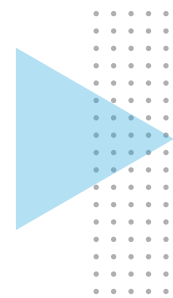
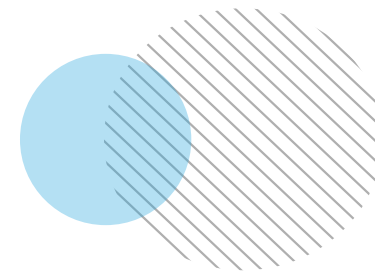


SUPER HEROES DEVELOPMENT



AUTHORS

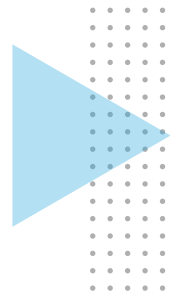


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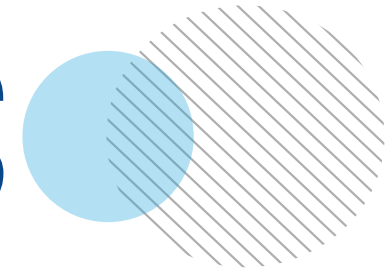
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We also acknowledge the executing units from Latin America and the Caribbean who have responded exceptionally to an uncertain and changing environment due to the pandemic. This publication is by and for you.



WHEN THE WORLD STOPPED, THEY KEPT GOING



The general guidance was to stay at home. People had to retreat to the point that animals began to take over unusual spaces. Sea lions sunbathed in the streets of Mar del Plata, Argentina, a puma wandered through Santiago, Chile, and a Peruvian beach that used to be teeming with tourists filled up with seagulls and pelicans. But not all humans had the luxury of watching things unfold from home. Quarantines were ordered around the world to save lives, but they also threatened the well-being of millions of vulnerable people.

That is why, just as the obligation of the great majority of us was to stay home, a handful of people had to take charge of the situation and even swim against the current to ensure that those who needed someone to fight for them would not be left behind: children in Brazil who wouldn't receive the meals that they used to get each day at school because lockdown led to the suspension of in-person classes; rural families in Paraguay who would have to wait longer for potable water because the restrictions halted water and sanitation projects; and hundreds of thousands of informal workers in Ecuador who could no longer go out each day to earn a living.



These are examples of real situations that developed as a result of the coronavirus and posed enormous challenges for the continuity of development projects that were underway in Latin America and the Caribbean. That doesn't mean that they were impossible to overcome. Hundreds of leaders and organizations in the region went against the tide of global paralysis to ensure that their initiatives wouldn't fail and, in doing so, to prevent beneficiaries from going without basic needs like food, education or access to clean water.

Each year since 2018, the IDB has recognized "executing units" through the initiative called Superheroes of Development. These are local teams comprised of public or private sector officials, entrepreneurs and leaders from different sectors. They overcome immense difficulties to implement and make possible the development projects that the Bank finances, even in a context of such complexity as that of a planet overwhelmed by the pandemic. For the third edition of this initiative, which took place in 2020, the goal was to highlight, pay tribute to and reward those who implemented projects despite great adversity. The idea was to recognize people who responded creatively and proactively to major limitations, who persisted when "Covidcentrism" took over the world and little or no attention was paid to anything other than the coronavirus.

A total of 88 cases were submitted for the 2020 edition of Superheroes of Development. After evaluating the size of the challenges that they faced, the solutions implemented and the lessons learned, six finalists were chosen. They all shared one common denominator: instead of paralyzing them, the crisis inspired them to seek out innovative solutions in order to improve people's lives and ensure that no beneficiary was left behind. Their stories, which are highlighted in this publication, reflect an important adaptive capacity. They adjusted their priorities, redesigned processes and even rethought the needs that they originally hoped to address.



For example, in Suriname, a group of female entrepreneurs found the perfect excuse to improve business areas that they would have never explored if it hadn't been for the lockdown measures. In Brazil, a training program focused on providing psychological support to overwhelmed students before the organizers continued to offer training activities. Another initiative that offered recreational and cultural spaces to young people who live in violent areas retooled their offerings so that they could keep the participants motivated and involved. They invited them to organize efforts to bring aid to their communities, turning program beneficiaries into local benefactors of their own environments.

There were several discoveries, one of which is that it is possible to streamline processes without making them less rigorous. And it is not only the finalists who demonstrated this. The IDB considerably reduced the amount of time set aside for the design and loan approval stages, particularly for key initiatives meant to address COVID-19-related challenges. On average, such initiatives were approved in two and a half months instead of the usual seven months. The Bank expects to authorize nearly \$7.9 billion in funding using this approach, in which internal procedures are made more flexible and simplified.

No one has experience living through an epidemic. No one knows how to do what we used to do when things were “normal.” The coronavirus, however, has equipped us all with new lessons that should not remain as individual learning, but as shared knowledge available to anyone in the region. We hope to use this publication, which highlights the challenges faced and solutions developed by a small number of teams, to enrich others’ projects. We want these executing units’ work to light the way for others based on their vocation, persistence and ingenuity, allowing them to deliver for the beneficiaries regardless of how large the wall is that stands in their way.





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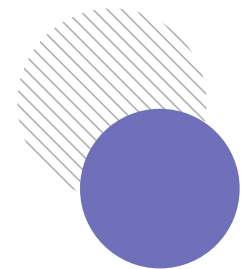
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PUBLIC SECTOR CREATIVITY UNDER LOCKDOWN



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SEEKING OUT “LOST” STUDENTS

01



BRAZIL



►► **Hunger limits many things.** One of them is learning.

