



Youth who completed their internships in private companies in Choluteca.

© UNHCR/Gabriela Villeda

Key figures

92 

youth who were forcibly displaced or at-risk of displacement were part of the programme.

53 

private companies offered internship opportunities.

49% 

employability rate

Empowering Displaced Youth through Internship Financing

Overview

In 2023, UNHCR Honduras initiated an innovative programme in collaboration with the Centre for Entrepreneurship Development (CDE Golfo), Community Training Centres, the National Vocational Training Institute (INFOP), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the Secretariat of Labour and Social Security (SETRASS), and 53 private sector companies. This programme aimed to finance internships, bolstering skills development, and enhancing future job prospects for internally displaced people.

The context of forced displacement in Honduras is complex, primarily driven by widespread violence but compounded by extortion, gender-based violence, human rights abuses, and climate change impacts. Economic struggles, amplified by limited employment opportunities and inadequate access to basic services, underscore the daily hardships faced by the populace, with internally displaced people frequently excluded from access to training, formal employment opportunities and higher education options. This backdrop underscores the importance of livelihood programmes, designed to include internally displaced people and those at risk of displacement to mitigate the socioeconomic impacts of being forced to flee one's community and home. By facilitating collaboration across actors to improve employment access and fostering labour market inclusion, these initiatives are crucial in offering durable solutions for forcibly displaced populations.



UNHCR, NRC and IPSA, one of the biggest furniture companies in Honduras, visit mentors of the internship programme at a furniture workshop, November 2023.

© UNHCR Honduras

Objective

UNHCR's livelihood programme, which funds internships for internally displaced youth, is dedicated to facilitating their entry into the formal labour market. This initiative encompasses not only those at risk of displacement but also returnees requiring protection and refugees. Embracing a whole-of-society approach, the programme fosters collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including civil society, private sector entities, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centres, and government agencies. It aims to raise awareness about displacement challenges among these actors and motivate their proactive involvement in creating lasting solutions for displaced individuals.

Programme Details

Participants The programme engaged **92 youth who were forcibly displaced or at-risk of displacement**, with limited or no previous work experience, providing them with access to internships with the private sector, while receiving financial support and close follow-up from UNHCR and its partners for three months.

Private Sector Involvement: A total of **53 companies offered internship opportunities** across various sectors.

Programme Focus: The internship and training areas were based on market studies and labour market trends, ensuring relevance and higher chances for future employability.

Role of State Institutions The INFOP enhanced the programme by providing all participants with soft skills training, aimed at maximizing their future employment prospects. Additionally, the SETRASS offered training on labour laws. Following programme completion, SETRASS actively supported graduates who had not secured job offers from their internship locations. This support involved assisting them in finding appropriate job placements through its employment centres and the ¡Si Empleo! platform.



© UNHCR Honduras

*“Although I had heard about the company, I never felt I had the skills and necessary experience to apply for job here. As young people, we are often deterred by the requirement to have previous work experience. **Thanks to the programme, I not only got a chance to approach the company, gain official job experience, but also to learn the work in different functional areas.** I think my strong side is the quality compliance evaluation of the coffee fincas and I will seek to work in this area.”*

María, 21 years
Intern at the coffee cooperative in Ocatepeque.

Key Achievements in 2023

Employment Outcomes Nearly half (49%) of the programme's graduates secured employment, with the remainder continuing their job search via the SETRASS ¡Si Empleo! Platform, with ongoing support from SETRASS

Positive Private Sector Response The programme was highly praised by participating companies, showing a keen interest in ongoing collaboration. Of the 53 companies involved, **nine offered additional financial support** to interns during their three-month training period.

Participant Satisfaction The **programme was highly valued by its youth participants**, who reported significant satisfaction. They highlighted not only the skills gained and formal employment experience, but also personal growth benefits such as increased confidence, self-esteem, and motivation to pursue better employment opportunities.

Institutional Commitment SETRASS showcased the programme as a key achievement within the Marco Integral Regional para la Protección y Soluciones (MIRPS), the regional framework for the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). It also expressed plans to secure funding to expand the programme in 2024.

Background

The inception of UNHCR's programme was based on an assessment of the job placement rates for graduates from TVET centres, particularly those most physically accessible to displaced individuals in Honduras. This analysis revealed relatively low employment rates among these graduates. In response, UNHCR and its partners assisted 23 TVET institutions in updating their curricula and supplying relevant training equipment, thereby enhancing the market relevance of their programmes. Collaboration with INFOP was also focused on the certification of pertinent courses in these prioritized centres. The curricular themes were selected based on a 2022 labour market assessment, ensuring they matched the employment sectors most in demand in the respective regions.

In 2023, UNHCR shifted its focus towards integrating youth, particularly those lacking work experience and TVET centre graduates, into the formal job market. Collaborating closely with various private sector entities, UNHCR facilitated internship opportunities for 92 young individuals. The programme targeted internally displaced persons, those at risk of displacement, returnees needing protection, and refugees.

UNHCR's extensive field presence and network of partners were instrumental in identifying eligible candidates for the programme. Those with specific protection needs and characteristics were prioritized for participation, contingent upon meeting the programme's eligibility requirements.

"I not only learned the new skills, but was warmly accepted into the team. And at the end of the programme, I received a job offer! When it was my birthday – the team prepared me a cake. Real inclusion – on all levels. I can't believe how my life changed 180 degrees just in 3 months."

Roque, 22 years
Intern at AC maintenance company.



© UNHCR Honduras

Impact and Future Outlook

The internship programme has showed promising results in the employment and social and economic inclusion of displaced youth in Honduras. Its successful pilot in 2023 has established a robust foundation for future expansion and ongoing success. Looking ahead, UNHCR is committed to intensifying its initiatives to support a larger number of forcibly displaced individuals and to strengthen collaboration with private sector entities and government agencies.



© UNHCR Honduras

"When we were approached with the offer to participate in the internship programme, as a company, we considered it to be a great opportunity to find a new potential staff while contributing to the solutions for displaced persons. We consider it a win-win. We invested time and resources in the training of the interns, and during these 3 months have been observing both, their learning progress and their attitudes to work. Both is equally important. We are very interested to scale up our participation in this or similar programmes in 2024"

Head of Human Resources
IPSA, San Pedro Sula