



# THE FORD PROGRAM

## in Human Development & Solidarity

 KELLOGG INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

January 2020



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## Boosting Markets to Benefit Communities in the Amazon

By **Viva Bartkus**, Mendoza College of Business (pictured above, far right)

How do remote markets impact communities? Across the world, small producers struggle to get their products to market, and when the markets come to them, struggle with middlemen. These challenges make it harder to sell labor or products, and harder to buy the goods families need.

A new Ford Program research project is studying how improved markets can serve communities in the remotest of contexts – Brazil's Amazon. In 2018, Notre Dame's Business on the Frontlines (BOFTL) program and the NGO Amazonas Sustainable Foundation (FAS) partnered to launch a fisheries business to support fishing communities in the Amazon.

Aspiring to make the Amazon rainforest worth more standing than cut, FAS promotes sustainable development, environmental conservation, and quality of life in hundreds of river communities. It is through its large network of community mobilizers that we were able to design and execute the research study. (*cont'd*)

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## Bringing the "Dinosaur Fish" to Market

At the center of the project is the *pirarucu* – a prehistoric, air-breathing, “dinosaur fish” that can grow 9 feet long and weigh 400 pounds. It inhabits lakes deep in the rainforest. Communities rely heavily on it, with half of their yearly income coming from just a few weeks of fishing.

Twenty years ago, the giant fish was nearly extinct due to overfishing, but as FAS taught communities to manage their commercial fishing operations, pirarucu populations have rebounded. The resurgence was expected to bring significant improvements to the livelihoods of traditional communities – but sadly, it did not.

The communities face an all-too-familiar situation: they do not capture a significant portion of the economic value of their fish. Instead, middlemen and fish processors claim the majority of the profits, and fishermen are forced to accept low prices. If prices remain low, many communities will likely turn to illegal logging, mining, and poaching in order to make ends meet.

Yet, these communities call themselves “children of the forest.” Acting in a capacity similar to US park rangers, community members are often the last line of defense against the pillaging of the rainforest. Building their economic livelihoods becomes vital to protecting the Amazon, and FAS asked the BOTFL team to advise on building and supporting a sustainable pirarucu fishery business.

## Investing to Change the Fish Supply Chain

Our investigation revealed that with a heavy dose of community organization and moderate investments into physical assets, FAS could build



a business that earned millions of Brazilian reais per year – and much of the increased profit would flow back to the fishermen. Investment in market infrastructure, transportation, and relationships with end customers would significantly change the fish supply chain. In particular, the fishermen would be empowered to contract and sell their pirarucu directly to consumers, without the use of middlemen.

Last year, FAS invested in a cold-storage facility in Fonte Boa and nine boats to deliver the pirarucu from the protected reserves to markets and customers in Manaus, the Amazonas state capital. Over time, such a pirarucu transportation and processing business should provide a steady source of income for the fishing communities, while supporting the frontline conservation efforts of both the communities and FAS.

On the academic side, we have launched an effort to determine the income and consumption impact of the investments in boats and the storage facility on the fishing communities. Along with myself, the project’s principle investigators include economists **Wyatt Brooks** and **Joe Kaboski**, and **Sara Sievers** of the Keough School of Global Affairs. The second pirarucu fishing season is underway, and we look forward to sharing the results from our research soon.

## Humanizing Migrants and Refugees: On the Border

*In September, the Ford Program and the Kellogg Institute's Undergraduate Student Programs collaborated to mark the World Day of Migrants and Refugees. Rev. Daniel Groody, CSC, whose work focuses on migrants, celebrated mass, and a panel of students shared their research on migrants and refugees. Here, economics and political science major Camila Antelo Iriarte (pictured below) reflects on her research on the US-Mexico border. With others, she is building a website to share her findings.*

*By Camila Antelo Iriarte '22  
Kellogg International Scholar*

The skin that has always protected me suddenly felt unsafe, dangerous, like a liability. On the border, it did not take me long to realize that the soft brown of my own skin, the cast of my features, my race, ethnicity, and place of origin influence how I am treated.

I want to share a more complex view of people arriving in the United States. They are not “illegals,” they are not “stealing jobs.” They are just who they say they are—asylum seekers. I aim to humanize the dialogue, moving from the general problem to a personal perspective. The stories are so full of heartbreak and intrigue. I focus on the women, the mothers, the daughters, the strong, and the brave. What is happening right now on the border is not a pursuit of the American dream, but a fight to survive.