According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), hunger makes it difficult for children to learn. In light of this, in the state of Amazonas, Brazil, one priority was guaranteeing the food security of over 440,000 students from low-income families whose classes were suspended due to the lockdown and social distancing measures. The biggest challenge was that officials didn't know for certain where the great majority of the students lived.

As is common in other parts of the world, many families depend on the food provided in schools to provide their children with proper nutrition. The problem wasn't classes. “The Aula en Casa (Home Classroom) program allows over 440,000 students to continue to receive services by televising classes,” officials from the Amazonas State Education and Athletics Secretariat explained. The hardest part was making sure that these elementary school students would receive meals in the state's 62 municipalities as a minimum condition for their academic development.

1. The story is based on this [operation](#).



“When the school switches gears and classrooms shift to students’ homes, we have to recreate an environment and provide the conditions necessary for learning to occur,” the Secretariat explains.

They began to design “Lunch at Home”, an ambitious initiative focused on distributing food kits with basic products such as milk, beans and pasta. The goal was to deliver approximately 10 kilos of food to each of the nearly half a million students.

To make matters even more difficult, many of the food baskets had to be delivered to the students’ doors due to guidelines regarding crowds and social distancing. But organizers faced a challenge that can only be described as enormous. Manaus, the capital of Amazonas, is home to over 220,000 students – nearly half of the affected population –, and 70% of its databases were outdated. This means that the officials had no way to locate 7 out of every 10 students in a city of approximately 1.8 million inhabitants. It was like looking for a needle in a haystack.





THEY USED AN APP

TO LOCATE THE STUDENTS IN A MATTER OF DAYS

Another important challenge was delivering meal kits to some of the most remote places in the remaining 61 towns, which is where some 224,000 children attended school.



They had to figure out how to distribute tons of food in rural, indigenous and coastal communities in which, for example, the only access is by river. It could take up to 40 days to reach settlements along the Juruá River, as well as in the regions of Alto Solimões and Alto Río Negro.

How could they contact all of the families? How could they ensure that no child would be left out of this enormous logistical operation? A simple technological solution allowed them to locate all of the students in Manaus in a matter of days. “The students were required to use an app that was specifically designed for this program. We conducted a census using that same app and registered them in order to facilitate the deliveries,” Education Secretariat spokespeople explain.



The app was designed and programmed in record time and allowed authorities to identify students’ precise location in a matter of minutes.



Families would only have to download the app to a cell phone and provide basic information such as the child's name, student number and, very importantly, the location of their residence. The process had to be completed at the location where they wanted the kit to be delivered. Using geolocation technology, they verified that the information provided matched the actual location.

They used the information gathered to quickly set up 37 distribution sites in Manaus that were strategically positioned to optimize the transfer of food items using the appropriate safety protocols. The development of another computer system to manage inventory in real time played a key role in streamlining planning and documenting food delivery.



SOME 4,500 TONS OF FOOD WERE DISTRIBUTED, THE EQUIVALENT OF 1,500 COMPACT CARS

Only a small percentage of students in the capital of Amazonas could not receive the food at their homes. It was not possible for them to provide the necessary information through the application, in most cases because they lacked a smartphone with the necessary technology for geolocation. In other cases, authorities felt that it was too dangerous to enter certain areas due to high crime rates. Distribution centers were set up so that the children's families could pick up their kits. Given that it was a minimal percentage of beneficiaries, experts determined that this would not cause crowding or violate social distancing measures.

They concluded that the same criteria could be applied in the remaining 61 towns. In the

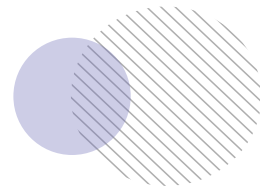
cases of small or remote towns or those with scattered populations, the kits didn't have to be delivered to each house. “In rural parts of the state, families would set up an appointment to pick up the food at the schools. Health authorities' instructions regarding distancing and hygiene were followed,” the initiative's coordinators explain.

In the case of rural communities and those who could not be located in Manaus, the deployment of this operation was accompanied by a massive media campaign designed to teach families how to use the app or provide information on where to pick up food baskets.

Organizers used every possible communications channel, from institutional advertising to teaching through social and traditional

media. They even created a call center to answer beneficiaries' questions, solve problems and receive feedback that would allow them to improve the operation. As a result of this effort, 4,500 tons of food was distributed (approximately 10 kilos of food per student), the weight of more than 1,500 compact cars.

The staff at the Amazonas State Education and Athletics Secretariat is particularly proud of the “totally responsible use of public resources.” According to its spokespeople, “All of the oversight and monitoring agencies were invited to supervise the program's execution. The Public Prosecutor's Office recognized our efforts as an example to be followed.”



SELF-REFLECTIONS, LESSONS WORTH SHARING

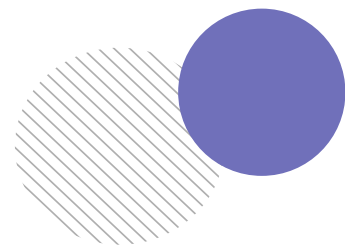
- When it becomes urgent to locate the precise location of a large beneficiary population in order to distribute aid that will guarantee the success of a program, technological solutions can be developed – in record time and a user-friendly way – that allow large numbers of people to be located and large-scale logistical operations to be planned, in this case to distribute aid as efficiently as possible. The government of the Brazilian state of Amazonas had to distribute food kits to all of its 440,000 elementary school students (one 10-kilo basket per child). This would ensure that they had adequate nutrition so that they could continue studying from home after classes were suspended due to the coronavirus. To avoid overcrowding, most of these deliveries had to arrive at the children's doorsteps. In the capital city of Manaus, the databases were so outdated that no current information was available for 70% of the city's 220,000 students. Officials didn't know where to send the food baskets. They decided to develop a simple mobile app. Each family would download it onto a cell phone and provide basic information such as their address. This process had to be completed in the same location where the basket was to be delivered to allow the app to verify the information using geolocation technology. They also developed a system to monitor inventory in real time, which allowed them to optimize the supply and subsequent food distribution. A total of 4,500 tons of food was distributed in the state of Amazonas.



