

Trinidad and Tobago

Garden to Kitchen: Listening to communities

Case Study



Context and Scope

The Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross has been working to support migrants arriving in their country. A majority of these migrants are Spanish-speaking and from Venezuela. These migrants come by boat to Trinidad and Tobago to work in the construction, entertainment and hospitality industries.

COVID-19 made the situation significantly more difficult for migrants as many of them work in the hospitality sector, which was repeatedly locked down. In an August 2020 study by UNICEF, the estimate was that unemployment for migrants rose from 33 per cent to 52 per cent (an increase of more than 50 per cent)*. Migrants often don't have access to health care or other community support.

The Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross undertook a situation and context analysis to identify existing knowledge, skills and capacities and the social, economic, political and/or cultural factors and power dynamics for arriving migrants.

This told them that migrants came from an agriculture background and wanted to grow vegetables to feed their family (food security), but also as a source of income by selling additional products to neighbors and the wider community. As a result, they launched their Garden to Kitchen initiative based on this feedback. This initiative provides families that meet the criteria a starter kit with seeds and information on gardening and the program. There are currently 35 families involved in individual gardens.

The National Society works hand-in-hand with migrant communities – listening to understand and address communities' assistance needs, priorities and preferences, and identify issues around age, gender, disability, and how these influence vulnerability.

This case study looks at the research process to understand the situation and context, how it has shaped the livelihoods programming of the organization, and suggested new programs to support migrant health.

*The Impact of COVID-19 on Migrant Children in Trinidad and Tobago:
<https://bit.ly/3dlGUkx>

Impact of using the CEA approach

The Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross undertook a situation and context analysis to identify existing knowledge, skills and capacities and the social, economic, political and/or cultural factors and power dynamics for arriving migrants.

Through its research which included face to face surveys the Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross has been able to support unemployed migrants, who have families with children that have medical issues or disabilities, through a comprehensive food security/livelihoods program involving starter growing kits, and livelihoods training.

Initially the National Society set up for surveys online, but they realized they weren't able to capture the everyone in a community this way, so they added the in-person interviews accessed community introductions (by trusted key informants).

The survey revealed the number of persons with a disability and medical conditions in children, which allowed for the criteria for the food security/livelihood program to be created.

Additional feedback was also gained through the surveys, that is changing the National Society's approach to the migrant health clinic they operate in Port of Spain. When the clinic began this year, there weren't any services for family planning. However, as the team engaged more communities, more and more women would ask for family planning methods describing they didn't have long-term access or economic means to access these services. The national society is working to add these services including gynecology, ultrasound, and contraception methods to what is available at the clinic.

There were two unintended effects from this research. The more the surveys were conducted, the more needs were revealed. The National Society is not able to meet the needs for everyone, so it is been difficult for the team to manage all of the requests. On the other side, the Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross has created an in-depth, trusted relationship with many migrant communities. They have been able to explain to community members one-on-one while doing the research, that they cannot help everyone, but with the surveys want to learn more, and people are still happy to participate and build that relationship.

Using data:

- Data was collected by Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross through in-person surveys (following COVID-19 protocols), using kobo. Community relationships for the survey began with introductions by key community leaders. Surveys ask questions on demographics, health, needs, economic situation, skills they have to be developed into future livelihoods
- Survey started in April in community clusters. So far about 300 people have been interviewed and the team is planning to survey an additional 300 people
- Through interviews, new communities have been identified, though referrals from interviewed individuals and key informants, for further surveys to be completed.

Factors for Success

There were four key factors that have allowed this CEA initiative to succeed:

Leadership buy in – All of the key people at the Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross from the president to operations managers support learning more about the community through in-depth research and are keen to see the feedback used in furthering the programs and in planning for future operations.

Key community leaders – By reaching out and creating relationships with long-time Venezuelan migrants, who have been in Trinidad and Tobago for more than a decade and have become residents, the Red Cross has been able to build bridges to communities who can find it hard to trust. Those leaders allowed Red Cross to make connections with vulnerable communities and to understand the real needs and who is not receiving help.

Flexible Partners – By Establishing partnerships through honest conversations with funders who believe in flexibility in the response and looking to move forward collectively.

Continuity Planning – Looking at continuity in programming. It's important to continue to scan the environment for how to keep the programs alive, including building relationships with non-traditional partners.



Key Constraints

There were some constraints the Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross had to overcome:

COVID-19 – the team had to work within government regulations and lockdowns, and to ensure that volunteers and the community were staying safe during the pandemic. The team implemented COVID-19 precautions and continued to adapt, innovate and evolve, which allowed them to continue their activities.

Identifying people – before meeting and working with the key community leaders meeting the most vulnerable communities could be difficult. In areas without those bridging leaders, people cannot be contacted or discovered because of concerns of trust.

Lessons Learned

Using evidence-based information from the community is key in designing programs. When conducting surveys, it's important to be clear that these discussions are not promises of support, but an opportunity for the National Society to learn and address the most vulnerable. Being flexible in the approach and adapting operations, for example health programs, based on the information being received from the communities. Work with the timing of the communities, for example you cannot do capacity building when basic needs are not met.

Recommendations

It's important to continue research using surveys and use the information to continue to adapt the migrant program, including growing the livelihoods options for communities.

It's important to continue working with vulnerable migrant communities and using word-of-mouth and key community leaders to connect with them.



For more information or feedback, please contact:

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