

Local Food Production as response to COVID-19



The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted many provincial supply chains impacting the availability of fresh food in some of our local communities. In response to this, we worked with these communities to develop the Family Food Production Units (UPAFs) initiative.

We identified with our communities that helping to increase food independence by implementing sustainable agricultural practices would create shared value. We created an alliance with the National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA) to assist with building the UPAFs at the homes of the families who volunteered to be involved in the project. Each participating family received the materials, seeds and support needed to build these structures.

Strategic alignment to



Shared Value Pillar

Natural resources and local production



Direct Contribution



Indirect Contribution



For the initiatives generated under the United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan, Orocobre has followed the guidelines proposed by the Food and Agriculture Organisation, contributing to the following targets related to SDG 2:

1. Meet the immediate food needs of their vulnerable populations
2. Support smallholder farmers' ability to increase food production

Background

In the los Andes area of the *Puna* region of North-West Argentina, communities are very geographically isolated. The people who live in this region participate in small-scale agriculture and livestock farming, and production of handicrafts. Most production is intended for family consumption with only some excess sold to generate income. In the context of COVID-19, this isolation became more pronounced as families were unable to obtain supplies in the closest towns. These restrictions identified a need for some community members to start producing their own fresh food.

Proposal

The purpose of this initiative was to meet the basic needs for food safety and economic and social development of families, by building greenhouses made with mud brick structures and polycarbonate roofing sheets, called **UPAFs (Family Food Production Units)**. These small greenhouses allow the growth of agricultural crops under controlled conditions, regardless of the typical low temperatures experienced in the *Puna*. By utilising the UPAFs, each family can grow quality produce year-round. Many of the community members who participated in this initiative were already participating in an existing Orocobre community development program called "[Raising Recycled Walls](#)", where they learned technical skills relating to safe and sustainable construction.

The first UPAFs were constructed in the communities of **Coranzulí, Huancar and Susques**. We aim to replicate the model used in these locations for the remaining local communities surrounding our Olaroz Lithium Facility. We have identified short-term outcomes of this project that include an increase and diversification of local food production that helps mitigate the shortage of food due to COVID-19 supply chain impacts. The potential for increased community resilience in the longer term has also been identified.



Barriers faced: access to communities

The strict lockdowns in place in many of these communities has made access very difficult. This added additional complications for the delivery of supplies and construction materials for the UPAFs. We implemented our COVID-19 Bio-security protocols to develop strategies to address these problems. This included providing training, technical assistance, and follow-up for each of the community groups. Our Shared Value team maintained ongoing communication with the representatives of each community and despite difficulties, construction of greenhouses and the first plantings were completed.

Partnerships

Communication between Orocobre and the communities has been essential for the development of the program. Our Shared Value team managed the strategic partnerships that enabled the Project to be launched. Stakeholders involved included:

- A community contact person who provided training on growing crops in greenhouses.
- The beneficiaries in the community who carried out the labour applying knowledge of construction techniques in the local area.
- National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA), who provided seeds adapted to the geoclimatic conditions of the *Puna* region in Jujuy, through their *Pro Huerta* (Vegetable Garden) program.

Indicators

We will monitor and report on the success of this program by developing indicators to measure progress. For example: amount of food harvested per year, UPAFs built and operating, hours of training and education, project beneficiaries, percentage of local material used in the building of the UPAFs.



We plan on rolling out this program in the remaining communities within the Company's area of influence, to share knowledge acquired and promote and strengthen local food resilience in the long term.