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FINAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF THE USAID/GUATEMALA COMMUNITY ROOTS ACTIVITY

Prepared under Contract No.: GS-I0F-0033M / 7200AA18M00016, Tasking N070

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DRG LEARNING, EVALUATION, AND RESEARCH ACTIVITY II

FINAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF THE USAID/GUATEMALA COMMUNITY ROOTS ACTIVITY

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Cover photo: Community Prevention Council (COCOPRE) members in Saspán, San Juan Ermita, Chiquimula. Photo taken by the evaluation team with their permission.

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ACRONYMS

COCODE	Community Development Council
COCOPRE	Community Prevention Council
COMUPRES	Municipal Commissions for Violence Prevention
CR	Community Roots Activity
CSOs	Civil Society Organization
DRG	Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance
EDR	Evaluation Design Report
EQ	Evaluation Question
ET	Evaluation Team
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GoG	Government of Guatemala
IP	Implementing Partner
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interview
LER	Learning, Evaluation, and Research
NORC	National Opinion Research Center
PE	Performance Evaluation
PNC	National Civilian Police
RTI	Research Triangle International
SME	Subject Matter Expert
SOW	Statement of Work
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WV	World Vision

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

As part of the Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Learning, Evaluation, and Research (DRG-LER) II Activity, USAID requested that NORC carry out a performance evaluation (PE) to assess the effectiveness of the Community Roots (CR) Activity in reducing violence and irregular migration to the United States in targeted communities in Guatemala. The evaluation is intended to inform USAID decisions about future programming on these issues. This evaluation covers the period from December 2016 to October 20, 2022. The following three main evaluation questions, in priority order, were defined by USAID:

1. To what extent have the overall activities implemented by the project helped to reduce violence, especially intra-family and gender-based violence (GBV), in targeted communities? With a special focus on to what extent have:
 - a. innovative process, such as involvement of community-based violence prevention committees, helped reduce violence in targeted communities? and
 - b. innovative approaches, such as extra-curricular education, certification of competencies, and vocational training activities, helped reduce violence in targeted communities?
2. To what extent did the overall activities implemented by the project support the reintegration of returnees to their communities?
3. To what extent did the overall activities implemented by the project reduce irregular migration?

EVALUATION DESIGN

The Evaluation Team (ET) conducted a scoping trip to inform the evaluation design and collect preliminary data. The ET used a mixed-methods approach including key informant interviews (KIs), focus-group discussions (FGDs), open-ended written responses, surveys, and secondary data. Qualitative data were collected from youth, community, and municipal violence prevention committees, municipal authorities, private sector stakeholders, and the national police, for a total of 323 informants (including some in non-target municipalities). Survey data were collected from 124 target youth and 21 non-target youth as well as from 44 municipal authorities in the 20 target municipalities. Including the scoping trip, the ET collected data from 503 informants through 95 FGDs, 21 KIs, and 158 surveys. In total, 17 of the 20 municipalities and 39 communities out of the 80 communities targeted by the CR Activity were visited. All FGDs/KIs were audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded with a qualitative software program to facilitate analysis. Survey data crossed variables for comparative analyses (e.g., training/no training and migration propensity). The ET analyzed secondary data from government sources on migration and violence, doing a comparative analysis with non-target areas on the latter.

FINDINGS

EQ1 To what extent have the overall activities implemented by the project helped to reduce violence, especially intra-family and gender-based violence, in targeted communities?

One of the biggest hurdles for reducing violence—especially GBV, which is the most prevalent nationally—is the “culture of silence,” or the lack of reporting violence and/or filing legal claims due to fear and/or dependency (economic and/or psychological) of women with their husbands/domestic partners. Coupled with this culture of silence is the lack of trust in the police and other public institutions that they will act. Additionally, there is a lack of reliable and available data regarding acts of violence and legal claims, making it difficult for CR to track progress and for the ET to determine violence trends in target areas. However, even if accurate data were available, a rise or fall in GBV claims does not necessarily mean that violence has increased or decreased due to so many unreported cases.

Data from target municipalities obtained by CR staff and publicly available national data from target and non-target municipalities *both show an overall decrease in GBV legal claims during the last years of CR implementation*. Detailed, disaggregated GBV data by trimester obtained by CR by the Woman’s Observatory of the Public Ministry reflect a 33 percent decrease in legal claims from July 2020 to June 2022 in target municipalities. The ET obtained public GBV data from the same source and compared the numbers of GBV legal claims filed from 2021 to 2022 in target and non-target municipalities in the four target departments. The ET found that GBV reduction was substantially more in target municipalities in two departments, slightly more in one, and less in the other. However, due to the CR Activity’s small coverage and other confounding factors (e.g., the culture of silence), it is not possible to attribute a drop in GBV cases filed to CR interventions.

Municipal authorities and youth perceive CR as having had a positive impact on violence reduction, yet it is unclear why they hold such a perception. This perception was reflected in survey and FGD data. Perceptions and personal cases in target and non-target communities did not show a difference, yet a substantially higher percent of non-target youth knew of GBV cases in the past year. *Overall, women tended to perceive much higher levels of GBV in their communities than men, according to survey data and FGD data.* Youth of both sexes expressed that the CR Activity increased their awareness of GBV, legal rights, consequences, and how to take legal action. Finally, *the CR Activity’s strategy to work through government institutions was successful*, yet administrative rotations and electoral changes tend to undermine institutionalization of strategies.

EQIA. To what extent have innovative processes, such as involvement of community-based violence prevention committees, helped reduce violence in targeted communities?

The CR Activity sought to implement a multipronged strategy including: 1) supporting the formation of the Municipal Commissions for Violence Prevention (COMUPRES) and the community-level prevention committees (COCOPRES), mandated in the National Prevention Policy; 2) helping the COCOPRES implement youth outreach strategies and develop violence and migration prevention plans; 3) strengthening coordination between the municipal authorities and the National Civil Police (PNC) Unit for Community Prevention of Violence (UPCV) to contribute to institutionalizing the community policing philosophy; and 4) forming reference networks in each municipality made up key actors/entities that provide a range of services for cases of violence.

Overall, the COCOPRES has made an important contribution, including tackling the “culture of silence” around domestic violence, which is a key barrier to violence reduction, yet their level of effectiveness varied. While the CR actions implemented largely fulfilled all their targets related to these strategies, the COCOPRES’ degree of effectiveness in violence reduction varied across municipalities/communities. This was

contingent on geographical location, coordination with other community and municipal leaders, existing levels of community participation, and the extent of education and training. While two-thirds of the youth conveyed that violence prevention talks were helpful, they frequently expressed needing more information. It is concerning that 26 percent of youth surveyed were not familiar with the COCOPRES in their community or its role, which was outreach to youth and identification of youth for education and training courses, including those surveyed. This suggests the need for more energetic outreach.

CR support for strengthening inter-institutional relations contributed to improving the population's pervasive and long-standing lack of confidence and trust in the PNC. Strengthening was done between the municipal authorities, community organizations, the Unit for Community Prevention of Violence and Crime (UPCV), and the PNC at municipal and community levels. Yet this also varied across regions and remains a barrier to violence reduction.

The CR Activity's creation of reference networks further helped to strengthen inter-institutional coordination for violence prevention and attention to victims. These were made up of representatives from the different COCOPRES, PNC, health/mental health clinics, and municipal offices for women and children. Their sustainability is likely in some municipalities that show more leadership.

A high level of alcoholism was frequently named as a key contributing factor in GBV and intra-family violence. Virtually all informants noted this as one of the top problems faced in their community, which—while not seen necessarily as the cause of domestic violence—was certainly seen as a key trigger.

Finally, as expressed by many informants across all categories, *the economic empowerment of women is critically important to reduce GBV* so that they can be independent entities no longer subject to male behavior and decision-making.

EQIB To what extent have innovative approaches, such as extra-curricular education, certification of competencies, and vocational training activities, helped reduce violence in targeted communities?

Numerous informants, including municipal authorities, perceived the technical training and alternative education as highly important for violence reduction. While many informants felt the principal value of these activities was “keeping youth busy” and out of trouble, others felt that further education and technical training also provided possibilities for attitudinal changes that encourage healthier ways of interacting with others, increase self-esteem, and offer prospects for engaging in activities for possible income generation. *The alternative education also provided a key venue/space for youth to receive talks on GBV and gender equity imparted by the facilitator.* Youth learned about forms of GBV, their rights, and how to take legal action. Yet youth who opted only for technical training did not benefit from such talks through the training sessions themselves and only benefited from these presentations if they had a very active COCOPRE. *In most of the communities, youth felt that they needed more information, including written materials, on GBV and legal rights and how to take action.* Surveys suggest that informants believe youth involvement in training and educational activities are effective for reducing violence while they participate, but not necessarily in the long run.

Technical training and alternative education were perceived to be the most effective at reducing violence in target municipalities with the highest levels of gang violence. In Colomaba and Coatepeque, which have the highest levels of gang violence in the target communities, various stakeholders shared a general consensus that

the levels of gang violence had decreased due to the education and training provided. This suggests that perhaps the level of impact on violence reduction of the technical training and alternative education is context specific.

EQ2 To what extent did the overall activities implemented by the project support the reintegration of returnees to their communities?

CR support has taken the form of psychosocial assistance, certification of competencies, and efforts to include them in training programs, although returnees have been difficult to identify, considerably limiting reintegration efforts. The issue of returnees is complex and has posed challenges to the CR Activity due to what observers refer to as their “invisibility.” There is a generalized sense among municipal authorities, COCOPRES, and youth beneficiaries that returnees are often psychologically traumatized, experience shame, are in acute financial distress, and seek a low profile. The CR Activity coordinated with Casa Nuestras Raíces, an organization providing services to returned children, adolescents, and young people. CR’s implementing partner IDEI (Asociación para la Investigación, Desarrollo y Educación Integral) provided psychosocial services to 254 patients (175 female and 79 male), and a total of 578 therapy sessions were provided. Additionally, CR worked with INTECAP and other technical training institutes to obtain competency certification for 68 men and 12 women returnees in trades such as construction, carpentry, beekeeping, technology, and coffee farming.

There is a lack of government and donor support for returnees, yet good models exist. The validated care model for returned migrants developed for CR by Ideas para Guatemala/Asociación Grupo Enlace is a useful contribution to an urgent national policy discussion, providing comprehensive inter-institutional inputs that combine the necessary articulated strategies for initial humanitarian support; registration; psychosocial support programs; labor market insertion and productive integration; financial advice; and follow-up.

EQ3 To what extent did the overall activities implemented by the project reduce irregular migration?

The activity resulted in employment, self-employment, or internships for roughly a fifth of youth who benefited from education and training. The CR Activity met this goal, as well as the goals for the number of youth reached and private sector alliances established for employing youth. In total, the CR Activity established 24 alliances and reached 5,318 youth through alternative education (4,400), technical training (2,457), and competency certification (278). At CR’s close, 228 (4.3 percent) of these youth were self-employed, 61 (1 percent) were employed, and 831 (15.6 percent) were with internships. The one unmet target was the percent of households reporting cases of minors and youth that had migrated, which was 69 percent against a target of 45 percent. The strong pull of migration due to restricted economic opportunities was a constant and substantial challenge for CR. The high propensity for youth to migrate due to economic reasons was prevalent in all ET data. Yet most informants expressed that they believe CR made some impact on its reduction.

There was a wide range of youth perceptions about future opportunities and intention to migrate. Youth tended to fall into four categories: 1) those who were confident they could make a life for themselves in Guatemala; 2) those who were less confident but intended to stay and try; 3) youth that aimed to find work or start a business but intended to migrate if they didn’t succeed; and 4) youth who very clearly expressed their intention to migrate to the United States. COCOPRES talks helped to dissuade some youth from migrating, especially those sharing personal stories about its hardships, yet COCOPRES varied across

communities in the level of effort of such prevention talks. A little over half of the youth indicated having received a talk on the topic, some of whom said it helped dissuade them.

The educational programs and the technical vocational training may have helped dissuade some youth from migrating and provided a degree of optimism about possible future earnings as well as positive behavioral values. The 65 youth that had received seed capital (in kind) or were trained in productive areas tied to their local economies were the most confident about succeeding. Many youth that had taken technical training were generating some income, but most were clear that the training would not serve to underpin a living wage. Many informants felt that the courses were too short, and others felt they could be tailored better to fit local market niches: in some cases, agriculture.

Youth assuming leadership roles in the project and certain vocational courses seemed to contribute to “rootedness and community attachment.” Several young people from FGDs had become volunteers with CR, such as violence prevention promoters, and reflected a sense of purpose and identity. Also, some youth that did technical training related to their local terrain, such as eco-tourism and coffee production/services, expressed having more appreciation for the nature in their country and municipality and wanting to have a more active role in protecting it and sharing it.

CR formed several successful private sector alliances and partners with successful local development models, but they were limited in number. Several local development and small business alliances/partners that CR supported generated employment/self-employment for youth and fostered rootedness. Several private sector alliances that provided training and future employment prospects were also successful, yet these benefited a relatively small number of youth.

While not as strong as economic necessity, violence was also found to be a driver of youth migration. A fifth of youth that indicated intending to migrate named violence and insecurity as a reason, and a higher percent of youth that had been victims of violence indicated the intention to migrate. FGD data revealed that cases of women migrating to flee abusive husbands/partners were common.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
EQ 1: To what extent have the overall activities implemented by the project helped to reduce violence, especially intra-family and gender-based violence, in targeted communities?	
A lack of community-level data on cases of violence and legal claims filed make attribution to CR difficult.	Through the COCOPRES, establish a system to track cases of violence and legal cases filed to understand CR impact.
The culture of silence around domestic violence makes it difficult to understand if increases or decreases of GBV cases filed correlates with the actual number of cases.	Use community-level data captured by the COCOPRES on violence cases and legal claims filed to better understand the relationship between the two.
Municipal data on complaints filed was unreliable and difficult to track to CR interventions due CR’s relatively small coverage.	Establish a rigorous monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) system to track the number of complaints in target and some non-target municipalities.

CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
CR strategies were applied uniformly despite variations in violence types and existing structures to address it across municipalities/communities.	Before implementation, map the different kinds of violence prevalent in each municipality, and existing structures to address them, to tailor strategies accordingly. Obtain violence baseline data at the community level.
CR's violence reduction strategy is a good model in terms of strengthening existing government efforts and institutions, yet elections and rotations undermine institutionalization.	Build on government policies and efforts to reduce violence at municipal and national levels, strengthening institutional and human capacities with existing USAID modules/courses.
EQIA To what extent have innovative processes, such as involvement of community-based violence prevention committees, helped reduce violence in targeted communities?	
COCOPRES' effectiveness varied widely and was contingent on leadership, coordination efforts, knowledge, and skills.	Ensure that the COCOPRES receive more robust training early on, with written materials and a replication plan.
There is a powerful "culture of silence" around domestic violence, which is a key barrier to violence reduction that CR began to tackle, although much remains to be done.	Prior to implementation, do a qualitative study in target municipalities to identify the most effective strategies for breaking down the culture of silence around violence.
Filing a legal complaint for women has been shown to be more effective when women are accompanied by a municipal authority and/or community leader.	Establish viable mechanisms at the community level for women to file a legal complaint with municipal/community leader accompaniment.
CR's support strengthened key interinstitutional relationships among COMUPRES, COCOPRES, municipal authorities, UPCV, and the PNC, contributing to increased trust with law enforcement due to UPCV outreach.	Support the establishment of the COMUPRES at the municipal level to create new COCOPRES to facilitate the institutionalization of Community Policing and linkages with the UPCV and PNC (both part of the Ministry of Interior).
Alcoholism, while not a single cause of domestic abuse, is a powerful trigger and a problem raised almost universally among informants.	Widespread alcoholism should be understood as a public health issue and viable treatment models need to be included in comprehensive anti-violence strategies.
There was a need to deepen COCOPRES outreach for violence reduction on all issues covered in the project, and efforts need reinforced with written materials.	Make COCOPRES' outreach to reduce violence systematic, with a replication plan and written and digital materials, which already exist from other USAID activities.
Psychological attention was recognized as a need by youth; however, a majority felt that access was limited.	Provide sustained support to the 18 comprehensive health clinics established, to strengthen them with the addition of legal, social, and didactic services. Expand mental health services, at local, community, and national levels.
No safe shelters/refuges were identified for women who were victims of GBV, yet the need was widely expressed.	Establish municipal safe shelters/refuges for survivors of GBV, creating a safe space for healing and recovery.

CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
Women's economic dependence on men evidences their need for economic alternatives that allow them to leave an abuser, make legal complaints, and reconstruct a secure life.	Prioritize women's economic empowerment, exploring municipal-level models tailored to women, such as establishing comprehensive centers for women to receive rights education, skills, psychosocial therapy services, and microenterprise training.
Many women affirmed the importance of working directly with men, starting young, on "new masculinity" awareness.	Train male youth and community leaders in "new masculinity" to improve gender equity and reduce violence.
The existing distrust in the police regarding reporting violence, especially GBV, was based on past experiences of indifferent attitudes, insensitivity, and corrupt practices, worsened by frequent PNC rotation.	Police training at the community level should strengthen awareness, sensitivity, and behaviors to attend to women victims of violence, and new PNC should have community-level contextual orientations on predominant crime issues.
EQIB To what extent have innovative approaches, such as extra-curricular education, certification of competencies, and vocational training activities, helped reduce violence in targeted communities?	
While the link between violence reduction and alternative education and training was not direct, the courses imparted values, such as respect, discipline, self-control, and goal motivation, that contribute to reducing violence in at-risk youth.	Incorporate positive youth development values in training curricula and seek to amplify youth voices and engagement in the community to foster agency and belonging.
Municipal authorities perceived the technical training and alternative education as highly important for violence reduction, with the latter seen as the most effective.	Promote a continuation of alternative education and technical education courses to broaden their access and extend their time period and the depth of the content.
While alternative education provided an important venue for youth to also receive talks on GBV and gender equity, those receiving only technical training did not receive such awareness sessions, constituting a missed opportunity.	Ensure that all courses offered to youth, whether alternative education or technical training, use their platforms to provide information on violence reduction and migration risks.
Informants believed the main value of alternative education and technical training in reducing violence was keeping youth occupied in positive activities, yet they perceived it to be unsustainable beyond the duration of the classes.	With municipal and national support, develop a range of ongoing community-supported activities to meaningfully engage youth in positive use of free time, whether through educational, recreational, or cultural activities.
Technical training and alternative education were perceived as the most effective at reducing violence in municipalities with the highest levels of gang violence.	Combine technical training and alternative education with existing regional strategies to prevent gang recruitment and offer options for possible gang desertion.
The School for Parents was seen as an important platform to share positive values and promote alternative approaches to parenting styles that reproduce abusive patterns.	Expand and replicate the School for Parents in all municipalities, incorporating it in school curricula and encouraging COCOPRES to promote its inclusion.

CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
EQ2 To what extent did the overall activities implemented by the project support the reintegration of returnees to their communities?	
Characteristics of the returnee population, including trauma, shame, and indebtedness, has made this population seek a low profile, making it difficult to identify and to provide support.	Promote an initiative with the broader development community to support the government of Guatemala (GOG) to effectively identify returnees and their needs and capacities to design programs that foster returnee ownership of their reintegration.
CR attended returnees through psychosocial assistance and competency certification, yet most were unaccompanied minors, limiting the provision of CR services to this group.	Maximize articulation among all organizations and government efforts working with returnees to ensure that all age groups have access to a full range of services.
Certification of competencies is a key step for returning migrants to aid in their reintegration into the labor market, but CR's efforts in this area were limited due to challenges in identifying this population.	Explore successful existing models in other countries for the certification of competencies, a key step in reintegration, which articulates training organizations, local government, and industry.
The validated model for returned migrants developed for CR, with strategies for comprehensive support, is a useful contribution to an urgent national policy discussion.	Build on the validated care models for returned migrants such as the one developed for CR by <i>Ideas para Guatemala/Asociación Grupo Enlace</i> .
EQ3 To what extent did the overall activities implemented by the project reduce irregular migration?	
CR's multi-pronged strategy for reducing irregular migration was effective in helping many youth develop skills, education, and optimism, yet restricted economic opportunities still drive many youth toward migrating.	Implement similar strategies yet include a stronger and specialized focus on economic empowerment through a sub-contractor or a separate project with this sole focus for the same target youth. Maintain a database of youth that need continuity in training toward economic empowerment to share with similar future interventions.
The small youth enterprises that were the most stable and successful for generating consistent and meaningful income were those that had received resources (in-kind) from CR, yet these were a relatively small number.	Include a component with substantial resources for a more rigorous and broad strategy for providing youth with seed capital and support for launching their enterprises, with systematic accompaniment, especially in the first year.
Technical courses helped many youth generate modest income, but they were too brief for youth to develop enough expertise to be competitive in the labor market and were often not matched with local demands.	Base technical training areas and length on a comprehensive analysis of local market demand, both by employers and business needs, and carefully tailor training to prepare youth to meet this demand.
CR did not seem to have criteria for defining "self-employed" or "internships," making the prospects of youth unclear in terms of opportunities and economic stability.	Have clear criteria for categorizing young people's employment/income situations to understand the interventions' real impact on economic empowerment.

CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
Alternative education helped youth complete high school or junior high degrees, which was especially valuable to the many women who had abandoned their studies, fostering confidence about employment and study opportunities.	Include alternative basic alternative education and, from the start, work with municipalities and COCOPRES to sustain it beyond the life of the project/activity. Consider childcare and transportation when offering these courses.
CR participation fomented important values and attitudes in youth, like increased self-esteem, greater optimism about the future, and motivation to use new skills to earn income.	Include systematic training for youth with modules and written materials, which guides them in knowing their strengths and resources and making a life plan.
COCOPRES' outreach to youth to prevent irregular migration was effective for dissuading some youth, especially when members used personal testimonies, yet not all COCOPRES actively pursued such outreach.	Provide systematic and differentiated training to specialize different COCOPRES members in different prevention areas, drawing on their own strengths and experiences in order to strengthen violence reduction outreach.
Though not the principal driver, violence is clearly a factor in migration, with municipalities and communities experiencing different kinds that contribute to migration.	Prior to initiating implementation, analyze the types of violence that drive migration in the different target areas and tailor the prevention strategies accordingly.
The extent that rootedness was increased overall wasn't clear, but it was seemingly enhanced when youth became prevention volunteers, assumed community leadership positions, and received technical training that exploits local, natural resources (coffee, eco-tourism).	To strengthen rootedness: a) include an explicit component to recruit volunteers and generate youth involvement in community and municipal organizations/governments, and b) offer technical courses that increase agricultural productivity using local, natural resources.
CR had alliances with several successful models for generating employment and self-employment through local development initiatives while also increasing rootedness, as well as some private sector initiatives to foster employment., yet these were quite limited in number.	USAID should request that bidding implementing partners (IPs) include in their proposals identified partners that offer a strong potential for generating employment through local development as well as private sector alliances that have proven successful in CR and/or other USAID projects/activities.
Several informants mentioned that a viable way to dissuade migration would be to incentivize the use of remittances for investment in local development and productive activities.	USAID should support local development initiatives that channel remittances into productive projects, informed by extensive related policy studies and experiences.

INTRODUCTION

As part of the Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Learning, Evaluation, and Research (DRG-LER) II Activity, USAID requested that NORC carry out a performance evaluation (PE) to assess the effectiveness of the Community Roots (CR) Activity in reducing violence and migration to the United States in targeted communities in Guatemala. It is hoped that the evaluation will serve to inform decisions about future programming on these issues. This evaluation will cover the period from December 2016 to October 20, 2022.

As noted in the Statement of Work (SOW) (see Annex I), this evaluation was divided into two separate steps: during the first period, the Evaluation Team (ET) carried out a desk study analysis and scoping mission, entailing a two-week trip to Guatemala (August 7–19, 2022) to identify key inputs for a viable evaluation design that can effectively and thoroughly answer the evaluation questions. The methodological findings of the scoping mission and its implications for this evaluation were shared during this initial period through a collaborative process between the evaluation team and USAID, and in September, the ET presented an Evaluation Design Report (EDR), approved by USAID in late September. The EDR proposed the evaluation design and methodology, including the ET's proposed data collection and analysis methods, preliminary work plan, and draft data collection tools.

The second step, the three-week data collection trip to Guatemala (October 2–21, 2022) and subsequent data analysis phase of this process took place in November–December 2022 and January 2023.

BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY ROOTS OVERVIEW

The CR Activity was one of a number of program initiatives being implemented by USAID to broadly address the root causes of irregular migration and violence¹ in Central America's Northern Triangle. While migration from the region to the United States has a diversity of underlying causes, the principal driver continues to be widespread poverty, and to a lesser degree, high levels of violence also play a role.² Guatemala forms part of this challenging landscape, as a 2021 report notes: "There were 113,000 apprehensions of Guatemalan nationals at the border in U.S. fiscal year (FY) 2018, and more than double that—270,000—in FY 2019. This figure dropped to 48,000 in FY 2020 as pandemic-related border closures were introduced, but it rose again to 283,000 in FY 2021."³ The average age of migrants has also fallen, with the World Bank reporting that "during the early 2000s, children and youth below the age of 18 represented only 15 percent of the migrants, versus 30 percent in 2018."⁴ The World Bank

¹ "Central America's Northern Triangle suffers high levels of violence stemming from organized criminal groups, including record high homicide rates, sexual violence, disappearances, forced recruitment into armed gangs, and extortion. This violence affects a diverse range of people including children, women, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons. Insecurity is also compelling an increasing number of persons to flee their homes and to seek international protection, particularly in bordering and nearby countries... Sixty-four percent of women interviewed for a 2015 study by the UNHCR study cited threats or attacks as one of their key reasons for leaving their communities." <https://www.acnur.org/fileadmin/Documentos/BDL/2017/10937.pdf?file=fileadmin/Documentos/BDL/2017/10937>

² "Although records are scarce, violence suffered by NCA (Northern Central America) emigrants both in their countries of origin and during transit has been explicitly identified as a determining factor in the forced departure of part of the population." https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/44288/1/S1801071_en.pdf

³ https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/mpi-huehuetenango-report-eng_final.pdf

⁴ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/jobs/migrating-better-life-why-better-jobs-are-key-helping-youth-prosper-home-guatemala>

also notes that “high levels of crime and violence represent staggering economic costs for the country”⁵ and numerous institutions examining the migration phenomenon, while acknowledging the limited data, suggest that violence, including drug trafficking, gang-linked activity, and intrafamily and gender-based violence (GBV),⁶ along with the lack of economic opportunity, constitutes an additional driver for both out-migration and internal displacement in Guatemala.⁷

As stated in the evaluation SOW, the CR Activity “was designed with the end goal of addressing the key underlying causes of migration of under-aged Guatemalans through holistic approaches to combating violence, and to contribute to the Government of Guatemala (GoG) and USG’s objectives of promoting sustainable development and decreasing violence in targeted areas.”

The CR Activity, with a total estimated ceiling of \$40 million (later modified to \$21.6 million), was originally intended to be implemented from December 15, 2016, to December 14, 2021, then granted an extension to end in December 14, 2023, but negotiated an anticipated closeout for May 31, 2023. It was carried out in the departments of San Marcos, Huehuetenango, Quetzaltenango, and Chiquimula and had recently expanded to Totonicapán and Sololá, covering 92 communities and 22 municipalities. The principal implementing partners (IPs) were World Vision (WV) as the prime and Research Triangle International (RTI) as the sub. The CR approach reflected an understanding of violence and migration as a complex, multifaceted phenomenon and that tackling this issue is linked to a diverse range of challenges, including cultural, structural, institutional, and policy-related causal factors. A crucial feature of the violence tableau and youth vulnerability is the structural violence that communities face as a result of social exclusion. In addition to the need to redress the serious economic and social deficits, there was a need to promote important community-level strategies to foster community resilience and address collective and individual trauma. As such, CR sought to develop a community-based approach, working closely with community leaders, proactively involving youth at the local level, but also aimed to promote primary and secondary prevention interventions that prevent violence, crime, and migration. Among the primary prevention actions, the activity provided capacity-building and training, extra-curricular education, and professional development, among others. The principal beneficiaries/target population were at-risk youth between the ages of 8–24 as well as adults considered to be from vulnerable groups, such as women and indigenous peoples. The desired short-term and long-term outcomes were reduced violence and reduced migration in targeted areas, increased private sector engagement with violence prevention activities, and increased leverage to support co-creation and sustainability of activities.

⁵ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/guatemala/overview>

⁶ “Sexual and gender-based violence is a primary factor forcing women and girls to migrate from the three Northern Triangle countries: Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. A 2017 study on migration from these countries conducted by the University of Washington found that the increase of violence between 2011 and 2016 coincided with a doubling of total respondents listing “fleeing violence” as their main reason for migration. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/violence-against-women-driving-migration-from-the-northern-triangle/>. “Women on the Run: First-Hand Accounts of Refugees Fleeing El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico,” United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, October 2015. <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/publications/operations/5630f24c6/women-run.html>.

⁷ In the Huehuetenango study conducted by the Catholic Diocese, which involved more than 400 families across the department, between 3 percent and 7 percent of those with family members who had migrated indicated that violence was their principal motive for moving. In addition, 15 percent of those interviewed said that their family member abroad would be in danger if they returned, with many citing either family violence or fears of authorities or extortion. In a 2020 IOM study, women were twice as likely as men to indicate that violence was their principal reason for leaving, suggesting there could be a link between domestic violence and migration. 2021. *Migration From Huehuetenango In Guatemala’s Western Highlands: Policy And Development Responses*. Migration Policy Institute Report.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The following three main evaluation questions, in priority order, were defined by USAID.

1. To what extent have the overall activities implemented by the project helped to reduce violence, especially intra-family and gender-based violence, in targeted communities? With a special focus on:
 - a. To what extent have innovative processes, such as involvement of community-based violence prevention committees, helped reduce violence in targeted communities?
 - b. To what extent have innovative approaches, such as extra-curricular education, certification of competencies, and vocational training activities, helped reduce violence in targeted communities?
2. To what extent did the overall activities implemented by the project support the reintegration of returnees to their communities?
3. To what extent did the overall activities implemented by the project reduce irregular migration?

EVALUATION DESIGN INPUTS

OVERVIEW

This section analyzes the range of inputs underpinning the evaluation design (explained in detail in the *Evaluation Research Approach* section), including the desk review and the scoping mission. To prepare for the evaluation phase of this two-step task, the ET first carried out a rigorous desk review of USAID background documents from June to September 2022 and undertook a two-week scoping exercise in Guatemala from August 7–19, 2022. The Scoping Work Plan was produced through a weekly co-creation process with the USAID Mission in Guatemala and other key stakeholders, including the ET and key DGR-LER staff.

DESK REVIEW

The CR Activity generated a very extensive body of information and material, including Annual and Quarterly Reports, Annual Work Plans, sector assessments (USAID or other), trip and monitoring reports, performance reports, success stories, gender analyses and planning assessments, and relevant sections of the Project Appraisal Document. Specifically, the ET reviewed the following documents:

- The Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan and associated datasets and reports
- Performance Indicators
- The Baseline Report and its annexes
- Strategic Communication Plan
- The 2021 Mid-Term Evaluation
- Quarterly Performance Reports
- Annual Performance Reports
- Annual Procurement Plans

- Weekly Highlights/Success Stories
- Final Reporting
- Miscellaneous thematic reports from USAID and/or external sources

The SOW noted the ET “should explore options to use locally disaggregated crime data and/or to replicate a baseline survey that was conducted by WV,” adding that “Both of these potential data sources have limitations. In the case of the baseline survey, it was intended to be a diagnostic tool and the intervention was not necessarily carried out in all the locations surveyed in the baseline.”⁸ While the team did not seek to replicate the baseline survey, which is a task that surpasses the time and budget of the evaluation, it served as a useful tool to inform the desk review and points of data collection in the scoping trip and evaluation.

The ET reviewed other relevant documents throughout this phase as recommended by the IPs, sector experts, and academics sought out by the ET to complement the analysis as needed. Migration statistics, such as from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), as well as the International Food Policy Research Institute’s (IFPRI) Migration Propensity Index were analyzed. To explore tendencies and patterns in violence, the ET accessed crime data from public security institutions such as the Unit for Community Prevention of Violence (UPCV) in the Public Ministry (MinGob) and from municipal-level data from the National Civil Police (PNC). The CR Activity had a trimestral reporting system, as well as three surveys (baseline, midterm, and eventually a final survey to be conducted in February 2023), using “Citizen Perception” as the violence indicator. Data on GBV and intra-family violence at a municipal level was available from the Women’s Observatory of the Public Ministry, which is a new, unified data system that gathers data on crimes against women and children, including GBV cases, since these can be reported through the PNC, Judicial Agencies, and/or Public Ministry, as well as through indigenous populations dealing internally with these issues.

Documents from the Migration Policy Institute, such as those analyzing the Department of Huehuetenango with respect to migration drivers, patterns, and policy options, provided useful data, as did Duke Sanford’s Migration Policy “Root Causes of Migration from Guatemala: Analysis of Subnational Trends.”

During the research team coordination meetings, the DDI/DRG/Evidence and Learning Senior Adviser shared a number of useful documents on the issue of survey methods for sensitive topics,⁹ and the Migration, Data and Learning Advisor from the USAID’s Latin America and Caribbean Bureau’s Strategy and Program Office also provided key documents to enrich the PE.¹⁰

The ET organized all desk review information in matrices by category (e.g., objectives and expected results, identified strengths and weaknesses, data sources) and thematic areas (e.g., migration, crime, GBV, community organization). Matrices will also serve to identify and document any gaps in data that require further information to be obtained through primary or secondary sources.

SCOPING DESIGN AND MISSION

⁸ *Scope of Work: Performance Evaluation of Community Roots Activity*. USAID/Guatemala, Democracy and Governance Office 2022 (p. 4).

⁹ Among them are *Survey Methods for Sensitive Topics*; *10 Things to Know about Survey Experiments*; and *Survey Experiments and the quest for Valid Interpretation*.

¹⁰ *National Victimization, Security, and Migration Survey in Honduras*; and *Final Migration Report 2021*.

The purpose of the scoping mission was to determine the most methodologically viable evaluation approach and scope to answer the evaluation questions and inform future USAID programming. It permitted the ET to best target data collection with IPs, partners, host government officials, local organizations, and beneficiaries. The specific objectives of the scoping trip were to:

- 1) Pilot and refine data collection tools to be used in the evaluation to obtain qualitative and quantitative information data related to migration, violence, and violence prevention.
- 2) Ensure that the sampling plan for the evaluation considers all relevant informant groups, including those that may have not been included in the scoping trip sample.
- 3) Determine a sampling plan for the evaluation phase that includes a wide range of sites with highly different levels of implementation challenges and program effectiveness at achieving desired outcomes.

The ET visited eight municipalities, which constitute 40 percent of the project's area of operation, and carried out key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with 170 informants (which is detailed in the following subsection). The ET fulfilled its stated objectives and derived important inputs from the mission for the evaluation design (see **Annex II.A.**, Scoping Mission Debrief).

One of the most important methodological takeaways that informed the evaluation design was the piloting of all FGD and interview guides and the survey tools for youth and Community Prevention Councils (COCOPRES), which allowed the ET to have well-designed tools to gather uniform data effectively. Additionally, the ET gathered relevant information for defining a sample for the evaluation data collection that was inclusive of different contextual factors (e.g., levels and types of violence, degree of marginalization and poverty) and factors facilitating and/or creating obstacles for CR's implementation (level of local government support, organizational level of the COCOPRE). Thus, the evaluation data collection sample intentionally included municipalities and communities representing a wide range of such factors. The ET also identified the availability of secondhand, municipal-level data on crime and migration, such as data from the police and the IPs. Finally, the ET pinpointed several issues that required further examination due to their complexity and sensitivity, such as the internal relationship between the National Civil Police (PNC) and the departments and dependencies of the national citizen security system and the articulation between the COCOPRES, Community Development Councils (COCODES), and the indigenous community mayors.

In sum, the scoping activity allowed the ET to define sample municipalities and communities, fine-tune informant groups, define focus group conformations, and make decisions regarding employing specific methods with different informant groups. Both the desk review and the scoping trip revealed initial findings related to the evaluation questions, which helped the ET tailor the evaluation design to examine the most relevant aspects of CR's implementation to inform future USAID programming. Additionally, the ET gathered relevant data that were pertinent to the evaluation questions, which have been included in the data analysis that led to the findings presented in this report.

EVALUATION DESIGN METHODS

The ET used a mixed-methods approach to conduct the evaluation. Qualitative methods included KIIs, FGDs, and open-ended written responses. Quantitative methods consisted of surveys and analysis of secondary data. Each method is described in detail in this section. (See **Annex II.B.** for the Research Design Matrix.)

SCOPING MISSION SAMPLE AND METHODS

For the scoping mission, sample locations covered the four departments where the activity has been implemented since its initiation in 2017: Chiquimula, Huehuetenango, Quetzaltenango, and San Marcos. Roughly two municipalities per department were included in the sample, which were selected based on the different conditions that affect implementation fidelity and level of success of achieving the desired outcomes. (See **Annex II.C.**, Scoping Mission Sample, for detail about the Scoping Mission Sample.)

The ET interviewed 180 persons in 33 FGDs and 4 KIIs with stakeholders that included WV and RTI technical staff and coordinators (#6); WV local facilitators (#9); private sector representatives (#6); Interior Ministry and the PNC (#6); implementing partners (#11); education authorities (#2); municipal authorities (#35); COCOPRES (#47); youth group participants (#37); and members of the Referral Network (#8); and national stakeholders (#13). See **Annex II.C.**, **Table C.3.**, for a sample size by informant group and **Annex IV** for the full list of stakeholders interviewed.

The ET used structured interview guides to conduct FGDs and KIIs. The ET held FGDs with 37 youth, with women and men separately when possible. (It was noted that women tended to express themselves more freely without the presence of young men, especially on issues related to GBV.) FGDs were held with 47 COCOPRES members. The ET did not auto-record KIIs/FGDs for the scoping trip but rather consolidated evidence in data matrices to allow for quicker access following the field work.

Additionally, the ET had target youth self-administer a questionnaire prior to each FGD, for a total of 37 young people surveyed (22 women and 15 men). This tool was validated and changed slightly for the evaluation phase (see **Annex III** for survey). While the ET had planned to have COCOPRES members self-administer a questionnaire, it became apparent that many COCOPRES members had an education level too low to complete the survey. Thus, the FGD guide incorporated several of the survey questions to administer during the FGD.

EVALUATION SAMPLING AND SITE SELECTION

The ET worked with WV to define a comprehensive sampling plan that included a range of implementation effectiveness due to different challenges and facilitating factors. Specifically, the ET shared with the CR Chief of Party (COP) selection criteria and the proposed municipalities and communities based on the scoping trip information and requested that WV provide suggestions and help to complement with additional municipalities and communities. The selection criteria for the sample locations were:

- Communities furthest from the municipal center and close to the municipal center
- Communities with mestizo populations and with high numbers of indigenous populations
- Municipalities and communities with high and low levels of success achieving CR's goals
- Municipalities with the highest levels of migration and lower levels of migration
- Municipalities and communities with the highest levels of violence and lower levels of violence
- Municipalities and communities with different types of violence being the most predominant (gang, inter-family, GBV)

Sample locations covered the four departments where the activity has been implemented since its initiation in 2017: Chiquimula, Huehuetenango, Quetzaltenango, and San Marcos. Roughly two

municipalities per department were included in the sample for the evaluation, most of which were different from the ones included in the scoping trip sample. In the case of municipalities that were also part of the scoping trip sample (such as Esquipulas, Olopa, and Quetzaltepeque), different informant groups were selected, and different communities were selected within those municipalities.

NON-INTERVENTION MUNICIPALITIES, COMMUNITIES, AND INFORMANTS

The ET decided to include stakeholders outside the target areas in the FGDs to obtain a comparative perspective on CR's effects. While this does not constitute a "control" group, the aim was for it to serve as a proxy for understanding how CR's interventions may be benefiting (or not benefiting) the targeted population. Thus, the ET worked with WV to select a municipality that had not been targeted by CR, as well as three communities that were not targeted but were within the targeted municipalities. The ET conducted both FGDs and a survey with target and non-target youth;¹¹ FGDs with COCOPRES in target communities and COCODES in non-target communities; KIs with local PNC in both target and non-target municipalities; and an FGD with municipal authorities in a non-target municipality. Different survey and FGD tools were used for these non-target informants (e.g., not including questions specific to CR), yet most questions were the same and pertained to issues related to CR's objectives such as violence, migration, the police, safety, opportunities for education and technical training, and level of optimism toward the future. (See **Annex II.D.**, Evaluation Sample Characteristics, for a breakdown of all sample locations and explanation for inclusion as per the selection criteria.) While the ET aimed for the best "control group" proxy, it is important to note that contextual differences between target and non-target sample groups must be taken into account when trying to do a comparative analysis, as noted in the limitations section.

