

FINAL EVALUATION
MUJERES
A.V.E.
PILOT STAGE

MUJERES A.V.E.




Final Evaluation - Mujeres A.V.E. - Pilot Stage

Executive Summary

- From December 2021 to January 2022, Mujeres A.V.E.'s final evaluation took place, with the purpose of identifying and analyzing its main impact areas and results. The evaluation was carried out under a qualitative, participatory and comprehensive methodology.
- The evaluation was based on data collection (structured and unstructured) and analysis under a gender, intercultural and territorial approach.
- The process was carried out at two key moments: on one hand, a cabinet analysis that consisted of reviewing existing material, results from previous evaluations, statistics and general information. Eighty folders and 305 documents were reviewed including reports, databases provided by SiKanda, the Mexican National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) and web pages. On the other hand, fieldwork information was gathered from interviews with key people in the project:

INTERVIEWS

- a) SiKanda staff (three in-depth interviews).
- b) Partners and other allies, such as the School of Social Economy of Oaxaca ECOOS and the Vicente Guerrero Educational Community Center (two in-depth interviews).
- c) Women participating in the project (six in-depth interviews and a focus group).
- d) Male relatives of participants (two in-depth interviews).



Most of this population lives in the Vicente Guerrero municipal agency.

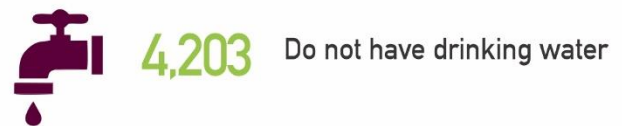
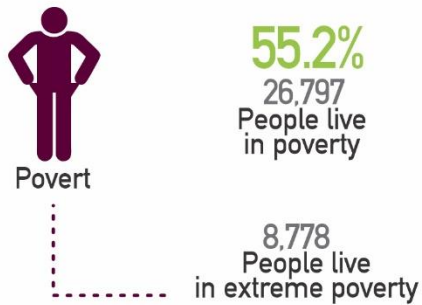
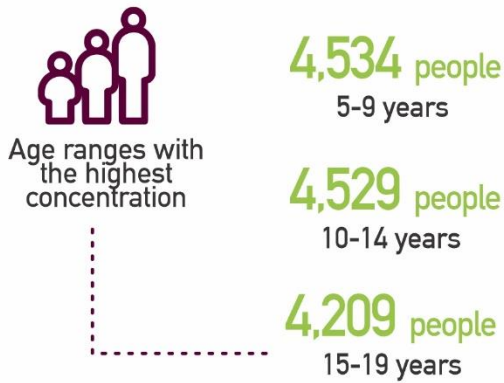
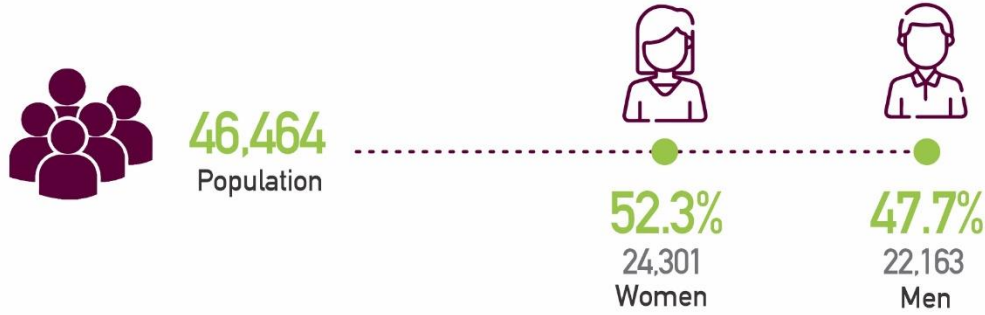
(National Institute of Statistics and Geography [INEGI], 2020)

General characteristics of the municipality of Villa de Zaachila



Mujeres A.V.E. currently takes place in Villa de Zaachila. This municipality is located in the Central Valleys region of the state of Oaxaca, 15 km south of the capital city. It is 54.86 km² wide, and is divided into: one municipal agency, three police agencies, a subdivision, ten boroughs and thirty neighborhoods.

**MUJERES
A.V.E. SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC DATA**



Most of this population lives in the Vicente Guerrero municipal agency. (National Institute of Statistics and Geography [INEGI], 2020).

