations into the workforce. Before joining Fundación Corona, he was the Director of Alianza Social ASU (Social Alliance ASU) in 2004, UNDP National Specialist in 2005, and Executive Director of Corporación Eccos (Eccos Corporation) in 2007. Germán has written several publications related to inclusive employment and in 2010, *Revista Gerente* (Manager Magazine) named him one of Colombia's 100 Managers of the Year.

Elizabeth Boggs Davidsen

Knowledge Economy Unit Chief, Multilateral Investment Fund, Inter-American Development Bank, USA

Elizabeth Boggs Davidsen is the Knowledge Economy Unit Chief of the Multilateral Investment Fund of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). She is responsible for cultivating the driving forces of the new economy—technology, innovation and entrepreneurship—to promote inclusive growth and job creation in Latin America and the Caribbean. Before joining the MIF, she served as the lead architect and principal investment officer for the IDB's Opportunities for the Majority Initiative, and for three years she was a policy advisor to the IDB's Executive Vice President. Prior to her career at the IDB, Elizabeth was a Program Officer for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna, Austria and for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Khartoum, Sudan. She holds both a master's in foreign service from



the Edmund Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University and a master's in Spanish from Middlebury College in Madrid, Spain. She earned a Bachelor of Arts from Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont.

Oscar Contreras-Villaruel

Executive Director, Fundación EcoScience Chile, Chile

Oscar Contreras-Villaruel is the Executive Director of Fundación EcoScience Chile (EcoScience Chile Foundation), a philanthropic foundation that aims to bridge the gap between science and society, and preserve Chile's natural heritage by managing more than 100,000 hectares of land in the country. Oscar is a social entrepreneur who specializes in creating corporate partnerships and STEM education programs. He is also the Founder and Board President of Fundación Ciencia Joven (Youth Science Foundation), and founding partner of PowerKit. Oscar holds a master's in public policy from the University of Chile, a graduate certificate in public policy from the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy, and a Bachelor of Science in biochemistry from the Pontifical Catholic University of Valparaíso.

Efraín Castillo Córdoba


Medical student, Latin University of Panama, Panama

Efraín Castillo founded Ecoteens Panamá, a group of young people that seeks to protect our natural environment through garbage collection, recycling, and awareness campaigns. They also provide tutoring to students and offer free language courses. He leads the campaign "Un joven diferente" (A different young person), which aims to empower young people to be unique and thereby incentivize the entire education community to improve. Efraín spent three years at ProEd Panamá as a student leader promoting volunteer work. As a finalist in the 2016 national public speaking contest, he participated in the Passport to Success® and Career Guidance courses provided by the Instituto de Competitividad Juvenil CoSPAE (CoSPAE's Youth Competitiveness Institute) for the Fundación Cable & Wireless Panamá (Panama's Cable & Wireless Foundation). Currently, Efraín is a medical student at the Latin University of Panama.

Iliana Cortéz Vega

National Director of Educational and Professional Guidance, Ministry of Education, Panama

Iliana Cortéz Vega is the National Director of Educational and Professional Guidance for Panama's Ministry of Education. She coordinates the Comisión Nacional de Orientadores Panameños (National Commission of Panamanian Counselors) and is an active member of the Colegio Nacional de Orientadores Panameños (National Association of Panamanian Counselors) and the NEO Panama Alliance. She is a university professor with more than eighteen years of experience designing educational, personal, social, career, and professional guidance projects that target youth in public education centers. Additionally, Iliana has worked as an administrative consultant manager specializing in education and organizational culture. She graduated with honors from the National University of Panama and Panama's University of Technology. She holds a doctorate in education and a master's in guidance and counseling and computer science for education.



Elías Dinzey Rosario

General Manager, Fundación Popular, Inc., Dominican Republic

Elías Dinzey Rosario has more than twenty years of professional experience in development program management and supervision and operations management for international organizations. In the past, Elías has worked as: National Coordinator and National Officer for the International Labour Organization (ILO); Operations Manager for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and Strategic Manager and Partner at the Agencia Latinoamericana de Expertos en Planificación H (Latin American Agency of Experts in H Planning). Elías holds a master's in business administration from the Mother and Teacher Pontifical Catholic University and completed graduate studies in international relations and development at the Latin American Institute of Social Sciences. He received training in monitoring, evaluation, and management of ILO country programs at the John Knox International Center in Geneva, Switzerland.

