

# Bridge to Employment Success Story

## BTE Success Story

Nigua, Dominican Republic

August 2024

### Why BTE?

The BTE Nigua program was launched on November 5, 2020, with the goal of increasing the number of students enrolling in post-secondary education and pursuing careers in STEM2D. The program was a collaboration between the Sur Futuro Foundation, which served as the coordinating entity, the Juan Bosch Education Center (secondary school),



and the Pontifical Catholic Mother and Teacher University, the post-secondary education partner. Social inequality and poverty are ongoing challenges in Nigua and students lack access to life skills training as well as sexual and reproductive health education. Dropping out of secondary school is common. The BTE program was launched to provide students with academic support and career exploration and preparation; offer teachers professional development opportunities; and prepare parents to support their children's transitions in work and learning.

To be eligible to participate in the program, students had to be starting their final compulsory year of school (which is followed by two additional years of non-compulsory high school) and living in or near Nigua communities with no plans to move during the implementation period. Following this process, 50 students who met specific academic criteria were selected. Likewise, 50 additional students with similar characteristics were selected as a comparison group.

During the three-year implementation period, the BTE Nigua program offered participating students tours to manufacturing facilities, visits to universities, workshops on emotional intelligence and conflict resolution, career coaching, guest speaker sessions, mentoring sessions, and sexual and reproductive health workshops.

## BTE: A Catalyst for Post-Secondary Education & Careers

The BTE Nigua program was comprised of 50 students who met pre-determined academic and attendance levels. The program launched at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which created restrictions for the overall program. Face-to-face time with students and families was restricted and replaced with online activities. BTE Nigua purchased tablets and cell phones with internet access for students to support their participation in the program.

Understanding that teenage pregnancy was the most common reason students were dropping out of school, the BTE Nigua program made this an area of focus and put an emphasis on parent and community involvement. A diagnostic approach was taken from the early stage of programming, involving parents, teachers, administrators, and community members. The BTE Nigua leadership team identified areas with high rates of student dropouts and offered workshops to spread awareness about teenage pregnancy and safe sex. The BTE Nigua team conducted home visits to meet the parents of the students, which aided in parent engagement. A student committee was also organized for students to present the information to parents. This helped to ensure the continuous involvement of parents in program design and decision-making. The BTE Nigua partners reported that while parent involvement was challenging, it was also crucial to the program's success. BTE Nigua also provided professional development opportunities, workshops, and sessions for teacher development to support sustainable change in the community.

### SITE PROFILE

**Location**

San Gregorio De Nigua,  
Dominican Republic

**Grant Period**

2020 - 2023

**Sponsor**

Johnson & Johnson

**Coordinator**

Sur Futuro Foundation

**Community Partners**

Pontifical Catholic  
Mother and Teacher  
University

**Volunteers**

22 volunteers

**Students Directly Served**

50 students

*“BTE is a great program, and the impact of the program can really be seen in the students. The students have evolved with the program from baseline to Year 3. Other people in the nearby area have heard about the program and hope they can participate as well, seeing the kind of impact it has had on our students.”*

*- BTE partner*

Later in the program, the BTE Nigua team organized a three-day bootcamp so that the students had an opportunity to travel and learn together. During the camp, students learned foundational life skills, as well as how to navigate challenges, through leadership workshops. To practice their interviewing and resume writing skills, students worked with Johnson & Johnson (J&J) volunteers to draft resumes and participate in mock interviews. Students enjoyed the opportunity to meet and acquire inspiration from professionals and guest speakers. Popular activities among the students included visiting a manufacturing site, virtual and in-person mentoring sessions with J&J employees, application support, and visits to educational centers. Overall, the BTE program supported students with their future education and work opportunities by teaching them practical skills and helping them prepare and apply for opportunities.

### Impact of BTE

A significant growth in interest in STEM<sup>2</sup>D careers was seen among students from baseline to end line. Students reported that the university visits were the most effective and their favorite activity during all three years of programming. Throughout the visits, students shared that they learned about career options and the day-to-day life of a university student. Students also shared that their participation in BTE helped them with their future education and career choices. They shared that they were more prepared, had more knowledge and skills needed for post-secondary education, gained experience that could go on their resumes, had knowledge about scholarships and received scholarships due to BTE, grew in their non-cognitive skills, and overall, had a better quality of life since participating in BTE. The program helped the students choose majors in post-secondary education and apply for admission and scholarships. All the activities that were designed for the

students supported their future planning and fostered positive changes, including providing them with more clarity and information about their goals and more motivation. Out of the initial 50 students who started the program in 2020, 31 (62%) completed the program. In an exit interview, one BTE Nigua partner mentioned that the program's attrition was related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the socioeconomic makeup of the location.

Several students reported that the BTE Nigua program had motivated them to try harder in school because they had more clarity about their goals for the future and increased knowledge of career options. All of the BTE graduates reported the intention to enroll in a post-secondary education institution and nearly two-thirds with a specialization in STEM<sup>2</sup>D or health. One student stated that BTE has been an effective program, explaining, "BTE has shown us what we need and how we should apply for universities and scholarships." Another student added, "I am a more prepared and competent person for my work and academics due to BTE."

## Sustainability

At the time of their interview, the BTE partners at Nigua were engaged in several conversations with the school and community partners to sustain the program. They hope



to sustain the program for two years and will approach the Ministry of Education for funding. The partners plan to continue to promote the impact and value of BTE and consult with other stakeholders to adapt BTE in their communities. The partners asserted that there is a need for a program like BTE to help young adults succeed in the community.

## STUDENT OUTCOMES

**100%** of BTE students who completed the three-year BTE program graduated from high school.

**100%** of BTE graduates enrolled in post-secondary education.

**65%** of BTE graduates chose a STEM<sup>2</sup>D specialization.

**74.2%** of BTE graduates received a technical certification.