- When program organizers are forced to make key changes to an ongoing initiative and must quickly notify large groups of beneficiaries, they can design and implement comprehensive communications strategies to raise awareness. In this case, families had to be informed of the existence of a new mobile app and taught how to use it so that their children would receive at home the food they were previously given at school. It was also necessary to know what alternatives were available for those who could not receive the kits at their homes, either because of difficulties in using the application, insecurity in certain areas of Manaus or in the case of children from the interior of the state, living in isolated and remote areas. The initiative’s executing units thus implemented a communications strategy that addressed several fronts in an effort to provide sufficient information to all beneficiaries. It included institutional guidelines, educational content delivered via traditional media and social media campaigns. They also created a call center to answer beneficiaries’ questions, address problems and receive feedback that would allow them to make adjustments and improve operations.



HOW TO TURN



A PANDEMIC

INTO A POTABLE WATER INITIATIVE

02



PARAGUAY



▶ As strange as it may sound, the virus that paralyzed the world in 2020 became a key ally for expanding the scope of Paraguay's Project to Build Water and Sanitation Systems for Small Cities, an initiative designed to provide these services to thousands of rural and indigenous households.

Prior to the pandemic, the program was slated to benefit a little over 25,000 people through the installation of new water and sanitation systems. In response to the challenge posed by COVID-19, they are currently implementing several additional interventions to improve the quality of the water that an additional 216,000 Paraguayans consume.

2. The story is based on this [operation](#).



Image courtesy of this [publicación](#)

The first milestone in this process came in December 2019, when most of us still hadn't heard of the coronavirus.

The National Environmental Sanitation Service (SENASA) signed six contracts with different companies to build integrated water supply systems during the first phase. They were to be operational by 2021.

According to data gathered by SENASA, one in four rural inhabitants did not have access to soap and water, two of the most basic hygiene elements. The initiative would be key for improving the quality of life of hundreds of communities. But the pandemic increased the size of the challenge. If hand washing was fundamental to mitigating the propagation of the virus, bringing clean water to 25,000 people seemed like very little.





SIMPLER CONTRACTUAL MODELS

The goal of making potable liquid available went from being an urgent need to a matter of life and death, particularly considering the limited capacities of rural health centers to handle any transmission of diseases.

While they activated emergency measures to provide water to populations without coverage in the short term, a solution had to be designed that would allow them to reach more Paraguayans without increasing the cost of the project.

The project organizers discovered that they could do a great deal with a small part of the budget apart from building new water and sanitation systems. They identified 69 communities that already had their water systems in place, but were in need of occasional repairs or improvements. The solutions might involve replacing a tank or tube or fixing a minor problem with a pump station, which would be sufficient to considerably improve the quality of water for over 26,000 people.





They found a formula that would allow them to make the repairs quickly and to reach a larger number of communities:

a competitive bidding process. This simple system would focus on the least expensive option given that the projects, goods and services to be acquired were simple, standardized and easily found in the market.



Image courtesy of this [publicación](#)

Organizers awarded two framework contracts for components, a flexible contractual model in which the prices were set – from the cost of replacement parts to that of the repairs – without the need to go into detail about how many repairs would be completed or where.

This meant that stakeholders could identify problems and make the necessary repairs to improve the existing water systems in the 69 selected communities until the budgeted resources were exhausted. In comparison, resorting to a traditional bidding scheme would have taken much longer, not only because of the phases and requirements of a process of this nature, but also because it would have required a previous and complete diagnosis of the state of the water systems to be repaired and the details of the repairs to be made – an impossible task in the midst of the pandemic.



SOMETIMES CHLORINATION IS ENOUGH

After determining that they could have a much greater impact using simple contractual systems, organizers decided that it was feasible to help 500 more communities that already had water distribution systems but no potable water due to a lack of chlorination.



They made a decision that was useful, economical and easy to implement: installing chlorination devices through a new bidding process that would allow another 190,000 people to start receiving potable water in the short term.

The same bidding system is being used to improve basic water and sanitation systems in 45 hospitals and family healthcare units. Despite the importance of these developments because of the medical attention provided to the population, particularly during the pandemic, there are intermittent interruptions and deficiencies in water service due to the saturation of local aqueducts. In order to address this, pools were built and pumps, tanks and chlorination equipment were installed. They also built new bathrooms and hand-washing stations to improve the hygiene practices of both patients and medical staff.



All of this – from the improvement of existing systems to the installation of chlorination equipment and interventions in hospitals and family healthcare units –

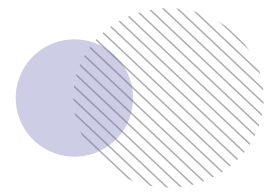
has been key to facilitating a habit that is taken for granted elsewhere in the world but that continues to be a daily challenge in rural areas of Paraguay: washing hands with clean water.

Fortunately, what started as a major obstacle became a powerful driver for reaching more people.

