



## Using audiovisual storytelling to promote social cohesion and combat discrimination against displaced Venezuelans in Colombia

Colombia | Duration: August 2022 - October 2024 | Implementing partners: Faculty of Communications and Philology of the University of Antioquia, Casa de las Estrategias Foundation

### The Challenge

In Colombia, displaced Venezuelans face significant challenges in social and cultural integration within host communities. The representation of displaced populations in Colombian media remains scarce or stigmatizing, as Colombia lacks a strong tradition as a migration-receiving country. This media landscape perpetuates prejudices and xenophobic attitudes, limiting opportunities for social cohesion between displaced Venezuelans and Colombian host communities. Public discourse often fails to recognize the valuable contributions that displaced Venezuelans make to Colombia's social, economic, and cultural fabric.

### The Solution

The "Cities Without Borders" project developed an innovative audiovisual strategy to promote social and cultural integration of the Venezuelan community through documentary storytelling. This practice leveraged the power of communications to humanize migration experiences and counter discriminatory narratives. The initiative produced a seven-chapter documentary series capturing twenty life stories of Venezuelans who have made significant contributions to Colombian communities across six cities: Apartadó, Barranquilla, Bogotá, Cali, Cúcuta, and Medellín.

# What Made This a Promising Practice?

This practice excelled by combining academic rigor with creative storytelling to address migration integration challenges. The innovative use of Design Thinking methodologies ensured content resonated with target audiences, while the university-NGO partnership brought together academic credibility and practical community connections. The series provided unprecedented representation of displaced Venezuelans in Colombian media, offering positive narratives that humanize migration experiences rather than instrumentalizing them. The integration of educational materials extended impact beyond entertainment, creating tools for ongoing community dialogue and learning. The practice demonstrated measurable impact through significant YouTube engagement (933% view growth) and high audience satisfaction (94.6% positive ratings), indicating strong resonance with Colombian audiences seeking more inclusive narratives.

## The Response

- **Story identification and participant safety:** Some potential participants wanted to contribute but posed security risks. This was addressed by implementing comprehensive risk assessment protocols and focusing on accompanying displaced Venezuelans, particularly when working with minors.
- **Broadcasting compliance requirements:** Television channels required extensive adjustments for content, including artwork permissions, spontaneous musical performances, and consent from background individuals. This was resolved by developing detailed informed consent processes and providing comprehensive legal guidance on copyright issues.
- **Extended production timelines:** Production processes took longer than initially planned. The team established regular coordination meetings between academic and production teams, creating systematic follow-up schedules that accelerated series completion and enhanced promotional strategies.

## Lessons Learned

The project demonstrated that audiovisual storytelling can effectively counter discriminatory narratives when combined with rigorous audience research and ethical production standards. Teams learned the critical importance of comprehensive legal preparation, particularly regarding copyright and consent requirements for television broadcasting. The experience highlighted the value of inclusive dialogue approaches that engage not only target populations but also parents, teachers, organizations, and local authorities, creating opportunities for mutual learning and strengthening social bonds. The project revealed that territorial approaches requiring context-specific analysis of local migration dynamics enhance content relevance and impact. Finally, the initiative underscored that sustainable impact requires not only quality content creation but also robust distribution strategies and educational tools that enable ongoing community engagement beyond initial viewing experiences.

## Key Results

### Pre-production and Research:

- Conducted comprehensive context analysis and audience mapping using Design Thinking methodologies
- Developed “design subjects” to understand target audiences’ perspectives, emotions, and consumption patterns
- Performed risk assessments to ensure safe and ethical storytelling approaches
- Applied surveys to validate audience design and narrative strategies

### Content Creation:

- Collected twenty diverse life stories emphasizing displaced Venezuelans’ positive contributions
- Implemented rights-based approaches and ethical criteria for working with vulnerable populations
- Ensured cultural, ethnic, and gender diversity representation
- Applied “do no harm” principles throughout production processes

### Educational Integration:

- Developed pedagogical activity sheets with four educational exercises for schools and community settings
- Designed activities to explore migration-related issues and promote dialogue
- Established broadcast agreements with regional and national television channels
- Projected series in schools, universities, and community environment





# 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](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/programming/programmes/lives-dignity-grant-facility_en)