



SOCIO-ECONOMIC INCLUSION TO REVERSE HUNGER IN LATIN AMERICA

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

NOVEMBER 2021





INDEX

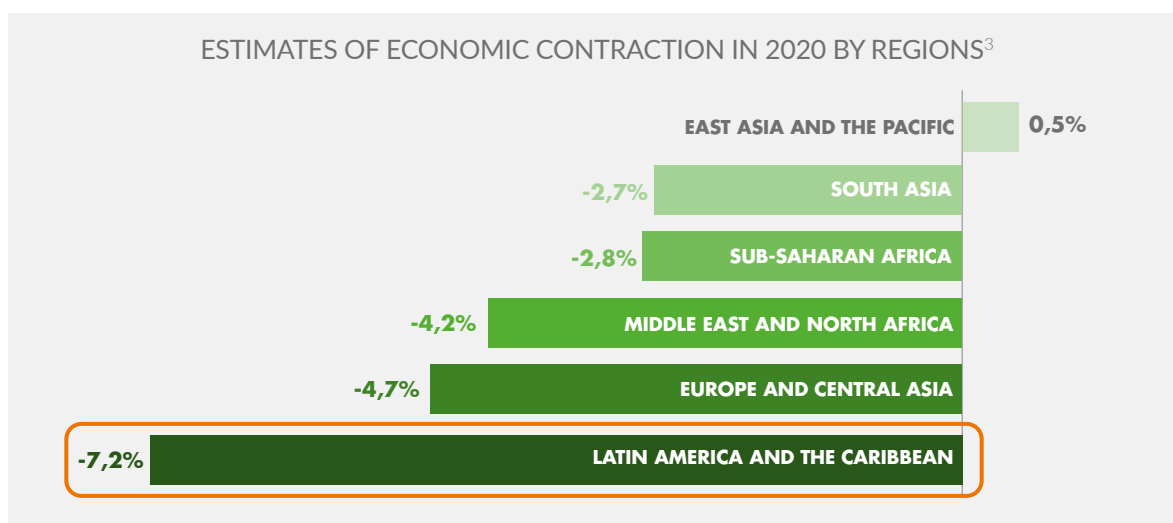
CHALLENGING TIMES IN LATIN AMERICA	03
CONCEPTS	07
OUR APPROACH	08
RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED	13
1. CONTEXT	13
1.1 DIGITAL LITERACY IN THE NEW CONTEXT GENERATED BY THE PANDEMIC	13
1.2 CONTRIBUTING TO CRIME AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION	14
1.3 CONTRIBUTING TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	15
2. DESIGN	16
2.1 FLEXIBILITY OF PROGRAMS AND METHODOLOGIES	16
2.2 USING A HOLISTIC APPROACH, ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS IN THE TERRITORY	16
2.3 PROMOTING DECENT CONDITIONS IN CONTEXTS OF HIGH INFORMALITY	17
3. IMPLEMENTATION	18
3.1 SUPPORTING MSES WITH THE CAPACITY TO GENERATE JOBS	18
3.2 PROVIDING FAMILY SUPPORT TO HOUSEHOLDS LIVING BELOW THE POVERTY LINE	19
3.3 COMBINING AWARENESS-ISING AND ADVOCACY ACTIONS WITHIN EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMS	20
3.4 PRIORITIZING TRANSFERABLE SKILLS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE RESILIENCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL	21
4. TEAMS AND PARTNERS	22
4.1 SETTING UP AND TRAINING TECHNICAL TEAMS COMPRISING MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY	22
4.2 ENGAGING AND STRENGTHENING STAKEHOLDERS	23
4.3 FOSTERING A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP ON THE PART OF LOCAL ACTORS	24



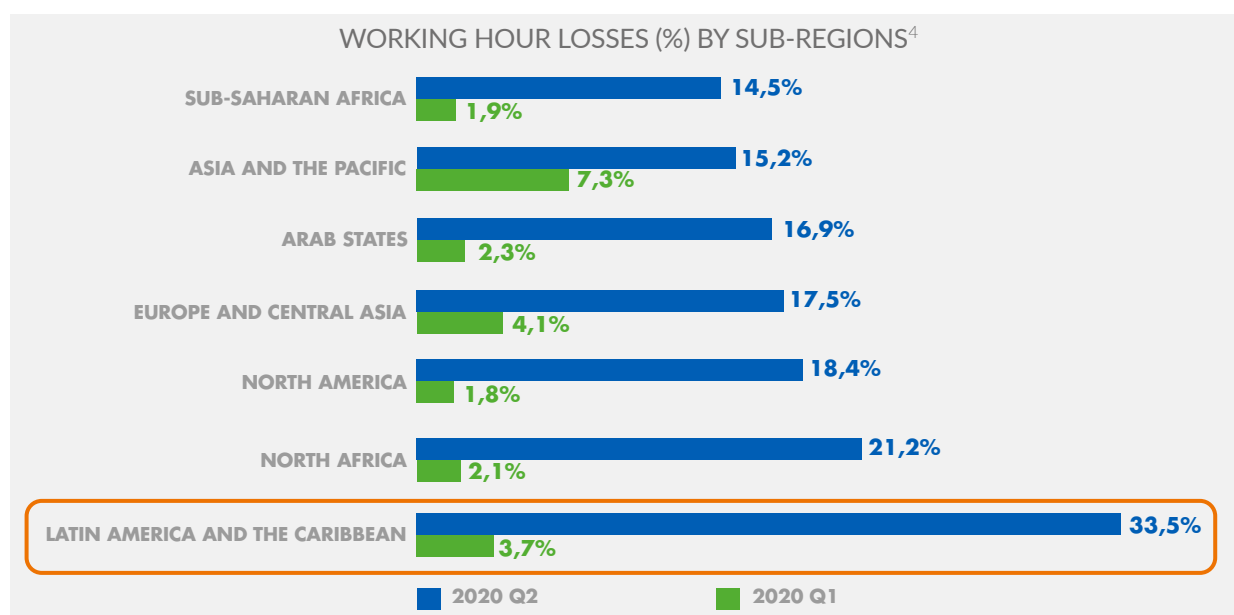
CHALLENGING TIMES IN LATIN AMERICA

The health emergency generated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent containment measures represent a new challenge for the Latin American socio-economic system, already severely affected by one of the worst global migration crises and by a situation of generalized violence in the north of the region.

