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USAID HONDURAS BENEFICIARIES PROVIDE ESSENTIAL SERVICES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During the global COVID-19 pandemic, millions of people around the world are staying at home in order to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus. In Honduras and many other developing countries with weakened health care systems and struggling economies, stay-at-home restrictions are critical. However, for the majority of citizens to be able to comply with lockdown orders, some workers must leave the safety of their homes to provide the health care and essential services that communities need in order to survive. To honor and to thank all of the people who are valiantly risking their health to provide vital services for their communities and countries, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Honduras Workforce Development Activity, Empleando Futuros, highlights the work of four Honduran youth who represent the best of their country during this time of crisis. Before the crisis, they were labeled “at-risk youth” because of the levels of violence in the communities where they reside. All four completed Empleando Futuros workforce training, found employment, and are now showing the resilience that Honduras needs at this time. Like so many others, they are at-risk now because they choose to support their country in this time of crisis. We call them and all others who are working in essential services, “Heroes of Honduras.”

Yoseline Moreno, a 21-year-old from Tegucigalpa, is truly on the frontlines of Honduras’ COVID-19 response. As an employee of COPECO, Honduras’ Emergency Response Commission, Yoseline prepares shelters for suspected COVID-19 patients; supervises the lines of people outside of supermarkets, banks and pharmacies to ensure that they are practicing safe social distancing; as prepares food to be delivered to vulnerable communities. She says that her bosses are emphasizing the importance of taking the necessary bio-security measures for her own safety and urging her to set a good example for Honduras.

Yoseline says she feels good about what she is doing and, although her family worries about her being exposed to the virus, they support her because of the country’s need at this time and because of her passion for her work. “Empleando Futuros was a great school for what we are living now. In COPECO, it’s essential to work as a team, especially during this health crisis that Honduras faces. Empleando Futuros taught me to communicate better, work in a team, manage conflicts and be assertive.” – Yoseline



Yoseline Moreno

Distributing food and medical supplies to 9.3 million Hondurans is another critical task at this time. Three Empleando Futuros beneficiaries are essential components of medical and food supply chains during the COVID-19 crisis.

Miguel Angel Orellana, a 21-year-old from San Pedro Sula, works for Proconsumo, a company that distributes medical, food and cleaning supplies to stores across Honduras. Miguel Angel loads merchandise and drives trucks to small stores and markets in the San Pedro Sula area.



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These community-based stores are critical in the supply chain as all public transportation in Honduras is closed. During the crisis, Miguel Angel has had to learn to adjust to new and different responsibilities. He says that when he is working in the warehouse, he feels less exposed but when he delivers food to the small stores, he is more concerned about contamination due his increased contact with other people. This is his first-ever job and he never imagined that he would have to face such obstacles in the workplace. But Miguel Angel is grateful for the chance to support his family and his country during this time.



Miguel Ángel Orellana

19-year-old Oscar Flores feels satisfied as a driver for the “Ocho Sin Pausa,” a motorcycle-based service that delivers food and medicines to individual’s homes: “Life has never before given me the chance to serve so many people in need of food. It’s incredible to see the smiles and feel the appreciation of people when I deliver food to those who have been waiting so long to receive.” He wears gloves and a mask and uses gel to protect himself and his clients. Oscar says he feels privileged to have a job now with so many people out of work.



Oscar Flores

Isis Aguilar is a 31-year-old who works at Walmart in Tegucigalpa. On the limited days that Hondurans can come into the store, she works as a cashier, while on other days she packs food for delivery. Isis says that to stay safe at work, everyone practices physical distancing, wears masks and gloves, and washes their hands frequently. She’s happy to have a job but also worries about the future. Isis says that Empleando Futuros opened doors for her to enter the labor market. Before the program, she says she was shy and uncertain, two aspects she’s had to overcome in order to be successful in her work. “I feel that my work is more important than ever, now that I help many people get the food they need while Honduras is living this health crisis.”

As of April 13, Honduras has 397 documented cases of COVID-19 and it has been estimated that almost 60 percent of the over 2,400 Empleando Futuros graduates who were employed are currently out of work. After just over three weeks of stay-at-home orders, Honduras is still bracing for more difficult days and weeks ahead. Empleando Futuros and USAID/Honduras salute Isis, Oscar, Miguel Angel, Yoseline, and all the other workers in Honduras and around the world who risk their safety so that everyone can contribute to “flattening-the-curve.” These four Empleando Futuros graduates show the dedication and resilience that bring hope for a brighter and safer tomorrow.