



Co-creating Research Methods with Indigenous Farmworkers

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Indigenous People in Mexico

- Estimated 8.4 million indigenous people in Mexico in 63 communities
- 8.6% of the total population
- The 7 states with the most indigenous municipalities are Oaxaca, Chiapas, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Veracruz, San Luis Potosi and Puebla
- Communities have their own languages that are not dialects of Spanish
- No written form for most indigenous languages



Farmworkers in Oregon

- 174,000 migrant and seasonal agricultural workers and their dependents live and work in Oregon each year
- They harvest berries, tree fruits & vegetables, work in nurseries & vineyards, and trim Christmas trees
- Estimated 30% to 40% are workers from indigenous communities of Mexico
- Indigenous workers speak languages such as Mixteco, Triqui or Zapoteco

Indigenous Farmworkers

- Cultural and linguistic isolation
- Spanish-speaking Latino/as may view indigenous people as inferior
- Fear of retaliation leads to exploitation in jobs, wages, and housing



Promoting the Occupational Health of Indigenous Workers

- The project aims to develop *community-based strategies to improve health and safety* conditions and *access to services* for indigenous farmworkers in Oregon
- Funded by NIOSH and NIEHS August 2004-August 2008

Project Partners



- Oregon Law Center (OLC)
- Pinos y Campesinos Unidos del Noreste (PCUN)
- Salud Medical Center
- Portland State University School of Community Health
- Farmworker Justice (FJ)

Highlights of Project Years 1-3 Activities:

- **Indigenous-speaking staff** as partners within the project
 - Former farmworkers
- **Focus groups**
 - Six with indigenous and other farmworkers, two with health care providers
 - Conducted in Spanish, Mixteco, and Triqui
- **Key informant interviews** with indigenous leaders and Oregon service providers
- **Community Advisory Council** convened
- **Community feedback forums** held to share project results
- **150 surveys** administered to Latino and indigenous farmworkers
- **Promotores program** created and implemented with indigenous farmworkers

Indigenous Outreach Worker Activities

- Through outreach and community collaboration identify indigenous community leaders to create opportunities for leadership and outreach in farmworker communities
- Conducted focus groups, surveys and Community Forums
- Ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness of project activities
- *Promotores* training
- Participated in:
 - Creating survey and focus group questions
 - Facilitating focus groups and administered surveys
 - Data analysis and interpretation
 - Creating reports and presentations

Focus Group Results

- **Workplace safety** was not a priority for supervisors or employers
- Experiences of **occupational illness and injury**
- Highlighted need for more readily available **first aid**
- **Workers are concerned about pesticides** but **lack information** about how to protect oneself
- Spanish language training videos were **not easily understood** by indigenous-speaking workers
- In every focus group farmworkers talked about being **disrespected and disregarded** by their employers and supervisors

Survey Results

- 58% of farmworkers in the survey reported working in areas with pesticides
 - Only 57% of these workers reported that they had ever received pesticide training
- There were a greater number of months since the last pesticide training for indigenous farmworkers than Latino farmworkers.
- 87% of indigenous farmworkers reported that they could understand Spanish well enough to receive information **orally**.
- Only 66% of Latino and 40% indigenous farmworkers reported that they could understand Spanish well enough to obtain **written** information.
- 20% of the respondents indicated that they felt discriminated against for speaking their native language.
 - 32% of indigenous workers; 8% of Latino workers

Community Feedback Forums

- Results of the survey and focus groups presented to in multiple community forums
- Asked community forum participants to provide feedback about the results
- Small group discussions about farmworker health issues

Promotores

- 10 indigenous language speaking farmworkers
- Trained to deliver information about pesticides, field sanitation, and farmworker rights



Promotores

- Create leadership opportunities for indigenous farmworkers to address occupational safety and health
- Methods of outreach include CDs, audiotapes, handbooks, and radio programs



Project Next Steps

- Continue to develop and implement a peer education program to raise farmworkers' level of awareness of workplace hazards and ways to protect themselves and enforce their rights
- With indigenous community partners continue to raise the awareness of governmental regulators regarding indigenous farmworkers in Oregon, with the aim of improving agencies' regulations and enforcement.

