Evaluating a Microfinance Program in Sayausí, Ecuador

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Evaluating a Microfinance Program in Sayausí, Ecuador

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Abstract

This report addresses the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program. It had been in operation for over a year but had not yet been evaluated. Our goal was to create and implement an evaluation tool for the program, then use our findings to provide recommendations. To accomplish this goal, we conducted semi structured interviews with each member of the program and performed participant observations at workshops and meetings. Through our evaluation, we found that the program has been an overall success. However, we did discover some problem areas, such as the management, accessibility, and organization of meetings and trainings. To solve these issues, we recommended that the management seek advice from Hearts of Gold on running the program and work towards making the program more accessible to all.
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Figure 1. Chris, Johnn, Grace, Z Oliver, and Esteban walking to an interview in Sayausí (Personal Photo)
Executive Summary

Introduction

Ecuador’s government has taken steps toward gender equality by working with and funding groups to empower women and mobilize for rights and respect. One popular strategy to better position women is through the development of microfinance programs, where participants can access monetary gifts or loans usually to put towards their own businesses or dreams. Kallpa Warmi is a non-governmental organization (NGO) specializing in empowering women in the rural community of Sayausí. In 2017, they created a community loan program called Mujeres Cosechando Sueños with a mission of supporting women’s financial independence and strengthening their role in the community. After one year of operation, Kallpa Warmi would like to evaluate the success of the program. They have collaborated with Hearts of Gold, an organization that supports smaller community NGOs, to appoint us to assess the outcome of the initiative and to evaluate the loan process and the program itself. Our goal was to work with both organizations to conduct an in-depth analysis of the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program.

Methodology

To approach the problem, we focused on the following objectives to complete our goal:

1. Understand the best practices for creating evaluation tools and generating indicators.
2. Create and refine our evaluation tool and indicators.
3. Implement and refine our evaluation tool.
In order to achieve the goal of conducting a successful evaluation of the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program, we created a social science evaluation tool which was the backbone of our project. We researched evaluation tools to obtain a general sense of understanding and gain exposure to new concepts or perspectives. Once obtained, we generated indicators and frameworks specifically relevant to the participants we evaluated, and from those, we developed specific questions to conduct semi-structured interviews. We listened to program participants’ stories of how the microfinance program changed their livelihoods or life trajectory. After our initial pilot week of interviews, we refined our questions and moved on to the full-scale evaluation. During this time, we also performed participant observations. We observed workshops and monthly meetings to gain perspective on the social and political environment within Mujeres Cosechando Sueños. We analyzed the information we gathered from interviews and participant observations to conduct our assessment of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños to form conclusions and recommendations. At the end of the project, we delivered to our sponsor the evaluation tool, our recommendations, and at their request, a magazine profiling each participant and their loans to market the program and its impact.

**Key Findings**

As we analyzed the data gathered from interviews and participant observations, we formed the following conclusions about the impact Mujeres Cosechando Sueños has had on its members.

**Finding 1: Life changes from their credit success, and the financial stability it has given them.**

Many participants said that joining Mujeres Cosechando Sueños bettered their daily lives as result of their credit success, financial stability, and the betterment of the lives of
their dependents. Over three quarters of members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños said their credit was successful and had an overall positive experience in the program. The 22% of participants who voiced their credits as unsuccessful had varying reasons, but most still had a positive experience. We also found that 81% of the people interviewed said the program had bettered the lives of their dependents, and 94% gained the financial stability they needed to support their families. However, some participants also noted a negative effect because they had to leave their children alone when they went to meetings. Overall, participating in Mujeres Cosechando Sueños increased members’ sense of financial stability and provided better lives for the majority of their families.

**Finding 2: The participants have received support from the program, their friends, and their families, but they faced some struggles along the way.**

Participating in this program has given the members a community to support them. Through the program, many have met new people and made new friends, and have motivated each other to be successful and participate. Access to emergency credits, for situations like medical emergencies, increased confidence in the program’s ability to support them, and 77% of the interview pool agreed that this program supported them enough that they would even want their children becoming members as well. In addition to the program supporting them, 24 members have stated that they receive support from their fellow members, mostly through their guarantors, often a friend in the program who agreed to pay back a credit if the borrower cannot. Additionally, when asked about the support of people outside of the program, 25% of participants stated they had heard negative opinions and feelings towards the program. By reducing the negativity that surrounds Mujeres Cosechando Sueños they can increase support for everyone who becomes involved.
Finding 3: Organization and Communication with the Board of directors

In all the meetings that we attended we noticed difficulties with communication and planning that can be traced back to the board of directors. Once everyone had arrived at the meetings, there was a lot of confusion about what they were going to talk about and it seemed as though the president was the only one who knew the vague agenda. This lack of organization and direction created unnecessary chaos that elongated the meetings. Another issue is that the board of directors and the members of the program struggle to communicate outside of the monthly meetings. Additionally, the board of directors wants more of the membership to read and follow the rules of the program, while many members said they were unclear about the rules. Organization and communication issues within management are limiting the potential growth of the program.

Finding 4: Observations, organization, and credit accessibility at monthly meetings

Through our participant observation of the monthly meetings, we found although these meetings were mandatory, there was a lack of member attendance. They spent most of their time handling financial responsibilities, and the meetings struggled to stay on track, often feeling disorganized and off topic. Some methods mentioned by interviewees to improve the organization at meetings included:

1. Obtaining their own space solely dedicated to program business and meetings to minimize distractions and provide a more professional environment
2. Establishing a defined plan of action for each meeting to improve workflow
3. Enforcing the rules to re-establish order and clarity
4. Implementing security regulations to reinforce confidence and focus

We found that a lack of credit accessibility had a negative impact on members dependant on the program because participants are only able to pay back and take out credits
once a month, and 23% of participants disliked being fined for meetings that they were unable to attend.

**Finding 5: Participants’ opinions about the workshops and trainings**

We found that one fifth of all active members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños struggle to attend or cannot attend the workshops at all due to their job schedule. From those who could attend, the following topics were requested.

1. **Accounting and money management**

   For some members, money management is a new concept that they do not have a lot of experience with. As a result, one seventh of the active members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños stated that they would like to have accounting and financial training as a future workshop.

2. **Agriculture and raising animals**

   Over half of all members with credits have taken out a credit for agriculture and/or raising animals. Additionally, at least five members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños used their credits to buy animals which later died. As such, two members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños expressed interest in workshops about how to raise common animals such as pigs, chickens, and guinea pigs.

3. **Psychology and social skills**

   Two people have stated that they wish there was more training on social skills and psychology. For example, one person mentioned that some members struggle to find guarantors for their loans because they come off as cold or aggressive. She would like training on personality and communication to help these members overcome their social challenges and increase the unity of the program.
4. Handicrafts and gastronomy

Just over a sixth of the members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños use their credits to sell goods that they create. They want more training on making products like clothing, food, and artisanal goods because they want to increase the types of goods that they can produce and sell.

Finding 6: Participants’ positive and negative experiences paying back their credits

We also analyzed the repayment process. Due to low interest rates and long repayment periods, 55% of the 29 people with credits considered it easy to pay them back. We discovered that when people were able to attend all the meetings and schedule their payments, it made the repayment process easier. Two common issues that members experienced when repaying loans were either inability to attend the meetings that month or struggle to obtain the money. About 24% of the participants reported regularly having problems repaying their loans. Some difficulties that members reported having included a month where production was low, or having an emergency unrelated to their loan that caused them to not be able to pay the full amount that month. This suggests that there are ways to make credits more readily accessible and, in turn, more likely to succeed.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Reestablish, reinforce, and re-teach the rules of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños

We recommend that Mujeres Cosechando Sueños provide their members with a set of clear rules to reinforce and govern the program. To accomplish this, we recommend providing printed copies of the rules to ensure that participants remain informed about how the program functions. Any new or updated rules need to be presented to the group if members are expected to follow them. In addition to providing copies of the rules, we
recommend that the program address any rules that have not been followed. This should be done by offering assistance to people who are struggling to follow or understand the rules. Lastly, we recommend that a member of the program sit down with a new participant before they join and review the rules with them. It is crucial to provide them with all the information necessary to fully understand the organization that they are planning to be a part of.

**Recommendation 2: Improving accessibility, function and financial action of monthly meetings**

In order to make monthly meetings run more smoothly and use time effectively, we recommend the following changes.

1. Performing financial actions outside of meetings

   We recommend creating time outside of the planned monthly meetings to allow members with busy schedules a chance to repay loans and ask financial questions. This would consist of setting aside a variety of time slots where a member of the executive board is available to aid with financial services.

2. Improving accessibility of meetings

   We recommend that the board of directors survey as many members as possible about the days and times that would fit best with their schedule to better program events. Additionally, we recommend that the program provide child care for its members who cannot attend meetings because they have to care for their children. Lastly, the board of directors should review with members the acceptable excuses that do not incur fines for missing a meeting.

3. Changes to dynamics and functions of the meetings

   We recommend that the board prepare an agenda ahead of time and post the meeting minutes to make them accessible to members who could not attend, either through electronic communication or placing a physical copy in the Sayausí infocenter. To improve the
professional environment, we recommend the program look into obtaining its own office space for privacy and financial security.

**Recommendation 3: Ideas for future trainings to add and improve to their current system**

In order to improve their workshops and supports, we recommend that Mujeres Cosechando Sueños focus on the following topics for their future trainings.

1. **Finances and accounting**

   As many interviewees suggested, we recommend that Mujeres Cosechando Sueños hold mandatory trainings about finances and accounting, covering basic topics about how to budget and save money. We also suggest that the board of directors seek more specific training on accounting and bookkeeping by utilizing their connection with Hearts of Gold to administer these trainings.

2. **Social skills**

   We suggest for the program to offer trainings in general social skills, body language, personality, and communication. Additionally, having conflict resolution skills could minimize any escalations that may occur in the future, and is widely important in a variety of settings. To be as professional and beneficial as possible, it would be ideal to bring an outside expert to design and administer this workshop.

3. **Credit specific skills**

   A final recommendation for workshop themes is to include trainings on skills that members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños want to learn and use a credit for. One credit specific area of focus is agriculture and raising animals. To help less experienced farmers, we recommend making a mentorship program to teach them. Another credit specific area of focus is handicrafts and gastronomy. We recommend spending time in a meeting discussing exactly what cooking and crafting skills the participants want to learn and then making these
workshops optional, to not overburden the busier members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños who may not see these skills as essential.

**Conclusion**

Rooted from the data collected in our interviews, these recommendations come from the participants themselves and our observations. Given the nature of these recommendations, they have the potential to effectively create positive change within the program to better the experiences of everyone in involved and to maintain that Mujeres Cosechando Sueños is well supported. Over the years, continuing this process of evaluation by collecting data, making recommendations, and acting on them, will ensure that Mujeres Cosechando Sueños is as successful as it can be. Furthermore, these improvements to Mujeres Cosechando Sueños will enhance the lives of its members and the community of Sayausí as a whole.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Ecuador’s government has made gender equality a priority, by working with and funding groups that empower women and mobilize for rights and respect. The percentage of women in the workplace is growing quickly. However, many women work informally, selling goods or services to members of their community. While informal work provides a small source of independent income, the opportunities for growth and entrepreneurship are limited and it is often not enough to support oneself. Additionally, a large proportion of the women in Ecuador are neither formally nor informally employed.

There is still a lot of progress to be made to achieve gender equality. The power imbalance manifests itself in the home as well as in the workplace. In many Ecuadorian homes, the husband generally holds the majority of the power. Historically, women have been expected to be homemakers and followers. It can be difficult to break out of this pattern and begin work if a woman has no prior work experience. Additionally, some women feel they have no right to personal money or property (Deere, Contreras & Twyman, 2014). Unfortunately, another symptom of the gender power imbalance is domestic violence. According to one report, over half of all Ecuadorian women will experience some sort of violence (psychological, physical, or sexual) at least once in their lives, a statistic which is even higher in rural areas (Deere et al., 2014). Domestic violence hurts children, families, and ultimately communities, in addition to the physical harm, depression, and low self-esteem it can cause for the victims themselves.

One popular strategy to better position women is through the development of microfinance programs, where participants can access monetary gifts or loans usually to put towards their own businesses or dreams. In addition to loans, some programs offer conditional cash transfers, which require the recipient to comply with certain conditions of the transfer. Examples of conditions include receiving regular medical care or ensuring that their children attend school. The idea is not only that women might benefit financially from the loans, they could also benefit socially. The programs offer opportunities to advance their
role in the household and community. One theory is that women build power and control through these incentives, thus taking a step towards gender parity and raising self-esteem.

However, as with any intervention, there is a risk for unintended consequences both negative and positive. Many microfinance programs found early success, helping alleviate poverty in the communities where they were implemented. Often, those previously beneficial programs turned detrimental over time when lending agencies became too profit focused or neglected the social impacts of their programs (Ashraf, 2014). An example of a social impact could be women becoming ostracized by their community for being perceived as having too much knowledge or power. It is critical to perform evaluations early and often to ensure they are having the desired positive impact.

Kallpa Warmi is a nongovernmental organization (NGO) specializing in empowering women in the rural parish of Sayausí. In 2017, the NGO and two other local groups created a community loan program called Mujeres Cosechando Sueños with a mission of supporting women’s financial independence and strengthening their role in the community. In addition to easily accessible loans with low interest, the program provides all participants with social and occupational training through a variety of workshops. After one year of operation, Kallpa Warmi would like to evaluate the success of the program. They have collaborated with Hearts of Gold, an organization that supports smaller community NGOs, to assess the outcome of the initiative and to evaluate the program to provide recommendations for future improvements.

Our goal was to work with both organizations to conduct an in-depth analysis of the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program. Our assessment identified social, economic, and environmental outcomes of the loan program, considering not only the participants individually but also their families, home, and social life. In order to complete our assessment, we developed and followed a plan of action for our project work. We understood the best practices for creating evaluation tools and generating indicators. By completing site assessments and participating in community events, we then refined our indicators and the evaluation tool we developed. Finally, we implemented our evaluation tool to gather the
necessary data to give recommendations to the program. We provided these data and recommendations to Hearts of Gold, Kallpa Warmi, and the board of directors of the program to support their mission to improve the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program.
Chapter 2: Background

In this section, we begin with a broad overview of microfinance from multiple perspectives, the importance of evaluating the organizations that run these programs, and the strategies for such evaluations. This is followed by an in-depth description of our sponsors, Kallpa Warmi and Hearts of Gold, and the microcredit pilot program that Kallpa Warmi started last year. To support our research, we have included a more detailed explanation of microfinance and the indicators of the impacts of such programs. We describe two case studies of similar programs and evaluations to form comparisons and gather information on how to proceed with our methodology. We then conclude with takeaways from our research in preparation to move forward with our project.

What is microfinance?

The ideas behind microfinance as a method to spread wealth among a small community have been around for centuries (Rahman, 2010). The recent rise in popularity and development of microfinance has been credited to Muhammad Yunus. He started his microfinance program, the Grameen Bank, in Bangladesh in 1976 with a mission of delivering loans to those deemed “un-bankable” (Rahman, 2010, para. 37). Since then Yunus’ methods have evolved to include not only loans, but also credit and savings programs, investment opportunities and micro-insurance. On top of the additional financial programs, many microfinance institutions have started offering various training programs as well. These trainings are in areas such as literacy, finance, microenterprise development and management, and health care (Rahman, 2010). These developments in microfinance, as well as an increase in success stories, have caused rapid growth in the use of this strategy.

Generally, microfinance projects target communities that have limited access to education or jobs. In place of a collateral payment, microfinance programs rely on social pressure and encouragement to ensure repayment. Many other microfinance programs
provide loans in groups, putting recipients together who have a previous relationship and can support each other in the use and repayment of the loans (Bruton, Khavul & Chavez, 2011). Creating these programs with a group focus spreads the responsibility around the community. This can make receiving and repaying loans seem more manageable as participants are never facing challenges alone. It is for this reason that lenders often prefer women as the recipients of their loans. Not only are women more likely to invest the loans in ways that will directly benefit their children and families, but their strong bonds in the community perpetuate the system described above (Bruton, Khavul & Chavez, 2011). The loan recipients are typically starting or expanding a small business with the credit they receive. The idea is that if these businesses become financially successful, not only will the recipients be able to repay their loans, but they will also be able to put money back into their community. This enables other members to have the opportunity to grow financially.

Chart 1 below describes the desired potential outcomes of a microfinance program. As illustrated here, these programs better the economic state of the community and increase opportunities by breaking the cycle of poverty. By hoping to improve economic well-being through the dispersal of loans, lending organizations are trying to address more than just the state of poverty.

Chart 1. Thematic description of outcomes
(Gopalaswamy, Babu & Dash, 2016, p. 6)
Importance of evaluating microfinance programs

Despite many positive stories, microfinance programs have received mixed reviews necessitating a closer look at their goals, operations, and impacts. Many of these programs claimed early successes, but there have also been many reports on the negative effects that microfinance can have on communities. A report entitled Microfinance: Lessons from a Crisis by Tara Nair (2011) highlights abuses that residents of Andhra Pradesh, India faced from profit driven microfinance companies. These unscrupulous lenders used the success of the early microfinance programs to earn the trust of villages in Andhra Pradesh and encouraged them to take out loans to grow their businesses. However, their desire to turn a profit coupled with a lack of interest in supporting the financial efforts of the community, led to the use of aggressive strategies to foster loan dependency among the citizens (Nair, 2011).

Profit driven organizations and the possibility of causing unintentional harm are the reasons it is important to perform regular evaluations. Nair reported further that the Indian government had tried to take action to remedy the situation but were largely ineffective due to the loan dependency that was already abundant in the region. This highlights the necessity for early community evaluation for suitability, and regulation so that legitimate processes will be followed.

