



## SUCCESS STORY



### Horizontina Youth Empowered to Take Civic Action

Horizontina is a small, rural town located in the northwestern corner of Brazil's southern most state. Horizontina and neighboring communities, which were originally colonized by European immigrants, may look and feel different from some of the better-known urban centers of Brazil, but youth here face the same challenges as those throughout the country. While youth in Brazil now represent the largest population segment, they often lack the opportunity to make their voices heard and determine their own priorities. Youth participants expressed that the few projects that exist for youth in the region are pre-determined in their scope and are run and designed by adults.

The Sowing Futures program, on the other hand, embraces Global Communities' participatory approach towards youth development. We first engaged local school officials and community leaders to help us identify and target at-risk youth. During our first encounters with youth, we asked them to reach out to each other and come back with ideas for projects based on their own interests. In one such case, a group of youth led by the 16-year old Luana Kollmann, proposed a cancer prevention awareness event. Luana explained how she and her family suffered through her mother's battle with breast cancer and the importance of sensitizing and educating the community on women's cancer prevention.

Sowing Futures helped to organize youth participants and facilitate working groups through a "learn-by-doing" approach whereby youth designed projects, developed action plans and worked together to put their projects in motion. Youth took responsibility for all facets of their projects, from finding project sponsors, to coordinating and organizing event logistics, to developing awareness campaigns and public outreach through local media.

In a span of just a few of months, the youth carried out two civic action projects: the cancer prevention awareness event and a "cultural night" designed to bring together the community for a night of music, dance, theater and fun. The 460 community members including 138 youth that participated in both events were eyewitnesses to the commitment, energy and leadership capabilities of Horizontina's youth. Cristiana Rodriguez, a 16-year-old participant addressed the audience





**“It was a very good feeling of helping people. I felt proud of my friends...and myself for being part of it all. Seeing our event and looking at the people who were there, I think we young people showed that we are capable of doing whatever we want. It was a wonderful experience to be a part of... and it was great to see people in the community feeling proud of the youth. I wanted to show that there are people who still care about the health of others.”**

—Luana Kollmann, youth participant

at the closing ceremony of the cancer prevention awareness event: “The idea of this campaign was created and developed by us youth. This is just the beginning of what we will do for our community. We want to be seen by our community in a different way, as young citizens who also care about community issues. We will be seeking to make a difference in our community, despite our little life experience.”

Sowing Future’s youth participants, empowered and energized by the results of their self-directed, collective efforts, are already planning for their next civic engagement. Youth have decided to prioritize a drug prevention awareness and education campaign for the city that will create and mobilize a network of public and private sector institutions committed to working together on this important issue.

*Global Communities, along with the John Deere Foundation and the John Deere Brazil Foundation, has identified opportunities for expanding community development activities that catalyze meaningful change for communities in need located near John Deere’s Brazil operations. The mission of this three-year program is to build the capacity of communities and local institutions to prioritize needs and mobilize resources that improve socio-economic conditions, particularly for at-risk youth.*

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