As with the scoping trip, the ET conducted KIs (usually with two to three people) with IPs at the local level, members of the private sector, and members of the PNC's Crime Prevention Unit. FGDs were conducted with youth, COCOPRES members, and municipal authorities (see Table I for a detailed summary of the informant sample for the evaluation phase).

Table I. Evaluation Qualitative Data Collection Sample by Informant Group

Respondent Category	FGDs	KIs	Female Informants*	Male Informants	Total Number of Informants
Municipal authorities in target municipalities	8		16	25	41
Municipal authorities in non-target municipalities	1		3	5	8
COMUPRES	1		2	2	4
COCOPRES	23		35	44	79
COCODES in non-target municipalities	3		4	5	9

¹¹ FGDs were held with target and non-target youth in all four target departments. The non-target FGDs were held in three non-target communities within target municipalities and youth not participating in CR in the municipal city of a target municipality.

Respondent Category	FGDs	KIIs	Female Informants*	Male Informants	Total Number of Informants
Local and private stakeholders		5	1	12	13
Youth in target communities	22		76	44	124
CR partner organizations/reference network		1	1	2	3
Implementing partners	1	5	4	5	9
Local PNC in target municipalities		3	1	7	8
PNC Prevention Unit		2		2	2
Local PNC in non-target municipalities		1		2	2
Youth non-targeted by CR	3		12	9	21
Total	62	17	155	164	323

* 4 youths did not indicate their gender

As mentioned in the limitations section, the number of informants that were indigenous/Mayan was difficult to obtain, yet of the youth, 12.5 percent (11 youth) that responded to the question regarding ethnicity self-identified as Mayan, and in COCOPRES FGDs about 15 to 20 percent of the members indicated having a Mayan language as their mother tongue.

Taking into account the scoping phase and the evaluation phase, the ET collected data from 503 informants through 95 FGDs, 21 KIIs, and 158 surveys. In total, 17 of the 20 municipalities were visited, and 39 communities out of the 80 communities targeted by the CR Activity.

DATA COLLECTION

This section provides details on each type of primary and secondary data collected for the evaluation. A summary of this is provided in the Research Design Matrix (**Annex II.B.**).

KIIS AND FGDs

The ET used the FGD and interview guides that had been validated during the scoping trip. However, based on further reading and discussions with USAID, the ET decided to make several modifications. To breach sensitive topics such as migration, the ET included several questions like those in the (IFPRI) Migration Propensity Index (<https://www.ifpri.org/publication/migration-propensity-index-application-guatemala>). Additionally, questions were included that mirrored those in the CR baseline and midline studies, such as questions pertaining to perceptions of violence levels. (See **Annex III** for all data collection tools.)

The majority of the KIIs were with two or three people, due to their in-depth knowledge of the same topic of interest, as in the case of the local PNC, Prevention Unit PNC, and CR staff. In most cases, the

ET conducted KIIs with one CR staff member. The average time that it took to conduct a KII was 45 minutes to 1 hour. The ET conducted youth FGDs with women and men separately, except in a few cases when it was not possible (e.g., low youth turnout). All FGDs took roughly 1 hour to conduct, though in some cases they extended to 90 minutes. All KIIs and FGDs were audio-recorded and transcribed, pending consent of each informant. Additionally, detailed notes were taken when possible (i.e., there were two ET members facilitating). The ET held briefing discussions and wrote analytic memos by EQ during the evaluation data trip, as time permitted.

SURVEYS

The youth survey was self-administered near the start of the youth FGDs and took roughly 15 minutes to complete. The ET explained the confidential nature of the questionnaire and offered to clarify any doubts yet also maintained distance to respect each participant's privacy as she/he responded. Participants were asked to put their questionnaires in a pile, face down, after which the ET member placed them in an envelope. Questionnaires were filled out by all youth FGD members as planned. In total, 124 target youth (76 women, 44 men, and 4 who did not indicate their gender) and 21 non-target youth (12 women and 9 men) responded to the surveys.

In the case of COCOPRES, survey questions were asked as part of the FGD, which did not lengthen the duration of the FGD. The ET elicited responses, based on a scale, through participants holding up fingers or writing the response on a paper (depending on the literacy level). All COCOPRE/COCODE FGD participants responded to the survey questions, which is a total of 79 (35 women and 44 men) COCOPRE members and 9 (4 women and 5 men) COCODE members.

Additionally, the ET administered a survey to **municipal authorities** and a specific survey to the **municipal liaison** for CR. This was done shortly after the field data collection phase. Google Forms was used to administer the survey to the email addresses noted during the evaluation data collection and provided by WV staff. Both surveys averaged 15–20 minutes to complete. While a total of 17 municipalities was visited during both trips, the surveys were administered to all 20 municipalities included as part of the evaluation. The surveys were left open for three weeks; they were sent to 120 authorities and 20 liaisons, of which responses were obtained for 34 and 10, respectively. This represented a 28 percent response rate for authorities and a 50 percent response rate for liaisons.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

As part of the FGDs with youth, the ET used open-ended questions to elicit responses on topics that youth would likely provide more transparent answers to privately. At the end of each youth FGD, the ET passed out blank pieces of paper and posed three questions: 1) Comparing yourself before and after your participation in CR, what are the most significant changes or differences? 2) What are the three main things that you have learned or developed? and 3) Do you see the future differently? If so, how?

Responses were obtained by youth in all FGDs. ET members noted the gender of each respondent and kept FGD responses organized by community and municipality.

SECONDARY DATA

There are three sources that provide information on cases of violence: the PNC, the Public Ministry, and the Judicial Agencies, all of which receive the legal complaints. The National Institute of Statistics also collects and presents data on violence cases. However, the information published by these institutions corresponds to three or four years prior rather than being up to date; in addition, each institution records data differently (e.g., data is categorized in different ways), preventing straightforward comparisons of data from different institutions. Due to these difficulties in obtaining up-to-date and standardized data, various cooperation organizations established the Women's Observatory within the Public Ministry (see <https://observatorio.mp.gob.gt/portal-estadistico/>), which is a centralized system with updated, municipal-level data on GBV and other types of violence (e.g., violence against minors, femicide, sexual assault). The portal has been in operation since March 2019; thus it has data from 2021, 2022, and part of 2023.

CR staff requested data from the Public Ministry's Women's Observatory for target municipalities every three months, based on the Right to Public Information, which allowed them to have updated and reliable information on GBV cases in those municipalities.

In addition to consulting all the aforementioned sources, the ET also searched for and found information and studies produced by an NGO called Diálogos (see <https://www.dialogos.org.gt/>), which conducts studies based on public statistical information or that its staff collects from public and private sources. This NGO presents monthly information on GBV from 2013 onward. For this evaluation report, the ET used the following: 1) the GBV data that CR staff collected from the Public Ministry, 2) municipal-level GBV data from the Women's Observatory of the Public Ministry, and 3) GBV data from Diálogos.

For migration, the ET consulted international sources, including the International Migration Organization, and governmental institutions, such as the Guatemalan Migration Institute.

DATA ANALYSIS

KIIS AND FGDS

The ET used a qualitative software program (ATLAS.ti) to organize and code all transcriptions. ATLAS.ti, like other qualitative software programs (e.g., MAXQDA, NVivo), is a program that allows for thematic content analysis through organizing information by codes and then analyzing across informant groups, locations, and methods (e.g., FGD, KII, short answer questions from survey data, memos from observation). It also allows for word counts and comparing and contrasting data based on any criteria of interest (e.g., female non-target COCODE members).¹²

The ET created a coding scheme with codes that align with the evaluation questions (e.g., GBV, GBV reduction, regular migration intention, irregular migration intention, returned migrants support, returned migrant issues, competency certification, etc.). The ET then uploaded all transcripts and open-ended questions into the ATLAS.ti and coded the texts into segments (quotations) by placing them in

¹² Soratto, J., Pires, D. E. P. D., & Friese, S. (2020). Thematic content analysis using ATLAS.ti software: Potentialities for research in health. *Revista brasileira de enfermagem*, 73. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340853211_Thematic_content_analysis_using_ATLAS.ti_software_Potentialities_for_researchs_in_health

the relevant code, thus consolidating data by topic. The ET then generated ATLAS.ti reports by codes relevant to each EQ and searched for tendencies and patterns in stakeholder and beneficiary perceptions. This included triangulating data by informant sources and analyzing the frequency of expressed perceptions across groups and comparatively between groups. The ET also triangulated this data with survey data and secondary data.

SURVEYS

Survey data were initially tabulated automatically by Google Forms, which creates graphs based on the responses. However, the ET disaggregated data by gender and also crossed variables (e.g., vision of the future and having received technical training or not). Additionally, data from youth surveys from target and non-target were compared, crossing variables such as the perception of the future, perceived level of security, and intention to migrate.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

The ET recorded all open-ended questions in Google Forms by question, noting the gender and location of the respondent. Then, the ET members looked over all responses and created categories (e.g., self-esteem, motivation, income generation) and tabulated and organized responses by categories in Excel. This allowed for tabulating the number of responses by category and examining consolidated responses by category.

SECONDARY DATA

The ET used the data provided by CR staff to calculate the change in the number of GBV complaints filed over a two-and-a-half-year period (2020–2022). Additionally, the ET used public data from the Public Ministry (Women’s Observatory) to calculate the trends in the frequency of GBV legal complaints filed for 2021 and 2022 in target and non-target municipalities in the four target departments. For migration rates, the ET used data from OIM, but a comparative analysis could not be done.

Additionally, the ET analyzed target performance indicators by EQ in comparison to reported results for the life of the activity, which gave an indication of the level of implementation. While most indicators were input and output indicators, there were several output indicators that reflected CR’s impact (e.g., the number of youth who found employment/self-employment).

VALIDITY

To help ensure validity, the ET triangulated all methods and sources. Specifically, the ET compared and contrasted data from KIs, FGDs, indicator reporting, and the surveys. Similarly, the ET examined data from different informant groups to compare and contrast the various perspectives and opinions. When trends emerged, the ET also looked for disconfirming evidence. The ET followed a systematic process of analyzing all data sources for one EQ at a time (see **Annex II.E. Data Sources Included in Evaluation Analysis Phase**). After examining all data relevant to that EQ, each team member wrote an analytic memo responding to the EQ by providing an analysis using empirical data across sources. The ET members used these memos as a basis for analytic discussions, which then constituted the findings. These ET discussions based on evidence-based analytic memos further reinforced the objectivity of the findings and conclusions.

EVALUATION LIMITATIONS

Data Limitations. Regarding primary data, it was not possible to meet with youth in two of the non-intervention communities, perhaps due to a lack of incentive (e.g., not being beneficiaries). This limitation was partially mitigated by examining COCODE data from these communities and other non-target youth data. Data on returnees is also limited, likely due their “invisibility” and/or reluctance to speak with people they didn’t know (especially foreigners) about being returned, as explained more in EQ2. Regarding secondary data, too, there is limited reliable data regarding the exact size of the returnee population and data that allow for a comparative analysis over time (target vs. non-target). Additionally, it was not possible to get community-level data on violence, but rather municipal-level data that made attribution to CR difficult due to its relatively small coverage per municipality. Furthermore, reliable municipal data were not available for the years prior to 2020 due to how recently the Public Ministry’s Women’s Observatory was established. Finally, due to the abrupt closing of the CR Activity (a year before expected), CR staff was heavily burdened with activity close-out as the ET was in the data processing and analysis phase and thus unable to respond in a timely way to the ET’s request for necessary data. Much of it was incorporated in the last few days of report writing, but some data were not obtainable.

Informant Bias. Social desirability bias is the tendency of respondents/informants to overreport more desirable attributes and underreport undesirable attitudes. This type of bias may have been exacerbated by the timing of data collection, which occurred in tandem with CR staff informing beneficiaries about the imminent project closure. The team aimed to mitigate this type of bias by emphasizing to informants that the ET is independent of both USAID and WV and had no influence on CR’s continuity or benefits. This was further emphasized by providing a phone number for beneficiaries to send messages via WhatsApp to the ET or to be passed on directly to WV and/or USAID. Additionally, the ET triangulated data sources and methods, including with informants such as the private sector allies that were not CR beneficiaries, thus minimizing bias. Finally, the ET discovered that the political position and election cycles can influence the attitude of the mayors and council members toward CR—such as those who were elected after CR began work with the municipality and thus it was not helpful for reelection. These authorities had the tendency to under-report the positive effects of CR interventions, which was also partially overcome through triangulation of sources.

Sampling Bias. Data for non-target youth may be biased because these youth came from more urban areas, within or very close to the municipal center. These youth may have a different perception of opportunities that more geographically marginalized youth. Furthermore, 12 non-target youth were from Malacatancito, which the ET perceived as a model municipality due to the female mayor’s strong leadership for reducing violence, encouraging citizen participation, and providing opportunities for youth.

Underrepresentation. The ET was made aware of the absence of self-identification of indigenous participants, leading to an apparent low representation of this population in the sample, even though some sample communities had a high percentage of indigenous people. This is due to historic discrimination and marginalization of this population in Guatemala and thus indigenous inhabitants sometimes do not want to be recognized as such. For example, just 16 percent of CR’s target population identify as indigenous, according to CR staff, though the actual percentage may be much higher. To overcome this limitation, the ET asked participants in FGDs if anyone spoke an indigenous language as their mother-tongue (and with youth, also asked if their mother did) and included this

question in the youth survey. This partially helped to overcome this challenge, yet it is still unclear if all youth self-identified accurately.

Sensitive topics. The ET wanted to ensure that youth answered sensitive topics transparently. Thus, youth FGDs were conducted with women and men separately so that they (especially women) would feel comfortable discussing these topics. For the survey, the ET either left the room or took physical distance from youth while they filled them out and asked them to place it face down or in an envelope to demonstrate the anonymity of the surveys. Open-ended questions following each youth FGDs also, allowing them to respond privately and anonymously about CR and its effects on them. Additionally, the ET provided a WhatsApp phone number to informants following each FGD, offering another medium to privately express any opinion that they may have not wanted to share in a group setting. Finally, the ET incorporated survey questions for youth and COCOPRES that indirectly probed their propensity to migrate and their experiences with violence, which may have helped elicit more transparent responses.

THEORY OF CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS

There are limitations/challenges in this activity that are linked to its original design and conceptual framework. According to the evaluation SOW, “The activity was designed with the end goal of addressing the key underlying causes of migration of under-aged Guatemalans through holistic approaches to combating violence, and to contribute to the Government of Guatemala (GoG) and USG’s objectives of promoting sustainable development and decreasing violence in targeted areas. The activity was designed in response to the high number of Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) arriving at the United States borders.... In addition, the activity is a response to the reported high levels of criminal violence in Guatemala, which has been reported to be one of the primary factors driving migration of UAC from Guatemala.”

The theory of change underpinning the CR design, as described in the Cooperative Agreement (Attachment B, p. 8), states:

“**IF** communities are empowered through technical assistance and tools, and small grants;

IF a diverse range of leaders (municipal authorities, citizens and the private sector) becomes engaged and confident in their collective capacities; and

IF meaningful and cost-effective institutions (prevention commissions, etc.) can be established and strengthened to sustain collaboration among these leaders, as well as with key outside allies;

THEN communities will be able to deliver the nurturing, recreational, educational, and employment opportunities that youth crave; attend to the children, adolescents and families at highest risk of becoming victims of perpetrators of violence; respond to those recently affected by violence; change community norms and perceptions; and ultimately succeed in reducing both violence and migration.”

Thus, the activity was originally envisioned to tackle violence as the principal driver of migration. Over time, as further data emerged analyzing the push factors of migration, it became apparent that the lack of economic opportunities far outstripped violence as the principal cause. The technical vocational training courses were then seen as a partial means to respond to this reality through equipping youth to generate modest resources (additional income) from largely home-based economic activities such as

cell-phone repair, hairstyling, and baked goods production, among others. These training programs were originally conceived as a means to change attitudes, generate optimism, and possibly contribute to family needs. Yet they were not designed on the basis of any market research regarding their viability to generate employment or income through successful entrepreneurship or analyzed from the perspective of sustainability as a meaningful source of income sufficient to deter migration. Many of the activity's IPs were aware that the training programs per se probably could not generate sufficient income to respond to the vexing issue of such limited economic opportunity and that unless these youth with the brief training they had received were integrated into a context of broader local development efforts, they would not succeed in deterring migration except in the short run. The original activity design reflects this contradiction, wherein a goal of migration deterrence was based on strategies to deter violence in a context where the central drivers were economic, and where the only economic dimension, technical vocational training, was not designed with a goal of sustainable income generation in mind. It is important to take this into account in interpreting the evaluation findings.

FINDINGS

EQ1. To what extent have the overall activities implemented by the project helped to reduce violence, especially intra-family and gender-based violence, in targeted communities?

Community Roots implemented an integrated array of strategies to reduce violence that included promoting a multi-stakeholder, inter-institutional, municipal- and community-level prevention model with interventions supported by the municipality and providing technical vocational training and alternative basic education. CR aimed to strengthen government and community counterparts and entities (e.g., police prevention units, local governments, community organizations) by providing resources and support for developing and implementing prevention policies and plans. Additionally, the aim was to provide an environment for positive youth development (PYD) through interventions such as recreational activities, creation of safe environments, and psychological support. These integrated efforts were aimed at reducing violence of all types, which has been a driving force for irregular migration.

The target municipalities confront different types of violence, yet CR faced several massive challenges in reducing violence across intervention areas. One of the biggest hurdles for reducing violence, especially GBV, which is the most prevalent nationally, is the “culture of silence,” or the lack of reporting violence and/or filing legal claims due to fear and/or dependency (economic and/or psychological), mainly by women with their husbands/domestic partners. This also occurs in cases in which the child/children of the woman are victims. This culture of silence is further fueled by shame, the tendency to keep family issues private, and religious influences that promote female submission. Coupled with this culture of silence is the lack of trust in the police and other public institutions that they will act. Furthermore, women lack alternatives since there is no public welfare system that takes care of GBV victims, such as shelters and/or economic support. There are several other smaller hurdles, such as people lacking information about their legal rights and how to take legal action, as well as the difficulty of traveling to the nearest municipality to file a claim. Finally, there is a lack of reliable and available data regarding acts of violence and legal claims, making it difficult for CR to track progress. The ET confronted this challenge as well, making it difficult to determine violence trends in target areas.

The evidence regarding violence reduction used for this evaluation comes from two principal sources: *citizen perception* (youth, COCOPRES members, and municipal authorities) and *GBV data* from combined public institutions linked with law enforcement and citizen security. While the former reflects a range of different nuanced elements that influence perceptions, the second reflects specifically the number of formal complaints filed regarding GBV. If “violence reduction” is defined in part as formal complaint filing, it needs to be acknowledged that many aspects of this process fall outside the sphere of influence of CR’s strategies and activities, as they relate to the receptivity and functionality of public institutions at different levels. It should also be noted that “more” or “less” complaints filed is not always a reliable indicator of violence reduction, and that these statistics are affected by a range of factors: for example, a rise in filed complaints may reflect higher levels of awareness regarding possible legal redress, rather than an uptick in violence itself. Similarly, if violence levels stay the same or increase, this may not be detected due to the culture of silence and the other aforementioned factors. It is important to note that national and departmental data on violence reflect a downward trend over the years of project intervention. According to a publication by Diálogos,¹³ on a national-level legal claims filed for violence against women have decreased 35.7 percent. However, as noted above, data sources and types vary greatly, making comparisons difficult. Thus, the ET’s challenge was to identify any difference in trends in target municipalities with comparable data.¹⁴

Data from target municipalities obtained by CR staff and publicly available national data from both target and non-target municipalities both show an overall decrease in GBV legal claims in target municipalities during the last years of CR implementation.. Disaggregated GBV data obtained by CR¹⁵ reflect a 33 percent decrease in legal claims from July of 2020 to June of 2022 in target municipalities, yet equivalent data from non-target municipalities was not obtained by CR, which would have allowed for a comparative analysis over this same time period. The ET obtained public data from the same source, which is the Women’s Observatory of the Public Ministry (<https://observatorio.mp.gob.gt/portal-estadistico/>), and did a comparative analysis of numbers of legal files claimed (per 100,000 habitants) for violence against women from 2021 to 2022¹⁶ in the four target departments. In Chiquimula, in the eight target municipalities claims decreased by 20.7 percent, while in the three non-target ones they decreased by 11.6 percent. In Huehuetenango there was only a slight difference between the five target and five non-target municipalities, with a 23.2 percent reduction in the former and 22.3 percent in the later. In Quetzaltenango the difference was the most substantial, with a 23.6 percent reduction in the two target municipalities compared with a 1.1 percent reduction in the two non-target ones. Finally, in San Marcos the decrease was greater for the five non-target municipalities, with a 36.22 percent reduction compared with 20.4 percent decrease in the five target ones. Examining the total number of claims across all target municipalities versus the total number across all non-target municipalities in the four departments, the reduction rate is 15 percent lower in non-target (38 percent for target, 23.3 percent for non-target), thus reflecting an overall trend for greater reduction in the target municipalities.

