



Humanitarian Assistance to Street Vendors in Otavalo, Ecuador During the COVID-19 Health Crisis

AYNI ECUADOR FOUNDATION

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In this current COVID-19 pandemic emergency, one of the sectors most affected is that of the informal street vendors in public spaces. Many of these vendors are of indigenous Kichua ethnicity, some are refugees from Colombia and Venezuela, but all are from economically modest or even disadvantaged backgrounds. They face difficult working conditions and enormous financial challenges under normal circumstances; the coronavirus epidemic has made an already difficult situation much worse. The Ayni Ecuador Foundation has begun to serve this population through short- and medium-term actions that allow them and their families to sustain their livelihoods and meet their basic daily living needs in terms of nutritional, psychosocial, and vocational support during the crisis. In short, this humanitarian assistance project aims to facilitate appropriate and indeed urgent intervention to immediately contribute to participants' physical and mental well-being, foster favorable conditions for maintaining proper sanitation and distancing practices during the health emergency period, and devise strategies to overcome current and post-pandemic economic challenges.

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Target Population: It has been estimated that there are hundreds of people who dedicate themselves daily to informal sales in the urban public spaces of Otavalo Canton in the Imbabura province. This number is increasing as many people with formal employment have either temporarily or permanently lost their jobs. The vast majority of these vendors (about 60%) are engaged in reselling both perishable and non-perishable food items. The other 40% sell items such as masks, clothing, personal hygiene products, and a range of other products from cell phone accessories to hand crafts, even small home furnishings. Many are trying to support families on \$2.00 - \$3.00 daily.

General Objective: To provide multifaceted humanitarian assistance aimed at improving the quality of life of 100 families in vulnerable conditions whose members are engaged in the informal sale of products in the urban public spaces of Otavalo. The new assistance period begins in December of 2020 and continues over four months.

- ✓ **Specific Objective 1:** Identify and characterize one hundred (100) vendors dedicated to the informal sale of products in public spaces in the urban sector of Otavalo Canton.
- ✓ **Specific Objective 2:** Carry out the acquisition of perishable and non-perishable food items to assemble in a basic family basket that contributes to the nutrition of each participant's family. Baskets are distributed to participants every 15 days for four months.
- ✓ **Specific Objective 3:** Implement psychosocial support strategies for the 100 participating families based in sound theory and practice with an aim to strengthen the mental and emotional resilience of participants during the period of enhanced hardship.
- ✓ **Specific Objective 4:** Help contribute to the attainment of greater life goals of each vendor via a vocational orientation process that equips vendors with a CV, enters them into a job exchange database, and helps them to create strategies for future success based on their own abilities and personal contexts.



Project Components & Impact: The selection and characterization of the potential participants is the first step of the initiative and allows for the identification of genuine need on the part of genuine informal street vendors. To verify eligibility, a socioeconomic profile is created and conditions are verified, thus ensuring that the humanitarian assistance reaches the families who need it most and that recipients are indeed engaged in informal sales in public spaces. Otherwise, the selection of participants is simply on a first-come-first-served basis. The information gleaned from the participant profiles will also inform the social intervention strategies.

The project impacts the selected participants on three main fronts:

✚ **Front 1 – Nutritional Support:** Every 15 days, each of the 100 families receive a basic food basket of perishable and non-perishable food items which helps provide balanced nutrition. About 60% of the street vendors are engaged in the sale of food products, thus whenever possible, products are bought directly from project participants in an effort to provide additional support. This measure can also reduce the amount of interpersonal contact and potential viral spreading by reducing the amount of time necessary in public spaces to sell their goods. The rest of the products in the basket are purchased from small merchants in the canton in order to contribute to their commercial and familial finances.

✚ **Front 2 – Psychosocial Support:** Various instruments¹ are applied for the progressive support of aid recipients during one-on-one sessions with qualified professionals which provide a safe space for open dialog as well the development of several coping and empowerment strategies. Focusing on multiple intelligence domains² is key among the individual and collective tools used to improve self-esteem, confidence, and collaborative work in order to succeed somewhat in the midst of the crisis. *Participation in this support component is an essential requirement for receiving the basic family food basket.*

✚ **Front 3 – Vocational Orientation:** Qualified professionals conduct one-on-one sessions in which they characterize the situation for each participant in order to provide vocational guidance regarding potential productive activities in a post-pandemic context. The vendors receive assistance in creating a CV and will be entered into a job exchange database specially created for this project. Additionally, the recognition and strengthening of positive character traits³ as well as the development of strategic competence to adapt to changing conditions and circumstances are tools used to help participants more effectively integrate into the current and post-COVID market. *Participation in this support component is an essential requirement for receiving the basic family food basket.*

The project initiatives are undertaken in conditions which meet high biosecurity standards, from the use of appropriate protective wear to the sterilization of products and supplies. **All participants also receive a free washable face mask to help protect themselves and others from the spread of COVID-19.** These measures, in addition to proper social distancing, safeguard the project team as well as set an example for participants of the need to maintain such protocols for the entirety of the pandemic.

¹ Psychosocial support as a personal, family and community process, to reestablish the emotional integrity of individuals and strengthen social bonds. Bernler, G. (1997) *Teoría para el trabajo psicossocial*. Editorial Espacio: Buenos Aires.

² In the domain of cognitive educational psychology, *multiple intelligence theory* breaks down the singular concept of intelligence into several modalities, awareness of which can provide greater insight into individual aptitude and learning as well as group dynamics. Gardner, H. (1983) *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. Basic Books.

