



COVID-19: VOICES FROM MEXICO



In face of the COVID-19 pandemic, Scort has reached out to Young Coaches all over the world to give them a platform to share their experiences and challenges.

Mexico, 09. June 2020

Earlier this year, the FCSA certified 41 Young Coaches who work with children from both the refugee and Mexican population. As in many other countries, the national government has imposed strict measures and most activities have been suspended. This forces the Young Coaches to adapt their work to the new circumstances.

“The big problem I have is, that the youth do not have access to internet - sometimes not even to a phone”, Eulises explains. He works as a sports coordinator for the Refugee Education Trust (RET) in Tapachula at the Southern border of Mexico. After sending videos with home-activities to children, Eulises received barely any reactions. Curious as to why, he contacted them and found out that they simply cannot afford data. But instead of giving up, he is now sending written instructions via message or even drops off printed out material when he gets a chance. This way, the information and activities become available to most children he usually works with.

Fernanda, a regional coordinator for Fútbol Más at the Northern border in Tijuana, also had to find other ways to get in touch with the kids from her community. She supports her organisation in creating and providing nationwide videos and tutorials on their social media and is live-streaming activities into shelters.

Daniela and her Peer Young Coach Omar work for CAFEMIN in one of these shelters in Mexico City. For them, it is the opposite to Eulises’ and Fernanda’s situation: Due to the lockdown, no one except staff can leave nor enter the shelter. While this brings its own set of problems, it also means that Daniela and Omar have access to the population living there, including families and children. Before the lockdown, external organisations such as Proyecto Cantera, where other Young Coaches work, would come to deliver activities. Now, Omar, Daniela and their co-workers had to be creative in finding solutions: “We use a big screen that we have in the patio and then we create a direct internet connection and like this we can live-stream activities”.



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But this is not all: They have also started to involve the youth staying at the shelter in running activities. From supporting children with schoolwork to organising a dance or other sports activities, the young adults are a great support for the staff. Additionally, receiving responsibilities and being given a purpose during their time of transit is benefiting the youths themselves.

However, providing activities to children is a secondary concern for many. In Tapachula, the borders are closed and many asylum seekers and refugees have lost their jobs in the informal sector, meaning they cannot earn any money to support their families.



© Daniela & Omar: Live-streamed activity



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With most of the shelters being closed, for many this results in a lack of housing and a lack of food on the table. In response to this, UNHCR, with support from RET, is providing financial help to a limited number of asylum seekers so they could rent their own spaces, buy food and better protect themselves from the risks of getting COVID-19. Additionally, asylum hearings have been postponed and the status of many remains uncertain. “This creates a feeling of uncertainty for the families trying to make a living in Mexico, a feeling that translates onto the children”, Young Coach Fernanda says. As a development psychologist,

she also worries about the children’s situation at home: working in vulnerable communities, she has encountered domestic violence in the past. She fears that “now there is a higher probability of that happening. For many children in that community, school has been an escape. But now they spend more time at home, with their aggressors in the same house”.

At the same time, however, Fernanda also experiences an extraordinary amount of solidarity. Residents in communities are helping each other out where they can and she

tells a story of a child who wanted to sell his toys to help his mother buy food, but that a neighbour stepped in to support the family while helping the child to keep its toys.

This solidarity also shows in Tapachula: to spread more positivity in a time where most news are worrisome, in partnership with UNHCR, RET has started a campaign called “cosas positivas” – positive things. It encourages the families RET works with to create a positive message in any form they like – cartoon, card, message – and to share it amongst them. By focusing on positive things, Eulises hopes to keep everyone’s spirit up.



© Fernanda: Online activities from Fútbol Más



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The CAFEMIN team also wants to bring a little joy to the community in the shelter: As the residents are missing the little things like going to the shop and buying their favourite sweets, the team opened up a little store inside the shelter, where they can find these things – small actions that can go a long way!

We thank all our Young Coaches for their ongoing commitment and work during this time! #TogetherWeInspire

For more information on the project in Mexico: [click here](#).



© Daniela & Omar: Activities at the shelter