Due to the coronavirus, the total number of beneficiaries jumped from 25,000 to over 240,000. SENASA's achievement provides an inspiring testimony: rather than spreading COVID-19, the pandemic multiplied the number of people who would receive better quality water more than ten times in Paraguay.



Image courtesy of this [publicación](#)



SELF-REFLECTIONS, LESSONS WORTH SHARING

- If a project seeks to improve people's quality of life through the provision of public services, the scope of the initiative can be expanded by building new infrastructure and repairing existing resources. In this case, the project executing units decided to intervene in water systems previously built in 69 rural communities, making minor repairs that would cost a fraction of the overall budget but would significantly increase the quality of the water consumed by 26,000 people in rural areas. Replacing pipes or fixing a pump station is sometimes enough to optimize the systems. Furthermore, they agreed to install chlorination equipment in another 500 towns that already had water distribution networks but did not have the treatment required to make the water potable. This impacted an additional 190,000 people.
- When there is an urgent need to expand the scope of an initiative, simple processes that increase the number of beneficiaries can be used without compromising the transparency or rigor of the processes. In Paraguay, the coronavirus inspired organizers to use flexible contractual models to repair and improve existing water systems in the aforementioned 69 communities. Specifically, they used a straightforward bidding process that favored less expensive offers for cases of simple work, goods or services. In doing so, they made progress in the awarding of two framework contracts for components, a mode that would allow them to establish the cost of spare parts and the specific value of repairs, without going into the details of how many repairs would be needed or where. They could then make repairs as problems were identified until the resources were exhausted. If they had used traditional bidding processes, it would have taken much longer without necessarily resulting in greater transparency or rigor. The bidding model was also used to install chlorination equipment in another 500 communities and to improve basic water and sanitation systems in 45 hospitals and family healthcare units. These contractual models increased the number of beneficiaries from 25,000 to over 240,000.



AS THE WORLD WATCHED **THE PANDEMIC,**



THEY WATCHED
THE YOUTH



3 BRAZIL

When the key to a project is empathy
(Brazil 2020).

4 BRAZIL

From beneficiaries to benefactors
(Brazil 2020).



WHEN THE KEY TO A PROJECT IS EMPATHY

03



BRAZIL



“How are you? How is your family?” Those two questions, and the genuine interest in knowing the answers, allowed an initiative impacted by the pandemic in Brazil to move forward. The Professional Information Technologies Support Certification program set a goal of training 2,000 at-risk youth to work as IT professionals, opening up a path to new job opportunities.

The four-month course is certified by Google, supported by the IDB and coordinated by Junior Achievement, an organization that works on job training issues around the world. Participants learn about technical support, customer service, cybersecurity and other topics. They also receive training in soft skills like social relationships and effective communication so that their training will be more comprehensive and they can be better prepared to enter the workforce.

3. The story is based on this [operation](#).



Drawing on lessons learned from other international experiences, the leaders of this initiative determined that this type of certification allows those who do not have university degrees to access better quality jobs.



For its part, the IDB – through work conducted in various youth training programs – has verified the importance of adding social skills to job training in order to bolster the prospects of job applicants. According to data provided by Google, just 16% of at-risk individuals complete IT certification when the training is limited to an online offering. In contrast, the same rate can be as high as 60% when students receive additional support, such as soft skills training and other job placement services.

It seemed like a great idea and an exceptional opportunity for the 2,000 young people between 18 and 29 years of age that they intended to shelter from the outset: the so-called "nini", who "neither" study "nor" work; from public schools and low-income households (barely one minimum wage per person), in the cities of Recife, São Paulo, Florianópolis and Porto Alegre; especially women of African descent and other young people at high risk of social exclusion.



“IT WAS A SHOCK FOR ALL OF US.”

Those chosen to participate in the program had gone through a lengthy process that included submitting documentation, online tests and interviews. Classes finally began in February 2020.

A few managed to finish out the first month. The great majority attended face-to-face sessions, for just a few days. Another group, the Porto Alegre group, was scheduled to begin sessions on the same day that the lockdown was ordered. "They were really excited. It was a great opportunity to start a career and join the work world. The pandemic came as a shock to everyone," program spokespeople explain.

There was a great deal of disappointment when lockdown began because one in every four unemployed Brazilians is a young person. At the same time, there are some 24,000 local job openings in the field of IT. These are real jobs that are ready to be taken by anyone with the proper training. The sector has a need for cybersecurity and technical support specialists.



The initiative's coordinators first decided to make everything that had been done in person virtual, particularly support for soft skills acquisition.

They found that 3 out of every 10 participants were unable to connect to the sessions because they lacked a computer, smartphone or stable internet connection. They then called on allies and partners to provide cell phones – loaned or rented – and data packages for those who needed them.



Once that process was complete, everyone could theoretically connect to the online classes. But that wasn't true in practice. "We realized that the problem wasn't limited to access to technology," the program representatives explain. They did a little digging and discovered that the young people were facing a series of burdens and challenges that kept them from focusing on their studies.

The families of 93% of students had suffered an economic setback due to the pandemic that forced the students to look for some source of income. They were also afraid of the disease, which had begun to affect their immediate surroundings. Nearly 25% of students reported that someone in their home had become ill with the coronavirus. The majority had limited space at home, which made it hard to concentrate because they had no place to study and attend classes. As if that weren't enough, their responsibilities at home increased. Some had to care for younger children or older adults. More than half said that the pandemic had a psychological impact of 7 on a scale of 1 to 10 on their lives.