Mauricio Doehner

Executive Vice-President of Corporate Affairs and Enterprise Risk Management, CEMEX, Mexico

Mauricio Doehner joined CEMEX in 1996 and has held several executive positions in Mexico as well as Europe. Since May 2014, he has been a part of CEMEX's Executive Committee, leading the Corporate Affairs, Enterprise Risk Management, and Social Responsibility areas. Mauricio has also worked in the public sector within the Office of the Mexican Presidency. Mauricio is currently the Vice-President of the Board of Confederación de Cámaras Industriales (Confederation of Industrial Chambers), and a board member of ARZYS, Centro de Integración Ciudadana (Citizens' Advice Center), Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey (Contemporary Art Museum of Monterrey), and Tecmilenio University. Mauricio earned his bachelor's degree in economics from the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education and received a master's in business administration from the Pan-American Institute for High-Level Business Administration and the University of Navarra's IESE Business School in Madrid. He also holds a Certification in Competitive Intelligence from the FULD Academy of Competitive Intelligence in Boston, Massachusetts.

Carlos Gauto


Coordinator, NEO Alliance, Paraguay

Carlos Gauto is a doctor with a specialization in psychiatry, which he studied in Brazil and France. Since 2000, Carlos has directed the Youth Area at Fundación CIRD (Development Information and Resource Center Foundation), NEO Paraguay's executing agency. He has extensive professional experience in youth-related areas such as drug abuse, youth development, youth employment and youth entrepreneurship. Carlos coordinated various employability projects for disadvantaged youth, including a project for the entra21 program, which was led by the International Youth Foundation in collaboration with the Multilateral Investment Fund. Currently, Carlos is the Coordinator of NEO Paraguay.

Bernardo Guillamon

Manager of the Office of Outreach and Partnerships, Inter-American Development Bank, USA

Bernardo Guillamon is the Manager of the Inter-American Development Bank's (IDB) Office of Outreach and Partnerships. In this role, he crafts and executes the IDB's institutional partnership strategy, and oversees a team of professionals who identify, establish, and manage partnerships with large companies,



government agencies, multilateral actors, non-governmental organizations, foundations, and universities. Since joining the Bank in 1992, Bernardo has led the IDB's private sector evaluation efforts, overseen the Integration and Trade Sector's operational program, and led the development of the IDB Group's Integrated Business Plan for Private Sector Operations. In addition, he worked on microfinance, microenterprise, and small enterprise development projects for the Andean region. He has also introduced the pioneering equity investments of the IDB's Multilateral Investment Fund in microfinance institutions. Bernardo holds a Bachelor of Science in agricultural engineering from the University of the Republic of Uruguay and a master's in business administration from Santa Clara University in California.

Brigit Helms

General Manager, Multilateral Investment Fund, Inter-American Development Bank, USA

Brigit Helms, a U.S. citizen, is the General Manager of the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF). She brings more than thirty years of experience finding business solutions to development problems. She has held senior positions at Development Alternatives, Inc., McKinsey & Company, the International Finance Corporation, and the Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest (CGAP). She has worked in more than 30 countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia. She holds a doctorate in agriculture and development economics from Stanford University and a master's in international studies from Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies.

Ramón Maciel Rojas

Director, National System of Professional Training, Paraguay


Ramón Maciel Rojas is the Director of the National System of Professional Training for Paraguay's Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security. Beginning in 1995, he worked as a business development consultant for the United Nations Development Program's projects, for the Inter-American Development Bank until 2006, and for countless businesses until 2014. In April 2014, he was appointed Director of the National System of Professional Training, where he continues to work at present. Ramón received a bachelor's in systems analysis from the Catholic University of Asunción and completed graduate studies in project management. He took specialized courses in economic development in Korea (1989) and policies to support small and medium-sized business in Japan (1997).

Bosco Martí Ascencio

Executive Director for Mexico and the Dominican Republic, Inter-American Development Bank, Mexico

Bosco Martí has been the Executive Director for Mexico and the Dominican Republic at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Inter-American Investment Corporation (IIC) since September 2014. Before joining the IDB, he worked as the head of the International Affairs Unit at the Mexican Ministry of Finance and Public Credit. From 2010 to 2013, Bosco worked as Mexico's Minister Counselor for Financial Affairs at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris. From 2009 to 2010, he was the head of the Government Unit at the Mexican Ministry of the Interior. From 2003 to 2009, he held various positions at the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Director for North America and Director of the Proyecto Mesoamérica (Mesoamerica Project). He also worked for the Office of the





Mexican Presidency and Mexico's Bank Savings Protection Institute. In the private sector, Bosco worked for Merrill Lynch and Arthur Andersen.

