



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS APRIL / JUNE 2021**

### **HUMANITARIAN AID TO INFORMAL VENDORS OF OTAVALO**

This executive report presents the systematization of the psychosocial support spaces implemented with 90 of the project participants, most of them women. Focusing on multiple domains of intelligence, individual and collective tools were applied to improve self-esteem, confidence and collaborative work, in order to face and cope with times of crisis.

a. At a general level, some aspects that were manifested among all these meetings will be specified, so the guiding axis of the dialogue with each beneficiary was to talk on positive and negative aspects experienced throughout the pandemic. Among the negative aspects we find:

**Debts:** Debts for rent, basic services, close people, and the burden of facing day-to-day difficulties in meeting financial obligations with banks and credit unions generated a high level of concern and restlessness in the vast majority of participants. Concern increased with debts that were not paid, so our beneficiaries were reported to credit bureaus and they could no longer access credit to invest in their informal sales businesses and other activities that would allow them to generate more incomes. This happened in the same way in cases in which support was required to obtain the necessary inputs for planting productive crops of fruit trees and vegetables.

**Fear:** The fear of the pandemic, death and being far away from people they love and who depend on them, is present in most cases. This fear increased in those who were more exposed to television and mass media, watching the news, feeding their feeling of fear for the pandemic along with it the concern. This fear of death, of the virus, puts the participants on a particular condition of vulnerability, generating very complicated situations for some. Several women related how they stayed alone at night, crying, without letting their children see them, going through enormous suffering motivated by the existing uncertainty about the present and the near future.

**Informality:** Instability in income generation through informal sales has been another major concern. This situation impacts on multiple dimensions of their lives, such as not having access to health, pensions, and what social security implies. In the same way, not having any certainty about the income to be obtained the next day, and having to expose oneself to long and intense hours of work to be able to generate income, increases the burden of concern for the participants.

**Persecution:** The municipal police persecute informal vendors, in some cases taking their merchandise from them. This is a cause of great concern for the participants because, in addition to coping with the difficulties of working in the streets, they suffer from harassment from the agents who persecute them, including cases of verbal and physical abuse. This situation gets worst in public spaces, only seeing



coercive measures that are applied with no viable alternatives provided to improve the situation of informal vendors.

***Education:*** the education of the participant's children has become a problem in terms of the demands made by teachers on performance, with activities that require the accompaniment of parents who have no one to leave their children with. Either they are left alone in their homes or taken to the streets to sell their parent's products. There is also a difficult situation in terms of connectivity as various beneficiaries do not have internet access in their homes and must use their phones - the ones who have them - for send the tasks, with regular payments to have internet access, an expense that is important in relation to the income they get.

***Health:*** Access to the public health system has been closed due to the pandemic. Only cases of COVID-19 are treated in the hospital -whose capacity has collapsed-. In addition, people is afraid of going to health centers and being infected. People with serious health problems cannot get appointments because they are not assigned in a proper time, and also they don't have the resources to access private health entities.

b. Now, among the positive aspects that were identified we can mention:

***Resilience:*** Several people stated that an articulation was generated at the family level and between neighbors to respond to the emergency, in which solidarity was strengthened by carrying out actions that gave mutual support between individuals and families. Thus, those who cultivate some products such as vegetables exchanged them with other people according to the needs of each one, as an important help to solve day-to-day needs. In the same way, there have been support spaces between neighbors sharing their concerns and difficult emotional situation during the crisis, opening important communication channels through dialogue that contribute to the strengthening of the social and individual well-being.

***Family:*** In all cases there has been a strengthening of the relationships inside families in which mutual support has been essential to be able to carry out daily activities, allowing subsistence and fulfilling the basic needs that are achieved with the available resources. Fathers, mothers, uncles, grandparents, children, cousins, who in many cases lives nearby, have strengthened their ties by supporting each other with the available resources at hand. In several cases, food was cooked together to save money and at the same time satisfy everyone's alimentary needs as much as possible.

It has also been possible to spend more time with the family, because before the pandemic almost all the participants stated that each member of their households were living life on their own, being together only at night. During the crisis of the pandemic and its restrictions, these families have had more time for their members to spend time together, sharing spaces and activities, concerns and needs,



games and stories, which has contributed enormously to improving and strengthening intra-family relationships.

***Innovation:*** Definitely many of the informal vendors are entrepreneurs who work hard to bring food to their homes on a daily basis. The crisis has led many people to develop their own business ideas in an empirical way, either with the sale of food prepared at home, selling trash bags, vegetables and fruits in different spaces. Some of the participants have started ventures in the field of tourism, such as the sale of prepared meals and handicrafts in places of public influx such as the shore of Lake San Pablo. The crisis opened the door for many to innovate and turn around their activities, positively impacting the generation of income for their own livelihood.

***Sowing:*** Several persons and families engaged in general service jobs, sales in shops and others. They were unemployed and engaged in informal sales to survive. Many of them have their own terrains that have begun to cultivate together with relatives and neighbors so that short-cycle products such as cabbage, carrots, tomatoes, and in general vegetables have been harvested, helping to respond to the food's needs of the families. The deep introspection of several of the participants in this regard is that returning to the rural work at food production is very important and necessary to improve their own subsistence conditions.

***Introspection:*** The confinement and the difficult conditions given by the crisis led many of the beneficiaries to question themselves about their *modus vivendi* before the pandemic. Their habits, behavior patterns and forms of interrelation with others were put on the table in a conscientious analysis that led many people to rethink the way they lived, reorienting their actions and behaviors towards a more supportive and understanding stance towards loved ones, social relationships with others and livelihoods.

c. After hearing about the problems expressed by the beneficiaries, several points were identified in which each one could improve their personal situation by making use of the resources available at hand and depending on the capacities identified in each one, such as:

***Improvement of family relationships:*** In several cases, a complicated situation regarding intra-family relationships was evidenced. Disputes between father and mother, or between parents and children, as well as between siblings are part of the problems faced by some of the beneficiaries. They were guided in the sense of seeking to improve these relationships through dialogue, seeking that the reestablishment of interpersonal relationships with family members allows generating spaces of mutual support and solidarity to respond to the challenges of the crisis experienced.

***Diversification of income / use of available resources:*** Some of the participants see their economic capacity diminished when they seek to generate income with the same activities that were carried out



before the pandemic. In this sense, other options and alternatives were investigated, guiding the beneficiaries to look for novel ways to be able to transform their reality with a vision of the future, planning and organization at the household level and with the available resources. In certain cases, some of the participants were invited to start or continue their studies at the secondary and higher education level, motivating them as it is evident that certain profiles have this capacity.

*Control / management of emotions:* as one of the most critical aspects in this pandemic has been the low self-esteem of the participants for the aforementioned reasons, much emphasis has been placed on highlighting each of them that in fact they do have the ability of being able to face the situation despite the diversity, and the importance that each person believes in himself as an engine of change and transformation in their lives and environment. Depending on the case, they were made to see that they had the capacities to get ahead, a motivation that in all cases was important and well received because upon leaving the sessions the beneficiaries expressed that being able to vent their problems, motivation and encouragement gave strength to continue and move forward. The beneficiaries were also guided to put a stop to the fears and fears that are cultivated in the mind through breathing exercises and mind control, as part of the exercise of self-control necessary to cope with a crisis situation.