Research Project Description: Improving Monitoring and Evaluation Techniques for SolCom Dominican Republic

Site: Barahona and surrounding villages, Dominican Republic

Research Topic: Monitoring and Evaluation

Partner Organization: Social Entrepreneur Corps and Soluciones Comunitarias, RD

Description of SEC: Social Entrepreneur Corps leads dynamic impact and immersion programs in Latin America. The mission of Social Entrepreneur Corps is to provide you with the knowledge, skills and support necessary to empower marginalized individuals, families and communities. You gain invaluable leadership and professional development experience through foundational training on social entrepreneurship and community consulting, working on high-impact social innovation projects and experiencing deep cultural immersion in local communities.

Description of community partner: Soluciones Comunitarias (SolCom) designs and implements innovative, practical, efficient and effective entrepreneurial and educational solutions with and for our constituents in rural, developing world communities. In 2004, SolCom was established as a Guatemalan owned and operated social enterprise, run by local constituents who have “risen through the ranks” as leaders. SolCom has since branched out to several countries throughout Latin America, including the Dominican Republic. Since starting in one community in rural Guatemala over 10 years ago, SolCom has created over $12,000,000 of net economic impact (new earnings + productivity gains + cost savings) in over 2,500 communities in five countries. Conservatively over 150,000 people have directly benefitted from their efforts.

Social issue: Solcomb offers community members a variety of informed opportunities to choose what they believe is most important for them. All of these opportunities result in a positive economic, health, energy and water impact. And many of the social innovations they offer as an organization have multiple benefits. In short, community members have a “menu” of options to choose from that is based on their personal needs and wants. SolCom believes opportunity and choice is critical to achieve client-focused outcomes. This menu ranges from access to empathetic job opportunities to the opportunity to purchase a cook stove, solar lamp, pair of glasses or water filter to the chance to start a community bank to the ability to access training, education and consulting.
Impact of project on the community (Community engagement): Research into current initiatives and projects will directly impact the organization’s outreach and community development efforts in towns and villages centered around the city of Barahona, in the southern region of the Dominican Republic.

Research project description: SolCom is seeking a Research and Evaluation Intern to assist in the introduction, scaling and evaluation of a new mobile-based platform for real-time assessments of community-based projects. The technology, based on a mobile platform called Commcare (www.commcarehq.org) has the potential to radically improve the local team’s effectiveness, which is currently using an all-paper system of data collection.

Methodology: The research will likely include quantitative and qualitative methods. The intern will partner directly with the Country Director in the design and implementation of an evaluation plan as the local team introduces the new technology during the summer, 2017. Potential techniques include interviews, surveys, focus groups and relevant literature review in several satellite communities around the city of Barahona.

Student profile: Applicants should have experience or education in quantitative and qualitative analysis methods. Experience living and working in the Dominican Republic is recommended but not required. Advanced Spanish is strongly preferred.