MUJERES A.V.E.



METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES FOR MUJERES A.V.E. EVALUATION

Territorial Approach: Project Location

- From a territorial approach, the physical space does not represent only a piece of land to be owned. Rather, it is about considering this space as a container, where different interactions generate agreements and conflicts. It is where the natural, sociocultural, religious ecosystem, etc., determines its economic activities, but also the roles that each one plays in the society that lives within the territory.
- The municipality of Villa de Zaachila is an area that has grown from urban centers. The municipal dumpsite is located in this area, which has attracted migrants. The vast majority of its inhabitants are from the Mixteca, Coast and Isthmus regions.
- Although it seems that there is no community identity as it is traditionally known, it can be said that the Vicente Guerrero municipal agency has built its own, based on the different life stories and experiences of its residents, as well as some common and shared characteristics: exclusion, marginality, invisibility and stereotypes to which they have been subjected. Thus, in conflict situations where the counterpart is identified, unity is present as a defense mechanism.

Gender: an approach to women's labor and relationships

- The concept of gender is related to all aspects of the economic, social, political, cultural, daily and private lives of individuals; it determines characteristics and functions depending on the sex or the perception that society has of it.
- In the eastern area of Zaachila, gender roles are present and deeply marked, since many participants –in addition to caring for their families, working outside their homes and/or running their businesses – also partake in different activities,

**...gender roles
are present
and deeply
marked**

civil or religious, even in the local administration without remuneration. The different occupations of these women multiply, while men are exempt from participating in domestic work and childcare.

- At present, it can be said that in eastern Zaachila, and particularly in the Vicente Guerrero municipal agency, there are already at least two generations of residents. Although access to services has improved, changes have not been noticed as to stereotypes and gender roles, and this is noticeable in different life aspects of people who live in the agency.

**...there are
already at least
two generations
of residents**

Interculturality: regions, poverty and migration

- Interculturality implies thinking about diversity, particularly about the complexity that social relationships entail. This interculturality should not be understood as an exchange between people of different cultures and religions.
- People were initially attracted to eastern Zaachila by the different job opportunities generated by the municipal landfill, which receives more than 700 tons of waste daily from twenty municipalities of the region, particularly from the city of Oaxaca de Juárez. The first settlers worked as informal recyclers and had no formal education or training.
- A large number of people moved from their communities in search of better living conditions and for other reasons. They saw an opportunity to own property and settle down instead of paying rent. Other people bought land as a business opportunity, that is, to resell it when its price increased.

MUJERES AVE.



FINAL STAGE OF MUJERES A.V.E. PILOT PROJECT

- 2021 was a year shaped by a political, economic and social context, as an electoral process took place where municipal authorities, local and federal deputies were elected. A slow economic recovery, due to COVID-19, also caused some activities to be canceled or postponed.
- Eastern Zaachila is an area in which conflicts frequently arise between different power groups, for example, neighborhood leaders, motorcycle taxi associations and political parties.
- Over the past six months, there have been roadblocks, government office takeovers, marches, protests, and the landfill has been closed, which has led to the postponement of some training workshops or their suspension.
- Internal situations have also affected participants' daily lives, such as: lack of communication with partners/spouses, psychological, verbal and economic violence, the possibility of a breakup and/or divorce, difficulty in making agreements on domestic work with daughters and sons, stress due to work overload and the loss of relatives.

The SiKanda team worked to promote mental health among participants, as workshops on stress management skills and psychological support were provided. They also offered training on business skills, including making promotional videos and product photography with cell phone applications, in addition to time management, social networks, Mexican fiscal and tax systems and collaborative economies. The One-Stop-Shop was renamed "Espacio A.V.E." or AVE Space in English, as it is a central component of the program and a meeting place for women.

Participants' Profile

Based on Baseline + Evaluation registries, the following data was processed and analyzed (1).