Already since 2015, poverty in Latin America has been increasing, reaching in 2020 the levels of 15 years ago.¹ The region is currently facing the worst economic recession on record, and is the region that has suffered the largest economic contraction due to the pandemic, with an estimated economic decline of 7.2%.²



The social protection measures put in place by governments in the region has not compensated the massive loss of sources of income. In fact, it is the region where the most working hours have been lost due to the pandemic:



All these factors have contributed to a worrying increase in hunger in the region.

¹ CEPAL, Panorama social 2020

² World Bank Group, June 2020

³ World Bank Group, June 2020

⁴ ILO, September 2020, ILO Monitor. COVID-19 and the World of Work. Sixth Edition



The trends in recent years show a 64% increase in the number of undernourished people, from 36.4 million in 2015 to 59.7 million in 2020,⁵ (Figure 1), as well as a rapid increase in the number of severely (14%) and moderately or severely food insecure people, reaching 40.9% in 2021, which represents an increase of almost 50% compared to 2015 (Figure 2).

CHANGE 2015 - 2021

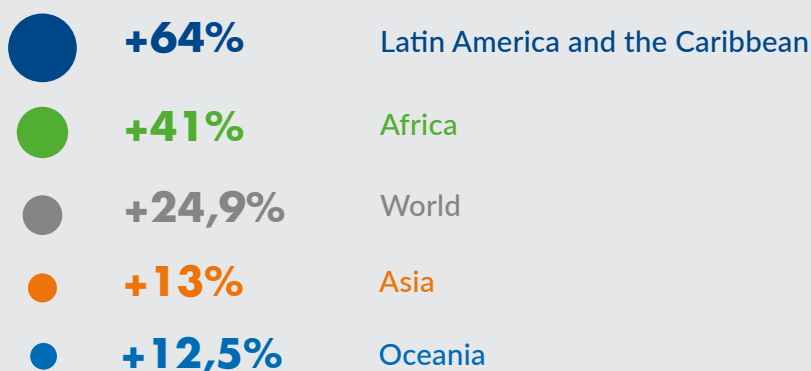
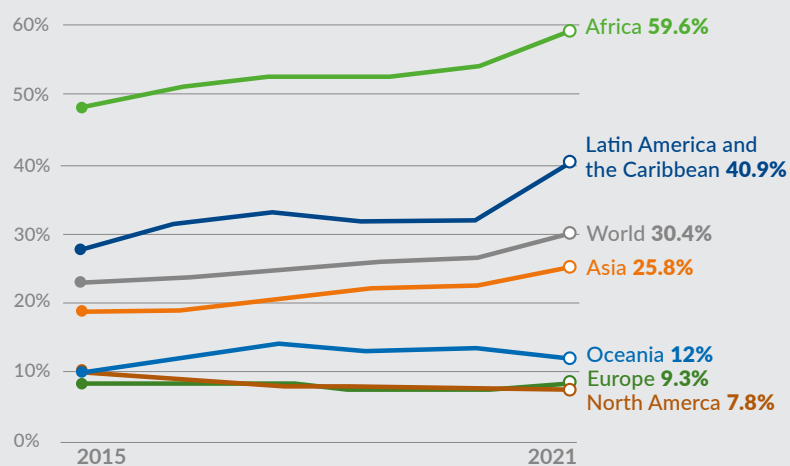


FIGURE 1: SOFI Data 2021, Washington Post edition

PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION SUFFERING FOOD INSECURITY (MODERATE/SEVERE)



CHANGE 2015 - 2021

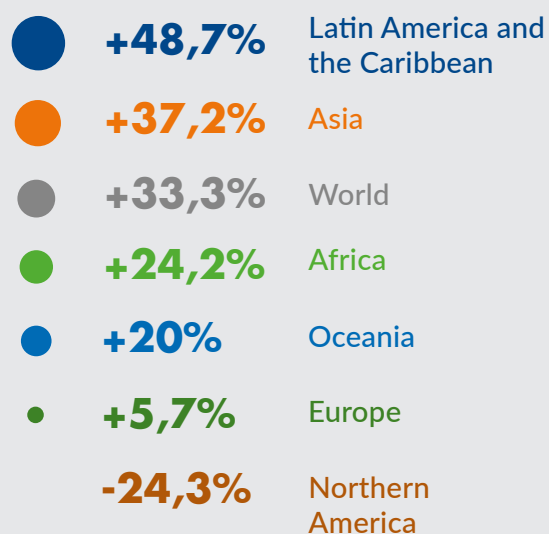


FIGURE 2: SOFI Data 2021, Washington Post edition

⁵ <https://sdgs.un.org/events/state-food-security-and-nutrition-world-2021-sofi-33052>



Increasing poverty and hunger are consequences of a socio-economic inclusion system that is characterized by:

• HIGH INSECURITY OF LABOR MARKETS



53,1%
of jobs are
informal (2016)



47,4%
of the employed contribute
to the pension system (2018)



20%
of the working population
live in poverty (2018)⁶

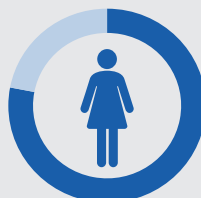


33,5%
loss of working hours by the
migrant population, higher
than in any other region⁷

• GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND THE INSECURITY OF WOMEN'S WORK

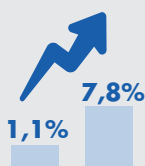


More than half of the **25**
countries with the highest
incidence of femicide cases are in
Latin America and the Caribbean.⁸



78% of women in the labor market
are employed in the service sector
(transport, business services and social
services): lower levels of labor rights
and higher health risks.⁹