Kathia Mejía

Executive Director, Fundación Sur Futuro, Dominican Republic

Kathia's professional experience spans the private, public, and social sectors. In the private sector, Kathia worked in development banking. In the public sector, she held administrative and financial positions at the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources. Kathia has worked in the social sector for the past ten years at Fundación Sur Futuro (Sur Futuro Foundation), where she has held the position of Executive Director for the past four years. She has led processes for local development, initiatives, and innovative products through the more than 30 simultaneous projects that the Foundation implements. Kathia has a Bachelor of Science in economics and a master's in financial management through a dual degree program between the Mother and Teacher Pontifical Catholic University and the University of Bordeaux. She is currently pursuing a master's in corporate social responsibility and sustainability through a dual degree program between the Mother and Teacher Pontifical Catholic University and the University of Valencia in Spain.

Alis Muñoz Hernández


Educational Planning Specialist, NEO Alliance, Colombia

Alis Muñoz Hernández is NEO Colombia's Education Manager. She has extensive experience in general management of human development and work-oriented educational institutions, a field she has worked in since 2001. She was the Director of Instituto Integridad Confianza Excelencia Nobleza Fe (Integrity Confidence Excellence Nobility Faith Institute, ICENF), which is one of NEO Colombia's quality services clients. Since 2006, she has advised formal educational institutions and job training centers on quality education standards. Alis has a bachelor's in public accounting from Remington University and she completed graduate studies in educational planning and development plans at Juan de Castellanos University.

Carmen Pagés-Serra

Chief of Labor Markets and Social Security Division, Inter-American Development Bank, USA

Carmen Pagés-Serra is the Chief of the Labor Markets and Social Security Division of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Previously, she was a principal research economist at the IDB's Research Department and led key publications such as *The Age of Productivity: Transforming Economies from the Bottom Up*. She is also the author of the book *Law and Employment: Lessons from Latin America and the Caribbean* jointly with the Nobel Laureate Prof. James Heckman. Carmen has published extensively in leading academic and policy journals in the areas of labor markets, social security and productivity. Prior to joining the IDB, she worked as a senior labor economist at the World Bank from 2004 to 2006. She holds a master's in economics from the Autonomous University of Barcelona and a doctorate in economics from Boston University.



Susan Pezzullo

Regional Director, International Youth Foundation, USA

Susan Pezzullo is the Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean at the International Youth Foundation (IYF). In this role, Susan oversees programs in 12 countries, including several large-scale youth employment programs aimed at system-level changes. Prior to her role as Regional Director, she directed the entra21 program that served 137,000 youth in 21 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Before joining IYF, Susan served as the Country Director for Nicaragua for the Peace Corps and worked for USAID and the Inter-American Foundation in Mexico and Central America. She holds a Master's in public health from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Pennsylvania. Raised in Latin America, Susan also has worked in southern Africa and Central Europe.

Zuleika Plazaola

Coordinator, NEO Alliance, Panama

Since 1997, Zuleika Plazaola has served as Executive Director of Consejo del Sector Privado para la Asistencia Educacional (Private Sector Board for Educational Assistance, CoSPA), a non-profit entrepreneurial organization in Panama. Currently, Zuleika is the Coordinator for her country's NEO alliance. She has extensive experience managing youth employability projects focused on job placement and coordination with the private sector. An engineer by profession, Zuleika received her Master's in engineering from the University of Delaware. She also completed graduate studies in non-profit management at the University of Louisville, in promotion of dual vocational training with the German Foundation for International Development (DSE), and in cooperative development project management with the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI).

William Reese


President & CEO, International Youth Foundation, USA

Bill Reese was appointed President and Chief Executive Officer of the International Youth Foundation (IYF) in 2005. Before joining IYF in 1998 as Chief Operating Officer, he was President and CEO of Partners of the Americas for twelve years. Previously, Bill served with the Peace Corps for ten years. He currently sits on the board of Youth Business International (YBI) and previously served on the board of InterAction. Bill Reese also serves as a founding board member of Solutions 4 Youth Employment (S4YE), a multi-stakeholder alliance, as well as on the boards of W.R.A.P. and ICTI Care Foundation. Bill received his bachelor's in political science from Stanford University and is a 1995 graduate of the Business School's Executive Program.