Generalities: 114 registered women



Mujeres A.V.E. Groups or Cohorts

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
12-11%	9-8%	12-11%	16-14%	12-11%	8-7%	10-9%	10-9%	9-8%	15-13%
Not specified: 1-1%									

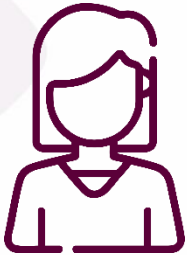
Profile

- **The fourth group or Cohort 4** had the highest number of participants (16).
- Of the **114 women registered** in the Mujeres A.V.E. training program, 50 women attended the courses continuously, with 68% completing the program as of January 2021 (Groups 9 and 10 were still undergoing training when this evaluation was conducted).
- The **average age of participants is 30-45 years**, representing 53.5% of all age groups.
- **50.4% of all participants have a partner**, regardless of marital status.
- It stands out that **34.8%** of the participants **have completed high school**.
- **76.5%** speak Spanish.
- The predominant indigenous language is **Zapotec with 10.4%**.
- **29.8%** of participants have on **average two children**.
- **4 out of 10 women (38.3%) receive government aid; 44.4% of participants are registered in the Bienestar Welfare Program.**
- 13.2% of participants have an **average monthly income** ranging from **1,000 to 3,000 pesos**.

⁽¹⁾Access link: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1nSxiRIq-6WA2OcJ8DOBH3aYhvrHx2z9ktX1LnUx_Tsk/edit

Regarding their businesses

Of the 114 registered women:



- **43.9%** of participants decided to start their own business **to contribute to the family income.**
- **31.6%** of women entrepreneurs keep a **record of their sales.**
- Only **16.7%** **separate their business records** from their personal ones (COVID-19 affected how they maintained records).
- **23.7%** of women **keep an inventory.**



- **19.1%** of women **save** part of their earnings.
- **20.2%** of participants have an average monthly income from their businesses ranging from **1,000 to 3,000 pesos.**
- **24.6%** of women report **monthly earnings** from their business of **less than 1,000 pesos**, while **15.8%** have a utility that goes from **1,000 to 3,000 pesos.**



- Only **8.8%** of women **have unpaid assistants in their businesses.**
- It stands out that, on average, **2.6%** of businesses **employ at least one assistant** per week.



- **19.3%** of women save part of their earnings, **the average monthly savings** is one thousand pesos.
- **33.3%** of women **have access to some type of credit** with different institutions.

Confidence in making business decisions



- **23.7%** of women entrepreneurs **make important decisions** regarding their business **with a family member**, partner or friend.
- **15.8%** of participants set product and service prices by themselves.
- **22.8%** of women **feel confident** when dealing with clients and providers.



- **23.7%** of women **feel supported** while running their business (2).
- **80.8%** of women **perceive an increase in profits** in their businesses.



- **100%** of interviewees stated that **they felt that their well-being had increased** as a result of their participation in the program as follows:
 - They felt more confident, secure and safe.
 - They felt as members of a group
 - They had learned to better interact with people
- **100%** of women interviewed indicated that they use WhatsApp as a sales tool, while **12%** additionally use Facebook.

(2) Help with domestic chores, economic aid, assistance with marketing tools and emotional support to mention a few.

MUJERES A.V.E.



MUJERES A.V.E. IMPACTS AND RESULTS

Highlights

A diagnosis was carried out prior to the implementation phase, which made it possible to have an understanding of the area and its context.

The project is aligned with two goals of the 2030 Agenda: Goal 5, Gender Equality and Goal 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth. This set the guidelines for the development of its training program along with a social and solidarity economy approach.



- From its inception, the program followed the “GET Ahead: Gender and Entrepreneurship” methodology by the International Labor Organization (ILO).
- The implementing team and allies (ECOOS) received prior training by Value for Women (Cherie Blair Foundation for Women - CBFW) in coordination with the Women's Entrepreneurship Development (WED) program of the ILO.
- Workshops and training sessions were catered for female participants on topics identified during evaluations and other meetings.

A comprehensive approach was set from the start, which reflects in the different partnerships with institutions and NGOs that were established in order to strengthen participants’ businesses and provide support for those with specific needs (health issues, personal matters and so forth). Alliances were solidified with organizations such as the Vicente Guerrero Educational Community Center, the Church of Santa Cecilia (Catholic Church), the Municipal Agency, the Santa Cecilia School of Musical Initiation, Aids Healthcare Foundation (AHF) Oaxaca, National Network of Indigenous Lawyers (RAI), Rosario Castellanos Women's Study Group (GES Mujer), Oaxaca en una caja®,

Hospital del Pueblo "Anna Seethaler" AC, Biodent Dental Clinic, Oaxaca Activa, Corazón Rosa AC, School of Social Economy (ECOOS), OXFAM and Fomento Social Banamex, in addition to strategic collaborative processes with government offices including the Oaxaca State Welfare Secretariat (SEBIEN), the State Institute for Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness and the Oaxacan Women's Secretariat.