• RISING INEQUALITY



The Gini index will increase by between 1,1% and 7,8% due to the pandemic¹⁰

⁶ CEPAL, El desafío social en tiempos del COVID-19

⁷ ILO, September 2020

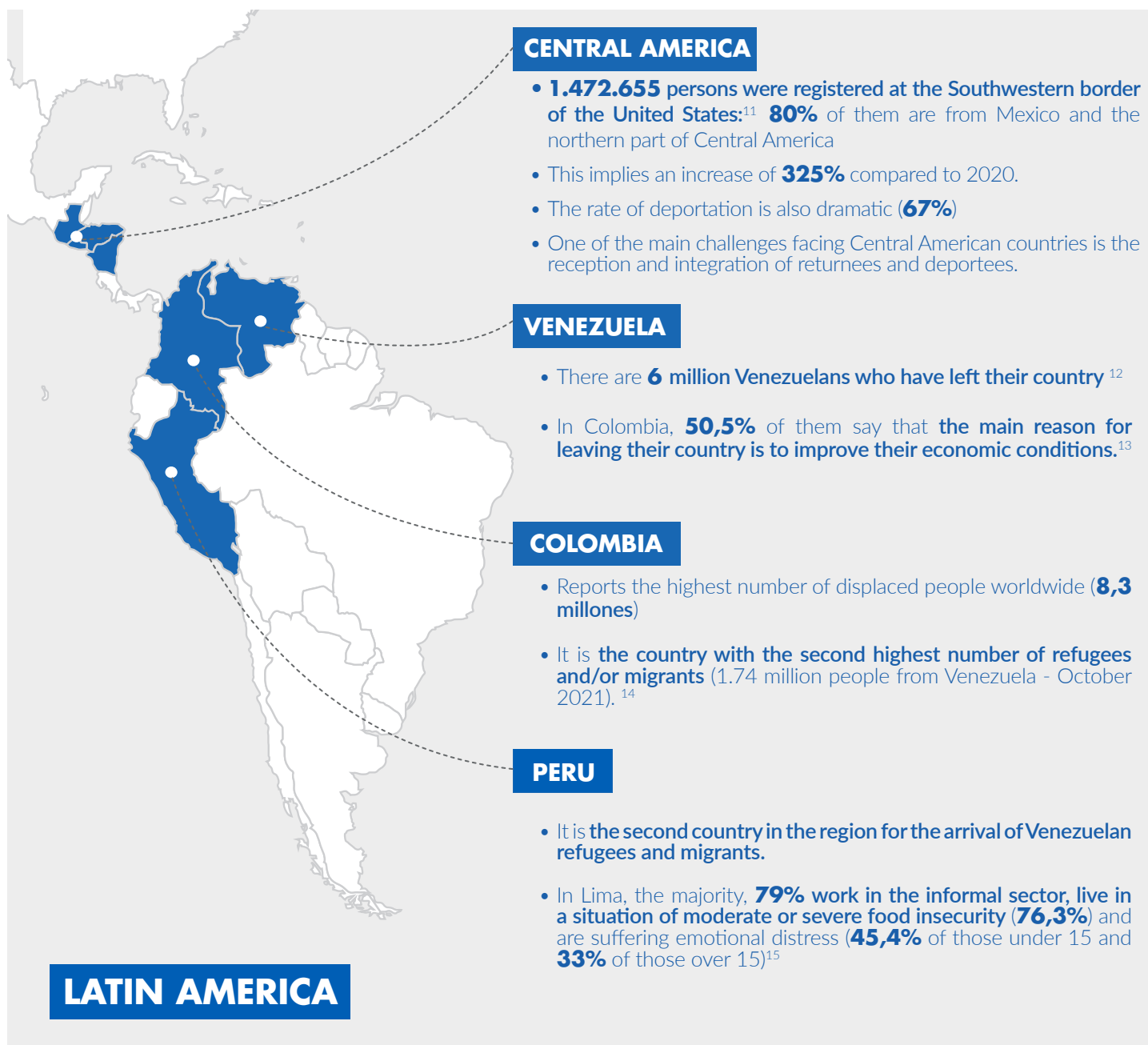
⁸ ONU Women

⁹ Ibidem

¹⁰ United Nations, The impact of COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean



• POPULATION ON THE MOVE



According to CEPAL and FAO projections, as a result of COVID-19, the number of people living in extreme poverty will reach **53.4 million** in urban areas and **30 million** in rural areas.”

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasts that unemployment rates will not return to pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels until 2025. Beyond the pandemic, climate change and forced migration flows have and will have an impact on economic activities and labor markets in the region. Therefore, it is not only important to focus on recovery from the crisis, it is also important to take into account these trends and to address the structural challenges that pre-date the pandemic with long-term interventions. The Latin American context needs comprehensive solutions, as there is every indication that the crisis will continue for years or decades to come.

¹¹ From October 2020 to August 2021, U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

¹² R4V/Noviembre 2021

¹³ <https://www.r4v.info/>

¹⁴ Action against Hunger, Estudio de caso sobre dinámicas migratorias de personas en trayectos de migración (2021)

¹⁵ Action against Hunger, Estudio multisectorial en personas refugiadas y migrantes de Venezuela que viven en Lima Metropolitana (2021)



CONCEPTS

LIVELIHOODS



A livelihood consists of the capabilities, assets (both material and social resources) and activities necessary to live. Families or households are considered to have sustainable livelihoods when they are able to cope with and overcome economic shocks and crises while preserving their resources and capabilities, without detriment to the natural environment.¹⁶

In this sense, livelihoods refer to the households and to those elements of the family that affect the ability to live, generate income, meet their basic needs and avoid protection threats.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION



Social exclusion occurs when individuals or a high percentage of people with similar characteristics (social groups) cannot participate in the economic, social, political and cultural life of their community.¹⁷

INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT



Inclusive employment refers to expanding participation in remunerated work under decent conditions (productive and quality employment, with rights and social protection), where income from work and pensions is above the poverty line.¹⁸

ECONOMIC INCLUSION



Economic inclusion implies access to labor markets, finance, entrepreneurship and economic opportunities for all, including non-citizens as well as vulnerable and underserved groups.¹⁹

SOCIO-ECONOMIC INCLUSION



Socio-economic inclusion ensures that all people, without distinction, can exercise their rights and guarantees, use their skills and benefit from the opportunities in their environment to generate their own income and assets.²⁰

¹⁶ Chambers & Conway (1991)

¹⁷ UNDP, Guía de inclusión para mujeres (2021)

¹⁸ CEPAL, Inclusión social y laboral El doble desafío para las políticas públicas de superación de la pobreza y reducción de la desigualdad

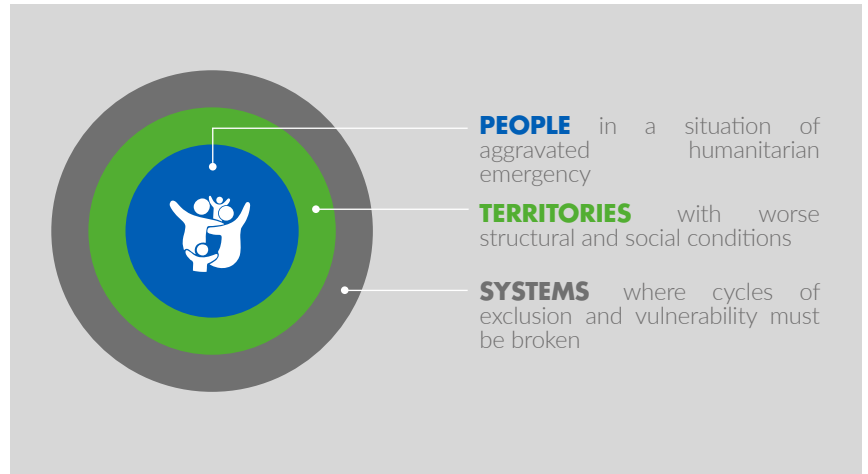
¹⁹ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/urban-development/migrants-inclusion-in-cities/good-practices/economic-inclusion/>

²⁰ UNDP, Guía de inclusión para mujeres (2021)



OUR APPROACH

In order to contribute to closing the existing gaps and structural deficiencies in Latin American social and economic systems, at Action against Hunger we address the multiple forms of exclusion, structuring our interventions in three complementary areas of work: **People**, **Territories** and **Systems**.



