



## EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY JOBS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN AGRICULTURE (EQUAL), 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



## CAMPOS DE ESPERANZA (“FIELDS OF HOPE”), MEXICO

VALUE  
\$11M

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE  
NOV 2016 – SEP 2023

### OBJECTIVE

Engages the government, private sector, and civil society to reduce child labor in migrant agricultural communities, particularly in the coffee and sugarcane sectors in Veracruz and Oaxaca by linking children and youth to existing educational programs and referring vulnerable households to existing government programs to improve income.

Collecting data, tracking indicators, and monitoring progress are crucial elements of successful programs, allowing decision makers to identify gaps, prioritize activities, and adapt approaches. Systematic collection of baseline data corresponding to a project’s key strategic components ensures a reliable baseline from which to establish realistic and meaningful target values for subsequent analysis. In the pandemic operating environment, many projects found there were physically isolated from target communities and had limited—if any—opportunity to interact directly with beneficiaries. Projects also faced competing priorities, including staff safety and having to find creative ways to pivot technical approaches to achieve objectives.

## Impacts of COVID



Escalating violence



Public transportation unavailable



Curfews



Road closures



Data collectors and researchers are unable to physically access project sites

The majority of projects evaluated reported a substantial delay in data collection and analysis. This disrupted the feedback loop to decision makers, delaying reaction time and in some cases causing missteps in programming.



Colombia EQUAL staff practicing social distancing.

	Colombia Equal	Campos de Esperanza (Mexico)
Monitoring Demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor 2,000 women and girls for (a) increased access to economic opportunities, (b) improved understanding of labor rights, and (c) improved access to labor and social protections in the unrefined brown sugar (panela) and the cut flowers value chains.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household site visits to monitor the status of 2,000 children in 1,500 households</li> </ul>
Pivots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invested considerable resources in conducting a pre-situational assessment (PSA) (see below)</li> <li>• Focused on developing a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&amp;E) plan according to the context</li> <li>• Used interactive platforms for participant engagement and activity verification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapted questionnaires to allow for a shift to phone interviews</li> <li>• Lessened the frequency of household visits</li> <li>• Added COVID-19 related questions to the household survey, i.e. vaccination and health status</li> <li>• Delivered printed educational materials on COVID-19</li> </ul>
Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used PSA to produce fact sheets</li> <li>• Individual intake surveys were delayed until Y2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued monitoring of approximately half of beneficiaries by phone</li> </ul>
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used fact sheets to gain buy-in from the public and private sectors</li> <li>• While travel was limited, used this time to develop high level strategies, build out the M&amp;E system, and develop staff capacity.</li> <li>• Gained a staff-wide understanding of perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders (government, civil society, private sector) and value chains.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of the households with which the project maintained contact, increased their knowledge of COVID-19 (trans- mission, safety, etc.)</li> <li>• Capitalized on continued in-person monitoring of factories/mills by reporting suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19 to the Ministry of Health</li> </ul>

The two featured projects faced different challenges as a result of the pandemic; In Mexico, Field of Hope had many years to establish relationships with local communities, labor organizers, factory workers, and other stakeholders. The project had staff and partners physically located in proximity to factories and mills, where many beneficiaries continued to work. By contrast in Colombia, EQUAL was in start-up mode when the pandemic disrupted activities. As a result, their respective approaches are distinguished. The former project made every effort to continue monitoring as they had before the pandemic, augmenting surveys to gather health information and taking advantage of this contact with households to disseminate information about the pandemic. The latter project used the first year of the project as an inception phase, conducting a PSA and gaining an in-depth understanding of the experiences, needs, and challenges faced by target beneficiaries.

### Pre-Situational Analysis

**PURPOSE:** Understand (1) experiences, needs, and challenges of target beneficiaries, and (2) perspectives of stakeholders (government, civil society, private sector, etc.) within the project context.

**METHODOLOGY:** Desk review and in-country research using a qualitative approach

**OUTCOME:** To inform project design by identifying limitations and challenges faced by beneficiaries as well as systemic constraints

### Limitations

- Not all households had phones or sufficient connectivity to participate in remote monitoring
- People would not necessarily speak freely with others in the household listening in, leading to inaccurate data
- Some topics were too sensitive for remote monitoring, e.g. conducting phone interviews for gender-based violence issues could place subjects at risk

## Best Practices

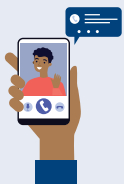
- ✓ Invest resources in a PSA and periodically review and update to capture evolving dynamics.
- ✓ The PSA process should be jointly led by M&E and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) experts, but to truly capture the full spectrum of the environment, the entire team should participate in a meaningful way.
- ✓ When remote monitoring occurs, phone calls work best for one-on-one while group interviews (e.g. focus groups) work better in an online setting with cameras.
- ✓ In-person monitoring is more resource intensive but also allows for general observation time at a project site and provides opportunity for the interviewer to observe facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, and environs
- ✓ Maintain communication with beneficiaries. The use of interactive platforms—such as Kahoot or Genially—keep beneficiaries engaged with the project and with each other, generate traceability for the project to follow up, and serve as verification to support data collection for activities.

## Lessons Learned



Conducting a PSA is a vital tool to help formulate a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan, as well as design and implement activities. It should be iterative before making programmatic changes in response to a crisis or significant event.

The development and piloting of all data collection tools prior to project implementation can help ensure ease of administration by project staff and adequate comprehension by the target population. This is especially important in the absence of a project baseline.



Remote data collection can save money and time but has limited application: there must be an established and trusting relationship with the beneficiaries, the topic must be non-sensitive, and beneficiary must have reliable and stable mobile and/or internet access.

In-person remains the best approach to collect qualitative data.



Ongoing coordination of the data collection processes at each level of the performance monitoring chain— data collection, verification, validation and analysis— can strengthen the data veracity.

