

# “For Such a Time as This”

## Project Proposal

April 13, 2020



Urban Mosaic's Responds  
to the Coronavirus

## What is Coming towards Us

In many urban poor areas of Mexico City and Barranquilla, Colombia, the prognosis of what COVID-19 could unleash is bleak: many families do not have access to running water, their mobility in overcrowded public transport systems is complicated, there is little or no adequate waste management, lack of basic services and poor housing impact most, the vast majority have no access to clean water or a hospital bed should they fall critically ill, and most work in the informal economy, which means there are no safety nets to help them in the financial crisis. UN Habitat confirms this assessment: “The pandemic will hit the most vulnerable people hardest, many of them living in urban slums and informal settlements.”<sup>i</sup> United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock, agrees: “If we leave coronavirus to spread freely in these places, we would be placing millions at high risk, whole regions will be tipped into chaos and the virus will have the opportunity to circle back around the globe.”<sup>ii</sup> We’re hoping for the best, but have been preparing for the worst.

## What we’ve done in Phase 1 of the Pandemic

**What we’ve done so far:** Over the past weeks we have worked hard to prepare ourselves and develop a preventative response. We formed people into small organized units, including in virtual form using WhatsApp, via our health clubs, youth clubs, citizen committees and faith communities. Together we handed out close to 20,000 flyers and 11,000 soaps, directly speaking to over 3,000 families, encouraging people to take COVID-19 seriously, and identifying homes with people with preconditions and older than 65. We also ran short workshops for kids, youth and mothers, in the streets of our communities, in small groups of 10 or less, with all protective measures that the WHO recommends, in place. These mobile workshops, moved from street to street, educating participants on the reality of the Coronavirus, how to recognize the signs of the disease, participate in community tracing to prevent the spread of the disease, develop emotional resiliency, and prepare to be ready to facilitate home care and self-quarantine, as much as possible. Since Mexico entered Phase 2, we no longer conducted such workshops.



Parallel to this, we equipped a total of 62 churches (between Mexico and Colombia), to make a transition from public services to start small home groups and home churches. We’ve developed and given them very practical materials and guidelines to run these (virtual) “Shalom Groups” (as we call them) and train home group leaders. As of now a total of 181 “Shalom Groups” have already been established, with a total of 2,000 participants. More will be launched in coming days. We expect that 200 or more virtual “Shalom groups”/home groups will be established, which will mostly meet in WhatsApp groups or in family units. Finally, dozens of pastors/community leaders have already shown signs of severe economic distress, which has compelled to give away generous food baskets to 100 distressed leaders and pastors for one month. We are in conversations now with others to help safeguard the food security of at least 200 leaders for three months.

## What we’ve been doing in Phase 2 of the Pandemic

**ACCESS TO WATER:** According to UN Habitat, installation of adequate handwashing stations in informal urban settlements is a critical component to combat the contagion, given that many there have no access to clean water. Correspondingly, Urban Mosaic has purchased 100 large water tanks with a capacity to store 290 gallons each. We are in the process of installing them in 100 different locations in urban-poor communities on the east side of Mexico City. These water tanks will be supervised by water committees we’ve formed, in conjunction with participating churches and citizen groups. We have already secured an agreement from the Water Department of the municipality of Los Reyes la Paz and the State of Mexico to regularly refill these tanks in order to provide continued access to sufficient water to populations living in the most vulnerable conditions. 7,500 vulnerable families will be directly benefited, allowing them to get access to water for handwashing and personal hygiene purposes.