Socio-economic inclusion interventions aim to have an impact on all three axes, contributing to the development of **technical skills and personal competencies** of individuals for their access to the labor market, promoting the generation of greater **opportunities for socio-economic development** of the territories and providing evidence to improve the initiatives of **governments**, society and the international humanitarian community. At a programmatic level, our priority is to stop hunger, while at the same time we promote and support deeper changes that seek to close structural gaps from a nexus approach between humanitarian action, development and peacebuilding.

After several years working on the issue, at Action Against Hunger we believe that this crisis requires us to reflect on the most effective socio-economic inclusion measures in order to work on structural transformations that promote the participation of the most vulnerable groups in society.

Since 2014 we have been working in Spain, Africa, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Latin America to promote the social and economic inclusion of people at risk of marginalization and in a situation of unemployment. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our programs have contributed to the recovery of the sectors of the population most affected by the crisis.



In **Spain**, for example, we have improved the employability of 20,378 people, helping 43% of those accompanied to find a job in less than 6 months. We have supported in shaping the business ideas of 6,058 people, achieving that 10% of these ideas became reality. 87% of the businesses created with our support are still running one year later.

In **Latin America**, we design socio-economic inclusion projects located in urban and rural areas, focusing on people with fewer resources and the most vulnerable groups. We work in coordination with local actors, aligning our interventions with national and regional development strategies, seeking to innovate in every aspect of our interventions.

For example, in **Peru**, where we have been working since 2019 with vulnerable young people and women from the poorest districts of Lima, 30% of those who have participated in our programmes have been able to find employment in companies that comply with labor rights and gender equality (EMPLOYMENT axis), while 26% have been able to formalize their businesses (ENTREPRENEURSHIP axis).²¹

²¹ 81% of formalized businesses are run by women



WHERE WE ARE WORKING

CENTRAL AMERICA



N° OF PROJECTS: 6



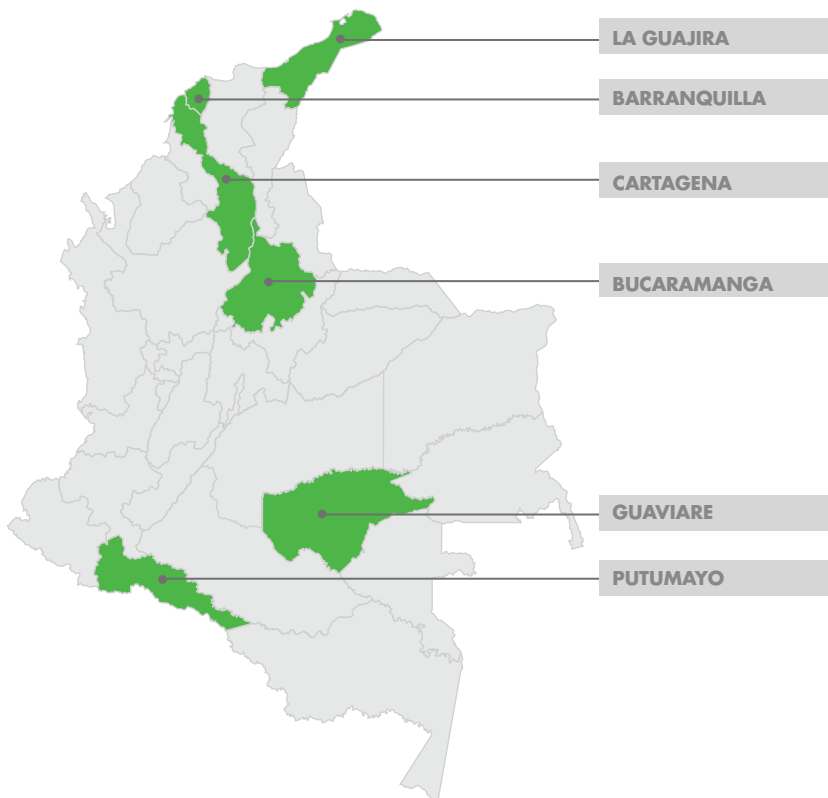
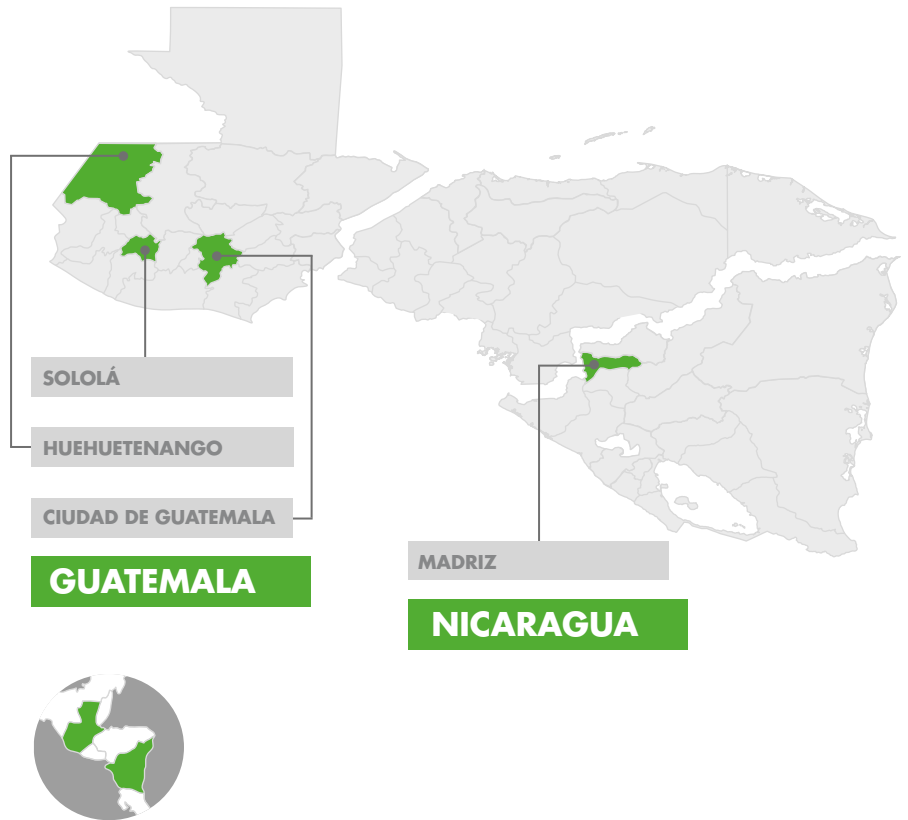
START YEAR OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC INCLUSION ACTIVITIES: 2017



