
Memorandum

TO: Jeff Goldman, Executive Director, Manna Project International
CC: Dr. Stacy Kosko, Associate Research Professor, MIDCM
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DATE: December 5, 2022
SUBJECT: Project Sangolqui: Providing Critical Childcare for the Children of Street Vendors in Sangolquí, Ecuador

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Ecuador, only around 54.5% of children are enrolled in pre-primary education.¹ This is especially the case in Sangolquí where low-income street vendor families experience limited access to early childcare. Consequently, families—especially mothers—are forced to bring their children to their stand at the local street market. More than half (52.5%) of women in Ecuador work in the informal sector and in South America, they have the highest unemployment rate compared to their male counterparts.² The country’s history of poverty and weak governmental institutions has only increased the number of children working with their parents in street markets. Our project therefore aims to provide vendor families with an early childcare program by expanding the use of Manna Project International’s (MPI) current resources. This project brief provides an overview of the lack of access to early childcare programs and outlines our proposed project to use the MPI Community Center and resource local university students to build a better and more sustainable system.

The reason for an excess of children in the Sangolqui street market is due to a series of unmet needs: lack of assistance programs for new mothers, lack of knowledge about the importance of daycare/early education programs, absence of reliable income for families in poverty, and more. This project rests on expanding the capacities of the MPI community center to include a proper daycare program and incentivizing street market parents to send their children to it. The following activities are necessary as part of our solution: involvement of ESPE University students in the MPI community center, increasing staff capacity through outreach, and the implementation of a conditional cash-transfer system contingent upon attendance rates.

PROJECT NARRATIVE

The goal of this project is to decrease the inequality in access to early childcare/daycare programs for children under the age of six whose families work in the street market in Sangolqui. Even though the Ecuadorian government has made child labor eradication a top priority, there is a significant lack of funding and enforcement needed to put these children in school and get them off of the streets.³ These children are not only deprived of the potential benefits that early child care intervention programs can have but they are also put at a greater risk of other dangers from street life and ultimately kept in a poverty cycle.

Our project objective is to expand MPI’s Community Center existing capacities so that it can run a free childcare program. The target population of this project is children from ages three to six

¹ “Ecuador.” Manna Project International, <http://www.mannaproject.org/ecuador>. Accessed 22 September 2022.

² Romero, T. (2022, November 18). *Ecuador: share employment in informal sector by gender 2021*. Statista. Retrieved December 9, 2022, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1284763/share-informal-sector-work-by-gender-ecuador/>

³ Bureau of International Labor Affairs. (2022). *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Ecuador*. U.S. Department of Labor. Retrieved December 9, 2022, from <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/ecuador>

years old. We aim to provide specifically pre primary school childcare as children over six years old are required to be enrolled in primary school.⁴ The childcare instructors would include MPI volunteers, both volunteers from the United States and students from ESPE University who would work as unpaid interns/volunteers. These volunteers will be hired based on their ability to communicate with the students in Spanish. Since many vending families are wary of foreigners, the hired staff must be knowledgeable on the culture, be fluent in Spanish, and make concerted efforts to engage with the community on a weekly basis. One of the first aspects of our solution is to increase staff at the community center and have designated staff who can walk the children from the market to the community center daily where they will spend the day engaging in various educational activities. This can be accomplished through increased outreach, social media campaigns, and a stronger connection between MPI and University of Maryland students with abroad volunteer and class credit opportunities.

Other than our solution working to formalize the daycare system and make it a structured program that all families can rely on, we need to make sure that even if the daycare is free, parents are actively participating and attendance rates signify progress. Some vending families use their children to help sell goods, and in this case, parents may not want to send their child to a daycare. In terms of parent participation, previous cases studies have shown the importance of parent involvement in early childhood growth.⁵ For these reasons, we plan to evaluate attendance and parent participation for the first four months after the daycare is opened. If participation rates are lower than our expected threshold, we plan to work with private donors to implement a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program whereby vending families in Sangolqui will receive a cash transfer on the condition that they keep their child in the daycare program until they are old enough for primary school. This would incentivise vending parents, especially mothers, to keep their kids in daycare and eliminate cost burdens. In terms of safety, the kids will be safer at the community center than on the streets and this may also ease the minds of vendor mothers.

Next, this project will incorporate new and innovative elements through the partnership with ESPE University, which is less than a ten minute car ride from the community center. Children who spend the day at the street markets are significantly lacking in nutritional support and missing out on hearty meals that would support their growth. A key feature of our solution is to construct a community garden adjacent to the community center that would increase access to healthy foods and improve nutrition for the children attending daycare. Not only would this provide a stable and reliable food source for the kids, but it is a sustainable form of agriculture and can only further benefit the community as a whole. By partnering with the local university, we will create internship/ school credit opportunities for students where they can work for MPI as volunteers and gain professional experience. ESPE science majors (Department of Life Sciences and Agriculture) would be especially sought out in terms of constructing, tending to, and learning about the power of community gardens and subsequently providing for their own community's children in need. These interns will also have the chance to work directly with volunteers from the U.S. which can also aid them in networking opportunities. Finally, daycare activities will have English learning components, which will also serve to benefit some ESPE University students who are simultaneously learning english. Overall, the inclusion of ESPE students will ensure that our solution effectively involves the community itself within the

⁴ The World Bank. (2018). Ecuador. *Education Policy and Data Center*, 4.

https://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/EPDC_NEP_2018_Ecuador.pdf

⁵ Pennsylvania State University. (2017, January). *Parent Engagement Practices Improve Outcomes for Preschool Children*. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Retrieved December 14, 2022, from <https://www.prevention.psu.edu/uploads/files/rwjf432769-ParentEngage.pdf>

APPENDIX

- **Estadio de la Universidad De Las Fuerzas Armadas ESPE (ESPE University)**

We plan to create a new partnership with ESPE University which is in close proximity to the community center of MPI because it has enough capacity to provide appropriate human resources to the daycare and community garden. Students who are science majors, especially the Department of Life Sciences and Agriculture majors, may seek out this opportunity to receive school credit and an experience that could enhance their resume. After partnership is established, they will help at the daycare and aid in constructing a community garden to increase access to nutritious food for the children during the day.

- **Private donors**

We plan to implement a conditional cash transfer program if we see that attendance rates are lower than expected for the first six months. We would do this via a partnership between MPI and private donors. An example could be the Inter-American Foundation who invests in community-led approaches to address challenges facing rural and urban communities, particularly among women, Indigenous people, and other underserved groups.⁶ They have thirteen active grants in Ecuador since November of 2022, benefiting over 8,000 people.

- **The University of Maryland at College Park**

We plan to build a stronger relationship with UMD and MIDCM to send college students to participate in MPI projects. They will work as student volunteers and will be responsible for teaching and leading English class, helping with the garden, and gaining practical experience in Sangolquí in Ecuador. This could be accomplished through expanding UMD's abroad chapter to include MPI opportunities.

⁶ Fasanella, C., & Weitzner, A. (n.d.). *Ecuador • Inter-American Foundation*. Inter-American Foundation. Retrieved December 15, 2022, from <https://www.iaf.gov/country/ecuador/>