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UNIDOS DE AMÉRICA

EMPLEANDO
FUTUROS

Entrepreneurial Pathways for At-Risk Honduran Youth

Empleando Futuros (Employing Futures) is a USAID-funded, five-year project that promotes workforce development and increases entrepreneurial pathways for Honduran at-risk youth. Implemented by Banyan Global from 2016 to 2021, Empleando Futuros supported over 5,000 youth through a series of market-driven training-to-employment programs. In 2018, Empleando Futuros launched an innovative pilot initiative to support former gang members and incarcerated youth with entrepreneurship skills and tools.

Empleando Futuros achieved a
72 percent job-insertion rate
among its more than
5,000 trained youth.



The Empleando Futuros entrepreneurship pilot worked with Honduran partners to provide entrepreneurship and business planning training to at-risk youth. Drawing on best practices in positive youth development (PYD), the pilot worked to build youth assets by creating stronger networks across families, communities, and businesses. Project partners used sports (Alliance for Peace) and intensive family systems support (Orphan Helpers) to build youth conflict resolution skills and self-esteem. Empleando Futuros collaborated with the National Center on Education for Employment (CENET) to train and certify partners in entrepreneurship. A total 75 youth graduated from these programs with competencies and skills in entrepreneurship; 43 youth developed business plans for new economic activities; and 31 youth received seed capital and business advisory support to launch their new enterprises.

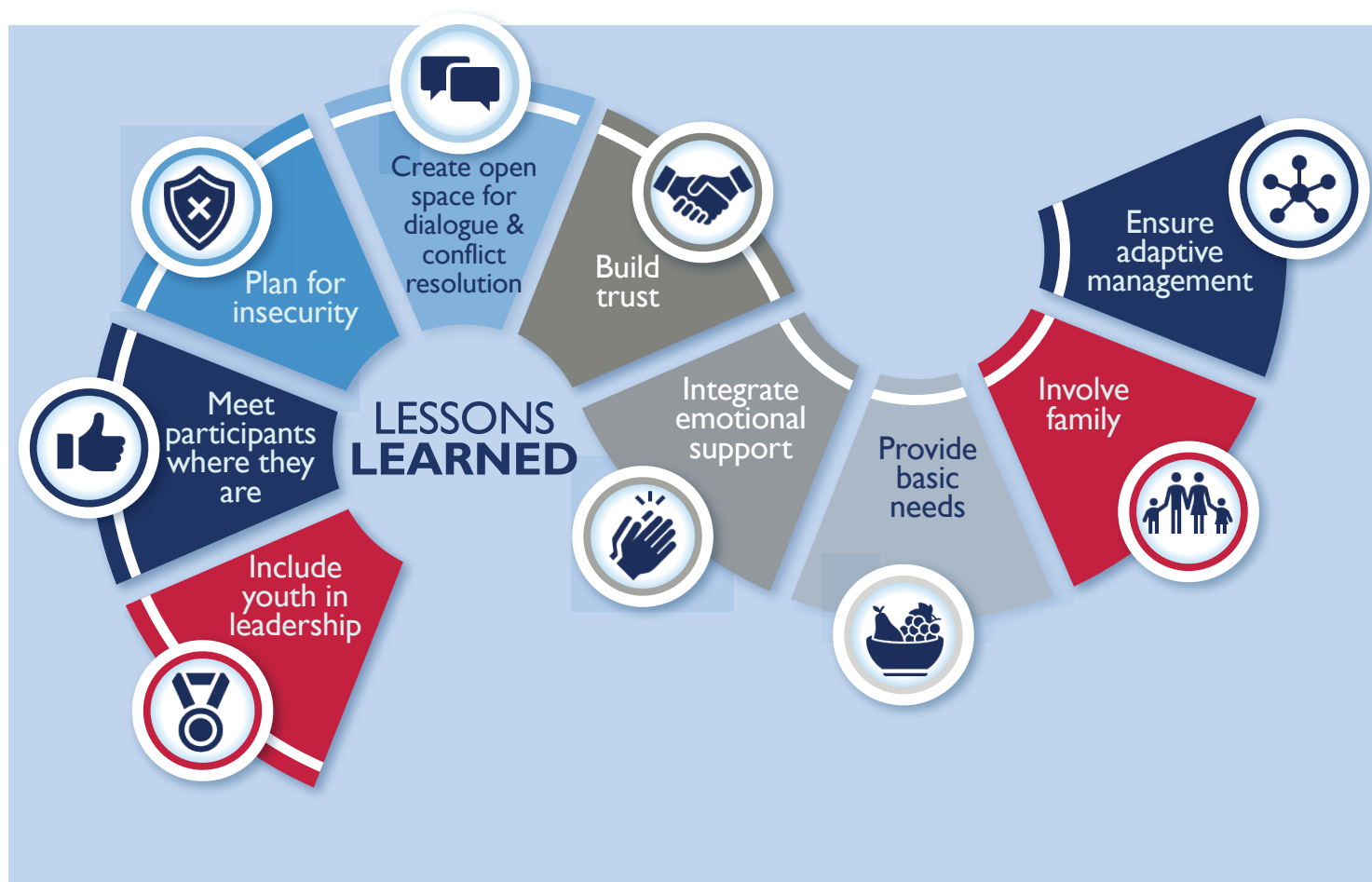
Entrepreneurial advisory services included cash flow management, inventory management, pricing and strategic planning.