¹³ Karla López, Diálogos, November 24, 2022. (<https://www.dialogos.org.gt/blog/la-violencia-contra-las-mujeres-mas-que-un-problema-individual-es-un-problema-social>)

¹⁴ As mentioned in limitations, community-level data were not available, making it more difficult to attribute reduction rates to CR interventions since only four communities in the municipality were beneficiaries.

¹⁵ These data were obtained by a WV/CR staff member who made a formal request to the Women’s Observatory to provide detailed and disaggregated data on violence against women reported in the target communities for all trimesters available, which covered a longer time period than what was available on the public website (by also including half of 2020). This was also more nuanced data including the different types of GBV (economic, psychological, physical), allowing for all types of GBV to be included.

¹⁶ Because this is a new system created to centralize data and increase its validity, public data only exist for the past two years.

However, as already mentioned, this does not necessarily mean there was a reduction in GBV, which would require other means to determine. Yet as explained below, primary data collected by the ET of perceptions on violence also reflects a reduction in target communities.

Women tended to perceive much higher levels of GBV in their communities than men perceived, according to survey data and FGD data. Almost 20 percent of young women placed the level of GBV at 5 on a scale of 1–5 (5 being the highest incidence), while only 5 percent of men did, underscoring the not surprisingly gendered perception of this phenomenon. Almost 60 percent of men placed the level of GBV at 1 (the lowest incidence) of the 1–5 category, while only 21 percent of women did. Between 30 and 40 percent of both genders placed the level of intra-family violence at 3. The vast majority of both genders place robbery, gang violence, and extortion at 1.

Comparative data on perceptions and personal cases of abuse don't suggest lower rates in target communities. Of target youth surveyed, 55 percent know of cases of GBV in the past year; 28 percent against children; and 47 percent intra-family violence. Whereas 81 percent of non-target youth knew of GBV cases, 29 percent against children, and 24 percent intra-family. Furthermore, 16 percent of young women in target communities reported having been victims of GBV in the past year and 19 percent had been victims of intra-family violence. Of the overall youth group, 17.7 percent reported having been victims of intra-family violence in the last year, which was the most predominant type reported. These figures were similar for non-target youth, 14 percent of whom reported being a GBV victim in the past year; percentages were lower for other types of violence suffered by surveyed youth in non-target communities. A higher percentage (81 percent) of non-target youth report knowing how to file a legal complaint than target youth (67 percent). However, non-target women perceive GBV as more severe than target group women and non-target women also find intra-family violence more severe than target women. Comparing the ET youth survey data with the mid-term and baseline data also did not reveal much of a difference. In the mid-term, 15 percent of people reported being victims of violence in general in the past year, similar to the youth survey data. In the baseline, 33 percent of survey respondents reported that their community is not safe (67 percent reporting that they live in a safe place), which is the same percentage of youth that reported that their communities were not safe or “a bit” safe, yet only 8 percent reported that they were “not at all” safe. The midline showed 72 percent perceiving their communities as safe and 26 percent not safe.

Municipal authorities, youth, and COCOPRES members perceive CR as having had a positive impact on violence reduction, yet it is unclear why they hold such a perception.

The only concrete survey material from the evaluation data collection wherein respondents were specifically asked about CRs contribution to violence reduction that comes directly from the ET's evaluation data collection is from the municipal authorities and liaison surveys. They were asked about violence reduction due to CR's intervention as *currently perceived* and *in the long run*. According to survey results, 47.7 percent of municipal authorities (including liaisons) indicated that CR has “strongly” impacted violence reduction, 43.1 percent indicated “moderately,” and 6.8 percent responded “not much.” Regarding the long term, 38.6 percent selected “a lot” in the long term, 52.2 percent selected “moderately,” and 9 percent indicated it would impact “little” in the long term. The survey did not include a subsequent question probing how the respondents came to these conclusions, and similar queries during FGDs did not yield much useful data. **Similarly, from the youth survey during the scoping mission showed that 100 percent of youth believe that CR interventions have reduced violence.** On a scale of 1–5, 5 indicating the greatest degree, 50 percent of young women and

53.8 percent of young men selected 5 as the extent of the impact. Almost 39 percent of young women and 23 percent of young men felt the impact merited a 4. These high scores were not always accompanied by an explanation as to how they arrived at these conclusions, although some respondents suggested that as men increasingly recognized the legal consequences of GBV, it had a deterrent effect. Similarly, data from most FGDs with youth and COCOPRES reflect the perception that violence, especially GBV, has decreased since CR's intervention.

Youth tended to express that through their participation in CR, they had more awareness about gender-based violence, legal rights and consequences, and how to take legal action.

In the open-ended questions, nine youth had responses pointing to heightened awareness on these issues and that they now experience less intrafamily violence. In FGDs, youth also expressed that there was more awareness in general about violence and its consequences. For example, one young woman responded, "I think now men don't dare raise a hand to a woman because they know that there are laws that protect women." This was also stated by other youth and some COCOPRES members. FGD data also reflected strengthening of municipal governments to coordinate with the police and other institutions and entities to prevent and respond to violence, spread awareness and educate, and other interventions toward violence reduction. As a municipal authority of Olopa explained, "With every community, in three, a COCOPRE has been created. If there is a problem there they go directly to the Public Ministry and or the look for the coordinator here."

CR's strategies to work through government institutions and initiatives aimed at violence reduction were successful, especially in municipalities that showed initiative and leadership toward this end, yet electoral changes and administrative rotation undermine effective institutionalization and sustainability of such strategies. While not all municipal authorities showed explicit commitment toward developing and implementing prevention policies, the ET found that roughly half of those included in the sample were putting CR's support to use to strengthen their efforts, including forming COCOPRES in other (non-target) communities, coordinating closely with the UPCV, and strengthening prevention policies and plans with a budget and actions. This was noted through FGDs, and survey data are consistent with qualitative data: 35 percent of municipal authorities surveyed responded that they have prevention policies that are defined and budgeted, and 15 percent indicated that they are in this process. Many municipal authorities expressed that, as part of their prevention efforts, they have increased and ongoing coordination with the UPCV/PNC. However, municipal authorities and COCOPRES members mentioned changes due to elections and rotation of UPCV/PNC could undermine prevention efforts. To institutionalize prevention efforts, CR developed a diploma for municipal authorities and PNC/UPCV members with the Institute of Education for Sustainable Development (IEPADES). Yet this was not implemented before the close of the activity.

One major limitation of CR in terms of making more impact on violence reduction and making this more visible is the small coverage per municipality. Municipal authorities in almost every municipality visited in the scoping trip and evaluation data collection pointed out that the coverage was small relative to the number of communities in the municipality. For example, in Tacaná, there are 180 communities, in Quetzaltepeque 60, and in Olopa 22 communities and 52 smaller surrounding ones. Community Roots worked in each municipal center and three communities, making the relative impact quite small. In some municipalities, the municipal government and COCOPRES, with the support of the UPCV, worked to form COCOPRES in additional communities. Several municipal authorities explained that they were in this process, such as this municipal authority in Cuilco: "We only have four COCOPRES

that we formed with Raíces Comunitarias. We have been in the process of forming six more COCOPRES with the support of the Prevention Unit in Huehuetenango. Though it has been challenging.” Several other municipalities were extending services, such as technical training and basic alternative education, to more youth in other communities. Despite the limited coverage, some municipalities were able to extend the support for greater coverage, though this was not the norm.

In conclusion, evidence shows that, overall, the CR Activity effectively worked through local governments and community organizations, strengthening them, and helping to put structures into place aimed at reducing violence and take legal action through inter-institutional coordination and other complementary strategies. While it is not possible to correlate CR’s overall interventions to the reduction in GBV violence rates in target areas, perceptions across informant groups indicate that the interventions contributed in different ways and to different degrees. The following two subsections (EQ I A and EQ I B) detail the ways in which the specific strategies may have helped to contribute to reducing levels of violence.

EQ I.A. To what extent have innovative processes, such as involvement of community-based violence prevention committees, helped reduce violence in targeted communities?

CR sought to implement a multipronged strategy for trying to reduce violence: 1) organizing COCOPRES and preparing them with violence reduction knowledge to share with youth and other community members; 2) supporting the creation and development of COMUPRES, the community commissions for violence prevention, mandated in the National Prevention Policy; 3) helping the COCOPRES develop violence and migration prevention plans with a series of activities aimed to reduce violence and supporting its implementation through the provision of funding and other resources; 4) strengthening coordination between the municipal authorities and the PNC/UPCV to contribute to institutionalizing the community policing philosophy; 5) helping organize talks at schools and in the community by the UPCV/PNC; 6) integrating violence prevention talks into the alternative education offered by FUNCAFE; 7) providing psychological attention to victims of violence and other youth in need of attention; and 8) forming reference networks in each municipality made up key actors/entities that are instrumental at preventing and tending to cases of violence.

The actions implemented largely fulfilled all their targets related to these strategies, as reflected in CR’s performance indicator reporting.¹⁷ The CR Activity contributed to ensuring that 92 intervention communities developed and implemented violence and migration prevention plans. With a final goal of 92, this represents 100 percent of the final target identified for 2023. Twenty out of a goal of 20 municipalities now allocate budget resources to violence and/or migration prevention actions, or 100 percent of the established target. CR support for establishing, accompanying, and strengthening 23 referral/support network for secondary violence and irregular migration prevention also achieved its goal. With respect to strengthening the community policing policy (MOPSIC) by 2022, 92 schools were implementing a violence and irregular migration prevention program with the participation of the police, representing 100 percent of the target, and of the 14,000 activities to be carried over the life of the activity (LOA) in the targeted communities by the police (violence and crime prevention), 12,812 had taken place—surpassing the target of 11,000 by the end of 2022.

¹⁷ The indicators referenced in this report are the final indicator reporting at the close of the CR Activity at the end of 2022 since the activity closed prior to the expected closure, shortening the anticipated LOA.

The role that the COCOPRES have played in violence reduction seems to have varied across communities in the type of actions they have taken and the frequency/intensity of their actions. The FGDs with youth and the COCOPRES suggest that the latter have become, especially where they are particularly active, the institution of choice and community ally, where members of the community often turn to share cases of violence and abuse, and where many youths feel there are prospects for resolution. In Atulapa, a COCOPRES member explained the role she takes in reducing violence:

We have tried to talk to the victims, and sometimes they say no (regarding filing a complaint). I have had opportunities to speak with their husbands. I have tried, and I have told them that this is not right, because if they continue in the same way (a complaint could be filed), then they say that they do not want to file a complaint. In some, a change has been seen because they almost no longer experience a problem of this type. In others it is difficult, but one always tries to talk to them so that they stop beating their partners. That is what one does to avoid engaging in court matters because they do not think one should make a complaint.

The response of the COCOPRES ranges from efforts at mediation, to support in the complaint process, to actual accompaniment to make the complaint at public institutions. Regardless of the final outcome of formal complaints, the FGDs also suggest that the public airing of such cases and the expanding knowledge of the possible legal consequences has had a dissuasive effect. What seems overwhelmingly apparent in almost all of the FGDs/interview data from all informant groups is the repeated assertion that the lack of a “culture of filing legal complaints” and hesitancy to denounce cases is deeply embedded and hard to change. What is framed as a “cultural” phenomenon reflects a variety of concrete issues that have historically made legal complaints very challenging, whether the indifference and corruption of the police, who have dropped charges when bribed, or public ministries and the judicial system, as well as the financial dependence that makes it extremely difficult for women to leave abusive relationships. A number of informants suggested that a step-by-step accompaniment for women by community leaders or municipal authorities in the process of filing a legal complaint would make these efforts more effective.

A high level of alcoholism was frequently named as a key contributing factor in GBV and intra-family violence. Virtually all informants noted this being one of top problems faced in their community, which, while not seen necessarily as the cause of domestic violence, was certainly seen as a key trigger. Some COCOPRES have sought to limit the sale of alcohol and/reduce the number of outlets such as cantinas, with varying degrees of success. Numerous informants pointed to the need to develop strategies for youth to confront this phenomenon. The only communities that reportedly didn’t face the problem of alcoholism were evangelical, which the ET encountered in two cases.

The effectiveness of the COCOPRES appears to be closely linked to the degree of training they have received, levels of participation already existent in the community, links with the municipal authorities, and non-conflictive/competitive relationships with other community organizations, such as the COCODES. The COCOPRES that are closer to the urban areas, where members tend to be better educated and by proximity are more likely to maintain relationships with the municipality, have been more effective. The COCOPRES members that had received a training diploma in violence reduction felt better equipped to deliver presentations and orient youth than those who had not. Both the COCOPRES, where they are trained and active, and youth perceive that a range of activities promoted by the COCOPRES served to reduce violence, particularly the “talks” on topics

such as women's rights, laws protecting women and children, how to file a complaint, and risks related to migration. These talks were given by municipal authorities, the UPCV, and some by the COCOPRES themselves. As this COCOPRES member expressed, *"Yes, it has gone down (the level of violence). We have not eradicated the problem, but we have had a school for parents. We call parents here to the community center and people come to give them talks on how to be self-sufficient, how to stay out of trouble, how to not mistreat women and children. These are the topics."*

About two-thirds of the youth said they had received violence prevention talks that were helpful, yet they frequently expressed needing more information. Many young women said that they had received these talks from the PNC, COCOPRES, and/or their alternative education teacher and that these were very helpful. However, many expressed wanting more information, such as this young woman: *"The talks are very important, but sometimes not just for oneself, but so many can hear them. It is important that they don't just occur once but that they give them continually."* Almost universally, youth expressed wanting more workshops and presentations of this type as well as written materials, so they have something to refer to if they need to take legal action or share information about this. Additionally, several informants from each category (youth, COCOPRES members, municipal authorities, and IPs) expressed that specific training needs to be provided to men on GBV, some specifying that this should be on "new masculinity" and/or start in elementary school.

In sum, the role that the COCOPRES has played in violence reduction seems to have varied across communities in the type of actions they have taken and the frequency/intensity of their actions. While some youth said that they had received information on violence (like in Santo Domingo, Malacatán), others, like in Vuelta Grande, Cuilco, responded: *"Not really, no. Talk about violence against women—no, we have not had."* Another young person in the FGD said COCOPRES had given talks about violence prevention. This was echoed in several other communities. Overall, according to FGD data, it seems that between half and two-thirds of the youth had received talks about violence prevention from the COCOPRES, which is consistent with youth survey responses – that 57 percent reported having received a talk from the COCOPRES (while 28 percent reported having participated in a recreational activity and 27 percent hadn't participated in any COCOPRES-led activity). Additionally, 66 percent of youth surveyed replied that people know where and how to report cases of violence (and 71 percent reported that they know where and how to legally file a claim), which is relatively low if the COCOPRES had been actively promoting this information in the community. (As noted earlier, this is 16 percent lower than youth in non-target communities, which is 90.5 percent.) Additionally, 33 percent of non-target youth responded that people do file claims, whereas 27 percent of target youth responded that people file claims. Responses about trust in the police reflect that with non-target youth there is more trust. So according to these data, the interventions don't seem to have impacted youth much. **Given that where COCOPRES are better trained and more effective, and youth feel that their interventions have been positive, it is concerning that 26 percent of youth surveyed were not familiar with the COCOPRES in their community or its role.** COCOPRES had a specific mandate to reach out to youth, and, in most cases, were the ones that identified youth for education and training. Thus, one would expect that all youth would know about them, especially since most of the communities were relatively small.

Youth, COCOPRES members, and municipal authorities perceive recreational activities promoted by the COCOPRES as a positive force against violence, both as healthy use of free time and as "safe" spaces. The recovery of public spaces for sports activities, chess

tournaments, and contests of different kinds with trophies have been seen as effective means for engaging youth in safe pastimes. In a survey of municipal authorities, 25 out of 34 persons indicated that they thought the recreational activities contributed “a lot” to reducing violence, as explained by a COCOPRES member: *“In sports activities, we’re able to prevent young people and children who are ordinarily on the street from meeting up with people they shouldn’t. In that sense, it prevents them from getting together. Instead, everyone is getting along and avoiding problems, harassment, and beatings.”*

Creating reference networks further helped to strengthen inter-institutional coordination for violence prevention and attention to victims. A total of 21 networks were formed over the life of the activity, with one in each target municipality. These were made up of representatives from the different COCOPRES, PNC, health/mental health clinics, municipal offices for women and children, and other entities that serve victims of violence (legally and with their physical/mental health) and help strengthen prevention mechanisms. The ET conducted FGDs with representatives of two reference networks (San Jose La Arada, Chiquimula and San Pedro Sacatepéquez, San Marcos) that explained how CR interventions have helped them strengthen coordination to prevent and tend to cases of violence more effectively. As with the COCOPRES, the level of efficacy depended much on the leadership and initiative of its members. The network in San Pedro Sacatepéquez was particularly active and numerous, covering the terrain of 17 communities in the municipality. Whether regular meetings will be sustained beyond CR’s support is unknown, but the forged personal and institutional relationships in many of the networks will likely be sustained.

While most youth considered psychological support to be an important need and useful when available, the majority of youth interviewed considered themselves underserved with respect to this service. Overall, there is a great need for psychological services at local, municipal, and national levels as such services are scarce. The psychological support services were provided to youth referred by the COCOPRES, by the broader referral networks or by project personnel who identified young people in alternative education or technical training groups. Most of them were young victims of violence, young people at high risk of migrating, returnees, young people with family conflicts or with relatives who migrated. The demand has generally exceeded the capacity of attention available in the clinics. CR made a needs assessment of 18 comprehensive municipal clinics, inaugurated the same year. CR’s original intention regarding the clinics, before the early closure of the activity, was to strengthen them with the addition of legal, social, and didactic services. Additionally, several municipalities explained that CR had been funding a psychologist, which the municipality would assume the cost for or were finding another way to maintain her presence (sometimes in coordination with CR).

The reduction of violence in a context of deeply rooted cultural norms is a long process that involves a wide range of interlinked factors to which the COCOPRES has made an important contribution. These factors include awareness-raising and rights education, economic empowerment of women, and institutional strengthening of public institutions mandated with protection and prosecution. The nuanced impact of the COCOPRES’ role in both rights education and as a community ally in steering rights holders toward accessing the justice system is an important contribution to de-normalizing violence. A significant legacy of CR with youth and women and in families will be the “know your rights and how to defend them” dimension, bringing to light the scourge of GBV in communities and informing men of the potential legal consequences of violence against women. The impact of this depends on the outreach capacity of the COCOPRES and how determined they are to

reinforce such knowledge, awareness, and potential for action through institutional networks, whether school, police, or municipal authorities.

Another area in which the CR Activity sought to provide support was in strengthening the inter-institutional relations between the municipal authorities, community organizations, the Unit for Community Prevention of Violence and Crime (UPCV), and the PNC at municipal and community levels. In 2017, the Ministry of the Interior's Vice-ministry for Crime and Violence Prevention issued a follow up strategy document to the 2014 National Prevention Policy, mandating the development of municipal prevention policies to prevent crime and violence at both community and municipal levels. The UPCV, the operational arm of the Vice-Ministry noted above, is mandated to form community commissions for prevention (i.e., COCOPRES), train them, and lead in the elaboration of a Municipal Prevention Policy and an action plan. The UPCV operates at departmental rather than municipal levels.

