

Restoring the rights of the street-connected population of Santa Faz

A participatory evaluation | CONACMI, Guatemala

About CONACMI

The National Association Against Child Abuse - CONACMI - is a civil society organisation based in Guatemala. Since 1995, it has developed programmes to support children and adolescents across the country whose rights have been violated.

CONACMI works to protect and respect the rights of children, adolescents and young people, and to bring about change at a cultural and systemic level through a variety of interventions including technical and social development, and research on intergenerational violence. CONACMI is a long-standing member of the Family for Every Child alliance.

Project evaluated: Restoring the rights of the at-risk street-connected population in the community of Santa Faz

The project, 'Restoring the rights of the at-risk street-connected population in the community of Santa Faz', has been implemented in the community of Santa Faz, Guatemala City. This is a community with high rates of poverty, violence, social exclusion and gang culture, as well as natural and anthropogenic hazards such as torrential rains, high winds, water depletion and pollution. These factors contribute to the levels of risk facing street-connected children and youth.

The project has assisted children and adolescents in street situations and at risk of living on the street. Strategies have included:

- Income generation.
- Inclusive education.
- Preventive and curative health support.
- Creation of protective communities.

Conacmi has worked together with the community and local support networks, including schools, local authorities, counsellors and CSOs to implement these strategies.



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Participatory evaluation plan

Through the participatory evaluation, which took place between April and September 2024, CONACMI aimed to strengthen its team's knowledge in the use of participatory tools. Its participatory methodology was based on the principles of dialogue, collaboration, reflection and action, allowing for the development of discussion and exchange of ideas. Conacmi aimed to assess the impact of the project on the lives of the children and young people involved and propose improvements for future interventions.

The project was evaluated using participatory qualitative and quantitative methods involving children, young people, parents, guardians, teachers and civil society organisations. The process included the following phases:

- Document review: A thorough review of the project documentation allowed for an in-depth understanding of the project design and implementation, as well as validation of the project activities and expected results.
- Development of tools: These included surveys of children and youth; focus groups with parents and caregivers; and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders.
- Selection of participatory evaluation participants: These were 197 children aged 9-12 years, 59 parents and caregivers, and other key stakeholders including representatives from a health centre, schools, civil society, the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Mayor.
- Agreeing processes for organising and analysing information: This included a matrix for recording all information.
- Collecting the data.

“Thanks to the project, I learned how to repair phones and computers. This gave me the opportunity to start my own business. I stopped using drugs and started focusing on my studies and business. Now I am a leader in my community...I am able to support my family. My goal is to help more young people get off the street.” Jayron - project participant

Tools selected

- Surveys: for children aged 9-12, using child-friendly methodologies, and for parents and caregivers.
- Focus group discussions with groups of both children, and parents and caregivers.
- In-depth interviews with key stakeholders to collect success stories.



Evaluation outcomes

- **Income generation:** The technical-vocational training and start-up capital provided by the project has enabled participants to acquire technical skills and set up their own businesses. This has generated sustainable income, fostered personal and community empowerment and transformed lives.
- **Educational inclusion:** School and out-of-school support strategies have significantly improved the academic performance and school participation of children and young people. Testimonies reflect how psychological support and recreational activities have contributed to more inclusive and protective educational environments.
- **Preventive and curative health:** The project has effectively addressed the physical and emotional health needs of the participating children and young people. Psychosocial care and hygiene training have improved the overall well-being of the participants. However, the lack of adequate infrastructure has been an obstacle to the full implementation of these strategies.
- **Protective community:** Awareness-raising activities and the creation of protective communities have contributed to reducing violence and improving security in Santa Faz. Community participation and training of local leaders have been crucial in maintaining a safe and welcoming environment for children and young people.

It should be noted that participants also referred to the significant positive impact the workshops had on family dynamics and interpersonal relationships.

Lessons learnt

- Maintaining a holistic approach that combines emotional support, recreational activities and educational and vocational opportunities is fundamental to addressing the needs of street children and youth.
- Taking a collaborative approach with other organisations is crucial for success.
- Project strategies must be adapted to the specific realities of this population.
- The participatory evaluation process has alerted Conacmi to its gaps in knowledge about the Santa Faz community context, enabling it to be better informed as it develops the strategy for the next phase of the project, giving it a higher chance of having meaningful impact.



Conclusion

CONACMI's participatory evaluation of its project Restoring the rights of the street-connected population of Santa Faz revealed the valuable impact it has had on income generation, educational inclusion, preventive and curative health, and protective community. The participatory nature of focus group discussions had a positive impact on family dynamics and interpersonal relationships within the community.

However, through the evaluation process Conacmi became aware of its gaps in knowledge about the Santa Faz community context; this will help it to adapt its strategy for the next phase of the project, giving it a higher chance of having meaningful impact.

CONTACT DETAILS

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