



SUCCESS STORY

Improving Youth Skills

USAID Training Helps Youth Achieve Dreams



Photo Credit: USAID Youth: Work Mexico program

"My dream is to pursue a career in physical therapy. Several years ago, I met the son of a cousin who was born paralyzed and that inspired me to want to help others. With the help of [Youth: Work Mexico], I am able to see that this dream is achievable".

— Cristian Alonso Chávez

When financially hard times fell on his family of 10, Cristian Alonso Chávez, 22, from the Francisco I. Madero neighborhood in Ciudad Juarez, did not continue his education after middle school, since he had to leave school to look for work.

Although Cristian had almost three years of experience as an industrial machine operator, his most recent job did not offer him any opportunities for advancement. When he tried to find new work, his low level of education, and the pressing need for income always led him back to the operator job.

One night, after months looking for new work, he was watching television when an interview caught his attention. Sigifredo Heras, a Youth: Work Mexico career counselor was recruiting youth who wanted to better their lives and find work. Cristian went to the nearest community center and enrolled in a life and employability skills training program through the USAID-supported Youth: Work Mexico program.

When Cristian met with his fellow trainees on their first day, he thought, "These youth are like me, and want to succeed." Seeing others in the same situation made him realize the challenges they were facing: family obligations, pressure to work, and few outlets to change their current situation.

Over the course of the seven weeks, Cristian began to evolve as a person and become more self-aware. His favorite part of the course was the lesson on self-awareness, where he discovered his strengths and weaknesses. With regard to his personal growth, Cristian reflects, "I have seen many changes from the time when I could not even turn on the computer, or knew what a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis was, to now, where I know my strengths and know how to use Microsoft Office and other skills that will help me access new job opportunities."

Cristian no longer sees being a machine operator as his only job option and is determined to find a position that allows him to grow professionally. Finding work is also no longer his only priority; he plans to go back to school and complete his degree.

"My dream is to pursue a career in physical therapy," he says. "Several years ago, I met the son of a cousin who was born paralyzed and that inspired me to want to help others. With the help of [Youth: Work Mexico], I am able to see that this dream is achievable".