Sobeyda Sánchez Pérez

General Director of Intermediate Education, Ministry of Education, Dominican Republic

From 2013 to 2016, Sobeyda served as the Regional Director of Education for the 10th District (Santo Domingo), where she led pedagogical and administrative processes. Under her direction, the district was awarded the National Prize for Quality under the Common Assessment Framework. She founded the educational magazine *Huellas Pedagógicas* (Pedagogical Footprints) and was responsible for the editorial. Previously, Sobeyda was the District Director for educational districts 10-06 and 10-04. Additionally, she held the leadership positions of District Deputy Director and Curriculum Coordinator. Sobeyda has also



worked as a school psychologist, special education teacher, and upper-level teacher. She has participated in various conferences on management, leadership, and the Digital Republic initiative. Sobeyda holds a master's in training of trainers from the Salomé Ureña Higher Institute of Teacher Training and has completed graduate studies in educational center management and psychopedagogy.

Samir Santos Jiménez

General Director of Employment, Ministry of Labor, Dominican Republic

Samir Enrique Santos Jiménez is the General Director of Employment for the Dominican Ministry of Labor. As a public servant for more than 15 years, Samir has held various positions in the Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Industry and Trade, and the Ministry of the Interior and Police. The last position he held was Executive Director of the Dominican Republic's National Legalization Plan for Foreigners with Irregular Immigration Statuses. Samir holds a bachelor's in law and masters' in public policy management and analysis and constitutional law.

Peter Shiras

Executive Vice President, Partnership Development, International Youth Foundation, USA

Peter joined the International Youth Foundation in September 2005 as the Vice President for Employability. He was appointed to Executive Vice President in January 2008. Peter has extensive international experience in Latin America and Africa, where he directed humanitarian and development programs during his 13-year tenure at Catholic Relief Services. He lived and worked in Central America from 1981 to 1985 and in Kenya from 1987 to 1990. He also worked for 11 years in Washington, D.C. with InterAction and Independent Sector. Peter has served on the Global Philanthropy Advisory Committee of the Council of Foundations and the board of Casa de Maryland. He is a graduate of Cornell University, with a master's and a Bachelor of Science in agricultural economics.

Miguel Székely


Director, Centro de Estudios Educativos y Sociales, Mexico

Currently, Miguel is the Director of the Centro de Estudios Educativos y Sociales (Center for Educational and Social Studies) and an advisor to the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the United Nations Development Organization, as well as other international organizations. From 2010 to 2013, he was the Director of the Instituto de Innovación Educativa (Educational Innovation Institute) at the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education. Between 2006 and 2010, he served as Mexico's Deputy Secretary of Upper Secondary Education and from 2002 to 2006, he was the Deputy Secretary of Forecasting, Planning, and Evaluation at the Mexican Ministry of Social Development. From 2000 to 2001, he worked as the Head of the Regional Development Unit for the Office of the Mexican Presidency and between 1996 and 2000, he was a Research Economist at the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington, D.C. Miguel holds a doctorate and a master's in economy from Oxford University.

Mary Snapp

Corporate Vice President, Microsoft, USA

Mary Snapp is the Corporate Vice President of Microsoft Philanthropies in Microsoft's Corporate, External, and Legal Affairs department (CELA). Mary leads the team responsible for Microsoft's philanthropic efforts.



The team seeks to invest the company's strongest assets – technology, money, employee talent, and the company's voice – to partner with nonprofits and communities to create lasting positive impact. A 27-year veteran of Microsoft, Mary joined the company in 1988 as Microsoft's first female attorney. Prior to her current role, she led the legal work for Microsoft's business development, strategic partnership, developer relationships, and business strategy teams. Mary currently serves on the board of directors for KCTS 9 Public Television, the YWCA of Seattle, King, and Snohomish Counties, and ArtsFund. She graduated from the University of Michigan School of Law. She also holds a master's in business administration from Wayne State University and was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate from the School of Journalism at the University of Kansas.

Emiliana Vegas

Education Division Chief, Inter-American Development Bank, USA

Since 2012, Emiliana Vegas has been the Chief of the Education Division at the Inter-American Development Bank. She has extensive experience in lending operations and applied research on regional and global education policy, including early childhood development, teacher policies, and school funding systems. Between 2001 and 2012, Dr. Vegas worked at the Work Bank in the Human Development Network and held various positions, including Lead Economist and Human Development Sector Leader for Central America. She holds a doctorate in education from Harvard University with a concentration in economics of education, a master's in public policy from Duke University, and a bachelor's degree in social communications with a concentration in journalism from Andrés Bello Catholic University (Venezuela).

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