

2021 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT:

VISION FOR VULNERABLE YOUTH INITIATIVE

The *Vision for Vulnerable Youth Initiative* is a program focused on increasing the social agency and economic development of teens and young adults in Central and South America. World Vision works with young people aged 14–29 who are both in and out of school using the Youth Ready curriculum—a holistic, multi-sectoral course that brings social, emotional and values-based learning together with life skills and literacy training.

Through the Youth Ready training, participants develop social, emotional, cognitive and communication skills that help with the development of their livelihoods. The ultimate outcome is empowered youth who are equipped to be engaged, productive citizens.

Running from 2019–2023, the *Vision for Vulnerable Youth Initiative* is underway in seven countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia and Ecuador.



Project participants in Ecuador received food kits to help their families through the pandemic.

Progress in 2021

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we've made changes in the way we teach the Youth Ready curriculum. In 2021, we conducted training using both traditional face-to-face methods as well as a hybrid approach—combining face-to-face and virtual teaching using tools like Google Classroom, Google Meet and WhatsApp.

Participants worked through immense challenges in 2021—not just related to the pandemic, but also because of hurricanes and political or economic instability in some regions. Even so, ambitious, motivated youth can do great things. We've seen this as they develop life plans and engage in community projects, going far beyond themselves to understand and meet the needs in their neighbourhoods.

In fiscal year 2021:

- 3,827 participants were involved in the program, including 2,401 adolescent girls and young women.
- 1,619 youth (1,042 female) gave back to their neighbourhoods by participating in 90 community projects, which benefitted 22,040 people in total.
- 994 youth (720 female) participated in vocational and technical courses.
- 138 Youth Ready facilitators (92 female) received training.
- 55 partnerships were signed with governments, businesses and foundations, providing youth with opportunities for training, business support and higher education.

Participants who join Youth Ready move through the curriculum in two phases. During the second phase, they choose one of three “pathways” to focus their training—entrepreneurship, education or employment. All three pathways experienced roadblocks this year, requiring extra work and problem solving by the youth, staff and partners.

- The 324 participants in the **employment** pathway experienced the most challenges, as the pandemic and hurricanes that hit Central America brought severe repercussions to the labour market.
- For the 1,130 youth in the **education** pathway, pandemic-related school closures and limited higher education options created difficulties. (Even so, education remains as the program’s most chosen pathway, as young people see the benefits of studying for their long-term success.)
- Participants in **entrepreneurship** experienced the fewest obstacles, with the 534 participants finding that a successful small business can quickly improve their lives, particularly when formal job opportunities are scarce.

Of the phase 2 participants, 62% have managed to secure an opportunity in their chosen pathway, and our project staff continue supporting the others to find solutions that suit their goals.

Focus on gender

In 2021, **63% of the Youth Ready participants were female**, including 2,401 adolescent girls and young women. This strong female involvement is the result of a concerted effort by Youth Ready staff encouraging and empowering young women to join, while also ensuring men are part of the conversation.

- **In Honduras**, an agreement between World Vision and a government program for women called Ciudad Mujer allowed 85 young women to join Youth Ready and register in a technical beauty course, providing vocational training in nail art and hairdressing. Because of their involvement in Ciudad Mujer they also received access to ongoing health services including cervical screenings, dental treatment and counselling.
- **In Colombia**, 48% of the project participants engaged in gender awareness activities and “gender-sensitive opportunities” during guidance counselling and vocational training. More young men joined the program this year, enriching the discussions between both women and men as they expanded their understanding of gender roles.

A gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) review of the Youth Ready curriculum and its online components is planned, as we continue to improve the program’s implementation.

Young women in Honduras received technical training in nail art and hair dressing thanks to a partnership between World Vision and Ciudad Mujer, a government program.





ANTHONY'S BRACELET BUSINESS FORMS A LINK TO HIS FUTURE

The pandemic hit Anthony, 19, and his family particularly hard. Things were tough before the pandemic—their neighbourhood in La Libertad, Peru has a complete lack of potable water, for example—but when COVID-19 arrived, Anthony's father lost his job. Anthony gave up his dream of attending university and started scrambling for temporary work alongside his parents, just to cover their basic needs.

When Anthony learned about World Vision's *Vision for Vulnerable Youth Initiative* on social media, he joined immediately, and quickly learned two things: "I realized that many young people like me wanted to do great things, but the pandemic and the lack of money made it complicated," he says. Perhaps more importantly, Anthony came to believe that there were bigger dreams for him than temporary work.

"That's how the idea was born of having a business in something I like," he says.

With training and seed capital from World Vision, Anthony gained confidence to launch a bracelet-making business and began selling the jewelry online so his market could extend beyond his neighbourhood.

"With the seed money, I was able to buy materials to make more elaborate products that I worked on with my mom," he explains.

The profits, some of which have come from large group orders, help to cover home expenses for Anthony's family, and because he has a savings fund, the dream of university is back on the table—he plans to study Communication Sciences.

"I am very grateful to the project," says Anthony, "for all the help it has given my family."



Anthony's parents are supportive of his new business. His mom has joined the venture and helps him create the bracelets.