

Gardening Projects Help Children Flower

American parents may bond with their children by taking them to farmers' markets or showing them how to grow potted plants, but in other areas of the world, growing plants may literally help keep families together.

In Ecuador, for example, children were often left alone while their parents went into the city to work. Because children had to take care of the home while their parents were away, many stopped going to school. ChildFund International, an organization that focuses on working with children, as well as with families, local organizations and communities to create environments in which children can thrive, decided to take a unique, community-wide approach to solving this problem – by growing a garden.

ChildFund Ecuador started training the community in flower and vegetable cultivation, as well as business administration. The local bank, which ChildFund helped develop, gave local fathers the loans that they needed to build greenhouses for roses, carnations and tomatoes. Today, more than 285 families now use their greenhouses as their primary source of income, so the parents don't have to migrate into the cities to work, and children can attend school regularly.

The Actively Engaged Mayan Women, or Mujeres Emprendedoras Mayas, in rural Tecpan, Guatemala, are using macro tunnels – or miniature greenhouses – to grow tomatoes, thereby creating income and improving food security for their families. As the women become more able to create their own income, they also gain the ability to better care for their children.

In ChildFund Uganda, children and their parents planted more than 10,000 eucalyptus trees and 5,000 pine trees to create

two new forests. In an area where environmental degradation has reduced the quality of life, the new forests provide inexpensive firewood, protection against soil erosion and an economic boost, as the trees provide timber for housing and other projects.

“Forests will be a major source of timber, which will be mainly used in house construction, and houses are very important to us,” said 14-year-old Nalubega Florence, a student at St. Andrew Primary School.

To learn how you can help communities come together through the plants that they grow, visit ChildFund International at www.ChildFund.org.