



From Silicon Valley to La Pintana: Chilean Scientists Teach AI and Programming to Young Mothers

With pride and joy, we share the article published by **El País Journal** on Thursday, June 19, 2025 highlighting the field of programming and the remarkable contribution made by **Cuky Pérez** and **Miguel Socías**.

After working at Netflix and Airbnb in the United States, data experts Miguel Socías and Cuky Pérez now teach free classes to women in one of Santiago’s most vulnerable municipalities. “We teach them tools that the market actually demands,” they say.

María de los Ángeles Pérez (Santiago, Chile, 50), known as Cuky, and Miguel Socías (Santiago, Chile, 53) are a married couple who spent two decades excelling in Silicon Valley. She led Airbnb’s platform team and worked at Shopify; he was a senior data scientist at Netflix. Both are economists with PhDs from Stanford University, experts in data science and artificial intelligence, and deeply passionate about education.

They had everything to continue thriving in the world’s technology capital—but in 2022 they chose to change course and return to Chile, specifically to La Pintana, one of the country’s poorest neighborhoods, to teach their skills to young mothers.

Many people around them could not understand such an altruistic decision, but they could. The choice was made in late 2016, after the death of Cuky Pérez’s mother in Santiago. “We no longer wanted to be far from our parents or receive another bad phone call from afar. Silicon Valley is unique, and we don’t regret our time there, but we didn’t want to keep that pace of life. It drains you and makes you feel that you are never enough,” Pérez explains.

After carefully planning when and how to return, they decided on 2022 and on teaching people with limited economic resources—specifically young mothers. “We decided that a large part of our time would be donated in Chile,” says the data expert.

For this purpose, they partnered with **Fundación SoyMás**, which trains adolescent mothers in different trades—such as hairdressing and gastronomy—in the municipalities of La Pintana, Maipú, and Renca in Santiago, as well as in Antofagasta in northern Chile. According to Bárbara Etcheberry, Executive Director of SoyMás, the goal is for these women to expand their networks, develop projects, achieve economic autonomy, and “break the cycle of poverty.”

Through this collaboration, the couple introduced a free course in programming and data analysis using generative artificial intelligence. In one workshop, participants learn a methodology known as *vibe coding*, which allows students to create web applications by giving instructions to AI. Within days, some participants had already built a functional social network from scratch.

“When we started, we knew we had to position our students in the labor market in areas where they wouldn’t compete directly with engineers, since we only have one year to teach this trade,” says Miguel Socías. “So we focused on tasks that engineers often find tedious but that offer real opportunities, such as data cleaning or cybersecurity. We teach tools the market demands.”

The curriculum designed by the couple includes programming languages such as JavaScript, Python, and SQL. To scale the courses, SoyMás partnered with **INACAP**, enabling instructors to teach mothers at INACAP facilities in Renca and Maipú. “This teaching model could be scaled across Chile. That’s the idea,” says Pérez. “Women are often underestimated, but they are incredibly capable.”

Pérez—considered by local media as one of the Chilean women who has gone the furthest in Silicon Valley—has long been interested in increasing women’s representation in technology careers. During the program’s pilot phase, she wondered whether the classes would resonate with the mothers. “That worried us, but we quickly realized that the women of La Pintana, who have faced so many obstacles, are deeply motivated by the desire to provide a better future for their children.”

To date, three cohorts have graduated from the program, and several former students have been hired as junior analysts in companies. The program has grown from 10 participants in 2023 to more than 80 today. “When class ends, no one leaves the room—they want to keep learning,” Socías explains.

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