

# New Tools



## Reducing Incidence of Child Labor and Harmful Conditions of Work in Economic Strengthening Initiatives (RICHES)

### Purpose

Multi-sectoral capacity building project that integrated issues of child labor alleviation and acceptable conditions of work into women’s economic empowerment initiatives to ensure women-led enterprises can improve livelihoods responsibly without resorting to child labor or other harmful labor practices

### Funding

\$1.9 million

### Countries

Global (with El Salvador and the Philippines as pilot countries)

### Period of Performance

Dec 2017 – Feb 2022

## Context

Supporting women entrepreneurs has been a hallmark of economic development and gender programming for decades. Women’s economic empowerment benefits the whole family, including nutrition, healthcare, and education for their children. UN Women calls women’s economic empowerment “central to realizing women’s rights and gender equality.” Women are also over-represented in informal work, lack access to decent work opportunities, and bear disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work, circumstances that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As women entrepreneurs endeavor to start or grow their businesses, they often face the burden of requiring additional labor: (1) for their direct business needs,

and (2) to complete household tasks and unpaid care in the home for which they no longer have time.

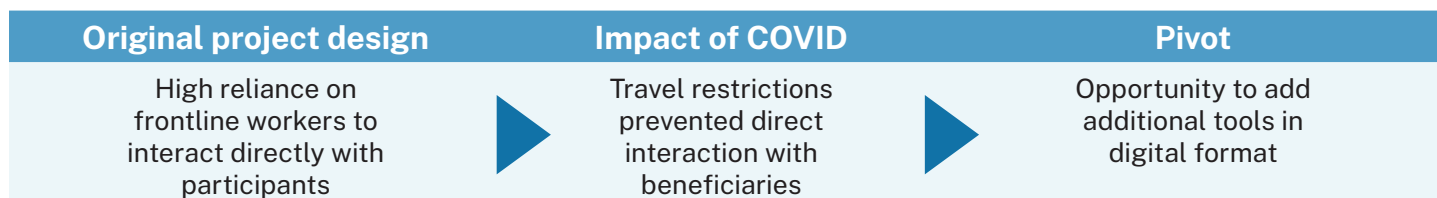
This demand for labor can increase the risk of child labor, posing a threat to children’s safety, health, and ability to attend school.



## Impacts of COVID-19

To support the project purpose, the RICHES team developed a toolkit for service providers and policy-makers who support women entrepreneurs to promote the goals of women’s economic empowerment while mitigating the risk of child labor. The RICHES Toolkit was being piloted when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. Consequently, the RICHES project staff recognized practitioners would not have the opportunity to travel to the field and interact with users of the tool, which was something the original design of the Toolkit relied upon. As a result of country lockdowns and travel restrictions,

the project could no longer directly interact with users of the tool, so the piloting the beneficiary-level tools became impossible in both El Salvador and the Philippines. RICHES was faced with the dilemma of how to achieve project objectives without diverting from what they originally set out to do. Fortunately, the project was provided with an opportunity to propose a “COVID-pivot budget.” In response, the RICHES project proposed additional digital tools that could be used to complement the in-person tools already designed for users of the tool, as well as frontline workers



## Toolkit Redesign

Recognizing the correlation between promoting women’s economic empowerment and the increased incidence of child labor, the challenge became how to employ a “do no harm” approach to programming. The RICHES project created a step-by-step toolkit made available online, encompassing 46 tools and 13 guides, complementing the toolkit, to help organizations identify, assess, and mitigate the risk of harmful work in women’s businesses.

The redesign focused on designing digital tools that women entrepreneurs could use : (1) to assess harmful working conditions within their enterprises, and (2) to learn through video format, the harmful working conditions that might exist in their enterprises and how they could be avoided or mitigated.