1.336 PEOPLE SUPPORTED

PRIORITY GROUPS

- Refugees and/or returned migrants, deportees, asylum seekers and other persons in need of international protection.
- Rural population with a high rate of unmet basic needs or structural poverty.



COLOMBIA



N° OF PROJECTS: 6



START YEAR OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC INCLUSION ACTIVITIES: 2019



2.489 PEOPLE SUPPORTED

PRIORITY GROUPS

- Refugee and asylum-seeking women
- Women affected by armed conflict
- Former women combatants



PERU



N° OF PROJECTS: 8



START YEAR OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC INCLUSION ACTIVITIES: 2019



885 PEOPLE SUPPORTED

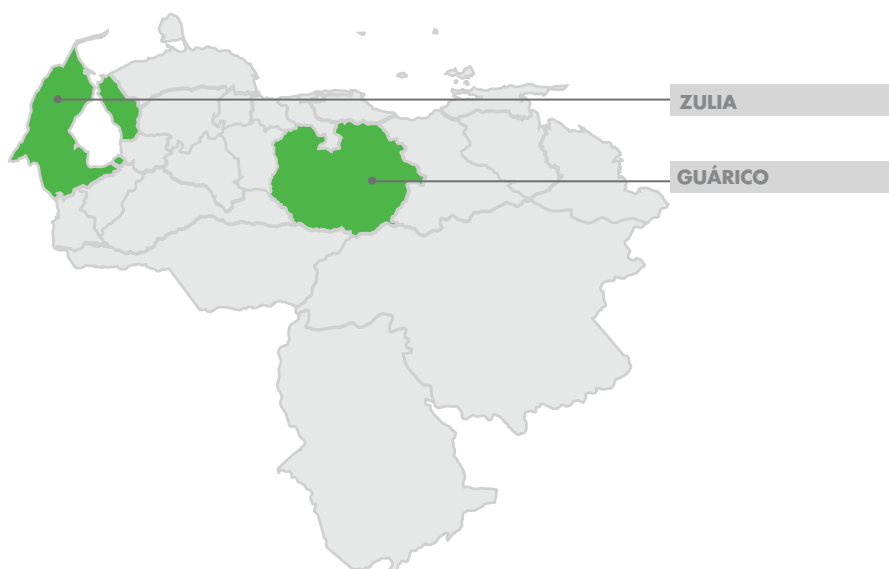
PRIORITY GROUPS

- Women
- Youth
- Migrant and refugee population with no access to livelihoods
- Rural population with a high rate of unmet basic needs or structural poverty



LIMA METROPOLITANA

AYACUCHO



ZULIA

GUÁRICO

VENEZUELA



N° OF PROJECTS: 2



START YEAR OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC INCLUSION ACTIVITIES: 2021



750 PEOPLE SUPPORTED

PRIORITY GROUPS

- Women in urban and rural contexts



PRIORITY GROUPS

Due to the magnitude of the crisis, which affects to a greater or lesser extent all citizens in the countries in which we work, we focus our work on those people who suffer multiple forms of exclusion, such as women, young people, rural populations with a high level of unmet basic needs and migrants, refugees, returnees, deportees and displaced persons.



WOMEN IN URBAN CONTEXT



CHALLENGES

- Informality
- Employment in sectors with high occupational and health risks
- Micro and small enterprises (MSEs) as the main source of employment - low levels of productivity



OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Room for improvement in the productivity of MSEs, main source of employment
- Support to participation
- Inclusion in the labor market reduces incidence of gender based violence (GBV)



YOUTH IN URBAN CONTEXT



CHALLENGES

- Low digital skills
- Limited internet access
- Higher participation in sectors with high risk of job loss



OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Digital literacy
- Government-sponsored infrastructure projects
- Growth of technology sectors



REFUGEE AND MIGRANT POPULATION WITHOUT ACCESS TO LIVELIHOODS



CHALLENGES

- Increase in unmet basic needs
- Lack of information
- Continued risk of eviction, mental health



OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- High level of education and professional experience
- Support networks
- Comprehensive support models covering basic needs



WOMEN AFFECTED BY THE ARMED CONFLICT AND FAMILIES OF EX-COMBATANTS

CHALLENGES



- Psychosocial harm suffered and lack of access to psychosocial care.
- Increased levels of risk aversion, which inhibits entrepreneurship
- Low qualifications / lack of education

OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS



- Comprehensive assistance, including psycho-social care
- Family accompaniment
- Diversification of income sources



INDIGENOUS AND AFRO-DESCENDANT WOMEN IN RURAL CONTEXT

CHALLENGES



- Unpaid care burden
- Limited technical skills
- Poor integration in value chains

OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS



- Cultural support for entrepreneurship
- Development of entrepreneurial competences
- Implementation of a differential ethnic approach



RETURNED AND DEPORTED MIGRANTS

CHALLENGES



- Lack of information
- Lack of financial resources to invest
- Training increases the likelihood that people will re-migrate

OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS



- Entrepreneurial attitude
- Promotion of access to differentiated financing
- Articulation with actors in the territory



RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Based on our experience and analysis of lessons learned from programs implemented in the region, we have identified a series of recommendations for the design and implementation of socio-economic inclusion programs. These recommendations are a call to sector organizations and donors to effectively address the challenges to socio-economic inclusion of the most vulnerable groups in the Latin American region.

1. CONTEXT



1.1 DIGITAL LITERACY IN THE NEW CONTEXT GENERATED BY THE PANDEMIC

The progressive digitalization of services such as training courses, support for formalization and/or psychosocial support is generating new gaps within the population, between people who have the material resources and knowledge to use them and groups that are being left out of this process.