CR's support has strengthened key inter-institutional relationships and community outreach processes. This involved the police in the creation and training of the COMUPRES and their action plans; in institutionalizing the integral security model MOPSIC; in providing presentations on the legal framework to prevent violence against women and the risks and dangers of irregular migration, and in the development of violence reduction plans in schools, among other activities. CR worked with the PNC to develop and validate the ADAPT and ADAPT Junior models, a strategy using an innovative approach to engage youth to carry out analysis, action, and advocacy plans in their local communities. When a staff member of the IPs was asked how CR supported the COCOPRES in their development of a violence reduction plan, he noted *"We focus on a model that the project precisely built together with the PNC and the UPCV, which are the guarantors on behalf of the Government for prevention. Together through the project, the ADAPT Plus methodology was validated, which gave us a series of work tools that allowed us to systematize information to already have the community plan."*

These activities served to contribute to the slow and challenging process of reversing the population's pervasive, generalized, and long-standing lack of confidence and trust in the PNC.¹⁸ According to CR's most recent performance indicators, trust in the police has grown from a baseline of 53.9 percent to 68 percent by the activity's closure. A COCOPRE member noted, *"We have coverage from the PNC at the school where they come to give talks. If I'm not wrong, they come every month. They take the fourth, fifth, and sixth graders to guide them. The inhabitants here are not accustomed to that, they're kind of afraid of the police, that's how people feel. For this very reason, and thanks to the project, this help has come to the school."* This process of building trust is complex and long, although there is a more positive sense regarding the UPCV, and the ET noted an increasing capacity to differentiate between them and actors at substation-level of the PNC. This latter level of the police is plagued by chronic and severe budget constraints which leave them often without fuel to be able to arrive at crime scenes, which undermines public confidence, and high levels of rotation that undercut efforts to build relationships with communities. A member of the PNC in Cuilco explained how he sees the advances: *"We, with MOPSIC and accompanied by Raíces Comunitarias, have been able to enter villages that we had not been able to enter for the same reason that sometimes they are conflictive, and they do not see the police as well. Yes, we have been able to enter villages where Raíces Comunitarias entered first and then provide accompaniment, and we have even been able to give talks and everything else."*

¹⁸ The Mid-term Evaluation of the CR Activity conducted by CID-GALLUP noted that 29 percent of those interviewed had a "strong distrust" or "semi-distrust" of the police; 54 percent a "semi-trust"; and only 14 percent a "strong trust."

One of the most critical pieces of the medium and long-term solution is the economic empowerment of women, making them independent entities no longer subject to and beholden to male behavior and decision-making. This opinion was held by various informants in every informant group. Projects to confront and reduce violence that aggressively seek to economically empower women have shown to help women leave violent relationships, including through an example given by the municipal authorities in San Juan Ermita involving 18 women. The women received training and support for starting a small business; only one woman went back to her violent relationship yet, according to the municipal authority, with a more empowered stance. Additionally, a suggestion was made in one municipality of establishing women's institutes or development places where women would receive both rights education and microenterprise training at the municipal level. While the COCOPRES talks and training programs do not definitively secure either economic independence or successful access to the formal justice system, they do build up young women's self-confidence and self-esteem, making them potentially more apt, determined, and informed to defend their rights.

EQ1B: To what extent have innovative approaches, such as extra-curricular education, certification of competencies, and vocational training activities, helped reduce violence in targeted communities?

With respect to the most recent CR performance indicators, the activity achieved its intended targets. In total, 2,457 youth received technical vocational training, constituted by 1,170 women (47.6 percent) and 1,287 men (52.3 percent). A total of 4,440 youth received alternative basic education: 2,767 women (62.3 percent) and 1,673 men (37.6 percent). The totals include individuals who took both trainings. In certificates for competencies, 278 were granted: 31 women (11.1 percent) and 247 men (88.8 percent). Among them were returnees and young people who already had knowledge and skills in a technical area and were certified by INTECAP or DIGEEX.

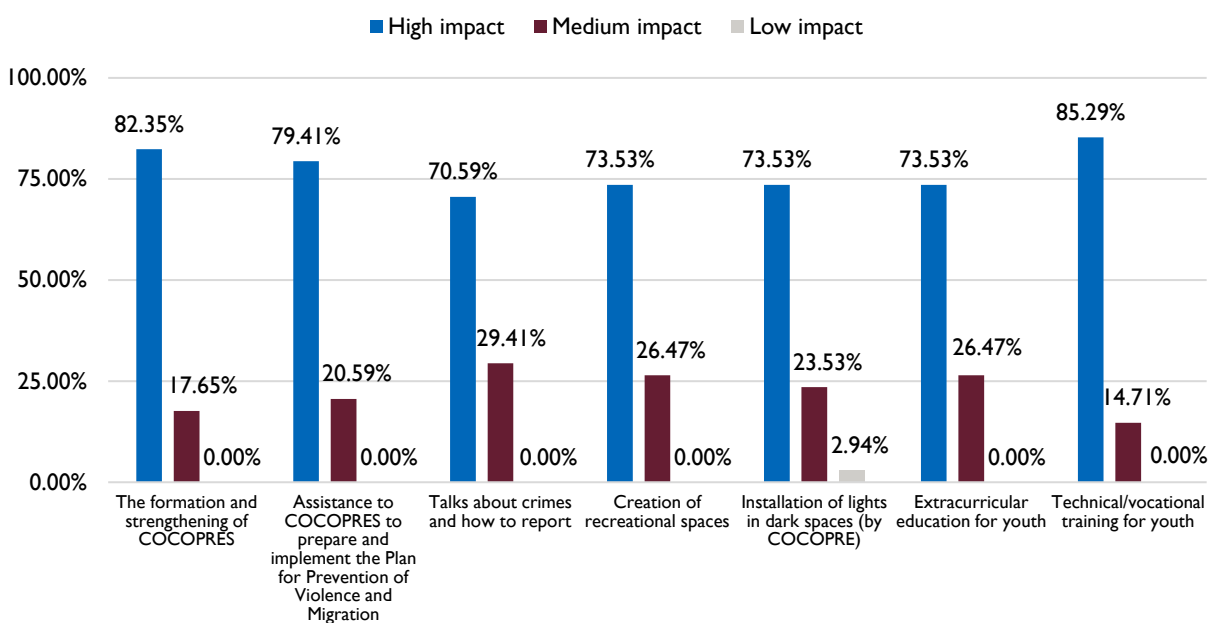
The relationship between these activities and violence reduction is not always a direct one but rather a result of “soft” effects of transferring values, such as instilling motivation toward tangible goals and greater hope for the future. Additionally, the activities kept youth engaged in sound and healthy use of spare time beyond the street and the home environment, which can be toxic and abusive. While it appears that most of the youth participants in these CR activities are victims rather than perpetrators of GBV and intra-family violence, they are immersed in a context where they are often daily witnesses to both physical abuse and heavy alcohol consumption, both negative models that can be contrasted with an educational or training environment where behavioral values such as mutual respect, discipline, self-control, goal motivation, cooperation, personal organization, and commitment are key. According to an IP staff that worked in the field with secondary prevention efforts, *“Training, and training also at an educational level, which has certain values. I feel that what we have is a lack of values. That is what ends up affecting us when we interact with other people and generate more violence in the place. Maybe avoiding the violence that lives in the whole community is difficult, but it will be one less person.”*

Municipal authorities and other key informants perceived the technical training and alternative education as highly important for violence reduction. In the ET's survey of municipal authorities, of the seven interventions by CR, **technical vocational training was selected as the most successful in reducing violence**, with 29 of 34 (85 percent) informants describing it as “high in importance” (see Figure 1. For all graphed survey data, see **Annex II.F**). Nine out of ten

municipal liaisons with CR described extra-curricular education *and* technical vocational training as highly important in violence reduction. While many informants felt the principal value of these activities was to “keeping youth busy” and out of trouble, others felt that further education and technical training provided deeper possibilities for attitudinal changes that both inform and encourage healthier ways of interacting with others, increase self-esteem and confidence, and offer prospects for engaging in activities that concretely improve possible income generation—all elements that can contribute to channeling youth toward more a more wholesome approach to daily life. The private sector Management Group (*Grupo Gestor*) linked to CR activities in Tacaná provided an example, referring to a girl who was rebellious and problematic: “We began to talk with her; she began her vocational training... She set up a beauty salon. Right now, she is setting up a massage parlor. She received psychological care, then she received the hairstyling course. Then she was linked to a group. We put her in the course there, she made her business plan, and we had the opportunity to provide her with some resources. That girl is giving us a lot back right now.”

Figure I. Municipal Authorities’ Perception Regarding CR’s Influence on Reducing Violence

How do you think that the interventions of Community Roots influence to lower the levels of violence in the communities where you work?



Municipal authorities from San Juan Ermita, Chiquimula also noted behavioral changes related to greater degrees of agency instilled by the courses of this kind: “When I met this person, her husband hit her, beat her, and left her purple. She couldn’t even leave her house; he wouldn’t let her do anything or participate in meetings. This past year when they began to give the courses, she enrolled and finished. We were kind of surprised because after being a (abused) woman.... She stayed with her husband, but now she perhaps sets her rules.... I don’t know if she secretly left him so she could hear the presentations (about violence), but I imagine that this also helped her, and she became empowered.”

The extra-curricular program the alternative education also provided a key venue/space for youth to receive talks on GBV and gender equity imparted by the facilitator. Convening

youth would likely have been difficult otherwise, based on comments of COCOPRES members regarding getting community members to attend talks. Thus, the alternative education opportunities helped youth learn basic information about forms of GBV, their rights, and how to take legal action. This may have contributed to violence reduction, yet it is difficult to affirm to what extent this is the case. Youth survey data show that a higher percentage of those who had received talks indicated that there was “a lot” (30.3 percent) or “a bit” (59.1 percent) more consciousness about violence and how to file a complaint. Of the youth that did not receive talks, a much smaller percentage (13.6 percent) indicated that there was “a lot” more awareness about these issues. Nine youth had responses pointing to increased knowledge on these issues in the open-ended questions asking what they learned and/or how they see their future as different. For example, one young woman responded, *“I have more knowledge about respecting others. I know more about one’s rights. Also about family violence.”* While it is difficult to measure to what degree this knowledge contributed to reducing violence in the context of this activity, it may be argued that knowing one’s rights is an indispensable start to responding to violence.¹⁹

In addition to the talks provided to youth through the alternative education platform, FUNCAFE launched a *School for Parents*, in all the groups where the courses were given. Although attendance was limited, those who did participate said that it served to help them learn about human rights, laws, and processes to file complaints. The *School for Parents* also seeks to help guide parents to interact in positive and non-conflictive ways, with mutual respect and affection, rejecting abusive or violent behavior. According to the CR 2022 Second Quarter Progress Report, *“In the Western region: 63 monthly sessions were attended by 1,075 participants (749 female and 326 male) and in the Eastern region: 18 monthly sessions were attended by 287 participants (220 female and 67 male)”* (p. 14).²⁰

Information about violence reduction, while valuable, did not reach many of the youth and other CR participants, and more information was necessary. Unfortunately, many of the youth who opted only for technical training did not benefit from such talks through the training sessions themselves and only benefited from these presentations if they had a very active COCOPRE. The fact that slightly less than half of the youth surveyed responded that they knew where and how to report violence, while the other half said they did not (32 percent) or they were not sure if they did (19 percent) reflects that the effort to make participants aware of what to do in cases of violence was not aggressive/comprehensive enough. In future, such talks on violence could be integrated into technical training sessions to ensure greater weight is given to these issues. This was underscored by many of the youth, especially women, in the FGDs who said that they would have liked more information on violence reduction—or any information at all, for those who had not received any talks/information. Several COCOPRES members also expressed the need for a more intentional effort to impart such information: *“I believe that it is important, the programs for youth, for children, for women who are suffering from violence, that it be a more direct issue for them with the involvement of community authorities and*

¹⁹ A Harvard study noted: “According to research by the Latin American center for competitiveness and sustainable development (clads) of INCAE business school and the social progress index, income and social progress are inversely related to interpersonal violence and intimate partner violence. Countries with higher levels of income and/or higher levels of social progress showed lower levels of violence. Likewise, the same study shows that education has a direct relationship with intimate partner violence. The countries with the highest level of education are also those with the lowest levels of intimate partner violence.” Ilie-Cardoza, C., Fernández, A., and Knaul, F.M. (2023). Overcoming domestic violence in Latin America: the need for education, employment and equality. <https://revista.drclas.harvard.edu/overcoming-domestic-violence-in-latin-america/>

²⁰ Community Roots Project FY2022 Quarter Two Progress Report.

organizations like Raíces Comunitarias, but that it be a little more intentional so that there can really be important empowerment.”

There was a widespread belief that the principal value of alternative education and technical training in reducing violence was keeping the youth busy, occupied in positive activities, and off the streets. This was expressed by COCOPRES members, municipal authorities, and IP staff. Several COMUPRES members from San Jose La Arada expressed this when asked what CR intervention has most helped to reduce violence. One stated, *“The courses. The courses help. Their wish is that youth and people have a means to keep busy.”* According to a WV staff member, this is the aim of the courses: *“Regarding the issue of violence, work has been done ... to promote the healthy use of free time. This has been developed by the COCOPRE and the reference network at the municipal level. This is the purpose of all of this formative, educational process for young people.”*

Numerous informants noted that youth involvement in training and educational activities are effective for reducing violence while they participate but not necessarily in the long run. Of the municipal authority liaisons, 60 percent thought the project was very effective at helping youth make good use of their free time, and 40 percent thought it was partially effective. And while 40 percent thought CR’s interventions were very effective for reducing violence in the short term, only 20 percent thought they were thus in the long term. For municipal authorities, half indicated that it was highly effective in the short term (38 percent partially, 9 percent a little, and 3% not at all) and 12 percent little or not at all; 44 percent indicated actions to be highly effective in the long term (44 percent partially effective and 12 percent a little). The higher percentage of those that perceived the impact as highly effective in the short term may be because in the short term youth were busy, but this may not be a long term solution to violence reduction unless accompanied by other strategies to raise awareness, educate, and foment economic independence.

Technical training and alternative education were perceived to be the most effective at reducing violence in target municipalities with the highest levels of gang violence. In Colimba and Coatepeque, which have the highest levels of gang violence in the target communities and some of the highest in the country, various stakeholders shared a general consensus that the levels of gang violence had decreased due to the education and training provided because it was effective at getting youth involved in positive and productive activities and providing them with more opportunities. This suggests that perhaps the level of impact on violence reduction of the technical training and alternative education is invariably context-specific: in areas of high gang violence or youth at risk of getting involved in gangs or organized crime, it is much more important to get youth involved in other, more productive activities. While in other areas, with youth who may not have a high risk of getting involved in gangs, crime, or violent activities, it keeps them occupied (hence off the streets where there is perhaps more risk) and gives them more education/skills and hope—maybe a new “chip” (better values)—and helps contribute to “positive youth development.” **There is likely a positive impact toward violence reduction, but it may be less apparent than in places with high gang violence.** This also suggests that violence reduction strategies may be more effective if tailored to the specific types of violence most prevalent in that context.

EQ2: To what extent did the overall activities implemented by the project support the reintegration of returnees to their communities?

CR's strategy with returned migrants was to provide them with psychological support and competency certification for those who had developed certifiable labor skills, such as soldering, carpentry, or construction. Through an implementing partner funded by CR, IDEI (*Asociación para la Investigación, Desarrollo y Educación Integral*), 21 workshops were provided for 94 returnees in Quetzaltenango and Guatemala City. In total, the CR Activity was able to attend to 831 returnees, 307 women and 584 men, only 11 of whom were older than 18. IDEI conducted interviews with all of these returnees, with the aim of reunifying them with their families within 72 hours. Additionally, CR worked with INTECAP and other technical training institutes to obtain competency certification for 68 men and 12 women returnees in trades such as construction, carpentry, beekeeping, technology, and coffee farming.²¹

The issue of returnees is a complex one and has posed particular challenges to the CR Activity due to their “invisibility.” Many informants suggest returnees are burdened both by a sense of shame and failure and that they often face high levels of indebtedness due to the sale of productive assets to cover the costs of the migration attempt. There is a generalized acknowledgement among municipal authorities, COCOPRES and youth beneficiaries that returnees are often psychologically traumatized by their experience, in acute financial distress, and constitute a partly hidden population that often avoids seeking support. One returnee noted, *“One returns very disappointed, very depressed for not achieving the objective with which we have gone. The famous American dream is not complete.... Yes, one feels disappointed in life.”* The ET noted a reticence on the part of many informants to discuss this phenomenon at length, especially to foreigners, possibly because part of this sector may still be linked to human traffickers, either by debt or by their intention to keep attempting to migrate and thus want to keep a low profile. Many observers have referred to the “invisibility” of this population. Thus, the ET was only able to identify a limited number of informants who were willing to self-identify as returned migrants.

There is limited reliable data regarding the exact size of the returnee population. The principal data sources in a 2020 study carried out for USAID used “1) a database maintained by IOM that tracks returnees from the United States and Mexico to Guatemala and 2) a CBP database that tracks Guatemalans apprehended or determined to be inadmissible in the U.S.”²² The IOM database estimated that for the years 2013 through 2020, the United States and Mexico returned a total of 693,070 Guatemalan migrants to Guatemala. By December 29, 2022, according to official GOG figures, 94,043 Guatemalans had been deported to Guatemala from the United States and Mexico, by air and land: 48 percent more than in 2021, when 63,520 people were deported. In a 2020 USAID profile of this population,²³ it notes the following characteristics: 83 percent male and 17 percent female; 85 percent over 17 and 15 percent under 17; many have been victims of crime and violence; most stop their formal education after elementary school; a high percentage come from the Western Highlands; 58 percent use

²¹ The total number of returnees that received psychological services with CR support was not available, but 118 was the number reported for FY2021.

²² P.10, 2021. “Descriptive Analysis of the Guatemalan Migrant Population returned to the country and apprehended or determined to be inadmissible in the United States between Fiscal Years 2013 and 2020.” USAID Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning initiative. (USAID/EI Salvador). Document was prepared by ME&A, Inc.

²³ <https://www.usaid.gov/guatemala/migration>

a coyote to cross the U.S. border; many have made multiple attempts to cross the U.S. border; and most do not have a fixed or stable employment.

In the municipalities where the CR Activity was carried out, figures for January to December 2022 from the Guatemalan Migration Institute (IGM) for eight of those municipalities show the following total number of returnees²⁴ (see Table 2). These numbers are to provide context, they are not numbers attended by CR.

Table 2. Returnees by Municipality

Municipality	Number of Returnees
Coatepeque	1,123
Malacatán	1,094
Chiquimula	881
Tacaná	867
Cuilco	553
Chiantla	491
Totonicapán	1,009
Nahuala	510
San Marcos	1,032

CR support has taken the form of both psychosocial assistance, certification of competencies, and efforts to include them in training programs, although returnees have been difficult to identify. Initially, CR sought to identify the returnees through the COCOPRES; however, this proved to be challenging as returnees typically did not approach the COCOPRES due to the stigma of shame noted above and/or commitments with “coyotes.” The CR Activity subsequently coordinated with *Casa Nuestras Raíces*, an organization providing services to returned children, adolescents, and young people, with offices in Quetzaltenango and in Guatemala City. CR funded one psychologist in each *Casa Nuestras Raíces* location. According to CR Annual Performance Report for FY22, implementing partner IDEI provided psychosocial services to “participating youth and returnee migrants through culturally relevant cognitive behavioral therapy.” According to the performance report for FY22 Q2, 254 patients (175 female and 79 male) received a total of 578 therapy sessions. Under the framework of this consultancy, the CR provided services through IDEI to not only returnees, who were fewer, but also to at-risk young people, whether victims of violence, in danger of gang recruitment, or possible migrants.

The FGDs yielded mixed results regarding access to support for returnees, yet the majority of informants from all informant groups replied that they did not know of services to support returned migrants. In interviews with municipal authorities in Coatepeque, one informant noted: *“I have two young women who were returned, so I referred them to Raíces. They provided psychosocial support, one young woman was from Magnolia and the other from Jardin, communities where Raíces works. Psychosocial support was given, and the girls received a technical course at INTECAP: one took a course in hairdressing, the other in cake-making.”* Other informants, including a returnee, replied when asked about the availability of support: *“No, I didn’t get help. My own family helped me just because one returns very disappointed, very depressed.”*

²⁴ https://mic.iom.int/webntmi/descargas/gt/2022/11/GT_muni_Noviembre2022.pdf

Three other participants added, “I would say no (there is no support)” and “Not that we know of” and “From relatives, maybe yes, maybe.”

Regarding training and certification of skills, one staffer from the IP noted: “With returnees, we work on certification for labor competencies. We have a nice group of returnees who were certified, who now come with trades and have been certified in the process... We also have not only the returnees as such, the children of the returnees. We have quite a few young people with returned children. Returned children who are part of our youth group, because our youth also saw the poverty in which their father came back.”

