COLOMBIA – CASE 5

Issue: Preventing burnout in a super successful program

This site got off to a great start and continued on that track, eventually managing 45 open loans with a 98.7% good repayment rate. Managing 45 open loans would be a lot for a program run by paid staff but for a program run by volunteers who also had full time jobs, it was incredible and we wondered how long they could sustain that pace. The program leader, occasionally expressed frustration with the workload and with security concerns. Will, the Response Volunteer who originally worked with him to set up the program suggested that collections be handled at a store to both eliminate any impression in the community that the leader walked around with a lot of money and to relieve him of the collection process. A portion of the program earnings could be used to pay the store.

He tried this for a while but found the solution to be unsatisfactory. In the meantime, due to the success of this program, Peace Corps Volunteers from other sites brought their counterparts to visit to see how the program worked. The program leaders was in essence now mentoring his potential peers, a role which he clearly enjoyed but which also added to his workload.

He confided in Kaleb, the new PCV, that he was looking for another job and would like to work full time with TCP Global because he really liked this type of work.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO? WHY?
THIS IS WHAT TCP GLOBAL DID:

TCP Global came up with a proposal to match the leader’s current salary by contracting with him to provide support services to new TCP Global sites. When confronted with the prospect of leaving his secure if unsatisfying employment, he reconsidered. Kaleb then gleaned that the real issue was concern about paying for his son’s college. He really needed more money, not just a change of jobs and he definitely did not want to lose the security of his present job.

By this time, he had consulted with various PCVs and counterparts and had agreed to handle fund transfers for sites that had not yet established bank accounts. Two new loan sites had just signed on and would likely turn to him for guidance in the early days. It seemed like exploitation for TCP Global to rely on him in this way without compensation, and it was a valuable service he was providing. TCP Global was always available to assist new programs but nothing compares to learning from someone who has been through the same experience. Equally important, the TCP Global work seemed to energize this man. He loved it.

TCP Global worked with Will and Kaleb who knew the situation on the ground from their time serving as PCVs in the community and we came up with a proposal to compensate the local organization for the extra work that its leader does, over and above running the micro-loan program. TCP Global has never compensated anyone for running the loan program and did not want to create a bad precedent. TCP Global provides opportunities for non-profits to earn funds by running successful programs but does not have a compensation package.
First we needed to determine if compensation might cause dissention in the organization so Kaleb checked with the board who confirmed that it would not create any friction and that it was understood that one person was doing that extra work and he would receive the compensation.

We wrote out an agreement for a $100 per month retainer with a clause included that allowed for either party to cancel the agreement with a short notice. The first allocation to was delivered in May, 2019 for the months of April-July.