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## Communities Leading Development Youth Entrepreneur, Ester Zaraí Us



Youth entrepreneur Ester Zaraí Us from San Antonio Huista, Huehuetenango, who, with the support of the USAID and CRS's CLD project opened a sweets and desserts business in 2021 which is a thriving small business in her community. Credit for all photography: CRS-CLD Guatemala, March 2023.



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## A collaboration between CRS, ADESJU, and Multiverse

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Ester is the oldest daughter in her family and has three younger siblings. Recently, after difficult events for her family, she took legal custody of her siblings. She works at a school to provide for her siblings and to support her father with expenses.

With support from the CLD project, youth entrepreneurship initiative, Ester established a sweets and desserts business to complement her income, complete with a branding and a social media marketing strategy that she feels is putting her business on the map in her community. To establish her business, Ester participated in several in-person workshops in the municipal head of Jacaltenango on youth entrepreneurship, participated in the Multiverse Accelerated Program, and traveled to Quetzaltenango for youth exchange visits. She also received seed capital from CLD to invest in initial start-up products.

*“I show my family, my siblings, that one can get ahead in life.” - Ester Zarai Us*



Ester sells products ranging from desserts, sweets, and regional snacks



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Ester recently created her business' brand and printed business cards.

Prior to the CLD program, Ester took courses in bakery and traditional sweets from the technical institute, INTECAP sponsored by World Vision's *Puentes* project. She learned about the CLD program with ADESJU from friends she made while being involved in *Puentes*. In initial training sessions, CLD encouraged her to build her business with her baking skills. CLD then offered her tools and ideas on how to build a successful business. The exchange visits offered a space for her to meet other participating youth and learn of other examples of youth enterprise. These served as examples of successes and challenges that other youth faced.

The exchange visits also allowed facilitators to identify additional needs that youth had in relation to strengthening their business.

*"The business has helped distract me and keep me busy because certain situations in life have not been easy."* - Ester Zarai Us

Ester also actively takes part in business fairs in Jacaltenango and Quetzaltenango. Through this work, she was invited by the Jacaltenango Youth Network organized by the Pop No'j Association which makes up a part of the Global Network of Indigenous entrepreneurs of Guatemala. However, due to new responsibilities at work, Ester has not been as active in this network.

Ester offered an example of how she applied what she learned in customer experience. After delivering a product, she follows up with clients about their satisfaction with her products and her business. This feedback gives her ideas on how to continuously improve while also strengthening her relationship with her clients.

*"...I tell them that there isn't a bad idea, but that all ideas are good and have potential."* - Ester Zarai Us



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***“The business has helped distract me and keep me busy because certain situations in life have not been easy.” - Ester Zarai Us***

**Ester’s shop also takes home orders and sometimes sells her products outside of a football stadium with a colleague.**

With her new income stream, Ester is better able to support her siblings and father, while also generating income for herself. Her siblings and father are supportive of her business too; her father helps her run deliveries; family support has been a critical factor for the success of her business.

Prior to her business, during the pandemic, Ester felt like she lost part of her identity and lost interest in her personal development due to her new role as stay-at-home older sister.

As time passed and her business became active, she now focuses more on her present opportunities with a renewed hope for her future. She’s setting an example for her siblings demonstrating achievement among life’s challenges.

Students at the school where Ester works asked her about her knowledge in entrepreneurship and wanted to hear about her business. She was proud to share her experiences with the students who were eager to also learn about building a business. The advice she would give to a young person looking to start a business is, “You need to put in a lot of effort, improve yourself, and make connections with people that are available to help”.

She says it is important to look for organizations that believe in youth like CLD believed in her and provided her with the motivation and moral support to begin her business.

***“My business would not exist without the support of CLD.” - Ester Zarai Us***







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# Communities Leading Development Youth Entrepreneur, Francisca Cano



Francisca Cano, a young Ixil entrepreneur from Nebaj, who, with the support of USAID and CRS's CLD project, opened a pharmacy seven months ago. Credit for all photography: CRS-CLD Guatemala, March 2023.







