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DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION

COLOMBIA COMPLEXITY-AWARE M&E

Fifth Iteration

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EXTENDED SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Under its contract with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Democracy International (DI) is responsible for conducting the Complexity-Aware Monitoring and Evaluation (C-AME) activity to monitor and evaluate the USAID/Colombia Reconciliation Activity, PAR (Programa de Alianzas para la Reconciliación), implemented by ACDI/VOCA. As part of this activity, DI presents in this document the results of the fifth iteration of the developmental evaluation (DE). The DE is a systematic effort to track and analyze program results that emerge under conditions of complexity, to document and interpret the dynamics, interactions, and interdependencies that occur and inform results during the implementation of PAR. This DE report package includes three documents: 1) an extended executive summary, which presents an overview of the analysis from primary and secondary data collection used to address the core questions of this evaluation, along with recommendations and lessons for the implementation and programmatic levels. 2) an annex with the detailed analysis of implementation and context (including a separate section on gender issues); the introductory section of this annex includes details about the evaluation scope, methodology, and an overview of the context trends in the Colombia-Venezuela border municipalities. 3) an annex comprising the case-by-case analyses, in which each case covers a specific implemented activity selected for this evaluation.

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

This report synthesizes the meaningful observations, data gathering, and results of the mixed-method analyses that C-AME has completed to date and leverages this body of work to address three primary questions about the Reconciliation Activity:

Q1. What is considered working and not working (and by whom) as the intervention unfolds?
Q2. How is the Reconciliation Activity connected to and affected by the wider context?
Q3. How and why do contextual factors influence results and what are the trends in the wider context?

Field data collection and analysis for this developmental evaluation are limited to municipalities where PAR is implementing a set of projects selected for this exercise. For this iteration of the DE, C-AME worked with USAID and PAR to prioritize specific interventions in three municipalities located on the border between Colombia and Venezuela: Arauca (department of Arauca), Cúcuta (department of Norte de Santander), and Maicao (department of La Guajira). C-AME selected the seven projects outlined in table 1 (details about rationale for project selection are available in Annex 1 – Evaluation Scope). Understanding the highly nuanced dynamics of each region of Colombia, in addition to the more recent context trends as they relate to the influx of Venezuelan migrants into Colombia, allows C-AME to draw preliminary conclusions about what works and does not work as PAR's interventions unfold. Further, triangulating results across all cases (Q1) in combination with the analyses of contexts (Q2 and Q3) allows C-AME to formulate meaningful lessons learned and recommendations that PAR and USAID may wish to consider in future interventions (see Annex 1).

Table 1. Projects selected by C-AME for DE 5

Location	Project title	Implementing partner	PAR Code
Arauca	*Propuesta de integración económica y reconciliación "Integración Construimos Futuro en Arauca"*	*Corporación El Minuto de Dios – Arauca (CMD-Arauca)*	PAR-03-157

Location	Project title	Implementing partner	PAR Code
	Generación de ingresos, independencia económica y entornos de protección a migrantes, retornadas, jóvenes y mujeres	*Cámara de Comercio de Arauca (CCA)*	PAR-03-166
Maicao	*Propuesta de integración económica y reconciliación: Integrándonos construimos futuro - Maicao*	*Corporación El Minuto de Dios – Maicao (CMD-Maicao)*	PAR - 03-155
	Reconciliación e inclusión socio productiva a partir de la siembra de melón para la exportación a la isla de Curazao en el municipio de Maicao	*Asociación de Agricultores independientes de la vereda Atnamana (Atnamana)*	PAR - 03-171
	La diversidad, elemento clave para la construcción de iniciativas de convivencia y reconciliación con población étnica, migrante y de acogida	*Nuestro Flow S.A.S. (NF)*	PAR-03-180
Cúcuta	*Integrándonos construimos futuro, estrategia de reconciliación e integración económica en Cúcuta*	*Corporación El Minuto de Dios – Cúcuta (CMD-Cúcuta)*	PAR-03-149
	Cúcuta Incluyente, Emprendedora y Solidaria	*Cámara de Comercio de Cúcuta (CCC)*	PAR-03-146
	La diversidad, elemento clave para la construcción de iniciativas de convivencia y reconciliación con población étnica, migrante y de acogida	*Nuestro Flow S.A.S. (NF)*	PAR-03-180

The data for this DE come from primary sources (i.e. PAR staff, implementing partners, project participants, and context actors), and C-AME collected these data through individual and group semi-structured interviews and focus groups. C-AME obtained 93 interviews (focus groups and semi-structured interviews) with 150 participants including PAR staff (headquarters and local officers), PAR implementing partners and beneficiaries, and context actors (for more information see Annex A).

C-AME analyzed demographic, socio-economic, and security data to characterize and further analyze PAR's implementation environment and used this data to highlight possible contingencies that may have a positive or negative impact on its work. C-AME applied textual statistical and qualitative analysis procedures to its unique databases of beneficiary, implementing partner, and stakeholder narratives to systematically examine interviews and identify key themes to develop a method for coding the data. We used NVivo 11 to organize and to conduct the first level of primary data analysis: text analysis and text mining. Using codes for analysis and identification of emerging issues, C-AME team explored relationships between categories and concepts, to further identify learning opportunities and formulate recommendations for improvement.

THE CHALLENGES OF BUILDING RECONCILIATION ON THE COLOMBIA-VENEZUELA BORDER

This developmental evaluation focused on the analysis of PAR implementation on the Colombia-Venezuela border and, as such, C-AME considers it relevant to start by laying out some aspects of the context in the border area to set the stage for the contents of the project-level, gender, and context analyses sections. In its fourth year of implementation, PAR expanded its territorial focus to include five municipalities located in three departments of the Colombia-Venezuela border: Norte de Santander, La

Guajira, and Arauca.[1] The change in geographic focus also implied a thematic adjustment, from a focus on, "…incidence of violence, socioeconomic conditions, presence of victims and demobilized persons, and local state institutional capacity," from PAR's foundational documents, to a focus on the emergent tensions that exist in border areas, with an emphasis on, "new conflict scenarios related to xenophobia, intolerance, and discrimination, stemming from the high rate of migration from Venezuela."[2] This new scenario of implementation on the Colombian-Venezuelan border poses a series of challenges for PAR, as activities implemented in this context face common unresolved issues stemming from historical problems in these locations. These common unresolved issues combined with the influx of people fleeing the political and economic crisis from Venezuela into Colombia has increased the need to focus the efforts of the GOC and international donors to assist migrants; this in turn deepens existing social tensions around access to the provision of goods and services for vulnerable populations from both national resources and international donors. Emerging tensions create an environment that negatively affects people's willingness to engage in reconciliation. In the next section, C-AME presents the key findings of the DE, highlighting the main successes and learning opportunities at the project and program implementation levels. These helped C-AME to draw recommendations for future PAR and other USAID reconciliation programming. Additional aspects of implementation, context and explanations that allow C-AME to produce this summary of results are available in Annexes 2 and 3.

SECTION 1: IMPLEMENTATION AND SURROUNDING CONTEXTS

SUB-SECTION 1.1: IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS WITH EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH VULNERABLE POPULATIONS (CMD)

C-AME created a category called "implementing partners with experience working with vulnerable populations," which includes projects implemented by the partner Corporación Minuto de Dios in the cities of Arauca (CMD-Arauca, PAR-03-157), Cúcuta (CMD-Cúcuta, PAR-03-149), and Maicao (CMD-Maicao, PAR-03-155). According to CMD's mission statement, they work under a unique development model designed to promote community development by supporting community engagement, conflict resolution, and mutual aid that constantly improves the quality of life of the individuals participating in their initiatives.

The overall CMD strategic approach includes a community development pillar, which serves as the umbrella for their strategy called *Integrándonos Construimos Futuro,*[3] which in the three border municipalities mentioned above, is funded by PAR. This strategy seeks to strengthen businesses, reconciliation processes, and social inclusion among Venezuelan migrant, returnee, and Colombian host populations in the cities of Arauca, Cúcuta, and Maicao. In each city, the projects target vulnerable populations such as displaced persons, victims of armed conflict, youth, LGBTI individuals, Venezuelan migrants, and Colombian returnees (from Venezuela). In each implementation site, the project adapted to local conditions while maintaining the following crosscutting components: (1) promotion of participants' mental and physical health, achieved through providing tools to manage emotions and with spaces for dialogue that cultivate social inclusion; (2) development of opportunities for economic inclusion through business strengthening (technical trainings and seed capital in the form of resources and equipment) and formal job placement;[4] and (3) construction of social capital through community initiatives that foster the rebuilding of the social fabric and facilitate integration between Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees, and host populations. For the work implemented by CMD in the

[1] The municipality of Arauca was already part of PAR's geographic scope.
[2] PAR-WPY4 p. 12.
[3] In English: Integrating Ourselves, We Construct the Future
[4] Despite being included in the components underpinning all of CMD's activities, the job placement only took place in Cúcuta.

different implementation sites and the context factors affecting this implementation, this section lays out the key implementation represented by the following icons:

Achievements (A):

Learning opportunities (LO):

Challenges (CH):

Recommendations (R):

(A) Integration between reconciliation and socio-economic components aligns with PAR program goals.

The structure and implementation of the project in the three cities allowed for coordination between the psychosocial aspects promoting the emotional wellbeing of participants and the aspects strengthening their economic initiatives. The CMD model aligns with PAR's results framework by implementing a comprehensive approach that not only focuses on developing economic opportunities, but also has a strong focus on the development of psychosocial abilities that potentially pass from the individual onto the beneficiaries' families and their community. The project provided beneficiaries with psycho-emotional tools to strengthen their capacity to manage emotions, and technical tools to identify economic alternatives to meet their needs. In this DE, we highlighted how the project activities strengthened participant business skills, which helped them to improve their levels of empowerment and trust. Similarly, CMD was able to integrate *DecidoSer* socio-emotional activities effectively with their own psychosocial support strategies, which contributed to improve beneficiaries' interactions with peers and may further enhance participants' capacity to communicate with customers and vendors in business settings, key assets for their success as entrepreneurs. Ultimately, implementing partners and participants agree that the project contributed to change individual experiences and narratives about them, improving family and community lives.

Considering that the beneficiaries represent vulnerable populations—participants were largely migrants, returnees, or displaced persons who often struggle to access psychosocial support systems—the hybrid approach allowed for an important process of reflection on both emotional and mental health and on their livelihoods. Within the *Integrándonos Construimos Futuro* strategy, it is useful to highlight the role of building social capital and integration opportunities through community engagement activities such as those hosted in Arauca, though the collaborative effort to weave an enormous *chinchorro,*[5] and the construction of a toy library in Maicao (Centro de Sueños e Historias). Both of these activities generated important project outcomes in both economic activity and social cohesion that will potentially continue helping to build the social fabric in communities of highly vulnerable populations.

(A) Implementer experience facilitated adaptive implementation

CMD has significant experience working with vulnerable populations due to its history implementing projects for humanitarian aid and development with populations like victims of the armed conflict. Partnering with PAR afforded CMD the opportunity to leverage that knowledge to effectively work with Venezuelan migrants and Colombian returnees who are in conditions of high socio-economic vulnerability. These populations usually relocate in areas of Colombia with high levels of poverty, housing informality, and limited access to public goods and services (for additional details, see Annex 2: Context, section on socio-economic vulnerability). Therefore, the target population for CMD's work in

[5] A *chinchorro* is an artisanal hammock made of woven fibers.

border cities is highly vulnerable, and CMD's experience has enabled them to work effectively with these types of groups. CMD implemented strategies like identification of optimal locations (i.e. Centro de Desarrollo Integral[6] in Cúcuta) and populations in each city for implementing activities, leveraging local leaders' knowledge to improve targeting of participants, creating spaces to facilitate participant engagement, and systematically monitoring attendance at project activities.

(CH) Participant economic and socio-emotional outcomes were affected by contextual challenges

The analysis of the complex contexts in which PAR implements its activity showed that there are multiple layers of vulnerability among participants and the territories in which they live, due to conditions of individual and structural poverty, weak local infrastructure, high levels of informality and persistent violence (see Annex 2: Context, socio-economic vulnerability). These aspects challenge the achievement of CDM and other PAR implementers, especially those aiming at improving the livelihoods of participants as a means to promote reconciliation. For instance, participants from CMD said the expansion and sustainability of their micro-enterprises was challenged by issues like: weak local infrastructure (e.g. lack of clean water and sanitation limiting the capacity of food ventures to provide high quality products); lack of alternative income sources or access to financial services to inject capital to their ventures; limited capacity for formalization; and/or inadequate access to markets. In turn, these situations caused some ventures to fail in their capacity to produce enough sustained income.

Vulnerability issues appeared to be more problematic during the COVID-19 pandemic (see Annex 2: Context, section on COVID-19). Many PAR beneficiaries are selected for participation in PAR activities precisely because of their conditions of vulnerability, which were exacerbated by the coronavirus crisis. For example, those who live in formal and informal settlements with limited access to clean water and sanitation have difficulty maintaining the hygiene methods that are important to slow the spread of the virus. Social distancing, another recommendation to reduce possible contagion, was a major obstacle for PAR implementation since partners had to devise new strategies to interact with beneficiaries using communication technologies, which beneficiaries have limited access to. Finally, the mandatory quarantine impacted the PAR funded micro-entrepreneurships; even if they were authorized economic activities, many of these did not have a commercial license or the necessary permits to operate under new COVID-19 restrictions.

(LO) Collaborative approach to learning, given the complex dynamics of vulnerability in the territories.

Under these conditions of vulnerability, the implementation led by CMD revealed some important learning opportunities. CMD, PAR and other local PAR and USAID implementing partners could collaboratively gather evidence to enhance capacities and develop coordination networks at the local level. This enhanced organizational and networked capacity would improve the implementers' capacity to respond to some of the challenges that are directly related to the complex context where projects operate. C-AME considers that PAR could gather the following recommendations and present them as possible implementation routes—given the drastic changes caused by the spread of COVID-19—that will allow the implementing partners to achieve their objectives.

R1. PAR, along with implementing partners like CMD, should continue implementing follow up strategies on the progress of the participants' ventures to identify ongoing challenges and

[6] Comprehensive Development Center

alternatives at the local level to re-direct participants to access support within the network of development organizations and public institutions operating in each territory. Given the social distance required due to the spread of COVID-19, the communication strategy should continue focusing on the use of phone calls, social media, or e-mail.

R2. Relatedly, communications should be tailored to the needs and capacities of the beneficiary populations considering some do not have access to equipment that allows them to check emails frequently, nor the habit of doing so. PAR should promote alliances that facilitate beneficiaries' access to institutions or facilitators that offer computer access or cellphone operators that subsidize equipment, so that the beneficiaries can access project contents that are being disseminated virtually.

R3. Collaborate with implementing partners like the Chambers of Commerce to leverage their experience to identify viable alternatives for business formalization among vulnerable entrepreneurs (see the following sections for more details).

(CH) Adapting procurement practices to local conditions.

For implementers like CMD-Maicao, adapting to the local conditions with high levels of informality turned into a challenge at times, due to the specific project activities and CMD headquarters requirements for oversight of activities. In all three cities, the project involved the purchase of inputs and supplies for participants to use as seed capital for their ventures. Staff from CMD-Maicao reported to C-AME the difficulties of purchasing these inputs and supplies in a context with high levels of informality coupled with purchasing procedures established by CMD's home office in Bogotá. For CMD in Maicao, it was difficult to identify a variety of vendors that meet CMD formal requirements (i.e. have tax registration, can apply the rules designed for USAID-funded purchase, and offer the products in the amounts and quality required by each entrepreneur). Participants indicated that the delivery of inputs from CMD to beneficiaries had some logistical problems due to an issue that was out of the control of CMD's staff on the vendors' side. In light of these challenges and as an effort to identify and prevent contingencies, as well as to tackle possible impacts that these may have during the development of the project, or on the results of the project, C-AME found that the CMD-Cúcuta offers a learning opportunity for implementations in places like Maicao.

(LO) Vendor fairs can facilitate participant procurement while the implementer maintains quality control

The vendor showcase organized by CMD-Cúcuta was a good practice that can be replicated in other projects of this type. According to CMD-Cúcuta, the vendor showcase was developed as a strategy to promote transparency and trust among beneficiaries, the implementing partner, and vendors. After ensuring compliance with the requirements of the CMD and USAID procurement manuals, CMD invited potential vendors and beneficiaries to mingle, so that, based on the list of requirements for their business, beneficiaries could choose the supplier that best aligned with their needs from a pre-selected pool of eligible vendors. This strategy turned out to be positive because it contributed to strengthen the trust bonds constructed between the implementing partner and the beneficiaries, contributed to the empowerment of the beneficiaries —who had an active role in the procurement procedure and got the equipment they specifically required—and strengthened the communication among all parties involved.

SUB-SECTION 1.2. IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS WITH EXPERIENCE DEVELOPING ENTREPRENEURIAL CAPACITIES

Under this category, C-AME includes the projects implemented by local Chambers of Commerce (CC) in Arauca (CCA) and Cúcuta (CCC). In Cúcuta, the CCC implemented the project *Cúcuta incluyente, emprendedora y solidaria*[7] (PAR-03-146); the CCA implemented the project *Generación de ingresos, independencia económica y entornos de protección a familias migrantes, retornada, jóvenes y mujeres del municipio de Arauca*[8] (PAR-03-166). These projects include an entrepreneurial skills development component and the development of psychosocial support activities, using the PAR Reconciliation Approach, to promote reconciliation skills among beneficiaries. The CCC and CCA activities' skills development component included training activities and expert guidance, and the implementer offered financial leverage for beneficiary businesses by investing seed capital (equipment or materials) for those enterprises whose owners met participation requirements. In Maicao, the association of agricultural producers of Atnamana (Atnamana) implemented the project *Reconciliación e inclusión socio-productiva a partir de la siembra de melón para la exportación a la isla de Curazao en el municipio de Maicao*[9] (PAR-03-171). The Atnamana project seeks to develop the agricultural skills of producers, through the improvement of melon planting techniques, by supporting the purchase of equipment, supplies and consultants for planting and exporting melons. The project has three components: 1) Improve participants' capacity for adapting, empowerment and resilience, through the implementation of workshops designed under the PAR *DecidoSer* methodology; 2) Promote organizational and business capacities of the association of farmers; 3) Planting and exporting melon. These three projects share their approach of combining the development of business and economic skills for vulnerable individuals and communities, while also attempting to drive reconciliation outcomes in the form of improved abilities for dialogue, respect, empowerment, and trust. For the work implemented by the CCs and Atnamana in the different implementation sites and the context factors affecting this implementation, this section lays out the key implementation achievements (A), learning opportunities (LO), challenges (CH), and recommendations (R).

(A) Support system for the formalization of business and improvement of entrepreneurial capacities

In addition to the training to improve entrepreneurial capacities of participants, a significant achievement of the CCs' implemented projects was the support of the participants' business formalization,[10] an issue that was pressing among participants with limited capacity (i.e. time, financial resources and legal status in Colombia) and willingness to function under the Colombian business regulatory framework. The beneficiaries of the CCC activity shared with C-AME some of the problems that impeded them from formalizing their enterprises; among the most common were the lack of knowledge regarding the specific requirements, the high costs associated with getting the documentation, taxation, and the difficulty in obtaining information. As a means to incentivize formalization, the CCs trained participants on the applicability of regulatory frameworks for business, showed them the path towards formalization and informed them about the advantages of formalizing their enterprise (e.g. access to financial services). Implementing partners such as the CCA are aware of the need for support and advice, thus they provided support and information that allowed participants to clarify some of their doubts and concerns about the formalization process of their enterprises, even after the project ended. This was especially

[7] In English, "Inclusive, entrepreneurial, and supportive Cúcuta."
[8] In English, "Generation of income, economic independence, and protective environments for migrant families, returnees, youth, and women of the Municipality of Arauca."
[9] In English, "Reconciliation and socio-productive inclusion through planting melon for exportation to the island of Curaçao, in the city of Maicao."
[10] Business formalization is the process by which businesses are regulated, carried out in the Chamber of Commerce and consisting of enrolling or inscribing the business license, paying relevant fees, and presenting accounting and required documents.

useful for Venezuelan beneficiaries, who were not familiar with the Colombian regulatory system and formalization processes in the country. In the context of restricted mobility due to the measures to contain COVID-19, the advice provided by the CCA enabled beneficiaries to learn about the processes and documentation required to obtain movement permits through the city and to maintain the productivity of the enterprises.

In Maicao, the crop technical team from Atnamana stated the project benefited from expert advice in planting techniques for irrigation, seed planting, and crop management. Making use of this technical advice, beneficiaries reduced seed and water losses, and ultimately were able to plant cantaloupe melons in the amounts and quality planned. Although COVID-19 required adjustments in terms of schedules and the number of participants working with the crop, the association managed to implement health and safety precautions and continue with the planting process. Members of 52 families have engaged in the planting processes together on this shared plot, which encouraged collaborative work, improved learning of farming techniques among participants, and enhanced input use, as reported by the technical team. Beneficiaries agree, and state that they expect that this acquired farming knowledge will allow them to improve livelihoods either as part of Atnamana or on their own.

(A) The use of *DecidoSer* affected individual perceptions and outlook, and helped improve family relations and community interactions.

At the individual level, participants from Atnamana acknowledged that having participated in *DecidoSer* workshops led to individual behavioral changes that positively affected their family and community interactions. Participants and the psychosocial support consultant identified positive changes such as management of emotions and capacity to engage with others by being empathetic to their personal experiences and living conditions. The project included victims of the armed conflict, who acknowledged they could now look at past experiences without fear and were able to forgive all the harm caused by armed actors, while also feeling hopeful about what the future holds for them, their families and communities. The project in Maicao targeted not only farmer associates of Atnamana, but also their families. For the first *DecidoSer* workshop, beneficiaries were asked to bring a relative whom they though would be willing to participate and engage in the activities. This became an opportunity for the community to engage participants and their families in psychosocial support activities with positive outcomes in terms of individual behavioral change and better family interactions, as reported by beneficiaries.

Similarly, participants from CCC reported that the psychosocial workshops allowed them to get to know themselves better and understand the reality of others, while also helping them build confidence in their abilities, contributing to higher self-esteem, and better management and expression of their emotions. By participating in activities, beneficiaries felt more empowered, confident, and trusting in themselves and others; they relayed to C-AME that project spaces provided them an added value given that, while the information about business administration from the technical workshops could have been found elsewhere (like on the internet), what they learned in these psychosocial workshops could only be gained through the experience of sharing it with others. Staff from CCC and CCA agree that the psychosocial workshops and the *DecidoSer* methodology facilitated in participants the recognition of their abilities as entrepreneurs. Participants from Cúcuta reported to C-AME that the project activities allowed them to construct personal and commercial connections with other participants. For the beneficiaries who are far from their families (i.e. Venezuelan migrants), building friendships enabled them to feel connected and supported in their endeavors. Participants consider that the project incentivized group work and the formation of alliances that helped them support each other and strengthen their businesses.

(CH) Difficulties planning and communicating logistical procedures to beneficiaries.

The projects implemented by CCC and CCA faced challenges in planning activities and communicating with beneficiaries, which affected their participation in some project activities, and ultimately affected PAR program-level expected outcomes (i.e. improved dialogue, respect and building of trust). In the case of the Chambers of Commerce, these difficulties were reflected in planning, communication, and logistical issues for the delivery of seed capital to participants, one of the most important project activities. Delays on the part of the CCs created hardships for participants and difficulties in implementation, and these impacted the progress made on reconciliation drivers (See Annex 3: CCC and CCA case-level analyses). Here C-AME presents a broad description of the situations participants and implementers described.

Situation 1. The beneficiaries of the project implemented by CCC indicated to C-AME that on several occasions they **were called to the training workshops without advance notice**, forcing them to adjust their personal and work schedules on short notice in order to attend the activities. Beneficiaries also pointed out that the **distance between their places of residence and the places where the trainings were held** impeded their participation in all the workshops, given some had **insufficient economic resources to cover transportation costs.** Furthermore, some beneficiaries indicated that due to mistakes in the attendance lists, they had to repeat some workshops and activities—implying further transportation expenses—despite having previously attended all the workshops. According to beneficiaries, **these programming and communication difficulties caused them stress and frustration**. CCC, on their part, argues that **some habits of the beneficiaries** (e.g. not checking email frequently, interruption in cell phone signal due to frequent visits to Venezuela) **made communication with participants difficult.** As a mitigation strategy, advisors created WhatsApp groups to distribute project information. In case any beneficiaries could not be contacted this way, the advisors sent text messages. Further, anticipating possible complaints by the beneficiaries for not having been contacted in advance to participate in the activities, CCC started to keep records of their multiple attempts to contact each one. This problematic oversight of beneficiary participation **delayed implementation** and caused beneficiaries to invest more of their time and scarce resources on project participation than they had anticipated or could manage.

Situation 2. Both CCA and CCC struggled with the delivery of seed capital inputs and equipment to beneficiaries, causing them **discomfort and dissatisfaction** and impacting the final objective of PAR, in terms of improving reconciliation capacities. In the case of the CCC, as far as C-AME is aware, the seed capital delivery has been **delayed indefinitely**, depriving beneficiaries of the investment they earned by participating. In Arauca, the delivery of seed capital by CCA was marked by multiple difficulties causing disapproval among beneficiaries, who reported to C-AME that they were confused and angered when they received materials that did not correspond with what they had requested

Cúcuta: Here, the award event was originally scheduled for December 2019, but was initially **postponed** to the end of March 2020 as CCC struggled to work within the parameters of USAID's procurement requirements, and as the full cohort of participants had not yet completed the required workshops.[11] In February 2020, CCC negotiated a project change in the scope of work, to include a time extension and increase in number of participants who could be eligible to receive seed capital from 75 to 116 participants. Given the update in the scope of work, CCC also pushed the award date to late June/early July, 2020, but by the end of March, CCC requested PAR **suspend the contract** for the first time, claiming that they could not carry out the procurement processes or seed capital awards due to the COVID-19 health related state of emergency. In April, the project received a second no-cost

[11] It was not made clear to C-AME why those participants who *had* successfully completed the required activities after the first round were not awarded their seed capital when they earned it, and instead were made to wait until their peers caught up.

contract extension through July 15. In June, eight members of CCC's board of directors, including the president of the board, were suspended by the regional attorney general's office pending an investigation,[12] leaving CCC without a legal representative who could sign contracts and implement procurement processes necessary for the purchase of seed capital materials, and **the CCC again requested a contract suspension**. When C-AME talked with the implementing partner in August 2020, the seed capital still had not been delivered to beneficiaries, and even in a focus group C-AME organized in March, various participants seemed skeptical about whether they would ever receive the awards and participants expressed they perceived the delays and difficulties as issues stemming from **poor project planning** and not from extraneous factors. According to staff from CCC, when they carried out an event to communicate the situation to the beneficiaries, some of them **expressed discomfort and distrust** towards the implementer as they had high expectations for the closing phase when they would receive the seed capital they had earned. At this time, C-AME does not have information on measures undertaken by PAR to guarantee the capital awards to those participants who earned them. In September 2020, the CCC board of directors elected a new executive president.[13] In December 2020, one year after the initial date for seed capital delivery, the CCC again opened a public call for the selection of new providers to supply the inputs and equipment for the beneficiaries' enterprises.

Arauca: The CCA experienced a similar setback as CCC when four out of the six members of its board of directors were removed, including the president and the executive president at the end of 2019, which caused CCA to delay the delivery of seed capital to beneficiaries, generating unease among them. Nevertheless, CCA managed to carry out two rounds of seed capital awards. The first group of 50 beneficiaries that complied with the attendance and business idea requirements received the capital awards in February 2020. This first round delivery of materials was marked by multiple difficulties causing **disapproval among beneficiaries**, who reported to C-AME that they were confused and angered when they received **materials that did not correspond** with what they had requested. According to participants C-AME interviewed, they **did not have support** or help from the CCA personnel nor from the provider of materials and equipment[14] with filling out the forms required to process their procurement, which resulted in delivery of the wrong items. Also, on the day of the awards, beneficiaries reported to C-AME, there **was yelling and complaining** on the part of the participants who express their discomfort with the partner and the provider over the materials they received. The **complaints and reproaches** of the participants also appeared in their WhatsApp conversations, where some participants (who had issues with the equipment and materials) were aggressive towards others who *did* receive the correct materials as requested. The implementing partner was aware of the difficulties and managed to make some improvements in the second round of deliveries, as confirmed by beneficiaries.

According to interviews C-AME conducted, the planning, logistical and communication challenges described above created a sense of dejection, discontent, and annoyance among CCC and CCA beneficiaries, many of whom were clearly unsatisfied. CCC's beneficiaries took on significant responsibility, time, and cost to participate in project activities (including their time spent attending and repeating workshops, their money spent on transportation, their forgone income when activities precluded them from working, and their emotional labor in psycho-social activities), and in exchange they expected to receive the seed capital to strengthen their enterprises and improve their livelihoods. The delay in delivery of the award **affected the beneficiaries economically and emotionally and damaged trust between participants** and CCC. For some of the CCA participants interviewed, **these difficulties represented a step backwards in the coexistence component** of the project, given that they undermined

[12] *La Opinión* (June 30, 2020) "Suspenden a miembros de Junta Directiva de Cámara de Comercio de Cúcuta." See: https://www.laopinion.com.co/cucuta/suspenden-miembros-de-junta-directiva-de-camara-de-comercio-de-cucuta-198826.
[13] Cámara de Comercio de Cúcuta (September 4, 2020). *Cámara de Comercio de Cúcuta tiene nuevo Presidente Ejecutivo*. See: https://www.cccucuta.org.co/noticias-7-m/2093-camara-de-comercio-de-cucuta-tiene-nuevo-presidente-ejecutivo.htm
[14] CCA bought equipment and materials through an external vendor provider, who was also responsible for delivering the items at the award ceremony.

the relationship of trust between the beneficiaries and the partner, and between beneficiaries themselves. To face these situations PAR should:

R1. Establish monitoring procedures to ensure that the selected implementing partner has the organizational and administrative capacity to carry out reconciliation activities. This is especially important when working with vulnerable populations, whose participation in reconciliation activities is essential and whose precarious living and working conditions means they have little absorptive capacity for shifts in timelines and participation incentives that may affect their livelihoods. If this capacity is not available within an organization, PAR can use internal procedures to determine whether additional capacity building from PAR may bridge these gaps, or if the partner would be better suited to implement another intervention type or none at all.

R2. During the activity design and participant selection phases, **work closely with implementing partners** (whether experienced or not) to ensure they: (1) implement activities in **locations accessible to participants** (and consider, irrespective of proximity to participants, covering transportation costs to avoid placing undue hardship on vulnerable populations); **(2) adequately communicate** to participants the expectations for participation (frequency, location, consequences of missed sessions and options to make up sessions, detailed assignments for activities like budget preparation, and estimated costs (and/or amounts to be covered by implementers)); and **(3) develop communication strategies** with each participant to ensure information about the project is received and understood.

R3. During the implementation process, **continue collaborating with implementing partners**, mainly those with less experience in working with vulnerable populations, in designing specific strategies that are in line with the type of population they serve and the reconciliation objectives they seek.

R4. PAR should design strategies to mitigate or diminish the possible negative effects that the internal or external administrative logistics and dynamics of the partners may have on the implementation or results. At the conclusion of DE data collection (August 2020), CCC had not yet delivered seed capital awards to beneficiaries due to the absence of anyone with the power to authorize these purchases. Although chambers of commerce are private institutions, they oversee public resources[15] and have been shown to be involved in political power struggles for their control.[16] In the case of projects implemented with PAR funding, these instability issues inside the chambers of commerce reflect direct risks to project implementation and results and should motivate PAR to design strategies to vet partner organizations in the private sector. Even though the situation is not directly in PAR's control, some strategies prior to implementation could have helped diminish the effects of administrative vacuums like the one the CCC project is facing. For activities in which an implementing partner will be responsible for purchases and/or awards of funds or materials, PAR should **ensure a contingency plan** is in place so participants receive the investments they have earned in the event the partner is unable to provide them.

SUB-SECTION 1.3. PARTNERS IMPLEMENTING ECONOMIC INCLUSION ACTIVITIES

In this section C-AME compiles the key challenges drawn from the analysis of projects that seek the socioeconomic inclusion of the beneficiary population, through different strategies, as well as critical factors that affected implementation and results. The focus of this section is on the projects

[15] In the case of Cúcuta, the chamber of commerce had political power struggles in the past in 2018, with the election of its executive president with political parties tied to the race. See: La Silla Vacía (2018, September 12) *Así arranca la pelea por la Cámara de Comercio de Cúcuta*. See: https://lasillavacia.com/silla-santandereana/asi-arranca-la-pelea-por-la-camara-de-comercio-de-cucuta-67923.

[16] In Colombia, chambers of commerce are private institutions that have been assigned public resource management, therefore they are subjects of oversight from state control bodies.

implemented by CMD, CCC, CCA, and Atnamana. This section outlines key implementation achievements (A), learning opportunities (LO), challenges (CH), and recommendations (R) when available.

(CH) Vulnerability of participants challenges the economic sustainability of participants' ventures.

Atnamana signed an in-kind sub-agreement with PAR and under this form of agreement, the organization of producers did not receive direct financial funding from PAR. According to participants, throughout implementation the organization's leadership faced **challenges trying to obtain financial resources** to sustain costs of labor and feeding workers. Although some participants expressed they volunteered their time for the farming activities, many of them expressed that they found it problematic because they hardly received any income during the planting and crop tending phases of the activity due to the expectation of future profit at harvest. Some participants expressed the leaders of the association **had to juggle to obtain financial resources to maintain the farming activities**.

Given the participants' context and systemic, multi-dimensional poverty, the projects implementing economic inclusion activities should take into account more holistic support strategies. The different groups that participated in the economic inclusion initiatives in the three cities included in this evaluation live in conditions of poverty, often work and live in informal settlements, and are located in areas typically excluded from economic development opportunities (see context section in annex 1: Context section). The initiatives to improve economic inclusion for Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees, and vulnerable host populations (as in CMD and CC projects) leverage beneficiaries' own micro-enterprises—developed out of necessity—as a means to channel an investment of capital and capacity, but the beneficiaries' precarious living and working conditions require additional efforts and forms of support to guarantee their sustainability.

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) highlights that the conditions and characteristics of the context in which emerging businesses are developed can facilitate or hinder their creation.[17] Results from this developmental evaluation suggest that the main challenges (based on GEM classification) new entrepreneurs face include the following: access to capital; policies, government programs, and tax regulation that limit entrepreneurial capacity; access to entrepreneurship education, infrastructure; ease of market entry; and social and cultural norms regarding entrepreneurship. Although the responsibility of addressing these common unresolved issues is outside of PAR's scope of work, there are strategies that PAR can implement to improve capacity building among participants and implementing partners. For this, PAR needs to continue developing alliances that allow persons who are undocumented (Venezuelan migrants and some Colombian returnees) and those who have low income and face socio-economic exclusion from the formal economic sector. Given these challenges, in order to develop economic inclusion through entrepreneurship,[18] C-AME provides the following set of recommendations for PAR:

R1. Promote alliances between implementing partners and local, regional, or national institutions that provide technical and administrative assistance to vulnerable entrepreneurs to continue improving entrepreneurial skills. C-AME observed that CCA was already working towards the development of such alliances with the Arauca Regional Entrepreneurship Network, and SENA so that beneficiaries with food businesses could participate in food safety trainings. These alliances can allow beneficiaries to continue accessing technical assistance that would help to maintain and update their entrepreneurial skills.

R2. Seek to develop alliances with financial entities that offer access to financial services and loans to vulnerable entrepreneurs. This should pair with strategies to increase awareness among

[17] Global Entrepreneurship Monitor - GEM. (2020). Global Report: 2019-2020. URL: https://www.gemconsortium.org/file/open?fileId=50443
[18] ACNUR, OIM, UNCTAD. (2018). Guía informativa sobre políticas de emprendimiento para personas migrantes y refugiadas. URL: https://www.acnur.org/5d27b4814.pdf.

the financial sector to adapt requirements and procedures, including outreach communications, to the conditions of vulnerable populations, showing their potential economic benefit. This can help strengthen entrepreneurial skills.

R3. Collaborate with implementing partners like the Chambers of Commerce to leverage their experience to **identify viable alternatives for business formalization among vulnerable entrepreneurs**. The example of CCA is useful to illustrate how this partner provided beneficiaries with first-hand information about formalization procedures, which reduced their uncertainty around this process. This, together with the information on the advantages offered by business formalization for access to opportunities and the provision of services, generated incentives in the beneficiaries to formalize their businesses.

R4. PAR and implementing partners should **continue developing strategies to expand markets** by considering additional types of entrepreneurs as beneficiaries and by developing alliances to explore alternative markets and buyers as means to reduce the risk of failure of the microenterprises. PAR can identify partners in the private sector to promote commercial networks to improve market access, as it has, for example, with some previous productive value chain activities.

R5. Develop a **support plan for small businesses** that, in addition to economic strengthening strategies**, includes business formalization**. This plan should consider the economic costs of business registration and time to complete these processes. If this plan already exists, PAR could monitor progress. Formalization would allow beneficiaries to have access to government benefits and stimuli to sustain their businesses in times of crisis, like accessing special operation permits, lines of credit, and to strengthen the local and municipal economy.

R6. Consider developing a collaborative structure between PAR, implementing partners and the communities to **establish community and local networks** to contribute to self-sufficiency during critical moments such as those imposed by the COVID-19. An intervention strategy focused on planned community development and based on the exchange of goods and services between different types of beneficiaries can mitigate the negative effect on the self-subsistence of beneficiaries' households, fostering the construction of collective abilities at the community level. These processes could contribute to build community capacities based on dialogue, participatory planning for the solution of day-to-day issues, empowerment at the neighborhood level, and the permanent exchange of information at low cost. This not only contributes to improve economic exchange between participants and their communities, but can also strengthen the social fabric.

(CH) Implementing partners faced difficulties adapting to and using USAID's procurement procedures.

C-AME observed that some implementing partners had difficulties adapting to and using USAID procurement procedures. Staff from both CCs expressed to C-AME they had difficulties understanding and implementing the parameters for purchases that would be allowable by USAID. The CC's project format entailed procuring specific materials or equipment on behalf of eligible participants' businesses. For CCA, aligning the beneficiaries' lists of requested equipment and the list of allowable purchases that USAID provided through PAR was, according to the beneficiaries, challenging and **caused delays** in the procurement process. Some participants explained to C-AME that the discrepancy between these lists was the excuse put forth by the partner for not being able to procure certain elements, claiming that USAID had not authorized the purchase.

However, CCA does not consider this a significant challenge. Staff from CCC explained to C-AME that they had difficulty understanding and implementing the list of procurement requirements from USAID furnished to them by PAR. According to CCC, it **was difficult to clearly identify the types and uses** of the equipment that are permitted to be acquired with project resources, and these items also do not

necessarily correspond to the needs of the small and micro-enterprises such as those run by the project participants.[19] The partner reported that translating, understanding, and clarifying doubts about the list was a lengthy process and that they did not advance the purchase processes for seed capital items until they were certain whether the selected items were allowable by USAID. Considering that these types of projects will continue to be a strategy for PAR implementation, PAR could:

R1. Inform implementing partners about standardized procurement requirements in Spanish, to ease the process for local staff and avoid misinterpretations. PAR could develop workshop materials and use examples to deliver this information to the partners, in which they can resolve doubts about requirements and documentation needed to support purchases.

R2. Promote spaces for dialogue between different implementing partners of these types of projects, so that they can exchange their experiences complying with procurement procedures, sharing challenges and lessons learned during implementation.

SUB-SECTION 1.4. PARTNERS IMPLEMENTING DIVERSITY AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

The project *Diversity, a key element in building initiatives for coexistence and reconciliation with ethnic, migrant and host populations* (Diversity Project for short) was implemented by Nuestro Flow S.A.S. (NF). It aimed to promote actions to make culture and intersectionality visible as they happen in the Black, *Raizal,*[28] *Palenquero,*[29] indigenous, Romani, and migrant Venezuelan communities, expecting to enable spaces for dialogue and promotion of equality, diversity, solidarity, and collaboration to strengthen the social fabric in Maicao, Cúcuta, and Bogotá. Although the project was implemented in three cities, this analysis builds upon interviews with participants from Maicao and Cúcuta. The project included the following activities: (1) a series of 20 meetings in ten public and private educational institutions in the cities of Maicao and Cúcuta where the NF-owned booklet "La Liga de la Diversidad Étnica"[20,21] was used to increase awareness among students about the cultural diversity of Colombia, as well as the importance of breaking stereotypes about differences between population groups. (2) The project hosted photographic exhibits in public spaces in Maicao and Cúcuta to encourage 300 inhabitants to reflect on the impact of discrimination and inequality. (3) NF made a series of twelve videos developed by child and youth participants where they presented their reflections on the diversity of ethnic groups in their territories. (4) The project facilitated production of the second volume of the booklet "La Liga de la Diversidad"[22] in order to include new characters that represent migrant populations. This section outlines key implementation achievements (A), learning opportunities (LO), challenges (CH), and recommendations (R) when available.

(A) Project activities and characters allowed NF to raise awareness about diversity.

According to the implementing partner, the activities implemented as part of the project allowed participants to think about diversity. For instance, the use of the fictional characters of the Diversity League allowed children and young participants to understand why *being different* is not a reason to judge others; quite the opposite, there are important values (superpowers) derived from diversity. One teacher from **Maicao** participating in the project stated this strategy was very useful because children are very perceptive and are open to receiving new information which can help a lot to reduce stigmas that might develop along with them. In fact, the use of the cartoon characters and

[19] For example, USAID may specifically allow and provide guidance on the purchase of an industrial kitchen-grade blender, while a micro-entrepreneur with their own fruit juice business might only need, and request, a blender of the type marketed for home kitchens, on which the USAID guidance is silent or unclear.
[20] In English, *The league of ethnic diversity.*
[21] The booklet includes a series of cartoon characters with cultural and ethnic features of Colombians to create superheroes to represent the power(s) of diversity.
[22] The word "ethnic" was removed for the second and third booklets, since ethnic diversity is not the only component of diversity addressed in the booklets' contents.

experiential activities was highlighted by participants as interesting and helped them better understand the positive messages around diversity. Another example was offered by another teacher from **Cúcuta**, who commented that, during the project activity at her school, one student was able to express that she felt she was being bullied, and it was an opportunity for teachers to work with her to address this. Teachers interviewed by C-AME asserted the project offered an opportunity for them and their students to reflect on the importance of acknowledging diversity in their cities, which are not only highly diverse, but also have a history of exclusion, with persistent traditional mindsets about gender roles, and complex interactions between social class and ethnicity.

(LO) Implementing partner is unsure of safety protocols in case of security incidents.

Implementation of NF activities took place in two cities where safety is a concern for locals as well as for implementers of development projects such as the NF staff. Although NF is aware of the security concerns, and during implementation they never felt threatened by situations of this type, when asked about safety protocols they expressed not being aware of specific PAR established protocols for cases when personal safety was at risk. NF, which implements activities in Maicao and Cúcuta, but is based in Bogotá, told C-AME that they are unsure of PAR's security protocols.

R1. Considering the complex security conditions where implementations took place, and taking into account that the implementing partner is seen as an "outsider" by the communities that live in these areas, C-AME recommends that PAR share with implementing partners a security protocol, or design protocols in case these do not exist, and make sure the implementing partners adopt preventive measures consistent with the risks in municipalities where they implement. It is important for PAR to ensure that implementers are not only familiar with the types of risks that exist in different areas of the cities, but also know and are able to use safety protocols in case they need to.

SECTION 2. RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT ACHIEVEMENT OF PAR RESULTS

The recommendations presented in this section are derived form a comprehensive analysis of PAR activities selected for this developmental evaluation and the analysis of complex contexts in which these take place. These recommendations serve as learning opportunities for the PAR program as a whole and are focused on key cross-sectional aspects of the program: reconciliation activities as means to ensure the improvement of the social fabric; gender aspects as they pertain to implementation and means to address reconciliation; the use of ethnically attuned approaches when context demands them; and the use of the reconciliation approach itself. We first describe observations and later present the corresponding recommendation(s).

R1. Ensure project implementation contributes to the improvement of the social fabric.

In the cases of implementations led by CMD, C-AME observed that the implementers relied heavily on local leaders to identify the potential and actual project beneficiaries. This had some advantages, such as the identification of a critical source of information about the populations that the project expects to work with, which facilitated better understanding of their capacities, challenges, and existing opportunities, while also contributing to the recognition and strengthening of the individual local leaders' leadership. However, C-AME also observed that in the case of CMD-Arauca, relying on local leaders presented potential risks to their leadership roles at the community level because assigning them responsibility in the participant selection put them in an uncomfortable position with those individuals who were not selected. Some leaders C-AME interviewed reported that those who had not been selected complained and became upset with them. This is an issue that implementers must address and, in fact, in the last conversation C-AME had with CMD Arauca on July 6, 2020, CMD-Arauca was designing a strategy to strengthen their connection with local leaders, seeking to guarantee sustainability

of the process. In the case of CMD-Maicao, one project participant reported to C-AME that because she is Wayuu, communities relied on her to become a focal point of community complaints regarding the project while also demanding explanations from her about those who were not selected as project participants.

