

January - September 2023

Social and economic inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees in Costa Rica includes **fostering access to formal and decent jobs** and other income generating 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 advocacy with the public and private sectors.

REMARKS BY AREA



In this reporting period, raising awareness aimed at **employment opportunities** for asylum seekers has become a challenge due to the latest **changes in the norms regarding work permits**, which introduce more requirements for the recruitment process.



Regarding **local inclusion** of refugees and asylum-seekers, actions are targeted towards **improving their employability profile** through digital literacy, technical training, job intermediation and access to financial services.



For **entrepreneurial development**, actions aim to enhance their **business management skills**, add value to the products and services offered and improve their **value chain linkages** to local markets.

ACHIEVEMENTS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

5 BUSINESS EVENTS with private sector to promote awareness and engagement with their Social Responsibility programs alongside our Partner Agencies.

255 PEOPLE CONNECTED TO DECENT WORK OPPORTUNITIES thanks to advocacy for employment and job fairs.

20 ENTREPRENEURS CATERED TO WRD ACTIVITIES including the fair, food and drink area and cultural activities.

THE HUMAN TALENT CONGRESS organized by the Costa Rica Chamber of Commerce allowed us to make important connections with recruiters and HR directors from diverse organizations connected to the Chamber and to promote *Vivir la Integración* program to potential partners.

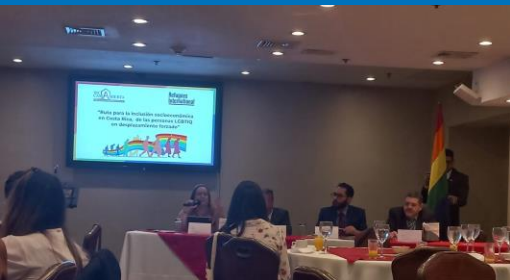
KEY FIGURES 2023

1,008	persons received assistance through the livelihoods programme
381	persons completed a financial health course to improve access to services
363	persons completed a digital literacy course for self-employment, wage-employment and entrepreneurship digital literacy
351	persons participated in basic training to improve their set skills
192	persons completed technical training for wage-employment, self-employment and entrepreneurship
107	persons accessed business training

LIVELIHOODS STRATEGY

- Private sector partnerships to develop recruitment strategies, staff awareness and capacity-building for forcibly displaced.
- Access to national social protection, education, and employability programs by creating alliances with public institutions.
- Wage employment job intermediation and business linkages to local value chains and commercialization opportunities.
- Access to basic, functional, and digital literacy and reduction of the digital gap.
- Access to financial products and services such as bank accounts, digital payments and financial health.
- Access to formal and decent wage and self-employment opportunities.
- Training for capacity-building on waged and self-employment skills, considering specific needs and opportunities in the Central and Northern Regions.

January - September 2023



The Livelihoods Unit was present at the "Route to Socioeconomic Inclusion of forcibly displaced LGBTQ+ persons" panel organized by our partner agency IRCA Casabierta



Seminar "What works and what doesn't when designing inclusive organizations?" by our allies Efecto Boomerang and the Costa Rican Chamber of Commerce.



UNHCR and Partner Agencies Fundación Omar Dengo and Fundación Mujer were invited to the internal World Refugee Day celebration at Western Union for awareness talks and entrepreneurship fair

VIVIR LA INTEGRACIÓN INITIATIVE

This initiative seeks to **promote the socioeconomic inclusion and self-reliance** of people forced to flee and stateless people, through an all-society, shared responsibility, network approach. It articulates **key sector actors** such as the Ministry of Labor (MTSS), the National Learning Institute (INA), partner agencies *Fundación Mujer* and *Fundación Omar Dengo*, the Business Alliance for Development (AED), and the Costa Rican Chamber of Commerce, among others.

In coordination with INA and partner agencies, a **referral mechanism has been implemented**, which allows entrepreneurs to join more than 20 courses to enhance their capacities for management, e-commerce, business formalization, etc. For both **wage employment and self-employment**, *Fundación Mujer* and *Fundación Omar Dengo*

have referred asylum-seekers and refugees to courses provided by INA in different zones.