- Frequent monitoring and evaluation methods were carried out by the SiKanda team (for example participatory evaluations at the end of each training cycle with the GET Ahead methodology). Activity reports were also elaborated on a quarterly basis, in which both challenges and coping strategies were detailed.
- The implementing team showed empathy towards participants and commitment to the program, by adapting the GET Ahead methodology into new formats and exercises for an easier understanding.
- Staff was hired for childcare services during training and other workshops.
- The program demonstrated flexibility, response capacity and adapted in face of the pandemic and the crisis derived from COVID-19:

- ✓ **It promoted the usage of ICTs** (Information and Communication Technologies) among participants by creating and implementing tools for Internet sales including short video creation courses, product photography and cell phone management; as well as savings methods both for personal and business purposes.
- ✓ **The implementing team monitored and provided accompaniment to participants via follow-up calls, SMS messages and WhatsApp text messages** when in-person activities ceased.
- ✓ **Emotional support was also considered and the mental health of participants became a priority; courses and psychological counseling were provided free of charge.**

- The Mujeres A.V.E. network was strengthened, in addition to the accompaniment provided to its Assembly and committees.
- The operating team responded positively to recommendations suggested by the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, the Trafigura Foundation, and external evaluations. Evidence shows that each one was reviewed and analyzed to later be implemented and/or integrated into the program.
- Mujeres A.V.E.'s duration (3 years) guaranteed a greater probability of success and positive impact on participants' lives and entourages. This also reduced learning costs and relevant experience was gained.

Impact on participants' lives

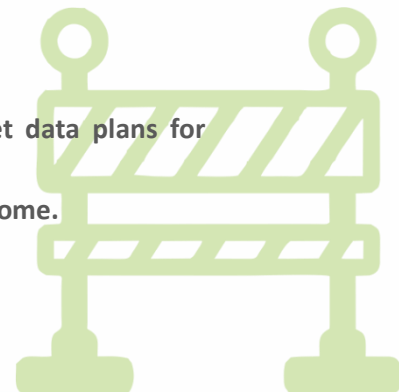
- One of the core objectives of the Mujeres A.V.E. program is its focus on strengthening micro-businesses, however, its different dynamics have also impacted women's lives and their communities.
- Women's confidence and organizational capacity have been fostered through fairs and other activities, and this in turn has enabled them to access new markets.
- The program has witnessed remarkable coping mechanisms employed by participants during times of crisis (such as the pandemic), while forging resilience and making adaptations to their businesses. Innovative ways in promoting their businesses have been used, such as social media, specifically WhatsApp and Facebook. They have also participated in virtual fairs and are now accepting new forms of payment.
- Their participation in the program has allowed them to value their own businesses and the work they perform in other aspects of life.
- The program has provided them with financial tools to manage their businesses: most women recognize that they had little or no knowledge on the subject. They also shared that they did not know how to apply them to their businesses before joining the training program.

- Participants have also strengthened their organizational abilities, as reflected by the formation of their Assembly. On their own accord, each committee was elected and new presidents were elected.
- Mujeres A.V.E. members show a deep appreciation towards the program. They feel thankful for mobile credit, food kits and emotional support provided by the SiKanda team. At present, they show greater willingness to continue working with the program and improve their businesses, thus experiencing an increase in their income.
- Women consider Espacio A.V.E. a place of convergence with other women, a place where they can not only share what they have learned on business matters, but also life experiences and changes in everyday dynamics as a result of enrolling in Mujeres A.V.E.
- • 100% of interviewees stated that they felt that their emotional and economic well-being had augmented as a direct result of their participation in the program.
- • 80% of interviewees indicated that their business sales had increased by approximately 39% since joining Mujeres A.V.E.
- • The average monthly income of participants derived from business sales equals 4,323 Mexican pesos, with profits of 2,143.08 pesos.
- • Regarding the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), 100% of the women interviewed mentioned using WhatsApp as a sales tool, while 12% additionally use Facebook.

Areas with potential for further development

- The development of a medium-term goal for the project, taking into consideration the context in which the program is implemented.
- Furthering advances that women have had, for example establishing cooperatives and other forms of association and group work, and a tracking system.
- Its focus on gender, only prioritizing women and children, does not involve partners, which could generate violence against women, as they achieve financial and economic independence. Interculturality, interculturality and territoriality still need to be considered.