It is recommended that **training activities on digital skills** be integrated into socio-economic inclusion programs and that actions be implemented to **support connectivity** through the provision of electronic devices and other resources that allow the most vulnerable people to access online services.

The acquisition of technological skills to access new digital services will allow people to improve their participation in social life and increase their income generation possibilities



In the context of COVID-19, serious limitations in terms of the digital competencies of young people and women have become evident. In the current context and for the future, there is an urgent need to work on strengthening these digital competencies.»

ALBERTO LOZADA

Technical specialist in employability and entrepreneurship
Action Against Hunger - Lima, Peru



Most of the people who participated in this workshop did not know how to open an email or how to create an email, they did not have Facebook, they did not use a computer. Many of them were mothers over 30, even the young people, some of them did not know how to write in Word, they have never used a computer, they do not have a computer, they do not have Internet[...]»

JULISSA ESPINOZA

Lima Norte Emplea y Emprende project
Action Against Hunger - Lima, Peru



1.2 CONTRIBUTING TO CRIME AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

In Latin America, urban crime and widespread violence are among the factors that most affect economic development and generate social costs. In addition, violence is one of the main drivers of migration and forced displacement.

To prevent violence and promote peace, it is important to develop socio-economic inclusion programs in **urban areas with high levels of crime** and **lower age groups**. It is also recommended to generate **partnerships** with companies (e.g. factories) whose employees live in areas with high levels of violence, to contribute to their socio-economic development.

Through these programs, young people have the opportunity to develop their skills for positive participation in society, surrounded by an environment that supports their capacity for action, strengthens their ability to avoid risks and turns them into agents of change.

Actors such as USAID recognize that youth participation is vital to development. The full participation of youth in development efforts can contribute to more sustainable investments to end cycles of poverty, build democratic societies, improve health and nutrition outcomes, and strengthen economies. Programs using a Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach have demonstrated that building the intellectual, physical, social and emotional competence of young people is a more effective development strategy than focusing solely on correcting problems.²²



²² <https://www.youthpower.org/positive-youth-development-pyd-framework>



1.3 CONTRIBUTING TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

As CEPAL points out, although economic growth on the continent has led to an increase in agricultural productivity and technological development, these benefits have come at a high environmental cost. In recent decades, there has been a sharp increase in air pollution in urban areas, deterioration of biodiversity, native forests and oceans, soil erosion and increased water scarcity.²³

In socio-economic inclusion programs, it is important to promote public awareness of the need to reduce pollution. Among other initiatives, it is recommended to promote environmental care through the concept of **circular economy**: reducing the use of plastics, reusing materials and recycling surplus materials from production to make other products.

The **triple bottom line** is another concept addressed in the entrepreneurship programs, which refers to the three aspects that every business should consider: economic benefit, social benefit and ecological benefit or return. In Action against Hunger's programs, we strive to make ventures economically viable, socially inclusive and ecologically sustainable.

Growth, equality and sustainability are inseparable elements. The promotion of environmental awareness and the development of businesses that incorporate concrete measures to mitigate environmental impacts help reduce pollution and the environmental impact of economic activity.

“

[...] we also focused on the environmental issue; for example, when I cut the fabrics, I have a lot of cotton or synthetic fabrics that I used to throw away because they were useless, it was wasted; then, after I saw that it is important to give it a reusable use[...] I contacted a friend who has his mechanical workshop and he selects a part of it to make dusters, and another part that is already useless he uses it to absorb the oil that falls from the machines, because he has a lathe workshop[...] He also has a friend to whom he gives the smallest fabrics for her handicrafts[...]»

LUZ MARÍA AGUILAR
Lima Norte Emplea y Emrende project
Action against Hunger - Lima, Peru

²³ CEPAL, Naciones Unidas, La emergencia del cambio climático en América Latina y el Caribe ¿Seguimos esperando la catástrofe o pasamos a la acción? (2020)



2. DESIGN



2.1 FLEXIBILITY OF PROGRAMS AND METHODOLOGIES

Whether urban or rural, the contexts in which socio-economic inclusion programs operate are extremely diverse and dynamic. Economic opportunities depend on the potential of the area and the target population, a factor that varies from one geographic region to another and can change over time.

Proposals that have **flexible structures** and allow technical teams on the ground to adapt activities to the context will have a better chance of having a positive impact on the territory. Program flexibility can also allow teams to react to unexpected events and take advantage of **local opportunities**.

A greater role for the technical teams in the implementation phase will allow a better alignment of the programs to the local reality and a greater impact on the territory and on the people.



The flexibility of the Vives Emplea methodology²⁴ of Action Against Hunger is another aspect that has been highlighted by the project team, as it allows to focus and adapt the contents and tools to the needs and characteristics of each work group, and also to meet the needs of each participant, so that each one can strengthen and enhance those knowledge and skills that are necessary to access a job and that may differ from one participant to another.»

HENRY TORRES
Deputy Director
Action Against Hunger - Lima, Peru



2.2 USING A HOLISTIC APPROACH, ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS IN THE TERRITORY

The difficulties and challenges faced by the continent's most vulnerable groups are systemically interrelated. In a context where groups and individuals suffer multiple forms of exclusion, solving a single obstacle can hardly allow for socio-economic inclusion.

It is important to design comprehensive programs that address the multiple causes of exclusion, establishing a framework of collaboration with actors within the community. For this reason, it is necessary to identify not only those services aimed at inclusive employment or the promotion of entrepreneurship, but also services aimed at the target audience of the intervention or the population in general.

Greater collaboration between actors in the territory will improve the access of individuals and families to the resources available in their environment and address the **multiple dimensions that affect their exclusion**, facilitating a more active participation in the community.

²⁴ Ed. Note: Employment Shuttle in its English version



“

A key aspect of our strategy is the coordinated and articulated work with the different relevant local actors in the territory and on the subject: local governments of the eight districts of Northern Lima, the Municipal Community of Northern Lima, the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima, the Ministry of Labor and Employment Promotion, private companies, the Employability and Entrepreneurship Network of Northern Lima, public and private universities and civil society organizations, with the aim of joining institutional efforts, sharing lessons learned and improving local public policies.»