Actions have been taken to **amplify the network of public and private organizations**. The IMAS's trust fund, FIDEIMAS, which is part of the Joint Institute for Social Assistance, has a mandate to support women in poverty and their families to develop productive activities, including SME and entrepreneurship. In collaboration with UN Women, FIDEIMAS has an e-commerce platform for women's businesses. In an **entrepreneurship fair**, asylum-seekers and refugees living in poverty conditions, presented their products to FIDEIMAS as a part of the evaluation process to be included in this platform.

ECONOMIC INCENTIVES

This initiative aims to benefit people with and for whom UNHCR works that complete business management training with **business start-up grants**, to invest in infrastructure, raw material, equipment, and supplies. Self-employed refugees can invest in equipment and tools. These grants also provide **basic economic support for participating in technical trainings** to improve wage-employment or entrepreneurship capacities. As of September 2023, **54 people have received these grants**; 27 of them (24 women and 3 men) live in Los Chiles, Upala and La Cruz, border cantons of the Northern Region. The economic incentives in this region work as a **strengthening strategy** to compensate for the lack of decent and formal jobs and the difficulties in accessing to childcare in this area, especially for women.

LISTENING TO COMMUNITIES

In August, the UNHCR Livelihoods team shared with **leaders of six communities located in Los Chiles and Upala**: Veracruz, Nueva Esperanza, La Virgen, Villa Nueva, Jomuza and Cartago Norte. These communities were **prioritized by Upala Field Unit Team** due to their vulnerability, but, mainly, due to their strengths and organizational capacities. Aspects such as livelihoods in the communities, resources required (technical knowledge, digital literacy, infrastructure, raw material, tools, etc.), challenges, interests and plans were discussed. Having these meetings allowed the **creation and targeting of strategies** according to the diversity that characterized the prioritized communities. These strategies must be developed for **all the groups living in the communities** to promote inclusion for people with and for whom UNHCR works and mitigate xenophobic practices within host communities.

January - September 2023

VIVIR LA INTEGRACIÓN SEAL

This certification is provided to **entities that take specific actions toward socioeconomic inclusion** of the people with and whom for UNHCR works. Based on Corporate Social Responsibility schemes, it allows organizations to report on **concrete actions conducted to protect and include the refugee and asylum-seeker population**. In 2022 more than 30 entities from the public and private sectors, academia, civil society, and NGOs were recognized for their positive actions. Many of them and some additional ones have already started workplans for this year's award and UNHCR expects even more nominations than in 2023. The **V Edition** was launched in June 2023.

CONNECTING WITH DONORS

In September, Costa Rica hosted the **Central American Donor Forum, CAFD 2023**, organized by the Seattle International Foundation. The Forum gathered 700 attendees, 180 speakers and 23 sponsors from the main donors towards livelihoods related projects in the region. Our office organized the panel “Closing Gaps: the Socioeconomic Potential of a Comprehensive Refugee Response”, moderated by Nathalie Hobeica from the Americas Bureau, with participation from our Partner Agencies *Fundación Mujer* and *Fundación Omar Dengo*, one of our main private sector partners, Accenture, and a representative of the Labour Ministry.

Additionally, the Livelihoods Unit organized a **visit to Fundación Omar Dengo facilities**, in order to connect donor organizations with UNHCR beneficiaries and have first-hand experience of training provided for them. Attendees represented the Norwegian Refugee Council USA, Glasswing International, USAID Honduras, Friendship Bridge, Fund for Global Human Rights, FUNDE, and Latin America Working.



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

As of 4 October 2023




From the People of Japan



UNHCR Costa Rica also appreciates the contributions of our private donors globally:
 Australia / Japan / Italy / Republic of Korea / Spain / United Kingdom / United States

CONTACT: Esteban Sánchez (sanchez@unhcr.org), Assistant Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion Officer

LINKS: UNHCR Costa Rica webpage | @ACNUR CostaRica | Costa Rica | Global Focus | Central America & Mexico | Operational Data Portal