In addition to the psychological support provided by *Casa Nuestras Raíces*, the ET identified a number of different individual projects related to returnees, such as a private hospital “Los Angelitos” in Tacaná, which is supported by the private sector and funds a “volunteer” psychologist who offers services to youth, among whom are returnees—although the demand outstrips the capacity of one staff person. **Swisscontact, an international NGO, has a project in Coatepeque to reintegrate returnees into the labor market based on a certification of skills acquired while in the United States.**

There are limited services and support for returnees, especially in the more remote communities and townships, despite the high rates in these zones. This is due to the combination of lack of government resources, elevated degrees of extreme poverty in the areas of origin of the returnees, and the challenges of access for support efforts in many of the most remote areas. The concept of “reintegration” of returnees, especially a sector as large as Guatemala’s, is one that has not been adequately addressed by government institutions, local NGOs, or the international donor community. There is a lack of robust policies and support mechanisms that provide psychosocial assistance, links to sustainable productive projects, and a comprehensive care model that would likely require inter-institutional and intersectoral coordination and planning with involvement of the civil society and local-level authorities.

CR hired the firm *Ideas para Guatemala/Asociación Grupo Enlace* to develop a care model for returned migrants and their possible inclusion on project services. The results were delivered, reviewed, and validated by the project in FY22 Q1, according to CR’s FY22 performance report. Although the closure of the project in December 2022 means the recommendations cannot be implemented, they can serve as a basis for future projects. Increasingly, given the recent ebb and flow of migrants, countries are realizing that the phenomenon of returnees requires urgent and targeted national policymaking focused on this issue.

EQ3. To what extent did the overall activities implemented by the project prevent irregular migration (and/or increase rootedness and community attachment)?

The CR Activity came to a close in the context of one of the largest waves of migration to the United States from Central America in recent history. The strong gravitational pull of migration in the face of scarce economic opportunities and, to a lesser degree, violence has had a sharply limiting effect on the impact of activities implemented by CR to reduce irregular migration and increase rootedness and community attachment. While vocational training, further education, and efforts to educate youth regarding the dangers of migration all contribute to positive youth development (PYD) and have provided important intangibles, such as increased self-esteem, greater optimism about the future, and—in some cases—motivation to start small-scale, home-based enterprises, the harsh realities of the

economic landscape will not deter a significant number from seeing migration as the only option for securing economic well-being.

The high propensity to migrate was evident in the surveys, KIIs, and FGDs with all informant groups.

In FGDs with all informant groups, when asked how many young people migrate (e.g., “Of every ten young people, how many migrate?”), the response was almost always between six and nine. Almost 30 percent (29.4) of municipal authorities surveyed indicated that the economic situation causes the majority of people to migrate, and 56 percent responded “many.” Of the 65 youth that indicated having the intention to migrate, 62 of them (90 percent) indicated it was due to a lack of economic opportunities and 30 of them (43.5 percent) indicated it was due to a lack of education opportunities (the next highest response was due to corruption, which was 33 percent).

CR used a multipronged approach to try to reduce irregular migration and foment PYD in the target municipalities/communities: 1) provide alternative basic education opportunities; 2) offer technical training through INTECAP and other partner organizations; 3) provide competency certification for youth that had taken enough technical training or already had certifiable skills; 4) offer seed capital (in materials) to youth to start business (e.g., equipment for a hair salon); 5) offer psychological services; and 6) support the COCOPRES to give talks to youth to dissuade them from migrating.

CR implemented all planned activities, meeting or surpassing all targets related to youth education/training and economic opportunities, resulting in employment, self-employment, or internships for roughly a fifth of youth attending.

The target for the number of businesses that create opportunities for youth was 20 for the LOA. There was an accumulated number of 18 by 2022, which was the goal for 2022.²⁵ CR provided secondary prevention services (education and training) to 5,318 youth, which was slightly short of the LOA goal of 5,500 but surpassed the accumulated goal for 2022, which was 4,300. Of these youth, 2,457 received technical training (1,170 women, 1,287 men); 4,440 received alternative basic education (2,767 women, 1,673 men); and 278 youth (31 women, 247 men) had their competencies certified in beekeeping (91), technology (50), construction (35), carpentry (25), and several other trades. Additionally, the goal for youth who received scholarships/technical training and become apprentices, employees, or are self-employed was 800 by 2022, which was surpassed by CR with a total of 1,120 youth (51 percent women). Most of these youth (177 women, 51 men) were self-employed or generating income due to their technical training. However, there are no criteria regarding the amount or consistency of income that constitutes being “self-employed.” A small portion of these youth (65) were able to successfully develop a business plan and apply for seed capital, resulting in a more robust small business. Roughly 5 percent of the 1,120 (38 men, 23 women) had found employment, and 831 had internships (one-third women). It is unclear if they still had these internships at the close of CR. Another indicator is perception of future employment opportunities, and the LOA goal was 60 percent indicating “optimistic,” of which 78 percent responded in such a way (37 percent very optimistic and 41 percent optimistic).²⁶ The only indicator that was not met was the percent of households reporting cases of minors and youth that had migrated, which was 69 percent against a target of 45 percent.

Youth did not have much optimism for the future, which is likely due to the very restricted economic opportunities. While important, these accomplishments are more nuanced when analyzed

²⁵ Due to CR closing early (at the end of 2022), the LOA will be regarded as 2022 and not 2023 as anticipated.

²⁶ CR obtained this figure for indicator reporting from the mid-term evaluation of Community Roots (December 2021).

with the qualitative and survey data collected for this evaluation. Survey data shows that 26.4 percent of youth opined that there are no accessible economic opportunities and 69.4 percent indicated that these opportunities are “a little” accessible (and only 4.2 percent responded that there are many). Overall perception of the future showed slightly more hope, with 15.6 percent of youth indicating it was good and 64.8 percent that it was mediocre.²⁷ The level of optimism did not differ greatly with the non-target youth, of which 28.6 percent indicated that it was good, 66.7 percent mediocre, and 19.7 percent “not at all good.” Furthermore, a higher percentage (21.7 percent) of youth who had taken technical training indicated the future was “not at all good,” as opposed to those who had not (17.7 percent). For those receiving alternative education, 21.6 percent of participants indicated “not at all good,” as opposed to 14.3 percent of those who did not participate. This could be due to youth who have acquired new knowledge and skills but still face a void of economic opportunities.

The perception of the municipal authorities further underscores the challenge that youth face in terms of economic opportunities: only 14.7 percent opined that the capacity for youth to stay in the municipality due to their education opportunities and 11.8 percent indicated a high level due to technical training; the great majority (64 percent) indicated that it was mediocre for both. A third of COCOPRES considered the future for youth was 4 or 5 on a scale from 1 to 5, while 40 percent opined that it was bad (1 or 2 on the scale). However, the great majority of municipal authorities also opined that CR’s interventions had a lot of impact (23.5 percent) or a medium impact (47 percent) on reducing migration in the short term and a lot (32.4 percent) or medium (53 percent) on reducing migration in the long term). Many COCOPRES members and youth echoed this perception. **Thus, while the challenge of reducing migration is massive, the majority of informants expressed that they believe CR did make some impact on its reduction.**

A wide range of youth perceptions about future opportunities existed, from intending to migrate to being confident about finding opportunities to make a living in Guatemala. In addition to this group of youth that expressed in FGDs and/or surveys that they intended to make a life for themselves in Guatemala and were confident that this was possible, there were three other categories of youth: 1) those who intended to stay and, for the moment, expressed that they thought this was possible; 2) youth who said that they would try to find work or have a successful business in Guatemala, but if they couldn’t, they would migrate; and 3) youth who very clearly stated that they planned to migrate to the United States. The statistical data also reflect this tendency: 29.5 percent of youth indicated that they planned to go to another country to live and work within the next three years and another 32.8 percent that they did not know, while 37.7 percent responded that they did not intend to. Broken down by gender: 54.8 percent of young women and 54.2 percent of young men who benefited from CR surveyed indicated that they had the intention of migrating and 30.3 percent and 28.3 percent, respectively, said they had the intention of going to live in another country. Another 31.6 percent and 34.8 percent, respectively, responded that they didn’t know.

²⁷ It is unclear why the ET’s data results on perception of economic opportunities and perception of the future differed greatly from what was reported by CR (which found 78 percent reported being optimistic or very optimistic about future employment opportunities, which is from the external mid-term evaluation). One explanation may be that surveys were administered via numerators for the mid-term evaluation while the ET had youth self-administer surveys, perhaps eliciting more transparent responses.

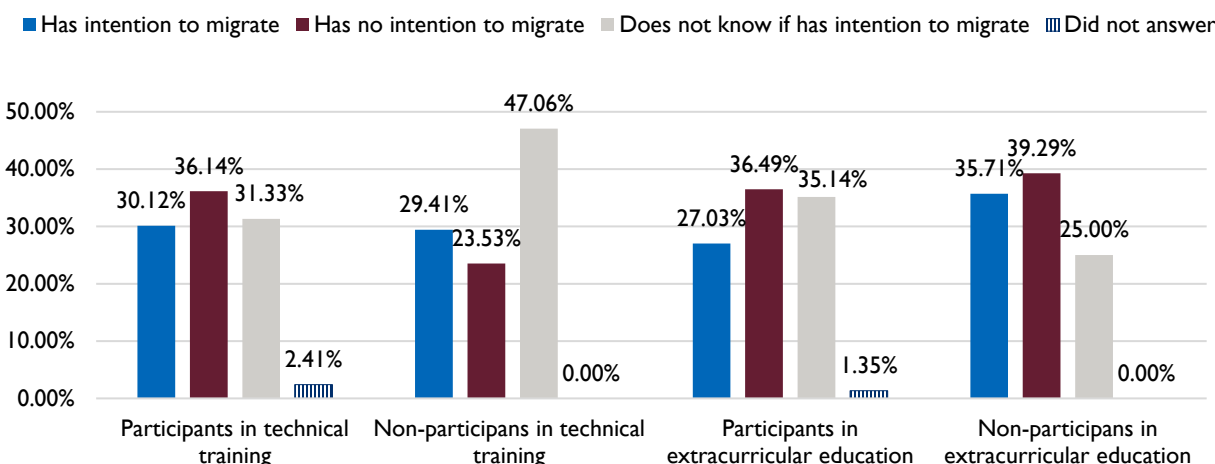
A third of the youth—27.5 percent of women and 32.5 percent of men—indicated that they have taken steps toward migrating, such as saving money (24 youth), talking to friends and neighbors about the trip (13), and making travel arrangements (7).

The educational programs and the technical vocational training may have helped dissuade some youth from migrating, at least temporarily, and provided a degree of optimism about possible future earnings. There is evidence that the opportunities provided by CR helped develop hope for youth regarding more opportunities and making some money while also working toward more economic stability through future studies and training. Of the youth who participated in FGDs and completed the survey, 72.5 percent had studied in the alternative basic education (60 percent of whom completed their high school degree) and 80.6 percent in technical training. Yet youth didn't necessarily see vocational training or further education as contradictory to migrating, as seen in survey data regarding intention to migrate. However, in non-target communities, in which 65 percent and 63 percent of youth (respectively) indicated not having opportunities for vocational training or alternative education, a much higher percentage of youth expressed having the intention to migrate: 75 percent of non-target women and 77.8 percent of non-target men (compared with 54 percent of women and 55 percent of men in target communities).

In FGDs most youth who had participated in alternative education felt that it had helped them become more employable and/or wanted to continue studying. A number of young people, especially women, expressed that they were grateful to the **COCOPRE** for finding them and offering them the opportunity to complete their studies. And many young people saw the value of a high school diploma for opening job opportunities. As one young woman expressed, *"With a high school diploma, we can choose to have a better job and not migrate."* Another young woman expressed: *"It has helped me a lot. I had only a sixth-grade education. Due to my economic situation, I could not continue. Before, I thought that I could only get ahead by migrating, but now I don't think that."* Another young woman explained that she appreciated the flexible nature of the alternative education since she also worked, so she was able to organize her time and attend. She also commented that her higher level of education allowed her to get a job that pays her more: *"Yesterday I was super happy because they confirmed my job, they told me that I did qualify, and now I'm going to have a little more income.... Now, I can have triple the income."*

Figure 2. Intention to Migrate and Participation in Education and Training

Technical training, extracurricular education and the intention to migrate.



Survey data reflect that youth who studied in alternative education and/or vocational training expressed an intention to migrate less than those who had not. For alternative education, 35.7 percent of those who didn't participate wanted to migrate (and a quarter of them indicated not knowing), whereas only 27 percent of those who participated indicated having the intention of migrating (with 35 percent indicating they don't know; see Figure 2, above. For youth indicating wanting to migrate, there was not much difference between those who did technical training and those who did not, with 30.1 percent and 29.4 percent, respectively. Yet a substantially higher percentage of non-participants indicated not knowing (47 percent) compared with 31.3 percent of participants and a substantially higher percentage of participants indicated not intending to migrate (36.1 percent) as opposed to non-participants (23.5 percent). The high number of youth who had received technical training expressing uncertainty about migrating or "not likely" reinforces the affirmation that a relatively large number of youth aimed to apply their skills to generate income and stay in Guatemala, but they were not sure this would pan out. This was reflected in FGD data as well.

The youth who seemed the most confident about not migrating were those who had received seed capital and those involved in initiatives tied to their local economies. The ET spoke with several of the 65 youth who had received support through machinery and/or other supplies to start a business, such as the young woman who received supplies for her piñata business and another young woman who received an industrial sewing machine for her seamstress/tailor business. She explained that the machine helped her to make many more types of products and get more done: "They already gave me the machine, and I finish the job in the afternoon, in the morning or at night. The machine is here; I no longer leave my house. It is faster. Here we make pants, skirts like the one I have now, which I also made, I can also make aprons. We also make jackets, pants, also blouses, shirts, complete suits like the one over there." She also emphasized the importance of being financially independent, which she felt her business allowed her.

The ET also carried out FGDs at two coffee cooperatives, with youth studying to be in the coffee business—in which the great majority of the youth felt sure they could make a living in Guatemala. As this young woman expressed, "I have thought that one can have opportunities here, perhaps not big or that it

won't be tomorrow or the next day, but little by little, it's a process. But one can make it here." Youth who had this degree of confidence about their future in Guatemala were a relatively small group within the ET sample.

The models that seemed to be the most effective at generating economic opportunities and fomenting rootedness were ones aimed at local development and successful alliances with small businesses. The ET interviewed members of two cooperatives in Tacaná, San Marcos (Grupo Gestores and a tourism cooperative) that developed opportunities to help curb migration through helping strengthen youth capacities locally. Grupo Gestores created a cooperative with savings and credit for 25 youth in 2012, and now they have helped youth start various businesses (e.g., honey, flowers, ecotourism), also with the help of CR for providing training and supplies. Similarly, the tourism cooperative has developed local terrain to make it a natural reserve for tourism, bird watching, and camping as well as a fungi plantation to grow and export shitake mushrooms. With the funds made through these projects they created (independently of CR), they have helped to support other projects—which CR has also supported—such as barber and beauty salons and cell phone repair. The indigenous group in Totonicapán (48 Cantones) is another successful, locally organized model that CR developed an alliance with. CR provided a three-month, intensive training in traditional (Mayan) sewing for 35 women, all of whom work together to produce clothing and are economically independent. **Several informants mentioned that a viable way to dissuade migration would be to incentivize the use of remittances for local development and investment in productive activities. Guatemala has a growing number of initiatives of this type, such as Prima-veral Inc., a U.S.-based nonprofit helping migrants to set up remittance co-ops,** among other organizations that “loan to members who have less cash, and share knowledge about starting businesses and building homes, enabling all of the members to launch projects that grow both members’ wealth and the local economy.”²⁸

CR formed several successful private sector alliances, but they were limited in number.

Grupo Hame is a national agricultural business that CR formed an alliance with to provide electrician and welding training to youth in hopes of hiring them.²⁹ As a member of Grupo Hame said, “*I hope that we can graduate these people and receive some in our business.*” Another alliance was with Rana Labs, which is a media production company. They provided training to youth to do media production and be news spokespeople. The ET encountered roughly 10 youth who had taken this training and were enthusiastic about working in this field, which they believed was a viable employment option. While these alliances and others mentioned provided good opportunities for youth, the overall number of such alliances was relatively small, thus benefiting a relatively small number of youth. Finding such alliances was a challenge.

Many saw the vocational training as a means of contributing modestly to the family income and/or generating some income for themselves for their next steps. About half of the youth who had taken vocational training had set up small at-home enterprises, usually in tailoring, hair styling, manicures, and to a lesser degree electrical activities. About half of the youth in FGDs expressed that they planned to do this temporarily while pursuing further academic or vocational training and/or saving money to invest in more supplies, as this young man explained: “*This support is very important. There are times when we have an economic crisis. It is what makes us perhaps not motivate ourselves but rather feel desperate to migrate to be able to help the family, the parents, my siblings. Sometimes we have no other*

²⁸ <https://time.com/6166459/guatemala-migration-economy-remittances/>

²⁹ *Grupo Hame* has roughly 25,000 employees and farms in various parts of the country, thus being able to provide employment in the municipality where the young person lives.

qualities than just being able to work for the minimum wage. With these projects, our mentality is changing. We can sell things, we can work and get home, and, in my case, be able to say, 'I'm going to make a cake,' or 'I'm going to make donuts,' or 'I'm going to make bread and be able to sell it.'"

This type of comment was made by a number of young women, men, COCOPRES members, private sector actors, and municipal authorities, as well as CR staff. As a COCOPRES member from Las Magnolias (San Isidro, Malacatán) said: *"Many young people have received training in different areas: confectionery, electricity, mechanics, academic preparation, completion of primary level studies, diversified basic level (9th grade). All the programs that have come to collaborate with young people, through the training or those benefits, have stayed working in our community and have avoided leaving, going elsewhere, to Mexico to the Tapachula farm, or to the United States."*

Additionally, the open-ended responses of some of the youth reflect a desire to stay in Guatemala. Of the 115 youth who responded, 25 wrote responses to one of the three questions about remaining in Guatemala and/or not migrating. For example, one young man wrote, *"With this technical knowledge I hope to work in my country and not migrate."* A young woman wrote, *"CR supported me to have a business and have knowledge and extra income, without the necessity to migrate."*

The technical training and further education served to instill positive behavioral values such as discipline, self-control, goal motivation, personal organization, and commitment. In FGDs, youth expressed that they enjoyed the opportunity to study with other youth and that they feel more motivated than before. One young man wrote that he has *"more of a vision to succeed, more knowledge, the desire to be an entrepreneur, and more motivation. Two young people described the changes in themselves in the open-ended responses. One said, 'Before, I didn't have so much knowledge about some things and I felt insecure, I didn't know what was going to happen in my future. Now I feel more confident in myself, and I also know what I want for my future.'"* The other said, *"Before, I had few friends; I only had my family to support me, but then the online nail course came out, I signed up to get ahead."*

Many COCOPRES members who had migrated told youth about their own experiences and hardships from this experience, which seemed effective for youth. A COCOPRES member in Sujchay, a community in Tacaná, explained, *"I had the opportunity to go to the United States for eight years. The truth is that I returned because I began to think that my children had already stopped studying and were entering adolescence. And there are a lot of dangers and risks when migrants travel through Mexico. So, I advise them to try to do what they can in our country."* Youth who had received talks from the COCOPRES usually said that they learned some things that they hadn't known, often mentioning the dangers and difficulties of migrating and that the talks influenced their thinking about migration, such as this young woman: *"I think that it also helped a lot because I also wanted to go with my family (to the U.S.), but the truth is that after listening to everything that one experiences, traveling like that, the legal part, as immigrants, to go there is not easy, especially with children. The talks that the COCOPRES gave us helped us a lot."*

While COCOPRES talks helped to dissuade some youth from migrating, not all youth received these talks and COCOPRES' migration prevention efforts seemed varied. Of youth surveyed, 22 percent opined that the COCOPRES prevention plan had helped reduce migration *"a lot,"* and a third of them thought it had helped *"a little."* A little over half of the youth in FGDs said that they had received talks about migration, which sometimes were the majority in a FGD and in some cases just several of the youth. Of youth surveyed, 57.5 percent indicated having participated in a talk by the COCOPRES and 28 percent in recreational activities. COCOPRES members in about two-thirds of the

communities said that they had given talks to youth about migration. In San Pablo, the COCOPRES organized talks with the PNC and Municipal DMM to support what they considered important for youth and families. *“We organize some talks through the municipality, with the Women’s Office, and Police Prevention even also within the school. And we have received training for about two or three years ... on methodologies for working in the community and structuring work agendas for our assigned place: in this case, the urban area, directly through the municipal network for the protection of children, adolescents, and youth.”* These mentioned COCOPRES are in or close to urban areas with members who have demonstrated leadership and a strong tendency to coordinate with the COCODE, other COCOPRES, the municipality (in some cases), CR, INTECAP, and other alliances and partners that help them to implement their prevention plans.