The situations described above that occurred in Arauca and Maicao can occur when the anticipation of development or aid projects creates a set of expectations among vulnerable participants about the possibility of accessing resources that can improve their quality of life. However, when resources are limited and only a few can access these, this has the potential to increase social tensions between community members. This tension in turn affects the capacity of programs like PAR to rebuild the social fabric in these communities. By enabling situations in which local leaders become mediators or focal points between communities and the implementer, community members are likely to talk with those they feel closer to (i.e. the leaders) to share their discomfort and dissatisfaction. Leaders, however, by not having decision-making control over project activities, have limited ability to respond community demands and this could threaten their leadership role and diminish their ability to guide community-level consensus. In similar situations, PAR can:

R1.1. Collaborate with implementing partners to determine the selection criteria that the target population must meet to be part of the project, as well as guidelines that inform communities about these conditions. For this, PAR can create protocols per implementing partner type, as well as demographic group type that can be used as a toolkit to create the specific project requirements for participation, and make those publically available and easily communicable to the communities.

R1.2. PAR should develop a learning agenda between PAR and its implementing partners to ensure their interventions are contributing to improve conditions for reconciliation at the community level by helping to rebuild the social fabric of these communities, rather than deepening social tensions.

R1.3. As part of the learning agenda PAR can develop a multi-faceted communication strategy to inform communities about PAR and the potential direct and indirect effects (positive externalities) of their interventions in each community. PAR can leverage territorial/program level activities to communicate with communities that are not direct beneficiaries, but perceive PAR presence in their territories, as project-level interventions have a limited scope. PAR should have a more effective communication strategy that manages to show the benefits of its intervention to a broader community, including where beneficiaries live, to tackle misconceptions and negative narratives that could arise from the intervention.

R2. Improve cross-cutting implementation of the gender approach, ensuring that relevant activities are implemented effectively throughout the program cycle.

C-AME observed in beneficiaries' narratives the presence of discriminatory imaginaries about women and LGTBI persons and struggles with vocabulary for the latter, despite the fact that most of the implementing partners claimed to have implemented the GSI workshops. When asked about the timing of the GSI transfer from PAR to them, most of the implementing partners stated that it was done at the beginning of the intervention, but then there were no more workshops on this topic. These discontinuities in the GSI implementation, and the limited capacity of implementers to integrate a cross-cutting gender focus in specific project components, has made it very difficult to apply the gender approach throughout the project cycle in a way that generates measurable results. On some occasions, the inclusion of gender issues has been limited to the nominal inclusion of women and LGTBI persons in activities or to raising awareness about gender inequality (issues that are not minor or insignificant), while failing to include intentional strategies to connect the specific activity content with an objective

to overcome or prevent gender inequalities and gender-based violence. C-AME concludes that the limited partner experience with including a gender focus in their activities and-or the lack of proper guidance from PAR have limited program capacity to fully integrate a cross-cutting gender approach at the implementation level, beyond the use of the GSI workshops. Based on this situation C-AME recommends the following to PAR:

R2.1. In the planning stages of each activity, **work with the partners to design specific strategies to reduce gender gaps that can be combined with focus areas of each initiative**, so that the intervention is as comprehensive as possible and promotes learning based on the beneficiaries' daily lives. For example, if the project is focused on economic empowerment, this might include learning sessions about equitable distribution of income and workload between men and women, issues of economic discrimination toward LGBTI persons, and avoiding the spread of traditional gender norms in project activities and narratives. PAR could also consider working with implementers to conduct a diagnosis of gender inequalities in the targeted municipalities, whose particularities are included in the design of the initiatives. This strategy could add a greater degree of meaning for the beneficiaries in the implementation of the gender approach.

R2.2. Ensure that implementers have the capacity to address the issues of sexual and gender diversity in an explicit and systematic manner to improve the sensitivity and effectiveness of their work with beneficiaries. C-AME considers that greater knowledge about the issues that LGBTI persons face to access their rights and equal opportunities is a fundamental step towards the reduction of inequality and discrimination. For this, PAR could design complementary gender and sexual diversity activities to accompany the existing ones with the purpose of giving greater visibility to the issue of diversity, eliminating prejudices, negative stereotypes and ideas that support discrimination.

R2.3. Monitor and maintain a close dialogue with the implementing partners for the implementation of the GSI along the intervention chain and for each project implementation. To ensure this, PAR can collaborate with the implementing partner to select—and modify as needed—the most appropriate GSI workshops, as well as collaborate on the design of a gender learning agenda for each activity. This would allow PAR to track implementation and results as partners carry out specific gender empowerment and awareness strategies. This means greater involvement of implementing partners in the conversations and skill building around GSI or other complementary activities, and an active role in planning activities aimed at reducing gender gaps, depending on the specific component of each initiative.

R2.4. Generate or take advantage of existing spaces to prevent or attend to cases of gender-based violence that may affect the beneficiaries. C-AME is aware that PAR has allies—such as the Sergio Urrego Foundation—that can contribute to the design of new approaches or support systems, or to the socialization of existing ones among partners and beneficiaries, that would help beneficiaries deal with and perhaps prevent violence. PAR could take advantage of these alliances, or build others, to further advance this objective.

R2.5. PAR can also **build upon the communication adaptations** they and implementing partners made during COVID-19 to update the socialization (i.e. via online modules and interactive activities) of GSI to beneficiaries throughout the whole project cycle, thus minimizing costs while also introducing creative and meaningful communication strategies to improve awareness of gender-related issues and diversity.

R3. Ensure that, when working with ethnic minority communities, implementation design is differential.

Although partners such as NF and CMD claim to have experience working with diverse cultures, C-AME perceived their limited knowledge of the indigenous cultural practices of the Wayuu project participants living in Maicao. This was most evident in the situation in which staff from NF demonstrated lack of knowledge about cultural practices associated with birth among Wayuu communities, using their own cultural biases to devise icebreaker games to capture information about the beneficiaries, instead of adapting their activities to the indigenous group's reality. Similarly, in a dialogue with CMD staff, C-AME perceived that this implementing partner interpreted the body language and emotional response of the Wayuu indigenous participants according to their "Western" expectations and experience, and that this interpretation resulted in the implementer seeing the participants as incapable of participating effectively in *DecidoSer* activities. This is an issue that could have been managed if implementer staff had better knowledge of PAR differential approaches and of the target beneficiary group before implementing an activity with them. Accordingly, C-AME suggests PAR:

R3.1. Ensure that implementers who have targeted ethnic communities for their projects know and make best possible use of DecidoSer modules designed to work with these groups. The transfer of these parts of the DecidoSer toolkit has to happen before, or in early stages of, the implementation. This would allow for greater awareness of cultural diversity issues and result in a more horizontal relationship between the partner and the beneficiaries. As a result of this, implementers may decide they need to hire staff who are from these communities or are quite familiar with their cultural practices.

R3.2. Design additional (to the ones available in the DecidoSer toolkit) training modules aimed exclusively at those implementers that target members of minority ethnic communities, that provide specific guidelines for the treatment and appreciation of cultural diversity. These could include, among others, training processes and exchange of experiences between implementing partners with similar or complementary profiles, formulation of care strategies and construction of instruments for capturing demographic information in ways that respond to the cultural reality of the communities.

R3.3. PAR should consider designing data collection tools that reflect the cultural context of implementation. One strategy could be to update the Pre-Intervention Survey to reflect cultural backgrounds or develop more detailed municipal context analysis briefers. The combination of these forms of data before the beginning of implementation can better inform partners of the features that are relevant for the development of the interventions. The identification of relevant and pertinent contextual elements could also contribute to the assessment of the time required for the activities to generate consistent and sustainable scopes of work given the available timeframes.

R4. Uneven focus on reconciliation efforts

As detailed in the analyses of this developmental evaluation (Annex 1: Implementation section, reconciliation approach sub-sections), some implementing partners have difficulty understanding what reconciliation entails and as a result, they structured implementation around their own ideas of it, in ways that better fit their experience. This sometimes creates an imbalance regarding the reconciliation expected outcomes. For instance, many participants have a limited view of reconciliation as the differentiating factor in the projects in which they were involved; rather, they perceive that individual and interpersonal reconciliation abilities are means to economic gain. For instance, for the projects implemented by the Chambers of Commerce there was no awareness of the reconciliation component as a differential factor of the projects, while the psychosocial component was understood as a way to contribute to the better development of the business activities supported by the projects. In the narrative of the implementing partners and participants interviewed, there is no connection between the

objectives of the projects and the construction of reconciliation processes. While participants being unaware they are involved in a project for reconciliation may not necessarily represent a failure of the activity to promote or adequately describe reconciliation, a lack of clarity around PAR's reconciliation goals limits the partners' capacity to ensure that reconciliation is the differentiating factor of their projects and limits the ability of participants to conceive of themselves as agents in social change processes. C-AME found evidence that some implementing partners had more clarity than others about the coordination that must exist between the RA and the goals of the initiatives they carried out. Generally, C-AME observed that each partner uses *DecidoSer* to fulfill their own organizational needs whether those have a reconciliation focus or not, as if using *DecidoSer* necessarily imbued their project with a Reconciliation Focus. However, for most of the activities examined this was not the case.

In previous documents delivered to USAID, C-AME has reflected on the tautological challenge PAR faces when activities produce positive economic and social change, but absent a connection between these and their contribution to reconciliation, these are necessary, but insufficient, conditions to bring about reconciliation. Evidence from this and former developmental evaluations indicates there are issues that PAR needs to continue addressing, in order to ensure implementation maintains a reconciliation focus. These include:

Limited understanding of what reconciliation entails among implementing partners.
The CMD implementers in Cúcuta and Arauca faced issues operationalizing the concept of reconciliation during implementation. Although they stated they understand PAR's goals, they expressed having limited knowledge of what is the Program's understanding of reconciliation and ended up adopting their own definition of reconciliation. Ultimately, for example, both Chambers of Commerce used their specific knowledge to build participants' entrepreneurial skills in an activity wherein the PAR reconciliation approach was a secondary tool to develop participants' individual and interpersonal skills.

Implementers use DecidoSer according to their organizational goals. For PAR's activities to contribute to PAR's objectives, all transformative alliances must implement the RA at least once on at least one level of the implementation chain. PAR works with partners to transfer the tools available in the RA (*DecidoSer* and GSI methodologies) to their staff, so they can implement it with project beneficiaries. From the cases studied by C-AME in this developmental evaluation, each implementing partner decides how to use the *DecidoSer* and GSI tools available in the RA. C-AME has also observed that each partner determines project level goals using the RA tools to achieve project ends, whether these goals have a reconciliation focus or not. In the cases studied for this developmental evaluation, C-AME observed implementing partners with varying ideas of what the RA is and its role within implementation.

In the case of CMD, the *DecidoSer* toolkit consists of guidelines that complement its strategies to address the psychosocial support needs of their beneficiaries. The Chambers of Commerce either developed an alliance with a third party to implement *DecidoSer* (Cúcuta) or hired personnel to implement it; in both cases *DecidoSer* was used as a tool to develop soft skills among participants to strengthen their business endeavors. In the case of Atnamana, there was a direct intervention by PAR in hiring a psychosocial support professional to aid the implementation of the RA. For staff from NF, the RA was a baseline to design their activities. Most partners highlighted that the experiential aspect of *DecidoSer* helped them to achieve project outcomes, however, not all partners consider that the development of reconciliation abilities is the main goal of their projects. This variety of uses of *DecidoSer*, along with the secondary role of reconciliation abilities at the project level, limit the projects' potential to transform individual attitudes, behaviors, and interactions towards reconciliation in a system that requires broader actions for societal change to strengthen it.

A limited reconciliation focus affected results. Activities that were designed to deliver economic objectives first and reconciliation second tended not to convey to participants the importance of reconciliation, the messaging around individuals' roles and responsibilities in supporting reconciliation, nor the reconciliation drivers sought in PAR's alliances. In some activities, participants managed to attain outcomes in trust and empowerment that were supportive of reconciliation broadly, but not specifically. Further, while it is not possible to conclude whether a stronger reconciliation focus in activities would have prevented this, in some instances implementer decisions and behavior effectively undermined progress towards reconciliation by eroding trust and disempowering participants, or by contributing to, rather than alleviating, their socioeconomic precariousness. This was the case with the Chambers of Commerce, whose activities required beneficiaries to pay for unaffordable transport to attend, and/or were promised and then failed to deliver seed capital investments to participants. In this context, CMD stands out as a positive example of an appropriately experienced implementer with an approach that was more easily adapted to align with *DecidoSer* and more attuned to participants' needs and abilities.

In order to address the issues described above, C-AME recommends PAR continue to strengthen work with implementing partners on the RA and ensure its use throughout the implementation, particularly in messaging and activities with beneficiaries that, if successful, can contribute to reconciliation. Overall, PAR should maintain the emphasis on reconciliation so that the "differentiating factor" of the initiatives remains.

R4.1. Since PAR considers it problematic to use a definition of reconciliation as a guiding principle of its activity, they can map how implementers understand reconciliation, and how they use these definitions to outline implementation. This would help PAR to grasp whether or not implementers have clarity on the program goal regarding reconciliation, if they are actually implementing it, and enable spaces for dialogue to discuss different concepts of reconciliation, the agents involved, and their respective roles within the process. The latter would allow PAR to capture partners and beneficiaries' understanding of reconciliation and the agents engaged in it.

R4.2. PAR could design collaborative learning activities that allow implementers to understand the PAR results framework and Theory of Change, and the crosscutting role of the Reconciliation Approach in its activities. This would help partners to outline their implementation path under a reconciliation focus as the differentiating factor of PAR funded initiatives.

R4.3. Given the different types of achievements in terms of reconciliation, PAR should foster spaces for discussion with its implementing partners to receive and provide feedback on what are (if any) the potential elements that are preventing partners from having a reconciliation focus in their activities with PAR beneficiaries. Such a conversation may provide useful feedback to ensure that the reconciliatory component is the centerpiece and cornerstone of each intervention.

R4.4. Continue implementing and constantly updating follow-up mechanisms that allow PAR and implementing partners to track individual changes regarding reconciliation abilities, family level changes, and community level effects of the use of the RA in implementation.

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DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION REPORT
(FIFTH ITERATION)

COMPLEXITY – AWARE MONITORING AND EVALUATION

ANNEX I - ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW

JANUARY 2021

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ACRONYMS

APC	Agencia Presidencial de la Cooperación Internacional en Colombia
C-AME	Complexity-Aware Monitoring and Evaluation
CCA	Chamber of Commerce of Arauca
CCC	Chamber of Commerce of Cúcuta
CDI	Centro de Desarrollo Integral
CERAC	Centro de Recursos para el Análisis de Conflictos
CMD	Corporación Minuto de Dios (needs first usage)
DANE	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística
DE	Developmental Evaluation
DI	Democracy International
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional
ENCOVI	Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Vida
EPL	Ejército Popular de Liberación (needs first usage)
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
GIFMM	Grupo Interagencial sobre Flujos Migratorios Mixtos
GOC	Government of Colombia
GSI	Gender and Social Inclusion
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IMMAP	Information Management and Mine Action Programs
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex
MAPP/OEA	Organization of American States, Mission to Support the Peace Process
MINTIC	Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NF	Nuestro Flow
PAR	Programa de Alianzas para la Reconciliación
PARES	Fundacion Paz y Reconciliacion
PEP	Permiso Especial de Permanencia
PPA	Public-Private Alliances (needs full name on first usage)
RA	Reconciliation Approach
SENA	Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje
SIVIGILA	Sistema Nacional de Vigilancia en Salud Pública
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

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INTRODUCTION

Under its contract with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Democracy International (DI) is responsible for conducting the Complexity-Aware Monitoring and Evaluation (C-AME) activity for the USAID/Colombia Reconciliation Activity - PAR (*Programa de Alianzas para la Reconciliación*), implemented by ACDI/VOCA. As part of this activity, DI presents in this document the results of the fifth developmental evaluation (DE). The DE is a systematic effort to track and analyze the program results that emerge under conditions of complexity, documenting and interpreting the dynamics, interactions, and interdependencies that occur during the implementation period of the Reconciliation Activity.

DI aims to inform adaptive management of the PAR Reconciliation Activity throughout its lifecycle, as well as to inform lessons learned that will be applicable after the project comes to an end. The Reconciliation Activity, meanwhile, aims to enhance the capacity of both the Government of Colombia (GOC) and civil society to strengthen and build reconciliation processes by fostering trust and tolerance among beneficiaries. Dismantling the aggressor/victim dynamic and narratives is essential if the Reconciliation Activity is to achieve its mission of reintegrating ex-combatants and providing support and services to victims of violence during the conflict. More recently, PAR has updated its geographic and thematic scope to address social and economic tensions that emerged from the influx of Venezuelan migrants into Colombia due to the neighboring country's social and political crisis, which affect reconciliation processes in Colombia.

C-AME supports reflection on PAR's practices, challenges, and successes, as well as those of the organizations that PAR influences directly and through which PAR interventions may indirectly affect beneficiary attitudes and behaviors with respect to reconciliation. To this end, C-AME aims to provide supplemental information and analysis through its ongoing evaluation and monitoring activities and periodic reports.

The Reconciliation Activity can benefit from a flexible learning and evaluation approach because of its distinctive characteristics. PAR seeks to generate changes in the attitudes and practices of diverse actors throughout Colombia. According to its Theory of Change, it will produce attitudinal change in Colombians who will be taking actions to strengthen reconciliation. The program's strategic approach consists of three interconnected results: R-1. Improved capacity for developing truth-telling and memory mechanisms; R-2. Awareness and mobilization increased through inclusive initiatives; and R-3. Local reconciliation initiatives strengthened through strategic public-private alliances (PPAs). In addition, PAR established three structural objectives: i. Local Partner Strategy, ii. Gender and Social Inclusion (GSI), and iii. Psychosocial Support. The last two form PAR's Reconciliation Approach (RA), implemented through the DecidoSer and the Gender and Social Inclusion methodological strategies.

PAR's interventions involve trial, error, and adaptation as beneficiaries' unique backgrounds and their environs may condition outcomes. The historical, geopolitical, and social contexts of each territory where PAR operates can and do influence the successes PAR's activities can achieve. The Reconciliation

Activity is therefore not a "one-size-fits-all" development program. The DE may support PAR in several ways, such as identifying strategic lines of inquiry, presaging unanticipated roadblocks in implementation, floating alternative causal explanations, and suggesting promising paths of intervention to project implementers that account for trends or changes in local contexts. For this DE, C-AME focuses on the Reconciliation Activity carried out by PAR in the following Colombia-Venezuela border municipalities: Arauca (department of Arauca), Cúcuta (department of Norte de Santander), and Maicao (department of La Guajira).

C-AME summarizes the process of collecting and analyzing supplemental PAR implementation data in its semiannual Developmental Evaluation Report. However, this year's C-AME work plan faced a significant limitation due to the health crisis caused by the spread of COVID-19. For C-AME, this meant developing a Remote Evaluation Strategy to conduct fieldwork and implementing that plan, which resulted in postponing the date of the original submission of the DE report from June to October 2020. As a strategy to adapt, C-AME combined in-person data collection that it had already conducted before the pandemic lockdown in March 2020 along with online and telephone data collection between May and August 2020. Further details on the adapted processes for data collection are available in the methodology section. Image 1 below depicts the geographic scope of the DE.

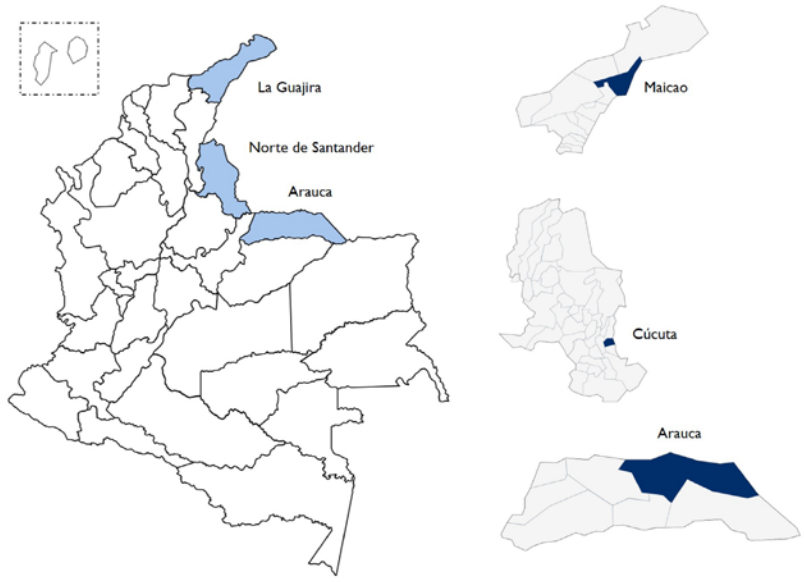

Image 1 Geographic scope of the fifth Developmental Evaluation

The structure of this document is as follows: Section 1 presents the scope of this evaluation, including the geographic scope and methodology, as well as a brief description of the recent Venezuelan migration crisis around some of the milestones. Section 2 details the results of this DE, broken into three sub-sections—first, project-level observations and analysis, second, analysis of gender conditions for reconciliation, third, context analysis, highlighting the effects of the specific context situations that affect PAR's interventions and results. Section 3 concludes the report with recommendations and constructive reflections.

EVALUATION SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This report synthesizes the meaningful observations, data gathering, and results of the mixed-method analyses that we have completed to date and leverages this body of work to address three primary questions about the Reconciliation Activity:

Q1. What is considered working and not working (and by whom) as the intervention unfolds?
Q2. How is the Reconciliation Activity connected to and affected by the wider context?
Q3. How and why do contextual factors influence results and what are the trends in the wider context?

The next section "unpacks" meaning in the evaluation questions and places geographic and project boundaries around them.

EVALUATION SCOPE

Field data collection and analysis for this DE are limited to municipalities where PAR is implementing its activities. For this iteration of the DE, C-AME worked with USAID and PAR to prioritize three municipalities for the study, located on the border between Colombia and Venezuela: Arauca (department of Arauca), Cúcuta (department of Norte de Santander), and Maicao (department of La Guajira).

C-AME used the following criteria for project selection based on project information data PAR provided to C-AME (through MONITOR, the Mission-wide M&E tool used by USAID/Colombia), as well as a collaborative effort to identify projects that would improve PAR learning process.

1. *Location:* Projects implemented in the Colombia-Venezuela border municipalities where PAR is active and which C-AME had not visited before.
2. *Implementation status:* Active or closed within the past three months at the moment of selection in February 2020.
3. *Scope:* Projects that involve activities that address migration related issues.
4. *Number of projects per municipality:* C-AME selected at least one project per target municipality.

Following these criteria, C-AME selected the seven projects outlined in table 1.

Table 1. Projects selected by C-AME for DE No. 5

Location	Project title	Implementing partner	PAR Code
Arauca	Propuesta de integración económica y reconciliación "Integración Construimos Futuro en Arauca"	Corporación El Minuto de Dios – Arauca (CMD-Arauca)	PAR-03-157
	Generación de ingresos, independencia económica y entornos de protección a migrantes, retornadas, jóvenes y mujeres	Cámara de Comercio de Arauca (CCA)	PAR-03-166
Maicao	Propuesta de integración económica y reconciliación: Integrándonos construimos futuro – Maicao	Corporación El Minuto de Dios – Maicao (CMD-Maicao)	PAR - 03-155
	Reconciliación e inclusión socio productiva a partir de la siembra de melón para la exportación a la isla de Curazao en el municipio de Maicao	Asociación de Agricultores independientes de la vereda Atnamana (Atnamana)	PAR - 03-171

Location	Project title	Implementing partner	PAR Code
	La diversidad, elemento clave para la construcción de iniciativas de convivencia y reconciliación con población étnica, migrante y de acogida	Nuestro Flow S.A.S. (NF)	PAR-03-180
Cúcuta	Integrándonos construimos futuro, estrategia de reconciliación e integración económica en Cúcuta	Corporación El Minuto de Dios – Cúcuta (CMD-Cúcuta)	PAR-03-149
	Cúcuta Incluyente, Emprendedora y Solidaria	Cámara de Comercio de Cúcuta (CCC)	PAR-03-146
	La diversidad, elemento clave para la construcción de iniciativas de convivencia y reconciliación con población étnica, migrante y de acogida	Nuestro Flow S.A.S. (NF)	PAR-03-180

METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY

C-AME developed data collection and analysis tools to examine the local contexts (systemic and circumstantial issues), in parallel with project-level analyses, under the assumption that contextual factors affect project implementation and performance. Understanding the highly nuanced dynamics of each region of Colombia, in addition to the more recent context trends as they relate to the influx of Venezuelan migrants into Colombia, allows C-AME to draw preliminary conclusions about what works and does not work as the intervention unfolds, triangulating results across all cases (Q1) and later combined with the analyses of contexts (Q2 and Q3) allows C-AME to formulate meaningful lessons learned and recommendations that PAR and USAID may wish to consider in future interventions. Compared to former iterations of the DE, and given the strong interaction between the gender dynamics at the context and implementation levels, for this iteration C-AME prepared a specific section analyzing gender issues as they pertain to implementation.

The data for this DE come from primary sources (i.e. PAR staff, implementing partners, project participants, and context actors), and C-AME collected these data through individual and group semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Although PAR and C-AME had agreed on a schedule to conduct the data collection for this DE with their staff, implementing partners, and project participants, C-AME had to stop in-person interviews and focus groups in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the government response, which included declaring a state of emergency and instituting a mandatory quarantine. In the following months C-AME developed strategies to adapt data collection procedures to ensure data quality and integrity that would properly inform this evaluation process. Data collection from primary sources continued in the month of May, initially with context actors, via internet and telephone calls. For semi-structured interviews, C-AME team members followed specific protocols in terms of means of communication, interview script, and time. In many cases, the work with project participants represented additional challenges due to their difficulties accessing stable internet and phone connections and smart phones. C-AME pivoted its strategy of typically collecting participant data through focus groups, to semi-structured interviews with pairs of beneficiaries. For this effort, C-AME had to restructure interview protocols while increasing the time and effort set aside for data collection and analysis, because the higher number of data collection events meant more hours of audio, and more

time needed for transcription and analysis. Thanks to these adaptive measures, during the fieldwork stage (in person and remote), C-AME obtained 93 interviews (focus groups and semi-structured interviews) with 150 subjects that included PAR staff (headquarters and local officers), PAR implementing partners and project participants, and context actors.

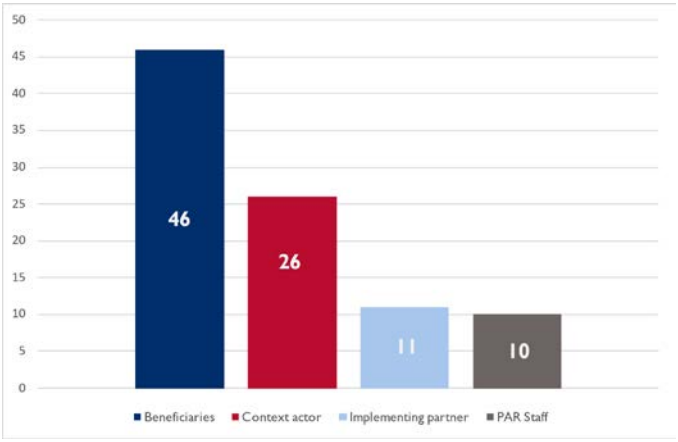

Figure 1: Data collection events

The breakdown of the types of actors included above is shown in Figure 1. C-AME collected data from PAR coordinators to understand firsthand the perspective of those managing implementation. C-AME also collected data from staff from the organizations implementing projects (implementing partners), and project participants. In addition, the C-AME team engaged in interviews with actors who were able to provide contextual information that has a bearing on PAR's implementation and is relevant to the areas of focus in this iteration.

For the context analysis, C-AME held interviews with representatives from the following categories of organizations for its context analysis: state institutions at the local level, think tanks, relevant non-governmental organizations (including foreign donors), non-profit entities, and representatives from the media. C-AME also analyzed relevant academic research and consulted information produced by media outlets at the local, regional, and national levels.

C-AME analyzed demographic, socio-economic, and security data to characterize and further analyze PAR's implementation environment and used this data to highlight possible contingencies that may have a positive or negative impact on its work. C-AME applied textual statistical and qualitative analysis procedures to its unique databases of beneficiary, implementing partner, and stakeholder narratives to systematically examine interviews and identify key themes to develop a method for coding the data. Field team members observed and collected useful data on site to characterize the dynamics of reconciliation, key actors, relationships, conflicts of interest and other elements that facilitate understanding the environment in which PAR is operating. Due to the limitations on mobility caused by the pandemic, many individual and group interviews that would normally have been carried out in person had to be conducted over the phone or internet, limiting the amount of observation C-AME could do of interviewees' non-verbal cues, body language, and context. We used NVivo 11 to organize and to conduct the first level of primary data analysis: text analysis and text mining. This software allows for the construction of databases with different types of discursive information, as well as the incorporation of useful text analysis procedures for the exploration of interviews. Using internal learning from the previous DEs, the evaluation team was able to predetermine codes for the analysis. Predetermined codes are the entry point for the data analysis. To identify emergent themes in the data, the team used the results from NVivo as the baseline to identify themes within the data for further

human coding. Using these tools for data analysis, C-AME team explored relationships between categories and concepts, to further identify learning opportunities and formulate recommendations for improvement.

When DEs help implementers to identify patterns, integrate new information, and analyze and consider the implications of what they are seeing and doing, this is called "sense-making." Because developmental evaluation scrutinizes closed and ongoing projects, insights are not only valid if they result from formal analysis. As such, C-AME relies on formal analysis as well as observations and educated hunches as the basis for learning and recommendations.

THE CONTEXT IN BORDER MUNICIPALITIES

As introduced earlier, this DE focused on the analysis of PAR implementation on the Colombia-Venezuela border and, as such, C-AME considers it relevant to start by laying out some aspects of the context in the border area to further understand the contents of the project-level, gender, and context analyses sections. While here we present some key systemic conditions that exist in border municipalities, further in the context analysis section, C-AME presents the results of the analysis that details specific effects of the context on implementation and results. In its fourth year of implementation, PAR expanded its territorial focus to include five municipalities located in three departments of the Colombia-Venezuela border: Norte de Santander, La Guajira, and Arauca.[1] The change in geographic focus also implied a thematic adjustment, from a focus on, "…incidence of violence, socioeconomic conditions, presence of victims and demobilized persons, and local state institutional capacity", to a focus on the emergent tensions that exist in border areas, placing an emphasis on, "new conflict scenarios related to xenophobia, intolerance, and discrimination, stemming from the high rate of migration from Venezuela."[2] This new scenario of implementation on the Colombian-Venezuelan border poses a series of challenges for PAR, as it has to face *common unresolved issues* that stem from historical problems in these locations. These *common unresolved issues* combined with the influx of people fleeing the political and economic crisis from Venezuela into Colombia has increased the need to focus the efforts of the GOC and international donors to assist migrants, while also deepening existing social tensions around access to the provision of goods and services for vulnerable populations from both public resources and international donors. These emerging tensions create an environment that negatively affects people's willingness to engage in reconciliation.

These social tensions intensify when looking at the current conditions of border departments where PAR's implementation took place. These departments have some of the highest multidimensional poverty rates in the country: La Guajira (51.4%) is among the poorest five departments in Colombia, while Norte de Santander (31.5%) and Arauca (31.8%) are above the national average, which is 19.6%.[3] Informal settlements in these departments, where C-AME found most of PAR beneficiaries are located,

[1] The municipality of Arauca was already part of PAR's geographic scope.
[2] PAR-WPY4 p. 12.
[3] DANE (2019) *Censo Nacional de Población y Vivienda 2018*.

also have very limited access to basic public utilities like clean and safe water. A study from IMMAP and UNICEF[4] found that the hygiene and sanitation conditions of most of the migrant settlements were precarious; 97% do not have access hygiene products (i.e. soap, towels, hand sanitizer, and clean water) available and in 99% of them, water is not safe for drinking due to an absence of treatment systems. This means that beneficiaries who live in these settlements have highly vulnerable conditions that can be further worsened by situations like the current COVID-19 pandemic, which is combated with constant hand washing and sanitation items like hand sanitizer, alcohol, and face masks. These situations expose the highly vulnerable conditions that not only migrant and returnee populations face, but also host populations in these areas.

Populations on the border are also experiencing a dire situation in terms of violence and security issues. The power vacuum left by the demobilization of the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC-EP) in 2016 has left various armed groups fighting for the control of highly strategic locations for rampant human, drug, and arms trafficking. Recent data show that between 2012 and 2019, groups in the border area have killed 5,000, recruited 71 young people, displaced 71,561 people, and committed 203 kidnappings.[5] For the migrant population, living in this region poses a serious risk as armed groups have made them targets of forced recruitment and have offered them income generation alternatives with the illegal economies they control all along the border.

The influx of Venezuelan populations towards Colombia and their situation in border municipalities have increased the presence of various humanitarian aid NGOs as well as UN agencies and GOC institutions to attend the crisis. According to Agencia Presidencial de la Cooperación Internacional en Colombia (Spanish acronym APC),[6] 22.3% of the total cooperation funds received by Colombia in 2019 were directed towards five departments: La Guajira, Cesar, Norte de Santander, Arauca, Vichada, and Guainía. Consequently, most of the resources received by these departments were destined to the Venezuelan migration crisis. Norte de Santander, where **CCC, CMD and NF** projects evaluated by C-AME are located designated 66% of its departmental resources from international donors to the crisis; Arauca committed 80%, and La Guajira committed 88%.[7]

The growing need for healthcare, education, public utilities, international protection, and employment have led to social tensions between Colombian and Venezuelan populations who are both seeking opportunities in the face of difficult social and economic situations. Accordingly, some mayors, governors, and other public figures have made official requests to the central government pointing out the dearth of resources to serve migrant and returnee populations. On some occasions locals perceive these types of statements and demands to the GOC as favoring the migrant population at the expense

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[4] UNICEF & IMMAPP (2019) *Resultados Preliminares Evaluación de necesidades WASH en 4 departamentos de frontera: Arauca, La Guajira, Nariño y Norte de Santander*. See: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/presentacion_cluster_wash.pdf.

[5] PARES (2020) *Sin Dios ni ley: Un análisis de la seguridad en la frontera colombo venezolana.* See: https://pares.com.co/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/INFORME-DE-SEGURIDAD-EN-LA-FRONTERA-1.pdf

[6] In English, Presidential Agency for International Cooperation in Colombia

[7] APC (2020) *Análisis del comportamiento de la cooperación internacional no reembolsable recibida por Colombia en el año 2019.* See: https://www.apccolombia.gov.co/sites/default/files/2020-09/Ana%CC%81lisis%20cooperacio%CC%81n%20internacional%20no%20reembolsable%20recibida%20por%20colombia%20en%20el%20an%CC%83o%202019.pdf.

of the vulnerable Colombians living in the host municipalities. This has led to the emergence of negative perceptions and narratives towards migrant populations, as evidenced by information from primary sources collected by C-AME, in which Venezuelan migrants described negative portrayals of them by locals and acts of xenophobia towards them as "competitors" for aid from local governments and international donors.[8] Xenophobia makes PAR's goal of contributing to the integration of migrants and locals more difficult and blocks the possibility of advancing in the four reconciliation drivers.

The following infographics designed by C-AME detail some of the key moments in the migration waves of recent years (figure 2) and relevant information on some of the migration related policies carried out by the GOC to address the Venezuelan migration crisis (figure 3), to be used as a reference when reading this DE report.

[8] "…possible scenarios of social conflict are identified, including manifestations of xenophobia, due to the impact of the arrival of the Venezuelan population to their territories, especially in the border departments of La Guajira, Norte de Santander, Arauca, Putumayo, Nariño and Chocó". (MAPP/OEA, 2019:18). In the last survey of Proyecto Migración Venezuela, February 2020, most of the Colombians surveyed have negative perceptions of Venezuelan migrants and Government aid directed towards them. See: https://s3.amazonaws.com/semanaruralvzla/documentos/1590818285_boletin_discriminacion2020pdf

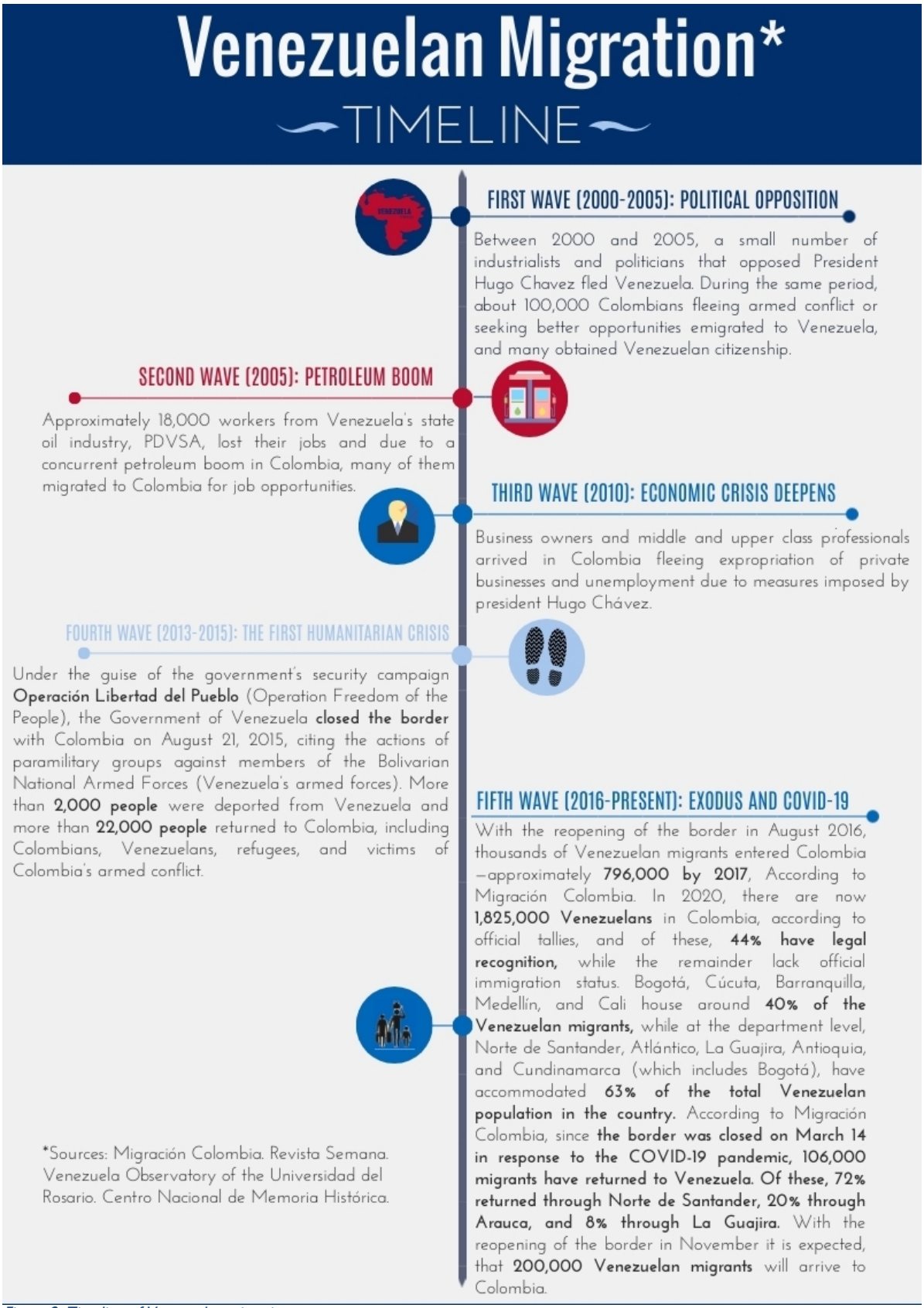

Figure 2. Timeline of Venezuelan migration

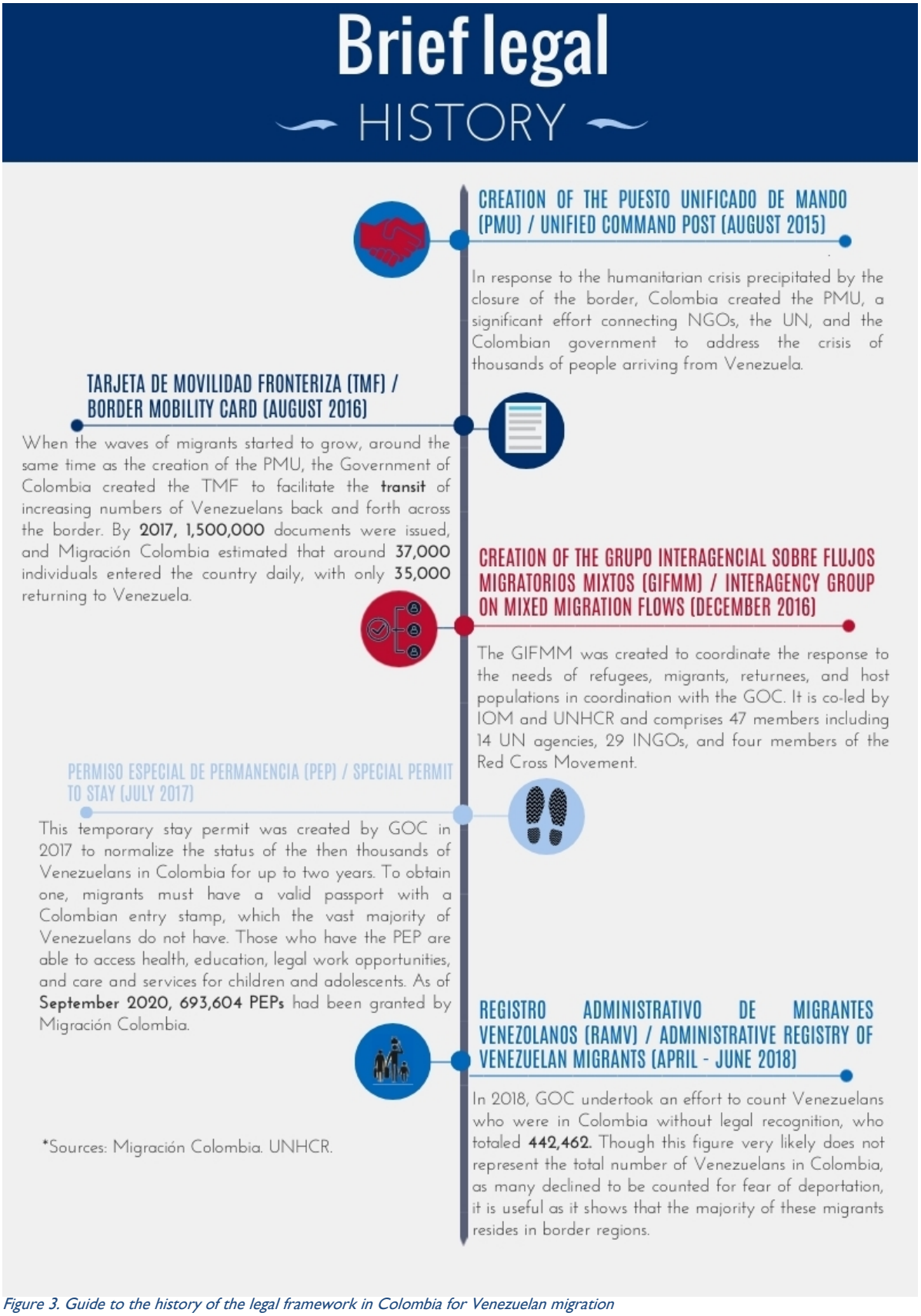

Figure 3. Guide to the history of the legal framework in Colombia for Venezuelan migration

ANALYSIS BY EVALUATION QUESTION

This section presents the results of primary and secondary data collection and analysis addressing the core questions of this DE. We describe and analyze the **seven PAR interventions in three municipalities** C-AME focused on during this evaluation period to address Question 1 (or Q1: *What is considered working and not working (and by whom) as the intervention unfolds?)*. Our response to Question 2 (or Q2: *How is the Reconciliation Activity connected to and affected by the wider context?)* details and analyzes significant contextual factors from the local levels that affect Reconciliation Activity **implementation**. Response to Question 3 (or Q3: *How and why do contextual factors influence results and what are the trends in the wider context?)* examines local context factors that influence Reconciliation Activity **results**.

Our presentation strategy below is deliberate: first, we present our project-level analysis in response to Q1, followed by a section that details the analysis of gender, and then group and address Q2 and Q3 *together, in the same sub-section* on context. This has several advantages: it limits unnecessary and semantically problematic disconnections between how PAR is "connected to" context and how it is "influenced by" context; it allows us to present all levels of context fluidly and in relation to the projects we have studied this cycle; and it enables us to draw on project-level findings as examples of how these issues concretely affect PAR projects.

PROJECT-LEVEL OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS (Q1)

In order to respond to Q1, C-AME conducted individual and group interviews and focus group discussions with PAR implementing partners and beneficiaries. In spite of the limitations mentioned above due to COVID-19, with this primary data collection, C-AME sought to capture perceptions and experiences of implementation, considerations about reconciliation processes related to project implementation, and identify achievements, challenges, and lessons learned from those engaged in implementation. For brevity and cogency, this section presents our major insights from the implementation based on a typology of implementing partners according to their main area of expertise as follows: (1) support to vulnerable populations; (2) development of entrepreneurial capacities; (3) cultural diversity.

Under category one we included projects implemented by partners with significant experience conducting initiatives with vulnerable communities. This is the case for Corporación Minuto de Dios (**CMD**),[9] [10] which implemented projects in Arauca (CMD-Arauca, PAR-03-157), Cúcuta (CMD-Cúcuta, PAR-03-149), and Maicao (CMD-Maicao, PAR-03-155). For category two we included projects implemented by partners with experience developing entrepreneurship skills, like the Chambers of

[9] Minute of God Corporation

[10] Corporación Minuto de Dios is an organization that has several years of experience providing humanitarian aid, but the projects implemented under PAR framework are not humanitarian aid projects. For the purpose of this DE, projects implemented by CMD fall under the category "projects implemented by partners with vulnerable populations".