- Participation in fairs must be reoriented. Market segmentation and audience targeting must be performed before registering for new fairs as they not only serve as a showcase of products or services, but also as a sales venue.
- Updating all documents, databases and reports presents work in excess. It is difficult to access data quickly and makes document review less efficient. Lack of systematization.
- Limited staff for organization and systematization tasks, due to the number of documents and reports generated and requested by donors, is noticeable. The Mujeres A.V.E. seems to be overwhelmed by this work load.
- A methodological scheme is required for the next stages of the program. With this form of planning, women could take off their businesses and generate profits (profitability). **If the current trend continues, there is a risk of Mujeres A.V.E. becoming a welfare program.**
- The low academic and/or literacy rates of some participants limits the correct application of business management concepts, like setting fair prices for their products and/or services.
- The need to share problems that are not directly related to the business but that do have an effect on it.
- The lack of a business vision, despite the fact that most interviewees mentioned considering owning and managing their businesses in the long term. It is suggested to further develop products or services in demand, or that have a competitive advantage.
- The coronavirus pandemic increased the visibility of the following life situations and aspects:
 - **Participants' needs, priority was given to the economic situation and household management such as childcare duties.**
 - **Limited internet access**
 - **Little knowledge of social media.**
 - **Lack of phone credit**
 - **The extended use of mobiles and Internet data plans for online school lessons.**
 - **Physical, verbal and economic violence at home.**
 - **Loss of family members.**
 - **Couple separation / divorce**



Finally, it is important to consider the following factors that may alter the Mujeres A.V.E. program in the eastern side of Zaachila:

- **The economic situation in the area, which is worsening with the pandemic.**
- **The latent conflict over the landfill, which is undergoing expansion plans, and the instrumental use of poverty, women and lack of services for political ends.**
- **The pandemic caused by COVID-19 and its variants; now-a-days, there are few available vaccines for youth and children worldwide.**



MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Consolidating and validating Mujeres A.V.E. own methodology with new cohorts. A certification procedure can be requested, which can lead to the implementation of this training curriculum in other areas and communities.
2. Design or redesign a methodological scheme for the future development of the program, which would allow for the advancement and/or autonomy of previous groups of women who have participated in the program. It can be done in two stages.

For the first stage, which includes the current 36 hours of training, the following should be considered:



- a. **Implementation of work strategies** with engaging men (partners and relatives of participants) and training sessions on masculinities and genders.
- b. **Create networks by types of businesses, with the support and accompaniment of women** from previous groups and those that are new to the program. Women within each network could organize and set up childcare routines, could tend to each other's businesses and promote their goods or services conjointly
- c. Women from previous Mujeres A.V.E.'s groups could teach others on topics such as cooking, confectionery, weaving, embroidery, etc. Together, they could participate in workshops about self-esteem and public speaking. By this, they could put into practice what they have learned.
- d. **New fairs and markets.** The Mujeres A.V.E.'s team can continue inviting more women to participate as a way to position their products in different markets, increase their sales and make a profit, whilst empowering them.

For the second stage, this evaluation proposes to first identify the businesses with the greatest progress achieved during the previous stage and to focus on their consolidation, using strategies and techniques to make them more profitable. It is important to prioritize quality over quantity.

Therefore, the implementing team should:

- a. **Strengthen training in finances** and determine financial projections of the different businesses.
 - b. **Continue advertising fairs among the group and inviting women to participate in other events** outside the state and the country to better position their products in different markets, increase their sales and profits, as they empower them.
 - c. **Reach other markets** through some virtual platforms such as Mercado Libre, Amazon, etc.
3. Add a label and a QR code that would identify a Mujeres A.V.E. product as a socially-responsible item, so that consumers know its place of origin, context and story behind it.
 4. Implement the program in other areas within the same municipality with similar poverty conditions and gender-based violence alerts, with the purpose of comparing and contrasting impacts and results from different perspectives: pandemic, inflation rates and economic recovery.
 5. Hire personnel for data collection, systematization and monitoring.
 6. Continuously work for the Mujeres A.V.E. program to effectively monitor its components, but also to minimize learning costs involved in training new staff.
 7. Strengthen relationships with key actors in the area.