This case is an extreme example of the dangers that can occur when organizations go unchecked. A common mistake is considering the success of the program over the success of the recipients. One of the most popular methods to measure the success of a microfinance program is the repayment rate on the loans given (Cons & Paprocki, 2008). However, high repayment rates do not necessarily mean that the recipients of the loans are better off financially. Since many microfinance programs use social expectations to encourage the recipients to pay back the loans, some may be paid back even if the recipient cannot afford to do so. Borrowers may feel pressured to forgo food or medical care, or to take out additional loans and develop loan dependency. In such cases, the program would report that it is successful because almost all of the loans are being paid back, but upon closer evaluation, it
becomes clear that they are not improving the economic status of the community. Therefore, evaluations of microfinance programing are important for long term positive gain.

**Microfinance for community support in Cuenca, Ecuador**

Microfinance opportunities have taken hold across the world as a means to alleviate poverty and enable communities to overcome their financial challenges. Based in Cuenca, Ecuador, the Hearts of Gold Foundation is an umbrella nonprofit that works with other nonprofit organizations in the area to build capacity and to help small NGOs better manage their organizations (Personal Communication, Kelly Mitchell, September 12, 2018). By educating newer nonprofits, Hearts of Gold has a goal of increasing the sustainability and synergy of the other organizations to build a resilient community. In particular, their mission is “to partner and strengthen the capacity of community-based nonprofit agencies to ensure at-risk children, women, and families achieve healthy, safe, educational and economically autonomous ways of life in Cuenca, Ecuador” (Mission, Vision & Values, n.d.).

One of the Hearts of Gold Foundation’s recipient organizations is Kallpa Warmi. Kallpa Warmi (which means “Strong Women” in Quechua) is a nonprofit women’s cooperative based in the rural parish of Sayausí, Ecuador. The parish’s main road is located about 25 minutes outside of Cuenca, and though the population is relatively small, the parish itself is spread over a large area due to the abundant farmland. Figure 2 below shows the landscape of Sayausí. Many of the residents live in poverty and struggle to find formal work. Sayausí faces many social challenges including gender and family violence, poverty, and substance abuse. In general, communities are patriarchal and give the men more power and voice. To offset this dynamic, the women affiliated with Kallpa Warmi are working to rise above the situations they have been born into in order to provide a better life for themselves and their children (Personal Communication, Kelly Mitchell, September 12, 2018).
Kallpa Warmi works to empower women and “bring a gender perspective to the daily problems and challenges of women” (Acerca De Kallpa Warmi, 2015). Through many different projects, more than 90 members work together to improve their lives socially and financially. In one such project, a gallery and café has been established where the women can sell their artisan crafts. The gallery is staffed entirely by members of the women’s collective. A second project is a catering business, where 20 members cook and serve hot meals made from ingredients sourced from the members’ organic farms, as seen in Figure 3 below (Strong Women: A Site Visit to Hearts of Gold Partner “Kallpa Warmi”, 2018).
Most recently, the organization has decided to refine their microcredit program. A year ago, Kallpa Warmi began the pilot phase of a microcredit program called “Mujeres Cosechando Sueños” or Achieving Dreams, which they created with two other local groups. The program was started to give women an opportunity to gain financial independence and to contribute to the local economy. Mujeres Cosechando Sueños was based on a similar community microfinance program considered widely successful in Tarqui, Ecuador, which has been running for over 20 years. The stable rate of economic growth through the Tarqui program’s life means that members can now take out loans of up to $3000. Kallpa Warmi saw this program’s perceived success and benefits for the community and decided to create a similar program in their own community hoping to receive the same benefits as those observed in the Tarqui microcredit program (Personal Communication, Kelly Mitchell, Sept 12, 2018).

Currently, there are 44 participants in Mujeres Cosechando Sueños: 40 women and 4 men. To join the program, each potential participant must be invited by a current member, fill out a basic application with their personal information, and contribute $50 to the fund.
Initially, borrowers can take out loans of up to $140. After being in the program for 8 months and successfully paying back at least one loan (with a small amount of interest to help grow the fund), the participants are then eligible to take out loans of up to $300. The borrowers use their loans to improve their lives. A popular use of the loans is for agriculture to buy seeds or animals, so the women can expand or have their own farms. (Personal Communication, Kelly Mitchell, September 12, 2018). Members of the community may also apply to take out emergency loans, that can be processed and granted on the same day as they have been requested. The payback period for a normal loan is six months, while the payback period for an emergency loan is only a month (Personal Communication, Marisol Peñaloza, October 28, 2018).

Almost all loans granted have been paid back in full. Sayausí is tight knit, and many of the participants in Mujeres Cosechando Sueños knew each other before joining the program. Since all the capital in the fund comes directly from the participants’ pockets, the borrowers want to support their community and lenders by repaying their loans in a timely fashion (Personal Communication, Kelly Mitchell, September 12, 2018). This creates a strong sense of accountability, leading to a high loan repayment rate.

Hearts of Gold Program Coordinator Kelly Mitchell said that participants join the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program because participating gives the women a sense of hope for the future and a chance to better support their families. Some struggle to hold onto their personal money because their husbands confiscate it to buy drugs or alcohol. That said, few of the women earn money through formal work and most work informally on small personal projects and businesses. Most of the male loan recipients use the loans to augment their income or support their jobs. Mujeres Cosechando Sueños tries to support its members through loans to jumpstart their pursuit of personal financial independence and build confidence to find their voice and strength. The program also has a goal of increasing its membership and providing more resources to its participants as the program grows.

Understanding the effectiveness of the loan program and its impact on the participants would
provide Kallpa Warmi and Hearts of Gold with information on how to grow and move forward.

Creating an assessment tool

In order to successfully complete our project of evaluating the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program, it was necessary for us to create a customized assessment tool. Understanding the steps taken to produce one of these tools was crucial in our research. The following section describes the knowledge and processes taken to create our assessment tool.

When evaluating the impacts of loans and investments of microfinance programs such as Mujeres Cosechando Sueños, some key characteristics of the program participants stand out. Successful participants have a clear goal for the growth of their new business. They want their businesses to succeed and therefore work hard to achieve their goals, whereas participants who do not have this drive find their businesses to be less successful. The second characteristic is that participants with high success rates make decisions on their own and not at the discretion of their spouses or family members. They create a separation between their families and what they are doing with the money they receive. This is something important to consider given the presence of domestic violence and lack of independence that women have with money in the household. If a woman can make decisions on her own regarding the use of her loan, she will have a greater sense of autonomy and independence. Finally, a third characteristic of success in participants is that borrowers with successful businesses show strong skills in maintaining relationships between other members of the loan group as well as with the lending organization (Bruton, Khavul & Chavez, 2011, p. 727). These three characteristics can be considered indicators of successful participation in microfinance programs.

When creating an assessment tool, it is important to recognize indicators across several sectors of the participants’ lives. These may include social, political, environmental, or economic indicators. Looking at indicators that encompass different dimensions of life
provides a broad perspective on which to construct analysis. These can be broken down into two main aspects: financial and socio-political. When evaluating the financial dimension of a microfinance program, it is necessary to consider the benefits to the loan recipients as well as the organization that is providing the loans. Participants are the main stakeholders of the program, as they are funding not only their loans, but the program itself. An evaluation must analyze both positive and negative impacts on borrowers, as the program is in place for the purpose of benefiting their lives and economic state. It is also critical to record effects on the program organizers; problems that arise for the lending organization could put the program in jeopardy. This information can be obtained through observations, interviews, and focus groups. In some cases, the way a person feels about the program may not be accurately reflected in what they say, so using quantitative data as well as qualitative observations can prove to be beneficial. Using a variety of evaluation strategies and developing a diverse set of indicators will allow us to perform a more holistic evaluation.

**Distilling indicators**

Distilling indicators for perceptions and impacts has become an important method of finding and categorizing information. The type of indicator most relevant to our project is a social indicator: “a statistic of direct normative interest which facilitates concise, comprehensive, and balanced judgements about the condition of major aspects of a society” (United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1969). A benefit of social indicators is that they measure important societal aspects that are not seen in economic indicators (Diener and Suh, 1997, p.194). These indicators are qualitative or quantitative measures that display how a project is performing compared to its desired result (Save the Children, 2018). These measurements can take the form of collected hard data; for example, the number of participants who repaid loans, or the profit of a business started from an initial loan. An indicator can also be a qualitative descriptor of the impact the program has had on a participant. For our project, it was important to understand in a broad sense what an indicator was, as well as how to define our own indicators.
When discussing what makes a ‘good’ indicator it is important to recall that indicators are different given varying locations, governments, cultures, and economic classes. Ruth Orbach, the current MEAL (monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning) Technical Lead for Save the Children HQ, stated that indicators should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely (Ruth Orbach, personal communication, September 16, 2018). The methods used to come up with the successful indicators vary from project to project. For example, a previous student research team that was working on a project focused on Community Investment Programs (CIPs) in communities surrounding London compiled their indicators by analyzing previously implemented CIPs and categorized them “based on their diverse contents and their inputs of volunteers or donations.” (Crossrail Community Investment Program IQP, 2014). This provided the group with clear indicators of what had previously proven to be successful. Doing ‘practice’ interviews on a small number of program participants prior to opening interviews to the whole community is another method to evaluate what is a successful indicator. Asking a wide range of questions to a small sample size can reveal what kind of answers the community as a whole may provide and allows the interviewers to edit and modify questions in order to collect specific and significant data. Some examples of indicators the Crossrail Project Group discovered are as followed: the confidence in the project, learning interest, the number of community participants, the amount of money donated to CIPs, and the number of people who earned jobs through CIPs (Crossrail Community Investment Program IQP, 2014). These indicators are specific to their IQP, but using their methods of developing indicators helped us to develop our own.

Different types of indicators come into play given the data that needs to be collected. In a broad sense, indicators can inform social scientists of a range of varying conditions. A specific challenge that we faced was finding indicators that revealed information economically, socially, and environmentally. The application of more in depth kinds of indicators is necessary to narrow the information gathered for a specific condition. An activity indicator describes the progress the project has made since implementation. Outcome indicators measure changes in lifestyle or daily activities as a result of the program.
Goal/impact indicators look at impacts that have happened over a long-term period (Save the Children, 2018). Considering all types of indicators provided us with a solid base for collecting our data and constructing a successful in-depth analysis.

**Case studies in microfinance assessment**

The following section introduces two case studies related to our project. The first case study about microfinance NGOs in Bangladesh offers a unique look at the potential negative outcomes of an evaluation. This study was a useful example to learn from and keep in mind when making recommendations for the future of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños. The second case study provided us with a detailed evaluation of microfinance organizations in Guatemala and Esperanza. Within this study, they ask multiple questions to analyze the effectiveness of the loans on its participants, both failing and succeeding. This evaluation proved to be a valuable reference for forming questions and establishing data collection strategies for our project.

**Case 1. Blaming the poor and legitimizing coercive loan recovery strategies: Unveiling the dark side of NGO practices in Bangladesh**

An NGO started in rural Bangladesh wanted to give out small microcredit loans (around $40) to impoverished communities in the area to help mitigate poverty. Dr. Muhammad Yunus, the creator of the project, established a bank dedicated to providing small, collateral free loans to jointly liable groups of borrowers in Bangladesh (Ashraf, 2014).

What started as a program dedicated to alleviating poverty, quickly turned into a program that used coercive loan recovery strategies and shamed their borrowers for defaulting, or missing repayment dates, which forced borrowers further into poverty (Ashraf, 2014). Borrowers, fearing social humiliation and collateral, took out more loans to pay for the original loans. Instead of helping them invest in businesses and livestock for a return on investment, the microcredit programs in Bangladesh increased interest on loans and disadvantaged the participants in rural areas. After further observation in these communities,
group leaders broke into defaulted member’s homes and stole goods to settle their debts (Ashraf, 2014). Although not physically harmed, women involved in the program were threatened and mistreated by their loan groups for not being able to pay their weekly payment. This process is referred to as “[profit] accumulation through violence” (Ashraf, 2014, p. 181). Further evaluation into these NGOs showed how they “exclude the poorest from programs by considering them unsuitable” (Ashraf, 2014, p. 186). The program began as a pilot project that gave out small loans to people in rural communities, meant to both mitigate poverty and empower borrowers. It relied on trust and social pressures to motivate participants to pay back loans in a timely manner. Although the program in Bangladesh used this social liability to invoke fear in individuals, group reliability can be a common strategy used within small communities. It is important to consider potential negative unintended consequences that could arise within communities and how it could affect payback plans. Predatory exploitation of borrowers’ lack of experience and desperate situations is a common problem in microfinance programs and was considered when evaluating Mujeres Cosechando Sueños.

Case 2: Microlending in emerging economies

In 2011, researchers analyzed microfinance organizations in Latin America using qualitative methods of evaluation to understand how loans directly contribute to a borrower’s success or failures (Bruton, Khavul, & Chavez, 2011). Specifically, this study aimed to understand the contribution of microfinance organizations to a society’s economic growth. In this case, they define microfinance as, “the issuance of small, unsecured loans for the purpose of business generation within poor communities” (Bruton, Khavul & Chavez, 2011, p. 718). This study asked two main questions in their research to determine the reasoning behind the borrowers’ success or failure to use the loan to generate a constant independent income:

1. Why are some successful borrowers able to create high performing businesses?
2. Why are some failing borrowers able to repay their loans while others do not?
They looked at case studies to develop findings on their research, using data collection techniques to gather information from the loan participants. To properly gather data, this study went through multiple steps of analysis to ensure proper strategies were being used to evaluate the entirety of the program. The steps are as follows:

1. Develop research questions on existing microfinance literature.
2. Generate interview protocol to examine what factors generate high business performance.
3. Conduct 15 semi-structured, face to face, interviews with the borrowers.
4. Use the interview protocols to individually analyze each case and compare.
5. Ask up to four experts to validate the findings and capture new learning
6. Generate a set of testable propositions by using the field evidence to lay groundwork for future research.

They chose to analyze the Grameen Bank in Guatemala and Esperanza in the Dominican Republic. These organizations provide their clients, mostly women, with small loans to manage cash flow. One method used to retrieve data involved interviewing a select number of loan participants in order to assess the status of the loan. After several one to two hour semi-structured interviews, details about each individual’s loans and how they used them were revealed (Bruton, Khavul & Chavez, 2011). These results distinguished participants that succeeded and failed in the program.

The study revealed several different types of borrowers. Some women became independent enough to manage businesses and generate a sustainable income to pay back their loans. Borrowers like these had orientation skills that “offers the ability to imagine future events and plan a course towards them” (Bruton, Khavul & Chavez, 2011, p. 727). This study investigated why each woman succeeded to pay back the loan and the background factors that contributed to these successes. The background factors that contributed to success included number of children, marital status, mental health, education, and so forth. The results in this study, for example, showed that “borrowers with high performing businesses either did not have husbands, or kept their business financial activities separate from the
influence of their spouses” (Bruton, Khavul & Chavez, 2011, p. 727). There were other individuals, however, that struggled to keep up with the payback program. Lacking the knowledge to run a business alone, these women made large up-front investments, generating just enough revenue to pay back their loan without any extra profit to spend in the household (Bruton, Khavul & Chavez, 2011). With a little extra support and education, these women can use their loans and make small investments for experimentation, allowing them “to walk away from an idea if it did not work out” (Bruton, Khavul & Chavez, 2011, 728). This study observed several people with varying degrees of success in paying back loans, as well as participants who struggled.

When evaluating a microfinance program, it is important to understand what failure looks like in order to identify how the program could be improved to better support its borrowers. One of the research questions explored in this study focuses on why participants fail to meet their obligations. If the participant is regularly struggling to overcome personal, economic, and social obstacles created by the program, the microfinance system has failed this individual. Consequently, these participants often turn to other sources of financing such as family, friends, additional loans, or outside employment that may push them further into debt and worsen their economic status (Bruton, Khavul & Chavez, 2011). There is no support system in place to prevent failing loans from complete collapse. There is also no system in place for missing a loan payment. According to this study, “borrowers do not have a clear idea of what may be the consequences of failing” (Bruton, Khavul & Chavez, 2011, p. 733). Lender intimidation and fear of punishment causes borrowers to make bad financial decisions. Borrowers who lack financial and social support struggle more to be successful in microfinance programs when compared to their well-supported peers. Participants who are unable to pay back their loan or generate additional income after receiving their loan expose systematic flaws within the microfinance program in itself.
Impressions

Looking at methods used in the first case study, it is clear that the NGOs ran into several difficulties that are crucial to be aware of. It was important to acknowledge the risk of being corrupted by benefactors looking to take control of loan programs. Using techniques similar to the ones used to evaluate Bangladesh, we conducted solo and group interviews, informal conversations, and other forms of open communication to make sure we could more fully understand the community that we were evaluating. These methods helped the loan program stay alert and monitor their participants’ progress as well as their overall growth as a program. We used these lessons and addressed them through our field work during our project.

The second case study evaluated multiple microfinance organizations similar to our project with Mujeres Cosechando Sueños. This is a strong example of a program evaluation that acted as a reference for our team. In addition, their success with conducting semi-structured interviews provided a foundation for setting up our own interview questions. They considered why some women created successful income generating businesses, while others failed to do so, which was pertinent to our project. This information revealed key indicators contributing to a borrower’s success or failure within Mujeres Cosechando Sueños. Using multiple research questions and analysis techniques, this study generated propositions to combat the problems faced by failing borrowers. This was a helpful strategy to reference when we were reviewing data from Mujeres Cosechando Sueños to ensure future growth in the program. This case study effectively evaluates multiple loan programs, implementing several analysis methods that we could draw from in our own evaluation.