Commerce in Arauca (**CCA**, PAR-03-166) and Cúcuta (**CCC**, PAR-03-146), as well as Asociación de Agricultores Independientes de la vereda de Atnamana[11] in Maicao (**Atnamana**, PAR-03-171). The third category includes one partner called Nuestro Flow[12] (**NF**, PAR-03-180) which is a social enterprise dedicated to the creation of content and pedagogical tools to promote equity and diversity.

INITIATIVES BY PARTNERS WITH EXPERIENCE WITH VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

For this iteration of the DE, C-AME focused on three CMD-implemented initiatives in three border cities, Arauca, Cúcuta, and Maicao. According to CMD's mission statement, they work under a unique development model designed to promote community development by supporting community engagement, conflict resolution, and mutual aid that constantly improves the quality of life of the individuals participating in their initiatives. The overall CMD strategic approach consists of five intervention areas, one of them being community development. Under this area, the strategy *Integrándonos Construimos Futuro*[13], which is funded by PAR, seeks to strengthen businesses, reconciliation processes, and social inclusion among Venezuelan migrant, returnee, and Colombian host populations in the cities of Arauca, Cúcuta, and Maicao. In each city, the projects target vulnerable populations such as displaced persons, victims of the conflict, youth, LGBTI individuals, Venezuelan migrants, and Colombian returnees. In each implementation site the project adapted to local conditions while maintaining the following crosscutting components: (1) promotion of participants' mental and physical health, achieved through providing tools to manage emotions and with spaces for dialogue that cultivate social inclusion; (2) development of opportunities for economic inclusion through business strengthening (technical trainings and seed capital in the form of resources and equipment) and formal job placement;[14] and (3) construction of social capital through community initiatives that foster the rebuilding of the social fabric and facilitate integration between Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees, and host populations.

In **Arauca**, the project sought to, "participatorily construct initiatives for social integration and reconciliation for 100 Venezuelan and Colombian returnee participants and their families." The project focused on participants living in the *Brisas del Puente* informal settlement[15] (on the boardwalk of the city) and in the El Refugio settlement. In **Cúcuta**, the objective of the project was the same, and this project was implemented in Commune 8 of Cúcuta, where CMD has its *Centro de Desarrollo Integral* (CDI).[16] The project provided seed capital (both materials and equipment) to strengthen 135 small or micro-enterprises, and expected to provide job placement opportunities for 15 project participants, of which 13 were ultimately hired. In **Maicao**, the project had the same objective, attempting to work with 100 participants and their families living in the neighborhoods *Bendición de Dios*[17] 1 and 2, and

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11 In English, Association of independent farmers from the rural community of Atnamana
12 Our Flow
13 Integrating ourselves, we construct our future
14 Despite being included in the components underpinning all of CMD's activities, the job placement only took place in Cúcuta.
15 The establishment of various families or communities in informal dwellings is known as an informal settlement or slum. Generally, they are in zones with high vulnerability and precarious living conditions. UN Habitat. (2003). The challenge of slums: global report on human settlements. URL: https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/Challenge%20of%20Slums.pdf
16 Comprehensive Development Center
17 Blessing from God

Montecarlos. All the projects included the provision of seed funding to participants (both materials and equipment) to strengthen participants' small and micro-enterprises.

In the next section, C-AME will present the evaluation results identifying achievements and learning opportunities on social and economic inclusion, the reconciliation approach, and social inclusion and integration.

ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIFIC PROJECT COMPONENT: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION

Achievements

The project activities strengthened participant business skills, which helped them to improve their levels of empowerment and trust. One of the *Integrándonos Construimos Futuro* components aimed to develop capacities among participants for their economic inclusion. CMD began by identifying vulnerable participants who own or have ideas for small or microenterprises ventures (e.g. manufacture of handicrafts, clothing, sewing, jewelry, shoemaking, production of foods). Then the staff carried out workshops to develop soft (communication and interpersonal) and technical skills to enhance technical, operational, and entrepreneurial capacities of participants, while engaging them in psychosocial support activities to enhance the management of emotions around difficult past and current experiences such as violence and forced migration. At the end of the process, participants received a seed capital award (inputs determined by each venture's need) to continue growing their businesses.

Participants from **Arauca** reported that their participation in the project strengthened their enterprises and improved their skills for managing them. They said they applied learning about budgeting so that each business could arrive at a breakeven point and be more conscious of the importance of establishing savings goals. Using this learning, participants say they are managing their spending and, with savings, some have been able to acquire necessary resources or upgrades for their businesses. In the same line of inquiry, both the implementing partner and beneficiaries from **Cúcuta** reported to C-AME a similar outcome: that the workshops were useful to them for learning to manage their business better, carry out accounting, set prices, and establish savings goals, among other skills. Beneficiaries believed that the improvement in their businesses solidifies their ability to work and earn money for themselves, enabling them to envision an independent future. In **Maicao**, beneficiaries also said they felt empowered to continue working on expanding their venture because the project improved abilities like communication skills for engaging with providers and potential customers, self-esteem, and trust. Per the staff from CMD **Maicao**, the delivery of seed funding inputs was symbolic and meaningful for participants, who usually feel excluded from opportunities for economic inclusion given their conditions of socio-economic vulnerability. Results from interviews with implementing partners and participants indicate that these achievements are indicative of improved levels of personal empowerment and trust in themselves and peers.

As part of project participation, in **Arauca** and **Cúcuta** participants developed commercial relationships with one another to obtain personal and business necessities; in **Maicao**, the opportunities for accessing local markets, and improved capacity to use social media for marketing purposes helped participants to

enhance their entrepreneurial skills, such that some of the ventures were still successful (in some cases, until the COVID-19 pandemic). The project allowed them to envision alternatives for recovery after the government mandated shutdowns. Participants and the implementing partners agreed that these outcomes were only possible because of the networks and sense of empowerment the projects created among participants.

CMD's experience working with vulnerable populations improved its adaptive capacity. CMD has significant experience working with vulnerable populations due to its history implementing projects for humanitarian aid and development with populations like victims of the armed conflict. Partnering with PAR afforded CMD the opportunity to leverage that knowledge to effectively work with Venezuelan migrants and Colombian returnees who are in conditions of high socio-economic vulnerability. These populations usually relocate in areas of Colombia with high levels of poverty, housing informality, and limited access to public goods and services. Therefore, the target population for CMD's work in border cities is highly vulnerable, and CMD's experience enables them to work effectively with these types of groups. CMD implemented strategies like identification of optimum locations and population in each city for implementing activities, leveraging local leaders' knowledge to improve targeting of participants, creating spaces to facilitate participant engagement, and systematically monitoring attendance at project activities.

CMD had a presence in Cúcuta, with the CDI (Image 2), before they formed an alliance with PAR. This center, located in Commune 8, serves as a service hub for migrants, returnees, and vulnerable populations in this area of the city. To incentivize beneficiaries and their families to participate, CMD supported participants to connect with other programs and services that their center offers. This connection not only generated close ties and trust between the partner and beneficiaries, but it also facilitated beneficiaries' attendance at activities. For example, CMD made its CDI game room and other recreation spaces available for small children while their parents participated in project workshops. In addition, the CMD team followed up systematically with beneficiaries who missed workshops, which allowed staff to identify reasons for participants' absences and for the regular adjustment of workshop schedules and placement of participants in appropriate activities—aspects of the implementation that participants highlighted as very helpful, because they enabled them to ensure participation in project activities.

Image 2. CMD CDI in Cúcuta. Photo by. Juan Luque

In the case of **Arauca**, CMD did not have a presence there before the PAR alliance, but with the start of this partnership they established an office. As a connection strategy, the partner identified and worked with community leaders from the neighborhoods in which the intervention took place, which allowed them to assure compliance with the proposed scope and to stay connected to beneficiaries. These

leaders provided critical information that helped CMD to develop a target population for the project (i.e. furnishing the partner with lists of possible beneficiaries and helping revise them to verify who met the required participation criteria), which contributed to legitimizing the beneficiary selection process within targeted communities.

Although **CMD does not have an office in Maicao** (which participants highlighted as one of the challenges of this implementation) the staff was able to leverage previous experience and knowledge of local stakeholders to identify the communities to work with and the best strategies to reach them. CMD used local foundations and other stakeholders (e.g. *Banco Amable*) to target beneficiaries, and further leveraged local leaders to channel project-related information throughout the community.

Building social capital and integration through community engagement activities. In **Arauca,** the project sought to construct social capital through a collaborative effort to weave an enormous *Chinchorro*.[18] According to CMD, this activity would, through communal weaving, support the construction and strengthening of the social fabric in communities, giving visibility to the region and contributing to the identification and ownership of a cultural identity connected to the "plainspeople," that would unite participants, transcending the differences of their origins or nationalities. The construction of the hammock took several months, during which the beneficiaries met to weave together. Consequently, the hammock became—according to beneficiaries—a symbol of the union between them and the representation of their progress through the project. Additionally, in **Maicao**, the project enabled the construction of a toy library (*Centro de Sueños e Historias*) as a multi-donor joint effort. According to the implementing partner and participants from *Montecarlos* neighborhood, the creation of the toy library was an important project achievement for building local social capital. The toy library is located in a neighborhood with several infrastructure needs, operates under a tent, and was equipped by multiple funding sources, as well as the work of locals. According to CMD staff, this became a place for the mixing of vulnerable populations from this community, where they can recognize each other with pride in their cultural backgrounds rather than in mutual recognition of their painful experiences. This important project outcome is helping to build the social fabric in a community formed by highly vulnerable populations. Having this community meeting space neighbors feel is their own is reported by participants as serving as a community focal point, that has helped youth and women as a place where they can access shared resources (like computers) and information. Places like these are important in cities like Maicao, because they can become part of broader strategies to develop protective

Image 3. The largest hammock ("chinchorro") in the world, built in Arauca under a CM- implemented project. Source: Meridiano70. (June 30, 2020).

[18] A *chinchorro* is an artisanal hammock made of woven fibers.

environments for youth and children, who live in a context where there are permanent threats of recruitment by illegal armed actors.

Challenges and Learning Opportunities

CMD had difficulty aligning purchasing procedures with local selling practices. In all three cities the project involved the purchase of inputs and supplies for participants to use as seed capital for their ventures. Staff from **CMD-Maicao** reported to C-AME the difficulties of purchasing these inputs and supplies in a context with high levels of informality coupled with purchasing procedures established by CMD's home office in Bogotá. For CMD staff in **Maicao,** it was difficult to identify a variety of vendors that meet CMD formal requirements (i.e. have tax registration, can apply the rules designed for USAID-funded purchase, and offer the products in the amounts and quality required by each entrepreneur). Participants' indicated that the delivery of inputs from CMD to beneficiaries had some logistical problems due to an issue that was out of the control CMD's staff on the vendors' side.

RECONCILIATION APPROACH

Achievements

Effective implementation of DecidoSer for social-emotional activities. CMD carried out the mental and emotional health workshops of the three projects using a combination of their own methodology and PAR's DecidoSer. CMD's methodology incorporates ludic-pedagogical activities to foster identification of emotions in oneself and others, which align well with the experiential aspect of DecidoSer; indeed, CMD and PAR have a history of partnership and this familiarity, especially with DecidoSer, likely simplified the activity start-up process. According to CMD staff from **Cúcuta**, in the process of methodological harmonization between PAR and CMD, several similarities between the two methodologies became apparent, like the use of the experiential techniques that make the activities more appealing to participants, as well as the use of the tools available in DecidoSer to develop the psychosocial support component of the project. Staff from **Arauca** reported that DecidoSer allowed them to strengthen their work in the region. As for participants, interviewees **from all the three cities** reported to C-AME that the methodology used in the workshops allowed them to take ownership of the content and learning and apply them in their daily lives. They liked the use of interactive and experiential activities and these motivated them to participate; for them, the workshops became spaces both for learning and to de-stress. Staff from the three cities agreed that the participant outcomes were due in part to the role played by the psychosocial support staff and the meaningful interactions they had with participants. According to participants in **Maicao**, the staff in general, but the psychosocial support staff in particular, went *above and beyond* to provide the best possible support to project participants and to engage them in project activities. According to the leadership team of **CMD-Maicao**, the psychosocial staff's professional skills as well as personal traits when interacting with participants helped to ensure participants' engagement in project activities.

The psychosocial support activities helped beneficiaries improve their expression and management of emotions. The three projects provided psychosocial support, which beneficiaries said helped increase their awareness of their emotions, improve their mental health, enable an open dialogue about cultural diversity, and improve self-trust, while also increasing their resilience. According to some beneficiaries this allowed them to engage more positively with their peers in the communities where they live. Staff from **CMD-Arauca** state that the psycho-emotional workshops carried out under the project allowed participants to self-identify as agents of change with the ability to do things to transform their reality and that of the environment in which they live. In the case of **Cúcuta**, participants highlighted that the psychosocial support activities, which included strategies for addressing past grievances (i.e. migrant grief) allowed beneficiaries to identify their own feelings, while also helping them generate empathy for others, creating closeness between the diverse populations that participated in the project. According to these participants, the workshops and activities permitted them to reconcile with themselves, to accept themselves as they are, release burdens and repressed feelings that they had accumulated, and to learn to overcome difficulties and move forward.

Image 4. C-AME led focus group with PAR beneficiaries from Cúcuta. Photo by William Mejía. Cúcuta, March 2020.

CMD staff from **Maicao** highlighted that the main project achievement was the change in narratives among participants about themselves. Regarding individual changes, participants from this city highlighted how thankful they were to access the psychosocial support activities. In fact they say that these experiential workshops *changed their lives* and their interactions with their families and community. For CMD staff, and according to the proposed activity design, individual changes can activate family and community-level changes. Staff from CMD-Maicao said, "The individual changes leveraged other series of psychosocial processes that were a little more at the community-level; those responded to the specific needs that people have in their territories, in their communities, and that allowed many things to be achieved in terms of community life projects." [Phone interview with staff from CMD-Maicao, August 2020]. This is consistent with the *Integrándonos Construimos Futuro* strategy that expects results to radiate from the individual, which the activity promotes by carrying out psychosocial support to participants so they can better manage emotions and, as such, have open dialogues with their families and community, as means to develop reconciliation abilities and forms of social integration.

According to participants and staff from the three cities, these series of successes were achieved thanks to the spaces for respectful and "brotherly" dialogue, and the establishment of close ties and relationships of trust based on empathy, which enabled participants to own and apply the reflections

they made during the project in their daily lives. **CMD-Arauca** staff stated that the project worked with participants on identifying their life stories with the goal of enabling them to recognize themselves and others as equals in rights and abilities and to motivate personal and collective transformations. This contributed to participants recognizing themselves as social change agents capable of seeking better personal and collective wellbeing.

Integration between reconciliation and socio-economic components aligns with PAR program goals. The structure and implementation of the project in the three cities allowed for coordination between the psychosocial aspects promoting the emotional wellbeing of participants and the aspects strengthening their economic initiatives. The CMD model aligns with PAR's results framework by implementing a comprehensive approach that not only focuses on developing economic opportunities, but also has a strong focus on the development of psychosocial abilities that pass from the individual onto the beneficiaries' families and their community. The project provided beneficiaries with psycho-emotional tools to strengthen their emotional management, and technical tools to generate economic alternatives to meet their needs. Considering that the beneficiaries represent vulnerable populations—participants were largely migrants, returnees, or displaced persons who often struggle to access psychosocial support systems—the hybrid approach allowed for an important process of reflection on both emotional and mental health and on their livelihoods.

The CMD-**Cúcuta** explained to C-AME that the design and integration of components resulted in participants recognizing their capacities, generating among them changes in attitude and perspective. According to the participants, the design and sequencing of these activities (first working on psycho-emotional tasks, followed by technical) allowed them to confront complex emotional and psychological issues that would have negatively affected their endeavors. The participants from **Arauca** expressed to C-AME that the individual psychological support, spaces for collective reflection, and capacity building workshops for business administration and growth motivated them to participate in the activities even more than the incentives of obtaining equipment or materials for their enterprises. Similarly, participants from **Maicao** indicated that the project activities helped them to improve self-confidence and increase their respect for and capacity to listen to others, abilities they can use to help their own business. The implementing partner from **CMD-Maicao** highlighted the adequate integration between reconciliation, economic inclusion, and social capital components that build upon the cross-sectional use of the psychosocial support activities.

Challenges and Learning Opportunities

CMD had difficulty understanding and operationalizing reconciliation in implementation. According to PAR staff at the central level, the program has not adopted a singular definition of reconciliation in an effort to allow participants and implementing partners to adapt their strategies to the local conditions and territorial needs. In this sense, CMD staff from **Cúcuta** maintain that, because reconciliation is an abstract concept, it became a challenge in implementation of activities with a reconciliation focus. This implementing partner opted to use terms like "recognize," "identify," "accept," or "respecting others," as proxies for reconciliation. Upon investigating with **participants from Cúcuta**, C-AME found that narratives about "union with and acceptance of others" prevailed in conversations about reconciliation,

especially with respect to others' thoughts and opinions. Although the **implementer in Arauca** described a connection between the objectives and the achievements of the project with the construction of reconciliation processes, this connection was not evident in the testimonies of beneficiaries. C-AME witnessed in Arauca participants' narratives that they place great importance on the psychosocial component of the project and praise its results, but they do not autonomously (that is, without being directly and explicitly asked about it) recognize these abilities as reconciliatory. In other words, participants were able to describe the personal benefits of their participation in the project, but did not generally associate these with a larger reconciliation process. In contrast, participants from **Maicao**, some of whom are victims of the armed conflict, recognized the reconciliation focus of the initiative, acknowledging that this helped them to come to terms with the past. Although there were only a few participants from this population group, the notion that they may be more familiar with the vocabulary of reconciliation (perhaps due to previous efforts to engage them in these processes) may have helped them, in comparison to their peers who are migrants or returnees, understand and internalize how the activities and their personal transformations could contribute to reconciliation.

Limited support from PAR to CMD to implement the DecidoSer methodology in the initial stages of the project. While all three projects highlighted as an achievement the methodological alignment for psychosocial support between PAR and CMD, the process was challenging at times. The implementing partner from **Maicao** indicated that the support from PAR on the RA came when project activities were already ongoing, rather than in early stages of implementation, indicating the RA (and as such, perhaps the focus on reconciliation) were not prioritized at the outset. Because of this, the psychosocial support staff had difficulty reporting to PAR following the standards required and when implementing psychosocial support activities, such as with the Wayuu indigenous group (see Social Inclusion and Integration Learning Opportunities for more on this). Having this support from PAR earlier in the implementation would have helped CMD to find strategies to adapt the workshops to the local cultural practices (i.e. working with Wayuu people) before the implementation started and not in a reactive manner. In **Cúcuta**, there were coordination delays in the process of aligning DecidoSer and CMD. According to PAR, this delay was due to the CMD organizational structure requiring administrative approval of the project activities by CMD in Bogotá, as CMD sought approval of activities one by one and implementation advanced according to the results of the previous activities.

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND INTEGRATION

Achievements

The projects promoted integration between migrants and host populations. The CMD *Integrándonos Construimos Futuro* initiative seeks to promote economic and social inclusion of vulnerable populations living in border cities, including Venezuelan migrants and returnee populations. Therefore the *"integrándonos"* (integrating ourselves) component is critical in these interventions as it is considered the step before community development. Staff from Arauca point out that activities that allowed for better integration between populations included the following: the creation of spaces in which migrants expressed situations of violence and discrimination that they had suffered, to which the Colombian participants responded with empathy and expressed their solidarity; the exercise recognizing pejorative

and derogatory words about migrants; and activities that allowed Venezuelans to affirm their cultural identity, demonstrating what makes them equal and allowing for their empowerment as outsiders in the territory they occupy. Beneficiaries agreed that having the possibility to share meeting spaces to exchange points of view and emotions without being judged eased integration. In Maicao and Cúcuta, participants said that the project created an opportunity for them to see each other as peers regardless of their place of origin, gender, or ethnicity. In Cúcuta, at the end of project activities, some participants have asked for forgiveness for possibly causing harm or offense, which indicates increased awareness about inclusion and integration. Beneficiaries reported that their participation in the project helped them move beyond some stereotypes about migrant populations. The project also allowed participants to develop meaningful relationships with each other, creating lasting friendships that continue into the present to provide mutual support in difficult times. According to the CMD staff from Maicao, the project became an opportunity to integrate Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees, displaced populations, Wayuu individuals, and other vulnerable host populations. This is highly valued under the program's overall objective—and the objective in border municipalities in particular—of reducing social tensions among different groups.

Learning Opportunities

Participation and integration of indigenous groups were challenged by CMD's limited experience implementing ethnically differential approaches. The projects in Arauca and Maicao also included indigenous people as part of its target population. In **Arauca**, fourteen individuals from the Inga indigenous community participated in the project. CMD made sure the project stayed regularly connected with the indigenous governor, who also participated in the project. According to the implementer, to facilitate this communication, CMD presented the activities they planned to carry out to the governor, so that he, as a respected authority within his community, could weigh in and approve their implementation with his community. In case any suggestion for modification of the activities arose from the indigenous community, the partner carried out the respective adaptation so that the intervention was in line with the needs of the community. Beneficiaries C-AME interviewed (which, due to a language barrier, did not include indigenous participants) in **Cúcuta** reported that the participation of the indigenous community in the project was positive and very enriching; for them to share with others among this diversity allowed them to understand other realities and cultures.

In **Maicao**, there is a significant concentration of Wayuu people and the project included participants from this group. However, the psychosocial support staff had difficulties adapting the workshops to the local cultural practices, which they had to do in the midst of implementation, since they had not been given the opportunity to prepare for this before the project started. According to the implementing partner, individuals from the Wayuu community tend to have their own way of expressing emotion that is different from what other cultures may be accustomed to. Further, among the Wayuu, the prospect of individual economic gain is troublesome, as they form part of an egalitarian society in which it is believed that the economic success of one of its members or families must stem from them taking away from others inside their communities. Therefore, initiatives that support these communities must seek to include not just individuals, but communities, to avoid doing unintentional harm with initiatives aimed at improving livelihoods.

The intervention led by CCC in **Cúcuta** targeted individuals of different nationalities, ethnicities, religions, sexual orientations, and other diverse backgrounds, though staff from **CMD** leading the other activity in **Cúcuta** indicated to C-AME that due to the partner's affiliation with the Catholic Church, there was a misunderstanding in the community that individuals from other religions could not participate, and according to beneficiaries, in some neighborhoods, there was a misconception that non-Venezuelans were excluded. Both participants and the implementing partner in this city agree that the process of integration between the diverse population groups was challenging at first because some arrived with prejudices, but the CMD methodology and workshop activities allowed them to create ties of empathy and solidarity with each other.

INITIATIVES BY PARTNERS WITH EXPERIENCE DEVELOPING ENTREPRENEURIAL CAPACITIES

In this section C-AME presents the results of implementation led by local Chambers of Commerce and an organization of agricultural producers. In Cúcuta, the CCC implemented the project *Cúcuta incluyente, emprendedora y solidaria*[19] (PAR-03-146). The CCA implemented the project *Generación de ingresos, independencia económica y entornos de protección a familias migrantes, retornada, jóvenes y mujeres del municipio de Arauca*[20] (PAR-03-166). In Maicao, the Atnamana association implemented the project *Reconciliación e inclusión socio-productiva a partir de la siembra de melón para la exportación a la isla de Curazao en el municipio de Maicao*[21] (PAR-03-171). These projects share their approach of combining the development of business and economic skills for vulnerable individuals and communities, while also attempting to drive reconciliation outcomes in the form of improved abilities for dialogue, respect, empowerment, and trust.

The Chambers of Commerce included a component to develop entrepreneurial skills among participants using the CANVAS[22] model. Each participant had their own microenterprise and would theoretically receive an investment of seed capital to improve it. In the case of Atnamana, PAR signed this partnership as a sub-agreement in kind, therefore the organization of producers received PAR support through

[19] In English, "Inclusive, entrepreneurial, and supportive Cúcuta."
[20] In English, "Generation of income, economic independence, and protective environments for migrant families, returnees, youth, and women of the Municipality of Arauca."
[21] In English, Reconciliation and socio-productive inclusion in the municipality of Maicao through the planting of cantaloupe for export to the island of Curaçao
[22] The CANVAS model is composed of nine modules that provide tools for users to define and create a business model. In these modules, users learn about characteristics of a business, such as identification of clients and market segments, identification of competitive advantages, distribution channels, and client relations, among others.

Image 5. C-AME led focus group with PAR beneficiaries from Cúcuta. Photo by Liliana Delgado. Cúcuta, March 2020.

equipment, supplies, and consultants (i.e. psychosocial support staff and agricultural specialists rather than direct financial support), for the planting of cantaloupe in a shared plot. Participants from all three initiatives include women, men, and youth who are Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees, ethnic minorities (Wayuu and Afro-Colombians in the case of Atnamana), victims of the armed conflict, and socio-economically disadvantaged host populations.

ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIFIC PROJECT COMPONENT: IMPROVING ENTREPRENEURIAL CAPACITIES

Achievements

Crosscutting technical assistance led to improved capacity to manage participants' entrepreneurial enterprises. The capacity building enabled beneficiaries from **CCA** and **CCC** to acquire basic understanding of business administration and management, and to formulate a business plan for their enterprises. Some beneficiaries reported that the knowledge they acquired allowed them to visualize themselves as business owners, as they did not before. Participants from **Arauca** consider say that the activities allowed them to strengthen administrative, organizational, and business knowledge, providing them a base on which to build better businesses. For instance, knowledge they acquired in the workshops on accounting allowed them to improve the quality of the products and services they offer and to strengthen their client relations. Beneficiaries say that the project helped empower them as business owners and they report that they feel capable of taking on the difficulties that arise. In **Cúcuta**, beneficiaries highlighted that the practical methodologies and audiovisual tools used by workshop facilitators enabled beneficiaries to understand administrative and organizational concepts that they later were able to use in their businesses. They reported that some participants were able to identify spending that surpassed their earnings and, using the tools they learned, made necessary adjustments. Some beneficiaries reported they had the necessary tools to better anticipate production costs and the profit margin required to increase the income derived from their enterprises.

In **Maicao**, the crop technical team from **Atnamana** stated the project benefited from expert advice in planting techniques for irrigation, seed planting, and crop management. Making use of this technical advice, beneficiaries reduced seed and water losses, and ultimately were able to plant cantaloupe melons in the amounts and quality planned. Although COVID-19 required adjustments in terms of schedules and

the number of participants working with the crop, the association managed to implement health safety precautions and continue with the planting process. Members of 52 families have engaged in the planting processes together on this shared plot, which encouraged collaborative work, improved learning of farming techniques among participants, and enhanced input use, as reported by the technical team. Beneficiaries agree, and state that they expect that this acquired farming knowledge allow them to improve livelihoods either as part of Atnamana or on their own.

*Chambers of Commerce adapted business knowledge to different beneficiary type*s. Beneficiaries of these projects had differing education levels and backgrounds, which was a challenge for the delivery of technical information at first. Both **CCA** and **CCC** were able to adapt to overcome this issue. In **Arauca**, according to staff from **CCA**, the project had to adjust the training material to be able to provide instruction in basic concepts so that participants could identify and construct, gradually, the desired model for their business. Nonetheless, in **Cúcuta**, given the variations in level of training and the ages of the beneficiaries that participated in the project, the use of adequate methodologies allowed both those who had prior training and/or knowledge in business concepts, as well as those who had none, to acquire useful knowledge and tools to strengthen their enterprises. Beneficiaries reported that the teaching strategy that the facilitators used was attuned to the different participant types and their different levels of knowledge about business administration and organizational topics.

Chambers of Commerce illuminated incentives to formalize businesses. In **Arauca**, the project contributed to the beneficiaries formalizing their businesses[23] which, at the same time, allowed them to access opportunities for training and financing. **CCA** provided support and information that allowed participants to clear up some of their doubts and fears about the process of formalizing their businesses, about which, according to the implementing partner, participants knew little or were misinformed regarding aspects like costs associated with the process, taxation, requirements, etc. The support from **CCA** highlighted for beneficiaries the benefits of formalization, like how to access credits for small businesses. Within **CCA**, the team charged with the project provided special attention and free advice on behalf of various parts of the chamber to beneficiaries on procedures for formalization and legal questions about commercial processes and business registration; this was especially useful for Venezuelan beneficiaries unfamiliar with the Colombian regulatory system. Even after the project ended, the partner continued communicating with beneficiaries, offering them advice and support in the formalization process for those who had not yet completed it. Participants agree in pointing out business formalization as an achievement of the project and report that the project helped them expand their vision as business owners.

Business networks and local alliances strengthened activities. To help build their businesses and offer training on the formalization process, **CCA** supported beneficiaries' attendance at trainings and additional activities offered by allies of **CCA**, facilitated by their participation and connection with the Regional Business Network of Arauca. For example, some beneficiaries working in the food industry

[23] Business formalization is the process by which businesses are regulated, carried out in the Chamber of Commerce and consisting of enrolling or inscribing the business license, paying relevant fees, and presenting accounting and required documents.

participated in courses on food handling offered by the Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje[24] (SENA). Obtaining this qualification enabled participants to strengthen their businesses, which was an additional motivation for formalization given that, to be able to access additional training opportunities, as well as obtain credit from some financial institutions, their businesses had to be properly registered. In addition, the construction of a support and exchange network facilitated commercial integration among entrepreneurs. The project allowed for mutual support among beneficiaries, who established commercial relationships for buying and selling their products and services. According to staff from **CCA**, learning about the success of their fellow beneficiaries became a stimulus for others to continue developing their business.

In the case of **Atnamana**, the technical team reported that PAR was instrumental to identifying local and foreign commercial allies. This started when members of Atnamana attended a business roundtable in the Caribbean region in Colombia organized by PAR that further led to the identification of commercial partners in Colombia and Curaçao. At the moment of data collection for this DE (August 2020) Atnamana was expecting to deliver the first melon shipment to Curaçao, after overcoming multiple bureaucratic and administrative hurdles like quality assurance, shipment, obtaining phytosanitary permits, and tax regulations for exports.

According to the staff from **CCC**, alliances with local and regional organizations or institutions permitted them to strengthen project implementation. For example, the partner sought to align itself with international cooperation entities—through the Grupo Interagencial sobre Flujos Migratorios Mixtos[25] (Spanish acronym GIFMM)—to access a database containing data on migrant and returnee populations that had participated in humanitarian assistance and development projects, which **CCC** used to develop its call for participants and selection criteria for the cohort. The partner reported that, given its lack of experience working with migrant populations, working with GIFMM was effective not only for improving their knowledge of the migrant issue, but also for informing and adequately redirecting participants whenever questions arose in interactions with beneficiaries.

Challenges and Learning Opportunities

Difficulties in the process of awarding seed capital caused discomfort and dissatisfaction for beneficiaries. C-AME learned of a few significant challenges to the implementation processes and delivery of results of CCC and CCA. To frame analysis and subsequent recommendations, C-AME presents the details of these challenges, according to information collected in interviews (see also the case-level analysis annex).

In the case of the **CCC**, as far as C-AME is aware, the seed capital delivery has been delayed indefinitely, depriving beneficiaries of the investment they earned by participating. The award event was originally scheduled for December 2019, but was initially postponed to the end of March 2020 as CCC struggled

[24] In English, National Training Service
[25] Interagency Group on Mixed Migratory Flows

to work within the parameters of USAID's procurement requirements, and as the full cohort of participants had not yet completed the required workshops.[26] In February 2020, CCC negotiated a project expansion, increasing the number of participants who could (on the basis of their fulfilling the activity requirements) be eligible to receive seed capital from 75 to 116 persons and expanding the budget (both to accommodate the addition of new participants and to increase the seed capital amount per beneficiary). In this modification, CCC also pushed the award date to late June or early July, 2020, but by the end of March, and due to the COVID-19 health related state of emergency measures, CCC requested PAR to suspend the contract for the first time, claiming that they could not carry out the procurement processes or seed capital awards. In April the project received a second no cost contract extension to close the project, through July 15. In June 2020, eight members of CCC's board of directors, including the president of the board, were suspended by the regional attorney general's office pending an investigation, leaving CCC without a legal representative who could sign contracts and implement procurement processes necessary for the purchase of seed capital materials and equipment. In addition, because of the lack of legal representative, the CCC again requested a contract suspension. When C-AME talked with the implementing partner in August 2020, the seed capital still had not been delivered to beneficiaries, and even in a focus group C-AME organized in March, various participants seemed skeptical about whether they would ever receive the awards and participants expressed they perceived the delays and difficulties as issues stemming from poor project planning, and not as extraneous factors.

Even prior to the scheduled award dates, CCC requested beneficiaries obtain quotes and source information on the equipment and materials they would request as their seed capital, along with potential vendors, and provide this information to CCC. However, because of the delays described earlier, procurement processes did not take place. Staff from the CCC maintain that the information provided by the beneficiaries was only for the purpose of the beneficiaries learning to develop a business and purchase strategy. While the partner saw this as a learning exercise, the beneficiaries understood it as a project requirement that demanded from them additional work that, for participants, was time wasted when CCC did not take it into account. Beneficiaries ended up expressing that they felt CCC perceived the research and vendor selection information provided by them was inadequate, which CCC's attempts to clarify did not seem to resolve.

In **Arauca, the CCA** experienced a similar setback when four out of the six members of its board of directors were removed, including the president and the executive president at the end of 2019, which caused CCA to delay the delivery of seed capital to beneficiaries, generating unease among them. Nevertheless, CCA managed to carry out two rounds of seed capital awards. The first group of 50 beneficiaries that complied with the requirements (attendance of project activities and good marks in a pitch presentation) received the capital awards in February 2020. The first round delivery of materials was marked by multiple difficulties causing disapproval among beneficiaries, who reported to C-AME that they were confused and angered when they received materials that did not correspond with what

[26] It is not clear to C-AME why those participants who *had* successfully completed the required activities were not awarded their seed capital when they earned it, and instead were made to wait until the rest of their peers caught up.

they had requested. According to participants C-AME interviewed, they did not have support or help from the CCA personnel nor from the provider of materials and equipment[27] with filling out the forms required to process their procurement, which resulted in delivery of the wrong items. Also, on the day of the awards, beneficiaries reported to C-AME, there was yelling and complaining on the part of the participants to express their discomfort with the partner and the provider over the materials they received. The complaints and reproaches of the participants also appeared in their WhatsApp conversations, where some participants (who had issues with the equipment and materials) were aggressive towards others who *did* receive the correct materials as requested. The second group of 27 beneficiaries was selected from the original 150 participants, due to an increase in the project budget. The beneficiaries that C-AME interviewed consider that the difficulties that arose were solved in the second delivery, in which beneficiaries received the correct materials, which were delivered individually and to the houses of each participant, due to the pandemic.

These situations not only affected the implementation of the project, but also directly impacted the final objective of PAR, in terms of improving abilities for reconciliation (i.e. dialogue, respect, trust and empowerment). According to interviews C-AME conducted, the logistical and communication challenges described above created a sense of dejection, discontent, and annoyance in beneficiaries, many of whom were clearly unsatisfied. For some of the participants interviewed, these difficulties represented a step backwards in the coexistence component of the project, given that they undermined the relationship of trust between the beneficiaries and the partner, and between beneficiaries themselves.

Issues related to activity planning and communication with participants. The beneficiaries from **CCA** and **CCC** pointed out some limitations in activity planning and development that affected implementation in both sites.

Poor CCC planning and support made it difficult for beneficiaries to consistently participate. According to beneficiaries from **CCC**, on various occasions, the participants were only requested to attend a training event in the evening before, or the morning of, the activity. Beneficiaries had to adjust their personal or work schedules with little advance notice because they felt they could not decline attending the mandatory project activities when their opportunity to receive an investment (i.e. seed capital) in their business was on the line. Beneficiaries also explained that sometimes it was difficult for them to attend all the workshops for the project **because they did not have enough money to pay for transportation.** To help their peers, other beneficiaries of the CCC project (who were similarly socio-economically disadvantaged) **collaborated to raise the money their fellow participants needed** to attend. Even so, disruptions in attendance contributed to delays in the overall activity timeline. In addition, some beneficiaries reported that, *despite having attended all of the activities,* they were made to participate in make-up sessions—implying a further hardship in transportation expenses—because their names mistakenly appeared on a list of participants with absences, which would have precluded them from meeting the requirements to receive seed funding. According to some beneficiaries, the scheduling and communication challenges resulting in some attrition from the program. In light of these situations, **CCC**

[27] CCA bought equipment and materials through an external vendor provider, who was also responsible for delivering the items at the award ceremony.

indicates that it was not that they did not call participants ahead of time so they could plan attendance, but that CCC business advisors (those responsible for calling participants) made various attempts to contact the beneficiaries and encountered difficulties communicating with them (e.g. participants did not answer the phone, email or text messages). The partner argues that some characteristics of the population in question (e.g. not being in the habit of checking email frequently, interruption in cell phone signal due to frequent visits to Venezuela) complicated communications with them. As a mitigation strategy, advisors created WhatsApp groups and used text messages to distribute project information, while keeping records of their multiple attempts to contact each one. This limited oversight for beneficiary participation delayed implementation and ultimately resulted in CCC failing to deliver the overall objective of providing seed capital to participant businesses.

Shortcomings in communication between the implementing partner and participants in Arauca. According to participants from CCA, information provided by the partner was not clear, particularly with regards to the requirements to meet and forms to fill out in order to receive awards of materials and equipment. Participants from Arauca expressed that these failures in communication between the partner, the vendor for materials and equipment, and beneficiaries during the entire procurement process generated disappointment and distrust about the project's resource management.

These situations related to the adjustments to planning and communication with beneficiaries are an indication of the limited experience of implementing partners like Chambers of Commerce in work with migrants and other vulnerable populations and, potentially, limited oversight of these partners on the part of PAR.

Implementing partners had difficulty understanding and implementing the USAID procurement procedures. The three partners in this category reported to C-AME that they faced some level of difficulty understanding USAID allowable purchasing rules (CCA and CCC) or, in the case of Atnamana, lacked capacity to secure additional funding to ensure project outcomes. CCC and CCA's project format entailed procuring specific materials or equipment on behalf of eligible participants' businesses. For CCA, aligning the beneficiaries' lists of requested equipment and the list of allowable purchases that USAID provided through PAR, was (according to the beneficiaries) challenging and caused delays in the procurement process. However, CCA does not consider this a significant challenge. Some participants explained to C-AME that the discrepancy between these lists was the excuse put forth by the partner for not being able to procure certain elements, claiming that USAID had not authorized the purchase. However, staff from CCC explained to C-AME that they had difficulty understanding and implementing the list of procurement requirements from USAID furnished to them by PAR. According to CCC implementing partner, it was difficult to clearly identify the types and uses of the equipment that are permitted to be acquired with project resources, and these items also do not necessarily correspond to the needs of the small and micro-enterprises such as those run by the project participants (e.g. USAID may specifically allow and provide guidance on the purchase of an industrial kitchen-grade blender, while a micro-entrepreneur with their own fruit juice business might only need, and request, a blender of the type marketed for home kitchens, on which the USAID guidance is silent or unclear). The partner reported that translating, understanding, and clarifying doubts about the list took time, and that they

proceeded with caution and did not advance the purchase processes for seed capital items until they were certain whether or not the selected items were allowable by USAID.

Atnamana, on the other hand, signed an in-kind sub-agreement with PAR. Under this form of agreement the organization of producers did not receive direct financial funding from PAR. According to participants, including the president of the association, throughout implementation, the organization's leadership faced challenges trying to obtain financial resources to sustain costs of labor and feeding workers. Although some participants expressed they volunteered their time for the farming activities, many of them find it problematic because they hardly received any income during the planting and crop tending phases of the activity due to the expectation of future profit at harvest. Some participants expressed the leaders of the association had to juggle to obtain financial resources to maintain the farming activities.

Beneficiaries with varying levels of experience in farming affected the learning curve. Atnamana is an organization of producers that has more than a decade in existence; however, for the purpose of this project, new associates became part of the organization. Therefore, part of the technical team expressed that some beneficiaries had farming experience while many of them did not, which affected the way some participants managed the crop. This created some seedling losses, which came at a considerable cost, according to the crop specialist. Further, the learning curve for beneficiaries who lacked farming experience was steeper. Although the cost of using labor from beneficiaries without farming expertise is higher in terms of time, effort and money, this could be a cost the project is willing to assume to empower participants under a reconciliation initiative. Nonetheless, this could also become a learning opportunity for PAR to ensure that in agricultural development projects, participant selection targets vulnerable farmers, and not widely vulnerable populations in general, unless it is prepared to offer a wider range and depth of technical assistance and perhaps differential instruction according to experience level.

RECONCILIATION APPROACH

Achievements

Activities affected individual perceptions and outlook. At the individual level, participants from Atnamana acknowledged that having participated in DecidoSer workshops led to individual behavioral changes that positively affected their family and community interactions. Participants and the psychosocial support consultant identified positive changes such as management of emotions and capacity to engage with others by being empathetic to their personal experiences and living conditions. The project included victims of the armed conflict, who acknowledged they can now look at past experiences without fear and were able to forgive all the harm caused by armed actors, while also feeling hopeful about what the future holds for them, their families and communities. The psychosocial support consultant highlighted that the DecidoSer workshops, which are experiential, participatory, and inclusive, helped participants to engage more enthusiastically in the activities, and further helped them process painful past experiences such as violence or forced migration and displacement.

Similarly, participants from **CCC** reported that the psychosocial workshops allowed them to get to know themselves better and understand the reality of others, while also helping them build confidence in their abilities, contributing to higher self-esteem, and better management and expression of their emotions. By participating in activities, beneficiaries felt more empowered, confident, and trusting in themselves and others; they relayed to C-AME that these spaces provided them an added value given that, while the information about business administration from the technical workshops could have been found elsewhere (like on the internet), what they learned in these psychosocial workshops could only be gained through the experience of sharing it with others. Staff from **CCC** consider that the psychosocial workshops and the DecidoSer methodology facilitated in participants the recognition of their abilities. These findings are similar to the ones reported by participants in **Arauca**, where they explained to C-AME that the project generated positive changes in their lives in the realms of self-confidence, self-esteem, self-care, and the generation of skills for coexistence.

Psychosocial collective activities through DecidoSer helped to rebuild family relations and community fabric. Participants from **Cúcuta** reported to C-AME that the project activities allowed them to construct personal and commercial connections with other participants. For the beneficiaries who are far from their families (i.e. Venezuelan migrants), building friendships enabled them to feel connected and supported in their endeavors. Participants consider that the project incentivized group work and the formation of alliances that helped them support each other and strengthen their businesses. In **Arauca**, dialogue about participant personal experiences, and listening to other beneficiaries describe their problems, helped participants recognize themselves as resilient and capable of overcoming difficult situations, while also inspiring feelings of solidarity and empathy about the experiences of other people who have lived through difficult moments.

The project in **Maicao** targeted not only farmer associates of Atnamana, but also their families. For the first DecidoSer workshop, beneficiaries were asked to bring a relative whom they though would be willing to participate and engage in the activities. This became an opportunity for the community to engage participants and their families in psychosocial support activities with positive outcomes in terms of individual behavioral change and better family interactions, as reported by beneficiaries. Participants reported this approach was extremely positive because it enabled opportunities to reduce tensions at the family level. This also helped with youth engagement in the project. According to the psychosocial support consultant, when young participants saw their parents engaged in DecidoSer activities, they felt motivated to continue attending the workshops. The psychosocial support consultant acknowledged youth engagement as a significant project achievement since this demographic tends to be apathetic and feel disenfranchised, therefore seeing them being active participants of all project activities was significant.

Challenges and Learning Opportunities

Inconsistency around the reconciliation component as a differentiating factor of the projects. Both the partners and participants praise the psychosocial component in terms of how it contributed to business activities. In other words, they understand the strategy of psychosocial support as a way to strengthen businesses, but not the other way around. For the participants from **Cúcuta**, the objective of the

psychosocial activities was to develop necessary skills to be entrepreneurs (e.g. assertive communication, leadership, empathy), but they did not recognize these abilities as a means to strengthen reconciliation. Staff from **CCC** made no connection, in their narratives to C-AME, between the objectives of the project and the construction of reconciliation processes, either. Further, interviewees from **CCA** were not clear about the potential for a process of economic strengthening to further the construction of reconciliation processes. The partner circumscribes the achievements of the project and the related skills development as a means to develop businesses. Meanwhile, the participants from **Arauca** report that they do not remember *reconciliation* being addressed in the project activities. Some interviewees had difficulty describing their understanding of reconciliation and identifying (and self-identifying as) transformed agents with a role to play in it. This lack of clarity on the part of both the implementers and their beneficiaries reveals an absence of the reconciliation component as a central tenet of the project and signals the importance of strengthening the methodological transfer and focus of the RA between PAR and the partner, and between the partner and beneficiaries.

The narratives from the implementing partner and beneficiaries contrast with the ones by participants from **Atnamana,** who acknowledge that reconciliation is an important component of the initiative funded by PAR. However, C-AME observed that there is a split between those who think the reconciliation focus is the main achievement, and those who believe the economic production is the most significant project outcome. Comparing these two types of answers, people (usually men) who were highly involved in crop management tended to give economic output a higher value, while women tended to give reconciliation a higher value. Women interviewed by C-AME tended to be more appreciative of the reconciliation component. The experiences participants face in the project may determine for them whether reconciliation can be conceived of as a means towards an economic end or vice versa.

