

From Lemons to Lemonade: Finding Creative Solutions to COVID-Related Challenges



EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY JOBS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN AGRICULTURE (VAMOS TEJIENDO), COLOMBIA

VALUE
\$5M

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE
DEC 2019 – NOV 2023

OBJECTIVE

Reduces the vulnerability of women and girls to labor violations in the cut flower and panela (sugar cane) sectors by providing them and communities with a better understanding of labor rights and improved access to labor and social protections



MYANMAR PROGRAMME ON THE ELIMINATION OF CHILD LABOUR (MY-PEC)

VALUE
\$7.75M

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE
DEC 2013 – MAR 2023

OBJECTIVE

Aims to establish a comprehensive, inclusive, and efficient multistakeholder response to reducing child labor.



YOUTH PATHWAYS CENTRAL AMERICA (YPCA), HONDURAS & EL SALVADOR

VALUE
\$17.3

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE
JUL 2015 – SEP 2021

OBJECTIVE

Reduce the prevalence of child labor, hazardous child labor, and irregular work among at-risk children and youth in El Salvador and Honduras

Cycling to Work (Vamos Tejiendo)

CONTEXT

- Women comprise 60% of workers in the cut flower industry. This sector saw an increased demand during the pandemic, so most workers retained employment.
- The Colombian government issued a decree requiring companies to cover the cost of testing and, should testing yield a positive result, also cover the cost of sick leave. The government's safety measures did not fully respond to the challenges facing women related to transportation, including minimal social distancing and protection against the riots and protests happening at the time, which placed women at higher risk.
- Most workers took public transportation or commuter buses provided by company at a fee.

CHALLENGE

- Women faced difficulty getting to their jobs due to road closures and risk of COVID exposure on public transportation. They also faced difficulty attending trainings outside of working hours due to increased caretaking responsibilities in the home.

PIVOT

- The project facilitated a partnership with the workers, employers, World Bicycle Relief, and local government to provide 100 bicycles for women; women rode bikes together in groups to their jobs and were able to circumvent road closures.
- Negotiated with companies for permission to conduct trainings during women's working hours as to not interfere with increased duties at home.

IMPACT

- Greater understanding among the public that the bicycle is an ideal means of transport, which can mitigate the impact of COVID for women in terms of biosecurity and distancing while they travel to their places of work.
- Enabled women's continued economic independence (continued employment, saved money from not using public transportation)

Sewing at Home (My-PEC)

CONTEXT

- June 2020 – GOM adopted new laws to protect children under 14 from labor skills training offered prior to COVID include food processing, mechanics, sewing, driving (brought to a halt by COVID)
- Garment designer training to transition children from working in factories to working at home in a safer environment
- The pilot direct services, implementing at village tract/ward level starting 2016, aim to increase the participation of child laborers and at-risk children in quality education, increase access of children above minimum age for employment to safe work, and reduce vulnerability of target households to child labor.

CHALLENGE

- Families were in economic distress and schools closed, increasing the risk of sending children to perform dangerous work in order to contribute to household income

PIVOT

- Provided training for livelihoods, education (youth) and occupational safety as well – sewing training (youth). Taught those that got sewing training to sew the masks and distributed them at community level (masks were expensive) – helpful to community.
- Shifted to sewing/mask-making and soap production

IMPACT

- Boost household income so they don't have to send children to work
- Promoted transmission prevention
- Made products available at an affordable price point

Home Gardens (YPCA)

CONTEXT

- At risk children and youth were affected not only by the pandemic but also by natural disasters in both countries

CHALLENGE

- Sustainable development work was no longer the goal, given the multiple crises. The project shifted in part to providing humanitarian aid to ensure the most at-risk youth and their families could survive.

PIVOT

- Used an extension period to provide emergency response service delivery targeting the most vulnerable youth and their families.
- Provided supplies for an additional 63 home garden kits for at risk-youth to grow their own vegetables. Kits included seeds and fertilizer.
- Delivered 487 rations of in-kind food and biosecurity kits. Food rations included beans, sugar, rice, cooking oil, pasta, flour, milk, and toilet paper. Biosecurity kits included hand sanitizer, wet wipes, liquid soap, bleach, and face masks. Rations and kits were delivered directly to beneficiaries and to local partner training facilities for distribution.

IMPACT

- Increased food security for families of at-risk youth
- Families sold produce for additional income
- Participants reported mental health benefits from gardening



Youth participants in the home garden activity grow cilantro, squash, cucumber, bell pepper, radish, and tomatoes.

Best Practices

- ✓ When making reprogramming decisions, consider activities that promote beneficiaries' physical and mental health in light of the crisis at hand.
- ✓ Conduct a pre-situational assessment and stakeholder mapping at project start up to best understand the experiences and perspectives of sub-groups of beneficiaries and key stakeholders, as well as limitations faced by these groups, then update as needed in time of crisis.
- ✓ In times of concurrent public health and climate emergencies, consider the viability of shifting project objectives from focusing on sustainability to providing humanitarian aid.
- ✓ Local entrepreneurship and other skills training should remain flexible to adapt to evolving demand of the market.
- ✓ Work with businesses and policy makers to stress the importance of prioritizing worker safety over production in the short term for long-term worker retention and growth.

Lessons Learned



Activities do not fail by prioritizing survival over sustainability; recognizing the gravity and magnitude of a crisis and responding with humanitarian aid can ultimately retain beneficiaries in a program.

Experiences of women in the face of a pandemic, natural disaster, or conflict are different than men, and therefore the way implementers respond in times of crisis must be informed by women and tailored to the challenges they face.



Investing time building relationships with other implementing partners and NGOs can result in fruitful collaborations when project activities are prone to change.