Summary

Our literature review has yielded three key topics of focus for our research: the understanding of how microfinance organization operate, why it is important to evaluate these programs, and how to develop the correct collection of indicators. In order to determine the current state of the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program, we needed a deep
understanding of effective evaluation strategies, including the use of both quantitative and qualitative indicators and different methods of data collection. In researching these methods through case studies, we uncovered the possible negative impacts that ineffective microfinance programs can have on communities. Starting a microfinance institution in a rural area is not always successful and can have downsides stemming from underlying problems that arise. Involvement of the government or private benefactors can cause the power and control of the program to shift away from the borrowers and lenders. It is important to perform evaluations on these programs early in and of the course of their development to ensure the program is achieving its desired impact and to avoid the negative outcomes stated above. Evaluating a business or organization can ensure that all factors, positive and negative, are considered. When considering our own evaluation, we took into account how the loans were being paid back, ensuring that participants in the community were not being forced to take out new loans to pay off previous debt. We also evaluated what the money was being used for and where the money was going, to ensure a return on investment for both borrower and lender. These skills assisted us in developing our plan of action to effectively evaluate Mujeres Cosechando Sueños.
Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, we begin by describing the objectives required to achieve our goal and outline the social science strategies that we employed to meet each objective. To better visualize our plan of action, we provide a timeline of our project work in Ecuador. Finally, we include resources for the data collection strategies we implemented, such as sample interview questions for various stakeholders.

Our project is an opportunity to work with the Hearts of Gold Foundation in collaboration with Kallpa Warmi to analyze the impact of the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program after their pilot year. In order to successfully complete this project, our goal is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program to be able to make recommendations for the future of the program. To do this, we will approach the problem by focusing on the following objectives:

1. Understand the best practices for creating evaluation tools and generating indicators.
2. Create and refine our evaluation tool and indicators.
3. Implement and refine our evaluation tool.

By meeting these objectives, we achieved our evaluation of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños.

Objective 1: Understand best practices for creating evaluation tools and generating indicators

The first objective is to understand the best practices for creating social science evaluation tools. In order to achieve the goal of conducting a successful evaluation of the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program, we needed a way to evaluate the program and the loans. Creating an evaluation tool is a large task that is full of nuances. This tool was the backbone of our project, so researching the topic was vital to our project’s success.

The primary source of information for this objective was traditional research through databases and journal articles, and social science research books. There is significant
academic literature published about how to identify indicators of impact and incorporate those indicators into an evaluation tool. Research through books and databases is beneficial when obtaining a general sense of understanding and gaining exposure to new concepts or perspectives. These sources helped us “learn the ropes of various skills and techniques necessary for effective interviewing” in a field research strategy described as “getting in” (Berg, 2007, pp. 90-91). The wealth of the information available created a strong foundation for our understanding of best practices for creating evaluation tools.

**Objective 2: Create and refine the evaluation tools and indicators**

Our second objective was to generate indicators and frameworks that were specifically relevant to the participants in the program and community that we evaluated. This was important to establish because it gave context to our data and allowed us to identify some of the deeper trends that were present. The first step we took to complete this objective was to perform a site assessment on the community of Sayausí. This involved informal discussions with our sponsors and observations as we explored the community. These were not structured interviews, but rather casual discussions that allowed us to gain a better understanding of how the program operates and affects the members involved as shown in Figure 4. Community values and perceptions were important to note during these conversations, due to our personal cultural differences with the participants in the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program.

We conducted ethnographic research and interviews with program participants and organizers. According to Berg, ethnographic research consists of “examining various phenomena as perceived by participants and representing these observations as accounts” (Berg, 2007, p.172). For us this meant listening to program participants’ stories of how the microfinance program changed their livelihoods or life trajectory. Completing this research provided us with a more in depth perspective of how they viewed the microlending program. It also helped us to discover new indicators as well as update the indicators we already had. It is important to note that the ethnographic research did not consist of any scripted questions,
but rather consisted of listening to and recording extended narratives based on open ended prompts, such as “Tell me about your experiences with Mujeres Cosechando Sueños.”

Figure 4. Grace and Chris talking with a member of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños
(Personal Photo)

Objective 3: Implement and refine our evaluation tool

Our implementation of our evaluation tool began with a pilot week of interviews with the intention of testing the indicators and questions we had already compiled. We continued to update our questions and interview style as we continued the process with the rest of the participants. Additionally, the semi-structured interview style that we chose allowed us to adapt our interview questions to fit each participant and their situation.

After our initial pilot week of interviews, we had enough indicators and questions solidly in place to begin our data analysis of the program as a whole. Given our limited population size of 44 participants, it was important to get as much information as possible from the pilot week so we could take full advantage of the interviews that followed.

Additionally, we were advised to limit our interview pool to only the participants of Mujeres
Cosechando Sueños to keep our scope manageable for our time frame and to avoid stirring up negative feelings from people who were not invited to participate. Our interviews consisted of a survey containing questions about the participant’s demographics and some specific questions about Mujeres Cosechando Sueños, followed by our semi-structured interview that we had prepared. These interviews generally took place at the participant’s house or locations where they had implemented their loans. Sometimes we would perform an interview at the kitchen table and others in a field filled with cows. By allowing the interviews to occur more naturally and where the participants felt more comfortable, we were able to dig into topics and detail beyond the pre-written questions to collect more accurate and authentic data.

Another element of the implementation of our evaluation tool was participant observations. Mujeres Cosechando Sueños usually holds a workshop for the program participants and members of the community about once a month. We had the opportunity to observe four workshops, giving us more insight into how the program is run and how effective the trainings are. Experiencing these workshops first hand provided us with more data and better allowed us to understand and relate to workshop-related feedback that we received during interviews. We also sat in on two of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños’ monthly meetings, which all members are required to attend. These meetings contained information about finances and the details of workshops. Being able to attend these meetings shed light on the social and political environment within Mujeres Cosechando Sueños. This also allowed us to see how the program is run and organized.

We analyzed the information we gathered from interviews and participant observation to conduct our assessment of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños. From our data, we created an evaluation tool that can be used in future assessments of the program. At the request of our sponsor, we also compiled a magazine, from the data we collected for the evaluation, profiling each participant and describing the uses of the loans given out thus far, to provide the community with more information about the program and its impact.
**Estimated timeline**

Chart 2, below, outlines the approximate timeline that we followed in Ecuador to perform data collection and analysis. To achieve all of the objectives of our project and successfully execute the methodology, we had to carefully plan our time. We began by doing our preliminary site assessments and research in Sayausí, which also included interviewing our sponsors. Through these steps, we refined the evaluation tool that we had created. In week two, we began to deploy the improved tool in the pilot week.

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<th>Week 2 10/29 - 11/2</th>
<th>Week 3 11/5 - 11/9</th>
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**Chart 2. A Gantt chart outlining the timeline of the project**

In addition to the pilot, we employed ethnographic research methods in order to gain a more holistic view of the participant’s experiences, and conducted semi-structured interviews to gain knowledge of specific points that we focused on. After running the pilot, we analyzed the results, adjusted our evaluation tool to be more effective, and redeployed for the full-scale evaluation. Our interview methods and questions were fluid throughout the entire process and were adjusted from interview to interview based on the dynamics of the situation. Finally, in the last two weeks, we focused on analyzing the data we collected in order to draw conclusions and make recommendations, as well as completed our magazine and our evaluation tool deliverables for our sponsor.
Chapter 4. Results and analysis

As we analyzed the data gathered from interviews and participant observations, we came to conclusions about the impact the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños has had on its members throughout the pilot year of implementation. This chapter outlines the discoveries we made and evidence we collected, beginning with a discussion about the life changes participants have experienced and the support systems provided through the program. This is followed by in depth findings about the functions of the executive board of directors of the program and how participants felt about the monthly meetings, as well as the trainings offered through the program. We end this chapter with a look into the loan repayment process. Feedback from participants provided us with these conclusions, which will help Kallpa Warmi to improve the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program in the years to come.

Finding 1: Life changes

In order to get the full scope of information needed to make conclusions about the pilot year of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños it was necessary to understand the life changes participants had experienced as a result of joining the program. This section discusses the data we gathered and trends we saw based on answers to the questions we posed in interviews about changes in lifestyle and home life. Some of these questions included:

1. How has Mujeres Cosechando Sueños affected your life? What changes have you seen in your daily life after joining Mujeres Cosechando Sueños?

2. Would you want your friends/children to participate in Mujeres Cosechando Sueños?

(For the complete list of interview and survey questions, see appendices.)

We also explored life changes through the following questions from our demographic survey:

1. Has participating in Mujeres Cosechando Sueños bettered the lives of your dependents?
2. Do you feel more financially stable after joining Mujeres Cosechando Sueños?

3. Do you believe that the use of your credit has been successful?

Participants were very open with us and enjoyed talking to us about their involvement in the program making the process of gathering and coding data fairly straight forward. Chart 3 below shows responses to some of the questions asked about life changes.

![Chart 3](chart3.png)

**Chart 3. Graph describing general answers from interviews relating to life changes**

**Credit success**

When talking to interviewees it was clear that most participants believed the uses of their credit had been successful for themselves and their families. Often, this sentiment was upheld even if they were not receiving extra income from their loans. Approximately 78% of program participants stated that their credit had been successful, meaning that over three quarters of members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños had an overall positive experience in the program and got what they wanted out of taking out a credit. Success in this case could mean
providing enough food for a whole family, making a profit from selling handmade goods, or even creating a small business. The credits provided to participants had no limit of uses and allowed program members to invest in projects that would benefit their lives as well as the lives of their families.

The 22% of participants who voiced their credits as unsuccessful gave mixed feedback. Some stated that the reasoning behind the failure of the loan was a lack of knowledge in animal care, resulting in the death of animals that had been purchased with the credit received. A participant stated that he had taken out a credit with the goal of starting a paper store, and although he began the business, not enough people came into the store and he quickly went bankrupt. He ended up selling the business and continued to work his full-time job instead. When we asked him if he would consider taking out another loan after that experience, he very adamantly said that he definitely would. This was a trend among participants who had unsuccessful credits; the majority voiced that their experience in the program had still been positive and they hoped the loans they took out in the future would be successful.

**Desire for others to participate**

Although it seems strange for us to have asked whether members would want their friends or children to participate in the program, we were unsure how participants would react to foreigners coming into their homes and asking them personal questions about their participation. We believed that if they were not completely open with us about their personal participation in the program, they may provide some insight into how they felt about Mujeres Cosechando Sueños when they were asked about their friends and family. We came across this method when researching previous IQP projects to come up with good interview strategies (Feasibility of Community-Based Businesses in Kamand Valley IQP, Gabor et al).
All interviewees who shared that they had a positive experience in the program voiced they would want their children or friends to participate in the program as well. Seven interviewees stated that this was to raise the amount of money in the program as a whole, allowing members to take out larger loans, while others voiced that it would teach their children how to save their money from a young age. This provided insight into how positive the experiences the participants really had in the program. It is our opinion that they would not want their children to participate if they had not felt that being a part of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños was a positive influence on their lives.

**Financial stability**

Given that the mission of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños is to empower female participants and provide an independent income to families it was important for us to look into members’ financial information and get insight into their financial stability. When asked if participating in the program had made them feel more financially stable about 94% of people interviewed said that Mujeres Cosechando Sueños had made them feel more knowledgeable and stable with their money. The ability to pay back loans and learn about finances at the monthly meetings provided an opportunity for participants to understand where their money was being kept, if they’re saving, and how the program worked.

Another element of financial stability involved the lives of participants’ families. When asked if being a member in the program had bettered the lives of their dependents, whether that be their children, spouses, or extended family, 81% of people interviewed said yes. Of the 19% who responded negatively to this question the majority stated it was because they had to leave their children home alone more than they would have liked or because they had not perceived a change in their family’s situations. Overall, participating in Mujeres
Cosechando Sueños increased members’ sense of financial stability and provided better lives for the majority of their families.

**Finding 2: Support**

In this section, we review the support that members have perceived and received after joining Mujeres Cosechando Sueños. Participating in this program has given the members a community to share their lives with. Many have met new people and made new friends after joining the group. These people have motivated each other to work hard and use their money to better both their lives and the lives of their families. We performed interviews with 80% of the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program to learn about how the program has affected their lives after joining. Some of questions that we asked in the interviews about the support system were as follows:

1. How do you feel the program has supported you?
2. Do you receive support from the other members of the program?
3. How does your family feel about your participation in the program?
4. How do people outside of the program feel about your participation?

**Support from the program**

It was an important goal of the program to establish a system that is able to support its current members and future membership growth. The participants should be able to lean on the program for support throughout the loan process and feel comfortable with their status within the group. A common complaint that came up was the lack of financial knowledge and assistance to be able to use the credits effectively. Some members discussed that not knowing their individual account balance and whether they are gaining or losing money in the program led to feelings of financial insecurity and uncertainty in the benefit of the program. Although
there were problems with the credit program that still needed addressing, we gathered that the members of the group were happy overall with the support they’ve received from the program. Of the interview pool, about 77% agreed that this program supported them enough that they would want their children becoming members as well. These results showed the confidence that these participants had in the program to not only want their kids to be a part of it but also to support the growth of the program.

**Support from other members**

24 of the members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños shared that they felt that they received support from other members. This support stems from the relationships they build in meetings and workshops. Additionally, most support from Mujeres Cosechando Sueños members is shown through guarantors, the person who agrees to payback a credit if the borrower is unable to pay. A fifth of all members surveyed say that they feel the support of the other members mostly through their guarantors. These participants stated that it was not hard to find their guarantors because they were part of the program already. After conducting interviews and observing how the program operated, we found that the participants support each other well in Mujeres Cosechando Sueños.

**Struggles of support**

There were not always positive feelings about the support within the program and between each other. When asked about the support they were receiving within the group, participants have expressed some struggles they have faced. There was a problem with people not getting the chance to socialize with other members because they wouldn’t see them at meetings or hear about their credits. This caused some rumors and gossip to float around about people who don’t socialize as much. Additionally, two people that were interviewed
said they did not trust the program fully to handle their money because they felt that it was not safe. When asked about the support of people outside of the program, 25% of participants stated they have heard negative opinions and feelings towards the program. By reducing the negativity that surrounds Mujeres Cosechando Sueños they can increase support for anyone and everyone who becomes involved.

**Emergency loans**

In addition to normal loans, that require the borrower to go through a waiting period before receiving the credit and have a six-month repayment period, Mujeres Cosechando Sueños also provides participants with emergency loans. These credits can be taken out immediately upon request and only have a month-long repayment period. Many members of the program have taken advantage of this when presented with situations such as medical emergencies, a lack of income, or fixes needed around the household.

Our interviews did not consist of questions about the uses of emergency loans, as some may have used these credits for personal or familial reasons. Despite this, 70% of members voiced that they had taken out one or more emergency loan during their participation in the program. Some examples of uses of these credits were to help with a business started by taking out normal credits, to pay for schooling for their children and to buy feed for their livestock. Having the opportunity to take out these emergency credits provided the participants a sort of safeguard if they ever needed money quickly. Many voiced that it was a good system of support provided through the program that they appreciated having access to.
**Finding 3: Board of directors**

As part of evaluating the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program we also had to evaluate the management of the program. Most of the data we collected on this topic came from our own observations of board meetings, workshops, and monthly meetings rather than asking questions. In all of the meetings that we attended we noticed difficulties with communication and planning that can be traced back to the board of directors.

**Executive board observations**

The planning issues were especially evident during the meeting of just the board of directors. Once everyone had arrived there was a lot of confusion about what they were going to talk about. This led to several minutes of confused discussion before anything could actually come out of the meeting. Additionally, it seemed as only the president knew the vague agenda. When she stepped out to attend to another issue, the rest of the members seemed bothered that they did not know what to discuss next. The lack of organization and direction for the meetings created unnecessary chaos that elongated the meetings.

**Communication**

Another issue is the communication between the board of directors and the members of the program. From what we have observed the only real form communication between the board of directors and the members of the program comes during the monthly meeting or through informal phone calls. However, not all members are able to come to every meeting and some members do not always have access to a phone. A trend we saw in interviewing the participants of the program is their difficulties with interacting with the board of directors outside of the monthly meetings. Many members do not have a chance to talk to the board of directors between meetings. An additional communication struggle revolves around the rules
that govern Mujeres Cosechando Sueños. The members of the board have expressed that they want more of the membership to read and follow the rules of the program. However due to confusion among the other members about the rules we have concluded that the board of directors may not have effectively distributed the rules. This miscommunication has led to conflict, especially about fines, and in one case, a member leaving the program. Organization and communication issues within management are limiting factors in growing the program and are areas that we and Mujeres Cosechando Sueños have identified for improvement.

**Finding 4: Monthly meetings**

This section covers the findings that we gathered from attending the organized monthly meetings for the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program that take place on the first Thursday of every month. There was a board of directors at these meetings in charge of collection and disbursement of the credits and keeping records of each person and the amount that they were putting into savings or taking out as credits. The board and the president were also in charge of running the meeting. The agendas generally included discussing the last meeting, group workshops, important events coming up, and the credit options available to members. Meetings also enabled the members of the group to voice any questions or concerns they had about the topics being discussed. We participated in those monthly meetings in order to observe and analyze the interactions that the participants had with each other as well as the overall operation of the meetings. We also asked a series of interview questions to determine how the participants felt about these meetings.

**Meeting Observations**

Our participation in the monthly meetings helped us collect data via participant observation as outsiders. The first thing we noticed was lack of attendance. The monthly
meetings are mandatory to pay back their credits, yet only about half of the active membership showed up. Punctuality also posed an issue, as multiple members would arrive late throughout the meetings, delaying it further and causing distractions. In some cases, this was due to members’ conflicting work schedules or the responsibility of caring for their children. Second, we noticed that they spent most of their time handling the money and less time giving out credits, discussing program and personal progress, and soliciting feedback. There were times during the accounting period where there would be nothing for members to do. People started to talk amongst themselves and wait for the other participants to finish receiving credits. As a result, the meetings struggled to stay on track, and often felt disorganized and off topic. There were times where people would speak over each other, making it difficult for the president to moderate the meeting. Despite this difficulty, the group was still able to make decisions together as a product of thought out discussions. Although there are many things that can be improved about the meeting process, the members seem to have similar opinions about the program and communicate well together to work out a solution.