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND INTEGRATION

Achievements

The projects became opportunities for the integration of multiple cultures and people. The project implemented by **Atnamana** targeted 52 people including 39 Colombians (of whom 19 were from the Wayuu indigenous group) and 13 Venezuelan migrants. Of all participants, 5% are of African descent, 1% are disabled, and 10% are victims of internal forced displacement. The target population and the integration of the project components became an opportunity to acknowledge the value of being different, and it was never an obstacle for collaborative work. In fact, participants indicate that having the possibility to work in a multicultural environment allowed them to improve capacity to empathize with their colleagues and understand that many of them, having had to migrate due to violence or the socioeconomic conditions in their place of origin, faced difficult situations and recognize how challenging is for migrants to adapt to a new place. In **Arauca**, the participation of young migrants and returnees in the project contributed to facilitating their social integration process. The project was designed to support social integration of migrant and returnee populations by strengthening their productive endeavors. According to migrant beneficiaries C-AME interviewed, this was a surprising and gratifying focus of the project and in their experience, it is uncommon that entities like **CCA** designate effort and resources to the strengthening and promotion of businesses belonging to youth and migrants. In **Cúcuta**,

participation in the project allowed beneficiaries to tear down stigmatizing prejudices about migrants. Colombian beneficiaries, primarily youth, who had not interacted in their daily life with migrants prior to the project, explained that by participating in activities and workshops, they came to understand the situation of migrants and it subsequently helped them to dismantle their prejudices about Venezuelans.

INITIATIVES BY PARTNERS WITH EXPERIENCE DEVELOPING DIVERSITY AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

Image 4 Fictional character Candelaria. Available at: https://www.nuestro-flow.com/la-liga-de-la-diversidad

The project *Diversity, a key element in building initiatives for coexistence and reconciliation with ethnic, migrant and host populations* (Diversity Project for short) was implemented by Nuestro Flow S.A.S.[28] (NF). It aimed to promote actions to make culture and intersectionality visible as they happen in the Black, *Raizal*[29], *Palenquero*[30], indigenous, Romani and migrant Venezuelan communities, expecting to enable spaces for dialogue and promotion of equality, diversity, solidarity, and collaboration to strengthen the social fabric in Maicao, Cúcuta, and Bogotá. Although the project was implemented in three cities, this analysis builds upon interviews with participants from Maicao and Cúcuta. The project included the following activities: First, a series of 20 meetings in ten public and private educational institutions in the cities of Maicao and Cúcuta where the NF-owned booklet "La Liga de la Diversidad Étnica"[31] was used to increase awareness among students about the cultural diversity of Colombia, as well as the importance of breaking stereotypes regarding the differences between population groups. Second, the project hosted photographic exhibits in public spaces in Maicao and Cúcuta to encourage 300 inhabitants to reflect on the impact of discrimination and inequality. Third was a series of twelve videos developed by child and youth participants where they presented their reflections on the diversity of ethnic groups in their territories. Finally, the project facilitated production

[28] In Colombia the acronym SAS means "Sociedad por Acciones Simplificada", in English, simplified joint stock company.
[29] The Raizal are an Afro-Caribbean ethnic group who speak the San Andrés-Providencia Creole, from the island of San Andrés and Providencia (Colombian Department), off the Colombian Caribbean Coast.
[30] Palenquero refers to the language and people from the same ethnic group from San Basilio de Palenque, a town of the municipality of Mahates (Department of Bolívar) in the south of Cartagena. The language, is a Spanish-based creole.
[31] In English, *the league of ethnic diversity*.

of the second volume of the booklet "La Liga de la Diversidad"[32] in order to include new characters that represent migrant populations.

Diversity Project is an initiative led by NF that includes a series of cartoon characters that use cultural and ethnic features of Colombians to create superheroes to represent the power(s) of diversity. The first and main fictional character created by NF is called "Candelaria" (see Image 5) and she is an Afro Colombian girl who was a victim of forced displacement in Nuquí in the department of Chocó, who arrived to Bogotá. The goal of the character is to reframe ideas about Afro-descendant Colombians, to transform negative connotations around the use of the color black (e.g. black sheep), and rethink behaviors and the meaning of being Black in Colombia. Broadly, the goal of the characters of the league, that are based on features of different demographic groups who live in Colombia, is to deconstruct behaviors that promote exclusion based on gender, ethnicity, place of origin, or abilities.

ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIFIC PROJECT COMPONENT: INCREASING AWARENESS ABOUT DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Achievements

Project activities and characters allowed NF to raise awareness about diversity. According to the implementing partner, the activities implemented as part of the project allowed participants to think about diversity. For instance, the use of the characters of the Diversity League allowed children and young participants to understand why *being different* is not a reason to judge others; quite the opposite, there are important values (superpowers) derived from diversity. One teacher from **Maicao** participating in the project stated this strategy was very useful because children are very perceptive and are open to receiving new information which can help a lot to reduce stigmas that might develop along with them. In fact, the use of the cartoon characters and experiential activities was highlighted by participants as interesting and helped them better understand the positive messages around diversity. Another example was offered by another teacher from **Cúcuta**, who commented that, during the project activity at her school, one student was able to express that she felt she was being bullied, and it was an opportunity for teachers to work with her to address this and establish boundaries. Teachers interviewed by C-AME asserted the project offered an opportunity for students and themselves to reflect about the importance of acknowledging diversity in their cities, which are not only highly diverse, but also have a history of exclusion, with persistent traditional mindsets about gender roles, and complex interactions between social class and ethnicity.

High demand for and youth engagement in NF-led workshops. The implementing partner indicated that upon their arrival to **Maicao**, they collaborated with Casa de la Cultura de Maicao-La Guajira,[33] a community center, to carry out one of the audiovisual workshops. Initially, NF planned to include 25 children and young people, but the demand for leisure activities is so high in that city that 60 people

[32] The word "ethnic" was removed for the second and third booklets, since ethnic diversity is not the only component of diversity.
[33] In English, House of Culture of Maicao-La Guajira.

arrived at the call for participants. After the initial participant target of 25, NF adapted its activities to be able to include 15 more, for a total of 40 participants. Participants expressed to C-AME that having opportunities like the one offered by NF is important in a place where there is lack of opportunities for positive leisure time. Parents confirm this perception, stating that these types of activities are important since youth are usually exposed to gang activity and violence; in addition, migrant youth lack opportunities to engage in cultural activities. For the implementing partner, this was an unexpected project outcome, since they did not expect their call for participants to be met with such high demand.

Use of DecidoSer as a toolkit to frame diversity focused activities. The implementing partner expressed that DecidoSer was a *baseline* for designing activities with project beneficiaries. As detailed by NF staff, they used the toolkit to plan their activities and it helped them to frame the discussions around diversity. Both the partner and participants highlighted that the experiential component of the activities (an element taken from DecidoSer) helped children and youth to feel engaged in group activities. Students indicated that they felt comfortable participating in the activities because, "…those are way more than just sitting in a classroom and listening to someone talking." Instead they were able to engage in activities that merged the experiential DecidoSer aspects with the audiovisual workshops and arts-based activities. A teacher from **Cúcuta** also highlights the importance of arts-based and experiential tools to achieve the project objectives.

Co-creation of new materials by NF and participants. Both implementing partners and participant teachers acknowledge that as part of the project activities, NF was able to systematically collect the participants' discussions around the need for new characters for the Diversity League. Using these inputs, NF designed two new booklets that include characters representing Venezuelan migrants and portray the effects of the Venezuelan crisis on the significant influx of Venezuelans into Colombia. The second booklet[34] includes two new characters: a little girl named Eva who is a Venezuelan migrant and uses a wheelchair to get around; her super powers are creativity and capacity to reuse recycled materials. The second character is an indigenous boy named Matiki, from *Serranía del Perijá* on the eastern border between Colombia and Venezuela, who arrived to Cúcuta due to the socio-economic crisis in Venezuela, extractive processes, and violence in his homeland. These characters seek to represent the diversity, vulnerabilities, and contributions of the migrant population arriving to Colombia. With strategies like this, the project not only attempts to highlight the positive aspects of migration, in that migrants are a diverse population with much to offer Colombia, but also increase awareness about the diversity that exists in border regions.

Challenges and Learning Opportunities

Limited strategies and capacity to incorporate local knowledge into implementation. The project implementers highlight that the first step during implementation was to identify local partners and to develop networks to ensure implementation was locally grounded, which occurred in **Cúcuta** and **Maicao**. While networks were created in the first stage, participant teachers from **Maicao** indicated that

[34] Booklet available at https://2e3b1102-6835-4607-b0ca-6ba3d85a9267.filesusr.com/ugd/a5a577_9003cc739dae4c1a88d5a3cec9b5a04c.pdf

the project did not do enough to include local knowledge and culture into project activities. NF is an organization based in Bogotá that moved staff to implement activities in Maicao and Cúcuta, and at times, insufficient contextual awareness turned out to be problematic, for example, during implementation when staff asked Wayuu children about their birthdays, but the children were completely unfamiliar with this concept as it is not part of their cultural upbringing. In a reflection about the role of NF and other donor activities in their community, one teacher from a Wayuu community in Maicao states:

> […] not only should we know what the organizations that arrive [to the communities] are doing, but also look at it, to rethink the theme of articulation, they need to look at what is being done in the community and therefore see how to connect [the new project with local experience]. It is important […] that the communication process continues […], and then when someone else arrives [other organizations] […] to make sure that the history remains, that there are coordinated actions. For instance, there needs to be a completely different look to the representative figures in the community, like the *palabrero,*[35]or someone who is a living expression of how to enable dialogue and of how to bring up harmony in the middle of conflict." *[Phone interview with beneficiaries from NF, Maicao, August 2020]*

This reflection process from a Wayuu teacher highlights the difficulties they face to bring together actions between the communities and NF. Although he acknowledges the valuable knowledge that NF brings to the communities, he also suggests that there is value in the knowledge and traditions of the communities like the Wayuu, which can inform the project framing, design, and implementation. The situation detailed earlier about lack of knowledge of Wayuu people's conceptions about birthdays illustrates the need for better contextualization of activities and facilitator training. While project outcomes such as the co-creation of project materials (i.e the second and third Diversity League booklets) reflect the project's capacity to collaborate with local participants, the lack of strategies to consider local practices in the planning stages of the project limited its capacity to fully engage with local communities. Two learning opportunities appear here; project implementation must be grounded in the context dynamics, including those related to the socio-cultural conditions of participants, and in this case cultural practices in the territory. Second, this type of project, which intended to raise awareness about diversity, has to be aware of local cultural practices of the communities they work with. This is highly relevant when working with indigenous communities whose cosmological views differ from western cultures; although the implementing partner acknowledged the value of local indigenous knowledge, they neglected to consider this cosmological context in project programming.

Limited implementation time affects monitoring local processes. Both implementing partner and project participants highlighted that the project implementation frame was short and did not allow the project to go beyond raising awareness about diversity. Because of the short duration, children and young participants only attended one or two targeted activities, rather than being part of a longer process that might have allowed for a broader range of topics or deeper exploration of the material. Many of the children and youth attended the project as part of a school activity. In fact, during the remote fieldwork

[35] Palabrero or "the messenger of the word" is a key figure in the traditional justice administration system of the Wayuu people. His role is to solve conflicts through mediation and negotiation.

conducted by C-AME some participants expressed they did not recall having attended the project activities, or recognize the project or its purpose. Although participants of this type are counted as project participants, effects of the initiative seem to be very limited on them. Here the limited implementation time, paired with limited capacity to establish follow-up mechanisms to reinforce the key messages, limit the project's capacity to produce lasting effects in the different implementation sites.

ANALYSIS OF GENDER ISSUES

PAR is cognizant that activity implementation occurs in contexts where gender inequality and gender-based violence prevail, and that creating conditions for reconciliation requires changes in the narratives and behaviors around gender norms. For the purposes of this analysis, C-AME understands **gender inequality** as an accumulation of social, economic, and cultural disadvantages experienced by people due to their gender and sexual orientation, which affects their ability to effectively access resources and recognition that would guarantee their wellbeing. **Gender-based violence**, on the other hand, is the combination of actions by which an individual or group is affected physically, mentally, and emotionally for reasons related to their gender or sexual orientation. These actions include physical violence (including sexual violence), as well as economic, psychological, and symbolic violence.

ADS 205 sets specific mandates and guidelines to promote gender equality and adopt a gender focus at different levels and phases throughout the program cycle. It mandates, among other things, the need for programs to include targeted work in the program design and implementation to address gender inequalities. This means that, beyond the nominal inclusion of women or LGBTI persons in the activities of USAID funded programs, targeted work towards awareness, and emphasis on the promotion of gender equality are critical at the programmatic and implementation levels. According to the PAR results framework, the gender component is cross-cutting, and objectives for gender equality support a reconciliation target. Specifically, PAR:

> "[h]as developed a key Gender and Social Inclusion (GSI) component for project implementers and participants. At the beneficiary level, DecidoSer fosters reflection and dialogue on gender roles within families and communities and raises awareness regarding the discrimination and exclusion of historically marginalized groups. For project implementers and facilitators, DecidoSer provides technical support for developing inclusive reconciliation projects through practical guidelines that can be applied throughout every project implementation stage."[36]

However, C-AME has observed that the implementation of the GSI is not continuous or consistent throughout projects and therefore limits the implementers' and their projects' capacity to face address gender-based disparities and associated forms of violence in the target municipalities corresponding to this DE.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GSI STRATEGY

[36] ACDI/VOCA. 2019. Program Alliances for Reconciliation. Fourth Year Annual Work Plan.

Although PAR has included the GSI strategy in its work with implementing partners and beneficiaries, C-AME observed limited capacity of the implementers to address gender-based inequality and violence. PAR has progressed in the nominal inclusion of women and LGBTI persons in its initiatives and has provided a space for dialogue and reflection on gender based inequalities through its Reconciliation Approach activities, but these processes have been very limited since not all interventions have implemented the GSI strategy with the same intensity and in a cross-cutting manner. Although PAR projects have implemented gender awareness activities C-AME has observed that there is an inconsistent implementation of the GSI strategy. The majority of beneficiaries and implementing partners interviewed for this iteration of the DE expressed that their attendance of gender awareness initiatives was limited to broad, citywide activities, rather than project-specific activities. For many, these types of events were not even considered part of the project implementation, but rather as an isolated PAR-led activity in each city that few beneficiaries attended. The weakness of the GSI implementation in the initiatives in border areas restricts the scope of PAR projects in reducing inequality and contributing to reconciliation.

Gender awareness processes vary across cities and projects. In **Cúcuta**, gender awareness activities took place through talks led by PAR (rather than implementation of the GSI by implementing partners) that called for the voluntary attendance of implementing partners, beneficiaries, and other community members. An example of such events is the "awareness workshop about labor inclusion of transgender persons." In **Arauca**, members of the **CCA** staff and a small selection of beneficiaries (five of 150) received the GSI training. However, when C-AME asked participants and staff from **Arauca** about attending gender awareness activities, they dide not seem to recall them and considered that they were a distinct activity from the project itself. In **Maicao**, only the project implemented in the rural community of **Atnamana** included specific GSI activities. In most of these cases, when C-AME asked about the inclusion of a gender approach, the implementing partners only mentioned the inclusion of women and LGBTI persons in the project activities. Generally, C-AME did not find sufficient evidence of the incorporation of a cross-cutting gender approach in the initiatives reviewed by this DE.

Implementing partners and participants find it difficult to identify and address gender issues accurately, contributing to persistent stigmas towards LGBTI persons and maintaining traditional gender roles. In the interviews, C-AME observed the repetition of negative stereotypes towards women or LGBTI people, the normalization of gender-based inequalities, and the marginalization of sexual orientations and non-hegemonic gender identities, among other elements that show the need to strengthen the development and implementation of a more robust gender approach. C-AME observed two recurring challenges in the GSI implementation strategy: 1) the limited scope of the activities carried out to raise consciousness and awareness about gender gaps, and 2) the limited integration of the GSI strategy into and across project activities.

Limited scope of the activities carried out to raise awareness about gender gaps. Although there were efforts to increase awareness about gender gaps, the dynamics in these three cities continue preventing beneficiaries from changing their narratives and imaginaries about gender, which require a more consistent effort to address them. The limited scope of GSI activites diminished the capacity of partners and beneficiaries to change stereotypes and gender roles. In projects like the one implemented in the

rural community of **Atnamana**, the traditional norms and cultural ideas around gender limited the possibility of achieving breakthroughs in the equitable distribution of actitivies or the responsibility for administering resources, which is reflected in the continuity of unequal relationships regarding gendered divisions of labor and of assuming financial risks. This also happens with the participation of women in productive endeavours, like the ones promoted by **CMD and the Chambers of Commerce in Arauca and Cúcuta**, where women still had sole responsibility for household care tasks. Despite participating and expressing an empowered narrative regarding their financial autonomy, the women participants who spoke with C-AME considered as a positive aspect of the project that the entrepreneurial opportunities allowed them to work from home, since this enabled them to not abandon their childcare and household tasks, which they and their male partners considered the women's sole responsibility. Although this does not signify a verifiable trend among beneficiaries, it does allow for C-AME to identify persistent, internalized, gendered roles that contribute to the unequal distribution of resonsibilites between men and women. Implementation of activities designed to empower women economically, that fail to address gendered power imbalances, run the risk that the project activities simply add to the burden of responsibilities on women.

Lack of coordination between the projects' activities and the GSI strategy. In Arauca, Cúcuta, and Maicao, PAR carried out additional activities to address issues related to gender-based violence or discrimination, as part of the implementation of the GSI strategy. These activities involved some implementing partner staff members and some project beneficiaries on a voluntary basis. In interviews and focus groups with C-AME in **Cúcuta**, implementing partners and beneficiaries that participated in gender activities identified these as being separate from the projects, and described not having clarity about how these were linked with specific activities of the project. The lack of coordination and the low impact of the gender activities carried out is reflected, for example, in the fact that some of the beneficiaries interviewed did not remember the specific topics that were covered in the workshops, which implies a low level of significance.

CONTEXT ISSUES PERTAINING TO INEQUALITY AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The limited implementation of the GSI at the project level mirrors the recurring inequalities and gender-based violence that occur at the context level, which ultimately affect the results of projects implemented by PAR. While these factors are part of a structural inequality and dismantling them requires long-term strategies, understanding how they operate can contribute to PAR activities having broader reach and, as such, achieving greater reconciliation results. Nuanced understanding of inequality and gender-based violence and the design of strategies to address these problems must represent a cross-cutting effort across the program cycle and within each project. According to C-AME interviews with PAR partners, beneficiaries, and context actors, inequality and gender-based violence restrict the program's progress toward reconciliation, more specifically in the empowerment and trust dimensions, and negatively affect the results of the projects examined by this iteration of the DE.

GENDER INEQUALITY AFFECTING PAR RESULTS

In Cúcuta, Arauca, and Maicao, beneficiaries C-AME interviewed affirmed that they had witnessed forms of discrimination and exclusion of women that, in some cases, implied barriers to access to the job market based on gender stereotypes, which ultimately affect the empowerment capacity for women. C-AME considers that although these discriminations have not been perceived by female beneficiaries within the activities of PAR interventions, they are obstacles to the achievement of reconciliation results given that the majority of the projects are carried out in a *machista* microcosm of these cities, in which projects seek to generate social integration via economic empowerment. Although C-AME does not have specific data on the percentage of women beneficiaries who are affected by these kinds of exclusion and discrimination, nor on the direct effects of these on their economic activities, C-AME has been able to register the persistence of prejudices in the narratives of beneficiaries in interviews and focus groups. C-AME has heard men participants minimize gender inequality, arguing that, "God made man more capable," and made women with "other skills."[37] These ideas about women are an expression of the normalization of gender discrimination that exists within and around project operations and, at the same time, contributes to accentuate the pronounced barriers, including economic, that women face.

Women beneficiaries interviewed by C-AME also reported that in their daily interactions there are incentives for gender-based inequality and discrimination due to the lack of consciousness about the rights of women. According to a context actor interviewed by C-AME, in the municipalities examined for this DE, women's rights are devalued from an early age when young girls are forced to abandon schooling to dedicate themselves exclusively to domestic activities.[38] Although PAR has fostered spaces for meeting and collaboration between men and women, many migrant beneficiaries—like those who participated in the **CCC** and **CCA** projects—report that gender inequality is a persistent problem that is expressed as discriminatory treatment towards women that impedes their personal development in their daily lives. This discrimination persists in the social norms that reduce women to their roles as mothers, wives, subordinates and caretakers and, in their most extreme forms, they promote degrading behavior on the part of men, including direct orders and the undervaluing of their leadership. C-AME observed these norms in the narratives of participants about their lived experiences, about their fellow beneficiaries. This situation has been especially striking for Venezuelan migrant beneficiaries C-AME interviewed in **Cúcuta** and **Arauca**, who agreed that discrimination towards women is even more intense in Colombia than in their places of origin.

In interviews with C-AME, context actors stated gender-based inequality and discrimination have increased due to migration and the need for migrant women to access resources to survive and support their families. In addition to the structural inequalities that are reflected in the lack of access to the job market, poverty, and indigence, migrant women experience exacerbated situations of exploitation or are forced to accept activities or roles that degrade their dignity and safety, like prostitution, marriage or relationships for economic reasons, and other risky activities.[39] The precariousness of survival contributes to maintaining incentives for migrant women to end up in illegal or highly informal

[37] Interview with project participants from Cúcuta.
[38] Interview with context actors from Cúcuta, March 2020
[39] Interview with context actor from Arauca, July 2020

economies—both because migrant women have few options to support themselves outside of these illegal economies, and because armed and criminal groups take advantage of the vulnerability of migrant women to draw them into these economic activities.

Gender inequality is also reinforced by the limited recognition by state authorities and the general public of the reality of women and LGBTI persons, and the denial of the exclusions that these groups face in their daily lives. According to beneficiaries from **CMD-Cúcuta,** transgender women experience greater barriers to entry in the formal job market than other population groups, or that they can only access jobs that uphold gender stereotypes (i.e. gay and/or transgender people are better suited for jobs in the beauty industry, sewing, or prostitution), and that there are no specific strategies to protect their rights on the part of state authorities. Further, some **CCA** beneficiaries consider that the participation of LGBTI people in marches and protests constitutes a danger for public morality and is not a good example for children. The difficulties of assimilation LGBTI individuals face as subjects of equal rights are also derived from an ignorance of and lack of familiarity with their daily experience, even within spaces in which gender awareness activities are being carried out.

In fact, in many of the PAR-supported activities reviewed for this DE, C-AME observed great difficulty among beneficiaries in speaking about the problems faced by LGBTI individuals, in the form of uncertainty about the terms to describe them and frequent use in participant narratives of markers of social distance, like "them" and "us."[40] These difficulties were also evident for partners like **CMD-Maicao**, especially at the start of implementation, in the beneficiaries' negative reactions when they were asked, for the purposes of understanding the characteristics of the participants, whether they were part of the LGBTI community. These situations represent a significant challenge; if the institutions, such as state authorities, and individuals charged with combating discrimination do not believe it exists, they cannot effectively implement policy to address it.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND LGBTI INDIVIDUALS AFFECTING PAR RESULTS

In testimonies of actors interviewed in Arauca, Cúcuta, and Maicao, there were repeated references to the forms of violence against women and LGBTI individuals stemming from the socio-culturally strongly embedded imaginaries and inequalities in the territories where C-AME conducted the DE. Among the forms of violence described to C-AME were domestic violence, mistreatment of migrant women, sexual slavery and trafficking (a phenomenon perpetuated and controlled by armed actors and criminal groups in border areas), institutional violence, and assault on LGBTI persons. These forms of violence erode trust within the affected individuals, limiting the processes of social integration and, consequently, challenging the construction of necessary conditions for reconciliation. Violence against women and LGBTI individuals reduces the PAR capacity to achieve trust at the community level and towards state

[40] For more examples of these uses of language, see interviews with beneficiaries of the CCA project C-AME carried out in July and August 2020.

authorities charged with preventing or sanctioning it. According to beneficiaries from **Arauca** and **Cúcuta**, the state has contributed to violence against women and LGBTI persons.

According to data from form the National Police,[41] *domestic violence and sexual crimes* affect considerably more women than men in the three cities studied for this iteration. According to information C-AME analyzed, 78% of those who report domestic violence are girls and women, while 22% are male. With respect to sexual crimes, these gaps are even more evident: 83.9% of those who report them are women, compared with 16.1% who are men. Women are also frequently affected by crimes like personal injury and homicide of which, comparing the three cities, there are slightly higher percentages in Arauca (in the case of homicides) than in Maicao and Cúcuta, and in Maicao (in the case of personal injuries) than in Arauca and Cúcuta. In Cúcuta, eleven women have been killed in the course of the year and 308 have been victims of violent assaults. Although the data available do not allow for disaggregating the number of LGBTI individuals affected by these types of violence, C-AME presumes that many decide not to come forward or do not find themselves in circumstances to do so.

Domestic violence has been one of the factors that has strongly affected trust and the construction of necessary conditions for reconciliation in Arauca, Cúcuta, and Maicao. Although PAR advertises its pathways to advice and assistance on the part of its ally organizations, they hardly mention what those resources are. Instead, when implementing partners detect situations of domestic violence they have a reactive response to address the victims' needs. In the case of the project implemented by **CMD-Arauca**, during the COVID-19 confinement phase, there were two instances of physical violence against female participants by their partners, and another that was reported before the pandemic. **CCA** also reported to C-AME that there was at least one episode of violence against one of the women beneficiaries during the mandatory preventive isolation period, in which the woman was beaten and thrown out of her house, and the materials for her business that had been donated to her within the context of the project were confiscated by her abusive partner, to whom this this beneficiary unfortunately later returned. In both cases, **CMD-Arauca** and **CCA** generated support protocols for the affected beneficiaries and activated a plan to filing a police report of domestic violence with the relevant state authorities.

Violence against migrant women generates disincentives for their social integration and the promotion of reconciliation. According to context actors C-AME interviewed in Cúcuta, due to the lack of opportunities, migrant women are condemned to activities that must be carried out in environments that harbor various forms of physical and psychological violence by their partners or other members of the community. As was mentioned previously, trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, relationships for money or immigration status, and other forms of slavery are part of the repertoire of violence that the most vulnerable migrant women experience when facing the impossibility of accessing sufficient resources to survive and support their families. According to information from the *Sistema Nacional de*

[41] Consolidated data for August, 2020, see: https://www.policia.gov.co/grupo-informaci%C3%B3n-criminalidad/estadistica-delictiva

Vigilancia en Salud Pública[42] (Spanish acronym SIVIGILA) of the *Ministerio de Salud y Protección Social*,[43] as of September 15, 2020, 55.5% of gender-based violence reported nationwide affected migrant women. This year to date, there have been 220 cases of mistreatment reported in Cúcuta and 100 cases in Arauca, while there is no information available for Maicao.

CONTEXT ANALYSIS: TRENDS, RISKS, AND CONSEQUENCES FOR INTERVENTION AND RESULTS (Q2 & Q3)

The effective implementation of PAR depends not only on the design and implementation of innovative intervention strategies, but also on adaptation to the events and dynamics taking place in the operating contexts. C-AME understands the operating context as the space in which PAR implementation takes place, which is defined by: 1) unexpected events that take place without being anticipated or avoided by PAR or its implementing partners; and 2) by long-term dynamics that are independent of the PAR activity, but that motivate and condition it at the same time. C-AME addresses the main factors that determine the operating context of PAR, identifying their effects on implementation (operational effects) or on results at the project or program level (effects on scope). It is worth noting that not all context sub factors have implementation and results effects, some only have effects on one or the other.

The context analysis presented below takes into account emerging or unexpected factors, such as the spread of SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 and the impact of the measures decreed by the GOC on the implementation and results of PAR. In addition, C-AME addresses structural, long-term factors such as socio-economic vulnerability in the focus territories of this DE, security conditions, and institutional factors affecting PAR in the border areas. Given that the intensification in migratory flows influenced the PAR agenda, C-AME will address the migratory phenomenon as a transversal issue to the contextual factors that are analyzed. C-AME is aware that most of the problems addressed in this context analysis predate the period of intensified cross-border migration in Arauca, Cúcuta, and Maicao, and therefore are part of what PAR has called *common unresolved problems*; however, the increase in migration has generated specific dynamics that condition reconciliation.

COVID-19 HEALTH EMERGENCY

Colombia has experienced the effects of the global pandemic in 2020 much as the rest of the world has. The Government of Colombia (GOC) decreed "mandatory preventive isolation"[44] beginning on March 25, 2020, which imposed mobility limitations on people in cities and regions throughout the country. This measure was intended to mitigate the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus pathogen that causes COVID-19. For PAR, this situation paralyzed most daily activities in the initial months of the

[42] National System for Public Health Surveillance.
[43] Ministry of Health and Social Protection.
[44] See Resolution 385 of 2020 (Ministry of Health and Social Protection) and Decrees 217, 457, and 637 of 2020 (President of the Republic).

pandemic, with significant consequences for the economic and social wellbeing of beneficiaries with whom C-AME spoke during this period.

Aside from the pandemic itself, C-AME's investigation shows that a number of secondary factors affected implementation and results for PAR. These included: 1) unequal access among participants to information technologies and virtual platforms or knowledge about how to use them; 2) economic insecurity of beneficiaries, combined with an increase in production costs and delays in delivering products; 3) decrease in available time and attention for participants to engage in projects; and, positively 4) creation of support networks in response to the crisis. These factors emerged differently in each region and for each project; some of these factors increased existing tensions in border areas covered under this DE. However, due to these difficulties, C-AME also saw opportunities for adaptation, some of which are already benefiting implementers.

DIFFICULTIES IN ACCESS TO AND USE OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

The change in implementation strategy, which consisted of the adoption of various forms of information and communications technology (ICT), affected to the largest extent those beneficiaries who did not have access to cell phones, tablets, or computers, or who lacked knowledge about how to use these. C-AME determined, through methods used for its Remote Evaluation Strategy, that beneficiaries experienced a range of difficulties using these tools for effective communication. Challenges include connectivity problems caused by absence and/or low quality of communication networks, a deficit of access to medium- or high-end technology with access to Internet, and little knowledge of how to use specific applications that would have made communications easier. In some cases, the problems of access extended beyond internet capability to even limited telephone access.

According to data from the Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies (MINTIC in Spanish) updated August 2019, [45] 29.2% of all Colombian households have access to fixed phone lines and 72.2% of people over age 5 have access to a mobile phone. While these figures take into account existing barriers for the country in terms of access to ICT, they are complicated even further considering the significant gaps between territories. With respect to the use of cellphones, compared to the national average (79.2%), La Guajira is the furthest behind in terms of persons five years and older with access to cell phones (46.2%), followed by Arauca (59.8%) and Norte de Santander (63.8%). Along the same lines, rates of Internet use are an indication of the digital divide and the exclusion that this produces; while the proportion of individuals over 5 years old who have used the Internet for at least one of their daily activities on a national level is 64.1%, in Norte de Santander that figure is 55.1%, in Arauca 47.4%, and 38.4% in La Guajira.

Although C-AME does not have municipal-level data on access to ICT and its use in the specific municipalities in focus for this iteration, it is possible to examine the divide between the three target

[45] National Administrative Department of Statistics (Spanish acronym DANE). 2019. Basic indicators for ownership and use of ICT in households and with persons 5 years of age and older. URL: https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/tecnologia-e-innovacion/tecnologias-de-la-informacion-y-las-comunicaciones-tic/indicadores-basicos-de-tic-en-hogares

departments of PAR's activities and the national average. With this information, C-AME can surmise that in marginalized zones of the cities examined under this DE, conditions may be even worse than the department average. The difficulty of these conditions influenced implementation and the PAR activity results as discussed in more detail below.

Context factor affecting implementation (Q2)

The quarantine impeded interpersonal communication between implementing partners and beneficiaries and required implementers to develop virtual training and support strategies to continue planned activities. Though these strategies permitted the project to advance toward achieving its objectives, they also presented significant challenges for the implementing partners and beneficiaries. In the projects executed by **CMD in Cúcuta and Arauca**, the partners designed strategies like topping up beneficiaries' phone data to ensure continuity of their participation, following up by phone, and using digital platforms for voice and video conferencing. However, although **CMD** carried out training on these tools, some beneficiaries confessed difficulties with managing platforms like Zoom or WhatsApp. **CMD** noted that beneficiaries in **Maicao** lacked access to cell phones, which impeded their receiving calls and participating in activities carried out during quarantine.

In **Cúcuta** and **Maicao,** NF developed a flier to publicize the results from its activities. This publicity was crucial to securing further gains from ongoing work on the Diversity League. Because of the pandemic, however, NF had to move the flier content online instead, which made it far less visible and accessible to beneficiaries, particularly in light of the unequal access to connectivity mentioned earlier. Despite the use of ICT shining a light on evidence of persistent inequalities[46] and the technology divide, however, the effects of this new strategy were different according to the geographic context of the intervention and the type of beneficiary. In the case of the NF intervention in schools in **Cúcuta**, the partner argues there was a decent rate of access to the Diversity League booklet via virtual media and believes a higher rate of access by students is due to a generational gap in the access to and use of ICT, where young students have the easiest time accessing and using Internet, compared with older people and other population groups such as indigenous groups and/or those with limited literacy.

Although C-AME does not have statistics on internet access by age group, there are relevant data that could be indications of a trend of higher internet use by youth. According to the study *Digital In 2020,*[47] people between the ages of 18 and 34 use social media like Instagram, Facebook and Facebook Messenger at the highest rates. Those aged 55 and older use these media the least. This could signify that the generational variable influences the use of ICT and this is important to take into account in the design of communication and adaptation strategies like those that PAR has deployed in the face of the

[46] These inequalities will be discussed further below, in the section on social vulnerability and its effects on implementation and results of PAR activities.
[47] See results from this study, carried out by *We are Social* and *Hootsuite* for Colombia at: https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-colombia

pandemic. Additionally, data from the MINTIC[48] suggest that those who do not use the internet do so because they do not know how or because they consider the costs too high. In La Guajira, for example, 38.3% of people that report not using the internet say they lack basic knowledge about it, and 24.3% report not having enough money to access the service. In Norte de Santander these proportions are 38% and 20.3% respectively, and in Arauca 35.6% and 24.3%, respectively. Understanding these gaps can contribute to the design of effective strategies for incorporating ICT in reconciliation and development projects.

For **CCC** and **CCA** projects, there were also issues using technology for virtual communication. The staff from **CCC** had to pivot their training and support strategy using mobile technology and virtual platforms, despite their beneficiaries lacking necessary tools like cell phones and computers and the skills to use them. Restrictions on movement meant the project's last meetings had to be carried out by phone. Beneficiaries of the **CCA** project reported to C-AME that they had difficulties with Zoom, which was used to carry out the trainings of phase two of the project, because their cell phones did not have the RAM capacity required for this application to function. Only those that had access to medium or high-end model cell phones, or those with computers, were able to overcome this obstacle. C-AME observed similar obstacles in activities that PAR carried out virtually with beneficiaries of the **CMD project in Arauca**, as many of them did not have internet access or smart phones.

Context factor affecting results (Q3)

The results of some PAR activities were affected by the difficulties beneficiaries experienced accessing and using communication technologies. Given that the most important aggregate result for PAR is reconciliation promotion, observed as a change in beneficiaries' narratives and in the environments where they are operating, the limitation on spaces for dialogue and listening directly affects the results in support of reconciliation. According to information gathered by C-AME, beneficiaries feel that the adaptation of project strategies to the quarantine was a good option for maintaining continuity of planned activities and for involving the family members of beneficiaries in the process. However, they reported that this changed the dynamic of the activities and limited interaction among beneficiaries, which negatively affected the possibility of constructing the dialogue and empathy that could have been derived from direct interpersonal communication. For some beneficiaries from CMD that C-AME interviewed, the relationships constructed through virtual means are not the same as those in person because they reduce the intensity of bonds; as such, addressing emotional topics and promoting mental health are difficult in this context.[49]

DECREASE IN BENEFICIARY EARNINGS, INCREASE IN COSTS OF PRODUCTION, AND DELAYS IN PRODUCT DELIVERY

[48] DANE (2019). Basic indicators for ownership and use of ICT in households and with persons 5 years of age and older. URL: https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/tecnologia-e-innovacion/tecnologias-de-la-informacion-y-las-comunicaciones-tic/indicadores-basicos-de-tic-en-hogares

[49] Interview with beneficiaries, Corporación Minuto de Dios - Arauca, July 29, 2020.

One of the notable effects of the quarantine was the significant decline in economic conditions, especially for those individuals who depend on the informal sector to survive, as is the case for the majority of beneficiaries with enterprises supported by PAR and examined for this iteration. According to DANE data from June 2020,[50] informal workers represent 46.2% of the economically active population in Colombia. This very high percentage highlights the barriers to formalization and the fragility of the job market, especially in situations like the one created by the rapid spread of COVID-19 and the quarantine decreed by the national government. Given that informal workers typically lack access to a basic social safety net, they cannot count on state or private support for survival, which increased their economic crisis during the quarantine. These vulnerabilities and the need to make a daily living for their families has worsened the precariousness of their subsistence and living conditions. Some of these situations were observed by C-AME in semi-structured interviews.

Beneficiaries with small businesses were affected by the grave economic situation caused by the pandemic. This situation is explained by the loss of work and the negative effect on household purchasing power; the impossibility of carrying out business that normally occurs in public spaces; the closure of commercial establishments in cities; and the increase in costs of production and distribution of goods and services, [51] among other reasons. The restrictions on mobility and the effects these had on individuals' capacity to work caused lost income for beneficiaries of business-supporting projects. At the same time, beneficiaries saw an increase in operation costs due to unexpected increases in costs and their use of public services at home, which coincided with more constraints on these services. Beneficiaries also faced difficulties delivering their goods to customers. This did not affect all beneficiaries equally, however, as some economic sectors were hit harder than others.

Context factor affecting results (Q3)

Movement restrictions challenged economic activities, especially for those beneficiaries whose residences and businesses are located in different areas from each other. C-AME learned in interviews that, for those participants who live in the peripheries of cities, or in semi-rural areas, mobility was disproportionately limited in comparison to that of residents of urban centers, who were able to move more freely within cities. In the **CMD project in Arauca**, beneficiaries in the El Refugio neighborhood on the outskirts of the city with limited access by road informed C-AME of the challenge they had earning a living during the pandemic. Some of them had to relocate to the center or other areas of the city to make sales to support themselves and their families. This move was all the more difficult because of the absence of public transport options. Bearing in mind that the majority of beneficiaries rely on their micro-enterprises as their only source of income, this represents a significant ordeal.

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[50] DANE (2020). "Boletín Técnico Medición de Empleo Informal y Seguridad Social," June 2020. Bogotá: DANE.
[51] Macroeconomic Analysis Unit, National University of Colombia (2020). "Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Colombian Economy. A temporary pandemic with permanent effects." in: Faculty of Economic Sciences – Center for Research in Development at Universidad Nacional de Colombia. *Documents of the School of Economics*. No. 108. Bogotá: National University of Colombia.

Some of the entrepreneurs and business owner beneficiaries adapted to the quarantine, for example, those that reoriented their product and service offerings to those most in demand during the confinement. For example, some people began selling mouth coverings in **Maicao and Arauca**, making protective gear, or selling food and offering home delivery. However, several beneficiary enterprises were unable to adapt due to the age or health of the owners, a significant decline in customers, or legal restrictions. Vendors selling food who did not formally register their businesses with the authorities had to close operations or drastically reduce their sales, because they could not legally deliver directly to homes. This disruption of business meant some beneficiaries had to seek other forms of subsistence, which exposed them to greater social vulnerability and increased the existing tensions over access to jobs.

In the case of production of raw materials for export, as with the project implemented by **Atnamana in Maicao**, there were delays in the distribution process, which affected the delivery of merchandise and the income earned by this commercial transaction. These negative effects were especially salient for the delivery of the goods destined for export to Curaçao in April, at which time the quarantine orders had already gone into full effect. According to the implementing partner, although the organization was able to solve its production, logistics, and delivery issues within Colombia, shipping to the island was complicated by the legal restrictions imposed in the receiving country. Though C-AME does not have sufficient information to calculate the size of the losses, it is clear that the delays resulted in a decrease in income for beneficiaries, which directly affected the economic empowerment of the families involved with this enterprise and, as such, negatively affected the results of this activity.

The majority of the activity beneficiaries C-AME interviewed agreed that the quarantine significantly reduced their customer base and affected their cash flow and business sustainability. The economic effects of the pandemic on families translated to a significant reduction in household income, resulting in reduced purchasing power and the reorientation of their basket of consumer goods to those of utmost necessity.[52] In addition, in some cases, the pandemic increased costs of production and distribution as raw materials and inputs were more difficult to obtain and shipping costs increased dramatically by virtue of the decrease in options.[53] Because many beneficiaries were unable to absorb these cost increases, some were forced to leave their homes to deliver products, which caused them anxiety, as they feared being sanctioned by police, especially those who did not have special permits to distribute their wares. All this contributed to some beneficiaries being unable to meet their financial needs, which, in the worst cases, directly affected the continuity of their businesses. Beneficiaries whose enterprises operated in rented spaces had difficulty paying rent and some participants, including some from the **CCA** activity, were evicted.

Production and distribution costs also increased due to the untimely increase in the cost of public utilities. This coincided with a time when participants found they had a greater need for public utilities while unexpectedly spending more time at home. They also had difficulty acquiring equipment and

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[52] DANE (2020). *Social Pulse Survey*. First round results – July 2020. Bogotá: DANE.
[53] See *El Espectador* (May 21, 2020). "COVID-19 desata crisis en el transporte de carga." URL: https://www.elespectador.com/coronavirus/covid-19-desata-crisis-en-el-transporte-de-carga-articulo-920671/

materials for production. Even when municipal authorities made great efforts to increase subsidies for public utilities, some beneficiaries C-AME interviewed said that the small decrease in cost was not as much as had been advertised by the authorities. Beneficiaries of **CCA**'s project, for example, reported that there was an untimely increase in costs of public utilities like power and water during the isolation period, meaning they had to designate part of their meager earnings to cover these additional costs, reducing the income on which they relied for subsistence. Although in **Arauca**, municipal authorities modified the 2017 200.92.014 accord with the objective of providing benefits in the form of subsidized rates for social strata 1, 2, and 3,[54] beneficiaries perceived that public utilities took advantage of the situation to charge higher prices, to the detriment of the beneficiaries' available resources.

DECREASE IN PARTICIPATION AND ACTIVITY REACH

One consequence of the pandemic was the decrease in participation of beneficiaries in program activities, which reduced their reach, especially for those activities requiring congregation of beneficiaries in physical spaces to function. Although PAR mitigated this partially using ICT, beneficiaries' virtual participation did not have the same desired effect. C-AME is aware that PAR does not have the capacity to create alternatives to overcome all these challenges, but the identification of the problem could generate dialogue between PAR, the implementing partner, and beneficiaries of similar projects.

Context factor affecting results (Q3)

The **CMD project in Arauca** attempted to weave the largest hammock in the world, which would gather numerous beneficiaries in the construction process, as well as other members of the Araucan society, including migrants, returnees, native populations and city dwellers.[55] The initial planning involved a symbolic activity to close the project: a public unveiling of the hammock and its installation on the José Antonio Páez International Bridge on the Venezuela-Colombia border, to make visible the links between the different participants and the power of teamwork between people of the plains. This activity, framed as a way to champion the plains identity, sought to recognize what unites the residents of the eastern plains of Colombia and Venezuela, rather than what divides them, with the purpose of generating the cultural conditions to eliminate discrimination and segregation, especially against migrants and returnees.

However, the quarantine affected the reach of this project, as did the barriers to internet access for many beneficiaries and other members of the Araucan society, especially in the poorest sectors of the city. Although there was good media coverage of the activity, including by national sources like *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador*, the original design for the event's effectiveness depended on in-person encounters between distinct members of the community, and their direct interaction, rather than an online ceremony. Reading about the event individually in newspapers or elsewhere on the internet could

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[54] Arauca authorities offered discounts of 75%, 50%, and 25% to social strata 1, 2, and 3, respectively. The strata refer to the six levels of Colombia's socioeconomic benefit organization scheme; citizens are organized into strata based on income and resource level, and the poorest half of consumers (strata 1-3) receive services at a lower cost, subsidized by additional costs levied on strata 5 and 6. See *El Meridiano* (June 2, 2020). "Habrá descuentos en las tarifas de acueducto y alcantarillado en el municipio de Arauca." URL: https://meridiano70.co/habra-descuentos-en-las-tarifas-de-acueducto-y-alcantarillado-en-el-municipio-de-arauca/

[55] See the description of this activity in the project analysis section.

not achieve this same effect. According to beneficiaries C-AME interviewed, the cancellation of this in-person meeting significantly minimized the symbolic and cultural effect of this activity that, among other purposes, PAR designed to create a space of interaction that would promote better coexistence and reduce discrimination in the city.

ADAPTATION AND STRENGTHENING OF SUPPORT NETWORKS

Despite significant setbacks, according to information gathered by C-AME, the quarantine also created an opportunity for PAR to develop adaptation strategies, some of which the implementing partner and beneficiaries took advantage of to continue their initiatives. These adaptation strategies improved project implementation and helped ensure results in the face of the unforeseen crisis.

Context factor affecting implementation (Q2)

In projects such as **CMD's in Arauca, Cúcuta, and Maicao**, the pandemic incentivized the creation of innovative strategies, such as those used by *"Ser familias frente al COVID,"*[56] which offered tools to families dealing with confinement, starting with training focused on adaptability to change, effective communication, and emotional management. This was carried out through three virtual events for which the partner determined in advance the availability and capacities of the beneficiaries in using ICT. Afterwards, the implementer developed a process for training beneficiaries in basic skills for mobile phone use and applications like WhatsApp. This approach decreased the distance between partner and beneficiaries and contributed to a more supporting environment, which helped to generate solidarity and a sense of greater recognition between participants and the partner.