³ This is a theoretical construct based in “positive psychology”, which focuses on a positive approach to individual and collective well-being. The premise is that recognition and cultivation of character strengths enables us to grow individually and work more effectively with others. Peterson, C. & Seligman, M. (2004) *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Project Timeframe: The duration of this initiative is until March 2021. In this period, actions to provide humanitarian assistance to 100 vulnerable street vendors/families in the canton of Otavalo will be implemented. **If funds allow, the project may be extended and expanded to include a maximum of 200 participants.**

Results Indicators & Long-term Impact: Evaluation of project effectiveness will be ongoing and based on specific results indicators devised for each project component. This enables us to empirically analyze the process and make pragmatic adjustments to maximize efficiency and impact. Successful implementation of the project should yield 5 important outcomes:

1) Participants will experience improved physical health as a result of having received a large basket of healthy food items on a biweekly basis.

2) As a secondary benefit to having received the food aid, participants will be able to spend their extremely limited earnings on other things like medicine, transport, etc., which can hopefully somewhat mitigate financial stress and improve quality of life.

3) Participants will be equipped with a CV, interview strategies, and employment leads, which can enable them to have a better chance of reducing or eliminating the need to sell in the streets.

4) Participants will feel emotionally supported, more confident, and less anxious as a result of having received professional psychosocial support. They will develop coping strategies to overcome current and future challenges.

5) As a result of having been supported on several fronts, participants and their families will have a chance to experience less insecurity and hopefully create a more stable long-term situation for themselves. In turn, this can have a domino effect as they are able to contribute more to their communities.

Projected Monthly Costs: The following table describes the projected overall costs per month related to the humanitarian intervention for 100 vulnerable individuals/families in Otavalo Canton.

Activity	Total Cost	December	January	February	March
1. Participant registration; project initiation & tracking costs. Supplies. Project & database management, PR.	\$5292.00	\$1323.00	\$1323.00	\$1323.00	\$1323.00
2. Biweekly basic food basket for 100 vulnerable Otavalo families.	\$12,800.00	\$3200.00	\$3200.00	\$3200.00	\$3200.00
3. Psychosocial support for 100 struggling street vendors.	\$5600.00	\$1400.00	\$1400.00	\$1400.00	\$1400.00
4. Vocational support to help 100 people increase their employability.	\$5600.00	\$1400.00	\$1400.00	\$1400.00	\$1400.00
TOTAL USD	\$29,292.00	\$7323.00	\$7323.00	\$7323.00	\$7323.00

*** Note that 82% of budgeted costs are for program components with direct positive impact.*

Project Budget: The table below provides describes the projected itemized costs to provide humanitarian assistance to 100 street vendors and their families on a monthly basis over the final 4-months of the project.

Type of Expenditure	Detail	Monthly Cost	Total Cost
Biweekly basic food basket for 100 families over 4 months	Basic family food basket with a \$14.00 per unit cost, comprised of: 1 kilo rice 1 kilo dried noodles 1 kilo dried lentils 1 kilo beans 1 kilo peas 1 kilo tomatoes 1 kilo carrots 1 kilo onions ½ kilo peppers ½ kilo lettuce 1 kilo oranges 1 kilo apples 1 kilo bananas	\$2800.00	\$11,200.00

Project publication, PR, fundraising, social media, press events	Personnel, printing & supplies, web promotion costs, transport	\$150.00	\$600.00
Database creation, management, & promotion	Creation & management of participant database; Creation, management, hosting, & promotion of job exchange database	\$210.00	\$840.00
Personal protective equipment & supplies	Supplies needed to safely carry out the distribution of the food baskets as well as support sessions, consisting of: 4 biosafety suits & face visors (\$35/ea.) 115 washable, reusable masks (\$149) 50 pairs of disposable gloves (\$15) 4 liters of antibacterial gel (\$8/ea.) 30 liters of alcohol & disinfectants (\$4/ea.)	\$113.00	\$692.00
Materials	Various materials such as office supplies, bags for food, disinfection supplies, etc.	\$50.00	\$200.00
Logistics assistant	1 person charged with buying food, assembling baskets and coordinating distribution	\$400.00	\$1600.00
Professional psychosocial support & empowerment training	2 professionals charged with conducting daily sessions for 5 different participating vendors each in order to provide psychosocial support, with a total of two monthly sessions per vendor (\$700 each professional).	\$1400.00	\$5600.00
Professional vocational support & work assistance	2 professionals charged with conducting daily sessions for 5 different participating vendors each in order to provide vocational support, with a total of two monthly sessions per vendor (\$700 each professional).	\$1400.00	\$5600.00
Project coordination	1 professional in charge of coordinating activities, keeping track of participants, and systematizing information to account for results, as well as evaluating and monitoring fulfillment of the project objectives based on predefined indicators.	\$800.00	\$3200.00
TOTAL USD		\$7323.00	\$29,292.00

Monthly humanitarian assistance cost, per family	\$73.23 USD
Humanitarian assistance cost over the 4-month project period, per family	\$292.92 USD

Signed,

Victor Hugo Pinzón Plaza
 President & Legal Representative
 AYNÍ ECUADOR FOUNDATION
www.ayni.org.ec
aynifund@gmail.com
 +(593) 098 398 63 91
 Otavalo-Ecuador

