Roberto, who is in his 4th year of secondary school, confided that at first he was nervous. The work was a little complicated since he had never had to do professional tasks. But things got better quickly. “I learned more each day. My co-workers saw how interested I was, so it worked out really well.”

Roberto was one of 23 student interns from La Maquina, Guatemala, where ECLT has worked with DNI Costa Rica to develop and launch a “rural employment training model”. A main priority is making sure that students in rural schools graduate with the skills they need to find jobs in their communities. In 2018, 12 organisations offered internships, including the Ministry of Labour, banks, renewable energy companies, the Chamber of Commerce and business centres, to name just a few.

Roberto is already looking forward to his next chance to participate in another internship next fall. As the employment training model is fine-tuned, plans are already in action to make it replicable for other communities – ensuring that more young people come out of school with the skills they need for a bright future.

“Thanks to my internship, I feel more confident. I am much less worried about looking for a job.”
In July 2019, the ECLT Foundation supported the Government of Guatemala to hold the First Subregional Forum on Strategies for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and Protection of Adolescent Worker in the Agricultural Sector.

The multi-stakeholder event brought together more than 80 key actors in the fight against child labour, including ministers and representatives from governments, companies, unions, and civil society organisations from all over Central America. The Forum was also attended by teenagers, young people and community leaders from the ECLT Foundation’s EEMPATA Project, in San José La Maquina, Guatemala, implemented by DNI-Costa Rica.

The Subregional Forum engaged participants on crucial issues regarding collaboration to fight child labour in Central America. Participants exchanged about common challenges and developed proposed ways forward on four key areas of work:

1. Child Labour Prevention and Education, ways forward:
   - Strategically coordinate work with local governments and the educational community, through agreements.
   - Increase capacity for visits and inspections in areas with a history of child Labour.

2. Elimination of child labour in supply chains, ways forward:
   - Establish baselines within supply chains
   - Draft and strengthen policies against child labor within companies.
   - Introduce new/improved agricultural and occupational safety inspections.

3. Protection of young workers and promotion of decent work, ways forward:
   - Raise awareness on decent work opportunities for young people, focusing on businesses
   - Encourage entrepreneurship
   - Find coordination mechanisms to cover migrant children and adolescents.

4. Strengthening inter-institutional and intersectoral alliances, ways forward:
   - Build and improve social responsibility programmes
   - Develop strategies for inclusive community participation, with cultural relevance.
   - Work across sectors to agree on common work plans.

Guatemalan President, Jimmy Morales, met with students from the EEMPATA project to hear about experiences in improving education in rural areas to fight child labour.