**INCREASING FOOD SECURITY:** The economic impact of the pandemic will be devastating for many residents, including our community leaders, who will or are already losing work, and many church pastors who are already having a hard time receiving tithes and offerings. To mitigate this devastating impact for leaders who have demonstrated their commitment to their communities, we hope to distribute for the first 2-3 months monthly food baskets to 250 community leaders and their families. Each food basket will cost us \$50 USD per month. In May, 150 leaders will receive a unit of 5 *laying hens* each, so they can count on regular egg production by placing the hens in their patios or small backyards. An additional 75 leaders will receive a unit of *one male plus three female rabbits* each, to start rabbit meat production for self-consumption. Finally, we will help 100 leaders start *small vegetable gardens* in their patios or rooftop for self-consumption, in addition to cultivating two community vegetable gardens (roughly 1,400m<sup>2</sup> of space), sow corn and beans on 3 ha of land we've been given during this coming growing season, while also starting with fish production of 6,000 fish, in a functioning fishpond we've been loaned for free. In total, 325 key leaders and their families will benefit from this food security program that will be fully producing two-three months from now. Once the laying hens, rabbit units, chicken farms, community gardens, fish hatchery and farmland start producing, we expect that up to 500 leaders and their families in our network will benefit within three to four months. While food security is not our core business, we have been able to get professional advice and have people who know how to run the small chicken farms, rabbit production, upkeep of laying hens, fish hatchery, vegetable gardens and cultivation of the farmland.



**ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE:** In the last week, we donated personal protection equipment (400 high security masks and 8,000 face masks), surface disinfectant (35 liters) and antibacterial gel (500 liters) to six hospitals and health centers in the eastern region of Mexico City, which had received almost no protective materials from the government. In addition, our small health center in one of our communities is the only health care provider in an area of over 15,000 people. While we will not be able to provide extensive health care during the upcoming health crisis, we are working very hard to complete construction of our fairly large community/health center (putting in windows, doors, indoor plumbing, toilets etc.) to offer it during the contingency as a possible shelter alternative or community health center. We are in the process of stocking the community/health center with basic medicines (paracetamol, hand sanitizer and honey-based cough medicine), and prevention supplies, in order to attend to our vulnerable population when needed.



**VIDEO PRODUCTION & CREATION OF AN ONLINE PLATFORM FOR OUR "SHALOM GROUPS:** In this difficult time ahead, we need to provide hope-filled leadership and messaging, based in sound theology, to the communities and churches we serve, both in Mexico and Colombia. Much material is available online - some good and a lot quite terrible - with bad theology dominating many feeds that are circulating among our local churches. We have already formed 181 (virtual) "Shalom Groups", we' While most people don't have access to streaming internet in the communities we serve, the majority have access to smart phones and WhatsApp, which we will use extensively to reach our eventual network of over 200+ "Shalom Groups". We are now preparing to launch a well-organized and user-friendly online platform to help participating churches and "Shalom Groups" access pertinent and very practical multimedia and written materials that we're developing to grow a "culture of Shalom", based in love of God, love of self and love of neighbor. Our hope is that this platform will become a reference point for many churches and home groups in our region, helping them walk through this emotional, family, economic and health crisis, not with panic, but in a spirit of practical love of neighbor, where the "Shalom Groups", organized in WhatsApp groups, become the primary units to care for those vulnerable in their streets. Doing so, will help form the basis for more churches practically seeking the Shalom of their own communities, even in this upcoming time of great pain and difficulty. Through this online platform, we've also launched a prayer campaign, where by now 28 organizations from 7 countries with over 400 churches are actively participating to pray Psalm 91 during 91 days.



## What will be doing in Phase 3 of the Pandemic

**MICRO-BUSINESSES TO ACTIVATE THE LOCAL ECONOMY:** We are in the process of elaborating business plans for 5-10 types of micro-businesses that will function during this time of pandemic, with the purpose of creating franchise-type businesses that can be carried out in different locations of the urban poor communities where we work. Our goal is to help launch a minimum of 75 micro-businesses, providing seed capital, to reactivate the local economy, while training and helping the micro-businesses in these vulnerable areas to run their businesses efficiently and creatively. The seed capital is not a donation but an interest-free loan that has to be returned after 6 months to start 75 more businesses.