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Francisca Cano, a youth participant from the community, La Pista in Nebaj, Quiché, is the youngest child of five and the last one at home with her parents. She became involved in the CLD project through her youth ministry group called *Colectivo No’j*. With ADESJU, Francisca participated in a series of trainings on creating a business plan and traveled to Quetzaltenango and Guatemala City for youth entrepreneur exchange visits, where she met other youth entrepreneurs and learned from them. She also received more individualized technical training on financial and legal management and marketing through the Multiverse youth acceleration program and was selected to receive seed capital. This experience gave her the knowledge base and assets to open a pharmacy in her community.

***“It has been a great help to be able to have this stable income and to be able to help [my parents] a little bit more now and in the future.” - Francisca Cano***





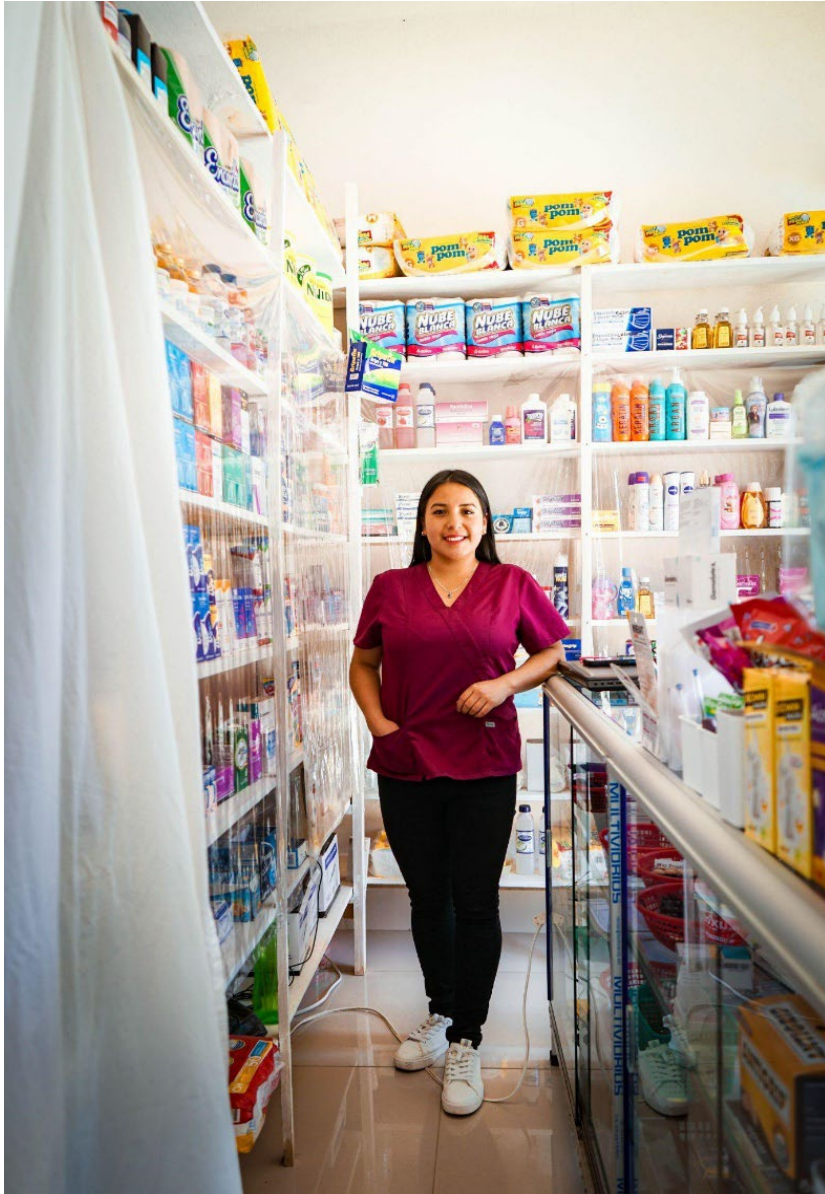
Francisca sells various products in her pharmacy to stay competitive.