REDUCING ABSENTEEISM DURING DISTANCE LEARNINGS



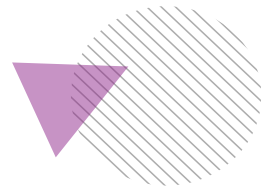
Organizers came up against “Maslow’s pyramid,” a psychological theory that advances the notion that human beings have five levels of needs. The bottom of the pyramid is comprised of essentials such as food, healthcare, and financial and family security. Once those issues are resolved, individuals can work on the needs that are higher up the pyramid, such as social relationships, recognition and personal fulfillment. To put it differently, a student cannot think about their Google IT certificate program if they don’t know where their family’s next meal is coming from or are afraid because a relative is sick.

The program helped mitigate some of the participants’ basic concerns. First, they distributed food baskets donated by third parties. They dropped off two baskets per

student at various pickup locations in Recife. They also offered psychological support to everyone who needed it. The simple act of talking about a difficult situation, how they felt about it, and the challenges that they were facing was liberating for the students and helped reduce their levels of stress and anxiety.

Once the group members felt better, they held weekly virtual meetings for teachers and students to continue soft skills training. They managed to integrate 44% of the students in this dynamic. Mock job interviews were even more popular. 56% of the original program participants signed up to meet with a human resources consultant and take part in this exercise. The good results led them to offer advice on the preparation of resumes. The organizers also launched a series of webinars called “Let’s Talk” and invited professionals to discuss their IT careers and share tips on entering the workforce.

The implementation of this strategy between March and June led to a momentous achievement: keeping a good number of students engaged, with the idea that they would move forward on their path to a world of work that would transform their lives. Sometimes a simple action can be a powerful source of support for others. It may be enough to simply listen to someone so that you can understand and work with them based on their own abilities. Program organizers explain that those who execute initiatives like this one have to “leave the bubble.” “Empathy breeds trust, and trust breeds participation and commitment on the part of students,” they explain.



SELF-REFLECTIONS, LESSONS WORTH SHARING

- When program beneficiaries can't make the most out of initiatives because they have more pressing concerns, asking them about their needs and taking steps to address them can increase participation. This requires listening, understanding and negotiating adjustments with the beneficiaries, so that together they can find the best way to move forward. In Brazil, the pandemic forced the closure of classrooms set aside for a Google-endorsed IT Support Professional Certification program, which included soft skills training. But it was more than that. COVID-19 also generated a series of burdens and challenges for the at-risk young people who had been chosen to take part in the initiative. The executing unit staff took the time to identify the problems that the students were facing. They understood that a good number of families were suffering from financial setbacks that led many young people to look for work so that they could contribute to the household income. Some had to take on additional domestic responsibilities. One in four said that someone that they lived with had contracted the coronavirus. After evaluating the situation, the organizers understood that most students didn't have the time or energy to continue to take virtual classes. That's why the program coordinators decided to pause and focus their efforts on helping them alleviate some of their concerns. They gathered food donations for students and provided psychological support to give them an opportunity to discuss their problems and needs. Just asking "How are you?" and listening and helping as much as they could helped reduce students' stress and anxiety. It was after these efforts that many of the students began to participate in weekly soft skills classes and even in a mock job interview with a human resources consulting firm. This kept them engaged and involved with the idea that they could move forward with their goal of transitioning to working life.



FROM BENEFICIARIES TO BENEFACTORS

04



BRAZIL



A shocking official announcement was made in March 2020: all of the activities of the six Youth Centers that were launched in the Brazilian state of Río Grande do Sul in 2016 and 2017 would be suspended. In addition to serving as recreational, cultural and job training sites, these spaces had become true lifesavers for young people who live in the most violent areas of the towns of Viamão and Alvorada and the city of Porto Alegre (the state capital).

According to a 2010 study, victimization rates among young people are 6.5 times higher than those of other age groups. These are at-risk populations that are exposed to drugs and crime (as victims or by being involved in some way). The Youth Centers were created through Programa de Oportunidades y Derechos (Opportunities and Rights Program), known as POD, funded with IDB resources and implemented by the Río Grande do Sul Secretariat of Justice, Citizenship and Human Rights. The goal was to offer alternative paths to young people between the ages of 15 and 24. Art and sports instead of drugs. Education and knowledge instead of guns.

4. The story is based on this [operation](#).



The Youth Centers provided a little bit of everything. Some kids would ride scooters, while others would attend music, dance and theater workshops. Students learned foreign languages as well as graffiti, tattoos and screen printing. They played soccer and volleyball.



They practiced gymnastics and martial arts. The Youth Centers offered technical training courses in trades that would lead to job opportunities, including sewing, hairdressing and the culinary arts. They taught customer service for restaurants and offered administrative and computer courses. Thanks to partnerships with the private sector, there were solid opportunities for moving from theory to practice and finding a job at a company.

They were places that focused on prevention and kept young people occupied with a wide range of activities. But they also sought to improve lives through employment or entrepreneurship. Some participants had created “mobile barber shops” and others repaired or customized clothing. “No one was bored in the Youth Centers,” one of the coordinators proudly explains.



“THE CENTERS FELL SILENT.”

The coronavirus and lockdown measures stopped all of this. “The Youth Centers couldn't provide services anymore. They fell silent, empty,” says one POD representative.



The concern was that closing Youth Centers in high-crime areas could be a matter of life and death for any one of the 3,600 young people who received services each year because they would no longer have a space in which to engage in healthy activities or learn in the hopes of accessing a better future.

“We knew that we had to take action in response to this unique lockdown situation that halted all in-person activities,” program representatives explain. They soon understood that these spaces had created strong bonds of friendship and solidarity. This is how they correctly determined that they had a network of committed young people who were willing to be proactive, for the good of their communities.

