FACTSHEET

COSTA RICA: Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion

As of August 2024

Background

Social and economic inclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees in Costa Rica includes **fostering their access to formal and decent jobs** and other income generation opportunities in the **Metro Area (GAM)** and the **Northern Region**.

UNHCR in Costa Rica advocates for forcibly displaced and stateless people to access state-led programs and labour market opportunities by **boosting capacity-building to improve employability and business ownership**, and through advocacy with the public and private sectors.

Key outcomes in 2023

- **Refugee unemployment decreased** from **9%** in 2022 to **7.2%** in 2023.
- **Financial Inclusion** of refugees, which includes access to bank accounts and mobile payments, was **slightly higher** than expected (**66%** versus **65%** forecasted target).
- **Refugee income was 11% lower in 2023** than in 2022, which is 22 pp below the 33% target, which can be related to the **deterioration of their working conditions**.

Living Integration (VLI) 2023 Key Figures: V Edition of the VLI Award

Vivir la Inclusión
Fomentá la Equidad. Creá Oportunidades.
Vivi La Inclusión

47 organizations from private, public and civil society sectors presented a nomination, **30% more** than in 2022

+900 **people were trained in technical and digital skills** for employment or entrepreneurship through various multisector alliances

42 **recognitions were granted in 2 ceremonies**, including **11 honorable mentions**, more than double than those granted last year

282 **private seed capital** identified (both in-cash and in-kind)

349 **people were directly employed** as a result of **4** referral agreements with partner agencies, **4** job fairs and **5** corporate inclusion policies identified

15 **research projects**, including a formal and informal labor study on refugees and asylum seekers **shared with 16 public sector institutions** for decision-making

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VLI Spirit

- The "**Living Integration**" refugee economic inclusion framework was rebranded as "**Living Inclusion**". Our team held an event to launch the new brand and present the VI edition of the Living Inclusion Seal where we had 35 allied organizations in attendance, as well as our own UNHCR Representative, Andrés Celis Neira, who was in charge of providing context and an introduction to this new iteration of our framework.
- This economic inclusion framework has been **implemented by UNHCR in Costa Rica since 2014**.
- Since then, it has contributed to the application of an **all-society, shared responsibility approach**, where the private sector and civil society organizations play a key role in the economic inclusion of those forced to flee.
- The main purpose of the **rebranding strategy**, including the change of its name, is to emphasize that **forced displacement is a reality for which all countries and societies must reflect and act upon proactively**. Therefore, addressing this situation is **not only a responsibility that refugees must undertake** to "adapt" or "integrate", but a shared duty with host countries to include them as part of the population who resides in their territories.
- The framework seeks to establish the international protection response as a **key task within national and local private sector, civil society and government**, while also researching and presenting the gains and benefits of the economic inclusion of people forced to flee in the host society.

VLI 2024: UNHCR's contribution

As of July 2024

2,000 people reached through:

Training:

- **219** Financial Health
- **225** Certified courses, including digital literacy, CCNA (Information Technologies), business management, etc.

Advisory and Support:

- **2,000** Workplan development
- **15** Job Interview Workshops

Livelihoods Grants:

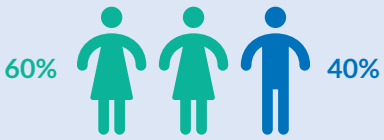
- **26** training grants
- **15** seed capital

Profile of people assisted

2024

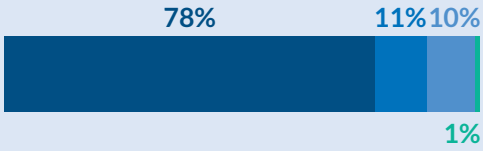
Sex

60% women
40% men



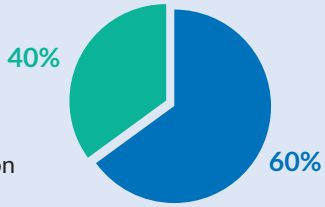
Nationality

78% Nicaraguans
11% Venezuelans
10% Others
1% People from host communities



Residence

60% from the Metro Area and Central Region
40% from the Northern Region



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Partnerships with the private sector

In 2024, the work in progress around the **VI Edition of the Living Inclusion/*Vivir la inclusión Award*** is focused on adding new allies to continue growing our community. Our ongoing **rebranding campaign** is not only increasing awareness and visibility of the VLI framework but also help us **create high-value alliances to target refugee and asylum seeker-led initiatives**, as well as financial inclusion and capacity-building for agricultural initiatives in the Northern area.

In 2024, we aim to **consolidate the VLI multi-sector ecosystem** by launching our rebranding campaign. This campaign includes a new image, website, communications strategy and a new design for the VLI award process. We hope this will help VLI grow, aiming at **including more organizations than ever before and providing an easier path for those getting started**.

Our field work:

On 21 June, as part of the commemoration of the **World Refugee Day**, UNHCR led an **Entrepreneurship Fair** at the facilities of the Migration Authority's (DGME) Refugee Unit in **San José**. **Five refugee and asylum-seeker women entrepreneurs participated** in the activity, offering their products and services, such as gastronomic products, jewelry, graphic design, among others, which represent an **opportunity to improve their livelihoods** and at the same time **grow with their host communities**.

In this fair, UNHCR and its partner agencies provided information on their different services offered, reaching more than **280 people**. This information was complemented with informative talks regarding **UNHCR's Livelihoods program**, tips on **how to face a job interview** and the experiences of **starting a business in Costa Rica**, the latter by the entrepreneurs at the fair. **Fundación Omar Dengo**, UNHCR's livelihoods partner agency, supported the rest of the talks and conducted assessments among participants to facilitate their incorporation into the program.

The group of entrepreneurs talked to Ms. Cindy Molina Mora, Head of the Refugee Unit. They discussed the **challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers in the country**, the specific **challenges of entrepreneurs**, as well as the **efforts by the Refugee Unit** to support the forcibly displaced population in Costa Rica.

Also, on **22 June**, an **Employment Fair** organized by the **State Distance Learning University** (**UNED**) took place in **Upala**. Fundación Omar Dengo provided information on access to the labor market for people in forced displacement to individuals and companies who participated in the Fair.

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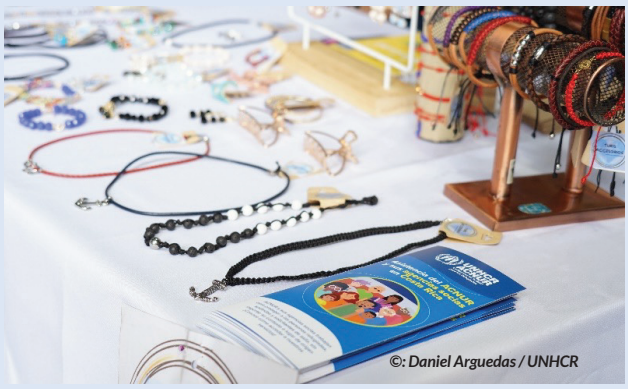
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UNHCR appreciates the contributions of donor countries that contribute to Costa Rica and global programs with unearmarked funds:
As of 31 July 2024

UNHCR Costa Rica also appreciates the contributions of our private donors globally:
Republic of Korea and Japan

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