Before opening her pharmacy, Francisca worked in her brother’s hardware store as she was unsuccessful in finding a job in her branch of work. In that job, she learned accounting and inventory programs that she now utilizes in her pharmacy. These programs are accessible with a click of her cell phone, where she can input information and check her pharmacy’s inventory.

Also prior to her involvement in CLD, she had considered opening a business with her parents as extra income to support her father who does not have stable income. After participating with CLD, Francisca decided to open a business based on her unique skills. Francisca has a technical certificate in nursing and now applies her nursing knowledge to customers of the pharmacy. She also makes home visits to administer injections and start IV lines for clients and follows up on her customers on their conditions.

***“These training sessions were incredibly important to me as an entrepreneur and makes my pharmacy stand out among the other pharmacies in my community.” - Francisca Cano***

***“Being able to share together and get to know other youth that were in the same process and learning from them [has been the best part].”- Francisca Cano***



She has full support from her parents in her business—they contributed to the initial seed capital to open the pharmacy, which was a critical factor for its opening. She is very proud to have started her own business and offer support to her parents.

Francisca’s success in opening the pharmacy did not come without challenges. She recounts feeling anxious prior to the opening of the pharmacy. She faced difficulties that she hadn’t been prepared for. For example, she had trouble finding providers that delivered to Nebaj without high delivery charges that cut into her profits.

However, since opening the pharmacy, she has let go of these fears. The seed capital was critical to support opening the pharmacy but the guidance and emotional support she received from ADESJU and Multiverse solidified everything. Opening the pharmacy would not have been a reality without the help of the CLD project.

Francisca dreams big and shared that the orientation that she received from ADESJU and Multiverse allowed her to open her mind and see things completely different. Her next goal is to continue her studies in nursing in the university and open another pharmacy, as a branch soon. Thanks to the support of organizations, Francisca feels like she has found economic freedom to manage her own money and manage her own business.

***“At first, I was a little scared. I felt scared about the fact that I wouldn’t know if it would work or not. The youth exchange visits that we had always motivated us. That helped me a lot to lose the fear.” - Francisca Cano***



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CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES



San Marcos, Guatemala



PASTORAL SOCIAL SERVICE





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# Communities Leading Development Youth Entrepreneurs, “The Rodriguez Brothers”



The Rodriguez brothers, (left to right) Lisandro (youngest), Esvin, and Nelson (oldest), from San Antonio Las Nubes, Chiantla, Huehuetenango, run a chicken farm with the support they received from USAID and CRS’s CLD project. Credit for all photography: CRS-CLD Guatemala, March 2023.



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San Marcos, Guatemala





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The Rodriguez brothers—Lisandro, Esvin, and Nelson—are the oldest siblings in their family in San Antonio Las Nubes, a community of 3,154 meters in elevation (above 10,000 feet) outside of Chiantla, Huehuetenango. Prior to participating in the CLD project, the brothers supported each other's education by studying only two years at a time, rotating between the brothers, to allow each brother to continue their education with the limited family income.

With support from the CLD project, the brothers started a chicken farm for egg production. They learned of the project through ADESJU who visited their community to invite youth to participate and were immediately interested given they had never heard of this type of support in their community.

They participated in weekly meetings in their community, youth exchange visits in Quetzaltenango—where they shared mutual learning experiences with other youth, and training in the ADESJU office in Chiantla. After presenting their business plan, the brothers were selected to receive seed capital.







*“[Education is] is important. We want to prepare ourselves to do great in life. That is our intention since we began the business”. -Nelson*

From the profit that they make, Esvin and Nelson send their youngest brother Lisandro (pictured) to school.

The brothers started a chicken farm business given there wasn't another chicken farm in their community; however, they had several concerns about the climate in San Antonio Las Nubes. They needed chickens that could survive the cold and many providers sold chickens from warmer climates. They received small chickens that didn't produce eggs until after 25 days of caring for them. Initially, the brothers didn't make a profit. They were breaking even, as much of their costs were investing in more chickens. To market the business in the community, the brothers hung a large sign in front of their house, which helped to start sales. With the application of good business practices learned in the CLD program and business advice they received from their providers, the brothers grew their business and now have 100 chickens. With a flourishing egg business, the brothers are taking on more responsibilities in business management.