They decided that while the pandemic could rob them of a place to dance, play sports or attend a workshop, it could not take away the young people's desire to continue to progress. They created the campaign #PODpelavida (#PODforlife) and invited them to join a campaign to invest everyone's time in minimizing the effects of the coronavirus.

One of the few things that they could do without major restrictions during the quarantine was surf the internet and use social media. That was the path to inviting more people to participate and develop a strategy that came from the program's communications team.



“WE REDEFINED THE ROLE OF THE YOUTH CENTERS.”

Youth Center participants quickly shifted from cultural, sports and culinary activities to collecting personal protective equipment and aid for the most vulnerable families.



They distributed baskets containing food and hygiene items in different neighborhoods. They made their own soap, hand sanitizer and masks for their communities and members of the military police. They even used a 3D printer that had been a source of entertainment to create face shields that they traded for food – for the food baskets – at various assistance stations. They also created informational videos about the campaign and worked to dispel fake news about the pandemic.



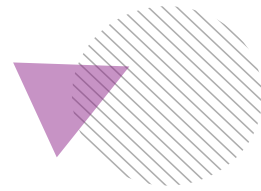
“We managed to mobilize these young people so that they could play an active role. We redefined the Youth Centers’ role during the pandemic, turning them into local points of reference in the struggle against the virus. We were thrilled that no one got sick doing this work,” representatives of the program explain.



Even better, they deployed this effort without having to allocate additional program resources. Everything needed was donated by universities and representatives of the private sector, or raised by the young people themselves.

The staff turned the program into an important volunteer force, at least temporarily. This allowed them to preserve the connection that they had created between the young people and the Youth Center. Most importantly, they allowed the centers to continue to serve as sources of vital support for hundreds of young people who live in high-crime areas so that they would continue to be busy, learning and helping.

The campaign moved to social media and beyond personal satisfaction to well-deserved social recognition for their contributions. “Pride” is the word that best describes the participants’ feelings as they moved from receiving assistance to providing it. This is an important change for individuals who can now say that the pandemic highlighted their capacity for empowerment because they ceased to be beneficiaries of the State to become benefactors of their communities, mitigating the negative impact of the coronavirus.



SELF-REFLECTIONS, LESSONS WORTH SHARING

- When young people are educated in environments that make them feel like they are part of the solution and not part of the problem, they can be called on to quickly change their role of beneficiaries and become benefactors in their own communities. In doing so, they become a source of pride for themselves and society as a whole. In the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, Youth Centers were created for recreation, culture and job training. They offer young people who live in communities with the highest crime rates a life choice. The centers had to be closed because of the coronavirus and the ensuing lockdown. Rather than halting their activities, the executing unit retooled the program, making young people an important volunteer force that helped to mitigate the effects of the coronavirus in their immediate environments. Together they distributed aid and safety supplies to the most vulnerable families. More than anything, the centers maintained their role as life-saving spaces for the hundreds of young people who live in those communities. They helped them to continue to be committed to their futures, busy and helping others.



PRIVATE SECTOR STAKEHOLDERS

WHO FOCUS ON

THE SOLUTION AND NOT

THE PROBLEM

5 SURINAME

Women who teach others to move forward thanks to difficulties and not just in spite of them (Suriname 2020).

6 ECUADOR

The private sector's multiplying force (Ecuador 2020).



WOMEN WHO TEACH OTHERS TO MOVE FORWARD THANKS TO DIFFICULTIES AND NOT JUST **IN SPITE OF THEM**

05



SURINAME



5. The story is based on this [operation](#).

- Any businessperson would be surprised to hear that 28 rural women from Suriname had created WUFS (Wi! Uma Fu Sranan), a farming cooperative founded in 2014 through which they began to grow up to 12 tons of yucca per month. “The majority of these women are from rural areas and have little or no education, but people started to look at them differently,” explain WUFS spokespeople. Their success, they say, “empowered them to go further.”

These women went “further” when they decided to process part of their harvest to make it yucca-based oatmeal and sell it in over 300 supermarkets nationwide. Next, they made banana-flavored flour, breakfast tortillas, bread with currants, pancakes and even soups, smoothies and frozen drinks. All of the products are made from the yucca that they grow and are thus gluten free.



No undertaking is easy, much less this one. The protagonists of this commercial success are single mothers who have had to balance their responsibilities as homemakers and mothers on their own. This is a common situation in rural, isolated parts of Suriname.



It is rare to see men in such areas, as they tend to leave to seek out better income opportunities far from their communities in the capital city or in areas with extractive industries such as mining.

The cooperative members planted yuccas to subsist, which is normal in their communities. But they wanted to improve their livelihoods and knew that they would have to broaden their horizons in order to do so. That was when they found Surivit, an agricultural company that would help them to implement a strategy to develop other yucca-derived products. It would also be responsible for key logistical aspects, such as the transportation of the harvest and raw materials to the processing center, as well as the distribution of finished and packaged products to supermarkets.



WHEN EVERYTHING STOPPED: FROM PLANTING TO SALES



To grow even more, they decided to develop and market a new product together with the support of the IDB. “We chose a very well-known traditional product made by indigenous people: mashed yucca for babies,” explain the initiative’s leaders.

They add, “Most people in rural areas are raised on this mash, though its consumption was declining [...] We were able to position it in the market through hard work and determination as a refined and innovative ready-to-eat product for children and the elderly.”

They knew that they had to strengthen the value chain, which meant improving at least three aspects: the quality of the crops, the sophistication of the processing plant and their ability to conquer new markets. Based on the technical cooperation agreement that they had signed with the IDB, they aimed to make progress in precisely those areas.