While most youth appreciated the modest income they might generate from vocational training courses, most were clear that the training would not serve to underpin a living wage. In some cases, COCOPRES members and youth were clear that they wanted to migrate even if they’d received courses, such as the woman (COCOPRES member) in Huica (La Libertad) who had taken several courses (technical training), including nails and hair cutting, and still had a plan to migrate. A CR field staff member also mentioned a case in which six young men who were studying all migrated to the United States at the same time, and another case in which 32 youth from one cohort receiving technical training migrated to the United States. It was mentioned in many FGDs and KIIs from all informant groups that the vocational courses were not adequate for finding formal employment or launching a business, such as this young man: *“Several received the motorcycle repair course; there were about three in Las Lagunas village. In other areas, about 15 received scholarships for technical courses. Although more hours of training are necessary because there were very few. Change that for the sake of those who are going to receive the course. More time. The courses are very short. Now they work in mechanical workshops and don’t think about migrating.”* As suggested by survey and FGD data, the courses helped some youth find work for the moment or gave them a base to continue training/studying or saving money, but it was not necessarily enough to keep them from migrating at some point if faced with income instability.

As suggested in this quote, technical courses often gave youth a sense of hope for the moment, but about one-third of youth expressed that if they could not get a good job and/or have success with their small business and/or selling their services, they would migrate (without a visa). As a teacher explained about one of his students in the alternative education program: *“What is lacking here are job opportunities. Because I already told you that a youngster told me, ‘Profe, I thought that being a professional was having everything, and no. I’m a professional and I don’t have a job. Now I’m going to go to the United States instead.’”*

In the FGDs, one of the most common phrases about why a young person wanted to migrate, which was especially heard from young women, was “I want to have something for myself,” meaning enough capital to have her or his own house and/or start a successful business.

The extent to which the activities reinforced or strengthened “rootedness and community attachment” is unclear, yet youth assuming leadership roles in CR and/or their community in general and certain technical courses seemed to contribute. Several young people who participated in FGDs had taken on roles within CR, such as being violence prevention promoters. They reflected a sense of purpose and identity with CR’s mission, as seen in their wearing of vests or T-shirts with the CR logo. While they expressed that they would continue this role after CR ended its support, they also noted that this would be more difficult without CR support and back-up to reinforce their credibility. The ET encountered other youth who had become part of the COCOPRES and/or youth

who had assumed leadership positions in their community in other organizations/entities (e.g., citizen security commission, church groups). Increased rootedness was evident in these youth. Additionally, several youths in the FGDs who had received technical training related to their local terrain, such as eco-tourism and coffee production/services, made comments related to rootedness, such as having more appreciation for the nature in their country and municipality and wanting to have a more active role in protecting it and sharing it.

Youth who expressed an optimistic view of their future in Guatemala had a lower tendency to indicate that they had an intention to migrate. Of the youth who indicated that their future in Guatemala was “good,” 22 percent did not indicate an intention to migrate, as opposed to 8 percent of youth who indicated having the intention; of those who labeled the future as “not at all good,” 24 percent indicated having the intention to migrate as opposed to 4 percent who indicated not having the intention. Thus, having an increased sense of hope may also be seen as having a stronger sense of rootedness, as expressed by some youth: *“From my family, there are three of us who came to the course here. The idea is to put it into practice, because simply migrating there, there are some who say it is easy; there are other people who say it is difficult. For me, in my case, it is better to work here or put into practice something that I have learned.”*

Other youth expressed having hope that they can achieve what they want if they try, as was apparent in FGDs and in the open-ended questions, such as the following responses by different youth: *“Before I thought about migrating because here I couldn’t get ahead and achieve my dreams. I didn’t know how to get out of my comfort zone. Now I have learned that I can get ahead and achieve my goal, and I am so happy to have finished my high school degree. I have the opportunity to be in technical training and work in what I like, be my own boss, and with my business to help others.”* Another said, *“Now I have more possibilities to work and generate income. This motivates us to stay in our country and succeed.”*

It should be pointed out, however, that the Guatemalan sense of rootedness, or *arraigo*, already exists more strongly than in other Central American migrants. According to a 2018 survey by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), only one-fifth of Guatemalan migrants to the United States intend to move there permanently, compared with half of Salvadorans and one-third of Hondurans. “Most Guatemalans, migration experts say, plan to spend only a few years earning money to pay for their children’s education or help their parents build a house and then return to a new and better life.”³⁰ This desire to return to an origin community was reflected in many comments in the youth survey. The deterrents to migration were less linked to a sense of economic opportunity but rather to familial obligations: having small children in the case of women and fears about the dangers involved and the high cost. Survey data show that 93.5 percent of the youth indicated their family as what keeps them in Guatemala, followed by 52 percent who indicated “my home/land” and 23 percent indicating their work. This type of rootedness was evident in the ET’s survey and FGD data, even in youth and COCOPRE members who expressed an intention to migrate or had migrated: most of whom said their aim is/was to earn money and then return to Guatemala, as expressed by this COCODE member: *“My thought was to go there to work and return. Because I had one thing in mind, one day the United States could get out of control, they would send us here. The truth is, this is our land, where we were born and where we are going to die, it is not there in the United States. We went there to struggle and do something, to have a better life here.”*

³⁰ <https://time.com/6166459/guatemala-migration-economy-remittances/>

While not as strong as economic necessity, violence was also a driver of youth migration.

Survey data show that 19 percent of youth that have the intention of migrating cite insecurity and violence as what drives them to migrate. Youth survey also data show that more youth victims of violence expressed a negative view of the future than non-victims, with 23.3 percent of victims expressing that the future was “not at all good”, as opposed to 15.6 percent of non-victims. Similarly, of youth that reported intending to migrate in the next three years, 39.7 percent had been victims of violence as opposed to 21 percent who had not, and 37 percent non-victims expressed not having the intention to migrate as opposed to 26 percent of victims. For undecided youth, a higher percent (36 percent as opposed to 27 percent) had been victims. Thus, these data reflect that violence may be a factor influencing the intention to migrate. In areas where gang presence and **aggressive gang recruitment was manifest, such as Colomba and Coatepeque**, interviewees did raise the issue of violence as a driver of migration. Both in these municipalities and in others not ridden with gang-violence, women pointed to GBV as an incentive also—such as in a community in Coatepeque in which young women said that it is common for women, even young ones, to migrate due to intra-family violence. In another municipality (Malacatán), a COCOPRES member stated: *“Here the issue of filing claims was not encouraged or was not encouraged until recently, but many people have had to migrate due to extortion or death threats. And people also due to domestic violence, for fear of revenge for filing a claim, women have to migrate.”*

In a study on migration in Huehuetenango conducted by the Catholic Diocese,³¹ which involved more than 400 families across the department, between 3 percent and 7 percent of those with family members who had migrated indicated that violence was their principal motive for moving. In addition, 15 percent of those interviewed said that their family member abroad would be in danger if they returned, with many citing either family violence or fears of authorities or extortion. Thus, the efforts to reduce violence are an important intervention as part of an overall strategy for reducing migration, as CR was initially conceived.

Conclusions and Recommendations

EQI To what extent have the overall activities implemented by the project helped to reduce violence, especially intra-family and gender-based violence, in targeted communities?

CONCLUSIONS

1. A lack of community-level data on cases of violence and legal claims filed make attribution to CR difficult.
2. The culture of silence around domestic violence makes it difficult to understand if increases or decreases of GBV cases filed correlates with the actual number of GBV/domestic violence cases.

³¹ However, even in the Huehuetenango study conducted by the Catholic Diocese, which involved more than 400 families throughout the department, between 3 and 7 percent of those with family members who had migrated indicated that violence was their main motive to move.⁹⁷ In addition, 15 percent of those interviewed said that their family member abroad would be in danger if they returned, with many citing family violence or fear of authorities or extortion. (Citation from the document: Migration from Huehuetenango in the Western Highlands of Guatemala, March 2022. Page 19. Migration Policy Institute. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/mpi-huehuetenango-report-esp_final.pdf)

3. Municipal-level data on complaints filed was unreliable and, when obtained, difficult to track to CR interventions due to CR's relatively small coverage.
4. CR strategies were applied uniformly despite variations in violence types and existing structures to address it across municipalities/communities.
5. CR's violence reduction strategy is a good model in terms of strengthening existing government efforts and institutions, which was especially successful in municipalities reflecting commitment and leadership, yet electoral changes and administrative rotation undermine institutionalization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Future interventions/activities aimed at reducing violence should consider the following:

1. To understand the impact of CR interventions, establish a system for the COCOPRES to track cases of violence, the type, and the number of legal complaints filed and withdrawn. This can be done by through manually recording the information rather than digitally.
2. Use community-level data captured by the COCOPRES on violence cases and legal claims filed to better understand the relationship between the two, and share results with the broader development community.
3. From the start, establish a rigorous MEL system to track complaints filed in target and some non-target municipalities to determine if and how USAID-supported efforts may impact violence reduction and/or legal complaints filed.
4. In an activity's design stage, develop a typology of the kinds of violence prevalent in each municipality, and existing structures to address them, to tailor strategies to each geographical area. Obtain baseline data on prevalence and types of violence at the community level.
5. Build on government policies and efforts to reduce violence at municipal and national levels, strengthening institutional and human capacities such as using the diploma developed by CR to train municipal authorities, PNC, and UPCV in violence reduction.

EQIA To what extent have innovative processes, such as involvement of community-based violence prevention committees, helped reduce violence in targeted communities?

CONCLUSIONS

1. COCOPRES' effectiveness varied widely across communities and was contingent on factors such as leadership, coordination efforts, and knowledge and skills, resulting in varying degrees of impact.
2. Fear of reprisal, the economic dependence of women on their partners, challenges of access to justice, and notions regarding the privacy of the family realm have created a powerful "culture of silence" around domestic violence, which is a key barrier to violence reduction that CR began to tackle, although much remains to be done.
3. Filing a legal complaint for women has been shown to be more effective when women are accompanied by a municipal authority and/or community leader.

4. CR's support strengthened key interinstitutional relationships and community outreach processes among COMUPRES, COCOPRES, municipal authorities, and the UPC/PNC. A visible result is the increased trust with law enforcement due to UPCV outreach in schools and communities.
5. Alcoholism, while not a single cause of domestic abuse, is a powerful trigger and a problem raised almost universally among informants.
6. While progress was made in violence reduction through the COCOPRES strategies, there was a need to deepen outreach and expand the number of talks and presentations on all the issues covered in the project (women's rights, violence reduction, migration, how to file complaints) and reinforce efforts with written materials.
7. Psychological attention was recognized as a need by youth; however, a majority felt that access was limited.
8. The ET was not able to identify any safe shelters/refuges available for women who were victims of GBV, yet the need for this was expressed across regions and informant groups.
9. Women's significant economic dependence on men puts in evidence their need to have economic alternatives that permit them to make empowered decisions to leave an abuser, make legal complaints, and reconstruct a secure life.
10. Many women informants from all categories affirmed the importance of working directly with men, starting young, on "new masculinity" awareness in order to effectively reduce violence against women and children.
11. The existing distrust in the police regarding reporting violence, especially GBV, reflected past experiences of indifferent attitudes, insensitivity, and corrupt practices. Regular PNC rotation makes trust-building more challenging.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Future interventions/activities aimed at reducing violence should consider the following:

1. Ensure that the COCOPRES receive more frequent and robust training early on, with written materials in Spanish and local languages and a replication plan, to better equip them for more vigorous outreach and interaction with youth.
2. Prior to or in the inception phase, carry out a qualitative study in target municipalities to identify the most effective strategies to break down the culture of silence around violence and build upon these efforts to address the issue.
3. Establish viable mechanisms at the community level for women to file a legal complaint with municipal/community leader accompaniment appropriate to the linguistic/ethnic and geographical location.
4. Support the establishment of the COMUPRES at the municipal level, to create new COCOPRES in other communities, allowing the authorities to institutionalize the national Community Policing policy. Such efforts should focus on strengthening linkages between the COMUPRES with the PNC and UPCV of their Department to further promote the COCOPRES' work.
5. Widespread alcoholism should be understood as a public health issue and viable treatment models need to be included in comprehensive anti-violence strategies, working with health workers, municipal authorities, and police on strategies and regulation.

6. COCOPRES' outreach to reduce violence should be systematic, with a replication plan, and accompanied by a range of written and digital materials on the legal framework for prevention and filing complaints, which already exist from other USAID projects/activities.
7. *Provide sustained support to the 18 comprehensive health clinics established, building on other projects with similar goals and on CR's original plan to strengthen them with the addition of legal, social, and didactic services. Expand mental health services at the local, community, and national levels.*
8. Explore the possibilities of establishing municipal safe shelters/refuges for survivors of GBV, with a survivor-centered approach, creating a safe space for healing, recovery, and reintegration programs to support economic independence of victims.
9. Prioritize the economic empowerment of women, which has been shown to help women break free of violent relationships. Explore municipal models specifically tailored to women, such as establishing comprehensive multi-purpose support centers and development places where women would receive rights education, skills development, psychosocial therapy services, and microenterprise training.
10. Train male youth and community leaders in "new masculinity" aimed at improving gender equity and reducing violence. Also, do community-level training including religious and other leaders and youth, on gender equity, GBV, and legal frameworks, accompanied by printed and digital materials.
11. Strengthen police training at the community level aimed at instilling awareness, sensitivity, and behaviors to attend to women victims of violence to avoid re-traumatization, disrespect, or minimization of the acts of violence. Formalize contextual orientations by the community to new PNC regarding community issues.

EQIB To what extent have innovative approaches, such as extra-curricular education, certification of competencies, and vocational training activities, helped reduce violence in targeted communities?

CONCLUSIONS

1. While the link between violence reduction and alternative education and training the training courses was not a direct one, the courses imparted a range of values, such as mutual respect, discipline, self-control, and goal motivation that contribute to reducing violence in at-risk youth.
2. Municipal authorities perceived the technical training and alternative education as highly important for violence reduction, with the latter seen as the most effective.
3. While the alternative education provided an important venue for youth to also receive talks on GBV and gender equity, those receiving only the technical training courses did not receive such awareness sessions, constituting a missed opportunity.
4. There was strong belief among informants that the principal value of alternative education and technical training in reducing violence was keeping youth occupied in positive activities and off the streets, yet they also believed that this goal was not sustainable beyond the duration of the classes.
5. Technical training and alternative education were perceived to be the most effective at reducing violence in target municipalities with the highest levels of gang violence.
6. The School for Parents, promoted by IP FUNCAFE, was seen by informants as an important strategy and platform to share positive values and promote alternative approaches to parenting styles that reproduce conflictive and abusive patterns.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Future interventions/activities aimed at reducing violence should consider the following:

7. Incorporate positive youth development values in training curricula and find ways to amplify youth voice and engagement in the community, seeking to articulate youth with broader community networks to foster a sense of agency and belonging.
8. Promote a continuation of alternative education and technical education courses to broaden access to these programs as well as extending their time period and the depth of the content offered.
9. Ensure that all courses offered to youth, whether alternative education or technical training, use their platform to provide talks and presentations on violence reduction and migration risks.
10. With municipal support, develop a range of ongoing community-supported activities to meaningfully engage youth in positive use of free time, whether with educational, recreational, or cultural activities.
11. Combine enhanced technical training and alternative education efforts with existing regional strategies designed to prevent gang recruitment and offer options for possible gang desertion.
12. Expand and replicate the School for Parents in all municipalities, incorporating it in school curricula and encouraging COCOPRES to promote its inclusion.

EQ2 To what extent did the overall activities implemented by the project support the reintegration of returnees to their communities?

CONCLUSIONS

1. Characteristics of the returnee population, such as trauma, shame, and indebtedness, has made this population seek a low profile, making it difficult to identify in order to provide support.
2. While the CR Activity attended returnees through psychosocial assistance and the certification of competencies, a large part of the population attended were unaccompanied minors, the sector covered by CR's IP, limiting the provision of CR services to mostly this age group.
3. Certification of competencies is a key step for returning migrants to aid in their reintegration into the labor market, but CR's efforts in this area were limited due to challenges in identifying this population.
4. The validated care model for returned migrants developed for CR is a useful contribution to an urgent national policy discussion that provides comprehensive interinstitutional inputs with articulated strategies for initial humanitarian support, registration, psychosocial support, labor market insertion and productive integration, financial advice, and follow-up.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Future interventions/activities aimed at reintegrating returnees should consider the following:

1. Promote an initiative with the broader development community and donors to support efforts of the GOG and UN agencies to secure more effective returnee identification and to determine needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities in order to design robust and comprehensive policies and programs that ensure returnee participation and increasing ownership of their reintegration.
2. Maximize coordination and articulation among all organizations and government efforts working with returnees, building networks to ensure that all age groups have access to a range of services, such that each phase of the return and integration process and all age groups are covered.

3. Explore successful existing comprehensive models in other countries for the certification of competencies, a key step in reintegration, which articulates training organizations, local government, and industry.
4. Build on the validated care models for returned migrants, such as the one developed for CR by *Ideas para Guatemala/Asociación Grupo Enlace*.

EQ3 To what extent did the overall activities implemented by the project reduce irregular migration?

CONCLUSIONS

1. CR's multipronged strategy for reducing irregular migration was effective in helping many youth develop skills, education, and increased optimism, yet restricted economic opportunities still drive many youth toward migrating as the only way to generate adequate resources.
2. The small youth enterprises that were the most stable and successful for generating consistent and meaningful income were those that had received resources (in-kind) from CR, yet these were a relatively small number.
3. Technical courses helped many of the youth generate modest income, but they were too short for youth to develop enough expertise to be competitive in the labor market and were often not matched with local demands.
4. CR did not seem to have criteria for defining "self-employed" or "internships," making the prospects of these young people unclear in terms of opportunities and economic stability.
5. Providing alternative basic education helped many young people complete their high school or junior high degrees, which was especially valuable to the numerous women who had abandoned their studies; it helped generate confidence about better, future employment and study opportunities.
6. Participation in the project fomented important values and attitudes in youth, like increased self-esteem, greater optimism about the future, and in some cases motivation to put into practice learned technical skills to generate income.
7. COCOPRES outreach to youth to prevent irregular migration was effective for dissuading some youth, especially when members used personal testimonies, yet not all COCOPRES actively pursued such outreach.
8. Though not the main one, violence is a driver of migration and different municipalities, and communities have different types of violence that contribute to migration.
9. The extent that rootedness increased overall wasn't clear, but what seemed to contribute was youth becoming prevention volunteers, assuming community leadership positions (including COCOPRES members), and receiving technical training that exploits local, natural resources (e.g., coffee, eco-tourism).
10. CR had alliances with several successful models for generating employment and self-employment through local development initiatives while also increasing rootedness, as well as some private sector initiatives to foster employment, yet these were quite limited in number.
11. Several informants mentioned that a viable way to dissuade migration would be to incentivize the use of remittances for investment in local development and productive activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Future interventions/activities aimed at reducing irregular migration should consider the following:

1. Implement similar strategies yet include a stronger and specialized focus on economic empowerment through a specialized sub-contractor or a separate project with this sole focus for the same target youth. Maintain a database of youth that need continuity in training toward economic empowerment to share with similar future interventions.
2. Include a component with substantial resources for a more rigorous and broad strategy for providing youth with seed capital and support for launching their enterprises, with systematic accompaniment—especially in the first year.
3. Base technical training areas and length on a comprehensive analysis of local market demand, both by employers and business needs, and carefully tailor training to prepare youth to meet this demand.
4. Have clear criteria for categorizing young people's employment/income situations to understand the true impact of the interventions on their economic empowerment and migration propensity.
5. Include alternative basic alternative education and, from the start, work with municipalities and COCOPRES to sustain it beyond the life of the project/activity. Consider childcare and transportation when offering these courses.
6. Include systematic training for youth, integrated into alternative education, with modules and written materials, which helps them understand their strengths and resources and guides them to make a life plan.
7. Provide systematic and differentiated training to specialize different COCOPRES members in different prevention areas (e.g., GBV, irregular migration), drawing on their own strengths and experiences in order to strengthen violence reduction outreach.
8. Prior to initiating implementation, analyze the types of violence that drive migration in the different target areas and tailor the prevention strategies accordingly.
9. Strengthen rootedness by: a) including a strong and explicit component to recruit volunteers widely and generate youth involvement in community and municipal organizations/governments, and b) offering technical courses that increase agricultural productivity and make use of local, natural resources.
10. Request that bidding IPs include in their proposals identified partners that offer a strong potential for generating employment through local development as well as private sector alliances that have proven successful in CR and/or other USAID projects/activities.
11. Support local development initiatives that channel remittances into productive projects/enterprises, developing alliances with successful migrants and migrant organizations that aim to invest in their country/communities. Inform such efforts with the extensive related policy studies and experiences.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I: RESEARCH DESIGN MATRIX