In order to determine their opinions, we directly asked the members of the group for their feedback on these meetings during individual interviews. We received a variety of responses from the participants by asking questions such as the following:

1. What do you feel about the monthly meetings?
2. Is there anything you would want to change about the meetings?
3. Is there anything you can think of that you would want to improve about the meetings?
Meeting organization

From these questions, we found a few common trends. One clear complaint was a strong request for more organization during the meetings. Several members even recognized the tensions that arose during meetings and expressed that they wanted everyone to work together more. Among those interviewed, 40% disliked when their other companions did not show up on time, and mentioned how they wanted group unity, punctuality, and organization to strengthen the program’s functionality. An important part of participating in the program is the social aspect. If tensions arise during meetings, pressure is put on the social relationships between members and management. Some methods mentioned by interviewees to improve the organization included:

1. Obtaining their own space solely dedicated to program business and meetings to be professional and stay on topic
2. Establishing a defined plan of action for each meeting to improve workflow
3. Enforcing the rules to re-establish order and clarity
4. Implementing security regulations to reinforce confidence and focus

Although a group this size will always have some kind of tension and disagreement due to conflicting opinions and schedules, a united group is necessary in a community as tight-knit as Sayausí.

Credit accessibility

A common topic brought up by the participants was credit accessibility. It was observed that a majority of the participants have multiple children and/or dependents that rely on them. When someone wanted to pay back existing credits or take out new ones, they had to wait for the next monthly meeting to do so. This frustrated the members who are unable to make it to the meetings because they needed to take care of the people they are trying to
support. They were also frustrated that they were fined for missing these meetings, which further disadvantaged them financially. This was a common frustration observed among 23% of the participants, many of whom wanted to use the program to benefit the lives of their families. For some members, being a part of the program is their only source of income for their families and children. As seen from the data collected, a lack of credit accessibility can have negative impacts on members who are dependant on the program to provide them with an income.

**Finding 5: Trainings**

One key component of membership in Mujeres Cosechando Sueños is participating in mandatory workshops and trainings. As a result, it was critical to ask questions evaluating the value of the workshops for the members. We evaluated this through asking questions about support such as

1. How do you feel Mujeres Cosechando Sueños has supported you?
2. How could you be better supported by Mujeres Cosechando Sueños?

Additionally, we asked direct questions about the workshops as stated below.

1. Do you attend the workshops?
2. What do you think about the workshops?
3. How could the workshops be improved?
4. What themes would you like to see for future workshops?

Through the responses to these questions, we were able to isolate trends in the opinions of the members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños. Chart 4 below describes what members voiced about trainings.
Accounting and money management

The primary responsibility of the members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños is to pay back their loans no matter what happens. For some members, however, money management is a new concept that they do not have a lot of experience with. Often the men in the household work and handle the money, so having loans of their own that they must manage can be a new challenge for women. As a result, one fifth of the active members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños stated that they would like to have accounting and financial training as a future workshop. While sixteen members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños mentioned that this program has encouraged them to save money, thirteen others said they still struggle with repayment. The data shows that money management and accounting were the most frequently requested workshop themes.

Accounting training was also requested by members of the board of directors. They are responsible for doing the accounting for Mujeres Cosechando Sueños. This involves recording the amount of money used for normal and emergency loans each month, the
payments with interest of each of the members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños, the fines due and collected, the savings each member has in Mujeres Cosechando Sueños, and the general financial status of the program. Though occasionally they receive help from other organizations, members of the board of directors stated in interviews that they would like more training on how to properly do the accounting and calculations for Mujeres Cosechando Sueños.

**Agriculture and raising animals**

Working the land and raising animals to sell or for personal consumption account for most of the economy in Sayausí. Over half of all members with credits have taken out a credit for agriculture and/or raising animals. As such, two members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños expressed interest in workshops about how to raise common animals such as pigs, chickens, and guinea pigs as shown in Figure 5. Additionally, at least five members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños used their credits to buy animals which later died. This figure could be significantly larger since the participants were not directly asked whether their animals died. The verbal requests as well as the comments about animals dying suggest that there is a great need and desire for training in agriculture and raising animals.

![Figure 5. Chickens and pigs purchased with a credit](Personal photo)
Psychology and social skills

For the members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños, the workshops and trainings are a way to socialize and meet new people. Three interviewees outright mentioned that they go to the trainings in part because it is an opportunity for them to meet their fellow members and get to know each other on a more personal level. This socialization is not limited to the members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños; it also spreads to their friends and family who also attend the workshops. One participant said that she brings her child with her to meetings and workshops because her child gets to socialize with the other children that come to the workshops.

While socializing at the workshops is a helpful positive experience for the members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños, two people wish there was more training on social skills and psychology. For example, one person mentioned that some members struggle to find guarantors for their loans because they come off as cold or aggressive and have trouble making friends and connections with other members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños. She would like training on personality and communication to help these members overcome their social challenges. Another member similarly described that she would like more training on connecting with people and networking with people. Implementing these themes of training could increase the unity of the program while teaching participants social skills that would benefit the participants inside and outside of the program.

Handicrafts and gastronomy

Another recurring requested theme for workshops was creating products that they could sell such as handicrafts, artisan goods, and gastronomy as shown in Figure 6. Just over a sixth of the members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños use their credits to sell goods that they create. Nonetheless, the women love to learn new skills and handicrafts. One member wants
trainings about knitting and making dolls. Another requested a training on sewing. In addition to handicrafts, one member mentioned wanting more training on gastronomy and cooking, like the ají workshop and the cheese and yogurt workshop held in November. They want more training on making these products because they want to increase what they are selling.

![Image of handicrafts](image.png)

**Figure 6. Handicrafts made by a woman in the program with her credit**

*Personal Photo*

**Accessibility of trainings**

One issue that came up a lot in discussions with members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños was the accessibility and scheduling of trainings. Over a quarter of all active members surveyed struggle to attend or cannot attend the workshops at all due to their job schedule. This is a significant portion of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños, especially since Mujeres Cosechando Sueños generally suffers low attendance to begin with. Though absences due to work or school can be excused with a form from their work, it is still a strain to not be able to attend mandatory workshops. Additionally, if an absence in not excused, the member incurs a fine that must be paid at the next monthly meeting. All three members who left Mujeres Cosechando Sueños did so because their work or school schedules did not permit them to attend meetings and workshops. Though it is nearly impossible to make a schedule that fits with all 42 active members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños, the workshops are inaccessible for a significant portion of the membership.
When asked how to make workshops more accessible and fit better in the members’ schedules, there were mixed reviews about which days are most convenient. Some members said that having workshops during the work week was best for their schedule, often citing selling their products at fairs and markets on Saturdays as their reasoning. Others said that the weekends were more manageable for them usually due to working full time Monday through Friday. Additionally, two people mentioned that the workshops should be more infrequent.

During the month of November, Mujeres Cosechando Sueños held four workshops in four weeks; only two of those workshops were mandatory. One participant stated that this schedule was too rigorous and burdensome on their already busy lives.

**Finding 6: Repayment**

As part of our evaluation of the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program we analyzed the repayment process. Through our analysis, we gauged the ease of repayment for the members and determined if any of the members had fallen into loan dependency. To investigate this, we asked each member what their experience was with repaying their loans and whether it was easy or hard. We also asked how members paid back their loans if they could not earn enough money to make the payments. Through our questioning, we discovered that some members had experienced struggles with repaying loans. There are two common issues that members experienced when repaying loans: either they couldn’t make the payments because it was inconvenient to come to the meetings to pay or because they were not able to come up with the money. However, out of all of the people who said they struggled to repay none of them seemed to have fallen into loan dependency. Our investigations also revealed some of the common reasons that members struggled with when repaying loans. This information provided us with insight on how to decrease the difficulty of the repayment process.
Positive feedback

When questioning the participants about the difficulty of repaying loans, only 29 participants had taken out loans and were able to provide feedback. About 55% of them reported no problems at all with paying back the loans on time. The general consensus among these participants was that the loans were easy to pay back because the interest rates on the loans are so low. The interest rate for a normal credit is only one percent and the loans are paid back over six months. One of the participants interviewed reported that the loans were easy for her to pay back because she scheduled out her payments to ensure she would have enough money each month. Another participant said that repayment was made easier because of the fact that she had to go to the meeting every month where she repaid her loans. Also, many of these members were able to attend all of the monthly meetings with no problems so the repayment process was made easier for them. Due to the large number of participants who reported not having issues with the repayment process, we concluded that there is not a problem with the repayment process as a whole, but rather there are smaller personal issues that need to be addressed.

Negative feedback

About 24% of the participants reported regularly having problems repaying their loans. As a follow up question, we asked these participants how they made their payments if they were not able to come up with the money themselves. Most of them responded that in those situations they would ask others for help coming up with the money. They mentioned asking friends, family, or other members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños, but did not mention if this money was expected to be paid back or on what time frame. Two members brought up the possibility of taking out an emergency loan in order to repay their normal loans however neither of them have done this yet. While not many people brought up this idea, the fact that
it has been mentioned means that it is important to keep an eye out for loan dependency. This would then put pressure on the borrower to have an added amount to pay back the next month. If their income was not big enough or they did not feel comfortable asking others for help when repaying, this could result in the borrower taking out yet another emergency credit, putting the participant in a cycle of debt. The most common reason that these members are unable to repay their loans is because the credit that they took out was unsuccessful. This led us to believe that there are steps to take to help ensure that the credits that members take out have higher chances of success.

**Payment at monthly meetings**

The last approximately 20% of the members reported that they had some loans that were easy to repay but also had some difficulties. These members reported that the difficulties were not constant, but rather occurred on a month to month basis. Some of these difficulties included having a month where production was low or having an emergency unrelated to their loan that caused them to not be able to pay the full amount that month. Other members had no problems with getting the money to repay the loan, but it was the actual process of repayment that they found difficult. Because repayment only happens at the monthly meetings, if a member is unable to attend the meeting due to other obligations, they must find someone who can attend the meetings for them to repay their loan that month. This process of having to pay at the monthly meetings has even discouraged people from taking out more loans because they know that they will not be able to attend the meetings and don’t want to go through the hassle of finding someone to represent them at the meeting and repay their loan for them. These people highlight some of the minor problems with the repayment process that could become a much larger issue as the program increases in size and more people are unable to attend the meetings.
Chapter 5. Conclusions and recommendations

Through analysis of our data, we have concluded that the following five topics include our key findings and led to our recommendations:

1. Life Changes
2. Management
3. Monthly Meetings
4. Trainings
5. Repayment

Conclusions from key findings:

Life changes

From our data, we concluded that participating in Mujeres Cosechando Sueños brings about positive life changes for members and their families. This finding was based on conclusions about credit success, participants’ desire for others to be part of the program, and members’ perceived financial stability.

Although the majority of members felt as though the use of their credit had been successful, the remaining people interviewed who gave the opposing answer did not think it was at the fault of the program. Despite failure in the use of their credits, these members were adamant that they would take out loans through the program in the future, and stated that their experience had still been positive despite their struggles. This leads to the conclusion that a member’s experience in the program does not directly correlate with successful use of their loan. Although the goal is for participants’ loans to always be successful, it is good that members still have a positive outlook on the program even if taking out a credit has not gone as expected.

Participants shed more light on the positive experiences they had in Mujeres
Cosechando Sueños by sharing that they would want their family members and friends to participate in the program. The reasoning for this varied from wanting to expand the size of the program, allowing members to take out bigger loans, to teaching their young children how to save from a young age so they could provide for themselves in the future. We concluded that if a member had not had a positive experience in the program, they would not want their children to participate as well. However, all members stated they would want family members or friends to be part of it, showing that current participants believe Mujeres Cosechando Sueños is a positive experience that should be shared with others.

Our final conclusion based on a member’s life changes as a result of being part of the program was taken from data about financial stability. Taking out a credit brings increased pressure and responsibility that many of these participants have not experienced before. Despite this, the majority of members interviewed stated they felt more financially stable since joining Mujeres Cosechando Sueños. Having the ability to pay back credits at the program’s monthly meetings provided a set time for members to learn about their status in the program and do all their accounting with the directive board. People interviewed also voiced that being part of the program has bettered the lives of their children or dependents. Some members took out loans to provide food for their families, while others sold goods and made a larger income than previously which allowed them to provide more for their children. This led us to conclude that being a part of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños provides members with a sense of financial security, adding to the positive experiences and life changes that comes from being part of the program.

**Support**

The community that has formed within Mujeres Cosechando Sueños is based off of trust and communication between the members. Relationships, built with trust between the
members and guarantors, helped increase their confidence in the program to take out credits. The support they received from the program, other members, and their families enabled participants to take out more credits and become more involved in the program. After asking questions about the support they had received, it was clear that in addition to the overwhelming positive support they had received, there were ways for the program to support them more. Responses suggested that the program needed to take steps toward providing the members with more financial security and reducing the negativity that surrounds the program. Given the findings that we collected, we made recommendations for the program to improve the support system within Mujeres Cosechando Sueños.

**Board of directors**

After analyzing the board of directors of the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños we concluded that there are fundamental problems with planning, organization, and communication. The meetings, which are run by the board of directives, often feel disorganized and lack effective planning. This often resulted in meetings being longer than they need to and the discontentment of some of the members in the meeting. Many members also had issues with the amount of communication they had with the board of directors. The only regularly scheduled time most members have to speak with the board of directors is the monthly meeting. The only other method of communication available is through phone calls. However, not all members have easy access to a phone and the president of the program is very busy and not always able to answer her phone. Because of the lack of communication some members received unexpected fines due to breaking rules they were never informed of. These issues are significant and pose a potential threat to the program if they are not properly dealt with.
Meetings

From our analysis of the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program we concluded that there are several challenges regarding how the meetings are run. The first thing that we noticed was the attendance and punctuality of the members. During meetings, many members arrived late or did not arrive at all, which led to disorganization due to the necessity of repeating topics for the members who missed information. Secondly, the meetings seemed to be lacking in organization, a sentiment that was echoed by many of the members that we talked to. From what we observed there was no agenda for these meetings or, if there was, it was not made apparent to the attendants of the meetings. This meant that whenever the meeting went off track it became very difficult to regain order and continue the meeting efficiently. Lastly many members complained about the accessibility of meetings. Meetings are currently held for three hours on Thursdays, which many members have said they cannot attend. This perpetuated the lack of attendance at the meetings and caused members to feel discouraged about their access to the program. Not all of these challenges are things that can be improved, as members will always have differing schedules and availabilities, however, there are steps that can be taken to create a better experience for all the members.

Trainings

Through the interview process, we were able to draw conclusions about the types of general and credit-specific trainings that the members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños wanted most and would benefit from as well as the schedule and accessibility of the workshops.

In terms of workshops on general skills, the most frequently requested type of training was on accounting and money management. While regular members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños want training on saving and keeping track of their money to be able to pay their loans properly, the board of directors of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños need more in-depth
accounting training to be able to track all of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños’s money and run the program more successfully. Caja members also specifically mentioned a desire for training in personalities, social skills, and communication to be better able to bond with their fellow members and secure guarantors for their credits.

A credit-specific area that some members said they would benefit from training in is agriculture and raising animals. Though there are many members with years of experience in this industry, there are some who have no experience and without guidance their animals died. Some of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños members also requested training in gastronomy and handicrafts that they could make and sell using their credits.

Finally, the workshop schedule is inaccessible to a significant portion of the members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños. At least a fifth of members have work and/or school scheduling conflicts with workshops that limit their participation in Mujeres Cosechando Sueños. However, when asked what days and times were more convenient for them, the data did not show a clear trend or preference among members. These needs and desires of the program’s members should be addressed in order to make Mujeres Cosechando Sueños the most beneficial it can be for its members.

Repayment

After evaluating the repayment process of the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program we came to the conclusion that the repayment process needs to be revised. The fact that members feel that they are unable to take out more loans solely because it is not convenient for them to pay the loans back is something that is limiting the growth of the program. Not only is there less money coming into the program from the loss of interest on loans that are not taken out, but members are also less likely to recommend the program to others if they themselves are unhappy with it. We found no current evidence of an issue of loan
dependency. However, some members have mentioned the idea of taking out emergency
loans to repay their other loans, so it is an issue that should be monitored, but there is no
action to be taken yet. Helping the participants that are regularly unable to repay requires
growth in other areas of the program such as the trainings and the organization of the
program.

**Recommendations:**

**Recommendation 1: Rules**

Based on the issues described above, we made recommendations with the hopes of
increasing the efficiency and success of how Mujeres Cosechando Sueños is run.

Through our analysis of interview responses, we recommend that Mujeres
Cosechando Sueños provide their members with a set of clear rules to reinforce and govern
their business. During their interviews, two women mentioned that several rules needed to be
changed or implemented to improve their groups’ communication. Implementing a system to
reinforce the rules of the program would clarify any confusion about how they operate,
improving meeting efficiency and overall group unity.

We recommend providing printed copies of the rules would ensure that participants
remain informed about how the program functions. Any new or updated rules need to be
presented to the group if members are expected to follow them. The hard copy will allow
members to refer to these rules during discussions or become a reference for anyone who
needs clarification. This will help maintain order, reduce confusion, and provide people with
a resource to use for taking out credits or other tools that Mujeres Cosechando Sueños has to
offer.

In addition to providing copies of the rules, we recommend that the program address
any rules that have not been followed. The rules are in place to protect the participants and
provide them with the information necessary to correctly utilize the program. When the rules are not followed, it could interfere with the meetings, savings, credits, future workshops, and group relationships. It is important to reinforce any rules not being followed in order to keep the program running efficiently. This should be done by offering assistance to people who are struggling to follow or understand the rules that are in place. If those people still have trouble following the rules, consequences determined by the board of directors should be implemented.