*“What I really liked was the friendliness and respect that they treated all of the youth that they work with.” -Nelson*





The three brothers shared that training and exchange visits were very important to them and were grateful for the opportunity and relationships built with ADESJU staff and other youth participants. They see their business as a great accomplishment.

Thanks to their business, they are now supporting the monthly education costs of the youngest brother, Lisandro, to go to school continuously. Lisandro shared that he is very grateful for the opportunity to study.

The brothers also see a change in their relationship with each other—they value more working together. The brothers are hopeful for the future and are looking for more opportunities that will allow them to expand the capacity of their business, invest in more chickens, and profit enough to pay for the education expenses for all of them.



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# Communities Leading Development Youth Entrepreneur, Leticia Yac Sacalxot



Leticia pictured with her brother (José Yac Sacalxot)

Youth entrepreneur Leticia Yac Sacalxot, from Cantel, Quetzaltenango, who, with the support of USAID and CRS’s CLD project owns and operates two businesses: a chicken farm and jewelry-making business. Credit for all photography: CRS-CLD Guatemala, March 2023.





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Leticia Sacalxot, a youth entrepreneur and mother from Cantel, Quetzaltenango, learned of the CLD project through a youth group in her community. Leticia reported learning important business skills and receiving immense support from ADESJU and Multiverse through the CLD project. Leticia participated in youth exchange activities in Quetzaltenango where she learned from other youth. She also participated in the Multiverse accelerated program that allowed her to gain personalized technical support for her chicken farm.

***"I really enjoyed the Multiverse training program that was more personalized. It allowed me to ask more personalized questions."*** - Leticia Yac



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She opened her chicken farm in June 2022 after receiving seed capital from the CLD project. Leticia’s goal was to raise and sell live chickens in her community. However, the first chickens weren’t ready to be sold until October of that year and she suffered losses when costs of production increased, and her clients did not accept the increased sale prices. Leticia reported that she was ready to give up the business but remembered all that CLD invested in her and chose to reorient herself and shift her business. The support she received from the CLD program not only helped her technically but gave her the personal motivation to continue.

Leticia shifted to selling costume jewelry, launching the business in December 2022 and maintains the chicken farm as extra income. Leticia’s brother and mother support her on the chicken farm and her husband helps her with her jewelry business, which were critical factors in the establishment of her businesses. Although her poultry farm is not as successful as she wanted it to be, she is extremely grateful for the seed capital and the mentorship that she received from CLD. She feels like the experience with the poultry farm has led her to the jewelry business because she is able to apply the knowledge that she gained through mentorship to the jewelry business.

With the marketing techniques that she learned from Multiverse, she began selling the jewelry on Facebook Live and she received good sales. She noticed that sales were influenced by different periods. So, she makes many sales around Valentines Day, Mother’s Day, and Christmas. As her jewelry business grew, she improved her packaging with gift boxes branded for special days. To improve customer service experience, Leticia also makes home deliveries.



Leticia sells costume jewelry, brand-name jewelry, and 925 silver on social media.





Leticia keeps the poultry farm as an extra income and receives help from her brother and mother.

Leticia reflected on how she learned to invest, whenever Leticia earns and saves a little bit of money, she invests in her jewelry business. She reported that young people generally don't apply investment strategies. With these business skills, she now has extra household income. She reported that she would not have been able to open the chicken farm without the seed capital or grow her jewelry business without the support from CLD.

Leticia offered advice to young people that want to open a business, indicating that being an entrepreneur is not easy, but it is important to continue to try and discover what works for you. Leticia hopes to be a guide and mentor for other youth, just as the CLD project supported her with mentorship in her businesses.