Context factor affecting results (Q3)

The quarantine also contributed to generating consciousness among beneficiaries of the social ties constructed within the context of the project, which translated to a recognition that, despite the physical distance caused by the mandatory isolation, it was possible to carry out group work and continue strengthening friendly and collaborative relationships, if from a distance. This was evident in projects like **CCA's and CMD's in Arauca and Cúcuta**, in which the pandemic proved to be an opportunity for institutional connections that materialized in the form of donations, by several institutions and organizations, of food for the poorest beneficiaries. In this process, in the case of **Arauca**, not only was there a connection formed between organizations, but there was also incentive for collaboration between PAR implementing partners as **CMD** was one of the donors that enabled **CCA** to carry out this donation process. **In Cúcuta, CMD** supported the most vulnerable beneficiaries with transit subsidies so that they could acquire clothes and necessities and pay their rent.

The pandemic also motivated beneficiaries with enterprises to formalize their businesses, as this would allow them, per municipal authorities, to circulate throughout the city and maintain productivity. **CCA**

[56] Being a family in the face of COVID

developed a strategy to promote business formalization, advising beneficiaries on the procedures and documentation required and facilitating the exchange of information between beneficiaries (see implementation section).

Finally, the health crisis caused by the pandemic also allowed beneficiaries to fine-tune their customer service protocols when complying with the sanitary and security requirements of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection. While implementing partners like **CCA** told C-AME that they had provided spaces for the beneficiaries to acquire skills in these safety protocols during the quarantine phase, the beneficiaries reported that many of these issues had been covered during the course of the project before the preventive isolation orders went into effect. As such, from these beneficiaries' perspective, it would have been desirable be trained specifically in approaches for overcoming the health crisis. Other beneficiaries reported the same perception, including those from **CMD's projects in Arauca, Cúcuta, and Maicao**. Despite recognizing the importance of complying with the legal requirements, beneficiaries said they did not receive any special training from the implementing partner that would have served as a reference point for the adoption of modes of working in the face of possible spread of COVID-19.

SOCIO ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY IN BORDER AREAS

This context section covers socio-economic vulnerability of the beneficiaries of PAR initiatives. Vulnerability is usually defined as the diminished capacity of a person or group to cope with risk and to face adverse situations. The concept has been thoroughly discussed from many perspectives, which suggest that vulnerability has to be seen as a composite factor that not only takes into account the risks and the diminished capacity of the persons to face adverse situations.[57] In order to understand what aspects of vulnerability affect individuals and communities participating in PAR initiatives and ultimately how these factors affect implementation and results, C-AME has identified three sub-categories that help to explain the vulnerability of host, migrant, returnee populations that have effects on PAR initiatives in border regions. In the following sections we will discuss structural poverty, access to utilities, and regularization and informality. Despite this intentional division of the factors they are closely related and conform only one part of the different situations and dynamics beneficiaries and projects face in border regions.

STRUCTURAL POVERTY

Poverty is a structural factor identified by C-AME affecting PAR activities; in many cases, this aspect of vulnerability is not only one driver for intervention, but also an obstacle in the implementation process. In this section we detail some relevant issues that illustrate the weak socio-economic system in which PAR participants live. We start by presenting the macro level aspects of poverty in the cities of implementation to further provide neighborhood level information. This allows C-AME to draw conclusions about the effects of poverty on implementation and results such as limiting capacity of

[57] UNDP. (2014) *Informe sobre Desarrollo Humano 2014 Sostener el Progreso Humano: Reducir vulnerabilidades y construir resiliencia.* See: https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/HDR/2014HDR/HDR-2014-Spanish.pdf

different participant types to attend project activities, or, restraining their capacity to sustain and expand business endeavors.

Structural poverty refers not only to the lack monetary resources but also unmet basic needs such as education, health access, housing, nutrition, public utilities, among others.[58] Currently in Colombia, structural poverty is measured through the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).[59] Border departments where PAR implementation took place have some of the highest poverty rates in the country, according to MPI: La Guajira (51.4%) is among the poorest five in Colombia, while Norte de Santander (31.5%) and Arauca (31.8%) are above the national average (19.6%).[60] Data from the municipalities analyzed in this DE show an even more dire situation, as they are among the poorest in Colombia—like Maicao, with 88.9% MPI—while Cúcuta (44.1%) and Arauca (60%) have higher rates compared to other capital cities in the interior of the country (figure 4).

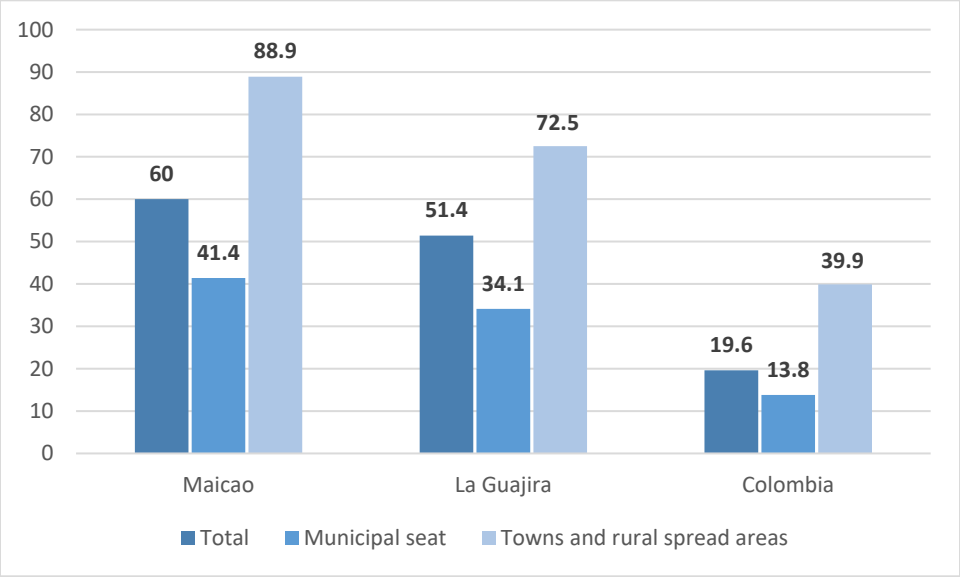

Figure 4 Percentage of households in multidimensional poverty in 2018. Source: DANE (2019).

Regarding the different populations living in border areas, it is worth noting the conditions of poverty of Wayuú indigenous population located in the Department of La Guajira, as they are one of the groups targeted by PAR interventions. This group represent almost 45% of the total population of La Guajira, 17.9% of the population of Maicao. They now face the worst living conditions in the department as they are located in rural areas mostly in La Guajira that have almost no access to water and, have a MPI

[58] United Nations (1995) *The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action* See: https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_CONF.166_9_Declaration.pdf

[59] Currently in Colombia, structural poverty is measured through the Multidimensional Poverty Index59 (MPI) calculated by DANE. To calculate MPI (percentages closer to 100 indicate poorer areas) DANE uses 2018 Census data on the following dimensions: health, education, employment and living standards. For additional references see: Alkire, S., Kanagaratnam, U., & Suppa, N. (2018). The global multidimensional poverty index (MPI): 2018 revision. OPHI MPI methodological notes, 46.

[60] DANE (2019) *Censo Nacional de Población y Vivienda 2018*.

above 90%. In 2019, the death rate due to malnutrition among children under five in La Guajira was nearly six times higher than the national average, and the rate of malnutrition among indigenous groups in this department is twice the national rate.[61]

Another group of interest for PAR interventions is the Venezuelan migrants and Colombian returnees living in border areas, as well as the host communities accommodating them. One of the drivers of migration from Venezuela to Colombia is the situation of poverty for people living in Venezuela. According to the *Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Vida*[62] (ENCOVI) the 2019 household level multidimensional poverty in Venezuela is at 64.8%, a 13.8% increase compared to 2018.[63] But, even more critical is the poverty line indicator that measures income in relation to the cost of a basic basket of goods in Venezuela, for which ENCOVI found that 79.3% of Venezuelans lack enough resources to buy a basic food basket, 96% of the households are poor, and 79% of the population faces extreme poverty.[64] In Colombia, DANE has attempted to adjust socio-economic data collection methodologies to capture the living conditions of migrants as well as the impact of poverty levels among this group on the overall Colombian poverty rates. Results from this adjusted data collection process show that four out of ten persons that migrated from Venezuela are poor; it also indicates that 2.7% (306,000) of the 13 million poor individuals living in Colombia are of Venezuelan origin.[65] As for the MPI, effects of Venezuelan migration on Colombian poverty rates also became a concern; since 2005 Colombia showed a reduction in poverty levels, however, from 2016 to 2019, MPI levels increased from 17.8% in 2016 to 19.6% in 2018. DANE attributes this MPI increase to Venezuelan migrants who lack access to Colombia's social security system and have limited access to

Image 5 C-AME fieldwork. March 2020.

[61] Human Rights Watch (2020) *Colombia: Niños indígenas en riesgo de desnutrición y muerte.* See: https://www.hrw.org/es/news/2020/08/13/colombia-ninos-indigenas-en-riesgo-de-desnutricion-y-muerte.
[62] In English, National Survey of Living Conditions.
[63] Universidad Católica Andrés Bello (2019) *Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Vida 2019-2020.* See: https://www.proyectoencovi.com/informe-interactivo-2019
[64] Ibid.
[65] DANE (2019).

healthcare services, two of the elements considered in the MPI. DANE's calculations that show that approximately 85% of the 723,000 migrants that arrived in Colombia in 2019 cannot access healthcare.[66]

Context Factors Affecting Implementation (Q2)

The conditions of poverty in the three cities of this DE are experienced by PAR participants themselves and have effects on their participation in project activities. Data from Cúcuta's municipal development plan reveal that **Comuna 8** and **Comuna 6** (where most of PAR participants from CCC and CMD live), located in peripheral areas of the city, have informal settlements where forcibly displaced persons, migrants, and very low income families live (figure 5).

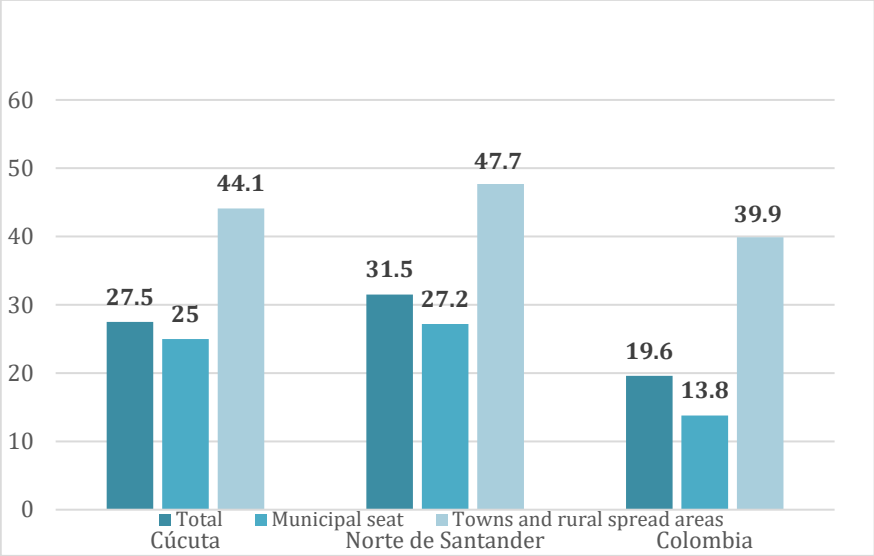

Figure 5. Percentage of households in multidimensional poverty in Cúcuta compared to the department of Norte de Santander and nationwide.
Source: Municipal Development Plan Cúcuta 2050 (2020).

In Maicao, the neighborhoods **Bendición de Dios 1 and 2**, where beneficiaries from CMD live, have no paved roads, houses are made from scrap materials, and plumbing is nonexistent, as detailed by the Mayor's office, the UN, and other NGOs. According to staff from CMD-Cúcuta, despite the conditions of poverty and vulnerability, beneficiaries from these areas attended project activities routinely and their participation was steady and did not decrease over time. CMD activities in Cúcuta were located much closer to where their participants resided (due to the existence of CMD-owned community development center) so transportation expenses were low or participants were able to walk short distances to attend activities. However, also in Cúcuta, beneficiaries from **CCC** stated that sometimes it was difficult for them to attend all the project workshops because they did not have enough money to pay for transportation. Participants from CCC created networks of support such that participants themselves raised funds to help their fellow participants to cover their transportation costs. In the project implemented by **CMD in Maicao**, vulnerability of participants and location of project activities also prevented participants from timely and steady project participation. The implementer from CMD-

[66] Ibid.

Maicao indicated that some participants did not have enough money to afford transportation to attend the activities and had to walk long distances, on unpaved roads and under high heat conditions from their communities to the implementation site. Despite the opportunities that participating in CMD activities presented to participants, the fact that they had to take on additional costs (either for transport or time spent walking) on top of the investment of their time spent participating in activities—which was time spent not earning money—is an element of activity design that warrants further exploration between PAR and implementing partners.

Persistent poverty among the communities where PAR participants live and vulnerability of its inhabitants make these place prone to the explosion of social tensions, which can be worsen by the arrival of organizations aiming at provide alternatives for economic development for few participants. In one of the activities of the **CMD project in Maicao** there was a situation that can illustrate how the vulnerability of the populations that inhabit the La Guajira department can yield to conflict situations that can affect implementation. During one of the activities, that was carried out in **Bendición de Dios 2**, in an informal settlement that hosts returnee and Venezuelan migrant populations, a facilitator from the **CMD** was physically assaulted by a person (not associated with the project), because that person did not receive food that was being given as part of the CMD activity. The implementing partner attributed this situation to the hunger and adverse conditions the settlement and the city of **Maicao** faces. Because of the security concern of its team, the implementing partner decided to carry out the activities in other locations so as not to create tensions between participants and non-participants in the same community.

Context Factors Affecting Results (Q3)

In highly vulnerable socioeconomic contexts like the ones found in **Maicao** in particular, and more broadly in La Guajira department, beneficiaries typically have a low access to financial services that could make them opt for informal loans. Data from La Banca de las Oportunidades (2020)[67] which measures financial inclusion in Colombia, shows that La Guajira is among the departments[68] that has fewer transactions by adult, access to credit, and use of electronic channels. Another interesting finding in this regard is that departments with high violence rates against women also have low access to credit (less than 40%), a situation that is highlighted in La Guajira, Chocó, Córdoba, Cauca, Sucre, Cesar, Bolívar, and Norte de Santander, another of the departments where PAR initiatives are located. Moreover, research has found that an increase in financial services led to reductions in the number of violent attacks in municipalities affected by armed conflict, essential for reconciliation processes led by PAR.[69]

IN THE CASE OF THE ATNAMANA-LED PROJECT IN MAICAO, C-AME IDENTIFIED THAT THERE WERE DIFFICULTIES RELATED TO INSUFFICIENT INCOME ON THE PART OF PARTICIPANTS, WHICH LIMITED THEIR ABILITY TO FEED AND ORGANIZE SOME OF THE COLLECTIVE ACTIVITIES ESSENTIAL FOR THE MELON PLANTATION. ECONOMIC INITIATIVES SUPPORTED BY PAR ARE DESIGNED TO GENERATE

[67] Banca de las oportunidades (2020). *Reporte de inclusión financiera 2019*. See: http://bancadelasoportunidades.gov.co/sites/default/files/2020-07/Informe_RIF_2019.pdf
[68] Along with Amazonas, Vichada, and Vaupés.
[69] Castro, et. Al. (2018) *Bancarization and Violence in Colombia.* See: https://repositorio.banrep.gov.co/bitstream/handle/20.500.12134/9398/be_1052.pdf.

OTHER SOURCES OF INCOME FOR BENEFICIARIES AND TO PROMOTE SOCIO ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT THROUGH NOT ONLY THE CREATION AND CONSOLIDATION OF DIVERSE BUSINESS IDEAS, BUT ALSO OF PARTICIPANTS' CAPACITY TO BE RESILIENT TO THE IMPACT OF A RANGE OF CHALLENGES, LIKE ACCESS TO THE FINANCIAL SYSTEM. STRUCTURAL POVERTY, IN THIS CASE, IS THE MOTIVATION FOR PAR INITIATIVES AND, AT THE SAME TIME, A BARRIER TO THE EXPECTED RESULTS IN BORDER MUNICIPALITIES. ONE OF THE FINDINGS IN THIS REGARD WAS THAT, AFTER IMPLEMENTATION ENDED, SOME BENEFICIARIES IN THE THREE IMPLEMENTATION SITES OF CMD REPORTED TO C-AME THAT THE INCOME GENERATED BY THEIR BUSINESSES IS SUFFICIENT TO COVER THEIR VENTURE COSTS AND SUBSISTENCE, WHILE OTHERS EXPLAINED THAT THEY HAD TO FIND ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INCOME. SOME PARTICIPANTS REPORTED THEY SELL THEIR PRODUCTS ON THE STREETS AND HAVE VERY LIMITED CAPACITY TO FORMALIZE THEIR BUSINESS IN WAYS THAT ALLOW THEM TO EXPAND THEM. THESE CHALLENGES APPLY PRESSURE ON THE IMPLEMENTER TO ENSURE THAT PARTICIPANTS' VENTURES WILL SUCCEED. IN THE CASE OF CÚCUTA, WHERE IMPLEMENTATION INCLUDED JOB PLACEMENT STRATEGIES, SOME BENEFICIARIES WERE DISCOURAGED AND ABANDONED THE JOB PLACEMENT COMPONENT EARLY DUE TO THEIR MISTAKEN EXPECTATIONS THAT THEY WOULD FIND EMPLOYMENT IMMEDIATELY AND THEIR BEING UNWILLING TO ALLOW ENOUGH TIME FOR RESULTS TO MATERIALIZE OR TO PARTICIPATE IN PROJECT ACTIVITIES. THE PARTICIPANT DROPOUT PROBLEM REVEALS SOME CHALLENGES IN THE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATING PROJECT REQUIREMENTS TO POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES. CONSIDERING THE VULNERABILITY OF THE TARGET POPULATION AND THEIR DIFFICULTIES ACCESSING JOB OPPORTUNITIES OR POSSIBILITIES OF FORMALIZATION AND BUSINESS EXPANSION, IT IS IMPORTANT TO ESTABLISH CLEAR COMMUNICATION AND MANAGE BENEFICIARY EXPECTATIONS.

ACCESS TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The access to safe and clean water in and between Norte de Santander, Arauca, and La Guajira varies drastically.[70] UNICEF and IMMAP[71] reviewed the situation of informal settlements in Colombia and their access to WASH. There are important findings that are worth mentioning and that can better explain the scenario of vulnerability of some of the participants of PAR-funded projects. One of the most important findings of the report was that most of the informal settlements are located in La Guajira, Arauca, and Norte de Santander—all of which are departments where PAR implements—with a smaller proportion identified in Nariño close to the Ecuadorian-Colombian border. The study also found that the hygiene and sanitation conditions of most of the settlements were precarious; 97% do not have hygiene products[72] available and in 99% of them, water treatment systems are non-existent so water is not safe for drinking. La Guajira also presents the highest rates of open defecation, found in 92% of the settlements, and in in 68% of them there is no use of toilets.

[70] Besides the harsh desert conditions that are a characteristic of La Guajira, located in the north of Colombia, efforts from the local governments and the GOC have not yet managed to address critical issues that affect both urban and rural communities, increasing the vulnerability of communities to food and water-borne illness. Cholera, diarrhea, infectious gastro-enteritis typhoid fever have increased over time related with the low quality of water in La Guajira, for example infectious gastro-enteritis and diarrhea presented 14.219 cases in 2017 versus 3.758 cases in 2009 (Contraloría General de la República, *La Guajira: revisión de la situación en Agua Potable y Saneamiento Básico,* 2018*).*

[71] UNICEF & IMMAPP (2019) *Resultados Preliminares Evaluación de necesidades WASH en 4 departamentos de frontera: Arauca, La Guajira, Nariño y Norte de Santander*. See: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/presentacion_cluster_wash.pdf

[72] Hand cleaning products such as soap, cleaner, and sanitizer. As for feminine hygiene products, the report showed that 89% of the settlements did not have an adequate access to sanitary pads, tampons, among other elements.

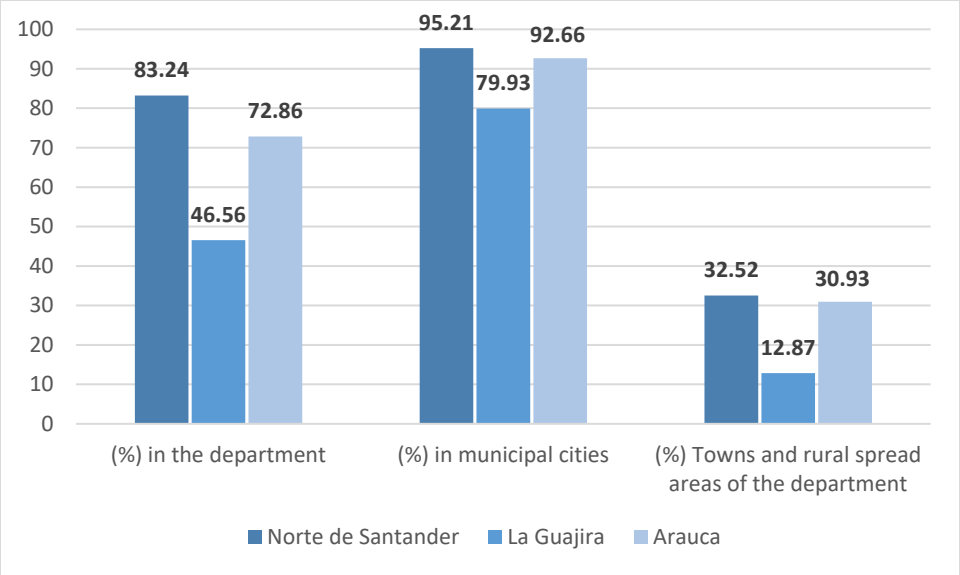

Figure 5 Percentage of plumbing coverage. Source: DANE (2019).

Context Factors Affecting Implementation (Q2)

Some examples of how these conditions affect PAR beneficiaries are detailed below. Most beneficiaries from the project of **CMD in Cúcuta live in Comuna 8**, and according to the implementing partner, informal housing prevails and therefore most do not have access to WASH or major utilities.[73] **In Arauca, El Refugio** is another informal settlement where many of PAR's beneficiaries live. Access to water and utilities is basically nonexistent, as is formal land tenure, meaning residents are vulnerable to loss of housing and cannot effectively demand access to utilities, a violation of their basic rights. As for **La Guajira, the informal settlement known as La Bendición de Dios in Maicao**, where many of the participants of the project implemented by **CMD** live, has high risks of flooding and precarious access to water and electricity, as the implementing partner pointed out. In October 2019 a massive flood affected more than 150 families from this settlement, as *La Guajira Hoy* reported, in which they also portrayed the difficult conditions of returnee and migrant populations.[74]

These informal settlements have mixed populations, of both Venezuelan migrants in El Refugio, as beneficiaries told C-AME, and Colombians who were forced to leave Arauca when they could no longer afford to live there, who had sold their houses and now live in this informal settlement. There are Colombian and Venezuelan families with diverse compositions of returnees, forced migrants, victims from the armed conflict in Colombia, among others. From what some media sources and the Colombian government has called the "second wave" of Venezuelan migration, the right to have clean and safe

[73] This information is in accordance with the findings of the Mayor's Office in Cúcuta, which diagnosed in 2018 a high presence of informal settlements and the need for formalization projects that would bring public utilities to these neighborhoods. (Departamento Administrativo de Planeación de San José de Cúcuta, 2018).
[74] La Guajira Hoy (October 7, 2019) *Lluvias en Maicao inundaron el barrio La Bendición de Dios*. Available in: https://laguajirahoy.com/featured/lluvias-en-maicao-inundaron-el-barrio-la-Bendición-de-dios.html.

water has been affected because of the increase in demand, increase in the losses because of illegal connections to the service systems, costs associated with water distribution by tanker trucks and the legal impossibility of building water and sewage networks in informal settlements.[75]

In **Arauca**, the lack of road infrastructure hindered the development of activities. C-AME understands poor road infrastructure as an inadequacy of physical spaces for mobility, exchange and municipal development, which we saw expressed in the impossibility of some implementing partners and beneficiaries reaching the projects' areas of operation, and in the difficulty of accessing supplies and raw material for production, in the case of business endeavors. These infrastructure issues not only affect the implementation of projects developed in peripheral zones of cities, but also accentuate the socio-spatial segregations, which are direct obstacles to integration between different social groups. The latter is relevant given that vulnerable populations that work with PAR, especially migrants and Colombian returnees, normally settle in peripheral zones that lack road infrastructure, which increases their vulnerability and their separation from populations that are fully integrated into the social, economic, and cultural life of the cities.

In the project implemented by **CMD-Arauca**, the implementing partner told C-AME about the difficulty of physically accessing El Refugio settlement, one of the implementation sites. This is even more problematic during rainy seasons since El Refugio is on the outskirts of Arauca in a floodplain area of the city. According to **CMD-Arauca**, the road conditions made access to the project's activities difficult and hindered its operation. Although the implementing partner managed to overcome the difficulties in working with persons from this sector of the city by locating their offices near the settlement, the beneficiaries C-AME interviewed stated that the lack of road infrastructure had been a problem for the development of their enterprises any time they needed to travel from the settlement to the city. According to a beneficiary of the project implemented by **CMD-Arauca**, rainy seasons are chaotic because the area is flooded, and this generates difficulties for opening their businesses or acquiring raw materials.

Context Factors Affecting Results (Q3)

Lack of access to water and sanitation can be a great obstacle for different productive initiatives from CMD in Cúcuta, Maicao and Arauca, and CCC and CCA, especially those related with food products as clean water is indispensable. Not having this resource reliably can constitute a risk for the persons that buy their products and even for the beneficiary who handles the food, as detailed in the previous section; diseases like cholera, diarrhea, and other food and waterborne illnesses are transmitted through unsafe water. Some beneficiaries from the CMD in Arauca explained that they had to obtain their water from drilling holes in the ground and did not have any access to treated water. Other beneficiaries from the CMD project in Maicao, not only detailed the lack of access to water, but also described how they needed to borrow water and utensils from kitchens and houses from other persons, because they did not have their own spaces to make the food they sold. This can lead to dangerous food conditions, as

[75] GOC has prohibited public utilities from installing service and access in informal settlements. For more information see: Departamento Nacional de Planeación- DNP (2020), Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social-CONPES 3989.

the beneficiary does not know if the water he or she is receiving is treated and safe or if the utensils are sufficiently clean to safely sell their products.

The lack of road infrastructure in the project implemented by **CMD-Arauca** also affects the achievement of the immediate results of the project and those of a broader scope at the programmatic level. One of the beneficiaries interviewed by C-AME mentioned that the highway on which their entrepreneurship is located has been closed several times for maintenance, which has affected the influx of people to his business and reduced sales. This same beneficiary expressed his intent to move his residence, with the objective of also moving his business to a place that ensures greater profitability, since problems with the roads are recurrent in his area and have directly affected his livelihood. According to reporting from the newspaper *El Meridiano 70*, in addition to the road problems, the sector of Llano Alto (the area of the city where El Refugio is located) presents a problem of rainwater and sewage, which makes it even more difficult to move in the area and generates health risks for residents.[76] During rainy seasons, stagnant water affects the homes of the sector's residents and public transportation does not enter the settlement, leaving residents to have to walk long distances and making it difficult to bring in consumer goods. According to one of the beneficiaries of the CMD-Arauca project, not only are they affected in winter, but it is also frequent that the cars that circulate in the sector, in the dry seasons, raise a great deal of dust affecting the food sales businesses, or damage pipes in exposed plumbing, making access to the sector even more precarious.

IMMIGRATION STATUS AND INFORMALITY

Regularization and informality are closely related and are one of the main issues that must be addressed in contexts with high levels of forced migration around the world. If a person does not have a regular status in the country he or she arrives to, formal employment is not possible, nor is equal access to health services,[77] among other disadvantages. When there are no alternatives for work, many of these migrants must dedicate themselves to informal economic activities to survive. In the case of Venezuelan migration, Colombia has become the host country with most Venezuelan migrants in Latin America, hosting around 1.6 million persons according to UNHCR, but only 60% have a recognized immigration status in Colombia, and of those approximately 680,000 who have a special permit to stay or *Permiso Especial de Permanencia* (PEP-See Evaluation Scope section), only 14% hold formal employment according to *Migración Colombia* (2020).

Regions where most of the Venezuelan migrants arrive to have high rates of informal labor and unemployment already, making the prospect of accessing formal employment nearly impossible. Cúcuta, where implementations from CMD and CCC are located currently has the fourth highest unemployment rate in the country at 19.8% by April 2020, 9.5% higher than last year. Arauca, another of the cities that are targeted in this implementation has high rates of unemployment with 27.2%,

[76] Meridiano 70. "Comunidad de Llano Alto". In: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_KWgBe-nSk&feature=youtu.be
[77] In Colombia, Venezuelans without formal immigration status can access ER services, but no other services are covered.

surpassing the national average of 19.8% registered in April, 2020.[78] Informality rates—or the percentage of the labor force that is engaged in informal labor—in these municipalities also remain the highest in Colombia, with a rate of 71.4% in Cúcuta, for example.[79]

Context factor affecting implementation (Q2)

In the project implemented by **CMD in Maicao**, some beneficiaries pointed out that to be eligible to participate in the project, they had to have the PEP. To fulfill this requirement, some beneficiaries registered family members with PEP as project participants, while sending another person to actually attend the activities. Many PAR beneficiaries in these communities do not have formal immigration status because their passports were not registered at the moment they entered Colombia, a common situation among the recent waves of Venezuelan migration flows that do not have passports and/or entered Colombia through unofficial border crossings known as *trochas*. Further, as a survey conducted by the *Proyecto Migración Venezuela* found out, more than 60% of Venezuelans in Colombia stated that having a savings account was among the most difficult challenges when trying to integrate in the country.[80] Despite regulations that have authorized banks to accept the PEP as a valid document for opening the account, many of the banks do not know how this regulation works and have been incorporating the measure slowly, and as one member of Asomicrofinanzas mentioned, they do not know if the document is false so they only accept a valid passport or a *cédula de extranjería.*[81]

Other problems related with the PEP were identified in the project led by **CCC**, where beneficiaries told C-AME that they could not formalize their businesses because they did not know the specific requirements needed to obtain the *matrícula mercantil* [82] or were in a bureaucratic loop where they were circulating through different institutions without obtaining the registry. Beneficiaries from this project also mentioned that the costs associated with obtaining documentation to legalize their business was high and they could not afford them. This was also the case for Colombian returnees who, despite having a valid ID to ease this process, did not have enough money to formalize their businesses.

Context factor affecting results (Q3)

Social and economic inclusion are among the desired results common for the projects led by **CCA, CCC,** and **CMD in Maicao and Cúcuta**. To achieve this goal, participants must meet requirements to make their businesses legal and if they cannot manage to comply with the regulations, their enterprises

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[78] Data from unemployment is not available at the same detail for Maicao, DANE only makes a strict follow up in unemployment in 24 cities in Colombia.
[79] DANE (2020). Arauca was not included among these updated figures related with informality.
[80] Proyecto Migración Venezuela (2019) *Integración Financiera a mitad de camino.* See: https://migravenezuela.com/web/articulo/integracion-financiera-a-migrantes-venezolanos-en-colombia/1481?fbclid=IwAR0xaukQiaBwa7hXriLO-iGGVACIoXTwwD3v6efmKIbQboPnYKUReXAkBxw.
[81] Dinero.com (September 19, 2019) *¿Por qué no hay bancos para migrantes?* See: https://www.dinero.com/pais/articulo/por-que-los-venezolanos-tienen-bajo-acceso-al-sistema-financiero/276965.
[82] Business license

are likely to become or remain informal. It is also worth noting that the PEP is a transitory permit that is valid for two years in Colombia and does not constitute a mechanism for permanent residency.[83] So if migrants with PEP want to continue with their businesses in Colombia, they must start an official immigration process with *Migración Colombia* in order to stay in the country, which could potentially affect the sustainability and continuity of the economic endeavors supported by PAR. In the case of Arauca, the implementing partner also stated that the informality in the El Refugio settlement accentuates the inequality in the municipality and relegates its inhabitants to the production of goods and services with little added value.

C-AME identified that some of the ventures supported by the CMD and Chambers of Commerce projects are informal food stands. The increase in informal food stalls in the streets and public spaces of cities, most of which are attended by migrant populations, is perceived by local inhabitants as a risk to public safety and a misuse of public spaces [cite supporting source]. This perception has a negative impact on the imaginary that the local population constructs about the migrant and returnee population [cite a supporting source]. This, in addition to the formal announcements and statements that mayors, governors, and other public officials have made to the central government pointing out the lack of resources to support migrant and returnee populations [cite source of support], which have been perceived by local inhabitants as a possible reallocation of resources that could leave them behind [cite a source that supports] make it clear that "the increase in migratory flows and the consequent arrival of new actors who live in areas of high poverty in the municipalities increases the perception of crisis and social inequality, causing an increase and intensification of social tensions," which makes it difficult to build and consolidate reconciliation initiatives.

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[83] "Can I accumulate time with PEP to qualify for a visa?" "No. PEP, given its legal nature, is designed to authorize the permanence of Venezuelan nationals that are in Colombian territory without the intention to establish themselves permanently, for which reason it does not equate to a visa, nor does it have any effect on the calculation of time needed to qualify for a, R-type Residence Visa." Migración Colombia (2020) *Preguntas frecuentes PEP.* See: https://www.migracioncolombia.gov.co/venezuela/pep/preguntas-frecuentes-pep.

[84] The high demand for housing, and the inability to meet it, resulted in the occupation of public spaces and the generation of informal settlements in high-risk areas. (World Bank, 2018).

CLIMATE OF ILLEGALITY AND VIOLENCE

The Colombia-Venezuela border is marked by the flow of persons, goods, and capital, some of which contribute to illegal economies controlled by armed actors on both sides of the border. This, combined with high levels of poverty and lack of opportunities for engagement in legal activities, generates risks for the engagement of vulnerable people in various forms of violence and illegality. Smuggling, extortion, illegal trafficking of migrants, human, drug, and micro-trafficking have been some of the forms that illegal trade activities have adopted. C-AME understands illegal economy to mean the process of production and distribution of goods and services declared illegal under Colombian law, as well as the value production activities that apply to them. These economies are characterized by the creation of high informality spaces and are prone to produce various forms of violence.

In the recent decades there has been persistent violence in the area of the Colombia-Venezuela border and the specific dynamics of violent conflict have evolved over time. With the adoption of the peace accords in 2016 and the creation of a power void in areas previously dominated by the FARC, violence has paradoxically increased as new groups struggle for control. At stake are cities and towns, some quite small but geo-strategically important for the access they offer to income from cross-border drug and human trafficking and other forms of illegal trade. The violence has affected not only Colombians, but Venezuelans who have crossed the border as well. Beneficiaries and implementing partners with whom C-AME spoke have said that the ongoing violence has been a constraint on their efforts in Cúcuta, Arauca, and Maicao. In the following sub sections C-AME will address two specific aspects of the operating context in these municipalities and their implications for PAR: persistent violence, climate of illegality.

PERSISTENT VIOLENCE

The Colombia-Venezuela border has become a source of growing contention among numerous armed groups. According to PARES (2020), 28 armed groups are now active throughout this border, compared to 7 armed groups identified by CERAC (2015) that took violent actions in the border from 2010-2015.[85] In **Cúcuta**, where the implementation of **CCC, CMD-Cúcuta,** and **NF** took place, the list of combatants includes Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN),[86] Ejército Popular de Liberación-Los Pelusos,[87] Los Rastrojos, Clan del Golfo, splinter groups from the FARC-EP, and organized international crime groups such as el Cartel de Sinaloa, Jalisco Nueva Generación, and Tren de Aragua.[88] The neighborhoods where many of PAR's beneficiaries in Cúcuta live have historically been areas that heavily

[85] Centro de Recursos para el Análisis de Conflictos (2015) *Reporte septiembre, 2015.*
[86] In English, National Liberation Army
[87] In English, Popular Liberation Army.
[88] El Espectador (February 10, 2020) *Así operan los grupos ilegales en el Catatumbo.* See: https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/nacional/asi-operan-los-grupos-ilegales-en-el-catatumbo-articulo-903966/.

suffered from armed conflict,[89] micro trafficking, targeted homicides, and forced displacements. Both migrant and host populations have borne these experiences.[90]

In **Arauca**, where PAR's program with the **CCA and CMD-Arauca** took place, the struggle for territorial control between splinter groups from the FARC-EP and ELN has resulted in an increase in violence. In **Maicao**, the dominant group in the past has been the ELN and many transnational crime organizations, including *Los Pranes* and *Los Chacones*. Their interest in Maicao is due to its strategic location that provides access to routes for the smuggling of gasoline, guns, cattle, and other high-value goods.[91] Meanwhile, economic opportunities in the region not connected to smuggling have languished, which in turn drives more people to seek employment with violent criminal organizations out of desperation to support themselves.[92]

Context factor affecting implementation (Q2)

As an example of the types of challenges that armed groups pose to PAR's work, **NF had to reschedule an activity that was planned at a mall in Cúcuta** called Ventura Plaza in February 2020 due to a series of security incidents. The first of these was a small explosive that went off at the mall, which turned out to be a teenage prank rather than the work of an organized group. The reaction to this event was telling, since the authorities chose to charge the boy responsible (who was only 15 at the time) with a serious act of terrorism.[93] The decision to take this event so seriously reflects the delicate tension in **Cúcuta** around anything even resembling a violent attack. The second situation was an armed lockdown, which the ELN and *Ejército Popular de Liberación* (EPL) imposed on northeastern Colombia in February 2020. In Cúcuta and its vicinities, the ELN and EPL used bomb threats and actual explosions to force commerce to an almost complete halt and prevent movement along highways in and out of the region.[94] The ELN and EPL used this lockdown as a show of force to consolidate control over even everyday aspects of life in this region. Because of the precarious security in Cúcuta, Nuestro Flow ultimately opted to move its event from Ventura Plaza to a different location. This move was significant because it meant rescheduling the activities in a less popular location.

In **Arauca**, the ELN also interfered with **CMD**'s efforts, as in July through September 2019, they carried out various violent attacks, set curfews, and imposed mobility restrictions as part of a commemoration

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[89] Paramilitary groups of las Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia AUC controlled these *Comunas* and committed homicides and other violent actions in the 2000's in retaliation of the control the ELN had in Cúcuta around the 90's. (Unidad de Restitución de Tierras, 2019).
[90] LaFM (July 7, 2020) *Denuncian desplazamientos intraurbanos en Cúcuta.* See: https://www.lafm.com.co/colombia/denuncian-desplazamientos-intraurbanos-en-Cúcuta
[91] PARES (2020) *La Guajira y Cesar: Un territorio en manos del crimen.* See: https://pares.com.co/2020/02/10/la-guajira-y-cesar-un-territorio-en-manos-del-crimen/.
[92] IBID.
[93] La Opinión (June 30, 2019) *Pánico en centro comercial de Cúcuta por detonación provocada por adolescentes.* See: https://www.laopinion.com.co/Cúcuta/panico-en-centro-comercial-de-Cúcuta-por-detonacion-provocada-por-adolescentes-179784.
[94] La Opinión (February 17, 2020) *Alarma en Cúcuta y Villa del Rosario por explosivos y grafitis del ELN.* See: https://www.laopinion.com.co/judicial/alarma-en-Cúcuta-y-villa-del-rosario-por-explosivos-y-grafitis-del-eln-192089#OP.

of the group's 55th anniversary. Historically, violent actions of the group increase in these months as a show of force in the regions where they operate.[95] According to **CMD-Arauca**, this situation forced them to stop some of their programmed activities and to re-schedule others. In 2019, the Ombudsman Office warned of the presence of criminal gangs and transnational criminal organizations in Maicao that are disputing social control of migrant population settlements like La Bendición de Dios and Montecarlo, which presents risks for CMD in Maicao.

> *"Some of the members of these groups from Venezuela have migrated to Colombia, establishing themselves in settlements located within the urban area and the surroundings of the municipality, such as Torres de la Majayura,* ***La Bendición de Dios and Montecarlo****; a situation that has brought with it a high risk for the Colombian civilian population and Venezuelan migrants, to the extent that they are structures that operate through the exacerbated use of violence. At the same time, they continue to be immersed in the criminal dynamics developed in their country of origin, such as the trafficking of Venezuela to Colombia, control of microtraffic networks, hitman groups and extortion of their fellow countrymen."* (Ombudsman, 2019)

CLIMATE OF ILLEGALITY

According to information gathered by C-AME, the three municipalities studied for the DE have been affected by the presence of armed actors and the development of illegal economies. **Maicao is** the city from which C-AME has the most evidence of the perceived effects of these situations on reconciliation, as understood by PAR. According to PAR members interviewed by C-AME, cities like **Maicao** have been established on the basis of illegal exchange between different villages and communities, which has generated a stigma towards the inhabitants and a significant reduction in trust among inhabitants towards legality and formal institutions. According to the PAR Reconciliation Barometer of 2019, the aggregate levels of trust in **Maicao** are only 41.5%, lower than what was reported for **Arauca** (47.2%) and **Cúcuta** (47.8%), and ten points lower than the results of the measurement for 2017, in the same city. Although there is no statistical evidence of the direct impact of illegal economies on these low levels of trust, the results of the Barometer can indicate that the presence of illegal trade practices and criminal groups affect trust. The breakdown by variables that make up the trust driver shows that cohesion, trust and security are the categories that report the lowest proportions among reconciliation indicators: 41.8%, 38.3% and 29.7% respectively.

Context factors Affecting Results (Q3)

For C-AME, illegality generates incentives for citizens not to consider institutional routes as viable alternatives for the resolution for their personal problems and broader social problems. In most cases, attempting to resolve problems by involving authorities can be considered an ineffective and inefficient option by citizens, which also restricts the development of viable state action strategies and increases the distance between the state and the citizenry. According to personnel from cooperation agencies in **Maicao** C-AME interviewed, the presence of illegal actors dedicated to gasoline, food, and goods

[95] CERAC (2020) *Reporte del conflicto con el ELN.* See: https://www.blog.cerac.org.co/reporte-del-conflicto-con-el-eln-3.

smuggling has grown in the city—including an ELN presence—which has generated a sophisticated division and specialization of illegal economic activities in the region, limiting its dismantling and facilitating the recruitment of persons for these activities. A municipal official interviewee highlighted the difficulty the state has in controlling human trafficking, which has generated a major humanitarian crisis that promotes the increase of existing social tensions over access to resources and services provided by the state or by international and civil society organizations.

Beneficiaries from the project implemented in the rural community of **Atnamana** state that there is also lack of trust from the local authorities towards citizens, which is reflected in the establishment of rigid protocols for the transport of agricultural production that they wish to export. According to beneficiaries interviewed by C-AME, state authorities in the border region believe the products and merchandise circulating roads bordering Venezuela must originate through smuggling practices taking place in such areas. Project participants are affected by strict controls, such as the difficulty obtaining phytosanitary licenses to transport vegetable material[96] licenses that are vital for the melons **Atnamana** has to transport and export to Curaçao.

In the case of **Arauca**, context actors have informed C-AME that illegal economies like smuggling and prostitution are maintained due to institutional hardships that are expressed in weak controls in zones and routes where these illegal activities are carried out. Commercial sexual exploitation has affected the lives of some women, mainly migrants, due to the lack of economic opportunities that allows them to access resources for their livelihoods and that of their families, which has generated greater stigmatization and distrust towards Venezuelan women, with Colombians frequently accusing them of being "home wreckers."[97]

INSTITUTIONAL SETTING: STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN RECONCILIATION PROCESSES

This section deals with one context factor, related to changes in implementing partner institutions that affected both implementation and desired results of the CCC project in Cúcuta and CCA project in Arauca.

CHANGES IN IMPLEMENTING PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

The **CCC**, had eight of its board directors members suspended in June 2020, including its executive director, because of investigations from the regional attorney's office regarding an increase in salaries not supported in technical documents, and other administrative irregularities.[98] For the PAR funded project, this represented an administrative vacuum with important implications over implementation and results, because the CCC lost its legal representative which limited the implementer capacity to execute

[96] According to the Resolución 3973 of the Instituto Colombiano Agropecuario (ICA), Colombian Agricultural Institute.
[97] Defensoría del Pueblo (2019). Análisis de género y movilidad humana en frontera. Bogotá: Defensoría del Pueblo.
[98] La Opinión (June 30, 2020) *Suspenden a miembros de Junta Directiva de Cámara de Comercio de Cúcuta.* See: https://www.laopinion.com.co/Cúcuta/suspenden-miembros-de-junta-directiva-de-camara-de-comercio-de-Cúcuta-198826.

contracts. In **Arauca, the CCA** had four out of the six members of its board of directors removed, including the president and the executive president who had been in office 13 years.[99] Unlike CCC, the removal of the members of the board of directors did not prevent CCA from delivering seed capitals to beneficiaries, it only delayed it.

Context Factors Affecting Implementation (Q2)

In the case of **CCC in Cúcuta**, the suspension generated negative impacts on implementation as the seed capital that was programmed to be distributed to beneficiaries had to be halted; according to CCC, the executive director, as the legal representative of CCC, is the only one person who can authorize expenditures like these. CCC made an official statement and organized an event to communicate the situation to the beneficiaries, and although some of the participants expressed their gratitude about the psycho-emotional aspects of the program, some expressed discomfort and distrust towards the implementer as they had high expectations for the closing phase when they would receive the seed capital they had earned.

As for **CCA in Arauca** the changes in the members of the board of directors at the end of 2019 delayed the delivery of seed capital to beneficiaries, and according to beneficiaries, this caused uneasiness in some of the participants as they thought they would not receive the elements they requested. After the changes in the board of directors, activities were re-programmed and seed capital was delivered to beneficiaries.