We also recommend that a member of the program sit down with a new participant before they join and review the rules with them. It is crucial to provide a new member with all the information necessary to fully understand the organization that they are planning to be a part of. Reviewing the rules in person allows them to ask questions and clarify any rules that may be confusing. This ensures that the participant’s commitment to the organization is voluntary and that they fully understand the rules and obligations expected of them. Transparency is important for maintaining mutual trust between the participant and the organization in order to maintain group focus and keep the program running smoothly.

**Recommendation 2: Meetings**

In order to best address areas of needed improvement related to monthly meetings, we recommend the following changes to the monthly meetings held by Mujeres Cosechando Sueños in order to increase efficiency of meetings for participants and to further promote professionalism. We have classified these recommendations into three categories:

1. Performing financial actions outside of meetings
2. Improving accessibility of meetings
3. Changes to dynamics and functions of the meetings

Following the steps laid out in this section will increase productivity and accessibility
Performing financial actions outside of meetings

As a result of attending two monthly meetings as participant observers, we came to a conclusion that the monthly reunions held on the first Thursday of every month are not run in an efficient and accessible way for all members. Each meeting has an allotted amount of time for repayment of loans and accounting services. This proved to be an ineffective use of time as people arrived late to the meeting or did not show up at all. A member who left the program stated that she was too busy with her work schedule to attend the meetings and therefore never had opportunities to repay her credits or hear updates about the program as a whole. In order to rectify this, we recommend creating time outside of the planned monthly meetings to allow members with busy schedules a chance to repay loans and ask financial questions. Creating a system we call office hours would be effective. Office hours would consist of setting aside a variety of time slots during the week and the weekend where a member of the executive board is available to aid with financial services, including repaying loans and requesting new credits. This would also make joining the program more accessible, as it would provide more options for members who are unable to attend the monthly meetings. Although the monthly reunion has been said to promote easy repayment, as it is a consistent time for participants to make their payments, it is not an effective strategy for members with busy work schedules or young children that need their attention. Having meeting options at various times on different days will increase accessibility for all members.

Another recommendation we have is to handle finances exclusively in these “office hours”. As stated previously, we observed performing these services during the meeting seemed to be an ineffective use of time. Many members would spend time sitting and having
side conversations while others finished their repayments. We received multiple complaints during interviews that the meetings end up being longer than intended due to this process and way of planning. The meetings are currently scheduled to be three hours; however, they could be scheduled for a shorter amount of time if financial responsibilities were taken care of outside of this scheduled time slot. This would also keep the meeting on track and limit lulls and side conversations. Members who have already completed their repayments must wait until everyone else has finished, taking away from professionalism and causing distractions. Given that members are also very busy, it is not a productive use of time for them to have to sit and wait for everyone to finish. However, if these office hours are implemented, there is a small chance that the social pressure to pay will be lessened because others are not there to witness payments (or lack of payment). This could impact the successful repayment rate of the program and cause financial issues in the future. When implementing this recommendation, it is important to monitor how office hours affect the repayment of loans. That said, we believe the method of office hours could be successful in making meetings more productive and efficient, and we recommend performing repayments and other financial responsibilities outside of these scheduled monthly meetings.

**Improving accessibility of meetings**

From our analysis of the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program we determined that the monthly meetings were not accessible to all members. Many members found the meeting time conflicted with their work schedules, school schedules, and childcare responsibilities. As a result, nearly the same subset members said that they find the repayment process inconvenient or difficult because the only time they are able to make payments is at the
monthly meetings. To combat this inaccessibility and inconvenience, we have formed recommendations that we believe will make the monthly meetings accessible to more members.

We recommend that the directive of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños survey all the members, or as many as possible, about the days and times that would fit best with their schedule and set a new meeting time that is convenient for more members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños. Currently the meetings are the first Thursday of every month from 3 to 6 pm. Many members have expressed that this time was not convenient for them and were regularly unable to go for various reasons. Now that the program has grown, it is important to reevaluate their meeting time. While Mujeres Cosechando Sueños should try to accommodate as many members as possible, they must also recognize their limitations and understand that they cannot accommodate everyone. The new schedule should also reflect the needs of the volunteers who organize the program. The information collected on schedules and availability should also be used to plan training times to be as accessible as possible, also considering the workshop organizer’s availability. As soon as monthly schedules are finalized, they should be shared with all the members, so they have sufficient time to plan the events into their schedules or obtain the necessary information for a formal excuse.

Additionally, we recommend that the program provides child care for its members, since some of the members have said that the reason that they cannot attend meetings is that they have to take care of their children. If the program could provide some sort of child care for these members it would be easier for them to attend meetings. Even reassuring members
that they are allowed to bring their children to the meetings would be helpful in including as many people as possible in the program’s events.

Finally, as previously mentioned, it will be impossible to find a meeting time that works for everyone. The program must acknowledge there are members that will not be able to attend. The board of directors should review with members the acceptable excuses for not attending a meeting and work with members whose schedules were not able to be accommodated to excuse their absences. These participants should not be fined for missing the monthly meetings. Through these methods and recommendations, the program meetings should be more accessible and convenient for majority of the program members.

Changes to dynamics and functions of meetings

Another observation we gathered as a result of sitting in on monthly meetings was the lack of organization and structure. These meetings are run by the program’s board of directors, but we found that there had not been preparation done beforehand by the board. Although there seemed to be a rough list of topics to talk about, there was no solid agenda written. Additionally, a large amount of time was spent going over the minutes from the previous meeting to refresh members and inform members who were not able to attend the previous meeting. In order to make these meetings run more smoothly and to use time more efficiently, we recommend that the board prepare an agenda ahead of time. This could be done at their weekly meeting that takes place the week prior to the monthly meeting. We also suggest that the secretary of the board post the minutes from each meeting in order to make them accessible to members who could not attend. Methods to do this could be through
email, although not all members have access to computers, or posting printed minutes in the Sayausí infocenter.

A common trend that came up in interviews was disappointment between members about punctuality. Interviewees voiced that it was frustrating to arrive on time to a meeting only to have many people arrive late. This causes distractions and disruptions in the flow of the meeting. This may also add to the time inefficiency at these meetings, as people who arrive late could miss important information that must then be repeated. We recommend that this matter be addressed to the membership as a whole during one of these monthly meetings. Since these reunions are mandatory, it would also be beneficial to enforce the rule currently in place that incurs a fine to members who are late. This would promote punctuality and attendance. Members who cannot come to meetings due to their work schedule or children could be excused from this fine if the board is aware of their absence prior to the meeting. Another way to improve attendance and timeliness, as well as enforce staying on topic in meetings, would be to discuss the rules of the program during one of these meetings. In interviews, some members stated they are not clear on what the rules are or are unsure how they have changed in the past year. By discussing these rules at a meeting to address this confusion, not only would participants be clear on the guidelines of the program, but it would keep meetings on task and professional.

Another common comment we received in interviews was the desire for Mujeres Cosechando Sueños to acquire their own space for meetings. As shown in Figure 7, the monthly meetings are held in a common space with children playing on computers and other meetings being held.
This can create distractions and cause the meeting to get off topic. We recommend the program look into obtaining its own office space, providing a private space to hold meetings, events, and keep participants’ money. Having a private space would also promote professionalism. Mujeres Cosechando Sueños is not a bank and should not be treated as one. However, it is a professional program that is handling money and looking to improve female empowerment, and thus it should be taken seriously. Although we make this recommendation, we also realize the limitation imposed due to the cost of renting a private office space. This could be a good use of donated money from outside sources, something members have voiced they desire for the program. Currently, Mujeres Cosechando Sueños does not conduct fundraisers or take donations, but this may be a reason to begin doing such.

**Recommendation 3: Trainings**

In order to improve their trainings and supports, we recommend that Mujeres Cosechando Sueños focus on the following topics for their future trainings.

1. Finances and accounting
2. Social skills
3. Credit specific skills
Finances and accounting

As many interviewees suggested, we recommend that Mujeres Cosechando Sueños hold mandatory trainings about finances and accounting. These are valuable skills for everyone, even those without loans. It is the responsibility of every participant in the program to repay their loan on time and to the full amount, which can require knowledge of saving and budgeting. It is also beneficial for the participants to be able to track their own finances so they are able to follow the gains and losses that they have had in their credits and the program. Gaining financial and accounting skills could not only boost self-confidence but also boost confidence in the success of the program and give participants more valuable, marketable skills they can use outside of their participation in Mujeres Cosechando Sueños.

These workshops should cover basic topics about how to budget and save money. Specifically, the members should learn about putting away extra money to be used in emergencies. Members may fall into a false sense of security, but they need to be prepared for unexpected expenses. This is especially important for participants who said that they only occasionally struggle to repay their credits due to unforeseen circumstances such as a month of bad crop. By learning more about techniques for saving money, Mujeres Cosechando Sueños members will be better equipped financially and will have to rely less on emergency credits to cover unexpected expenses.

One Caja specific topic that should be covered in the trainings is strategies to avoid loan dependency. A couple members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños who struggle to repay their loans said that they would consider taking out additional loans to cover their missed payment. However, this can lead to a vicious cycle of loan dependency where debt keeps growing and becomes insurmountable. From our research, we know this is a common danger of microfinance programs that Mujeres Cosechando Sueños should be aware of and actively work to prevent.
In addition to some general financial trainings for all the program members. We suggest that the board of directors, or at least some of the board members, seek more specific training on accounting and bookkeeping. Some members of the board said that they know enough about accounting to run Mujeres Cosechando Sueños, but that they would like more training to improve their skills. This training is crucial for the administration to be able to confidently lead the other members and for the program to continue growing and moving forward.

In order to provide this financial training, we suggest that Mujeres Cosechando Sueños brings in support from Hearts of Gold to administer these trainings. Hearts of Gold specializes in capacity building for small nongovernmental organizations like Mujeres Cosechando Sueños and has a wealth of experience running workshops on financial management. Additionally, Hearts of Gold has already partnered with Kallpa Warmi, one of the three founding organizations of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños, to work on similar areas of capacity building. This connection is a great resource for the program to use to help its administration and its regular members.

Social skills

Another crucial focus for trainings should be social skills. Mujeres Cosechando Sueños is a highly social organization. Members need to be able to make connections with each other so that they can find guarantors for their loans. Having friends and connections also makes all of the mandatory meetings and workshops more enjoyable for the participants. However, strong social skills are useful in all areas of life, not just Mujeres Cosechando Sueños. Being able to connect and network with people can dramatically increase the amount
of support a person receives and opens more doors to opportunities. People are more likely to trust someone that they connect with.

However, for some of the members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños, social skills are lacking. Coming from a rural area, there is a wide spectrum of social skills. While one member may spend a lot of time out socializing with friends and neighbors, another may not leave their house. Under-socialization leads to members being labeled as cold or aggressive, which deters group unity and creates a roadblock if that member is trying to find a guarantor for a loan. With some training, these participants could better recognize which social habits are helpful and which are harmful. Through this mandatory training, all members of the program could learn how to adjust their behavior and demeanor to better connect with others.

Among topics to discuss in training about social skills would be general social skills, body language, personality, and communication. The participants should learn how to present themselves with a professional social demeanor including how to appear approachable and converse with acquaintances. Another topic to discuss would be conflict resolution. Though not directly mentioned by any of the interviewees as a desired workshop theme, conflict resolution is a very valuable skill to have, especially when working with large groups such as Mujeres Cosechando Sueños. We have observed that there is some tension in meetings and workshops when there are differing opinions. Having conflict resolution skills could minimize any escalations that may occur in the future. It is a widely important skill in a variety of settings.

To be as professional and beneficial as possible, it would be ideal to bring an outside expert to design and administer this workshop. Not only is an expert more knowledgeable on the subject, it also increases the seriousness that members bring to the workshop. From our workshop observations, it seems that members learn more and are more focused if the workshops are held by outside experts, rather than members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños.
The board of directors should reach out to their contacts at the municipality and at Hearts of Gold to see if either organization has any connections to experts who could lead a workshop on social skills and communication. From there, Mujeres Cosechando Sueños and the expert could work together to create and present a workshop that is beneficial to everyone.

Credit specific skills

A final recommendation for workshop themes is to include trainings on skills that members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños want to learn and use a credit for. The participants need trainings not only in general skills, but also credit specific skills so that their credits are successful. However, these trainings should be optional since not everyone has the same interests for using their credits and it is important not to overburden participants with too many commitments.

One credit specific area of focus is agriculture and raising animals. There were at least five participants who said that some or all of their animals died. This could have been prevented had they received more information and training about raising animals before starting their loan. Some of the members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños would benefit greatly from such training. However, it is illogical to require all members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños to attend this workshop if majority of them have a significant amount of experience and do not need to learn how to care for animals.

It is for this reason the we recommend making a mentorship program to help the less experienced farmers. Given that people can join Mujeres Cosechando Sueños at any time, a mentorship program is a relatively low effort alternative to a once a year workshop that could easily be missed if someone joins Mujeres Cosechando Sueños after the workshop. In the mentorship program, an inexperienced member trying to raise animals or grow crops should
be paired with a member who has successfully grown said crops or raised said animals. This provides the inexperienced member with a dedicated person to go to for help and questions when they run into problems. Since this is on a case by case basis, the program would not be a strenuous commitment for anyone involved. It would provide support when necessary to increase the success of credits and would also be a rewarding experience for mentors, recognizing their skills and successes. An example of such agricultural successes can be seen in Figure 8 below.

![Agriculture grown by a member of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños](Personal photo)

**Figure 8. Agriculture grown by a member of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños**

(Personal photo)

Another credit specific area of focus is handicrafts and gastronomy. A small portion of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños mentioned that they would like more workshops, like the one shown in Figure 9, on how to make handicrafts and foods they can sell, such as ají, yogurt, dolls, and knitting. This could be a great opportunity for participants to learn new skills and grow their businesses’ offerings. However, only six members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños have used their credits for handicraft or gastronomy. Therefore, we recommend spending time in a meeting discussing exactly what cooking and crafting skills the participants want to learn and then making these workshops optional, so as to not overburden the busier members.
of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños who may not see these skills as essential. With credit specific skills, it is important to actively seek feedback from the participants and to make them optional because not all members have the same credits or goals.

![Image](image.jpg)

**Figure 9. Members of Mujeres Cosechando Sueños learning how to make aji**

(Personal photo)

**Future research**

Our findings revealed a number of areas of research that should be pursued in the future.

Understand why participants were unable to pay their credits and address underlying issues

Through our research, we discovered that 20% of interviewed participants thought paying back their credit was difficult. We also found that 31% of participants interviewed said that they needed help from members of the program or family members to pay for their credits on time. Although we interviewed each participant to learn about their involvement in the program, a future research team should review each participant’s payment experience in detail to figure out the main cause of this payment issue. Using the information gathered in
the interviews, steps should be taken to provide participants with the resources they need to assist them in paying their credits on time.

Create an updated report of financial status and of each participant’s individual progress

An updated report of financial information for the entire program with an individual account log would benefit this program greatly. We interviewed two women who said they did not trust the safety of their money and would like to monitor their investments. This could be solved with a safe to secure the group’s money along with a log containing each individual’s financial history with the program. A future project could be creating an accounting system with a private log for each participant that controls cash flow, making it easily manageable, secure, and time efficient. Another project that Mujeres Cosechando Sueños has been working on is building their savings. Having a savings fund enables them to perform better workshops and participate in public events to advertise and grow their program. Further research into better savings plans is needed to help grow the program financially. Once a savings route is chosen, all the records should be digitized to maximize organization and make it easier to monitor and modify their savings for all future investments. This will help run meetings more smoothly and truly show them how they are doing financially so that they can make sound financial investments to grow their program more successfully. After steps are taken toward financial security, it will encourage people to invest more money into the program if they see return on investment from the program.
Findings from the conducted interviews suggested 28% of the participants had heard or experienced negativity towards or within Mujeres Cosechando Sueños. 60% of which talked about negativity specifically within the program. From our findings, we gathered that it had a lot to do with communication issues and distrust within the group. There was also a case where a person left the program due to negativity and distrust. It is important to understand the underlying problem that caused these women to leave and to also comprehend the reasons for people outside the program to form negative opinions. A future project group should perform in depth interviews and develop a plan of action to address the issues that could have caused this negativity to transpire. This plan of action should involve current members of the program to reduce the chances for this negativity in the future, hopefully restoring trust and friendships, bringing the group closer together.
Project conclusion:

The goal of this project was to evaluate the impact of the pilot year of implementation of the Mujeres Cosechando Sueños program. Through our research, we discovered that the program has had an overall positive effect on the lives of both participants and their families. However, there are some negatives that we found within the program broadly resulting from misinterpretation of program rules, inefficiently run and scheduled meetings, and material taught in program offered trainings. In order to address these areas of improvement, we have provided recommendations for the program, as well as potential future projects. Following these recommendations and continuing evaluations of the program could potentially further improve the lives of everyone involved in Mujeres Cosechando Sueños and provide a positive resource for the community of Sayausí as a whole.
Appendices
Appendix A: Most Recent Participant Interview Questions in English*

1. Can you tell us about your participation in the Caja?
   a. Do you have credits in addition to savings?
   b. What do you use your credits for?

2. How has the Caja affected your life? What changes have you seen in your daily life after joining the Caja?

3. How do you feel the Caja has supported you? How could you be better supported?

4. Would you want your friends/children to participate in the Caja?

5. Are there things about the Caja that you would like to change? What are they?

6. How does your family feel about your participation in the Caja? Have your relationships changed?

7. Do you feel like you have received support from your friends in the Caja and other members? Why/How? Have you experienced that there are people not part of the Caja that have negative feelings toward your participation or the Caja in general?