**HOUSING CONSTRUCTION:** We have just signed a collaboration agreement with Habitat for Humanity A.C. for the construction and improvement of 150 housing units in the municipalities of Chalco, Los Reyes la Paz and Texcoco, on Mexico City's east side. Habitat will be in charge of the financing and technical assistance for the construction of the houses, while Urban Mosaic will focus on the social organization and (self)-construction process of these 150 houses. The goal is not only to support 150 families in vulnerable conditions to obtain a home, but also to reactivate the local economy by hiring almost 500 construction workers, who will have a job and will be able to feed their families.

## Costs of Project

Total project cost will come to \$158,000 USD. We already secured \$88,000 USD for this project; which means that we only need to raise an additional \$70,000 USD to meet all of the projected project goals.

Concept	Cost
Access to Water	
○ Purchase & Installation of 100 Water Tanks	\$8,000
○ Installation of 100 Hand-Washing Stations	\$8,000
Increasing Food Security	
○ Food Baskets for 250 leaders for 2 months	\$25,000
○ 150 Units of Laying Hens (each unit has five hens)	\$7,500
○ 75 Units of Rabbits (each unit has a buck and three does)	\$7,500
○ 100 Units of Vegetable Gardens	\$5,000
○ 2 small chicken farms for egg and poultry production	\$5,000
○ 2 community vegetable gardens	\$4,000
○ 1 small fish farm for fish production	\$4,000
○ Farming of 3 ha of land (corn and bean production)	\$4,500
Access to Basic Health Care	
○ Complete Basic Construction and Equipping of Community Center	\$6,500
○ Purchase of Basic Medication	\$7,000
○ Purchase of Protective Equipment (gloves, masks, sanitizer, gowns etc.)	\$3,000
Video Production & Creation of an Online Platform	
○ Creation of Online Platform	\$1,500
○ Creation of Multimedia Content	\$1,500
Micro-Businesses to Activate Local Economy	
○ Seed Capital for 75 Micro-Businesses	\$20,000
○ Technical Assistance, Training and Coaching for Micro-Businesses	\$5,000
Housing Construction	
○ Supervision of (Self-)Construction of 150 Homes	\$15,000
Management Cost	
○ Project Management	\$20,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$158,000</b>



## Conclusion

We thank anyone who would be willing to participate in this project to join hands with us, by helping us purchase the water tanks to allow 7,500 vulnerable families (35,000 people) to have water for hand-washing and basic personal hygiene, increase food security for 500 leaders and their families (benefitting 2,500 people), provide access to very basic health care to the most vulnerable people in need, and create an online platform that will initially serve over 60 churches and more than 200 "Shalom Groups"/home groups, 12 non-profit organizations and over 100 citizen committees and health clubs in our network in Colombia and Mexico, launch 75 micro businesses and help build 150 new homes, providing jobs to 500 construction workers during three months, we have to act very fast, since our window of opportunity is shrinking daily to provide these goods to people. Thank you for considering joining us in this task!

In the weeks and months ahead, we will keep you updated, including how we hope to respond to the already present epidemic of (domestic) violence in our countries, that will only grow in coming months, as people's stress levels will increase due to home confinement and economic hardships. Children, in particular, are at greater risk of exploitation, violence and abuse when schools are closed, jobs are lost and movement is restricted. Thanks for your prayers as we seek to be salt and light and bearers of hope in our fragile cities in Mexico and Colombia.

## Contact Information

- For MORE INFORMATION, please contact David Jones: [david.jones@urbanmosaic.net](mailto:david.jones@urbanmosaic.net)
- To GIVE ONLINE, go to <https://urbanmosaic.net/covidresponse/> and follow the instructions.
- To donate by CHECK OR MONEY ORDER, payable to Urban Transformation International, PO Box 205, Wheaton, IL 60187.

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> <http://onuhabitat.org.mx/index.php/onu-habitat-covid-19>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1060222>