ALEJANDRO VARGAS

Technical Coordinator
Action Against Hunger - Lima, Peru



2.3 PROMOTING DECENT CONDITIONS IN CONTEXTS OF HIGH INFORMALITY

In Latin America, informality is a situation of great magnitude and extremely heterogeneous. Around 50% of the region's workforce are working informally.²⁵

In contexts where labor formality is very limited or absent, it is important that socio-economic inclusion programs have a holistic approach, addressing the different aspects related to informality, its causes and consequences. At the level of public advocacy, it is necessary to demand **economic policies** focused on employment and explicitly aimed at curbing informality, together with **legislation** that promotes paths to formality for those people who are developing their activities in the informal economy. It is also important to highlight the key role played by **social dialogue** in the formulation and implementation of effective policies to support this transition to formality.

Given their fundamental role in promoting labor rights and decent working conditions, it is essential to strengthen the active participation of trade unions, business organizations and cooperatives and promote their dialogue. Likewise, socio-economic inclusion programs need to promote the extension of **social protection** (childcare, maternity protection, measures to address economic and social exclusion) to people dependent on informal markets.

These actions are intended to minimize the negative effects of informality on the most vulnerable groups and to speed up the pathways to formality where possible.

The International Labor Organization recommends addressing the high levels of informality that exist in many contexts in the region from multiple perspectives, adopting a comprehensive approach.²⁶



²⁵ ILO <https://www.ilo.org/americas/temas/econom%C3%ADa-informal/lang-es/index.htm>

²⁶ ILO, The informal economy and decent work: a policy resource guide supporting transitions to formality (2013)



3. IMPLEMENTATION



3.1 SUPPORTING MSEs WITH THE CAPACITY TO GENERATE JOBS

Latin America is one of the regions in the world with the highest number of micro and small enterprises (MSEs). These actors represent an important source of employment for women. However, their growth is limited by low productivity levels. It is therefore necessary to work with this segment to promote economic development in rural and urban contexts and thus reduce gender inequalities in terms of access to employment opportunities.

In coordination with the services available in the territory, it is important to identify companies with growth potential using a **value chain approach** and always considering the do-no-harm principle. Therefore, an analysis is required to identify sectors and companies whose growth does not generate social or environmental damage to the rest of the community.

These actors can receive incubation,²⁷ pre-acceleration or acceleration²⁸ services appropriate to the stage and type of venture. Using a comprehensive approach, it is necessary to promote financial inclusion, digital transformation, representation of MSEs and boost their productivity.

The objective is to enable companies to reach sufficient operational and sales levels to allow the hiring of new personnel. In this way, the labor absorption capacity of the local economy is promoted and traditionally excluded individuals and groups have more opportunities for labor inclusion.



“

I believe that my business started here, because I learned the tools to know how much to sell my product for. I had never really known how to calculate that. I had never had a business for myself but for hobby, but now I do have the business I needed, things came together and everything is working out well! »

AMALIA ROSA
Vives Emprende project
Action Against Hunger - Barranquilla, Colombia

²⁷ Technical or financial support to start-up businesses

²⁸ Business acceleration is the process by which a company achieves good results in a short period of time through a specific action plan



3.2 PROVIDING FAMILY SUPPORT TO HOUSEHOLDS LIVING BELOW THE POVERTY LINE

The capacity of the head(s) of household to generate income is directly related to the coverage of the needs of the other members. At the same time, household dynamics affect the capacity of individuals to generate and maintain their livelihoods over time. This link becomes stronger as the family's degree of socio-economic exclusion increases.

In these cases, interventions are needed that go beyond individual support to provide **comprehensive assistance to households**. This support can cover the main elements of vulnerability, including health, nutrition, education, digital literacy, basic household finances, gender roles, etc.

Household support can also reduce cases of gender-based domestic violence and promote an environment in which gender-based stereotypes are overcome.

To carry out this type of support, using a social protection approach,²⁹ it is important to count on a multidisciplinary team, including psychology professionals, and to work in coordination with the services available in the area.

This allows the head(s) of household to achieve sustainability of their income-generating activity and generate livelihoods that are maintained over time and allow families to quickly cope with and recover from shocks.

“

Since 2014 UNHCR has been implementing the Graduation Model methodology in Latin America. It is a sequential multisectoral intervention that supports the poorest and most vulnerable households to achieve a sustained income and enable them to escape extreme poverty within a specific period of time»

DANIEL IZA
Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion Officer
UNHCR Guatemala

²⁹ Set of interventions aimed at reducing social and economic risk and vulnerability and alleviating extreme poverty and deprivation (FAO).



3.3 COMBINING AWARENESS-RISING AND ADVOCACY ACTIONS WITHIN EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMS

Among the main challenges to labor inclusion faced by the most vulnerable groups are discrimination and practices associated with prejudices based on gender, ethnicity and place of origin. Migrants, refugees, deportees and returnees also face obstacles to formalization and recognition of their educational qualifications.

For this reason, it is necessary to incorporate advocacy plans in socio-economic inclusion programs to promote an improvement in the design and implementation of public policies for the insertion of migrants and other traditionally excluded groups in the local labor market. Advocacy activities should be aimed at officials and decision-makers in charge of defining and implementing public policies.

Compliance with labor rights has been a central element of the Lima Norte Emplea y Emprende project. The topic has been positively evaluated by the participants because of its usefulness during the job search and when dealing with the employer, especially in cases where complaints are warranted. This topic was particularly emphasized by the Venezuelan participants, who were more unfamiliar with Peruvian regulations.

To address discrimination and xenophobia, it is recommended to promote awareness campaigns aimed at the host population and to involve young people from both populations in project activities to confront and address discrimination and xenophobia.

At the same time, it is necessary to work with the target population and the private sector in awareness-raising activities that link the promotion of labor rights to the multiple activities of the project.



The topic of labor rights was very interesting, because I didn't know that as a worker I had so many rights, so many things to know, I wasn't very aware of that."

CELESTE BARTUREN
Lima Norte Emplea y Emprende project
Action Against Hunger – Lima, Peru





3.4 PRIORITIZING TRANSFERABLE SKILLS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE RESILIENCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

In a context of forced migration, informality and economic volatility such as that of Latin America, people belonging to the most vulnerable groups rarely manage to maintain a single occupation throughout their lives and previously acquired technical competencies may be difficult to take advantage of in the new context.

A key element of socio-economic inclusion programs is the promotion of cross-cutting competencies, such as **soft skills**,³⁰ which can be used at different stages of one's professional life, as well as in one's personal life.

In order to contribute to the development of cross-cutting competencies, Action Against Hunger programs have a participatory and experiential approach, where the participants are the leading players and they determine the development and the contents to be worked on, and put this knowledge into practice.