8. What is your experience with repaying your loans?
   a. Is it difficult?
   b. Is it easy?
   c. Do you always have enough money to pay your credits?
   d. What do you do if you do not have enough money to pay your credit?

9. What are some challenges you have faced in the Caja?

*Note: Mujeres Cosechando Sueños is referred to by the members as “the Caja” so our interview questions reflect that.
Appendix B: Most Recent Participant Interview Questions in Spanish

1. ¿Puede decírnos sobre su participación en la Caja?
   a. ¿Tiene créditos o solo ahorros?
   b. ¿Para qué usa sus créditos?
2. ¿Cómo ha afectado la Caja a su vida? ¿Qué cambios ha visto en su vida diaria desde unirse a la Caja?
3. ¿Cómo siente que el programa le ha apoyado? ¿Cómo podría ser apoyado de mejor manera?
4. ¿Querría que sus amigos/niños participen en la Caja?
5. ¿Hay cosa sobre la Caja que quiere cambiar? ¿Cuáles son?
6. ¿Cómo se siente su familia sobre su participación? ¿Han cambiado sus relaciones?
7. ¿Siente que ha recibido apoyo de sus amigos que participen en la Caja y los otros socios? ¿Ha experimentado que hay personas que no son parte de la Caja que tienen sentidos malos sobre su participación?
8. ¿Cuál es su experiencia de pagar sus créditos?
   a. ¿Es difícil?
   b. ¿Es fácil?
   c. ¿Siempre tiene bastante dinero para pagar sus créditos?
   d. ¿Qué hace si no tiene bastante dinero para pagar sus créditos?
9. ¿Cuáles son unos retos que ha afrontado en la Caja?
Appendix C: Participant Survey in English

Survey of Demographic Information

This survey contains questions about your demographic information. You can skip questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. These responses will not be published and will be used only by the investigators to do the evaluation.

What is your name? ________________
How old are you? ________________
What is your sex?
   _____ Male  _____ Female  _____ Other
What is your marital status?
   _____ Married  _____ Divorced
   _____ Separated  _____ Widowed
   _____ Single  _____ Domestic partnership
What is your level of education? ___________________
How many people depend on you? _______________
Has participating in Mujeres Cosechando Sueños bettered the lives of your dependents?
   _____ Yes  _____ No
   Please explain why:
How has your employment status changed as a result of participating in Mujeres Cosechando Sueños?
   _____ Yes  _____ No
   Please explain why:
Credit 1:
   Type (normal or emergency): ____________
   Amount: _________________
   Purpose:
Credit 2:
   Type (normal or emergency): ______________
Amount: _______________

Purpose:

Credit 3:

Type (normal or emergency): ____________
Amount: ________________
Purpose:

Has your credit provided you with extra income?

_____ Yes   ______ No

Please explain why:

Do you feel more financially stable after joining Mujeres Cosechando Sueños?

_____ Yes   ______ No

Please explain why:

Does your project have an effect on the environment?

_____ Yes   ______ No

Please explain why:

Do you believe that the use of your credit has been successful?

_____ Yes   ______ No

Please explain why:
Appendix D: Participant Survey in Spanish

Encuesta de Datos Demográficos

Esta encuesta contiene preguntas sobre sus datos demográficos. Puede omitir preguntas que no se siente cómodo responder. Estas respuestas no se publicaran y serán usadas únicamente por los investigadores para hacer la evaluación.

¿Cuál es su nombre? ________________
¿Cuántos años tiene? ________________
¿Cuál es su sexo?
   _____ Hombre   _____ Mujer   _____ Otro/a
¿Cuál es su estado civil?
   _____ Casado/a   _____ Divorciado/a
   _____ Separado/a   _____ Viudo/a
   _____ Soltero/a   _____ Unión de hecho
¿Cuál es su nivel de educación? ________________
¿Cuántos personas dependen de usted? ________________
¿Siente ud que el participar en la Caja ha mejorado las vidas de sus dependientes?
   _____ Si   _____ No
   Por favor explique por qué:
¿Cómo cambió su situación laboral como resultado de participar en la Caja?
   _____ Si   _____ No
   Por favor explique por qué:
Crédito 1:
   Tipo (normal o emergente): ____________
   Monto: ____________
   Propósito:
Crédito 2:
   Tipo (normal o emergente): ____________
   Monto: ____________
Propósito:

Crédito 3:

Tipo (normal o emergente): ________________

Monto: ________________

Propósito:

¿Su(s) crédito(s) le ha proporcionado ingresos extra?

_____ Si  _____ No

Por favor explique por qué:

¿Se siente más estable financieramente desde que participó en la Caja?

_____ Si  _____ No

Por favor explique por qué:

¿Su proyecto tiene un impacto en el medioambiente?

_____ Si  _____ No

Por favor explique por qué:

¿Piensa que su uso del crédito tiene éxito?

_____ Si  _____ No

Por favor explique por qué:
Appendix E: Mujeres Cosechando Sueños Evaluation Tool Packet in English

Mujeres Cosechando Sueños Evaluation Tool

What is this packet?

We have put together this packet to create an easy way Mujeres Cosechando Sueños to understand how to perform evaluations similar to ours. This packet contains the questions we asked in interviews along with why we asked them, and our compiled indicators that were used to write these questions. It then goes on to describe how to change the interview questions and why changes may be necessary, effective ways to perform interviews, and how to code and analyze the data that is collected. It is important to complete these evaluations on a regular basis, (every year or so), to ensure that members are happy with their participation and benefiting as much as possible from being part of the program.

What are the questions we asked?

Although we had a base set of questions compiled to ask at every interview, depending on the tone and flow additional questions were asked on the spot to retrieve more data. These questions were asked if an interviewee seemed hesitant to answer a question, didn’t understand the initial questions posed, or to draw out more information about a subject.

*See Appendices A and B for Interview Questions in Spanish and English

*See Appendices C and D for Participant Survey in Spanish and English

Why did we ask these questions?

Prior to starting our interviews, we compiled a list of subjects we wanted information about. These subjects consisted of support, well-being, family dynamics, community, and economics. From this list, we posed the question “What do we want to know about each of these subjects?” This allowed us to develop our indicators, which allowed us to come to less obvious conclusions based on the answers we received in interviews. An indicator is a qualitative or quantitative measure that displays how a project is performing compared to its desired result.

Some of our indicators are as follows:

1. Marital status and number of children
   a. Can lead to conclusions about the participant’s initial desire to become a member
2. Desire for their family or friends to participate
   a. Implies a positive overall experience in the program
3. Community’s view of the program
4. Attitudes toward workshops
   a. Can reveal changes that need to be made to topics or organization
5. Attitudes toward monthly meetings
   a. Can reveal changes that need to be made to topics or organization
6. Feeling of support from other participants
   a. Can shed light on the community and unity of the program
7. Loan usage
   a. Can reveal changes that need to be made to topics of trainings to better benefit the loan usage and increase success

Having this list of indicators provided us with a baseline of what questions needed to be asked in an interview. Essentially, what do we want to know, and what do we need to ask in order to get that information?

After coming up with our initial questions, we saw that some were hard for participants to understand or didn’t yield the type of answers we wanted. Throughout our process of field work, our questions were adjusted until we found a set that was the most effective for retrieving our data. Allowing our interview process to be fluid and changeable helped us discover the best way for us to run an interview, both for us and the participant. It is important for the people being interviewed to feel comfortable and not as if they are being interrogated, as this may decrease the amount of information shared with interviewers.

**Why and how do you change the questions?**

While the questions provided have been carefully curated, there is a variety of reasons why you might need to change the questions. Below are a few of the most likely reasons to modify or add a question.

1. The question is not understood by the interviewees.
2. The answers to the question asked are not giving insight into the theme or reason why the question was asked.
3. Mujeres Cosechando Sueños or community has changed and needs to add questions to address these new changes.

For the first reason, you only need to rephrase the question, which is rather simple. From the previous interviews, identify why people were not understanding the question or what parts were confusing. From there, edit the wording of the question to address these issues. For example, on our survey, we asked “¿Su proyecto tiene un impacto en el medioambiente?” However, to many people, especially those with a lower formal education level, the word ‘el medioambiente’ was confusing. When we noticed that a person did not understand the question, we modified it to “¿Su proyecto daña o contamina la naturaleza?” which seemed more understandable and provided us with better answers.

The second reason stems from having good intentions to collect strong responses from a question that does not work out. Often times we ask questions for one reason, but others do not interpret them that way. As with the first reason, think back to interviews where the question was misinterpreted and try to identify why the question was misinterpreted. When rephrasing, keep these reasons in mind and try to avoid making the same mistakes again.

The final reason is probably most like to happen. As Mujeres Cosechando Sueños grows and changes, it is important to update this evaluation tool to reflect and evaluate those changes. In this case, determine the information that you want to obtain from asking the question (and the indicators) before you write the question, so you can write a question that will give you valuable data. There are many other reasons other than the three listed that would result in needing to change the interview questions. As a general guideline, you should use this method of deciding the reason for the question and then writing an appropriate question.
How do you administer the interviews?

As previously mentioned, it is critical to make sure that the interviewee is comfortable during the interview because an uncomfortable person is less likely to open up and give meaningful answers. The first key to this is being flexible. Every interview will be different in some way and every person will have a different idea of where and how they want to be interviewed. Go into the process with an open mind. This is especially true with where the interviews are held. When we performed interviews, sometimes we were sitting in the living room or at the kitchen table, but other times we were standing by the side of the road or in the middle of a field of potatoes. Let the interviewee bring you to the place they feel comfortable giving the interview.

The other area you must be flexible in for the interviews is the conversations themselves. While it is important to answer the questions from the survey, it is more important for the interviews to feel like a conversation rather than an interrogation. If a question does not feel right to ask, don’t ask it. Let the interview deviate from the script and go where the interviewee wants. Often, this will give you richer and fuller answers to the questions you do ask. Do not be afraid to ask follow-up questions or focus on different conversation areas in different interviews. Keeping these thoughts in mind will help the conversation flow naturally and the interviews to be more informative and successful.

How do you code and analyze the data?

Once the data is collected, what do you do with it? This is the most important step of the evaluation. To do this, follow the following steps:

1. Compile all of the data together in one place (often a spreadsheet)
2. Rewrite open ended interview responses as themes
3. Identify trends
4. Create recommendations or conclusions based on the trends

In our compilation of data, we compiled all of our written notes, transcriptions, and survey responses into a spreadsheet to keep track of responses based on the person interviewed and the question asked. This helps to see all of the data together and start identifying themes. An example is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Número</th>
<th>Edad</th>
<th>Sexo</th>
<th>Estado Civil</th>
<th>Nivel de Educación</th>
<th>Número de dependientes</th>
<th>Mayor las vidas de los dependientes</th>
<th>Cambió su situación laboral</th>
<th>Explicó</th>
<th>Monto del primer crédito</th>
<th>Propuesto del primer crédito</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Mujer</td>
<td>Divorciado</td>
<td>Primaria</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>Trabaja en casas cada día pero ahora puede trabajar solamente en su propia casa</td>
<td>$140.00 Pollos (maíz)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Mujer</td>
<td>Separada</td>
<td>Primaria</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
<td>$140.00 Pollos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Mujer</td>
<td>Unión de hecho</td>
<td>Primaria</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>Más divertido</td>
<td>$140.00 Pollos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Mujer</td>
<td>Divorciado</td>
<td>Primaria</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>$140.00 Pollos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Mujer</td>
<td>Casada</td>
<td>Primaria</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>$120.00 Agricultura, plantas, semillas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Mujer</td>
<td>Casada</td>
<td>Secundaria</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>Más responsabilidades</td>
<td>$140.00 Pollos, alimentación (3 manzanas)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Mujer</td>
<td>Soltera</td>
<td>Primaria</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td></td>
<td>$140.00 Pollos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you do not feel comfortable using spreadsheets, you can do this on paper by gathering all of your notes together or writing out a chart on paper.

This process is very easy for the yes or no survey questions but becomes more difficult for the open-ended interview questions since the responses are much longer and less
straight forward. To compile these interviews, convert the long-written responses into themes. See the examples below for how to create the themes.

Example 1:
Response: I cannot attend many of the trainings because I have work during the workshops. It is hard because I am sure they are helpful and fun, but I just can’t make it and I have to be able to work to support myself. However, if I could go to the meetings, I would really like to have a training about accounting because it is hard to manage my money and I know I need to save money, but I don’t know how to save and sometimes I do not have enough money to pay my credit.
Themes: Work, Accounting

Example 2:
Response: I love going to the trainings because I get to socialize with all my friends in the program. I also bring my child with me so that he gets a chance to socialize with the other kids that come to the meetings. For themes, I would really like some trainings on how to raise pigs because I know how to raise guinea pigs and chickens, but a pig is a big investment and I don’t want it to die. I would also like some accounting training, so I can better manage my money to grow my business.
Themes: Socialization, Raising Animals, Accounting

In the example above, the themes significantly shorten the responses and make it easier to pick out trends in the data. The short phrases for the themes represent something much larger (ex. Work represents not being able to attend workshops due to a job schedule.), but shorted they are much easier to parse. When compiling all the data, you should follow this procedure for all of the interview questions.

Finally, once the data is compiled and sorted, you should write down any trends that you see. A trend is anything that a significant number of people said or want. For example, if 7 people said that they want meetings to be shorter, that is a trend that should be noted. Once you have these trends, you can make recommendations for how to improve the program by addressing these trends and you can begin taking action to make Mujeres Cosechando Sueños the best it can possibly be.
Appendix F: Mujeres Cosechando Sueños Evaluation Tool Packet in Spanish

Herramienta de Evaluación para Mujeres Cosechando Sueños

¿Qué es este paquete?

Hemos recopilado este paquete para crear una manera fácil para Mujeres Cosechando Sueños entender cómo realizar evaluaciones similares a nuestra. Este paquete consiste de las preguntas que preguntamos en las entrevistas, junto con por qué les pedimos, y nuestros indicadores que usamos para formar las preguntas. Este paquete también tiene instrucciones para cambiar las preguntas y por qué los cambios pueden ser necesarios, formas efectivas de realizar entrevistas, y cómo codificar y analizar los datos que se recopilan. Es importante hacer estas evaluaciones regularmente (cada año o así) para asegurar que los miembros están contentos con su participación y para beneficiarse tanto como sea posible de ser parte del programa.

¿Cuáles son las preguntas que preguntamos?

A pesar de que teníamos un conjunto básico de preguntas recopiladas para preguntar en cada entrevista, en función del tono y flujo se preguntaron preguntas adicionales sobre el terreno para recuperar más datos. Estas preguntas se preguntaron si un entrevistado parecía vacilante para contestar una pregunta, no entendía la pregunta, o para sacar más información.

¿Por qué hicimos estas preguntas?

Antes de comenzar nuestras entrevistas, recopilamos una lista de temas sobre que queríamos información. Estos temas consistieron en el apoyo, el bienestar, la comunidad y la economía. De esta lista planteamos la pregunta “¿Qué queremos saber sobre cada uno de estos temas?”. Esto nos permitió desarrollar nuestros indicadores, lo que nos permitió llegar a conclusiones menos obvias basándonos en las respuestas que recibíamos en las entrevistas. Un indicador es una medida cualitativa o cuantitativa que muestra cómo se realiza un proyecto en comparación con el resultado deseado.

Algunos de nuestros indicadores son los siguientes:

1. Estado civil y número de hijos
   a. Puede llevar a conclusiones sobre el deseo inicial de los participantes de convertirse en miembro
2. Deseo que su familia o amigos participen
   a. Implica una experiencia positiva general en el programa
3. Opinión de la comunidad sobre el programa
4. Actitudes hacia los talleres
   a. Puede revelar cambios que deben hacerse sobre temas u organización
5. Actitudes hacia las reuniones
   a. Puede revelar cambios que deben hacerse sobre temas u organización
6. Sentimiento de apoyo de otros participantes
   a. Puede echar luz sobre la comunidad y la unidad del programa
7. Uso de créditos
a. Puede revelar cambios que deben hacerse sobre temas de los talleres para beneficiar mejor el uso de créditos y aumentar el éxito

Tener esta lista de indicadores nos proporcionó un punto de referencia de qué preguntas debían ser formuladas en una entrevista. Esencialmente, ¿qué queremos saber y qué necesitamos preguntar para obtener esa información?

Después de llegar a nuestras preguntas iniciales, vimos que algunas eran difíciles para los participantes entender o no ceder el tipo de respuestas que queríamos. A lo largo de nuestro proceso de trabajo de campo, nuestras preguntas se ajustaron hasta que encontramos un conjunto que era el más eficaz para recuperar nuestros datos. Permitir que nuestro proceso de entrevista sea fluido y cambiante nos ayudó a descubrir la mejor manera para hacer una entrevista, tanto para nosotros como para el participante. Es importante que las personas entrevistadas se sientan cómodas y no como si estuvieran siendo interrogados, ya que esto puede disminuir la cantidad de información compartida con los entrevistadores.

¿Por qué y cómo cambiar las preguntas?

Si bien las preguntas que se han proporcionado han sido cuidadosamente comisariadas, hay una variedad de razones por las que puede ser necesario cambiar las preguntas. A continuación, se muestran algunas de las razones más probables para modificar o añadir una pregunta.

1. La pregunta no es entendida por los entrevistados
2. Las respuestas a la pregunta formulada no están dando una idea del tema o la razón por la que se hizo la pregunta.
3. La Caja o comunidad ha cambiado y necesita añadir preguntas para hacer frente a estos nuevos cambios.

Por la primera razón, sólo es necesario reformular la pregunta, que es bastante simple. De las entrevistas anteriores, identifique por qué la gente no entendía la pregunta o qué partes eran confusas. Luego, edite la redacción de la pregunta para abordar estos temas. Por ejemplo, en nuestra encuesta, preguntamos "¿Su proyecto tiene un impacto en el medioambiente?". Sin embargo, para muchas personas, especialmente los que tienen un nivel de educación formal inferior, la palabra 'el medioambiente' era confusa. Cuando nos dimos cuenta que una persona no entendía la pregunta, la modificamos a "¿su proyecto daña o contamina la naturaleza?", que parecía más comprensible y nos proporcionó mejores respuestas.