The toolkit includes 13 trainings and guides accompanied by 46 tools designed to be used in 3 phases. Most

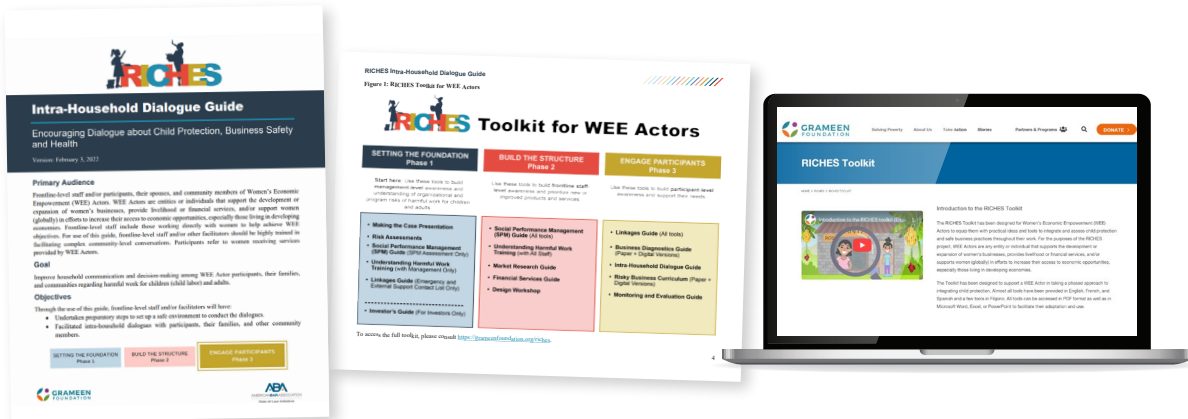
### Do No Harm Principles

Take measures to ensure efforts do not put any individual or group at increased risk of harm

Ensure that interventions do not cause harm to the populations they aim to serve

materials are available in both paper and digital formats in at no or low cost. Toolkits are available in English, Spanish, Filipino, and French.

Materials are geared towards multiple audiences: women entrepreneurs, investors, people in management positions, frontline staff, and families of women entrepreneurs.



## Best Practices

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Taking the time to build local networks of organizations enables better cooperation and collaboration in times of crisis. The pandemic demonstrated a greater reliance on local networks, organizations, and staff for conducting face-to-face training and support.

Faced with a public health crisis, governments had competing priorities to address health and safety concerns. Rather than compete with health messaging, the project capitalized on these circumstances to complement government messaging and elevate the importance of women’s economic empowerment as means to improving household and business resilience.
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The RICHES Toolkit was designed to be adaptable by identifying a core package and allowing organizations to select, which supplementary materials were the most relevant. This flexibility to adapt to varying capacity levels of local organizations promotes maximum buy-in.

## Limitations

**BROADER IMPACT UNKNOWN.** The project ended with creation of the toolkit based on practitioner feedback, which was incorporated throughout the tool development process. The entire piloting phase was to conduct this feedback loop which took at least a year.

**LIMITED ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY.** Some women in geographically isolated areas were less likely to transition to online learning. Accessing videos online or downloading files was problematic where physical infrastructure failed to provide a reliable wi-fi or cellular access and where there was competition within the

household for use of a shared device and data, such as for children’s education. Some of the digital tools also required alphaneumeric literacy which would limit their use among illiterate populations.”

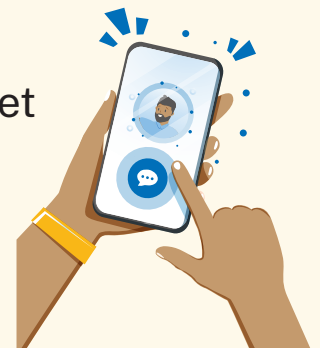
**NOT ALL TRAINING MATERIALS ARE CONDUCTIVE TO DIGITIZATION.** . While the RICHES team focused on digitizing tools designed to be implemented with beneficiaries, the Intra-household Dialogue Guide required face-to-face sessions to be effective which resulted in limited piloting.

## Lessons Learned



**DIVERSITY TRAINING MODALITIES** Delivery of the toolkit in multiple formats allows flexibility based on country-specific priorities, needs, and challenges, enhancing the toolkit usefulness and broadening its application.

**PLAN AND BUDGET FOR TECHNOLOGY NEEDS** Budget for assistance to women entrepreneurs to have access to digital content (e.g. data plans, purchasing devices, printing services, display videos in a community center).



**ENSURE BUY-IN FROM TARGET ACTORS, COUNTRY-SPECIFIC OR OTHERWISE** To ensure buy-in and promote broad utilization, marketing the toolkit should be aligned with country-specific policies and communications campaigns of other women and children’s rights advocacy groups.