

Resilience Through Socio-Economic Inclusion of Displacement-Affected Populations in Costa Rica

Costa Rica | Duration: February 2022 - January 2025 | Implementing partners: Fundación Mujer (FM) and Fundación Ayuda en Acción (AeA) - Costa Rica

The Challenge

Costa Rica hosts significant displacement-affected populations, including refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants primarily from Nicaragua and Venezuela. These populations face barriers to integration including limited access to formal employment, discrimination, and challenges in obtaining documentation and essential services. Local authorities and service providers, despite showing goodwill, often lack awareness of Costa Rica's commitments under the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) and have insufficient resources to address these populations' needs effectively. Meanwhile, displaced people may not understand their rights and entitlements, and lack structures to collectively voice their needs to relevant authorities.

The Solution

This practice promotes sustainable socioeconomic integration of displaced people and host communities in Costa Rica. It combines job placement, vocational training, and entrepreneurship interventions with protection components, including psychosocial and legal support. The initiative improves educational quality and access to rights information for youth, while incorporating community-based disaster risk reduction. Aligning with MIRPS commitments, it humanizes services jointly with public and private sector actors, addressing displacement comprehensively.

The project partners built on their complementary strengths - with AeA leveraging extensive networks with national and local authorities, while FM contributed strong connections with private-sector actors. This enabled them to act as effective facilitators, bringing together key actors with limited resources to integrate displaced persons into new communities by holding authorities accountable and re-establishing the social contract.

What Made This a Promising Practice?

The project's strength lay in its integrated multi-sector approach, where activities reinforced each other as they were carried out in the same communities. For example, the Las Brumas II association of small black bean producers received business management training and equipment to measure bean grain humidity for better pricing, while also receiving tarps to build a greenhouse and establish a drying shed through disaster mitigation measures. This comprehensive approach addressed multiple vulnerabilities simultaneously.

The creation of support networks between refugees and local communities encouraged inclusion and exchange of experiences, resulting in mutual enrichment. The project's methodological approach focused on promoting local ownership through collaboration with authorities and people affected by displacement, aligning activities with the goals, policies, and strategies of local government.

The Response

- **Staff rotation and availability:** The project defined multiple dates and times for trainings to ensure participation of border personnel in humanization workshops.
- **Government changeover:** New awareness-raising activities were conducted with incoming authorities to maintain project continuity.
- **Employment placement difficulties:** The project identified barriers vulnerable people face in accessing employment and focused more on technical training programs in high-demand areas and supporting immigration regularization.
- **Gender violence discussions:** Recreational methodologies like art therapy and dance therapy facilitated more active participation and better understanding of sensitive topics.

Lessons Learned

The project demonstrated that the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus approach is applicable in contexts with climate-related threats, combining disaster risk reduction with social cohesion between hosts and climate migrants. Connecting community groups with various authorities and empowering them to interact directly proved successful for advocacy efforts, resulting in mitigation works using supplies from authorities and labor from the community. The established structures have been formalized to ensure continuation beyond the project timeframe, enabling empowered community groups to continue engaging with authorities.

Key Results

Employment and Entrepreneurship:

- Provided workshops and training processes to strengthen competencies and skills
- Offered job opportunities and promoted entrepreneurship to generate livelihoods
- Conducted workshops on business management and model analysis for ventures
- Created specialized technical training programs in high-demand areas like Costa Rican Cuisine, Baking, Painting, Repair, and Plumbing
- Collaborated with private sector companies to design needed vocational programmes

Community Integration and Protection:

- Developed an advocacy plan to raise awareness of Costa Rica's MIRPS commitments
- Created tailored training for public and private sector workers on assisting displaced people
- Implemented gender violence prevention through campaigns and specialized support services
- Conducted workshops on positive masculinities with Upala's public forces
- Used art therapy, dance therapy, and film forums to address sexuality and gender violence issues

Disaster Risk Reduction:

- Built capacity based on community risk understanding at municipal and community levels
- Installed meteorological stations with sensors for early warning
- Distributed radio communication equipment to activate alarms in case of possible floods



LiD Lives in Dignity

GRANT FACILITY

The Lives in Dignity (LiD) Grant Facility was an EU-funded initiative managed by UNOPS that promoted development-oriented approaches in forced displacement settings. With €24 million allocated between 2021–2025, the Facility supported 14 innovative, multi-stakeholder projects across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Its flexible funding model empowered local actors, strengthened partnerships, and fostered integrated programming across five key areas: livelihoods, service delivery, housing and spatial planning, protection, and disaster- and climate-related mobility. The Facility prioritized community-led solutions, localization, and social cohesion, advancing sustainable development for both displaced populations and host communities. **Find out more at** https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/programming/programmes/lives-dignity-grant-facility_en