Context Factors Affecting Results (Q3)

In **Cúcuta**, CCC's suspension of project activities and seed capital awards generated negative impacts on beneficiaries. One beneficiary explained in interviews with C-AME in March that he was relying on the seed capital award of a machine he needed to complete an order for 1,000 pairs of shoes to which he had already committed (see Annex 2). Beneficiaries took on significant responsibility and cost to participate in CCC activities, including their time spent attending and repeating workshops and conducting vendor research and budgeting, their money spent on transportation, their forgone income when activities precluded them from working, and their emotional labor in psycho-social activities. In exchange, they expected to receive a capital investment in their livelihoods, which CCC's institutional failings disrupted, resulting in economic disempowerment and damaging of trust between participants and CCC. At this time, C-AME does not have information on measures undertaken by PAR to guarantee the capital awards to those participants who earned them, nor on the ongoing institutional challenges (or solutions) within CCC.

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[99] La Voz del Cinaruco (November 29, 2011) *Adecofa rechaza intromisión de directivos en la Cámara de Comercio de Arauca.* See: https://lavozdelcinaruco.com/24841-adecofa-rechaza-intromision-de-directivos-en-la-camara-de-comercio-de-arauca#.X2kANGhKiUk.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT IMPLEMENTATION

Gather and systematize learning of the implementing partners in the project cycle. As detailed earlier in this DE, the project implementation cycle showed experiences of learning, which allowed partners to build capacities and develop coordination networks that they have built in the municipalities. Some of these challenges are directly related with the context where projects operate and the vulnerability of participants. In light of these challenges and as an effort to identify and prevent contingencies, as well as to tackle possible impacts that these may have during the development of the project, or on the results of the project, C-AME considers that PAR could gather the lessons learned and present them as possible implementation routes that will allow the implementing partners to achieve the proposed objectives. The following is an example of such lessons:

- *Continue using the provider fair model implemented by CMD in support of beneficiaries' business procurement as a means to create trust around procurement processes*. C-AME observed that implementers faced multiple difficulties trying to implement the procurement procedures given the size of the micro-enterprises and the complexity of the requirements from USAID. C-AME highlights the vendor showcase organized by CMD-Cúcuta as a good practice that can be replicated in other projects of this type. According to CMD-Cúcuta, the vendor showcase was developed as a strategy to promote transparency and trust among beneficiaries, the implementing partner, and vendors. After ensuring compliance with the requirements of the CMD and USAID procurement manuals, CMD invited potential vendors and beneficiaries to mingle, so that, based on the list of requirements for their business, beneficiaries could choose the supplier that best aligned with their needs from a pre-selected pool of eligible vendors. This strategy turned out to be positive because it contributed to strengthen the trust bonds constructed between the implementing partner and the beneficiaries, contributed to the empowerment of the beneficiaries —who had an active role in the procurement procedure and got the equipment they specifically required—and strengthened the communication among all parties involved.

- *Explore the possibilities for mutually beneficial economic and interpersonal skill building activities.* As detailed above, participants from economic skill building activities in all three cities expressed to C-AME that the individual psychological support, spaces for collective reflection, and capacity building workshops for business administration and growth motivated them to participate in the activities, in some cases even more than the incentives of obtaining equipment or materials for their enterprises. Participants from Maicao indicated that the project activities helped them to improve self-confidence and increase their respect for and capacity to listen to others, abilities that will strengthen their businesses. This finding may have broader applications for USAID; while the contribution of these activities to reconciliation is inconsistent (especially with a participant group that largely did not have the same relationship with the Colombian conflict that participants in previous DE-studied activities did), the combination of psycho-social support with economic skills and business building may not be something that USAID typically attempts in the same activity. In particular, USAID might support opportunities for evaluative analysis of questions such

as: *How much more effective might some economic subsistence and entrepreneurship activities be (in terms of income, client base, or overall sustainability) if they incorporated a psychosocial component to help heal trauma or self-doubt that inhibit participant entrepreneurs from realizing their full potential as community members and business owners? And vice versa; could activities focused on social and emotional support benefit from an economic component that offers participants a tangible opportunity to demonstrate their self-efficacy and skills in a way that can potentially change their life circumstances? Is there something specific to the migrant and returnee populations in Colombia that contributed to these activities' successes (and/or failures), or is this something that could have similar effects in other conflict-affected environments?*

Alliances should continue adapting implementation to the vulnerability of participants and fragile contexts.

The influx of Venezuelan migrants to border departments has generated additional pressure on the Colombian government to design policies in response. This situation has also increased social tensions between host populations and those who arrive, as departments where migrants have to stay have poor socio-economic conditions compared to the rest of the country as well as numerous armed actors who control illegal economies and perpetrate violence. This complex context has become the scenario of multiple interventions from various international cooperation agencies that have sought to present solutions, but the social fabric has been affected in such a way by all the challenges described above, that some interventions are seen as helping Venezuelans to the exclusion of the host population, while ignoring the historical problems host populations face.

C-AME's analysis indicates the limited experience of some implementing partners in working with vulnerable and migrant populations affected their management of projects. Indeed, even CMD, which has considerable experience providing humanitarian assistance, and Atnamana, ostensibly familiar with the living conditions of fellow participants, could not avoid some of these pitfalls. In the case of the Chambers of Commerce, these difficulties were reflected in planning, communication, and logistical issues, which translated into delays, hardships for participants, and difficulties in implementation and impacted the progress made on reconciliation drivers. In these cases, PAR should:

- Establish more robust policies and procedures, prior to implementation, to assess whether the implementing partner has experience working with vulnerable populations and is recognized among different groups and organizations as an actor that could establish reconciliation processes in their local context. If not, use these policies and procedures to determine whether additional capacity building from PAR may bridge these gaps, or if the partner would be better suited to implement another intervention type or none at all.

- During the activity design and participant selection phases, work closely with implementing partners (whether experienced or not) to ensure they: implement activities in locations accessible to participants (and consider, irrespective of proximity to participants, covering transportation costs to avoid placing undue hardship on vulnerable populations); adequately communicate to participants the expectations for participation (frequency, location, consequences of missed sessions and options to make up sessions, detailed assignments for activities like budget

preparation, and estimated costs (and/or amounts to be covered by implementers)); and develop communication strategies with each participant to ensure information about the project is received and understood.

- During the implementation process, continue collaborating with implementing partners, mainly those with less experience in working with vulnerable populations, in designing specific strategies that are in line with the type of population they serve and the reconciliation objectives they seek.

Vulnerability issues appeared to be more problematic during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many PAR beneficiaries are selected for participation in PAR activities precisely because of their conditions of vulnerability, which were exacerbated by the coronavirus crisis. For example, those who live in formal and informal settlements with limited access to clean water and sanitation have limited access to hygiene methods that are important to slow the spread of the virus. Social distancing, another recommendation to reduce possible contagion, was a major obstacle for PAR implementations since partners had to devise new strategies to interact with beneficiaries based on telecommunication technologies, which beneficiaries have limited access to. In addition, the mandatory quarantine impacted the PAR funded micro-entrepreneurships; even if they were authorized economic activities, many of these did not have a commercial license or the necessary permits to operate under new COVID-19 restrictions. Although the program and its implementing partners adapted to this emerging condition, C-AME recommends that:

- Considering the relevance of electronic devices in these processes and the vulnerability of the beneficiaries (which implies not having access to them, or not knowing how to handle them), PAR should promote alliances that facilitate beneficiaries' access to institutions that have computer rooms or cellphone operators that facilitate access to equipment, so that the beneficiaries can access the contents that are being disseminated virtually.

- PAR should continue implementing follow up strategies on the progress of the program's implementation that give priority to mechanisms such as face-to-face visits when possible, voice calls, and the use of social networks or e-mails. This considering that the beneficiary populations do not have access to equipment that allows them to check emails frequently, nor the habit of doing so.

- Collaborate with implementing partners like the Chambers of Commerce to leverage their experience to identify viable alternatives for business formalization among vulnerable entrepreneurs (see the following sections for more details).

Alliances implementing economic inclusion activities should take into account participants' context and systemic, multi-dimensional poverty to develop more holistic support strategies.

The different groups that participated in the economic inclusion initiatives in the three cities included in this DE live in conditions of poverty, often work and live in informal settlements, and are located in areas of each city that are excluded from economic development opportunities. The initiatives to improve economic inclusion for Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees, and vulnerable host populations leverage beneficiaries' own micro-enterprises—developed out of necessity—as a means to channel an investment of capital and capacity, but the beneficiaries' precarious living and working conditions require additional efforts and forms of support to guarantee their sustainability. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) highlights that the conditions and characteristics of the context in which emerging businesses are developed can facilitate or hinder their creation.[100] Results from this DE suggest that the main challenges (based on GEM classification) new entrepreneurs face include the following: access to capital; policies, government programs, and tax regulation that limit entrepreneurial capacity; access to entrepreneurship education, infrastructure; ease of market entry; and social and cultural norms regarding entrepreneurship. Although the responsibility of addressing these common unresolved issues is outside of PAR's scope of work, there are strategies that PAR can implement to improve capacity building among participants and implementing partners. For this, PAR needs to continue working in the developing of alliances that allow persons who are undocumented (Venezuelan migrants and some Colombian returnees) and have low income and face socio-economic exclusion from the formal economic sector. Given these challenges, in order to develop economic inclusion through entrepreneurship,[101] C-AME provides the following recommendations to PAR's activity:

- Promote alliances between implementing partners and local, regional, or national institutions that provide technical and administrative assistance to vulnerable entrepreneurs to continue improving entrepreneurial skills. C-AME observed that CCA was already working towards the development of such alliances with the Arauca Regional Entrepreneurship Network, and SENA so that beneficiaries with food businesses could participate in food safety trainings. These alliances can allow beneficiaries to continue accessing technical assistance that would help to maintain and update the participants' entrepreneurial skills.

- Seek to develop alliances with financial entities that offer access to financial services and loans to vulnerable entrepreneurs. This should pair with strategies to increase awareness among the financial sector to adapt requirements and procedures, including outreach communications, to the conditions of vulnerable populations, showing their potential economic benefit. This can help strengthen entrepreneurial skills.

- Collaborate with implementing partners like the Chambers of Commerce to leverage their experience to identify viable alternatives for business formalization among vulnerable entrepreneurs. The example of CCA is useful to illustrate how this partner provided beneficiaries with first-hand information about formalization procedures, which reduced their uncertainty

[100] Global Entrepreneurship Monitor - GEM. (2020). Global Report: 2019-2020. URL: https://www.gemconsortium.org/file/open?fileId=50443
[101] ACNUR, OIM, UNCTAD. (2018). Guía informativa sobre políticas de emprendimiento para personas migrantes y refugiadas. URL: https://www.acnur.org/5d27b4814.pdf.

around this process. This, together with the information on the advantages offered by business formalization for access to opportunities and the provision of services, generated incentives in the beneficiaries to formalize their businesses.

- PAR and implementing partners should continue developing strategies to expand markets by considering additional types of entrepreneurs as beneficiaries and to developing alliances to explore alternative markets and buyers as means to reduce the risk of failure of the microenterprises. PAR can identify partners in the private sector to promote commercial networks to improve market access.

- Develop a support plan for small businesses that, in addition to economic strengthening strategies, includes business formalization. This plan should consider the economic costs of business registration and times to complete these processes. If this plan already exists, PAR could monitor progress. Formalization would allow beneficiaries to have access to government benefits and stimuli to sustain their businesses in times of crisis, like accessing special operation permits, lines of credit, and to strengthen the local and community economy.

- Consider developing a collaborative structure between PAR, implementing partners and the communities to establish community and local networks to contribute to self-sufficiency during critical moments such as those imposed by the COVID-19. An intervention strategy focused on planned community development and based on the exchange of goods and services between different types of beneficiaries can mitigate the negative effect on the self-subsistence of beneficiaries' households, fostering the construction of collective abilities at the community level. These processes could contribute to build community capacities based on dialogue, participatory planning for the solution of day to day issues, empowerment at the neighborhood level, and the permanent exchange of information at a low cost. This not only contributes to improve economic exchange between participants and their communities, but can also strengthen the social fabric.

PAR should consider institutional setting and background when selecting implementing partners.

At the conclusion of DE data collection (August 2020), CCC had not yet delivered the seed capital awards to beneficiaries due to the absence of anyone with the power to authorize these purchases. Although chambers of commerce are private institutions, they oversee public resources[102] and have been shown to be involved in political power struggles for their control.[103] In the case of projects implemented with PAR funding, these instability issues inside the chambers of commerce reflect direct risks to project implementation and results and should motivate PAR to design strategies to vet partner organizations in

[102] In the case of Cúcuta, the chamber of commerce had political power struggles in the past in 2018, with the election of its executive president with political parties tied to the race. See: La Silla Vacía (2018, September 12) *Así arranca la pelea por la Cámara de Comercio de Cúcuta*. See: https://lasillavacia.com/silla-santandereana/asi-arranca-la-pelea-por-la-camara-de-comercio-de-Cúcuta-67923.

[103] In Colombia, chambers of commerce are private institutions that have been assigned public resource management, therefore they are subjects of oversight from state control bodies.

the private sector. Even though the situation is not directly in PAR's control, some strategies prior to implementation could have helped diminish the effects of administrative vacuums like the one the CCC project is facing.

- For activities in which an implementing partner will be responsible for purchases and/or awards of funds or materials, PAR should ensure a contingency plan is available so that participants receive the investments they have earned in the event the partner is unable to provide these.

PAR can improve permanent and systematic support to project implementers.

C-AME has identified some difficulties, like knowledge and capacity to use procurement procedures and lack of knowledge of safety protocols among some implementers that could be addressed with support and guidelines from PAR to the implementing partner.

- *Some implementing partners had difficulties adapting to and using USAID procurement procedures*. The Chambers of Commerce had difficulties understanding and implementing the parameters for purchases that would be allowable by USAID, in that they struggled to identify the type and uses of equipment that can be procured with these resources and to find matches between these and the needs of participants. According to the CCC, getting these documents translated was time-consuming, which ultimately led to delays in implementation. Considering that these types of projects will continue to be a strategy for PAR implementations, PAR could:
    1) Inform implementing partners about standardized procurement requirements in Spanish, to ease the process for local staff and avoid misinterpretations. PAR could develop workshop materials and use examples to deliver this information to the partners, in which they can resolve doubts about requirements and documentation needed to support purchases.
    2) Promote spaces for dialogue between different implementing partners of these type of projects, so that they can exchange their experiences during procurement procedures, sharing challenges and lessons learned during implementation.

- *Some implementing partners are unaware of USAID safety protocols.* Considering the complex security conditions where implementations took place and taking into account that the implementing partner is seen as an "outsider" by the communities that live in these areas, C-AME recommends that PAR share with implementing partners existing security protocols, or design protocols in case these do not exist, and make sure that the implementing partners know and adopt preventive measures consistent with the risks found in municipalities where implementation takes place. NF, which implements activities in Maicao and Cúcuta, but is based in Bogotá, told C-AME that they are unsure of PAR's security protocols. In both cities, safety is a concern for locals, as well as for implementers of development projects such as the NF staff. Although NF is aware of the security concerns, and during implementation, they never felt threatened by situations of this type, when asked about safety protocols they expressed not being aware of specific PAR established protocols in cases when personal safety was at stake. This is especially important for implementing partners who lack experience in the specific contexts where

they will be implementing activities, or whose organizations do not have their own safety and security oversight policies and procedures.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT ACHIEVEMENT OF PAR RESULTS

Ensure project implementation contributes to the improvement of the social fabric.

In the cases of implementations led by CMD, C-AME observed that the implementers heavily relied on local leaders to identify the potential and actual project beneficiaries. This has some advantages such as the identification of a critical source of information about the populations that the project expects to work with, which provides a better understanding of their capacities, challenges, and existing opportunities, while also contributing to the recognition and strengthening of these individuals' leadership. However, C-AME also observed that in the case of CMD-Arauca, relying on local leaders presented potential risks to their leadership roles at the community level because assigning them the responsibility in the participant selection put them in an uncomfortable position with those individuals who were not selected. Some leaders C-AME interviewed reported that those who had not been selected complained and became upset with them. This is an issue that implementers have to face, in fact, in the last conversation C-AME had with CMD Arauca on July 6, 2020, CMD-Arauca was designing a strategy to strengthen their connection with local leaders, seeking to guarantee sustainability of the process. In the case of CMD-Maicao, one project participant reported to C-AME that because she is Wayuu, communities relied on her to become a focal point of community complaints regarding the project while also demanding explanations from her about those who were not selected as project participants.

The situations described above that occurred in Arauca and Maicao can be common in communities that have high levels of vulnerability because the anticipation of development or aid projects creates a set of expectations among vulnerable participants about the possibility of accessing resources that can improve their quality of life. However, when resources are limited and only few can access these, this has the potential to increase social tensions between community members that affects the capacity of programs like PAR to rebuild the social fabric in these communities. By enabling situations in which local leaders become mediators or focal points between communities and the implementer, vulnerable individuals are likely to talk with the ones who they feel closer to (i.e. the leaders), to communicate their complaints, annoyance, discomfort, and dissatisfaction. Leaders, by not having direct decision-making capacity over project activities, have a limited ability to respond community demands and therefore, their leadership role could be questioned and diminish their ability to seek community-level consensus. Given the persistent conditions of vulnerability in communities where PAR intervenes, it is PAR's responsibility to provide ongoing support to the implementing partner, in the process of identifying target populations. For this PAR can:

- Collaborate with implementing partners to determine the selection criteria that the target population must meet to be part of the project, as well as guidelines that inform communities

about these conditions. For this, PAR can create protocols per implementing partner type, as well as demographic group type that can be used as a toolkit to create the specific project requirements for participation.

- Because of the potential risks of development and aid projects deepening the existing social tensions in vulnerable communities, PAR should develop a learning agenda between PAR and its implementing partners to ensure their interventions are contributing to improve conditions for reconciliation at the community level by helping to rebuild the social fabric of these communities, rather than deepening social tensions.

    - As part of the learning agenda PAR can develop a multi-faceted communication strategy to inform communities about PAR and the potential direct and indirect effects (positive externalities) of their interventions in each community. PAR can leverage territorial/program level activities to better communicate with communities that are not direct beneficiaries, but perceive PAR presence in their territories (as project-level interventions have a limited scope). PAR should have a more effective communication strategy that manages to show the benefits of its intervention to a broader community, including where beneficiaries live, to tackle misconceptions and negative narratives that could arise from the intervention.

Improve cross-cutting strategies of the gender approach, ensuring that they are effectively implemented throughout the program cycle.

C-AME observed in beneficiaries' narratives the presence of discriminatory imaginaries about women and LGTBI persons, and struggles with vocabulary for the latter, despite the fact that most of the implementing partners claimed to have implemented the GSI workshops. When asked about the timing of the GSI transfer from PAR to them, most of the implementing partners stated that it was done at the beginning of the intervention, but then there were no more workshops on this topic. These discontinuities in the GSI implementation, and the limited capacity of implementers to integrate a cross-cutting gender focus in specific project components, has made it very difficult to apply the gender approach throughout the project cycle in a way that generates measurable results. On some occasions, the inclusion of gender issues has been limited to the nominal inclusion of women and LGTBI persons in activities or to raising awareness about gender inequality (issues that are not minor or insignificant), but has not included intentional strategies to connect the gender issue and the specific activity component, with an objective to overcome or prevent gender inequalities and gender-based violence. C-AME believes that the limited partner experience with including a gender focus in their activities and/or the lack of proper guidance from PAR have limited program capacity to fully integrate a cross-cutting gender approach at the implementation level, beyond the use of the GSI workshops. Based on this situation C-AME recommends that PAR:

- In the planning stages of each activity, **work with the partners to design specific strategies to reduce gender gaps that can be combined with focus areas of each initiative**, so that the intervention is as comprehensive as possible and promotes learning based on the beneficiaries' daily lives. For example, if the project is focused on economic empowerment, this might

include learning sessions about equitable distribution of income and workload between men and women, issues of economic discrimination of LGBTI persons, and avoiding the spread of traditional gender norms in project activities and narratives. PAR could also consider working with implementers to conduct a diagnosis of gender inequalities in the targeted municipalities, whose particularities are included in the design of the initiatives. This strategy could add a greater degree of meaning for the beneficiaries in the implementation of the gender approach.

- **Ensure that implementers have the capacity to address the issues of sexual and gender diversity in an explicit and systematic manner** to improve the sensitivity and effectiveness of their work with beneficiaries. C-AME considers that greater knowledge about the issues that LGBTI persons face to access their rights and equal opportunities is a fundamental step towards the reduction of inequality and discrimination. For this, PAR could design complementary gender and sexual diversity activities to accompany the existing ones with the purpose of giving greater visibility to the issue of diversity, eliminating prejudices, negative stereotypes and ideas that support discriminatory practices.

- **Monitor and maintain a close dialogue with the implementing partners for the implementation of the GSI** along the intervention chain and for each project implementation. To ensure this, PAR can collaborate with the implementing partner to select—and modify as needed—the most appropriate GSI workshops, as well as the design of a gender learning agenda for each activity. This would allow PAR to track implementation and results as partners carry out specific gender-empowerment and awareness strategies. This means greater involvement of implementing partners in the conversations and skill building around GSI or other complementary activities, and an active role in planning activities aimed at reducing gender gaps, depending on the specific component of each initiative.

- **Generate or take advantage of existing spaces** to prevent or attend to cases of gender-based violence that may affect the beneficiaries. C-AME is aware that PAR has allies—such as the Sergio Urrego Foundation—that can contribute to the design of new approaches, or to the socialization of existing ones among partners and beneficiaries, that would help beneficiaries deal with and perhaps prevent such violence. PAR could take advantage of these alliances, or build others, to further advance this objective.

- PAR can also **build upon the communication adaptations** they and implementing partners made during COVID-19 to update the socialization (i.e. via online modules and interactive activities) of GSI to beneficiaries throughout the whole project cycle, thus minimizing costs while also introducing creative and meaningful communication strategies to improve awareness of gender-related issues and diversity.

Ensure that, when working with ethnic minority communities, implementation design is differential.

Although partners such as NF and CMD claim to have experience working with diverse cultures, C-AME perceived their limited knowledge of the indigenous cultural practices of the Wayuu project participants living in Maicao. This was most evident in the situation in which staff from NF demonstrated lack of knowledge about cultural practices associated with birth among Wayuu communities, while using their own cultural canons to capture information about the beneficiaries, instead of adapting their capture protocols to this reality. Similarly, in a dialogue with CMD staff, C-AME perceived that this implementing partner interpreted the body language and emotional response of the Wayuu indigenous participants according to their expectations and experience in "Western" cultures, and that this interpretation resulted in the implementer seeing the participants as incapable of participating effectively in DecidoSer activities. This is an issue that could have been managed if staff from the implementers had better knowledge of PAR differential approach before implementing an activity with participants from indigenous communities. Accordingly, C-AME suggests PAR:

- Ensure that implementers who have targeted ethnic communities for their projects know and make best possible use of DecidoSer modules designed to work with these groups. The transfer of these parts of the DecidoSer toolkit has to happen before, or in early stages of, the implementation. This would allow for greater awareness of cultural diversity issues and result in a more horizontal relationship between the partner and the beneficiaries. As a result of this, implementers may decide whether or not they need to hire staff that are from these communities or are quite familiar with their cultural practices.

- Design additional (to the ones available in the DecidoSer toolkit) training modules aimed exclusively at those implementers that target members of minority ethnic communities, that provide specific guidelines for the treatment and appreciation of cultural diversity. These could include, among others, training processes and exchange of experiences between implementing partners with similar or complementary profiles, formulation of care strategies and construction of instruments for capturing demographic information, which respond to the cultural reality of the communities.

- PAR should consider designing data collection tools that reflect the cultural context of implementation. One strategy could be to update the Pre-Intervention Survey to reflect cultural backgrounds, or through more detailed municipal context analysis briefers. The combination of these forms of data before the beginning of implementation can better inform partners of the features that are relevant for the development of the interventions. The identification of relevant and pertinent contextual elements could also contribute to the assessment of the time required for the activities to generate consistent and sustainable scopes of work given the available timeframes.

- Help implementers to clarify the scope of the Reconciliation Focus of implementations.

As detailed in the body of this DE, some implementing partners have difficulty understanding what reconciliation entails and as a result, they structured implementation around their own ideas of it, in

ways that better fit their experience. This sometimes creates an imbalance regarding the reconciliation expected outcomes. For instance, many participants have a limited view of reconciliation as the differentiating factor in the projects in which they were involved; rather, they perceive that individual and interpersonal reconciliation abilities are means to economic gain. While participants not knowing they are involved in a project for reconciliation may not necessarily represent a failure of the activity to promote or adequately describe reconciliation, a lack of clarity around PAR's reconciliation goals limits the partners' capacity to ensure that reconciliation is the differentiating factor of their projects and limits the ability of participants to conceive of themselves as agents in social change processes that it. C-AME found evidence that some implementing partners had more clarity than others about the coordination that must exist between the RA and the goals of the initiatives they carried out. Generally, C-AME observed that each partner uses DecidoSer to fulfill their own organizational needs, whether those have a reconciliation focus or not, as if using DecidoSer necessarily imbued their project with a Reconciliation Focus, whereas for most of the activities examined here, this was not the case. In previous documents delivered to USAID, C-AME has reflected on the tautological challenge PAR faces when activities produce positive economic and social change, but absent a connection between these and their contribution to reconciliation, these are necessary, but insufficient, conditions to bring about reconciliation. Evidence from this and former DEs indicates there are issues that PAR needs to continue addressing in order to ensure implementation maintains a reconciliation focus, including:

Limited understanding of what reconciliation entails among implementing partners.
The CMD implementers in Cúcuta and Arauca faced issues operationalizing the concept of reconciliation during implementation. Although they stated they understand PAR's goals, they expressed having limited knowledge of what is the Program's understanding of reconciliation and ended up adopting their own definition of reconciliation. Ultimately, for example, both Chambers of Commerce used their specific knowledge to build participants' entrepreneurial skills in an activity wherein the PAR reconciliation approach was a secondary tool to develop individual and interpersonal soft skills among participants.

Implementers use DecidoSer according to their organizational goals. For PAR's activities to deliver their goal, all transformative alliances must implement the RA at least once on at least one level of the implementation chain. PAR works with partners to transfer the tools available in the RA (DecidoSer and GSI methodologies) to their staff, so they can implement it with project beneficiaries. From the cases studied by C-AME in this DE, each implementing partner decides how to use the DecidoSer and GSI tools available in the RA. C-AME has also observed that each partner determines project level goals using the RA tools to achieve project ends, whether these goals have a reconciliation focus or not. In the cases studied for this DE, C-AME observed implementing partners with varying ideas of what the RA is and its role within implementation. In the case of CMD, the DecidoSer toolkit consists of guidelines that complement its strategies to address the psychosocial support needs of their beneficiaries. The Chambers of Commerce either developed an alliance with a third party to implement DecidoSer (Cúcuta) or hired personnel to implement it; in both cases DecidoSer was used as a tool to develop soft skills among participants to strengthen their business endeavors. In the case of Atnamana, there was a direct intervention by PAR in hiring a psychosocial support professional that aided the implementation of the RA during implementation. For staff from NF,

the RA was a baseline to design their activities. Most partners highlighted that the experiential aspect of DecidoSer helped them to achieve project outcomes, however, not all partners consider that the development of reconciliation abilities is the main goal of their projects. This variety of uses of DecidoSer, along with the secondary role of reconciliation abilities at the project level, limit the projects' potential to transform individual attitudes, behaviors, and interactions towards reconciliation in a system that requires broader actions for societal change to strengthen it.

Limited reconciliation focus affected results. Activities that were designed to deliver economic objectives first and reconciliation second tended not to convey to participants the importance of reconciliation, the messaging around individuals' roles and responsibilities in supporting reconciliation, nor the reconciliation drivers sought in PAR's alliances. In some activities, participants managed to attain outcomes in trust and empowerment that were supportive of reconciliation broadly, but not specifically. Further, while it is not possible to conclude whether a stronger reconciliation focus in activities would have prevented this, in some instances (as with the Chambers of Commerce and Atnamana), implementer decisions and behavior effectively undermined progress towards reconciliation by eroding trust and disempowering participants, or contributing to, rather than alleviating, their socioeconomic precariousness (i.e. requiring them to pay for transport they could not afford to attend activities, or promising and then failing to deliver seed capital investments). In this context, CMD stands out as a positive example of an appropriately experienced implementer with an approach that was more easily adapted to align with DecidoSer and more attuned to participants' needs and abilities.

In order to address the issues described above, C-AME recommends PAR continue to strengthen work with implementing partners on the Reconciliation Approach and ensure its use throughout the implementation, particularly in messaging and activities with beneficiaries that, if successful, can contribute to reconciliation. Overall, maintain the emphasis on reconciliation so that the "differentiating factor" of the initiatives remains. For this PAR could:

- Since PAR considers problematic to use a definition of reconciliation as guiding principle of its activity, they can map how implementers understand reconciliation, and how they use these definitions to outline implementation. This would help PAR to grasp whether or not implementers have clarity on the program goal regarding reconciliation, if they are actually implementing it, and enable spaces for dialogue to discuss different concepts of reconciliation, the agents involved, and their respective roles within the process. The latter would allow PAR to capture partners and beneficiaries' understanding of reconciliation and the agents engaged in it.

- PAR could design collaborative learning activities that allow implementers understand PAR results framework and Theory of Change, and the crosscutting role of the Reconciliation Approach in its activities. This would help partners to outline their implementation path under a reconciliation focus as the differentiating factor of PAR funded initiatives.

- Given the different types of achievements in terms of reconciliation, PAR should foster spaces for discussion with its implementing partners to receive and provide feedback on what are (if any)

the potential elements that are preventing partners from having a reconciliation focus into their activities with PAR beneficiaries. Such a conversation may provide useful feedback to ensure that the reconciliatory component is the centerpiece and cornerstone of each intervention.

- Continue implementing and constantly updating follow-up mechanisms that allow PAR and implementing partners to track individual changes regarding reconciliation abilities, family level changes, and community level effects of the use of the RA in implementation.

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DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION REPORT
(FIFTH ITERATION)

COMPLEXITY – AWARE MONITORING AND EVALUATION

ANNEX II - EVALUATED PROJECT CASE STUDIES

JANUARY 2021

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ANNEX 2: EVALUATED PROJECT CASE STUDIES

CORPORACIÓN MINUTO DE DIOS - ARAUCA (ARAUCA)

INITIATIVE FOR ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND RECONCILIATION "INTEGRATING OURSELVES WE CONSTRUCT A FUTURE IN ARAUCA"

Title	*Propuesta de integración económica y reconciliación "Integración Construimos Futuro en Arauca"* (In English, Initiative for Economic Integration and Reconciliation "Integrating ourselves we construct a future in Arauca")
Implementing partner	Corporación El Minuto de Dios (CMD)
Participants/ Beneficiaries	Displaced persons, youth, and victims of the conflict. Additionally, the project profile mentions the participation of migrants, returnees, and host populations.
Implementation period	July 15, 2019 – June 30, 2020
PAR Code	PAR-03-157

The proposal for economic integration and reconciliation "Integration We Construct a Future in Arauca" is a project implemented by Corporación Minuto de Dios (CMD) in the municipality of Arauca, capital city of the eponymous department. The project sought to, "participatorily construct initiatives for social integration and reconciliation for 100 Venezuelan and Colombian returnee participants and their families."[1] The project was designed with three components: 1) physical and mental health, with the purpose of providing participants with tools to manage emotions, and with spaces for dialogue that promotes social inclusion; 2) economic inclusion, with the objective of strengthening participants' economic options through training and awarding economic incentives (seed capital in the form of resources and equipment); and 3) constructing social capital through community awareness and mobilization initiatives that support community integration, repairing the social fabric, and the appropriation of the cultural regional identity. The project was carried out in the *Brisas del Puente* informal settlement[2] (on the boardwalk of the city) and in the El Refugio settlement, and it closed in June 2020.

ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECT SPECIFIC COMPONENT: SOCIOECONOMIC INCLUSION

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

The project activities and training workshops strengthened participant management skills and formalized their training as business owners, improving their empowerment.

- Participants reported that their participation in the project strengthened their enterprises and improved their skills for administrating and managing them. In the project workshops and activities,

[1] PAR. (2019). Project profile: PAR-03-157

[2] The establishment of various families or communities in informal dwellings is known as a settlement. Generally, they are in zones with high vulnerability and precarious living conditions. UN Habitat. (2003). The challenge of slums: global report on human settlements. URL: https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/Challenge%20of%20Slums.pdf

beneficiaries acquired and/or honed skills for carrying out: business budgeting (accounts receivable and payable, expenses, production costs); analysis of prices and product quality; personnel administration; client relations; and more. Participants said this learning caused them to be more conscious of the importance of establishing savings goals. Using this learning, they are managing their spending and, thanks to their savings, some have been able to acquire necessary resources for their businesses.

- For the participants, the pedagogy and methodology with which the workshops were designed and carried out were a central element that contributed positively to their learning, primarily (though not exclusively) due to covering administrative and commercial topics. Participants signaled that the resourcefulness and versatility of the facilitators in explaining the contents enabled them to learn better and apply this learning. The implementing partner states that the learning participants acquired in this component allowed beneficiaries to adapt their business costs so that each business could arrive at a breakeven point. The partner reports that some beneficiaries could not quantify their production costs and, by applying what they learned through the project, they were able to make the necessary adjustments.
- In the same way, participants report that the equipment they received as seed capital from the project has helped them improve productivity and working conditions of their businesses.
- Finally, participants reported that the project allowed them to establish commercial relationships with each other and processes for connecting their businesses. Commercial relationships helped beneficiaries obtain personal (such as food and clothing) and business necessities (providing inputs for some part of their supply chain).

Connection and support of local leadership. Before starting this initiative, the implementing partner did not have a presence in Arauca. As a connection strategy, the partner identified and worked with community leaders from the zones in which the intervention took place, which allowed them to assure compliance with the proposed scope and to stay connected to beneficiaries. These leaders provided critical information about the target population for the project (i.e. furnishing the partner with lists of possible beneficiaries and helping revise them to verify who met the required participation criteria), which contributed to legitimize the beneficiary selection process. The partner's strategy to involve leaders in the call for and analysis and selection of beneficiaries led to recognition and strengthening of these individuals' leadership. Further, these leaders' participation in the project as beneficiaries also allowed them to be trained. Nevertheless, this strategy was considered by some beneficiaries C-AME interviewed as an area for improvement, as assigning community leaders the responsibility to influence the decision process about the participant selection ended up putting them in an uncomfortable position with those individuals who were not selected. Some leaders C-AME interviewed reported that those who had not been selected complained and became upset with them. In the last conversation C-AME had with CMD Arauca on July 6, 2020, CMD was designing a strategy to strengthen their connection with local leaders, seeking to guarantee sustainability of the process.

II. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Not all participants reported that their businesses are profitable. While some beneficiaries reported to C-AME that the income generated by their businesses is sufficient to cover their costs (raw materials, services, rent, employees, etc.) and cover their subsistence, others explained that the income accrued through their businesses was insufficient to survive, and consequently, they had to find additional

sources of income. C-AME highlights the importance of establishing mechanisms for close monitoring of participant enterprises, especially those that do not generate sufficient income for their owners, owing to the fact that this constitutes a challenge to the sustainability of the project and the investment made.

RECONCILIATION

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

Methodological alignment between CMD and DecidoSer. The mental and emotional health workshops of the project were carried out with a combination of CMD's own methodology and DecidoSer. The partner considers that the methodological transfer of DecidoSer from PAR allowed them to strengthen their work in the region. According to CMD, the project worked with participants on their life stories with the goal of enabling them to recognize themselves and others as equals in rights and abilities and to motivate personal and collective transformations. This contributed to participants recognizing themselves as social change agents possible of seeking better personal and collective wellbeing.

The psychosocial support activities helped beneficiaries improve their expression and management of emotions, contributing to their obtaining abilities like empowerment and trust. Beneficiaries explained to C-AME that, due to their participation in the project, they can identify positive transformations in behavior, and they consider that the project activities inspired their self-confidence, self-esteem, and empowerment. Some beneficiaries commented that they felt more secure with themselves, which had allowed them to improve their recognition on the part of their peers in the communities where they live. For CMD, the psycho-emotional workshops carried out under the project allowed participants to self-identify as subjects situated in a context, subjects with the ability to do things to transform their reality and that of the environment in which they live. Both CMD and participants agree that these transformations were achieved thanks to the spaces for respectful and "brotherly" dialogue, and the establishment of close ties and relationships of trust based on empathy, which enabled participants to own and apply the reflections they made during the project in their daily lives. Reflections included the following examples:

- **Dialogue and listening spaces let participants forge relationships of empathy and mutual recognition.** Project activities allowed some participants to process painful memories, which contributed to the construction of relationships based on mutual recognition of one's bias and that of others. According to CMD, while the process of emotional opening up was difficult at first, the connection and closeness constructed in the workshops facilitated the creation of a safe space for dialogue in which listening to others describe their situations of vulnerability and understanding them as a common experience allowed participants to recognize themselves as equal members of a community. For those beneficiaries, participating in these spaces helped them overcome emotional responses to moments of pain. Participants felt that they could calmly express emotions that they had repressed and, as such, unburden themselves in confidence; they reported feeling supported, motivated, and strengthened during the activities.
- **The establishment of friendships and trust between both the members of the CMD team and the participants, and between the participants themselves, allowed beneficiaries to overcome barriers** like fear and shame to tell their stories. Hearing the stories of others generated closeness and empathy. Participants explained that hearing from others who had experienced similar difficult situations to their own helped them to identify their factors of resilience for overcoming possible adversities, both on a personal level and in their business endeavors. Bonds of trust and closeness

transcended the project and led to the development of personal and commercial relationships between participants and, in some cases, between participants and members of the CMD team. The implementing partner considered that the construction of these relationships allowed participants—primarily, though not exclusively, migrants—to let go of repressed emotions and process feelings of alienation and disconnection in their new environments. This process in turn promoted migrants' self-knowledge and facilitated their adaptation to the new realities in which they lived, enabling their integration with each other and in their communities.

- **Learning from project activities had an impact on the personal and family lives of participants.** Participants reported that what they had learned in the activities improved their personal and family relationships. According to their stories, in the project activities they learned to listen and to converse without hurting or judging others. Applying this in their daily lives allowed them to strengthen and improve relationships, deepen conversation, and avoid arguments.

The activity for constructing social capital (the largest hammock in the world) promoted the ownership of elements of collective identity. The project sought to construct social capital through a collaborative effort to construct an enormous *chinchorro*.[3] According to CMD, this activity would, through communal weaving, support the construction and strengthening of the social fabric in in communities, giving visibility to the region and contributing to the identification and ownership of a cultural identity connected to the "plainspeople", that would unite participants, transcending the differences of their origins or nationalities. The construction of the hammock took several months, during which the beneficiaries met to weave together. Consequently, the hammock became—according to beneficiaries—a symbol of the union between them and the representation of their progress through the project.

II. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Limited awareness of participants of the reconciliation component of the project. As was mentioned earlier, while the implementer described a connection between the objectives and the achievements of the project with the construction of reconciliation processes, this connection was not evident in the testimonies of beneficiaries. For CMD, the activities allowed participants to recognize themselves as agents of individual and collective change and as part of a community seeking conditions of wellbeing. However, while the majority of beneficiaries C-AME conversed with see the impact and positive transformation motivated by the project in their personal lives (whether on an individual basis or for their businesses or families), none of them recognized these transformations as potential reconciliation abilities.

According to C-AME observations, the partner based their implementation of the activities on the principles of PAR and the project worked on the drivers of reconciliation, conveying what was proposed through methodological tools of their own and that they received from PAR, however, CMD had difficulty operationalizing reconciliation and transferring this concept to beneficiaries. C-AME witnessed in participant narratives that they place great importance on the psychosocial component of the project and praise its results, but they do not autonomously (that is, without being directly and explicitly asked about it) recognize these abilities as reconciliatory. In other words, participants were able to describe the personal benefits of their participation in the project, but did not generally associate these with reconciliation.

[3] *Chinchorro* is an artisanal hammock made of woven fibers.

GENDER, SOCIAL INCLUSION, AND MIGRATION

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

The project promoted integration between migrants and host populations, promoting recognition and elimination of some stereotypes and negative imaginaries. CMD points out that some activities allowed for better integration between populations, such as the following examples: the existence of spaces in which migrants expressed situations of violence and discrimination that they had suffered, to which the Colombian participants responded with empathy and expressed their solidarity; the exercise recognizing pejorative and derogatory words about migrants; and activities that allowed Venezuelans to affirm their cultural identity, demonstrating what makes them equal and making possible their empowerment through taking ownership of the territory they occupy. Beneficiaries agreed that having the possibility to share meeting spaces to exchange points of view and emotions without being judged eased integration.

Participation and integration of diverse population groups. In addition to migrant and returnee populations, fourteen individuals from the Inga indigenous community participated in the project. CMD made sure the project stayed constantly connected with the indigenous governor, who also participated in the project. According to the implementer, to facilitate this communication, CMD presented the activities they planned to carry out to the governor, so that he, as an authority, approved their implementation with his community. In case any suggestion for modification of the activities arose from the indigenous community, the partner carried out the respective adaptation so that the intervention was in line with the focus of the community. Beneficiaries C-AME interviewed reported that the participation of the indigenous community in the project was positive and very enriching; for them to share with others among this diversity allowed them to understand other realities and cultures. C-AME tried to get in touch with the Inga governor to understand his perceptions of the project, but given the emergency measure decreed to contain the COVDI-19 pandemic, and due to the difficulties with communication and connectivity in the region, it was impossible.

Design of strategies that facilitated the participation of women heads of household in project activities. With the objective of promoting and facilitating participation of women heads of household, the project connected with Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia so that teaching professionals could carry out fun activities with the small children while their mothers attended the activity workshops. This strategy, which stemmed from a recognition of the unequal division of childcare labor that falls on women, was intended to provide an option for women who did not have a trusted person to care for their children and for whom this would have prevented their participation.

II. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Disconnection of the GSI strategy. PAR implemented an additional activity in Arauca (for all of its initiatives, not just for the CMD-led activity there specifically) to address issues related to discrimination and gender-based violence through its GSI strategy. However, the information C-AME collected does not indicate a connection between the gender activities carried out by PAR and the CMD project activities. This disconnect is evident, for example, in the low levels of recall among participants of this GSI-focused activity and its contents. This trend, which was repeated in the other interventions analyzed, indicates a lack of constant, systematic, and comprehensive implementation of the gender strategy in the evaluated projects.

According to the partner, during project activities, they promoted equality and recognition of the diversity of the "other" as a subject with equal rights. While the majority of participants C-AME spoke with recognize the existence of situations of discrimination and mistreatment of women and LGBTI communities, in their testimonies, C-AME heard persistent gender stereotypes, principally concerned with gendered roles and the tasks of caretaking, not only for children, but for all activities and members of the household.

SUSTAINABILITY

The most significant achievement of this project is its comprehensive development of three outlined components: physical and mental health, economic inclusion, and construction of social capital. The combined efforts undertaken by the partner allowed for significant advances in the psycho-emotional realm of participants, in the strengthening of their businesses, and in the construction of community links. As a result, participants have a very positive perception of the project and of the implementing partner. Beneficiaries explained to C-AME that they felt satisfied with their participation in the project and they consider that the project met its objectives and met their expectations. Beneficiaries appeared more empowered and confident in their abilities. The main challenge is the profitability of some participants' businesses. Constructing a solid strategy for follow-up, designing strategies for marketing, and strengthening business networks could contribute to making the existing investment more sustainable.

CORPORACIÓN MINUTO DE DIOS - CÚCUTA (NORTE DE SANTANDER)

INTEGRATING OURSELVES, WE CONSTRUCT OUR FUTURE: STRATEGY FOR RECONCILIATION AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN CÚCUTA

Title	*Integrándonos construimos futuro, estrategia de reconciliación e integración económica en Cúcuta.* (In English, Integrating ourselves, we construct our future: Strategy for reconciliation and economic integration in Cúcuta)
Implementing partner	Corporación El Minuto de Dios (CMD)
Participants/ Beneficiaries	Displaced persons, conflict victims, youth, LGBTI individuals. Additionally, the project profile mentions migrant, returnee, and host populations.
Implementation period	May 15, 2019 – June 30, 2020
PAR Code	PAR-03-149

This project was implemented in neighborhood 8 of Cúcuta, Norte de Santander department where partner organization Corporación Minuto de Dios[4] (CMD) has its *Centro de Desarrollo Integral.*[5] The project targets vulnerable populations such as displaced persons, victims of the conflict, youth, LGBTI individuals, Venezuelan migrants, and Colombian returnees. The objective of the project is to, "participatorily construct initiatives for social integration and reconciliation for 150 Venezuelan and Colombian returnee participants and their families."[6] The project was designed with three components: 1) psychosocial support to individuals and groups to improve participant awareness, identification, and management of emotions; 2) development of stabilizing economic alternatives and empowerment through business strengthening and formal job placement; and 3) constructing social capital by identifying issues to address with community initiatives. The project provided seed capital (both materials and equipment) to strengthen 135 small or micro-enterprises during February and March despite the state of emergency declared in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, the project proposed job placement for 15 candidates, of which 13 were ultimately hired. Initially, the project was set to close at the end of February 2020, but this was extended to June 30.

ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECT SPECIFIC COMPONENT: SOCIOECONOMIC INCLUSION

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

Integration between components and the project focus. The structure and implementation of the project allowed for coordination between the psychosocial aspects promoting the wellbeing of participants and the technical aspects strengthening their economic initiatives. The project provided beneficiaries with psycho-emotional tools to strengthen their emotional management, and technical tools to generate economic alternatives to meet their needs. Considering that the beneficiaries represent vulnerable populations—participants were largely migrants, returnees, or displaced persons—the hybrid approach allowed for an important process of reflection on both emotional and mental health

[4] Minute of God Corporation
[5] Comprehensive Development Center
[6] PAR. (2019). Project profile: PAR-03-149

and on their livelihoods. The implementing partner explained that the design and combination of these activities resulted in participants recognizing their capacities, generating among them changes in attitude and perspective. According to the participants, the design and sequencing of these activities (first working on psycho-emotional tasks, followed by technical) allowed them to confront complex emotional and psychological issues that would have negatively affected their endeavors. The participants expressed to C-AME that the individual psychological support, spaces for collective reflection, and capacity building workshops for business administration and growth motivated them to participate in the activities even more than the incentives of obtaining equipment or materials for their enterprises.

The implementing partner's experience enabled the project to adapt during implementation and ensure sustainability of some results. The project was strengthened by CMD's experience in: community work; work with vulnerable populations; support to migrant populations and humanitarian assistance; and their existing ties to the community and the beneficiary population. CMD used its network of alliances in the region to strengthen project implementation and leveraged its track record in working with vulnerable populations to make connections with other entities and programs in the area that resulted in comprehensive opportunities for participants. Some examples of positive strategies C-AME identified were:

- To strengthen the job placement component, CMD used its jobs website to improve visibility of applicant profiles and promote beneficiaries' entry into the workforce. CMD also promoted employment opportunities through their partners and through these were able to maintain better oversight over the hiring process.
- To incentivize beneficiaries and their families to participate, CMD supported participants to connect with other programs and services that their Development Center offers. This connection not only generated close ties and trust between the partner and beneficiaries, but it also facilitated beneficiaries' attendance at activities. For example, the Development Center made its game room and other recreation spaces available for small children while their parents participated in project workshops.
- To expand the reach of the project, the partner prioritized raising awareness in the neighborhood and highlighted the work carried out in partnership with community leaders and Community Action Committees.
- As a strategy to strengthen beneficiary trust in the transparency of procurement processes for the resources and equipment provided to them as seed capital, CMD held a vendor fair. After meeting selection criteria, vendors at the fair promoted their goods and services and were able to dialogue directly with beneficiaries, enabling participants to collect the necessary information to make purchase decisions according to their needs, budgets, and business plans. For CMD, this fair is seen as a strategy for consolidating trust through clear communication with participants about their procurement processes.
- Although C-AME carried out some fieldwork in Cúcuta prior to the declaration of the COVID-19 health emergency, the team also conducted virtual interviews, in which the implementing partner's handling of this crisis and the challenges it created for implementation and project close stood out. CMD's experience and their partner network facilitated the generation of adaptation and mitigation strategies appropriate for the situation.

CMD structured workshop contents and schedule according to participant needs and availability. The CMD team followed up systematically with beneficiaries who missed workshops, establishing weekly communications with them to understand the reasons or circumstances behind their absences and to propose realistic alternative timing or accommodations to enable them to attend. This exercise allowed for the constant adjustment of workshop schedules and placement of participants that resulted, at the end of the project, in all 135 beneficiaries fulfilling the requirements to access seed capital. According to the participants, the possibility of flexible hours and coordination with the team at CMD allowed them to adapt their schedules and ensure their participation.

Levels of participant empowerment and trust increased because of their participation in the project's economic inclusion processes. Both the implementing partner and beneficiaries reported an increase in participant empowerment, and beneficiaries reported to C-AME that the workshops were useful to them for learning to manage their business better, carry out accounting (i.e. manage accounts receivable and payable, expenses, overhead), set prices, and establish savings goals, among other skills. Some participants noted that they had been experiencing losses in their businesses and that, as a result of their participation in the project, were able to make necessary adjustments. Others reported that, thanks to their savings, they were able to acquire materials they needed for business. Beneficiaries believed that the improvement in their businesses allows them to work and earn money for themselves, enabling them to envision an independent future for themselves.

II. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Some beneficiaries were discouraged and abandoned the job placement component. This component of the project sought to strengthen soft and technical skills of 15 beneficiaries to promote their employability. According to the implementing partner, this part of the project was affected when some beneficiaries stopped participating due to their disappointment with not finding employment immediately, being unwilling to allow enough time for results to materialize or to participate in project activities. Given their experience working with vulnerable populations, during the participant selection process CMD did foresee the possibility of some beneficiary attrition, and enrolled extra participants at project outset. However, the participant dropout problem reveals some failures in the process of communicating project requirements to potential beneficiaries. Considering the vulnerability of the target population and their difficulties accessing job opportunities, it is important to establish clear communication and manage beneficiary expectations.

RECONCILIATION

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

The project approach to psycho-emotional support allowed beneficiaries to deal with the pain of grief and make progress in reconciliation. The inclusion of strategies for addressing grief—for instance, conceptualizing the feelings of loss and suffering that migrants experience as process of *migratory grief*—through activities and experiential workshops enabled beneficiaries to identify their feelings and generate empathy for others, creating closeness between the diverse populations that participated in the project. Participants (the majority of whom were migrant, returnee, or displaced persons) reported to C-AME that the psychological support they received during the project permitted them to process the pain of their personal grief. Support from the CMD team and the safe space created by the project were

especially important for those suffering discrimination and rejection upon arriving or returning to Colombia.

Distinct spaces for psychological support allowed beneficiaries to attain closure with painful processes. The project carried out both individual and collective support activities; while the group sessions were mandatory, the individual spaces were designed for those who, due to their personal situation, felt it necessary to seek additional support. In these spaces, the team set out to reinforce the processes of participant empowerment and the recognition and ownership of their rights. At the same time, the project utilized narrative therapy and experience-based activities to encourage participants to share their experiences in the group settings. Participants expressed that at the beginning of the activity, they felt they were going through a difficult situation alone, but upon hearing the stories of others in the group, with similar histories and problems, they were able to recognize and better understand their own experiences while growing closer to each other. Listening, sharing, and helping others allowed them to empathize, recognize their own abilities, and strengthen their resilience. Participants expressed that the workshops and activities permitted them to reconcile with themselves, to accept themselves as they are, release burdens and repressed feelings that they had accumulated, and to learn to overcome difficulties and move forward. In these spaces, participants could also relate to people with different ways of living and thinking, and they reported that through these interactions they learned to tolerate and respect different opinions. Although the implementing partner reported that beneficiaries were not always consistent in their attendance, having these individual sessions available to talk about experiences that are difficult to share in group settings is a strategy that similar interventions—particularly those working with victimized populations and with women and LGBTI individuals—should consider.

Participants established support networks and friendships. Participants reported that the dialogue and listening sessions enabled them to establish close relationships and forge support networks, some of which transcended the project activities. Participants shared with C-AME that outside of project activities, they seek each other out for conversation, advice, and joint problem solving. According to the implementing partner, the creation of a safe space allowed participants to feel that they could express their feelings without fear of judgment. Participants highlighted the close and trusting relationship with the workshop facilitators, whose openness and availability for conversation with participants, even outside project hours and locations, built bonds of trust. According to one participant, the close bonds constructed with some of the psychosocial professionals from CMD allowed them to handle the grieving process after the death of a loved one. Beyond friendships, participants constructed commercial relationships between their businesses, consisting primarily of reciprocal buying of goods or on the recommendation of their associates for opportunities.

Ownership and application in daily life of learning and reflections produced in the context of the activities. Beneficiaries commented to C-AME that they have replicated the learning they acquired in the psycho-emotional workshops with their families and associates and that this has helped them and their family members to find relief, better express how they feel, and resolve arguments with their partners and children. They report that project activities have helped them internalize processes of forgiveness and reconciliation toward the people who have rejected them. Some interviewees reported having suffered rejection and discrimination by family members upon returning or arriving to Colombia; for them, applying what they learned in workshops has allowed them to not hold resentment and forgive those who caused them harm. Participants also reported having shared what they learned in technical

workshops for administration and growing their businesses with the groups and associations they belong to.

Methodological alignment between CMD and DecidoSer. The mental and emotional health workshops of the project were carried out with a combination of CMD's own methodology and DecidoSer. CMD's methodology incorporates ludic-pedagogical activities to foster identification of emotions in oneself and others. According to CMD, in the process of transfer and methodological harmonization from PAR to CMD, several similarities between the two methodologies, especially the intents and objectives of each, became apparent; as such, the coordination was a simple process consisting of reviewing each of the activities and proposed workshops. According to PAR, this process of coordination was delayed due to the CMD organizational structure requiring administrative approval of the project activities by CMD in Bogotá. According to PAR, this chain of revision and approval delayed the implementation of activities, as CMD sought approval of activities one by one and implementation advanced according to the results of the previous activities. As for participants, they reported to C-AME that the methodology used in the workshops allowed them to take ownership of the content and learning and apply them in their daily lives. They liked the use of interactive and didactic activities and these motivated them to participate; for them, the workshops became spaces both for learning and to de-stress.

II. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The diversity of definitions of reconciliation affects the possibility of operationalizing the concept in implementation. According to PAR staff at the central level, the program has not adopted a singular definition of reconciliation. In this sense, CMD maintains that, because reconciliation is an abstract concept, it became a challenge in implementation of activities with a reconciliation focus. In response, the implementing partner opted to use terms like "recognize," "identify," "accept," or "respecting others,"[7] as proxies for reconciliation. Upon investigating with participants, C-AME found that narratives about "union with and acceptance of others" prevailed in conversations about reconciliation, especially with respect to thoughts and opinions. Given this variety of definitions, it is important to reflect on possible strategies for operationalizing the conceptual components of reconciliation. Even though PAR uses a working definition of reconciliation, as stated in its 2017 AMEP,[8] the implementing partner does not use this definition; as such, it is important that this definition be socialized among local partners.

GENDER, SOCIAL INCLUSION, AND MIGRATION

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

Diverse population groups participated constructively. Individuals of different nationalities, ethnicities, religions, sexual orientations, and other diverse backgrounds participated in the project. According to CMD, due to the partner's affiliation with the Catholic Church, there is a prejudice in the community that there are barriers to access for individuals from other religions and according to beneficiaries, in some neighborhoods, there was a misconception that non-Venezuelans could not participate. Taking into account these challenges, the diversity of the participants is an achievement of the project. According to CMD, the project sought to guarantee the participation of diverse populations, through activities that took into consideration the different types of vulnerability that existed among participants,

[7] Semi-structured interview with implementing partner, CMD, Cúcuta. March, 2020

[8] "Reconciliation entails coming to terms with the past, engaging in constructive dialogue, and transforming old narratives. As such, it requires the transformation of understandings, attitudes, and behaviors that have been forged by armed conflict and inform the ways in which Colombians deal with conflict and differences in their day-to-day lives."

while guaranteeing opportunities for all to participate. Beneficiaries consider that this focus enabled them to get to know greater diversity. Both participants and the implementing partner agree that the process of integration between the diverse population groups was challenging at first because some arrived with prejudices, but the CMD methodology and workshop activities allowed them to create ties of empathy and solidarity with each other. The implementing partner considers it an accomplishment that, at the end of project activities, some participants have asked for forgiveness for possibly causing harm or offense. Beneficiaries reported that their participation in the project helped them move beyond some stereotypes about migrant populations.

Creation of a safe environment for individuals from the LGBTI community. In beneficiary focus groups in Cúcuta, the trans women who participated in the project reported feeling comfortable and at ease during activities. In their experience, given they normally do not feel comfortable in groups due to fear of rejection and stigmatization, in the workshops and activities they felt accepted and safe.

> "At the beginning, I said, feeling reluctant, 'no, why would I go to socialize with those people? So that they can look at me like a weirdo?' I mean, I didn't feel like going…I avoid going where there are lots of people because of rejection. Right? But then, from the first day that I arrived, it seemed so good to me. Alejandra and Juan Carlos [facilitators] made us feel like we were part of the group, like we were friends of theirs. I still see them sometimes and they greet me with happiness and trust. And now with the other participants we shared the activities with, […] they don't stigmatize as much, [i.e.] 'this one is Venezuelan, that one is Colombian, this one is homosexual.'" *[Participant, Focus group with CMD project beneficiaries. Cúcuta, March 3, 2020)]*

Despite the acceptance that they found in the project context, these beneficiaries report that they still face discrimination and rejection in Colombian society; they have been victims of insults, attacks, and disrespectful treatment.

II. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Limited ability of the activities to address traditional gender roles. Some female participants shared a narrative of empowerment and increase in self-confidence, reporting that, thanks to their enterprises, they recognize that they do not depend on men to support themselves and their families. Even so, other female participants reported to C-AME that they were comfortable maintaining their businesses, so long as these permitted them to work from home and still carry out childcare and household duties. Some participants said the division of labor in their homes impeded their ability to obtain jobs that would take them away from household duties. One participant said that her partner did not let her work outside the house because she "had to" be responsible for feeding the family and caring for the children. These female participants felt it was more feasible to opt for economic endeavors that let them work from home. Participants also explained that, on days when they participated in project activities (twice a month), they left their children in the care of other family members (generally female) and that on those days, they had to get up earlier to be able to leave lunch prepared and the house in order before leaving to attend project activities. These persistent gender roles and the absence of questioning around them indicate a need for PAR to deepen its GIS strategy.

SUSTAINABILITY

The most significant project achievement is the strength in psycho-emotional work with beneficiaries, which contributed to improving conditions for reconciliation, as established in the PAR results framework. The support provided to participants and enabling protective environments - which configured spaces for dialogue, empathy and trust among the beneficiaries - contributed to improve participant´s capacity to deal with their pain and bring emotional closure to their grieving process. This improve participant´s capacity to manage emotions which led to them feeling more empowered and self-confident about their capacities. The establishment of support networks among the beneficiaries, their proximity to the CMD professionals, and their frequent relationship with the services offered by the Center for Integral Development may be factors that contribute to the sustainability of the project achievements. However, result from this case showed that the socio-economic conditions of participants (i.e. low income, limited access to financial resources), as well as the limited capacity of the partner to follow-up individual cases, are risk factors that can affect the economic sustainability of each venture, affecting participants capacity to ensure sustained income in the long run, which ultimately would help to build reconciliation according to PAR TOC.

CORPORACIÓN MINUTO DE DIOS - MAICAO (LA GUAJIRA)

PROPOSAL FOR ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND RECONCILIATION: BY INTEGRATING WE BUILD THE FUTURE - MAICAO

Title	*Propuesta de integración económica y reconciliación: Integrándonos construimos futuro- Maicao* (In English, Proposal for economic integration and reconciliation: By integrating we build the future - Maicao)
Implementing partner	Corporación El Minuto de Dios (CMD)
Participants/ Beneficiaries	Displaced populations, men, indigenous, young people, LGBTI individuals, and women. According to project documents, participants include Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees, displaced and vulnerable hots populations.
Implementation period	August 25, 2019 – June 30, 2020
PAR Code	PAR-03-155

Integrándonos Construimos Futuro[9]-Maicao project, implemented by Corporación Minuto de Dios (CMD), aimed to strengthen initiatives of social integration and reconciliation with 100 participants and their families residing in Maicao (La Guajira). The project also focused on promoting dialogue and trust for empowering and strengthening socio-economic capacities of participants, and enabling processes of social transformation through three components: 1) **physical and mental health**, which uses a cross-sectional psychosocial support and gender-based approach to increase awareness among participants of their emotions, as the basis for social development. This component expected to rebuild self-trust among participants, improve their mental health, and develop capacities for peacebuilding. 2) **Economic inclusion**, aimed to develop capacities for economic stabilization of participants through the strengthening of 100 business units in process of consolidation, own by local vulnerable entrepreneurs with experience and technical knowledge, but lack economic capacity to improve their units. The ultimate goal of this component was to implement strategies that allow participants to increase their income and further develop stable livelihoods. 3) The **building social capital** component included awareness and mobilization activities aiming at strengthening social capital of the communities. Under the third component, CMD acknowledged the importance of cultural identities of participants who are from the Wayuu ethnicity, Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees and vulnerable host communities. The project engaged participants living in the neighborhoods Bendición de Dios 1 and 2, and Montecarlos.

ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECT SPECIFIC COMPONENT: SOCIOECONOMIC INCLUSION

[9] In English, By integrating we build the future

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

Strategies for economic inclusion allowed participants to develop adaptation mechanisms. The second component of Integrándonos Construimos Futuro-Maicao aimed to develop capacities among participants for their economic inclusion. The strategy begins by selecting vulnerable participants with small business units (e.g. manufacture of handicrafts, clothing, jewelry, shoemaking production of foods, raising of broilers.), who have technical knowledge and potential for expansion. The project implemented workshops to develop soft and technical skills to enhance technical, operational and entrepreneurial capacities of participants. The project also engaged participants in a local business fair where participants accessed the local market to show their products. At the end of the process, participants received a seed capital (equipment and materials) to continue growing their small or microenterprises ventures. According to participants, the entrepreneurship component was the last part of the implementation, which turned out to be beneficial for them. Beneficiaries said they felt ready to take the next step with their business units, but only after strengthening individual abilities for socialization, such as public speaking for engaging with providers and potential customers, self-steam and trust, and abilities for managing personal emotions. In addition, the implementing partner stated that activities like the delivering of seed capital, and participation in the business fair were symbolic and meaningful moments for participants, who usually feel excluded from opportunities for economic inclusion given their conditions of socio-economic vulnerability. The implementation of project activities in the economic inclusion component not only strengthened participants´ business abilities, but also developed skills such as management of personal finances, as expressed by participants themselves.

Participants and the implementing partner also indicate that the trainings, opportunities for accessing local markets, and the seed capital they received through the project, helped them to enhance their entrepreneurial skills. Many of the business units supported by the project were working well before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the skills and materials acquired through the project allowed some of the business to remain active. Soft skills learned, such as planning, online marketing, and overall, their sense of empowerment, allowed participants to adapt their business units to the economic and health crisis. In fact, participants stated that they feel like an "entrepreneur" capable to solve their difficulties.

Building social capital through a toy library "Centro de Sueños e Historias". According to the implementing partner and participants from Montecarlos neighborhood, the raise of the toy library was an important project achievement for building local social capital. They toy library was a joint effort from multiple donors and international organizations, including USAID, through PAR/CMD. The toy library, is located in a neighborhood with several infrastructure needs, operates under a tent, and was equipped by multiple funding sources, as well as the work of locals. According to CMD staff, this became a place for the encounter of vulnerable populations from this community, where they can recognize each other from their cultural background rather than their painful experiences. This important project outcome is helping to build the social fabric in a community formed by highly vulnerable populations.

Implementing partner´s experience and capacity to engage with multiple stakeholders, permitted access to local communities. The implementing partner has experience working with vulnerable communities throughout Colombia, providing humanitarian aid. Although CMD does not have an office in Maicao, they were able to leverage previous experience and knowledge of stakeholders to identify the communities to work with and the best strategies to reach out these communities. CMD used local foundations and other stakeholders (i.e. Banco Amable) to target potential beneficiaries, and further

used local leaders to channel project-related information throughout the community. In addition, previous experience from the partner allowed their staff to be aware of how the socio-economic vulnerability of participants could affect project implementation, therefore, participants indicate that activities were planned during times that could adapt to the needs of participants. Since the majority of participants are women, the implementing partner considered times that did not interrupt the domestic duties they have at home.

II. CHALLENGES

CMD purchasing procedures faced local selling practices. As part of the implementation, the project included the purchase of equipment and materials for entrepreneurs, so they can use them as seed funding for their business units. As CDM is a large organization with headquarters in Bogota and presence in multiple locations throughout Colombia, they have established strict organizational processes, including purchasing procedures that the Maicao staff had to follow in order to purchase the inputs for the entrepreneurs participating in the project. Staff from CDM in Maicao indicate that purchasing procedures limited the capacity of them to identify a variety of vendors that meet CDM formal requirements (i.e. have tax registration, can apply the rules designed for USAID funding purchase, offer the products in the amounts and quality required by each entrepreneur). CDM staff found out that requesting a list of specific items per entrepreneur makes it difficult for them to find the exact item requested by each beneficiary. Therefore, for future endeavors of this type, they have learned that having a standardized list of items that participants could pick up from, rather than asking each beneficiary a list of items, may improve the purchasing processes. The partner has also used this experience to create a local vendor list for future initiatives. On the participants´ side, they indicated that the delivery of inputs from CDM to beneficiaries had some logistic problems, but they indicate it was on the vendor's side, an issue that was out of control CDM´s staff. Nevertheless, participants expressed gratefulness for the benefits they received from the project.

Despite positive views from participants about the implementer, local conditions created situations that affected trust from communities towards CDM. Participants are extremely positive about CDM, however, there are local conditions associated with the socio-economic vulnerability of the communities where the project is being implemented that affect the building of trust between the implementing partner and the communities. The first example comes from a safety incident in which a community member (not project participant) attempted to attack physically one of the CDM staff member for an issue related to lunches provided for the day´s activity by the project. According to the implementing partner, other operators of humanitarian and development initiatives had also faced issues that impact coexistence in such areas of Maicao. As a result, the group events moved from neighborhoods to other areas of Maicao, where staff can have better control of the project activities. Nevertheless, this meant for participants to walk long distances and under strong sunny conditions. Another example is the lack of staff that speaks Wayunainki[10] and can easily communicate with the local community-both participants and non-participants. This created uncertainty and lack of effective communication between CDM and the communities where the implementation takes place. These situations require attention because this is a project that aims at building trust, as part of a larger reconciliation initiative. Gaining trust from the

[10] The language of the Wayuu people, an ethnicity that is predominant in La Guajira. In Maicao, approximately 40% of the populations self-recognizes as indigenous.

communities where the interventions take place is important to create positive links between the implementers and communities as means to strengthen the local social fabric.

Legal requirements for Venezuelan migrants affected trust within community members and towards CMD. Participants in psychosocial support activities stated that they and other Venezuelan migrants could not access to the seed funding benefit and specific trainings because they lack the Permiso Especial de Permanencia[11] (PEP). This has created among Venezuelan migrants potential internal disagreements because the legal status that this document provides allow some to access the benefits of a project such as the seed funding. One participant from the psychosocial support activities who did not have the PEP expressed that she requested to CDM to participate in at least the psychosocial support activities and they agreed. However, her neighbors expressed frustration and anger since they could not participate. Again, better communication strategies from CDM towards the community could enhance the project capacity to build the social fabric in these communities with high levels of social and economic vulnerability.

RECONCILIATION

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

The changes in the individual narratives improved family interactions and helped to rebuild the social fabric. The implementing partner highlights that the main project achievement was the change of narratives among participants about themselves. The project provided cross-sectional psychosocial support to beneficiaries expecting to increase awareness about their emotions, improve their mental health, enable an open dialogue about cultural diversity, and improve self-trust. For CMD individual changes can activate community-level changes. According to the implementing partner: *"The individual changes leveraged other series of psychosocial processes that were a little more at the community-level, those responded to the specific needs that people have in their territories, in their communities, and that allowed many things to be achieved in terms of community life projects."* *[Phone interview with staff from CDM-Maicao, August 2020]*. Regarding individual changes, participants highlighted how thankful they were to access to the psychosocial support workshops that merged DecidoSer and CDM's own methodologies. According to participants, these experiential workshops changed their lives and the interactions with their families and community. A participant stated:

> "Thanks to Corporación Minuto de Dios that I now have that little spark of youth that one has and how jovial one gets. […] I have changed a lot […] before I was not like that, before I was a gunner, a spoiler, a bad temper, now no, I also recognize when I make a mistake, immediately that I apologize to the person. […] The workshops have helped me a lot." *[Phone interview with participants from CDM-Maicao, August 2020]*.

Adequate integration between economic inclusion and reconciliation components led to individual changes with potential positive effects over local communities. Beneficiaries expressed the project changed their views about themselves, and helped them to enhance their relationships with their relatives and surrounding communities. Participants interviewed also by C-AME indicated that the project helped them to improve self-confidence (trust), to respect and listen to others (respect and dialogue), and to feel they have control of their lives and their business (empowerment). All the

[11] In English, Special Permit to Stay. It is a document issued by Migración Colombia for Venezuelans that had formally entered Colombia.

interviewees stated that the workshops/project help them to reconcile with themselves and in some cases with those that harmed them in the past. Participants expressed that due to these abilities, they now feel more confident to express their emotions without overburden those around them, recovered self-love, and have used these abilities to face difficult emotional situations. The implementing partner indicated that the success of the project in terms of narrative changes is due to the adequate integration between reconciliation, economic inclusion and social capital, components that build upon the cross-sectional use of the psychosocial support tools provided by PAR and merged with the methodologies of CDM. Staff from the implementing partner indicated:

> "I consider that the psychosocial process has to be transversal, not like a ring and in the end not, it has to happen all the time, so that people are always connected with the process and ultimately make sense of it. In the end, what we (CDM staff) always said is that in the end the business or the entrepreneurship, the economic inclusion ends up being an excuse to be able to work everything else." *[Phone interview with staff from CDM-Maicao, August 2020]*.

Expected change under PAR's program framework result from the implementation of a comprehensive approach that not only focuses on developing economic opportunities, but also has a strong focus on the development of reconciliation abilities that from the individual pass onto the beneficiaries' families and their community.

The CMD staff played an important role in the implementation of the reconciliation strategy. According to participants, the staff in general but the psychosocial support staff in particular went *above and beyond* to provide the best possible support to project participants and to engage them in project activities. In addition, the pandemic allowed the psychosocial support team of professionals to find alternatives to engage family members into the psychosocial support activities for control of emotions during this time. According to the leadership team of CDM, this was only possible to the relationship of empathy that the psychosocial professional created with participants. It is important to acknowledge that psychosocial staff professional skills and personality greatly contributed to improve participants engagement in the all the project implementation activities.

II. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Limited support from PAR to CDM to implement DecidoSer methodology in the initial stage of the project. Although the implementing partner indicated how Reconciliation Approach (RA) tools helped them to strength their capacities to deliver effective group psychosocial support, CMD staff also indicated that the support from PAR came when project activities were already ongoing rather than in early stages of implementation. Because of this, the learning processes implementing DecidoSer delayed, and the psychosocial support staff had difficulties presenting the reports following the standards required by PAR. Having this support from PAR earlier in the implementation would have helped CMD to find strategies to adapt the workshops to the local cultural practices (i.e. working with Wayuu people) before the implementation started and not in a reactive manner, as it occurred. According to the implementing partner, individuals from Wayuu community tend to have a different forms to express their emotions, when compared to Western Cultures. This was a learning process that occurred during implementation and not before, something that the implemented partner considered to be problematic. Perhaps the intervention of PAR in the planning stages could have helped the implementing partner to foresee and adapt to that situation.

Emotional distress that emerged during project activities requires additional psychological resources to address past and current traumas. CMD experience helped the staff to grasp the situations that participants have gone through due to their situation as migrants, displaced and in general, their multiple conditions of vulnerability. Most participants interviewed by C-AME expressed they experienced emotional distress during the first workshops they attended to. While the group and the staff from CDM had the tools and skills to manage emotional distress, some participants expressed that due to the past and present pain they have experienced, it would be important for them to have alternatives to access psychological support for their individual cases. The project impact could be significantly improved if PAR and CDM can use their capacities to stablish alliances with other local or regional stakeholders to provide additional psychological support. Although this type of the partnerships are outside the scope of PAR and CDM, emotional healing of participants will help them to continue with their personal, familiar and community processes of reconciliation.

GENDER, SOCIAL INCLUSION, MIGRATION

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

Engagement of project participants´ regardless of their place of origin, gender or ethnicity. Participants, the majority of them are women, acknowledged that the project created an opportunity for them to see each other as peers regardless of the place of origin, gender or ethnicity. The project also allowed participants to develop meaningful relationships with other participants creating lasting friendships that nowadays provide mutual support in difficult times. This produced among participants a sense of comfort given the possibility of exchanging experiences. Therefore, the project became an opportunity to integrate Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees, displaced populations, Wayuu individuals, and other vulnerable host populations. This is highly valued under the program´s objective of building reconciliation by reducing tensions among different groups. In addition, awareness about the different types of vulnerabilities the participants' face helped CDM to plan accordingly and design activities at times that were convenient for the participants, and considered waiting times if it was difficult for some participants to attend timely. For instance, the women participants indicated that they did not feel they were giving up on their daily routines, instead they felt that this was a time for themselves and they valued the possibility to participate in the workshops.

II. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Limited work to transform traditional gender norms. The implementing partner stated that the project did not target LGBTI population; therefore, they did not include a strong gender diversity component into their activities. Although this was a partner´s strategy to maximize project time, it is also important to acknowledge that the work on gender awareness about traditional norms and diversity is important under the Reconciliation Approach framework, and as such, working to reduce gender barriers is important for reconciliation processes. CDM did a good work on implementing strategies for female empowerment, but additional work to reduce gender discrimination in all its forms is important under PAR framework.

SUSTAINABILITY

The analysis of narratives from the implementing partner and beneficiaries has highlighted significant achievements from this economic and integration project. Overall, the most significant change identified by the actors engaged in this process is the capacity of the project to change individual narratives and

behaviors that later have an impact on the building of social fabric and reconciliation. This was only possible due to the effective integration of the economic inclusion and reconciliations components with the cross-sectional implementation of the psychosocial support tools. This strategy is very effective in balancing out reconciliation and economic outcomes under PAR framework. However, the evaluation team identified the following lessons learned: 1) when they are not local, continue working to identify local factors that affect implementation and use that information to inform programming. 2) Understand the local culture to make a strategic planning of activities. And 3) for PAR is important to provide support to the psychosocial support staff from the planning stages, that way the partner makes an effective use of the alliance with PAR, while PAR also assures that important components, such as gender and social inclusion strategies are implemented throughout the life of the project.

ATNAMANA - MAICAO (LA GUAJIRA)

RECONCILIATION AND SOCIO-PRODUCTIVE INCLUSION FROM PLANTING OF MELONS FOR EXPORT TO THE ISLAND OF CURAÇAO IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF MAICAO

Title	*Reconciliación e inclusión socio-productiva a partir de la siembra de melón para la exportación a la isla de Curazao en el municipio de Maicao.* (In English, Reconciliation and socio-productive inclusion from the planting of melon/cantaloupe for export to the island of Curaçao in the municipality of Maicao)
Implementing partner	Asociación de Agricultores Independientes de la vereda de Atnamana.
Participants/ Beneficiaries	Afro descendants, displaced populations, men, indigenous, and women. According to project documents, participants include Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees, displaced and vulnerable hots populations.
Implementation period	September 23, 2019 – August 08, 2020
PAR Code	PAR-03-171

The project *Reconciliation and socio-productive inclusion from the planting of melon* implemented by association of independent farmers from Atnamana works towards the economic empowerment and socio-productive inclusion of 52 families from the corregimiento[12] Carraipía-municipality of Maicao. This, through the improvement of planting techniques of melon, seeking to improve the quality of the fruit and further selling it in the local market as well as exporting it. The project has three components: 1) **Improve participant´s capacity for adapting, empowerment and resilience**, through the implementation of workshops designed under the PAR´s DecidoSer methodology to empower individuals as subjects of change, and strengthen the social fabric of the community. 2) **Promote organizational and business capacities of the association of farmers**, in partnership with La Guajira Chamber of Commerce from which participants attended sessions on business development and innovation, regulatory and administrative procedures for farmer organizations, accountancy, and entrepreneurship. 3) **Planting and exporting melon** component consisted of planting of 10 hectares of cantaloupe melon, providing participants technical advice through local extension agents and a PAR sponsored crop specialist to improve planting techniques and commercialization practices. PAR signed this partnership as a sub-agreement in kind, therefore the organization received PAR funding through equipment, supplies, and consultants (i.e. psychosocial support staff, agricultural specialists), rather than financial support. The analysis of this case builds on the narratives of participants, and the technical advisory team (psychosocial and agricultural consultants, and the president of the association of farmers).

ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECT SPECIFIC COMPONENT: DEVEOPMENT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS

[12] In Colombia, the term "corregimiento" refers to a sub-division within a municipality.

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

Implementation of planting techniques for melon in a shared plot, is expected to improve participants´ livelihoods. The third component of the project develops all the matters related to the production and commercialization of melon. The selection of this crop responds to the agricultural tradition of rural areas in Maicao that had been lost due to the spread of violence related to smuggling and trafficking. By the time, C-AME conducted interviews with beneficiaries and technical team, harvesting had just started, therefore our analysis includes activities implemented before harvesting. According to the crop technical team, the project benefited from expert advice in planting techniques for irrigation, seed planting, and crop management. The result of this technical advice is that beneficiaries reduced seed and water loses, and ultimately allowed the group to plant cantaloupe melons in the amounts and quantities planned. Although COVID-19 required adjustments in terms of schedules and the number of participants working in the crop, the association managed to implement biosecurity protocols and continue with the planting process. As a shared plot, members of the 52 families have engaged in the planting processes, which have encouraged collaborative work, improved learning of farming techniques among participants, and enhanced input use, as reported by the technical team. Beneficiaries agree with that, and state that they expect that this acquired farming knowledge allow them to improve livelihoods either as part of Atnamana or on their own.

Reaching commercial agreements is expecting to create long-term gains. According to the technical team, PAR was instrumental to identify local and foreign commercial allies. It started when members of Atnamana attended a business roundtable in the Caribbean region in Colombia organized by PAR that further led to the identification of commercial partners in Colombia and Curaçao. Atnamana is expecting to deliver the first melon shipment to Curaçao, after sorting out multiple bureaucratic and administrative procedures like quality assurance, shipment, obtaining phytosanitary permits, and tax regulations for exports. After the delivery of the first cargo takes place, the technical team expressed to C-AME, that the profits will be divided among the participants in proportion to the work and effort they put into the cultivation, but leaving a percentage of the profit for the organization as a shared pool of resources. Therefore, it is expected that by the selling of melons, participants will improve their livelihoods and capacities to develop alternatives for sustained income.

II. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Beneficiaries with uneven experience in farming became recent associates of Atanamana affecting the speed of the learning curve. Atnamana is an organization of producers that has more that has more than a decade of existence; however, for the purpose of this project new associates became part of the organization. Therefore, part of the technical team expressed that some beneficiaries had farming experience but many of them not, which affected the way some participants managed the crop. This created some seedling loses, which came at a considerable cost, according to the crop specialist. Not only that, the learning curve for beneficiaries who do not have farming experience is longer, compared to those who do. Although the cost of using labor from beneficiaries without farming expertise is higher in terms of time, effort and money, this could be the cost the project is willing to assume to empower participants under a reconciliation initiative. Nonetheless, this could also become a learning opportunity for PAR to ensure that in farm-related development projects, participant selection should target vulnerable farmers, and not only vulnerable populations in general.

Vulnerability of the partner affected the capacity to respond effectively to challenges during implementation. As mentioned earlier, the Alliance between PAR and Atnamana took place under an in-kind sub-agreement, therefore the organization of producers did not receive financial funding from PAR. According to participants, including the president of the association, throughout implementation the association leadership face challenges trying to obtain financial resources to sustain costs of labor and feeding workers. Although some participants expressed they volunteered their time for the farming activities, many of them find it problematic because they hardly received any income in the present under the expectation of future profit. This turned out to be even more problematic when many of them are in conditions of high economic vulnerability. Some participants expressed the leaders of the association had to juggle to obtain financial resources to maintain the farming activities ongoing, which affects empowerment capacities on the part associates. Here, it is important to recall that under the program, the priority should be on the **generation of economic opportunities as means towards reconciliation goals**, rather than generating expectations of income increase at any cost. Although participants explained they met to listen the leadership on how the profit is going to be distributed once the melon shipment is completed, the limited access to financial resources during implementation to sustain labor, created uncertainty of what the future holds for the association and the associates. This led to some level of discomfort among some participants for not receiving a payment for their work or services provided to the association through this project. Beneficiaries do not engage in the decision-making process, rather they are informed about the distribution of profits. There are multiple narratives that indicate that not all participants have a clear message about the distribution of profits:

> "No, no, I mean, I don't know how the... I mean, that's what we have to meet and they'll explain to us how the distribution is going to be, I don't know. There have been many expenses that have to be paid, so what I don't know how it's going to be distributed, I wouldn't know exactly how." *[Phone interview with participants from Atnamana, August 2020]*.

> While other participant states:

> "So, people have been told that they have a percentage depending on the profit there. If they spent so much and left, say, 300 million profit, you know that 300 million profit will be distributed equally among all of us who are there, there will not be one more peso for anyone because "I have more, because I planted more", no, everything coincides, and those who could not go this time [as part of the profit], will go next time." *[Phone interview with participants from Atnamana, August 2020]*.

Lack of economic resources prevented some beneficiaries to fully engage in the process. The project implementation took place in the community of Atnamana, part of corregimiento Carraipía. However, not all beneficiaries live in this community, some of them live in places closes to the border with Venezuela. Therefore, for some participants it was very expensive to attend the project activities, either to the psychosocial support or farming gatherings. The cost in terms of time and money for some participants discouraged them to fully engage in project activities. Even, some participants express "the project leadership should be aware that they are demanding things [participation in project-related activities] that others [project beneficiaries] can't fulfil." *[Phone interview with participants from Atnamana, August 2020]*. This situation not only limited full engagement, but also enabled potential tensions within the members of the organization limiting project capacity to achieve PAR program goals through project implementation.

RECONCILIATION

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

Individual behavioral changes reported by beneficiaries. At the individual level, participants acknowledge that having participating in DecidoSer workshops led to individual behavioral changes that positively affected their family and community interactions. Participants and the psychosocial support consultant identified positive changes such as management of emotions, and capacity to engage with others by being empathetic to their personal experiences and living conditions. As the project included victims of the armed conflict, they acknowledged they can now better look at past experiences without fear and were able to forgive all the harm caused by armed actors, while also feel hopeful about what the future holds for them, their families and the communities. When C-AME asked a participant for the project objective, she responded:

> "I come from a very difficult past [victim of the armed conflict] and that [DecidoSer workshops] helped me a lot, and I am very happy with that, because I feel that I am free and I have another way of thinking, a different way of living my life, and that is what this is about, **reconciliation, no violence**. That is what I have learned here in the project." *[Phone interview with participants from Atnamana, August 2020]*

The psychosocial support consultant highlighted that DecidoSer workshops are experiential, participatory and inclusive, which helped participants to engage more enthusiastically in the activities, and further helped them process painful past experiences such as violence or forced migration and displacement.

Family-focused DecidoSer activities achieved participant engagement such as youth. The project targeted not only farmer associates of Atnamana, but also their families. For the first DecidoSer workshop, beneficiaries were asked to bring a relative whom they though would be willing to participate and engage in the activities. This became an opportunity for the community to engage participants and their families in psychosocial support activities with positive outcomes in terms of individual behavioral change and better family interactions, as reported by beneficiaries. The project also included specific activities targeting youth and women, such as targeted workshops and home visits to women participants to follow up their individual processes. Participants reported this approach was extremely positive because it enabled opportunities to reduce tensions at the family level. It also helped some participants to deal with old intergenerational conflicts: *"Look, I did not let myself be guided by my father, or my sister, or my mother, you want to do it all, but if you had let yourself be guided, you would have been in another position." [Phone interview with participants from Atnamana, August 2020].* According to the psychosocial support consultant, when young participants saw their parents engaged in DecidoSer activities, they felt motivated to continue attending the workshops. The psychosocial support consultant acknowledge youth engagement as a significant project achievement since this demographic group tend to be apathetic and feel disenfranchised, therefore seeing them being active participants of the whole project activities was very significant:

> "I was very surprised because during the implementation that young people showed such acceptance of the process. When you talk to a young person and tell him to be part of a process, many times, as I have seen in these processes, they are reluctant to participate and

even more if you talk to them about the countryside and agriculture. But because this process goes hand in hand with work towards human and personal development of participants, they have learned how to be part of this project." *[Phone interview with psychosocial support consultant, Atnamana, August 2020]*

II. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The amount of information available in DecidoSer toolkit can be overwhelming for the psychosocial support staff. The psychosocial support consultant expressed that DecidoSer is a great tool to develop psychosocial support activities with beneficiaries such as those from Atnamana. However, the toolkit has a significant amount of information that the consultant has to take, process, and use to prepare targeted workshops. Here, it is key to ensure that PAR psychosocial support staff is available to solve questions or concerns that emerge during implementation, and are willing to provide support to local staff to navigate through the tools available in the DecidoSer and Gender and Social Inclusion strategies.

Acknowledgement of the importance of reconciliation varies across participants. Although participants acknowledged engaging in DecidoSer workshops helped them to change individual behaviors and interactions with family, when C-AME asked participants about the most relevant project goal there is a split between those who think the reconciliation focus is the main achievement, and those who believe the economic output is the most significant achievement. When compared those two types of answers, people who are highly involved in crop management tend to give economic output a higher value, while women tend to give reconciliation a higher value. Women interviewed by C-AME tend to be more appreciative of the reconciliation component. The experiences participants face in the project determine whether reconciliation is a means towards an economic end of vice versa.

GENDER, SOCIAL INCLUSION, AND MIGRATION

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

The project became an opportunity for the integration of multiple cultures and people. The project targeted 52 people, 39 Colombians (including 19 Wayuu people) and 13 Venezuelan migrants, of whom 5% are of African descent; out of all participants, 1% are disabled and 10% are victims of internal forced displacement. The first project component includes the individual and interpersonal psychosocial support for participants, while also sought to rebuild the social fabric of the community of Atanamana, through the community project based on melon production and the recovery of the social, cultural and historical memory of the Wayuu people and the local population around agriculture. When asked project participants about their interactions with others in the project who are from different origin than themselves, they stated that the project became an opportunity to acknowledge the value of being different, and it was never an obstacle for collaborative work. In fact, participants indicate that having the possibility to work in a multicultural environment allowed them to improve capacity to empathize with their colleagues and understand that many of them, having to migrate due to violence or the socioeconomic conditions in their place of origin, was a difficult situation and recognize how challenging is for migrants to adapt to a new place. Not only that, the association included among project participants, a person with special abilities, for which the project developed strategies for labor inclusion and improvement of his quality of life by enabling specific sites within farming activities, acknowledging his knowledge, abilities and individual views.

II. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Gendered-based division of labor at the farm. From the work developed on the i**mproving participant´s capacity for adapting, empowerment and resilience** component, participants acknowledge they now respect diversity and recognize women and men are equal. It has also helped women participant empowerment as reported by them. However, when it comes the division of labor at the melon plot, gender-based divide persist:

> "We have different activities within the process, activities that we would say are more typical of women, for example, the case of fruit selection, which is an activity that we see as good for women to participate in, for young people to participate in, the planting in the nurseries, is a very gentle, very simple activity. With that we are not discriminating or saying that women are weaker, no, but that they should be linked to all the processes in which they feel in equal conditions, in which they feel that they are servile, that they can work and that they can contribute to the process, the same as the children, taking care of them obviously, taking care of them in the handling of agrochemicals and all these things." *[Phone interview with member of the technical team, Atnamana, August 2020]*

Under PAR reconciliation approach, gender awareness can contribute to reconciliation by ensuring that individuals, regardless of their gender, are treated as equals and respectfully, and as such are willing to engage in reconciliation processes. The alliance between PAR and Atnamana operate in a rural context where traditional gender norms tend to negatively impact the equal distribution of roles and benefits among males and females. The equitable distribution of activities, financial risks, benefits and ability to manage resources between men and women, as well as a change in the ideas about the distribution of power, are critical for the implementation of alliances with agricultural producers. While the activities to improve women empowerment exists within the project C-AME observed that the implementation of the GSI strategy is inconsistent in this project and limited the capacity to produce a change of narratives about gender equality among participants that affected job designations around the planting of melon. Here C-AME observed a gendered division of labor, which reinforced stereotypes based on biological differences between men and women; cultural norms dictated the acceptance of gendered and age-based division of labor, giving women and children responsibilities that are perceived as easy and gentle. This could preventing women and youth from contributing their full potential to this process on the basis of stereotypes could contribute to preserving the traditional and unequal distribution of gender roles within the family system and community.

SUSTAINABILITY

The analysis of narratives from technical team and beneficiaries highlighted achievements from this implementation in all the project components. Significant achievements include implementation of technical improvements for a shared melon crop, participants´ sense of empowerment through improved knowledge of farming, improved individual capacity to manage emotions, and the capacity of the project to enable spaces for the integration of multiple cultures. However, there are also aspects of this project that constitute learning opportunities for PAR that are important to consider to ensure sustainability under PAR results framework. Those include: the multiple layers of vulnerability of beneficiaries and the organization that affect project implementation; the high level of variation of the importance of reconciliation across participants; and that lack of sustained implementation of the GSI strategy that keeps normalizing issues such as the gendered-based division of labor at the farm.

CÁMARA DE COMERCIO DE ARAUCA - ARAUCA (ARAUCA)

GENERATION OF INCOME, ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE, AND PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR MIGRANT FAMILIES, RETURNEES, YOUTH, AND WOMEN OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF ARAUCA

Title	*Generación de ingresos, independencia económica y entornos de protección a familias migrantes, retornada, jóvenes y mujeres del Municipio de Arauca* (In English, Generation of income, economic independence, and protective environments for migrant families, returnees, youth, and women of the Municipality of Arauca)
Implementing partner	Cámara de Comercio de Arauca[13] (Spanish acronym CCA)
Participants/ Beneficiaries	Youth, women, victims of the armed conflict. The project profile also mentions the participation of migrant and returnee populations.
Implementation period	August 20, 2019 – May 30, 2020
PAR Code	PAR-03-166

The *Generation of Incomes, Economic Independence, and Protective Environments for Migrant Families, Returnees, Youth, and Women of the Municipality of Arauca* project, implemented by the Arauca Chamber of Commerce aimed to strengthen the business management capacity and entrepreneurship skills of 150 people. In support of this objective, the project comprised five activities under three components: 1) 'Psychosocial support with a focus on reconciliation,' carried out by the partner through meetings in which they implemented the PAR Reconciliation Approach. 2) 'Business for life,' which consists of the development of a business model applying the CANVAS[14] methodology, after which participants present a business model in a pitch in front of a panel of judges made up of members of the CCA and members of the Regional Business Network of Arauca. 3) Award of seed capital (equipment and materials) to the 50 business initiatives rated most highly in the pitch. With the signing of the extension of the contract the number of initiatives that received seed capital was increased by 27 and these beneficiaries were selected from the initial pool of 150 participants. Additionally, the project planned a "migrant social and economic integration forum" which was cancelled due to the restriction measures decreed by the government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project closed at the end of February 2020, but was extended to May 30, 2020.

ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECT SPECIFIC COMPONENT: DEVELOPMENT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

Information and business training received through the project contributed to the strengthening of participant businesses. The process of capacity building enabled beneficiaries to acquire basic

[13] In English, Chamber of Commerce of Arauca
[14] The CANVAS model is composed of nine modules that are designed to provide tools for users to define and create a business model. In these modules, users learn about characteristics of a business, such as identification of clients and market segments, identification of competitive advantages, distribution channels, and client relations, among others.

understanding of business administration and management, and to formulate a business plan for their enterprises. According to the partner, this training process signified a challenge, given that the project had to adjust the training material to be able to provide instruction in basic concepts so that participants could identify and construct, gradually, the desired model for their business. Participants, on the other hand, consider that the activities allowed them to strengthen administrative, organizational, and business knowledge, providing them a base on which to build their business better. According to participants, the workshops on accounting and the knowledge they acquired allowed them to improve the quality of the products and services they offer and strengthen their client relations. Beneficiaries consider that the project helped empower them as business owners and they report that they feel capable of taking on the difficulties that arise and continuing forward; some confirmed that since the project they have learned to better manage their own business including making better use of their time, allowing them to have more free time they can devote to their families.

The project incentivized the formalization of businesses.[15] The project contributed to the beneficiaries formalizing their businesses which, at the same time, allowed them to access opportunities for training and financing. CCA provided support and information that allowed participants to clear up some of their doubts and fears about the process of formalizing their businesses, about which, according to the implementing partner, participants knew little or were misinformed regarding aspects like costs associated with the process, taxation, requirements, etc. The support from CCA contributed to highlight for beneficiaries the benefits of formalization, like how to access credits for small businesses. Within CCA, the team charged with the project provided special attention and free advice on behalf of various parts of the Chamber to beneficiaries on procedures and requirements for formalization and legal questions about commercial processes and business registration; this was especially useful for Venezuelan beneficiaries unfamiliar with the Colombian regulatory system. Even after the project ended, the partner continued communicating with beneficiaries, offering them advice and support in the formalization process for those who had not yet completed it. Participants agree in pointing out business formalization as an achievement of the project and report that the project helped them expand their vision as business owners. Formalizing their businesses allowed them, for example, to hire employees and obtain the necessary permits to market and distribute their products during the COVID-19 mandated quarantine.

To strengthen their businesses and offer training on the formalization process, the partner supported beneficiaries' attendance at trainings and additional activities offered by allies of CCA, facilitated by their participation and connection with the Regional Business Network of Arauca. For example, some beneficiaries working in the food industry participated in courses on food handling offered by the Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje[16] (SENA). Obtaining this qualification enabled participants to strengthen their businesses, which was an additional motivation for formalization given that, to be able to access additional training opportunities as well as obtain credit from some financial institutions, their businesses had to be properly registered.

The construction of a support and exchange network facilitated commercial integration among entrepreneurs. The project allowed for mutual support among beneficiaries, who established

[15] Business formalization is the process by which businesses are regulated, carried out in the Chamber of Commerce and consisting of enrolling or inscribing the business license, paying relevant fees, and presenting accounting and required documents.
[16] In English, National Training Service

commercial relationships for buying and selling of their products and services. The average size and advanced level of consolidation of some businesses enabled beneficiaries to reciprocally provide each other goods and services and the WhatsApp groups created to distribute information about the project became platforms to advertise products, propose ideas and agreements to strengthen their businesses, share contacts of potential clients, and celebrate achievements of their businesses. According to the partner, learning about the success stories of their fellow beneficiaries became a stimulus for others to continue developing their business. Beneficiaries reported that through these groups, they were able to understand their peers' needs and offer their products. For example, a beneficiary commented to C-AME that her business carried out publicity for the fast food business of a peer; a similar exchange happened with other beneficiaries with photography, publicity, food, and raw materials businesses, who became clients and promoters of other beneficiaries.

II. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

CCA carried out two seed capital deliveries. The first group of 50 beneficiaries that complied with the requirements (attendance to the project activities and good qualification in the presentation of the PITCH) received the funding in February 2020. The second group of 27 beneficiaries was selected from the original 150 participants, due to the project increased budget. During the delivery event, beneficiaries complained to the provider and the implementing partner about the disparities between the materials requested and what was received, without obtaining an answer that allowed them to clarify what happened which caused discontent among beneficiaries, aggressive behavior towards the provider hired by CCC, and other beneficiaries. On the contrary, attitudes led to dissatisfaction and discussions within the group of beneficiaries, and between them and the provider and partner. The beneficiaries that talked to C-AME consider that the difficulties that arose were solved in the second delivery, which was carried out individually and in the house of each participant, due to the pandemic.

Shortcomings in communication between the implementing partner and participants during the project complicated the relationship between them. Clear and proactive communication between the partner and participants would have resolved some difficulties and clarified some mishaps that occurred during the project implementation. According to beneficiaries, information provided by the partner was not clear, particularly with regards to the requirements to meet and forms to fill out in order to receive seed capital. The project was designed to award participants who met certain criteria with materials and equipment needed for their businesses, as a form of capital investment in their endeavors that the project would procure on their behalf. According to the first cohort of participants who received seed capital, the partner was not clear and precise in communications about the procurement process the partner would undertake, except in communicating to participants the fact that the maximum budget for each recipient's capital award would be 3,500,000 COP (about $906 USD) and in requesting participants identify possible environmental impacts associated with the use of the requested equipment. Participants expressed that these failures in communication between the partner, the vendor of the materials and equipment, and beneficiaries during the entire procurement process generated disappointment and distrust about the project's resource management (see the next section). At the same time, the lack of clear communication and the attitudes of some organizers of the seed capital award event irked some additional participants. Meanwhile, the second group of beneficiaries lacked clarity on why they had to retake all of their previously attended workshops a second time through virtual channels. These issues indicate a need to establish direct channels of communication so that the partner can listen to suggestions, complaints, and demands from participants, explain or demonstrate the reasons behind

decisions, admit mistakes, and adapt their challenge mitigation strategy for minimum possible negative effect.

Difficulties in the process of awarding seed capital caused annoyance, discomfort, and dissatisfaction in beneficiaries. During the course of the project there were two rounds of awards of seed capital made to a total of 72 beneficiaries (50 in the first round in February 2020 and 22 in a second round after the partners signed a contract extension). The first round delivery of materials was marked by multiple difficulties causing disapproval among beneficiaries, who reported to C-AME that they were confused and angered when they received equipment that did not correspond with what they had requested. According to individuals C-AME interviewed, there were several mishaps and incidents during the equipment procurement process, including the following:

- Participants reported that they did not have support or help from the CCA personnel nor from the provider of materials/equipment with filling out the forms required to order the equipment that would be acquired for the seed capital award. Although the partner required the participants to determine the specifications of the equipment and materials required for their businesses, this information was not clear among beneficiaries at the time of their submission of these forms. According to beneficiaries, the form completion and research process for materials specifications was handled by each participant individually, without supervision from staff of CCA. As a result, these forms—that were later used to inform the procurement process handled by CCA—were filled out incorrectly, meaning the equipment and materials CCA acquired with the seed capital were not what beneficiaries were expecting.
- Beneficiaries C-AME interviewed highlighted that, on the day of the awards, there was yelling and complaining on the part of the participants to express their discomfort with the partner and the provider over the materials they received. Some interviewees reported having been the subject of insults and disrespectful language on the part of the provider and they said their complaints were not heard. Beneficiaries reported that neither on the day of the awards ceremony, nor afterwards, had PAR, the implementing partner, or the vendor provided explanations for what happened during the awards, when, according to participants there, was aggressive behavior from the vendor towards the beneficiaries.
- The complaints and reproaches of the participants also appeared in the WhatsApp groups created to distribute information about the project activities. Various interviewees explained that they opted to remove themselves from the groups due to the aggressive nature that the discussion took on. For instance, some participants reported that in these online interactions, there were arguments that got aggressive between beneficiaries, primarily between those who had received the equipment they had requested and those who were dissatisfied with what they received.

These situations not only affected the implementation of the project, but also directly impacted the final objective of PAR, as will be discussed in the Reconciliation section of this document. According to interviews C-AME conducted, the logistical and communication challenges described above created a sense of dejection, discontent, and annoyance in beneficiaries, many of whom were clearly unsatisfied. For some of the participants interviewed, these difficulties represented a step backwards in the coexistence component of the project, given that they undermined the relationship of trust between the beneficiaries and the partner, and between beneficiaries themselves. Participants agreed that these difficulties were not handled adequately by the partner, and C-AME saw evidence in interviews of the

persistence of suspicion towards the beneficiaries that had received the products they requested on the part of those who had not. While these implementation errors were resolved by the partner during the second round of awards of seed capital, indicating the partner had identified the problem and was applying an adaptation strategy, the participants C-AME interviewed who received the seed capital as part of the project extension indicated that they proceeded with caution and distrust, taking unilateral measures to ensure they would receive the equipment they requested. This means, beneficiaries were more cautious about the oversight of the purchasing and delivery processes, and looked for additional information about the requested equipment. Although is adequate that participants take control of the process, it also demonstrates lack of trust between the parties engaged in project implementation. All of these challenges and the attitudes demonstrated by the vendor are especially troubling in the context of a project seeking to construct reconciliation processes by strengthening pillars like trust and dialogue.

CCA had difficulty understanding the procurement procedures established by USAID. The partner reported to C-AME that they had some difficulty combining the beneficiaries' lists of requested equipment and the list of allowable purchases that USAID provided through PAR. For the partner, this process of alignment between the two lists caused delays in the procurement process, but, contrary to what the beneficiaries perceived, CCA does not consider this a significant challenge. In participant interviews, some participants explained that the discrepancy between these lists was the excuse put forth by the partner for not being able to procure certain elements, claiming that USAID had not authorized the purchase.

RECONCILIATION

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

The psychosocial work carried out on the project precipitated positive changes in participants. Some particpants explained to C-AME that the project generated positive changes in their lives in the realms of self-confidence, self-esteem, self-care, and the generation of skills for coexistence. One beneficiary told C-AME that he saw himself motivated to make changes on a personal level and in his close relationships, going back to the dialogue and listening skills acquired in project workshops to resolve problems in life. Participants interviewed explained that the project helped them know themselves better and transform their relationships with themselves and with others.

The collective experiential workshops carried out on the project allowed for the exchange of experiences between participants, promoting recognition of the "other" and the establishment of relationships based on empathy. Dialogue about their personal experiences, and listening to other beneficiaries describe their problems, helped participants recognize themselves as resilient and capable of overcoming difficult situations. According to the partner, being able to express feelings of pain allowed beneficiaries to relieve these burdens and identify themselves with others. Beneficiaries described this exercise as strengthening their listening ability, and inspiring feelings of solidarity and empathy about the experiences of other people who have lived through difficult moments.

II. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Difficulties with the delivery of seed capital affected the construction of trust between the partner and beneficiaries. As introduced above, the challenges present during the award of seed capital negatively impacted the achievement of the overall objective of the project and undermined the advances that had been achieved toward the reconciliation drivers in question. Although the implementer and beneficiaries

highlighted some advances in the development of reconciliation abilities (primarily dialogue, solidarity, and tolerance) attributed to the project implementation, and they consider that these abilities can be applied in their daily lives, when difficulties arose in the awards process, neither the partner nor the participants made use of these abilities they had acquired. This represents a barrier limiting the possibility of the project transforming attitudes and behaviors of its subjects—both partner and participants—to act and respond appropriately in moments of crisis. Further, this incident highlights the difficulty in applying, at personal, interpersonal, and social levels, the advances achieved in the implementation of the project.

Lack of emphasis on the development of reconciliation as the objective of the project. The partner and participants both exhibited difficulty identifying what components of the initiative contribute to the construction of reconciliation processes. Staff from CCA was not clear about the potential for a process of economic strengthening to furthering the construction of reconciliation processes. The partner circumscribes the achievements of the project and the related skills development as a means to develop businesses. Meanwhile, the participants report that they do not remember *reconciliation* being addressed in the project activities. Some interviewees had difficulty describing their understanding of reconciliation and identifying (and self-identifying) transformed agents with a role to play in it. This lack of clarity on the part of both the implementer and its beneficiaries reveals an absence of the reconciliation component as a central tenet of the project and signals the importance of strengthening the methodological transfer of the RA between PAR and the partner, and between the partner and beneficiaries.

GENDER, SOCIAL INCLUSION, AND MIGRATION

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

The participation of young migrants and returnees in the project contributed to facilitating their social integration process. The project was designed to support social integration of migrant and returnee populations by strengthening their productive endeavors. According to migrant beneficiaries C-AME interviewed, this was surprising and gratifying focus of the project and in their experience, it is uncommon that entities like CCA designate effort and resources to the strengthening and promotion of businesses belonging to youth and migrants. For them, as a highly vulnerable population, the opportunity to participate in the project was encouraging. One participant describes their reaction to learning about the project:

> "– A friend gave me the flier that the CCA made and it seemed great to me that they were giving an opportunity to Young entrepreneurs, because [the opportunities] are mostly not like that. […] I remember that I didn't even believe it, I looked on Facebook to see if it was true and it was!"
>
> – (C-AME interviewer) "And why did you not believe it was real?"
>
> – Because of the nationality factor. It was good that the Chamber of Commerce was supporting Venezuelans' businesses and that is why I was surprised and I went to ask about it."
>
> *[Telephone interview with a CCA project participant, Arauca, July 2020]*

II. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Difficulty in identifying and handling topics related to gender. The CCA demonstrated very little, superficial understanding of the topic of gender and was not aware of gender inequality and gender-based violence. Attempting to uncover more about the implementation of the GSI strategy in the project, C-AME learned from the partner that this had been carried out through an additional activity led by PAR in Arauca, in which the members of the CCA team and fewer than five project beneficiaries participated. The partner reported that there were no other activities with a gender focus carried out with the rest of the project beneficiaries. This signals a lack of depth of implementation of the gender focus on this project, and the necessity for expanding the training process with partners and beneficiaries so that there are specific activities geared toward sensitizing these individuals on the gender gaps that exist in the region.

SUSTAINABILITY

The most significant achievement of the project is related to the process of training participants; the skill-building workshops provided them with knowledge and tools to manage their businesses better. The most significant challenges were visible in the reconciliation aspects of the project and they highlight the need for PAR to strengthen follow-up in their process of implementation and deepen the transfer of both the RA and the GSI from PAR to partners so that this is then transferred to beneficiaries.

CÁMARA DE COMERCIO DE CÚCUTA - CÚCUTA (NORTE DE SANTANDER)

INCLUSIVE, ENTREPRENEURIAL, AND SUPPORTIVE CÚCUTA

Title	*Cúcuta incluyente, emprendedora y solidaria* (In English, Inclusive, entrepreneurial, and supportive Cúcuta)
Implementing partner	Cámara de Comercio de Cúcuta[17] (CCC)
Participants/ Beneficiaries	Youth, women, others. Additionally, the project profile mentions participation of migrants, returnees, and host populations.
Implementation period	May 22, 2019 – July 15, 2020
PAR Code	PAR-03-146

This project is implemented by the Cúcuta Chamber of Commerce (CCC) in the department of Norte de Santander, and targets youth, migrants, returnees and host populations. The project objective is to promote and strengthen business skills and initiatives of 150 beneficiaries generating income opportunities and social inclusion, through three components: 1) Training, advice, and financial leverage for beneficiary businesses and business concepts including, among other activities, awarding seed capital (materials and equipment) to 75 small or micro-enterprises; 2) psycho-emotional support, provided through PAR's Reconciliation Focus implemented by Universidad Simón Bolívar; and 3) a communications and positive messaging strategy, including beneficiary participation in a "Strengthened, Integrated, and Supportive Cúcuta" fair. Though the project began with 75 businesses under component two, this was later expanded to 116 due to a time and budget extension of the sub-agreement.

The Project has been extended twice; initially it was slated to close at the end of February 2020, but it was extended first to April 30, then to July 15. However, due to a temporary suspension by the president and seven members of the board of directors of the CCC, on orders from the regional attorney general's office, at the time of C-AME's last conversation with CCC (August 5, 2020), the activity had been unilaterally ended.

ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECT SPECIFIC COMPONENT: DEVELOPMENT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

Teaching strategies used in the business workshops contributed to improved beneficiary knowledge of business administration and organization. The practical methodologies and audiovisual tools used by workshop facilitators enabled beneficiaries to understand administrative concepts. Given the variations in level of training and the ages of the beneficiaries that participated in the project, the use of adequate methodologies allowed both those who had prior training and/or knowledge in business concepts, as well as those who had none, to acquire useful knowledge and tools to strengthen their enterprises. Beneficiaries reported that the teaching strategy used by facilitators was attuned to the different participant types and their different levels of knowledge about business administration and organizational

[17] In English, Chamber of Commerce of Cúcuta

topics. According to the beneficiaries, they learned about budgets, marketing, social media management, and other concepts. On the basis of the knowledge acquired in the workshops, some participants were able to identify spending that surpassed their earnings, and using the tools they learned, made necessary adjustments. As a result of their participation in the project, beneficiaries professed that they had the necessary tools to better anticipate production costs and the profit margin required to increase the income derived from their enterprises, and they consider that the knowledge they acquired allowed them to visualize themselves as business owners.

Alliances generated through the project improved the prospects for the partner in work with migrant populations. According to the implementing partner, alliances with local and regional organizations permitted them to strengthen project implementation. For example, the partner sought to align itself with international cooperation entities—through the Grupo Interagencial sobre Flujos Migratorios Mixtos[18] (Spanish acronym GIFMM)—to access a database containing data on migrant and returnee populations that had participated in humanitarian assistance and development projects, which CCC used to develop its call for participants and selection criteria for the cohort. The partner reported that, given its lack of experience working with migrant populations, working with GIFMM was effective not only for improving their knowledge of the migrant issue, but also for informing and adequately redirecting participants whenever questions arose in interactions with beneficiaries. Further, given that CCC's focus is on business and not on psychosocial support, the partner worked with Universidad Simón Bolívar to implement the psychosocial component of the project. For this, the partner relied on instructors and interns (students in their last semester of school) from both psychology and social work programs who, with support from PAR's psychosocial professional, led the DecidoSer workshops.

II. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

In the case of the CCC, the seed capital delivery has had multiple delays. The delivery was originally scheduled for December 2019, but it was initially postponed to the end of March 2020. In February 2020, the project scope (from 75 to 116 participants receiving the seed capital) and budget (addition of new participants and increased the seed capital amount per beneficiary) were extended, which pushed the delivery date to late June-early July, 2020. However, the June date was also pushed, and when C-AME talked with the implementing partner in August 2020, the capital seed had not been delivered to beneficiaries. The **first delay** (from December 2019 to March 2020) occurred (according to the partner) because beneficiaries did not comply with the attendance goals necessary to receive the capital, and also because CCC had difficulties understanding USAID procurement processes for small purchases such as those requested by project beneficiaries. The **second delay** happened because of the updates in the project scope of work. But by the end of March, and due to the COVID-19 health related state of emergency measures, CCC requested to PAR to suspend the contract for the first time, claiming that they could not carry out the procurement processes or program seed capital deliveries. In April the project received a second (no cost) contract extension in order to close the project, until July 15. The **third delay** occurred because in June seven members of CCC board of directors, including the head of the board were suspended by the Regional´s attorney´s office, leaving CCC without a legal representative who could sign contracts and implement procurement processes necessary for the purchase of seed capital materials and equipment. In addition, because of the lack of legal representative, the CCC requested another contract suspension. When C-AME talked with the implementing partner in

[18] Interagency Group on Mixed Migratory Flows

August 2020, the capital seed had not been delivered to beneficiaries, and even in March, when C-AME talked to beneficiaries, they expressed their concerns and uncertainty for not having received the seed funding equipment and materials, and the project remained suspended.

Issues related to activity planning and communication with participants. The beneficiaries pointed out some limitations in activity planning and development that can be summarized in the three points below.

Communication issues made it difficult for beneficiaries to plan their participation. According to beneficiaries, on various occasions, the call for activity participants was done in the evening before, or the morning of, the activity. Beneficiaries had to adjust their personal or work schedules with little advance notice because they felt they could not decline attending the project activities when their opportunity to receive an investment in their business was on the line. Some beneficiaries reported having to suspend work activities because CCC called for their attendance at project activities. Further, according to some beneficiaries, this caused some to have to leave the project. Participants consider that advance planning and communication of the activity schedule would have allowed them to better organize their time and plan their participation. Further, some beneficiaries indicated to C-AME that despite having attended all of the activities, they were made to participate in make-up sessions of some activities because their names [mistakenly] appeared on a list of participants with absences, which would have prohibited their meeting the requirements to receive seed funding.

In light of this situation, CCC indicates that their business advisors (those responsible for participant recruitment and activity implementation) made various attempts to organize the beneficiaries, but they encountered difficulties communicating with them. The partner argues that some characteristics of the population in question (e.g. not being in the habit of checking email frequently, interruption in cell phone signal due to frequent visits to Venezuela) complicated communications with them. As a mitigation strategy, advisors created WhatsApp groups to distribute project information. In case any beneficiaries could not be contacted this way, the advisors sent text messages. Further, anticipating possible complaints by the beneficiaries for not having been contacted to participate in the activities, CCC started to keep records of their multiple attempts to contact each one.

Lack of an oversight strategy for beneficiary participation delayed the implementation timeline. Given the significant challenges with attendance throughout implementation, the implementing partner opted to repeat workshops to guarantee participants could meet the minimum attendance requirements (to attend 80% of business workshops and 100% of psychosocial support sessions) to access seed capital. By January 2020, the project had not achieved the goal of 75 participants meeting the minimum attendance requirement, and rather than grant awards to those participants who *had* completed the required courses, CCC devised a strategy to delay *all* awards and repeat training sessions until they met their goal. By the end of the first round of repeats, the goal of 75 graduates still had not been met, but by the end of the second repeat round, 120 people met the attendance requirement to obtain funding and materials, of which the project disqualified four recipients, for a total of 116 who were slated to receive the capital investment. Given the delays, the award of seed capital to all participants, initially planned for December 2019, was postponed to February 2020. While CCC did attempt to initiate the purchasing process in February, by March, the COVID-19 health crisis emerged, and in June, the president and seven members of the board of directors of the CCC, on orders of the regional attorney general's office pending an investigation, suspended the activity (see Context Analysis for more details). For these reasons, despite an extension of the sub-

agreement between PAR and CCC that would have included the provision of seed capital to 116 participants, by August 5 (the date of C-AME's last conversation with CCC), the beneficiaries still had not received these awards. These delays in the implementation timeline and resulted in CCC failing to deliver its ultimate objective of providing seed capital to participant businesses.

CCC had difficulty adapting to the procurement procedures established by the donor. The partner explained to C-AME that they had difficulty understanding and implementing the list of procurement requirements from USAID furnished to them by PAR. According to the implementing partner, it was difficult to clearly identify the types and uses of the equipment that are permitted to be acquired with project resources, and these items also do not necessarily correspond to the needs of the small businesses such as those run by the project participants. For example, the list from USAID might include an industrial scale food blender, while a microenterprise owner might only need a household or restaurant-grade blender for their business; it was unclear to CCC whether purchasing this for a qualifying participant would comply with USAID's restrictions. The partner reported that translating, understanding, and clarifying doubts about the list took time, and that they proceeded with caution and did not advance the purchase processes for seed capital items until they were certain whether or not the selected items were allowable by USAID. As such, CCC opted to wait to know which participants were going to receive seed capital and which would not. According to what they reported to C-AME, in agreement with their purchase manual, CCC determined it was not possible to issue a direct request for purchases for the total amount of the items that were to be awarded to the beneficiaries, and as such, the purchasing process had to be subject to a public procurement process with the appropriate time frame.

These situations related to the adjustments to planning and communication with beneficiaries are an indication of the limited experience of the implementing partner in work with migrants and other vulnerable populations, let alone with a donor like USAID. Per the issues described above, the partner had difficulty following up with participants who faced attendance challenges, which delayed implementation. C-AME also saw evidence of a lack of understanding of the target population, seen in the absence of strategies, from the planning stage onward, for working with migrants who the partner came to see as a drifting population unaccustomed to consistently attending activities such as those organized by CCC for an extended period of time. Nevertheless, the partner recognized the difficulty in convening migrants, particularly youth, and as such opted to redirect its target strategy. When their initial call for participants generated hundreds of responses, but too few from migrant youth (and it is unclear why this was), CCC elected to issue a call for youth participants from the Cúcuta host community instead to meet the minimum required number of young participants, resulting in a participant cohort consisting of mostly middle-aged and older migrants and local Colombian youth.

Handling of information about seed capital generated uncertainty and desperation among participants. Beneficiaries indicated that it was not clear to them what the upper limit on the amount of seed capital was, and so, at the moment of developing a plan for using it, including obtaining quotes for the required inputs and raw materials, they used a base amount quoted by CCC of 2,000,000 COP (about $539 USD), which was later changed. The partner maintains that the information provided to the beneficiaries at the start of the project about the amount of seed capital was only for the purposes of the beneficiaries developing a business and purchase strategy as a learning exercise. The change in the advertised seed funding amount was seen by beneficiaries as yet another task requiring their effort to adjust their budgets and seek new quotes. Further, the decision to not use the providers identified by

the beneficiaries, as CCC elected to carry out its own procurement process, has the potential to disempower beneficiaries by sending the message that the research and vendor selection information provided by them was inadequate. The implementer has the responsibility to manage beneficiary expectations to the extent possible, especially when it comes to the use of resources. In the case of developing learning exercises, it is always important to clarify and reiterate to the participants the purpose of the activity.

On the other hand, the multiple delays in award of the seed capital (as of August 2020, the beneficiaries had not received it) discouraged the participants and generated uncertainty among them. In a focus group C-AME organized in March, various participants seemed skeptical about whether they would ever receive the awards, and participants perceived the delays and difficulties as issues stemming from poor project planning and not as extraneous factors. Participants expressed that they needed the investments to be able to strengthen their enterprises, speed up production, and improve the quality of their products (e.g. one participant hoped to have a machine they had ordered, as a result of the potential seed funding, that would help them finish an order of 1,000 pairs of shoes in time). One participant described the situation:

> Truthfully, there is a perception about CCC, when one sits down to look at it, that there was no planning. Also, an important issue from all this (…) about these projects, that should be handled very delicately, is about expectations, because it could be that I say to you: 'I am going to give you these classes [that] are going to help you to do this,' and maybe I said something that raised your expectations; people get frustrated. (…) It is really important, because the enterprise, for you [referring to the beneficiaries with greatest vulnerability] is a livelihood, (…) a pillar within something that you hope to construct, to secure sustainability. For many people, for example, who are in a subsistence economy, it [the business venture] is for daily survival. I can either attend a workshop or go to work, and I cannot do both, because if I do not [work], I do not survive. I mean, there are issues that are at the limit [of what participants can tolerate], so, managing expectations well in that case is key." *[Focus group of CCC beneficiaries. Cúcuta. March 2020]*

RECONCILIATION

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

The creation of close ties and friendships between participants provided them emotional support and generated business opportunities. Beneficiaries explained that the project activities allowed them to construct personal and commercial connections with other participants. For the beneficiaries who are far from their families, building friendships enabled them to feel connected and supported in their endeavors. Participants consider that the project incentivized group work and the formation of alliances that helped them support each other and strengthen their businesses. As a result, and building upon the conversations that began in the context of the project, some participants have had projects and ideas that have allowed them to expand the markets for their businesses. Participants told C-AME they consult with the trainers and with their cohort about new projects and investments to know how to strengthen them.

Psychosocial activities contributed to strengthen participants' emotional management, empathy, and empowerment. Participants reported that the psychosocial workshops allowed them to get to know

themselves better and understand the reality of others. The workshops were spaces to vent, in which they could express their problems and empathize with the difficulties of others. Participants indicated workshops helped them build confidence in their abilities, contributing to higher self-esteem and better management and expression of their emotions. By participating in activities, beneficiaries felt more empowered, confident, and trusting in themselves and others; they relayed to C-AME that these spaces provided them an added value given that, while the learning about business administration from the technical workshops could have been found elsewhere (like on the internet), what they learned in these psychosocial workshops could only be gained through the experience of sharing it with others. The implementing partner considers that the psychosocial workshops and the DecidoSer methodology facilitated in participants the recognition of their abilities. According to CCC, the participants' transformations, in terms of how they refer to themselves, are remarkable.

II. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Lack of clarity around the reconciliation component as a differentiating factor of the project. Both the partner and participants praise the psychosocial component in terms of how it contributed to business activities. In other words, they understand the strategy of psychosocial support as a way to strengthen businesses, but not the other way around. This shows participants had difficulty understanding the project within the context of the reconciliation processes promoted by PAR. For the participants, the objective of the psychosocial activities was to develop necessary skills to be entrepreneurs (e.g. assertive communication, leadership, empathy), but they did not recognize these abilities as a means to strengthen reconciliation. Though participants consider that they can apply the skills acquired through the project in their daily lives, they limit the applicability of this learning to their business and economic activities. The partner did not demonstrate, in their narratives to C-AME, a connection between the objective of the project and the construction of reconciliation processes, either. While the partner recognizes that narrative transformation, on the part of the participants, is a fundamental element of the project, the partner sees the potential for these narratives to be transformative to the participants' income opportunities and livelihoods only, and not to their potential for reconciliation. Though economic empowerment is an intermediate result in PAR's results framework, it is not the ultimate objective of the program.

GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION, AND MIGRATION

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

Participation in the project allowed beneficiaries to tear down stigmatizing prejudices about migrants. Colombian beneficiaries, primarily youth, who had not interacted in their daily life with migrants prior to the project, explained that by participating in activities and workshops, they came to understand the situation of migrants and they subsequently dismantled their prejudices about Venezuelans. These youth admitted that they had negative prejudices about this population, which they attributed to disinformation and negative perceptions spreading on social media and communication networks. They reported that their experience interacting during project activities helped them learn not to judge and stigmatize migrants, caused them to change their attitudes and behaviors towards migrants, and to understand that the two populations could support each other.

II. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Participants repeated gender stereotypes in conversations with C-AME. In the data collection events, C-AME observed that, while participants recognized some forms of gender-based violence and inequality in the contexts in which they live, they also demonstrated normalizing, in their words and actions, of gender gaps, inequality, and violence, and they marginalized non-hegemonic sexual identities and orientations. The persistence of these stereotypes among beneficiaries indicates the need to strengthen the implementation of the gender focus in projects, for example, by designing specific activities to sensitize participants about gender gaps, as well as a continuous, cross-cutting implementation of the GSI in project activities.

Participants identified a cultural gap between Venezuelan women and Colombian women, in terms of their empowerment and knowledge of their rights. Women participants in C-AME's data collection events identified cultural differences between the nationality groups; Venezuelan women recognized themselves as more independent and courageous, indicating they saw traces of submission in their Colombian counterparts. Although the former indicates the existence of an important empowerment discourse that could be motivating, the project does not have flexible strategies to identify and socialize these discourses in a way that empowers the women who do not identify with them, and in a way that minimizes the risk of victimizing some individuals or creating tension within the group of participants.

SUSTAINABILITY

The most significant project achievement was the development of entrepreneurial skills among participants. The participants told C-AME that thanks to the workshops and advice they have more knowledge and better tools to organize and manage their businesses. These improved skills contributed to better administrative and financial management of their enterprises, but - overall – it helped them to acknowledge individual capacities and potentialities, which ultimately helped them to increase their self-confidence and empowerment.

On the other hand, the main project challenges were mainly due to the partner's lack of experience in working with international donors to support vulnerable populations. The challenges mentioned above in planning, communication and monitoring of the process, became challenges for the implementation of the program to the extent that the inexperience of the partner did not allow him to take the appropriate measures at the right time to solve them. The mismanagement of participants' expectations, added to the situation faced by the Chamber's management, are important challenges for the sustainability of the project's achievements, since they directly impact the individual processes of empowerment of participants and strengthening of their undertakings, and the relationship between them and the implementing partner.

NUESTRO FLOW - CÚCUTA (NORTE DE SANTANDER) & MAICAO (LA GUAJIRA)

DIVERSITY, A KEY ELEMENT IN BUILDING INITIATIVES FOR COEXISTENCE AND RECONCILIATION WITH ETHNIC, MIGRANT AND HOST POPULATIONS

Title	*La diversidad, elemento clave para la construcción de iniciativas de convivencia y reconciliación con población étnica, migrante y de acogida* (In English, Diversity, a key element in building initiatives for coexistence and reconciliation with ethnic, migrant and host populations)
Implementing partner	Nuestro Flow S.A.S.
Participants/ Beneficiaries	Displaced populations, men, indigenous, young people, LGBTI individuals, and women. According to project documents, participants include Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees, displaced and vulnerable hots populations.
Implementation period	October 10, 2019 – March 31, 2020
PAR Code	PAR-03-180

The project *Diversity, a key element in building initiatives for coexistence and reconciliation with ethnic, migrant and host populations* was implemented by Nuestro Flow S.A.S.[19] (NF). It aimed at promoting actions to make culture and intersectionality visible as they happen in the black, Raizal, Palenquera, indigenous, gypsy and migrant Venezuelan communities, expecting to enable spaces for dialogue and promotion of equality, diversity, solidarity, and collaboration to strengthen the social fabric in Maicao, Cúcuta and Bogotá. Although the project had three implementation cities, this analysis builds upon interviews with participants from Maicao (La Guajira) and Cúcuta (Norte de Santander). The project included the following activities: 1) 20 meetings in 10 public and private educational institutions in the cities of Maicao and Cúcuta where the NF-owned booklet "La Liga de la Diversidad Étnica"[20] was used, to increase awareness among students about the cultural diversity of Colombia, as well as the importance of breaking stereotypes regarding the differences between population groups. 2) Two photographic exhibits in a public space in Maicao and Cúcuta, to encourage 300 inhabitants to reflect on the impact of discrimination and inequality. 3) A series of 12 videos developed by child and young participants where they present their concerns about the diversity of ethnic groups in their territories. 4) Production of the second volume of the booklet "La Liga de la Diversidad"[21] in order to include new characters that represent migrant populations.

La Liga de la Diversidad Étnica is an initiative led by NF that includes a series of cartoon characters that use cultural and ethnical features of Colombians to create super heroes to represent the power(s) of diversity. The first and main fictional character created by NF is called “Candelaria”, who represents an Afro Colombian girl, victim of forced displacement who arrived to Bogotá from Nuquí in the department of Chocó. The goal of the character is to reframe ideas about African Colombians, transform negative conceptions around the use of color black (e.g. black sheep), and rethink behaviors

[19] In Colombia the acronym SAS means “Sociedad por Acciones Simplificada”, in English, simplified joint stock company.
[20] In English, *the league of ethnic diversity*.
[21] The word “ethnic” was removed for the second and third booklets, since ethnic diversity is not the only component of diversity.

towards the meaning being black in Colombia. Broadly, the goal of the characters of the league, that are based on features of different demographic groups who live in Colombia, is to deconstruct behaviors that promote exclusion based on gender, ethnicity, place of origin, or special abilities.

ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECT SPECIFIC COMPONENT: INCREASE AWARENESS ABOUT DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

Project activities and characters allowed NF to raise awareness about diversity. According to the implementing partner, the activities implemented as part of the project allowed participants to think about diversity. For instance, the use of the characters of the "Liga de la Diversidad Étnica" allowed children and young participants to understand why "being different" should not be stigmatized, quite the contrary, there are important values (super powers) derived from diversity. One teacher from Maicao participating in the project stated this strategy is very useful because children are very perceptive and are open to receive new information which can help a lot to reduce stigmas. In fact, the use of the cartoon characters and experiential activities was highlighted by participants as interesting and helped them better understand the positive messages around diversity. Another example was offered by another teacher from Cúcuta, who commented that, during the project activity at her school, one student was able to express she felt she was being bullied, and it was an opportunity for setting up boundaries. Teachers interviewed by C-AME asserted the project offed an opportunity for students and themselves to reflect about the importance of acknowledging diversity in their cities, which are not only highly diverse but also very excluding with persistent traditional mindset about gender roles, and complex interactions between social class and ethnicity. Although the project helped to raise awareness about diversity, the length of the activities and project time were short, therefore its capacity to change narratives, attitudes and behaviors was limited by short-term participation. Nonetheless, raising awareness about cultural diversity is an important achievement, especially in places like Cúcuta and Maicao, where there are persistent negative stereotypes based on gender, ethnicity, place of origin and/or special abilities.

High demand and youth engagement in Nuestro Flow led workshops (an activity to use leisure time). The implementing partner indicated that upon their arrival to Maicao, they collaborated with Casa de la Cultura de Maicao-La Guajira[22] to carry out one of the audiovisual workshops. Initially, NF planned to include 25 children and young people, but the demand for leisure activities is that high in that city, that 60 people arrived upon the call for participants. After the initial participant target of 25, NF adapted its activities to include a total of 40 participants (15 more over the additional target). Not only that, participants expressed to C-AME that having opportunities for using their leisure time is important in a place where there is lack of opportunities for leisure time use. Parents confirm this perception, stating that the implementation of these types of activities are important since youth are usually exposed to gang activity and violence and specially migrant youth lack opportunities to engage in cultural activities that allow them to better use their leisure time. For the implementing partner, this was an unexpected project outcome, since they did not expect their call for participants received such high demand. In addition, they consider this indicative of the local dynamics of lack of institutional legal opportunities for

[22] In English, House of culture of Maicao-La Guajira.

youth, which can also add to the dynamics of violence and exclusion persistent in places like Maicao and Cúcuta.

Use of DecidoSer as a toolkit to frame diversity-focus activities. The implementing partner highlighted that DecidoSer was a "baseline" for designing activities with project beneficiaries. As detailed by NF staff, they used the toolkit to plan their activities and it helped them to frame the discussions around diversity. Both the partner and participants highlight that the experiential component of the activities (an element taken from DecidoSer) helped children and youth to feel engaged in the group activities. Students indicated that they felt comfortable participating in the activities because "those are way more than just sitting at a classroom and listening at someone talking", but instead they were able to engage in activities that merged the experiential DecidoSer aspects with the audiovisual workshops and arts-based activities. According to one teacher from Cúcuta: "The initiative brought by Nuestro Flow is very striking because it is something that moves the kids a lot, the audiovisual part. Another thing that moves the kids a lot is the physical part, what is music, what is culture, what is art, through, it moves a lot in the sector graffiti, drawing, artistic expression in children." *[Phone interview with beneficiaries from Nuestro Flow, Maicao, August 2020].* This illustrates, that it the methodological part of the project was critical when working with children and young persons.

Co-creation of new materials (NF+Participants). Both implementing partners and participants (teachers) acknowledge that the second and third "Liga de la Diversidad" booklets developed upon the inputs of participants. As part of the project activities, NF was able to systematically collect the participants discussions around the need for new characters for the "Liga de la Diversidad". Using these inputs NF designed two new booklets that include characters representing Venezuelan migrants and portray the negative effects of the Venezuelan crisis that generated a significant influx of Venezuelans into Colombia. Booklet number 2 includes two new characters: a little girl named Eva who is a Venezuelan migrant and uses a wheelchair to get around; her super powers are creativity and capacity to reuse recycled materials. The second character is an indigenous boy named Matiki, from Serranía del Perijá in the eastern border between Colombia and Venezuela, who arrived to Cúcuta due to the socio-economic crisis in Venezuela and extractive processes and violence in his homeland. These characters seek to represent the diversity, vulnerabilities, and benefits of the migrant population arriving to Colombia. With strategies like this, the project not only attempts to highlight the positive aspects of migration, but also increase awareness about the diversity that exists in border regions.

II. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Limited knowledge of cultural context. NF is an organization based in Bogotá and moved staff to implement activities in Maicao and Cúcuta. At times, this lack of context awareness turned out to be problematic. According to the staff from NF there was a situation during implementation in which they asked Wayuu children about their birthdays, while trying to explain what a birthday is and how it is celebrated in western cultures (i.e. having birthday cakes), but the children were completely unfamiliar with this practice. Two learning opportunities appear here; project implementation needs to be aware of the context dynamics, including those related to the socio-economic status of participants, and in this case cultural practices existent in the territory. Second, this type of project, which intended to raise awareness about diversity, has to be aware of local cultural practices of the communities they work with. For projects like the one implemented by NF implementers have to understand the cultural dynamics of the communities, before raising awareness about cultural diversity. This highly relevant

when working with indigenous communities which cosmological views differ from western cultures, something that the staff from NF acknowledges as very important when working with these groups.

Limited strategies to include local knowledge into implementation. The project implementers highlight that the first step during implementation was to identify local partners and to develop networks to ensure implementation happens with local partners, this was something that happened both in Cúcuta and Maicao. While networks were created, participants (teachers) from Maicao indicated that the project did not do enough to include local knowledge and culture into project activities. In a reflection about the role of NF and former initiatives in their community, one teacher from a Wayuu community in Maicao states:

> […] not only we should know what the organizations that arrive [to the communities] are doing, but also look at it, to rethink the theme of articulation, they need to look at what is being done in the community, to see what has been done in the community and therefore see how to articulate [the new project with local experience]. It is important […] that the communication process continues […], and then when someone else arrives [other organizations] […] to make sure that the history remains, that there are coordinated actions. For instance, there needs to be a completely different look to the representative figures in the community, like the *palabrero*[23], someone who is a living expression of how to enable dialogue and of how to bring up harmony in the middle of conflict." *[Phone interview with beneficiaries from Nuestro Flow, Maicao, August 2020]*

This reflection process from a Wayuu teacher highlights the difficulties they had to articulate actions between the communities and NF. Although he acknowledges the valuable knowledge that NF brings to the communities, also suggests that there are value in the knowledge and traditions of the communities like the Wayuu, which can inform the project framework and implementation actions. The situation detailed earlier about lack of knowledge of Wayuu people's conceptions about birthdays could be seen as an incident that demonstrate the need for better articulation. This could happen if the implementing partner does reach out earlier in the implementation, not only to establish contacts but also to understand the communities views on the issues they want to raise awareness of. While project outcomes such as the co-creation of project materials (i.e the second and third "Liga de la Diversidad" booklets) reflect on the project capacity to articulate with local participants, the lack of strategies to consider local practices in the planning stages of the project limit its capacity to fully engage with local communities, which is key to achieve narrative changes about diversity.

Limited implementation time (effects monitoring local processes). Both implementing partner and project participants highlighted that the project implementation frame was short and did not allow the project to go beyond raising awareness about diversity. Because of the short project timeframe, children and young participants only attended to one or two targeted activities, rather to be part of a longer process. Many of these children and youth attended the project as part of a school activity. In fact, during the remote fieldwork conducted by C-AME some participants expressed they did not recall having attended the project activities, or resemble the project or its purpose. Although participants of this type are counted as project participants, effects of the initiative seem to be very limited. Here the

[23] Palabrero or "the messenger of the word" is a key figure in the traditional administration justice system of the Wayuu people. His role is to solve conflicts through mediation and negotiation.

limited implementation time, paired with limited capacity to establish following-up mechanisms limit the project capacity to produce lasting effects in the different implementation sites.

Gender-awareness activities were very limited. When asked participants about gender awareness resulting from project implementation, they did not identify specific activities seeking to deal with issues regarding gender inclusion. Not that the project was not concerned about issues of gender equality, for instance, the interaction between the staff and participants allowed at times to draw attention towards behaviors that are against gender equality; or one of the videos prepared by participants in Cúcuta, featured a character who is bisexual (see video here). However, some participants stated that issues like normalization of gender inequality or stigmas towards gender differences were not mentioned at all during the NF led activities or do not recall having discussed issues related to gender equality. Although gender was not the main focus of the alliance between PAR and NF for this project, the initiative could have better used the partner capacity to plan implementation around the inclusion of a more clear gender strategy.

Implementing partner is unsure of safety protocols in case of security incidents. Implementation of NF activities took place in two cities where safety is a concern for locals, as well as for implementers of development projects such as the NF staff. Although NF is aware of the security concerns and during implementation they never felt threatened by situations of this type, when asked about safety protocols they expressed not being aware of specific PAR established protocols in cases when personal safety was at stake. Although the implementers expressed being part of other organizations where such security protocols are in place, it is important that PAR recognizes what type of implementing partner NF is (not a local organization in the cases of Cúcuta and Maicao) to determine what type of safety protocols apply for non-local partners. It is important for PAR to ensure that implementers are not only familiar with the types of risks that exist in different areas of the cities, but also know and are in capacity to use safety protocols in case they need to use them.

SUSTAINABILITY

Can NF diversity activities complement PAR´s gender and social inclusion strategy. As detailed in this analysis NF led activities seek to promote actions to increase awareness about the diversity of cultures and intersectionality that exists in areas such as the cities of Maicao and Cúcuta. Since acceptance of cultural, ethnic, gender, and special abilities diversity is important under PAR results framework, capacity developed by NF can be utilized to inform PAR social inclusion strategy.