La segunda razón proviene de tener buenas intenciones para recoger respuestas fuertes de una pregunta que no funciona. Muchas veces hacemos preguntas por una razón, pero otras no las interpretamos de esa manera. Como en la primera razón, piense de nuevo en las entrevistas donde la pregunta fue malinterpretada e intenta identificar por qué la pregunta fue malinterpretada. Al reformular, mantener estas razones en mente y tratar de evitar cometer los mismos errores de nuevo.

La razón final probablemente es la forma más probable que ocurre. A medida que la caja crece y cambia, es importante actualizar esta herramienta de evaluación para reflexionar y evaluar esos cambios. En este caso, determine la información que desea obtener de hacer la pregunta (y los indicadores) antes de escribir la pregunta para que pueda escribir una pregunta que le dará datos valiosos. Hay muchas otras razones aparte de las tres que se enumeran que resultaría en la necesidad de cambiar las preguntas de la entrevista. Como una
pauta general, usted debe utilizar este método de decidir la razón de la pregunta y luego escribir una pregunta apropiada.

¿Cómo administrar las entrevistas?

Como se mencionó anteriormente, es fundamental asegurarse de que el entrevistado se sienta cómodo durante la entrevista porque una persona incómoda tiene menos probabilidades de abrirse y dar respuestas significativas. La primera clave para esto es ser flexible. Cada entrevista será diferente de alguna manera y cada persona tendrá una idea diferente de dónde y cómo quieren ser entrevistados. Entra en el proceso con una mente abierta. Esto es especialmente cierto con el lugar donde se celebran las entrevistas. Cuando realizamos entrevistas, a veces estábamos sentados en la sala de estar o en la mesa de la cocina, pero otras veces estábamos de pie al lado de la carretera o en medio de un campo de patatas. Deja que el entrevistado te traiga al lugar que se siente cómodo dando la entrevista.

La otra área en la que debe ser flexible para las entrevistas son las propias conversaciones. Si bien es importante responder a las preguntas de la encuesta, es más importante que las entrevistas se sientan como una conversación en lugar de un interrogatorio. Si una pregunta no se siente bien preguntar, no preguntas. Deje que la entrevista se desvíe del guion e ir a donde el entrevistado quiere. A menudo, esto le dará respuestas más ricas y completas a las preguntas que usted pregunta. No tenga miedo de hacer preguntas de seguimiento o centrarse en diferentes áreas de conversación en diferentes entrevistas. Mantener estos pensamientos en mente ayudará a que la conversación fluya naturalmente y las entrevistas sean más informativas y exitosas.

¿Cómo se codificar y analizar los datos?

Una vez recopilados los datos, ¿qué hace con ellos? Este es el paso más importante de la evaluación. Para hacer esto, siga los siguientes pasos:

1. Compile todos los datos juntos en un solo lugar (a menudo una hoja de cálculo)
2. Reescribir respuestas abiertas de las entrevistas como temas
3. Identificar tendencias
4. Crear recomendaciones y conclusiones sobre las tendencias

En nuestra compilación de datos, recopilamos todas nuestras notas escritas, transcripciones, y respuestas de encuestas en una hoja de cálculo para llevar un registro de las respuestas basadas en la persona entrevistada y la pregunta formulada. Esto ayuda a ver todos los datos juntos e iniciar la identificación de temas. A continuación, se muestra un ejemplo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Número</th>
<th>Edad</th>
<th>Sexo</th>
<th>Estado Civil</th>
<th>Nivel de Educación</th>
<th>Número de dependientes</th>
<th>Mejoró las vidas de los dependientes</th>
<th>Cambió su situación laboral</th>
<th>Explica</th>
<th>Monto del primer crédito</th>
<th>Propósito del primer crédito</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Mujer</td>
<td>Divorcio</td>
<td>Primaria</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>Trabaja en casas cada día pero ahora puede trabajar solamente en su propia casa</td>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Pollos (matera)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Mujer</td>
<td>Separada</td>
<td>Primaria</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>Más divertido</td>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Cuyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Mujer</td>
<td>Unida de hecho</td>
<td>Primaria</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>Más divertido</td>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Pollos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Mujer</td>
<td>Divorcio</td>
<td>Primaria</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Más divertido</td>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Pollos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Mujer</td>
<td>Casada</td>
<td>Primaria</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Más divertido</td>
<td>$120.00</td>
<td>Agricultura, plantas, semillas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Mujer</td>
<td>Casada</td>
<td>Secundaria</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>Más responsabilidades</td>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Pollos, alimentación (3 muzun)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Mujer</td>
<td>Soltero</td>
<td>Primaria</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td>Más divertido</td>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Pollos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Si no se siente cómodo usando hojas de cálculo, puede hacerlo en papel reuniendo todas sus notas juntas o escribiendo un gráfico en papel.

Este proceso es muy fácil para las preguntas de la encuesta sí o no, pero se vuelve más difícil para las preguntas de entrevistas abiertas ya que las respuestas son mucho más largas y menos directas. Para compilar estas entrevistas, convierta las largas respuestas escritas en temas. Vea los ejemplos a continuación para crear los temas.

**Ejemplo 1:**
Respuesta: *No puedo asistir a muchos de los entrenamientos porque tengo que trabajar durante los talleres. Es difícil porque estoy seguro de que son útiles y divertidos, pero no puedo hacerlo y tengo que ser capaz de trabajar para sostenerme. Sin embargo, si pudiera ir a las reuniones me gustaría realmente tener una formación sobre contabilidad porque es difícil de administrar mi dinero y sé que necesito para ahorrar dinero, pero no sé cómo ahorrar y a veces no tengo suficiente dinero para pagar mi crédito.*
Temas: Trabajo, Contabilidad

**Ejemplo 2:**
Respuesta: *Me encanta ir a los entrenamientos porque me llega a socializar con todos mis amigos en el programa. También traigo a mi hijo conmigo para que tenga la oportunidad de socializar con los otros niños que vienen a las reuniones. Para los temas, realmente me gustaría algunos entrenamientos sobre cómo criar cerdos porque sé cómo criar cuyes y gallinas, pero un cerdo es una gran inversión y no quiero que muera. También me gustaría un poco de formación contable para que pueda administrar mejor mi dinero para hacer crecer mi negocio.*
Temas: Socialización, Criando Animales, Contabilidad

En el ejemplo anterior, los temas acortan significativamente las respuestas y facilitan la selección de las tendencias de los datos. Las frases cortas para los temas representan algo mucho más grande (ej. el trabajo representa no poder asistir a talleres debido a un horario de trabajo.), pero en cortocircuito son más fáciles de analizar. Cuando compile todos los datos, debe seguir este procedimiento para todas las preguntas de la entrevista.

Finalmente, una vez que los datos son compilados y ordenados, usted debe anotar cualquier tendencia que usted vea. Una tendencia es todo lo que un número significativo de personas dijo o desea. Por ejemplo, si 7 personas dicen que quieren que las reuniones sean más cortas, esa es una tendencia que debe tenerse en cuenta. Una vez que tienes estas tendencias, puedes hacer recomendaciones sobre cómo mejorar el programa abordando estas tendencias y puedes empezar a tomar acción para hacer de la caja lo mejor que pueda ser.
Appendix G: Charts of demographic information from surveys

The charts below describe the data we collected from our demographics survey.

**Chart 5. Ages of members interviewed**

Ages of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range in Years</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[18, 28]</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(28, 38]</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(38, 48]</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(48, 58]</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(58, 68]</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chart 6. Gender of members interviewed**

Gender Ratio of Interviewees

- Male
- Female

Chart 5. Ages of members interviewed

Chart 6. Gender of members interviewed
Chart 7. Marital status of members interviewed

Marital Status of Interviewees

- Divorced
- Married
- Separated
- Domestic Partnership
- Widowed
- Single

Chart 8. Education level of members interviewed

Education Levels of Interviewees

- Primary
- Secondary
- Superior
Appendix H: Credit specific coded responses based on interviews and surveys

Columns with 0s and 1s represent our code, where 0 = no and 1 = yes.

This data has been separated out from the other coded responses to reduce the risk of other data being de-anonymized

The data begins on the following page
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credit 1 Amount</th>
<th>Credit 1 Purpose</th>
<th>Credit 2 Amount</th>
<th>Credit 2 Purpose</th>
<th>Credit 3 Amount</th>
<th>Credit 3 Purpose</th>
<th>Emergency Credits</th>
<th>Raising Animals Loan</th>
<th>Agriculture Loan</th>
<th>Handicrafts/Production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Repair motorcycle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Chicken wire and materials to build guinea pig cages</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>Buy guinea pigs, sheep, and to repair her greenhouse</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td>Buy cows</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Chickens</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>Pigs and feed (2 died of pneumonia)</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td>Bakery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Chickens, feed (3 died)</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>Pig sty</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td>Chickens, plants, and potatoes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Pigs (2)</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>Fix her weaving machine to make pants to sell</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>Fix her weaving machine</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td>Buy shoes to resell and to study beauty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Started hot dog, salchipapa, and hamburger stand. Buy all the food</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Guinea pigs</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>Chickens</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Chickens (later died)</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>Guinea pigs</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>House for her guinea pigs</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>Agriculture, plants, seeds</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$120.00</td>
<td>Agriculture, plants, seeds</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>Tourism and materials for catering services</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td>Buying things for her tourism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Tourism and materials for catering services</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>Improve her services and her artisanal production</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Chickens, feed</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>Pigs, feed</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td>Working the land, feed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Credit 1 Amount</td>
<td>Credit 1 Purpose</td>
<td>Credit 2 Amount</td>
<td>Credit 2 Purpose</td>
<td>Credit 3 Amount</td>
<td>Credit 3 Purpose</td>
<td>Emergency Credits</td>
<td>Raising Animals Loan</td>
<td>Agriculture Loan</td>
<td>Handicrafts/Production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Transport for her dialysis class</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>Transport and school costs</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Guinea pigs, feed, shelter</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>Chickens, feed, shelter (all died so paid back with money from guinea pigs and legumes business)</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td>Addition to her house, bought concrete</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Start raising guinea pigs. Had to use some of her own money</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>Pay for private university for her son</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Handicrafts and knitting</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>Knitting ponchos</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td>Food services?</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Guinea pigs, shelter</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>Chickens, shelter</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td>Hens</td>
<td>3 or 4</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Feed for pigs</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>Feed for guinea pigs and hens</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Supplies for her paper store</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>Christmas merchandise for paper store</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Bazaar/paper store that had no clients so he sold it to recoup the losses</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Knits and sells sweaters, boots, hats, and scarves</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Chickens</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Raising chickens</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit 1 Amount</td>
<td>Credit 1 Purpose</td>
<td>Credit 2 Amount</td>
<td>Credit 2 Purpose</td>
<td>Credit 3 Amount</td>
<td>Credit 3 Purpose</td>
<td>Emergency Credits</td>
<td>Raising Animals Loan</td>
<td>Agriculture Loan</td>
<td>Handicrafts/Production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Raising chickens</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>$145.00</td>
<td>Put a roof up on one of her buildings on the coast</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>To plant potatoes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Guinea pigs (she got sick and couldn't take care of them so they died and she had to use her vegetable money to pay it back)</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>Guinea pigs</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Food for cows</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>To plant seeds for agriculture</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td>Food for cows and guinea pigs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140.00</td>
<td>Guinea pigs, agriculture (broccoli), and inexpensive accounting course</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Appendix I: Coded responses based on interviews and surveys

*Columns with 0s and 1s represent our code, where 0 = no and 1 = yes.

The data begins on the following page
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Batteries lives of dependents</th>
<th>Explain</th>
<th>Changed employment status</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Extra income</th>
<th>Explain</th>
<th>More financially stable</th>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Environmental impact</th>
<th>Explain</th>
<th>Repayment</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Guarantor</th>
<th>Hard to attend meetings?</th>
<th>Heard Negative feelings toward the Caja?</th>
<th>Wants more Organization in meetings?</th>
<th>Explain</th>
<th>Didn't have enough money or needed help from friends to pay back loans?</th>
<th>Mentioned taking out emergency loan</th>
<th>Felt support from other members</th>
<th>Saves in program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Worked in houses all day and can now work at home</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>A little bit of economic help</td>
<td>For $115</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Eat not sell</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Accounting, Social Skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Better</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>More fun</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>A little bit of economic help</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No chemicals</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>Accounting, Computer, Agriculture, Animals</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>More responsibilities</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not yet</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Hopefully</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Socialize, Morale, Environment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Used to have to leave home everyday, now only goes to market once a week</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No chemicals</td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>Socialize, Morale, Environment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Better able to provide the necessities</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>She has less time</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>Work, Organization, Scheduling</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Has to leave her child home alone</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>First no but she hopes the second and third are</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>TravelExpense Organization, Scheduling</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Maintained the same</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Organization, Scheduling</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Socializes her child at workshops and meetings</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>She only does the savings and hasn't taken out any money</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Everything is natural</td>
<td>Socialize</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Go with her to events</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Especially the guinea pigs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>Selling, Animals, Handicrafts</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Can buy them the things they need</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Able to drive to work instead of having to walk</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Accounting, Work</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>They sell things with her and the money helps feed them</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No chemicals</td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>Work, Handicrafts</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>They eat better</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>It has stayed the same</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Everything is natural</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Caja</td>
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<tr>
<td>Batteries lives of dependents</td>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Changed employment status</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Extra income</td>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>More financially stable</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>Environmental impact</td>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Repayment</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Guarantor</td>
<td>Hard to attend meetings?</td>
<td>Heard Negative feelings toward the Caja?</td>
<td>Wants more Organization in meetings?</td>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Didn't have enough money or needed help from friends to pay back loans?</td>
<td>Mentioned taking out emergency loan</td>
<td>Felt support from other members</td>
<td>Saves in program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>A little bit. The savings help. Need to save more</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Only a little</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>Handicrafts</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>She leaves the house an meets more people</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Has to plan the meetings (secretary)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not yet, recently started, hopefully soon</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Just animals, no chemicals, organic</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Accounting, Social Skills, Gastronomy</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Motivation, support, kids attend workshops with her</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Has to coordinate and schedule more</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>punctualit y</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>They can do more</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Works for her kids</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Started recently so no extra income yet</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No change</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Already has a full time job</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Started</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Work, Business</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Their mentality is changing as they listen to her talk about the Caja</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Very little. Now cares for guinea pigs. Her work is at home</td>
<td>To pay for school</td>
<td>Had 10 guinea pigs but now has closer to 20. Good investment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Natural. If anything it helps the environment</td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>They have more income</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Got a job after joining the Caja, but not related</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>She sells, and plants more and gets more money</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>All natural</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>She has to leave the her children alone a lot</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Got a job after joining the Caja, but not related</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Very little. She is waiting for the potatoes to grow</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>All natural</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>Attendance</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>She does not have a credit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Intercultural</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>She also has another job - trout farm</td>
<td>For feed for her animals</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>She is not recouping the costs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>It changes but not good or bad</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Scheduling</td>
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Appendix J: Magazine

The magazine starts on the following page
La Historia

La Caja Solidaria Mujeres Cosechando Sueños se inició el 15 de junio de 2017 con el objetivo de empoderar a las mujeres y en ese momento era el primer programa de su tipo en Sayausí. La meta del programa está enfocada en apoyar a cada uno de sus socios, motivándoles a invertir y llevar a cabo sus emprendimientos dirigidos a mejorar su calidad de vida. Los miembros fundadores de la Caja esperaba ofrecer a las mujeres más independencia así como responsabilidades. La Caja se formó como un esfuerzo conjunto entre Kallpa Warmi y otras dos organizaciones, una de Bellavista y otra de San Miguel, para llegar a mayor número posible de personas. La Caja también recibió mucha ayuda de Waaponi y Coordinación de Equidad Social y Género, que ayudó al grupo a comenzar y ofreció varias capacitaciones. El programa comenzó con 28 miembros y en ese momento el préstamo más grande que un miembro podría recibir era de $140. Ahora, a partir de Noviembre del 2018, existen 43 miembros y pueden obtener hasta $300 en préstamos. El programa actualmente tiene $15,000 en préstamos y espera seguir creciendo aún más. Para el año 2021, Mujeres Cosechando Sueños espera ser una cooperativa con más de 100 socios, comprometido en apoyar y motivar a cada uno de los socios contribuyendo al bienestar de los mismos.

The History

The Caja Mujeres Cosechando Sueños was started on June, 15th 2017 with a goal of empowering the women and at the time it was the first program of its kind in Sayausí. The goal of the program is focused on supporting every one of its partners, motivating them to invest in and accomplish their undertakings towards bettering their quality of life. The founding members of the Caja hoped to give the women more independence and responsibilities. The Caja was formed as a joint effort between Kalpwa Warmi and two other organizations, one from Bellavista and one from San Miguel, to reach as many people as possible. The Caja also received a lot of assistance from the Waaponi and Coordinación de Equidad Social y Género, who helped the group get started as well as providing training. The program started with 28 members and at the time the largest loan that a member could receive was $140. Now, as of November 2018, there are 43 members and they are able to take out up to $300 dollars in loans. In total, the program currently has $15000 out in loans and hope to continue growing even further. By the year 2021, Mujeres Cosechando Sueños hopes to be a cooperative of over 100 partners, committed to supporting and motivating each one of its partners contributing to their personal wellbeing.
Zoila Chuñir ha obtenido dos créditos para comprar cuyes y pollos. Acceder a estos créditos le ha permitido mejorar la vida de sus hijos. Sus animales se venden en los mercados todas las semanas y también sirven como alimento para su familia. Ella ha recibido el apoyo de sus amigos en la Caja, el formar parte de este proyecto le ha proporcionado más estabilidad financiera en su vida diaria.
Blanca Quichimbo es socia fundadora de la Caja. Ella ha obtenido dos créditos. El primero se utilizó para comprar y criar cuyes, y el segundo se utilizó para comprar y criar pollos. Los cuyes fueron utilizados por su familia para su alimentación. Sus pollos también se utilizan como fuente de alimentación, pero también se venden en mercados. Ella siente que la forma en que ha utilizado sus créditos ha sido provechosa y ha brindado apoyo en su vida diaria para ella y su familia.

