

Summary

Esperanza International is a non-profit organization that operates in the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Organized to address the root causes of poverty, Esperanza offers integrated community development programs that are aimed at creating better health outcomes, improving educational opportunities, generating income, and empowering those that have lost hope. Working in close coordination with leaders of communities, Esperanza's work focuses on giving a hand up and not a hand out to those in need.

At the core of Esperanza's developmental philosophy lies microfinance. The benefits of the small loans that Esperanza offers to poor women with entrepreneurial spirits extend far past revenue and profit margins. As businesses develop with the help of Esperanza's loans, borrowers reinvest profits in better medical care, improved education for their children, and safer homes. By focusing their services on women, Esperanza believes that these benefits will be more evenly distributed throughout families and communities. Since Esperanza is often the only available source of credit that women in the Dominican Republic and Haiti have access to, loans as small as \$20 can lead to radical improvements in the lives of borrowers and their families.

My internship with Esperanza focused on capturing the radical improvements that the loans created in the lives of borrowers. At the bank meetings that I regularly attended with loan officers I was expected to interview borrowers about how their loans were going and what changes they had experienced in their lives since receiving their loans and developing their businesses. I would then take the interviews and write small stories about the women and their loans, families, and lives in general. Then, I would either post these stories, along with a picture of the borrower, on Kiva, a website that funds microfinance projects all over the world, or on the Esperanza website. I was expected to meet a quota of posts on Kiva and Esperanza each month.