*"Without the support of CLD, I don't think it would've been possible to start my business." - Leticia Yac*

*"I thought about all that they have invested in me [CLD], and I remembered what I learned through the ADESJU and Multiverse training sessions, and I was determined to continue." - Leticia Yac*





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# Communities Leading Development Youth Entrepreneur, Maria Chum



Maria Chum, from Climentoro Aguacatán, Huehuetenango, owns Buhoo’s Bakery, an enterprise she started with the support of USAID and CRS’s CLD project. Credit for all photography: CRS-CLD Guatemala, March 2023.



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Maria Chum is a young entrepreneur and mother from a community in Climentoro Aguacatán, Huehuetenango and owns and manages Buhoo's Bakery. Buhoo's Bakery offers cakes, sweet breads, cupcakes, and flan. Recently, with her cousin, she expanded the business and opened a cafe that sells snacks, coffee, hot chocolate, and baked goods from Buhoo's.

Maria got to this point with support from a series of initiatives that helped her build the leadership and technical skills necessary. With support from ADESJU and other organizations, Maria participated in trainings, internships, and exchanges with other youth groups from different municipalities throughout the years. She first became involved with ADESJU at the age of 24. She, along with others in her community, formed a youth group and participated in trainings on leadership, civic participation, self-esteem, among other topics. She also participated in a course in Quetzaltenango with the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) on formulating projects for her community and a child's rights training with World Vision—which led her to become a volunteer for World Vision for three years working with small children.



Maria offers special occasion cakes in the cafe that she owns with her cousin.





Maria says that the experiences with these organizations and the youth leadership opportunities in her community have contributed greatly to her personal development and led her to the CLD program.

Now at 32, Maria is most recently involved in the entrepreneurial support from ADESJU through the CLD project. After she participated in training with the ADESJU, which helped her to improve her online sales and offered support for her to purchase additional baking supplies (such as baking molds, a small oven, and a mixer), she then received individualized mentorship through the Multiverse Accelerated Program. Another factor that contributed to her success was her previous experience in entrepreneurship. Prior to opening the bakery, Maria had a pizza business that was not working as well. Through her entrepreneurial training, she was motivated to shift to different products. She also reported that the youth exchanges activities helped her and her cousin decide to open the coffee shop.

***“When I started, some people questioned if this type of business would work in this community. But I didn't pay attention to them. It did work and I realized any type of business can work in any part of Guatemala or the world. It just depends on the strategies and the way you do it.” - Maria Chum***

***“I see things from a different point of view now, that things can be accomplished. Although it's not easy, it doesn't matter where you live [to be successful].” - Maria Chum***



Maria offers a wide variety of products such as special occasion cakes, banana bread, coco bread, apple bread, cupcakes, and flan. She has taken a certificate course in baking and actively learns new recipes online.



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Maria Chum in her kitchen where she bakes all the products that she offers.



The cafe is small and simple, without much equipment, but she learned that with good business strategies you don't need lots of space or fancy equipment to open.

Her training in baking and business knowledge, together with seed capital from CLD helped her improve the quality of her products. With the additional investment in equipment and packing, Maria now has increased product quality and customer base. After registering her business in Guatemala's tax agency (SAT), she can now offer official purchase receipts to her customers and gain business from larger clients, like the BANRURAL bank and CRS. Her business stands out in her community among the other small businesses and draws in plenty of clients.

Maria faced challenges to establish the business. To source materials, she had to travel to the municipal center of Aguacatán and had trouble marketing her products. Through experience, she has now established relationships with providers who deliver materials on public transport to her community, and she deposits the payment through bank transfers. She also began marketing her products on Facebook and opened a WhatsApp business account where she takes orders.

Maria has had the support of her brother and her sister-in-law throughout this process. Now, after two years of growing her business, she can pay them for their work. As a mother, she also feels she has gained more economic independence to provide for herself and her daughter solely from her business.

Maria has big goals. Maria wants to continue taking courses in marketing and business skills to grow her skillset and eventually open her own cafe that is solely hers to sell her baked goods. She feels like USAID and CRS gave her the foundational knowledge and resources to not only open the business but to continue operations beyond the support of the CLD project.