I spent 10 weeks inside a detention center helping asylum seekers prepare for “credible fear interviews” that establish a basis for staying in the US. I had over 120 clients. Following the Notre Dame mission with “willingness to enter into the conversation” and “service to justice,” I plan to share the stories of 55.

When I started, the average wait time for the women detained inside to get an interview was 10 days. By the time I left, it had increased to 60. The number of women rose from 600 to 1,300—not because more were trying to cross the border, but because fewer were being released after ICE delegated their cases to immigration courts.

The people in front of us are human beings: when you look into their eyes you see that they could just as easily be any one of us.





## Ford Team Supports Undergraduate Research in Dandora

By **Thomas Quigley '20**

*A biological sciences major and International Development Studies minor, Quigley (pictured far right) spent summer 2019 in Kenya on a Kellogg/Kroc research grant.*



In Dandora – where resources are scarce and neighbors are often strangers newly migrated from all over Kenya – the walls often feel thin. In communities where there is trust, women find other women to share the weight of their financial and emotional burdens. Where women fear other women’s intentions, perceived exclusion from social circles and savings groups can heighten competition and silence collaboration and mentorship.

Over seven weeks in Dandora, I collected data exploring how community perceptions of trust influence if and how women seek support beyond the household.

When I first pitched my project to Ford Regional Research Programs Manager for East Africa **Jackline Oluoch-Aridi**, I asked her for an honest assessment. Could such an apparent outsider –male, college-aged, white, limited KiSwahili skills –really conduct interviews with Kenyan women about complex, gendered challenges and authentically represent their experiences in my findings?

“We will help you,” Jackie assured me.

I understood what she meant when I finally met the other members of the Ford research team: Senior Community Mobilizer **Christine Achieng** and research assistants **Cindy Mical** and **Brian Ambutsi**.

Each day, they made it possible for me to learn and have rich conversations about life in Dandora. They translated, covered for my shortcomings, and guided me in entering all-female spaces.

When I considered piloting my questions at Visitation Maternity Ward, Christine walked me over to Br. Andre Medical Centre and connected me immediately. When interview participants handed me their babies while they recounted stories about their own mothers, I followed Cindy’s example and gently bounced the infants. Being an outsider did not exclude me from participating fully, as my research partners bridged the gap. It is impossible to convey the depth and breadth of support that Jackie, Christine, Cindy, and Brian offered me. Altogether, we completed three dozen 90-minute interviews and two focus groups, working together to create a mosaic of perspectives that just might do our research question justice.

Throughout, study participants spoke of the transformational impact of the community engagement of Dandora Holy Cross Parish: the structure and sanctuary it provides, the gentle kindness of the Parish priests, and the Ford Program’s listening-first approach.



## Ford Project Leads to \$2.5 Million Grant

*By Carrie Gates and Elizabeth Rankin*

Ford Program Researcher **Laura Miller-Graff** (psychology and peace studies), pictured below, and co-principal investigator Kathryn Howell of the University of Memphis have been awarded \$2.5 million from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to evaluate an intervention program for pregnant women exposed to violence. It builds on a Ford Program-funded project in Lima, Peru, as well as on pilots in South Bend and Memphis.

Women are most likely to experience violence from their intimate partners when they are young – and when they are pregnant. Exposure to violence during that critical time has negative outcomes for both mother and infant, and there is a lack of effective interventions to support them. The researchers are working to change that with their Pregnant Moms' Empowerment Program.

“Violence is an offense against the whole person, the whole family, and our response to it should also be holistic,” said Miller-Graff, a Notre Dame alumna.

The NIH grant will allow them to complete a randomized, multisite, controlled trial involving more than 200 women. The Lima arm will continue to receive funding from the Ford Program.



## Valuing Inherent Dignity: Busingye Receives Ford Family Award

*By Ashley Rowland*

Meeting Point International, the NGO founded by **Rose Busingye** in Kampala, Uganda, helps women with HIV/AIDS and their children to increase their self-sufficiency and recognize their inherent dignity in a society that often shuns them.

In a September ceremony in the Hesburgh Center, she received the 2019 Ford Family Notre Dame Award for International Development and Solidarity in recognition of her work (pictured above: Keough School Dean Scott Appleby, Busingye, and Director of the Ford Program **Rev. Robert Dowd, CSC**).

“[The women] are not defined by their sickness or by their poverty,” she said in a discussion following the ceremony. “They are defined by their value...it is something that that they were created with.”

“Rose is doing work that promotes integral human development, and we have much to learn from her efforts,” said Dowd. “She accompanies women in ways that help them to make the most of their God-given potential.”

The annual award recognizes substantial contributions to human development through research, practice, public service, or philanthropy.