Since 2019, Action against Hunger has been working for the socio-economic inclusion of young people and women in Lima. Using a competency-based approach, the "Vives programs"³¹ for employment and entrepreneurship seek to promote the acquisition of social skills and basic competencies by people for their socio-economic inclusion, highlighting their talent and initiative to improve their personal situation and the environment around them. To achieve this objective, the training methodology is dynamic and playful, aspects that have been positively valued by the participants.

On the other hand, it is essential to include the **gender perspective** across the board, from the initial phase (giving equal opportunity to women and men to access the training), to the contents (including specific topics on gender equality and equity), the methodological tools (dynamics and specific exercises to motivate reflection on gender roles and stereotypes, time distribution between men and women and others), the use of inclusive language and the invitation of women and men speakers to address these issues and share their experiences. The gender approach has been an effective tool for promoting women's labor rights and combating gender-based violence.



Because of all the situation I had been through, I felt a bit demotivated, with low self-esteem. The training helped me regain this motivation[...] you develop yourself, you know how to deal with people, find solutions to conflicts. That was very important for our intellectual development. Despite my age, it has been important to me. We always talked and saw the motivation it gave us, how to develop ourselves, what we want to achieve and how we want to be, what kind of leader we want to be.»

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³⁰ Personal competencies that are most in demand by employers, such as self-esteem, self-confidence, perseverance, communication and teamwork. These competencies allow people to enter the work environment in a satisfactory way and increase the chances of success in the development of their functions. They also imply advantages both at a personal level and for companies.

³¹ Methodology of Acción contra el Hambre that seeks to promote the social and labor inclusion of unemployed people in a situation or at risk of social exclusion, through their personal development and the strengthening of their skills. The program involves the creation of teams made up of unemployed people, who improve their social skills and their competencies for employment or entrepreneurship through group sessions, individual sessions and contact with the private sector.



4. TEAMS AND PARTNERS



4.1 SETTING UP AND TRAINING TECHNICAL TEAMS COMPRISING MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

Refugees, migrants, indigenous and Afro-descendant populations, and informal workers in urban and rural areas have different needs, strengths, visions and strategies.

It is important that these groups see the preservation of their culture recognized, as well as the promotion of entrepreneurial strategies originated and controlled by the community itself, according to its own **cultural values and priorities**.

In rural areas with the presence of diverse indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, it is essential to use an ethnic differential approach. This is put into practice by understanding the development vision of the indigenous and/or Afro-descendant people, aligned with their worldview, priorities and traditions, and their inclusion in the program. This allows understanding the community's expectations about the program and adjusting objectives, expected results and activities.

For this reason, in the initial phase of the program, it is recommended that the technical team be made up of native people or people belonging to the community who have a deep knowledge of the local culture and language, as well as of its mechanisms and the actors that make up the community. This element must be accompanied by an investment in the training of the selected personnel.

Throughout the project, it is essential to implement activities to understand the local context and learn from it in order to adapt the tools and strategies for socio-economic inclusion.

Offering support that is more in line with the local environment, the community's worldview and existing socio-economic development desires allows programs to obtain results that are more consistent with the territory and that are more sustainable over time.

In Venezuela, Acción contra el Hambre works in Villa del Rosario, a community whose local economy depends on trade with Colombia, which has been severely limited by border closures. Indigenous women in Villa del Rosario face institutionalized racial and gender inequalities that limit their economic opportunities. To address the complexity of the context of the implementation area, thanks to the support of a local community center, the program has been able to count on a trainer from the community as part of its team. This element has allowed the establishment of a positive and collaborative relationship between the community and the technical team, facilitating the identification of entrepreneurial strategies adapted to the women's vision and the definition of skills that could be useful in the long term.





4.2 FOSTERING A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP ON THE PART OF LOCAL ACTORS

Within the framework of local development programs, local stakeholders often feel that their knowledge and experience are not valued. As a result, the methodologies and tools used are not integrated into their service portfolios.

It is recommended that organizations working in the region **promote the leadership or co-leadership** of these actors in the design and implementation of socio-economic inclusion programs.

In the design phase, it is important to create spaces for methodological exchange, so that local actors can share their vision, tools and strategies so that these can be integrated into the programs.

Where possible, the role of international organizations should be limited to operational, technical and methodological support.

An equal participation of local stakeholders in the design and implementation of programs will allow a greater appropriation of innovative methodologies and resources, allowing for their sustainability over time.

GIZ works in Latin America in areas such as policy advocacy, institutional strengthening, promotion of employment, entrepreneurship and the circular economy, and vocational training. In its Promotion of Sustainable Rural Economic Development (PRODES) II program in Colombia, one of the greatest success factors was the bottom-up approach, which made it possible to consider the demands at the level of partners and counterparts. The leadership of the partners in the design and implementation of actions resulted in a higher degree of ownership.³³



³³ Alice van Cauberg, Diana Ramos y Tatjana Mauthofer (Mainlevel Consulting AG), Evaluación central de proyecto Promoción del Desarrollo Económico Rural Sostenible (PRODES) II (2020)



4.3 ENGAGING AND STRENGTHENING STAKEHOLDERS

Socio-economic inclusion is an issue that involves numerous public, private and civil society actors. Coordination between these bodies can be weak in some cases.

In the framework of socio-economic inclusion programs, it is recommended to strengthen this collaboration and **break down the compartmentalization** that may exist between the different dimensions (e.g. microfinance institutions, business incubators, ministries). It is important, at an early stage of the program, to identify the entities present in the intervention area dedicated to the promotion of employment or entrepreneurship and to analyze their capacities.

Within the framework of the program, a steering committee may be established which, through regular meetings among its members, can help to improve the coordination of the activities of the different actors. These meetings can gather representatives of relevant ministries, the private sector, technical experts with sectoral knowledge, representatives of vocational training centers, etc., at the same discussion table. Such meetings help to build trust and foster collaboration among stakeholders in the territory.

To increase the scale and sustainability of the program, it is also important to work through **local structures**, jointly designing capacity building plans that allow them to grow organizationally throughout the program.

Greater collaboration between the actors in the territory, together with their organizational growth, will generate an environment that offers greater support to people in a situation or at risk of exclusion so that they can recover economically.



In 2019, in the framework of the Lima Norte Emplea y Emprende project, an exchange was held between Action Against Hunger and local partners. In particular, a 2-week workshop allowed to identify common methodological elements and to define areas of improvement for all the organizations involved. As a result of the exchange, new tools and methodologies have been integrated into their programs by “Alternativa”, a civil society organization that promotes the labor inclusion of people at risk of exclusion, contributing to strengthen their employment and entrepreneurship programs beyond the duration of the project.



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