

# SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS AND YOUTH WELL-BEING:

## Lessons from 18 years of youth-targeted livelihood development programming in rural Honduras

Sara Wyngaarden<sup>1</sup>, Sally Humphries<sup>2</sup>, Kelly Skinner<sup>1</sup>, Esmeralda Lobo Tosta<sup>3</sup>, Veronica Zelaya Portillo<sup>3</sup>, Paola Orellana<sup>3</sup>, Warren Dodd<sup>1</sup>  
➤ <sup>1</sup> University of Waterloo, <sup>2</sup> University of Guelph, <sup>3</sup> The Foundation for Participatory Research with Honduran Farmers (Spanish acronym: FIPAH)

### BACKGROUND

- Rural Honduran youth have unequal access to education, vocational training, social services, and healthcare to support their growth and development.
- Livelihood opportunities are constrained by climate change, which puts pressures on agricultural systems<sup>1,2,3</sup>, and governance disputes, which have led to restrictions on foreign aid resources and migration opportunities<sup>4,5</sup>.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed economic opportunities, increased food insecurity, and introduced additional mobility restrictions<sup>5</sup>.
- Effective vocational development opportunities are critical to facilitating sustainable livelihood formation and supporting the well-being of rural Honduran youth.

### STUDY OBJECTIVE

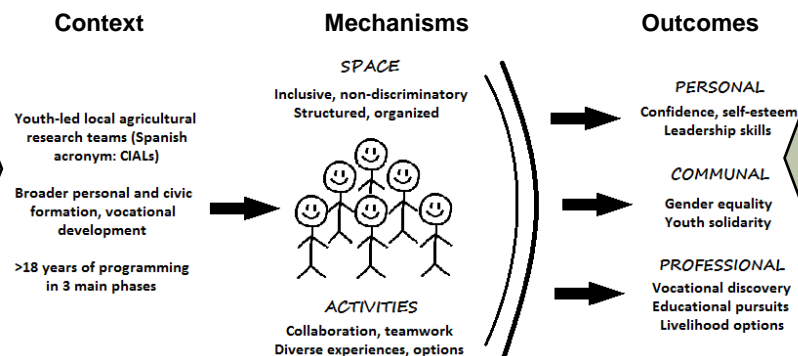
To complete a participatory impact evaluation of a youth-targeted development intervention implemented by the Foundation for Participatory Research with Honduran Farmers (Spanish acronym: FIPAH) in two rural municipalities of Honduras.

### METHODS

- *Study locations:* Jesús de Otoro, Intibucá (South-Central) and Yorito, Yoro (North-Central), Honduras
- *Approach:* Practical Participatory Evaluation
- *Research team:* Canadian researchers collaborated with FIPAH staff/researchers, and local youth leaders
- *Data sources:* **1596 former participants** (demographic survey); **94 current and former participants** (purposely sampled for semi-structured interviews)
- *Quantitative analysis:* descriptive statistics
- *Qualitative analysis:* Thematic analysis through a realist lens to explore “how, why, and for whom” the program had been effective<sup>6</sup>.

“The essential part is that CIAs are an opportunity, an opportunity for young people who have a desire to start their lives today. The situation in which we are living is very difficult, but with these groups [...] we learn to make **leaders**, to have the **motivation** to start our own businesses, to **find a solution**, an alternative, to generate income for our own families. CIAs have been one of the groups that have given the most, in due time, to be able to change our lives and to change our way of life and the way we see things” (Female, age 24, Yorito).

### RESULTS



*Transformative participation:* The program facilitated gender sensitivity and group solidarity. More than 50% of participants were women, who had active decision-making and leadership roles.

*Meaningful collaboration:* Through organized teams with rotating leadership roles, youth from 36 rural villages established projects to address local development challenges.

*Low-risk experimentation:* Youth explored diverse vocational interests. More than 60% of respondents continued to live in their home communities, including 20% who worked in agriculture.

### DISCUSSION

- FIPAH created a conducive environment for young people to develop their potential. The program helped prepare young people to lead productive and creative lives in rural areas and beyond<sup>7</sup>.
- Program successes were facilitated by partnerships with other local development organizations. Collaborations enhanced diverse educational and skill development opportunities for youth, and mitigated competition for their time and attention.
- The findings parallel Theories of Change (ToC) associated with the Human Development and Capabilities Approach (HDCA), youth empowerment theories, and Positive Youth Development (PYD).

Please contact Sara Wyngaarden at [slwyngaarden@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:slwyngaarden@uwaterloo.ca) with any questions or comments.

### CONTRIBUTION

- This in-depth analysis of FIPAH's youth-CIAL program context, mechanisms, and outcomes provides insights to guide program theory development for other youth-targeted programs, particularly in low resource, rural communities.
- Alignment with existed ToCs provides evidence of the efficacy of these ToCs in serving youth from these remote Honduran communities. Furthermore, these findings help fill a literature gap regarding the efficacy of these ToCs among youth in remote areas of lower-middle income countries.



### REFERENCES



<sup>1</sup>Classen, L., Humphries, S., FitzSimons, J., Kaaria, S., Jiménez, J., Sierra, F., & Gallardo, O. (2008). Opening Participatory Spaces for the Most Marginal: Learning from Collective Action in the Honduran Hillside. *World Development*, 36(11), 2402–2420.  
<sup>2</sup>Dodd, W., Gómez Cerna, M., Orellana, P., Humphries, S., Sadoine, M. L., Zombré, D., ... Cole, D. C. (2020). Factors associated with seasonal food insecurity among small-scale subsistence farming households in rural Honduras. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(3).  
<sup>3</sup>Humphries, S., Classen, L., Jiménez, J., Sierra, F., Gallardo, O., & Gómez, M. (2012). Opening Cracks for the Transgression of Social Boundaries: An Evaluation of the Gender Impacts of Farmer Research Teams in Honduras. *World Development*, 40(10), 2078–2095.  
<sup>4</sup>Ortega Hege, M., Centeno Orozco, R., & Castillo Venerio, M. (2005). *Masculinidad y factores socio-culturales asociados al comportamiento de los hombres: estudio en cuatro países de Centroamérica*. Mexico: Meyer, P. J. (2020). *Honduras: Background and U.S. Relations*.  
<sup>5</sup>Floate, H., Durham, J., & Marks, G. C. (2019). Moving on from logical frameworks to find the “missing middle” in international development programmes. *Journal of Development Effectiveness*, 11(1), 89–103.  
<sup>6</sup>Stewart, F. (2019). The Human Development Approach: An Overview. *Oxford Development Studies*, 47(2), 135–153.

Funding was provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council