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CONFLICT & DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

Monthly Activity Report

Youth Violence in El Salvador: Evaluating the Impact of an Agricultural and Nutritional Innovation in the Reduction of Violence and Gang Involvement

Period covered by this report:	December 1-31, 2016
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Background: The Conflict and Development Foundation (CDF) and Food for the Poor (FFTP) signed an agreement in March 2016 to conduct a study to evaluate the impact of an agricultural and nutritional innovation – the use of semi-urban hydroponic gardens to produce leafy vegetables – in violence reduction and keeping youth out of gangs in El Salvador. The study is being conducted in six communities in Ciudad Delgado with high incidence of violence and gang presence. FFTP and its counterpart in El Salvador, the New Horizons for the Poor Foundation, together have created the Center for Agricultural Innovation and Education (CHINAMPA). CHINAMPA promotes hydroponic agriculture and the study will be part of their current pilot program to promote the use of hydroponic systems to grow leafy vegetables that serve as nutritional supplements to the diet of vulnerable families.

Objectives of the Study: This study will seek to: (a) collect data on the inter-relationship between youth malnutrition, school desertion, and gang recruitment in the target communities; (b) identify the main types of violence affecting youth in the target communities; and (c) determine if participating in the semi-urban hydroponic gardening project and complementary social and cultural inclusion activities has an effect on reducing youth violence activities and gang involvement.

Key Project Achievements/Major Milestones

- Community hydroponic gardens have been established and are under operation in six target communities.
- During the past 10 months, community members and youth have learned how to produce hydroponic crops and manage and care for their crops. Harvesting continues.
- During the month of December, the project team continued promoting peace-building, nutrition, horticulture, and seasonal celebratory activities. Also, sports and musical events were conducted as complementary community activities that promote teamwork, inclusion, and relationship building.
- Besides the technical knowledge in horticulture and nutrition, the project has also allowed youth and their families to strengthen their teamwork abilities, promote social inclusion, strengthen their inter-personal values (i.e. support, recognition, and independence), giving them tools needed to excel in academic, familial and community relationships.
- In the last two months of the program, coordinators will measure the impact on reducing gang recruitment in the area.

Upcoming Activities:

- Visit communities to collect height and weight data, and deliver nutritional foods.
- Seminars on solidarity, social responsibility, and good communication skills to avoid violence.
- Register boys that won scholarships through CENAR.
- Individual psychological consults.
- Early educational activities with boys and girls.
- Collect data on leadership and teamwork workshops.
- Conduct theater arts programs for kids: *Theater Imaginarium* matinees.
- Prepare tastings focusing traditional dishes.
- Increase knowledge and awareness of teamwork to get good results.
- Meetings with volunteers in each community.
- Field work at the hydroponic gardens.
- Collect information on school dropout rates and violence during 2016.