In order to improve the quality of the yucca and the processed mash, they decided to train 400 workers on various standardized food industry methodologies,

such as Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP). This would allow them to secure globally recognized certifications in these areas. A second effort involved renovating the production plant, which only had one automated yucca shredder, meaning that workers had to shred the rest manually. Third, they needed to grow in terms of marketing and sales.

The execution of this technical cooperation agreement began in December 2017. Everything was going as planned until the lockdown measures arrived along with social distancing guidelines and transportation restrictions. The co-op members had to cancel their training courses, which were to be delivered in person. Even worse, they were unable to



plant new crops or care for them properly for weeks. The yucca processing was interrupted, which led to a significant loss of harvested product given that it is perishable. Sales dropped when supermarkets were ordered to close for several days.





A NEW DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

However, it would take much more than a pandemic to defeat this group of female entrepreneurs.



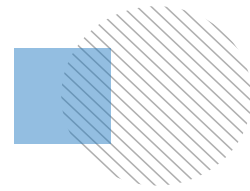
Online training wasn't an option because they lived in areas with poor internet connections, but they produced five-minute animated videos and other kinds of virtual materials. The contents could be easily shared and downloaded through WhatsApp. They even developed an interactive mobile app that featured a food safety game which allowed the workers to reinforce what they had learned.

The greatest challenge was financial. Revenues collapsed during quarantine periods, yet they continued to pay workers' salaries. They decided to implement a new marketing system using Facebook and WhatsApp, offering home delivery for individuals who would resell their product, retail business owners and end consumers. It was a hard sell, as this sort of home

delivery is not common in Suriname except for fast food restaurants. WUFS was confident that "it would take time" to convince people to buy their products this way.

Fortunately, what began as an obstacle due to lockdown ended up being an opportunity to design and implement the new sales and distribution channel. Under normal circumstances, they never would have explored these strategies, at least not in the short and medium term. The effort was worth it, though, because it coincided with greater interest in feeding children their products. "COVID also offered us opportunities. Today there is more awareness about the use of local products and demand is growing," WUFS representatives explain.

Their goals have not changed. They still want to expand, develop new yucca products, reach more people in Suriname and even penetrate markets elsewhere in Latin America and the Caribbean with the support of partners like the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations). This story is an example, especially in a year like 2020, when so many things changed for all of us. Instead of lamenting what they couldn't do, these women focused on the approaches that would allow them to blaze new paths. One could say that they brought their company to a new level thanks to the coronavirus and not in spite of it.



SELF-REFLECTIONS, LESSONS WORTH SHARING

- When projects face obstacles that interrupt specific processes, participants can take the opportunity to explore and implement alternative solutions that can enrich and strengthen the initiatives. In Suriname, the pandemic halted various aspects of a project that was being implemented with WUFS, a women's cooperative that focused on yucca production and the processing and sale of related products. Specifically, lockdown measures made it impossible for them to distribute the products and sell them in supermarkets. They also had to cancel a series of in-person training activities focused on best practices for farming and manufacturing. These difficulties motivated the entrepreneurs and IDB executing unit to rethink some processes and implement new strategies that they would not otherwise have considered. For example, they decided to develop a new marketing strategy and test another delivery system. They started selling through social networks, such as Facebook and WhatsApp, and opted for home delivery of orders for resellers, retailers and end consumers. It took some time to convince people to use these channels to make their purchases because only fast food restaurants use that sort of delivery system. The effort was worth it, though, because they found more and more consumers who were interested in their products. In regard to the canceled training sessions, offering online classes wasn't an option because of the lack of optimal internet connections in the areas where the workers lived. They designed a solution that they never would have considered if it hadn't been for the pandemic: producing five-minute animated videos and other virtual materials that could easily be shared via WhatsApp. The materials allowed the workers to continue to learn without the need for in-person classes.



THE PRIVATE SECTOR'S MULTIPLYING FORCE

06



ECUADOR



6. The story is based on this [operation](#).

▶▶ **Working from home is not an option for everyone, even during a pandemic. Staying at home making video calls doesn't work for an independent plumber or someone who owns a food cart. In Ecuador, nearly half of all workers are in the informal economy. As a result, the news of an imminent quarantine caused an enormous amount of concern in mid-March 2020.**

“We were asking them to stay home, but they probably had no way to get food,” reflects the spokesperson for Unidos Alimentamos Más Personas (Together We Feed More People), an Ecuadorian civil society initiative designed to bring food to the country’s most at-risk groups during the lockdown. One of the program beneficiaries confirmed the seriousness of the situation: “We wouldn’t have died of COVID. We would have died from hunger.”



The first entity to take a step forward as part of Unidos Alimentamos Más Personas was Almacenes Tía, one of Ecuador's largest supermarket chains.



The Diakonía Food Bank joined the effort just a few hours later. They knew they had to act quickly and proactively, as both the central and local governments were overwhelmed with urgent health-related tasks that needed to be carried out.

Tía and Diakonía combined their talents and experience to create a logistical system that could be used to put together food kits and a donation page in just four days. But it was more than that. They activated a chain reaction of solidarity that allowed the deliveries to be made to Ecuadorians' homes. Their partners ranged from religious groups that drew on their mobilizing capacities like the Archdiocese of Guayaquil and evangelical churches to the Army and police, which provided security.

The logistics deployed allowed them to deliver food to up to 250,000 people in just one day, an achievement that led them to believe that they had fulfilled their mission. But they didn't know how long the pandemic would continue. "After three weeks, we realized that this would be a much longer process," they admit.