Blanca Quichimbo is a founding member of the Caja. She has taken out two normal loans. The first loan was used to buy and raise guinea pigs, and the second was used to buy and raise chickens. The guinea pigs were used by her family for food. Her chickens are also used as a food source, but are also sold at markets for profit. She feels as though how she has used her loans has been successful and provided support in her daily life for her and her family.
María Pintado ha sacado un crédito normal para comprar pollos y cuyes. Ella no solo usa los pollos para comer, sino que también los vende en mercados. Ella siente que el uso que dio a su crédito ha sido exitoso y ha disfrutado poder compartir su experiencia con las nuevas personas que ha conocido a través de la Caja. María le gusta que la Caja apoya a todo tipo de personas sin importar su procedencia o nivel de educación.
Teresa Buestan has taken out two normal loans. The first loan was put towards agricultural purchases of plants and trees. The second loan not only bought more plants, but also allowed Teresa to buy guinea pigs and birds as well. Her family used the birds purchased as a source of food. She appreciates that the Caja has provided her with the income to be able to buy supplies in times of emergency and has allowed her to purchase her plants and animals.
Bertha Pintado has recently taken out her first normal loan. She used the loan, which she received only two months ago, to buy 40 chickens as well as their feed and habitats. The chickens are used as food for her family. She and her husband take pride in the fact that she does not use any kinds of chemicals when raising her chickens, therefore bettering people’s health. She believes the use of her loan has been successful and enjoys that participating in the program has provided her with more independent responsibilities.
Rosa Bacuilima has taken out three normal loans. She used the first to buy chickens, the second to buy food for her pig, Juan, and the third to open her own bakery. The program has affected her life for the better and allowed her to become more financially stable. Rosa believes the use of her loan has been successful and would like to take out more loans from the Caja to further grow her businesses.

Rosa Bacuilima ha sacado tres créditos. El primero lo usó para comprar pollos, el segundo para comprar comida para su cerdo, Juan, y el tercero para abrir su propia panadería. El programa ha impactado a Rosa de forma positiva y le ha permitido ser más estable financieramente. Rosa cree que el uso de su crédito ha sido exitoso y le gustaría obtener más créditos de la Caja para hacer crecer sus negocios.
Ana Buestan has taken out three loans. Her first loan was used to buy two pigs, the second was used to buy materials to make a pigsty, and the third was used to buy chickens and seeds to plant her garden with vegetables and potatoes. These resources has made it easier for her to feed and take care of her children. Participating in the Caja has provided her with more time at home and with her family. She has felt very supported in the Caja and enjoys the workshops provided. Ana believes that the uses of her loans have been successful and that being a part of the Caja has been a big help to her and her family’s lives.
Maria Luz Bravo has taken out three loans to buy chickens, pigs, agriculture help, and feed for all her animals. Since joining the Caja she has felt supported and met a lot of new people. She enjoys going to the workshops and learning new skills that she can use in her daily life. She is very confident in her loans and believes they have all been successful. María’s experience in the Caja has been overwhelmingly positive.
Fabiola Contreras has taken out three loans that she has used to buy feed and supplies for her pigs, hens, and guinea pigs. She feels the program has supported her and she enjoys having access to her own things and her own money. Her participation in the Caja also allows her to maintain focus on her schoolwork. She really enjoys going to the workshops and meeting people from all over Sayausí who are participating in the program. Fabiola feels that her loans have been successful and provided her with the opportunity to buy a lot of things she needs.
Mariana Pintado has taken out three loans that she has used to buy guinea pigs and supplies for farming vegetables. She feels as though the program has supported her through the workshops that are offered, and feels more financially stable since joining the program. Although unfortunately all the guinea pigs she bought with her first loan died, she is optimistic that the uses of her second and third loans will be successful. Mariana enjoys being a part of the Caja and can’t wait for the program to continue growing.

Mariana Pintado ha sacado tres préstamos que ha usado para comprar cuyes y suministros para cultivar hortalizas. Ella siente que el programa la ha apoyado a través de los talleres que se ofrecen, y se siente más estable financieramente desde que se unió al programa. Aunque lamentablemente todos los cuyes que compró con su primer préstamo murieron, ella es optimista de que los usos de su segundo y tercer préstamo serán exitosos. Mariana disfruta ser parte de la Caja y no puede esperar a que el programa continúe creciendo.
María Dolores ha sacado tres préstamos que usó para comprar cuyes, pollos y para construir un pequeño recinto para sus animales. A ella le gusta ir a los talleres que se ofrecen y aprecia la oportunidad de aprender cosas nuevas. A ella le gusta la camaradería que ha obtenido al formar parte de la Caja, donde conoce a muchas personas con nuevas ideas que la aconsejan. María se ha sentido muy apoyada por el programa y aprecia las oportunidades que este ofrece.

Maria Dolores has taken out three loans that she’s used to buy guinea pigs, chickens, and to build a small enclosure for her animals. She enjoys going to the offered workshops and appreciates the opportunity to learn new things. She liked the comradery that comes with being a part of the Caja, where she gets to meet a lot of new and open people who support her. Maria has felt very supported by the program and appreciates the opportunities its given her.
Fabricio Gutama's first time in a group like this. The Caja has given Fabricio more motivation to pursue small projects to improve his life. For example, he used his credit to make repairs on his motorcycle so he could get to work each day. He feels that the Caja is beneficial to him because he can meet new people and learn more about how the loan system works.
Janeth Buestan took out two credits to support her papelería. Recently, she took out a credit to buy christmas items to sell in her papelería. She has learned much more about finances since joining the Caja and she has more ideas for her papelería now that she has the money from the Caja. She enjoys socializing and being a part of a group of people that supports each other. She hopes that the Caja will grow bigger and provide them with even larger credits in the future.
Balvina Vásquez has changed a lot since joining the Caja. She has taken three credits since joining the group. The first two credits allowed her to fix her weaving machines to make and sell clothes to pay for food to feed her family. The third was used to buy and sell shoes and to pay for her education at beauty school. The support she receives from members of the Caja has improved her family's life and helped her financially.

Balvina Vásquez ha cambiado mucho desde que se unió a la Caja. Ella ha sacado tres créditos desde que se unió al grupo. Los dos primeros créditos le permitieron arreglar sus máquinas de tejer para hacer y vender ropa para pagar por la alimentación de su familia. El tercero se usó para comprar y vender zapatos y para pagar su educación en la escuela de belleza. El apoyo que recibe de los miembros de la Caja ha mejorado la vida de su familia y le ha ayudado económicamente.

Balvina Vásquez has changed a lot since joining the Caja. She has taken three credits since joining the group. The first two credits allowed her to fix her weaving machines to make and sell clothes to pay for food to feed her family. The third was used to buy and sell shoes and to pay for her education at beauty school. The support she receives from members of the Caja has improved her family's life and helped her financially.
Blanca Bacuilima has two credits that she has used to improve the habitats for her guinea pigs and for agriculture. Working on her agricultural loan is something she really enjoys doing since joining the Caja. She enjoys going to the workshops and learning new subject material. She looks forward to learning more about finances and how the Caja functions. Being involved in the program with her friends and other participants is a highlight for her.
Carmen Morales is the secretary of the Caja. She has taken out three loans that have gone towards buying chicken wire for her guinea pig cages, to buy guinea pigs, to fix her greenhouse, and to buy cows. She appreciates the new relationships she’s created and the new people that she’s met through the program. She feels more financially stable and believes that participating in the Caja has bettered her life.

Carmen Morales es la secretaria de la Caja. Ella ha sacado tres préstamos que se han utilizado para comprar mallas para las jaulas de sus cuyes, para comprar cuyes, para arreglar su invernadero y para comprar vacas. Ella aprecia las nuevas relaciones que ha creado y las nuevas personas que ha conocido a través del programa. Se siente más estable financieramente y cree que participar en la Caja ha mejorado su vida.
Lourdes Zurita doesn’t have any credits yet, but is currently saving her money through the Caja. In the future, she’d like to take out a loan to buy chickens. She enjoys the workshops and brings her kids with her when she participates. She believes participating in the program has improved the lives of her children because they are more motivated. She appreciates how much all the participants in the program try to help each other and the companionship that results from that.
Dunia Lizalde has taken out one credit to grow her business and buy supplies for her food stand, La Viave. She currently sells hot dogs, hamburgers, fried chicken, french fries, and colas. Her family also works with her at the business. She likes the monthly meetings for the Caja and wouldn’t change anything about them. She gets along well with the other participants and appreciates the support she receives. Dunia feels more financially stable since joining the program and she is more confident starting a new business knowing she has the support of the Caja.
Rocio Buestan has not taken out her first loan yet, but has experience with the Caja due to her mother's involvement in the program. She has been contributing $5 to the program every month in preparation for taking out her loan. Although Rosa hasn't yet received her credit, she feels as though being involved in the program has bettered the lives of her children, and she feels more confident.

Tania Buestan

Aunque Tania Buestan no ha solicitado un préstamo todavía, pero ahora ha disfrutado de su participación en la Caja y espera obtener préstamos en el futuro para comprar pollos. Ella descubrió que los talleres son educativos y que se siente apoyada por lo que está aprendiendo y por cuántas personas conoce. Ella también aprecia el círculo social que la participación en el programa crea para su hijo.

Although Tania Buestan doesn’t have any loans yet, she has enjoyed her participation in the Caja thus far and hopes to take out loans in the future to put towards buying chickens. She has found the workshops educational and feels supported by how much she’s learning and how many people she’s meeting. She also appreciates the social circle participating in the program provides for her child.
María Gómez has not taken out any loans yet but is currently saving money through the Caja. She appreciates how simple the process is to deposit and save her money compared to doing it at a bank. She enjoys having the opportunity to learn more about finances and saving. In the future, she hopes to take out some loans that she wants to put towards caring for her guinea pigs, pigs, and birds.
Angélica Quinde hasn’t taken out any loans but is currently saving her money through the Caja. She enjoys that participating in the program provides her with the opportunity to learn about her finances and meet lots of new people. In the future she hopes to take out some loans that she will put towards her children’s education. Her daughter also participates in the Caja and is learning about starting her own savings. Overall, Angelica has enjoyed being a part of the Caja so far and is looking forward to taking out her own loan.

Ester Tineo Salvador tiene un préstamo que ha destinado para la fabricación de botas, bufandas y sombreros que teje a mano. Invirtió su préstamo para pagar el hilo que utiliza. Ella también está ahorrando dinero a través del programa y siente que su dinero está seguro en la Caja. A Esterfilia le gusta ir a todos los talleres, específicamente a los de manualidades. Ella también aprecia la comunicación constante con otros socios y la compañía que viene con eso.
Manuel Albarracín had one credit that he spent towards chickens. He believes his credit was successful because he made money from selling all of his chickens. He plans to take out more credits to purchase more chickens and to support the Caja as much as possible. He enjoys meeting new people and seeing them at meetings to understand how everyone contributes to the program. He would like to see his kids participate and grow the program because he can see how supportive everyone is with each other in the Caja.

María Tinizhañay no tiene créditos, pero le gusta ahorrar y participar en las reuniones y talleres que ofrece la Caja. A ella realmente le gustan los talleres y piensa que le ayudan mucho. Le gustaría ver que el material temático de los talleres se amplíe para incluir la capacitación económica y contable. María se siente apoyada a través de la compañía que le proporciona ser parte del programa.

Maria Tinizhañay doesn’t have any credits yet, but is enjoying saving and participating in the meetings and workshops that the Caja offers. She really likes the workshops in particular and thinks they help her a lot. She would like to see the subject material of the workshops to expand to include economic and accounting training. She feels supported through the companionship that being a part of the program provides for her.
Paola Albarracin has been a member of the Caja since November and has taken out one loan that she has used to buy guinea pigs, agricultural needs, and to take a course in accounting. She really enjoys going to the workshops and believes that they motivate and unite the members of the Caja. She likes being a participant in the program and appreciates meeting new people and getting support from the other members. Being part of the Caja has made Paola feel more financially stable and has provided her with more income.
Luz Ruilova has taken out two credits that she has used to put a roof on one of her properties on the coast, and to grow potatoes. She appreciates all the support she gets from the other participants and likes that she can share what she’s learned with them. She enjoys all the themes of the workshops that are offered through the program and she learns a lot. Being a part of the cooperative has helped Luz learn more and get out to work daily.
In addition to running her own trout farm, Fernanda Bermudez has taken out two loans to buy guinea pigs and chickens. She finds the workshops very helpful and she learns a lot. The companionship of the other members has affected her life in a positive way. She believes that the Caja provides good support for small projects such as guinea pigs and other animals. Fernanda feels more financially stable since joining the program and thinks that participating in the Caja has bettered the lives of her children and taught her new and valuable things.
Nelly Albarracin has taken out two normal loans and three emergency loans. She used the first loan to buy some guinea pigs and used her second loan as well as her emergency loans to help pay for her sons educations. The Caja has had a positive impact on her life and has helped her improve her organizational skills as well as allowed her to meet a lot of new people. She enjoys the sense of self worth that she gets from being a member of the Caja and likes that she has something she can call her own.
Rocio Albarracín ha sacado tres créditos, los dos primeros los usó para material para tejer que usaba para producir artesanías y el tercero para comprar artículos para su negocio de catering. Le gusta que la Caja la beneficie tanto económicamente por los préstamos y ahorros como socialmente porque asiste a todos los eventos que le han permitido hacer muchos nuevos amigos. También le gusta ir a los entrenamientos porque le enseñan cosas nuevas que le son útiles. Por último, agradece mucho el apoyo que recibe de los demás miembros de Caja y la forma en que todos están dispuestos a ayudarse unos a otros.

Rocio Albarracín has taken out three credits. She used the first two to buy knitting supplies that she used to produce handmade goods and the third to buy supplies for her catering business. She likes that the Caja benefits her both economically because of the loans and savings and also socially. She attends all of the events which has allowed her to make many new friends. She also likes going to the trainings because they teach her new things that are useful to her. Finally she really appreciates all the support that she receives from the other members of the Caja and how they are all willing to help each other.
Darwin Aguilar has taken out one loan that he put towards opening up a paper store. Although his store wasn’t successful, he would take out more loans through the Caja in the future and feels as though the program supported him to start up his own business. He enjoys the monthly meetings and thinks they are scheduled and run well. He recommends that his friends participate in the program as well so they can experience the support and benefits he has. Overall, Darwin is excited by the opportunities and projects that participating in the Caja offers and has enjoyed being a member thus far.

Ninfa Pérez has taken out two normal credits that she used to pay for her transportation to Quito for nursing school. Being part of the Caja has provided her with a way to make new friends and build herself a community. The program supports her by helping her with her expenses. She would like her friends to participate in the program as well to help the Caja grow. Ninfa believes the use of her credits has been successful and has had an positive experience overall so far in the Caja.
Marisol Peñaloza ha sacado 3 créditos que usó para su Programa de Turismo en Sayausí Rural. Ella ha comprado ollas, artesanías, ropa y otros productos para hacer crecer los servicios que presta. Ella también puso el crédito hacia sus estudios en psicología educativa. Los créditos le han ayudado mucho en su negocio turístico. Los talleres la han ayudado con su crecimiento personal y ella siente que la Caja ha sido una fortaleza para ella. Ella siempre siente el apoyo de los miembros de la Caja y su familia, y espera motivar a más personas para que continúen trabajando juntas para hacer crecer la Caja.

Marisol Peñaloza has taken out 3 credits that she used towards her Tourism Program in Rural Sayausí. She has bought dish pots, artisan products, clothing, and other products to grow the services she provides. She also put the credit toward her studies in educational psychology. The credits have helped her tourist business a lot. The trainings have helped her with her personal growth and she feels the Caja has been a strength for her. She always feels support from the members of the Caja and from her family, and she hopes to motivate more people to keep working together to grow the Caja.
Elvia Narvaez had 3 credits to buy food for her cows and guinea pigs, and to buy vegetable seeds to sell at her business. The credits she receives help grow capital to buy more food and seeds in the future. The Caja helps her family move forward and she receives support from both her family and the other members of the program. She thinks the workshops are a learning experience for everyone. She is optimistic about the program and wants the Caja to keep growing to support her and other members in the future.

Leandro Leon has taken out one normal credit to raise chickens. He feels that being part of the Caja has provided him with opportunities to meet new people and experience new projects. He believes that the Caja has had an abundantly positive impact on his life. Being a member not only supports him, but his whole family, including his mother and younger siblings. He has found that he has become closer to his siblings as a result of being part of the Caja, as they help him take care of his chickens. Leandro believes that the use of his credit has been successful and has allowed him to feel more comfortable in his work.
Estimada Caja,

Toda nuestra experiencia ha sido un placer para nosotros. Muchas gracias por invitaros a sus casas y empresas para compartir sus vidas con nosotros. Fueron muy amables y nos hicieron sentir bienvenidos, disfrutamos mucho de nuestro trabajo, y por eso siempre les agradeceremos. Gracias por esta oportunidad. Les extrañaremos mucho.

This whole experience has been a joy for all of us. Thank you so much for inviting us into your homes and businesses to share your lives with us. You are so kind and made us feel very welcome. You made our work fun, and for that we will always be grateful. Thank you for this opportunity. We will miss you dearly.

Mil gracias,

Grace, Chris, Michael, y Oli

Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Bibliography