Learning

A variety of critical lessons were learned in planning, designing, and implementing the entrepreneurship pilot activity.

Planning

- ❏ **Include youth in leadership.** Youth were engaged in designing and developing project interventions thereby ensuring that resources were adequately devoted to identified needs, interests, concerns, risk factors, and social conditions.
- ❏ **Meet participants where they are.** Intervention planning included youth to ensure the pilot met participants where they were. Activities such as masculinities workshops were held to address stereotypes around male identities and male responses to potentially violent situations.
- ❏ **Plan for insecurity.** The project team recognized the necessity of having safety plans or protocols in place to handle possible instances of violence among participants given the high level of insecurity and volatility in youth's lives.



Designing

- **Create open space for dialogue and conflict resolution.** Partners designed interventions with safe spaces in mind where youth could talk about issues important to them, including resolving conflict. Skill building on conflict resolution bolstered these efforts.
- **Build trust.** Interventions were designed to build local capacity through the use of mentors. Honduran mentors from similar backgrounds were a decisive feature in building trust among participants along with frank dialogue about youth concerns.
- **Integrate emotional support.** Partners designed interventions to directly address issues around youth's emotional health, which was critical to addressing the trauma some youth had faced through crime victimization and incarceration.

Implementing

- **Provide basic needs.** Addressing issues around access (transportation) and food for high-risk youth were important to overcome the physical limitations many youth faced in project participation.
- **Involve family.** Family participation proved paramount. Families were included in workshops and team-building activities. In several cases, family members played an important role in directly supporting youth's business ventures.
- **Ensure adaptive management.** Empleando Futuros continually assessed implementing partners' programming and insisted on strong communication that enabled mistakes to be identified while facilitating adaptation. The result was highly responsive support to at-risk youth.

Outcomes/Impact

- 🔄 **Increased youth resilience and empowerment.** Empleando Futuros has directly contributed to its youth having more positive self-esteem as they begin to take control of their lives and provide tangible support to their families. Business owners involved in the project noted that participating youth showed greater respect for one another as well as others in their community. COVID-19 also tested youth's resilience to adapt and re-engage with society; one youth quickly moved his business from selling candy to cloth masks after the pandemic began.
- 🔄 **Reduced recidivism.** Entrepreneurship and skill-building activities directly contribute to youth's recidivism as they re-engage with their families and communities.
- 🔄 **Reduced violence.** Youth participants began questioning their violent practices and set positive, new examples for their peers. Some became messengers and mediators for developing a culture of peace within their family, group, and community spaces.
- 🔄 **Reduced social stigmatization.** Project activities have resulted in decreased prejudice and social narratives that promote the stigmatization and discrimination of youth who have been in conflict with the law or in gangs. Involving a wide range of actors (family members, businesses, community partners) and promoting project results have contributed to constructing new narratives around youth and their contribution to society.

The youth entrepreneurship pilot had long-lasting positive impacts on targeted youth, their families, and communities