A NEW STAKEHOLDER

AND TECHNOLOGICAL PLATFORM FOR PROMOTING SOLIDARITY



They decided that the system they had been working with was very efficient but that it was not the best option if they had to continue to deliver meal kits indefinitely. The first issue was nutritional balance.

The food baskets included basic products like oil, oatmeal, rice, salt and canned tuna fish, but they did not include other necessary items such as fruit, vegetables, meat and chicken. These perishable items could not be distributed through a system that did not include refrigeration.

Second, they wanted to implement a model that could both provide aid and channel resources to the base of the pyramid. “We weren’t mobilizing the social and solidarity-based economy: neighborhood stores, which we ‘supplanted’ by delivering food products to vulnerable groups,” program representatives explain.



A new private sector stakeholder arrived to move them in the right direction: Banco del Pacífico. Together, and thanks to a donation from the German government, they developed a technological platform to promote the model.

The idea was for people to be able to pick up their food baskets at the closest supermarket or store instead of sending deliveries from a few locations to each home. They took advantage of the fact that Banco del Pacífico already had a network of non-bank locations throughout the country which were added to the Tía stores, which have a presence in 22 of Ecuador's 24 provinces.



The procedure was as follows: The Diakonía Food Bank received the donations and selected the beneficiaries. Banco del Pacífico used the platform to send a text message to those beneficiaries with a unique security code (given the high penetration of cellular telephony in Ecuador). Beneficiaries used the code to visit any Tía or participating neighborhood store to claim a basket of basic necessities for up to \$5.99.

One of the advantages of the model was that people could put together their own kit, choosing from a long list of items that included cleaning products and perishable foods. Furthermore, if the food was picked up



at a Tía store, the company donated an additional 10% so that the beneficiary could “expand” their basket. In addition to providing relief to beneficiary families, the system was key for boosting the economic activity of neighborhood shops, those humble businesses that form part of the popular economy. The system helped them to move their inventory and sell their products.



FROM FOOD KITS TO CORONAVIRUS VACCINATION



Although the platform was only used for a few days because the quarantine ended, it proved that the tool could multiply the scope of the aid by a factor of 20. The new system increased distribution capacity significantly, allowing food to be delivered to stores for up to 5 million Ecuadorians per day, up from 250,000. If new lockdowns are ordered, the deliveries can be reactivated in an organized, safe manner considering the proper nutritional balance and mobilizing resources at the base of the pyramid.

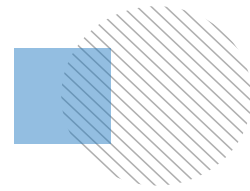
Aware of the tool that they now have in their hands, Unidos Alimentamos Más Personas has taken on the task of exploring another use for the platform. Specifically, they are interested in responding to a national challenge that is of interest to all Ecuadorians: universal vaccination against COVID-19. “We are developing

an app similar to the one we used to distribute food so that people can receive a text message regarding where and when they can be vaccinated,” Tía spokespeople explain. They plan to add over 5,000 Ecuadorian pharmacies to the database along with public and private hospitals so that people can visit the location most convenient to them once the vaccine arrives in the country.

Few people would have imagined the evolution of this technological development: initially designed to improve a food distribution operation, it could become a potent tool for immunizing the population. In addition to being an unprecedented solution in Ecuador, its promoters note that it is available for use anywhere in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The multiplying force of the private sector is not limited to its ability to engage civil society. Its talent can also be used to provide solutions

to the public sector that benefit the public. The families who received over 910,000 food kits between March and June 2020 – nearly 4,100 tons of food – can attest to this. The total amount distributed would fill 157 four-axle trucks to the brim, one after the other. A joint effort, the spirit of which is summed up in the words of a Tía manager: “We were a single brand called Ecuador.”



SELF-REFLECTIONS, LESSONS WORTH SHARING

- When society faces complex social crises, the private sector can lead major initiatives that draw on the talents of stakeholders with different capacities (logistical, technological, or human capital). Together, they can provide solutions to matters that overwhelm the capacity of the public sector. In Ecuador, Almacenes Tía worked with various civil society representatives to take food kits to at-risk families impacted by the quarantine. Their leadership attracted key stakeholders such as the Diakonía Food Bank and religious groups. This allowed food to be delivered to thousands of people quickly and on a large scale (up to 250,000 Ecuadorians per day). Banco del Pacífico later joined the effort, developing an app that multiplied the initial capacity by a factor of 20.
- If a logistical operation has to be redesigned even if it had initially yielded good results, it is possible to use technological developments to adjust it and increase its scope. When lockdown was extended in Ecuador, they decided that they had to change the logistics used to deliver the food kits. They had been sent to the doors of the homes of at-risk families. The goal of this shift was to expand the coverage and include the items necessary to provide balanced nutrition (foods that had not been included because they were perishable, such as fruits, vegetables and meat products). They also wanted the resources to flow to a significant foundation of the pyramid: neighborhood stores, which are a key part of what is called Ecuador's social and solidarity-based economy. Banco del Pacífico, an organization that partnered with them to develop a technological platform for delivering donated food kits, joined in the effort. The kits were not delivered to homes, but to the store or supermarket closest to the beneficiaries. Using various stakeholders' databases, they sent a text message to the cell phones of the selected families so that they could pick up the meal kits at any point included in an extensive network of stores. In addition to being able to deliver properly preserved food, as it was kept refrigerated in the refrigerators of stores and supermarkets, they multiplied the initial distribution capacity, being able to deliver food baskets to up to 5 million people in a single day.

SUPERHEROES OF DEVELOPMENT >>



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