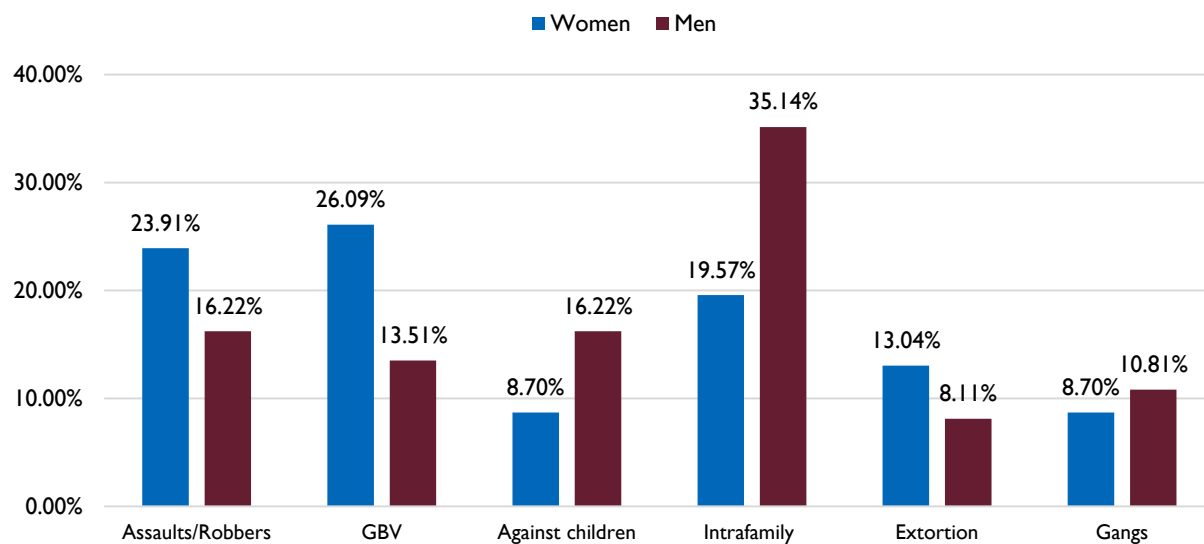
Evaluation Question	Topic	Source	Data Collection Method
I. To what extent have the overall activities implemented by the project helped to reduce violence, especially intra-family and gender-based violence, in targeted communities?	Level of gender-based violence (GBV) in the community	Youth (target and non-target)	Survey and FGDs
	Personal experience or firsthand knowledge of an act of GBV	COCOPRES	FGDs
	Level of violence against children in the community	COCODES (non-target)	Surveys, FGDs, interviews
	Personal experience or first-hand knowledge of an act of violence against children	All informants	Survey and FGDs
	Types of violence that are the most prevalent	Youth (target and non-target)	FGDs
	Level of overall safety in your community	COCOPRES	Survey and interviews
	Tendency to report cases of violence (why or why not, where, how)	COCODES (non-target)	Interviews
	Tendency to file legal complaints for cases of violence (why or why not, where, how)	Municipal authorities (target and non-target)	Interviews, FGDs, survey
	Reasons for not reporting or filing complaint	PNC (local and dept. prevention)	
	Relationship with the police	All informants	
I.a. To what extent have innovative processes, such as involvement of community-based violence prevention committees, helped reduce violence in targeted communities?	Role of the COCOPRES (general and in relation to youth)		
	Existence and implementation of the Violence and Migration Reduction Plan	Youth	Survey and FGDs
	Perceptions on the effectiveness of the plan to prevent migration and violence	COCOPRES	FGDs
	Type and degree of involvement in community-based violence prevention committees and activities	Municipal authorities	Survey and interviews
	Psycho-social support for youth	Youth (target and non-target)	Survey and FGDs
	Level of different types of violence	COCOPRES	FGDs
	Awareness about violence, rights, and filing complaints	COCODES (non-target)	FGDs
		Municipal authorities (target and non-target)	Interviews

Evaluation Question	Topic	Source	Data Collection Method
1.b. To what extent have innovative approaches, such as extra-curricular education, certification of competencies, and vocational training activities, helped reduce violence in targeted communities?	Existence of recreational areas and activities	Youth (target and non-target)	Survey and FGDs
	Youth involvement with CR recreational activities (e.g., art, sports)	COCOPRES	FGDs
	Youth involvement in initiatives to reduce violence and irregular migration	COCODES (non-target)	Survey and FGDs
	Youth involvement with CR recreational activities (art, sports, etc.)	Youth (target and non-target)	FGDs
	Type, quality, and relevance of technical/vocational training	COCOPRES COCODES (non-target) IPs, facilitators, mentors	Interviews
2. To what extent did the overall activities implemented by the project support the reintegration of returnees to their communities?	If the people who migrated benefited from services offered by CR	Youth (target and non-target)	Survey and FGDs
	Knowledge and participation in reintegration efforts for returnees	COCOPRES	FGDs
	Returnees and their behavior or psychosocial needs attended	COCODES (non-target)	FGDs and survey
		Municipal authorities (target and non-target)	FGDs/ interviews
		Returnees	
3. To what extent did the overall activities implemented by the project reduce irregular migration (and/or increase rootedness and community attachment)?	Level of migration in the community	All informants	Survey, FGDs, interviews
	Migration destinations and motives	Youth (target and non-target)	Survey and FGDs
	If she/he has migrated and/or know someone who has	COCOPRES	FGDs
	Optimism about the future	COCODES (non-target communities)	FGDs
	Degree of optimism regarding economic opportunities		
	Intention to migrate		

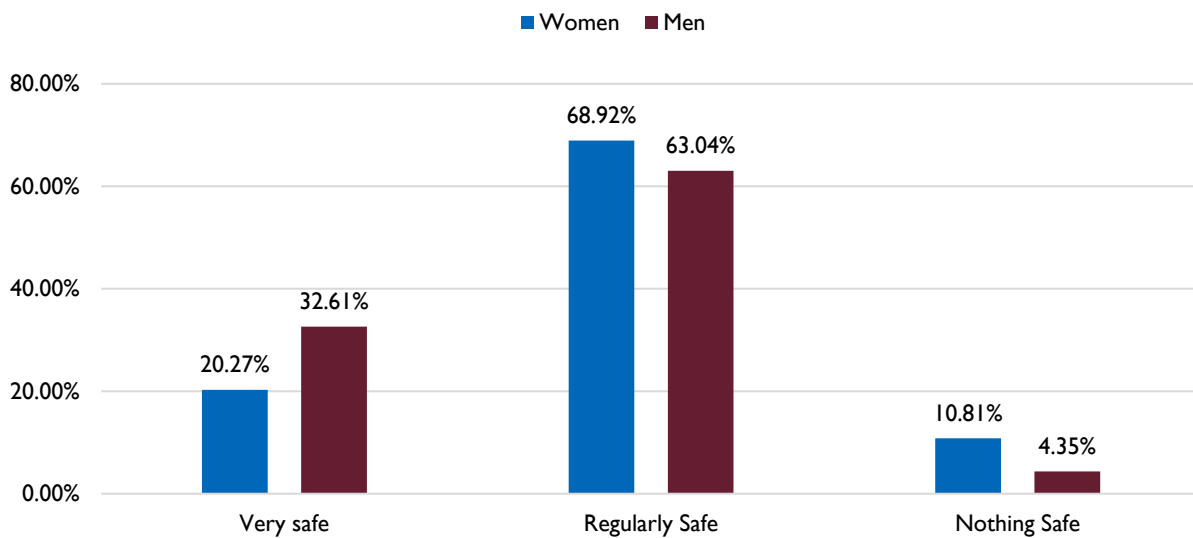
ANNEX II: YOUTH SURVEY RESULTS IN GRAPHS

VIOLENCE

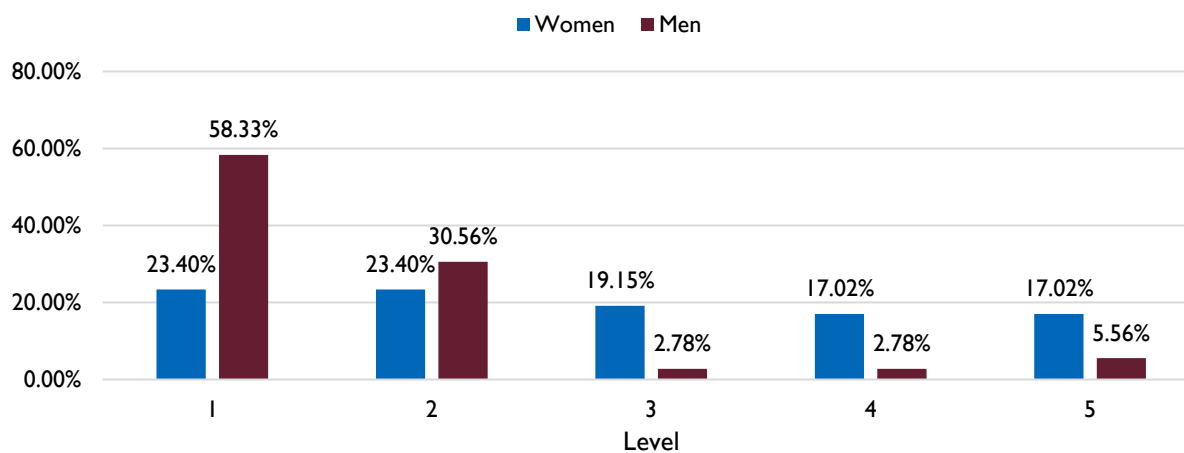
Proportion of victims of violence in the last year by gender



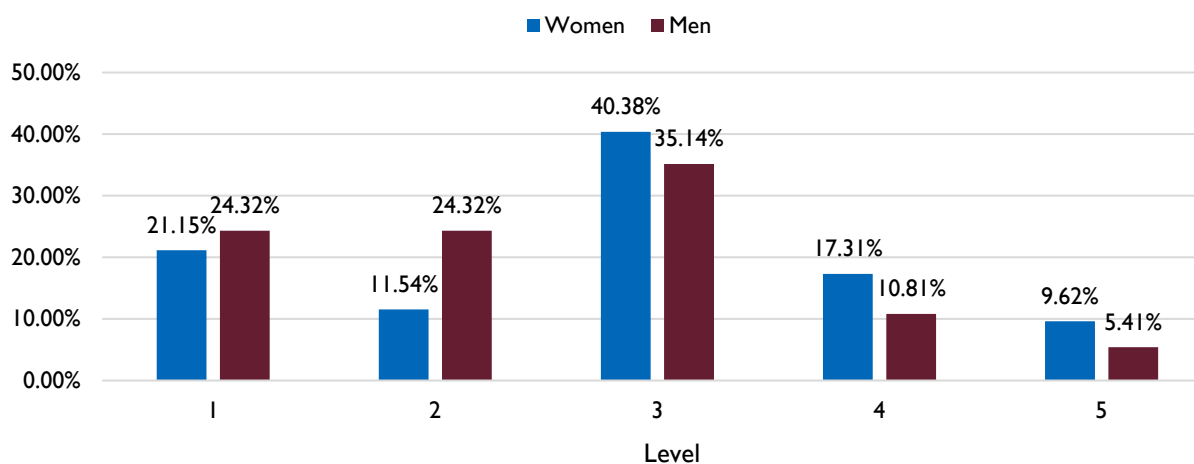
Level of security perception by gender



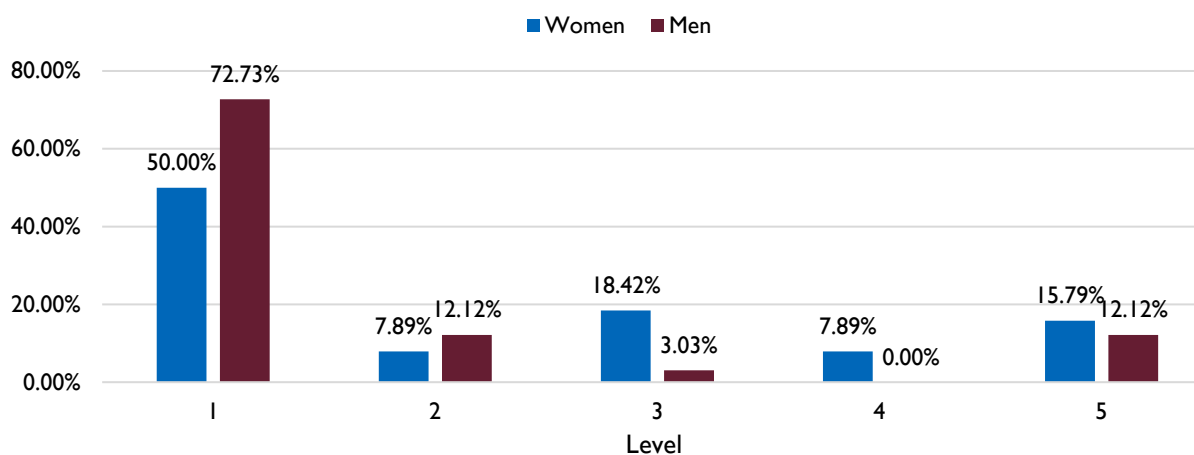
Perception level of violence towards women



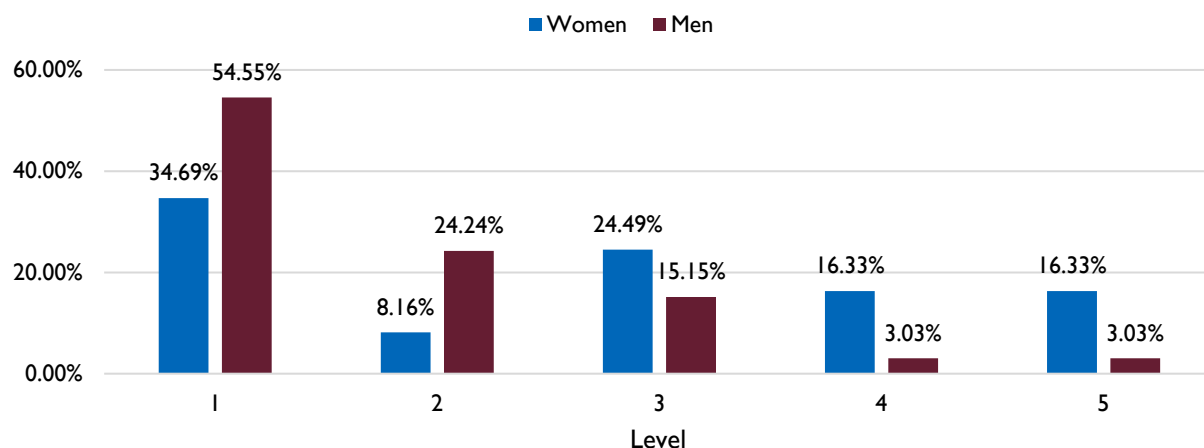
Perception of intrafamily violence



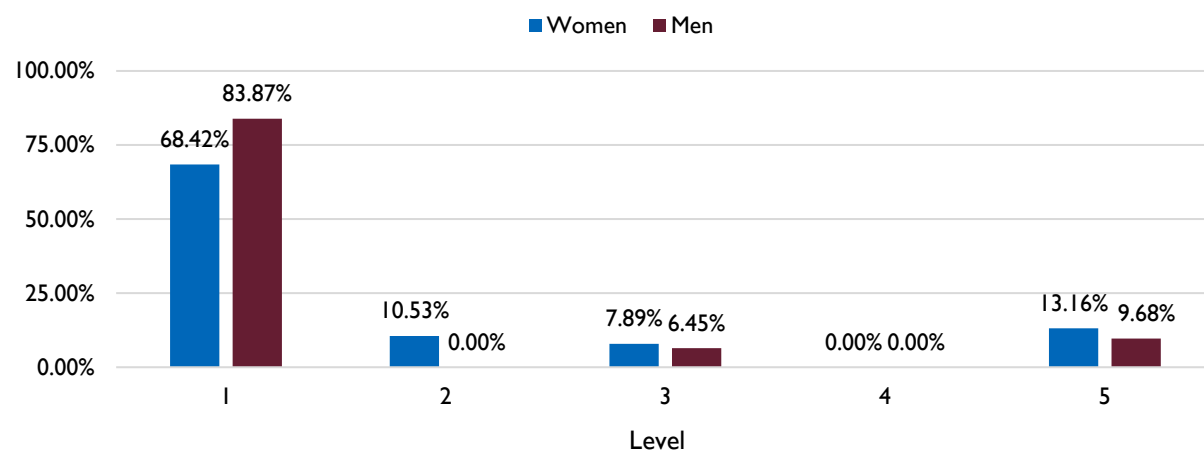
Perception of gang violence



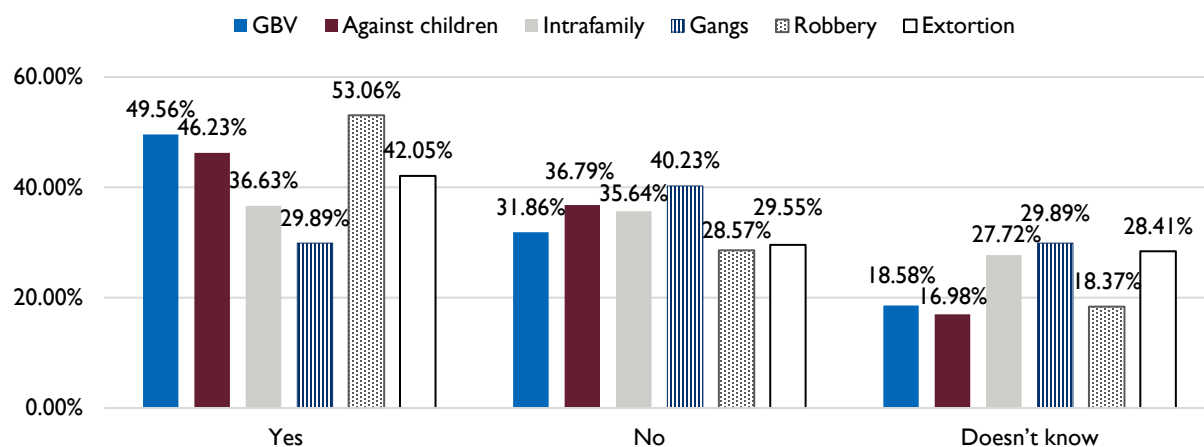
Perception of violence assaults/robberies



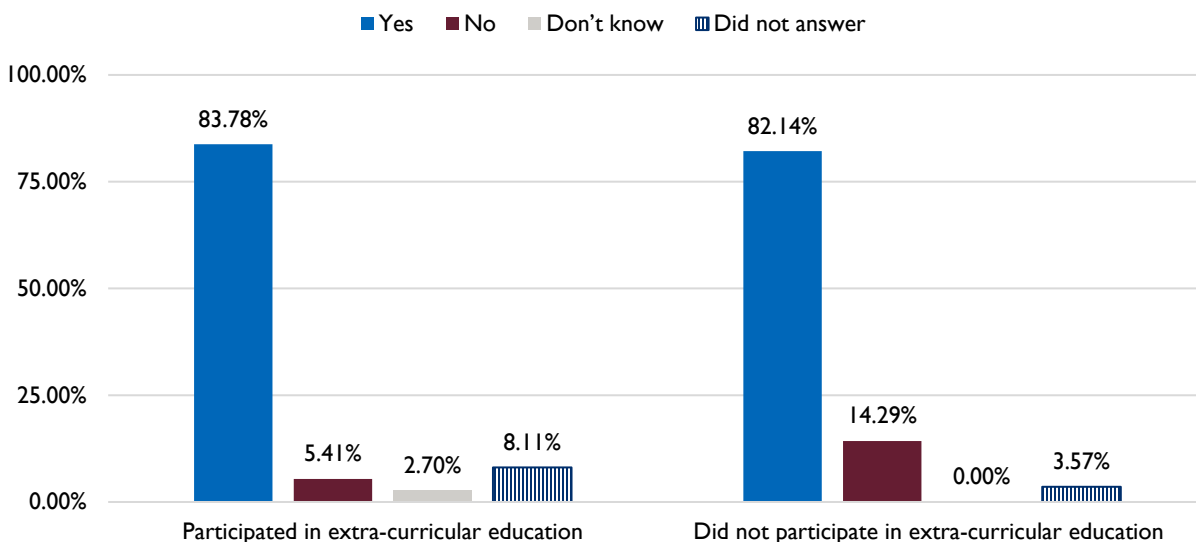
Perception of violence due to extortion by gender



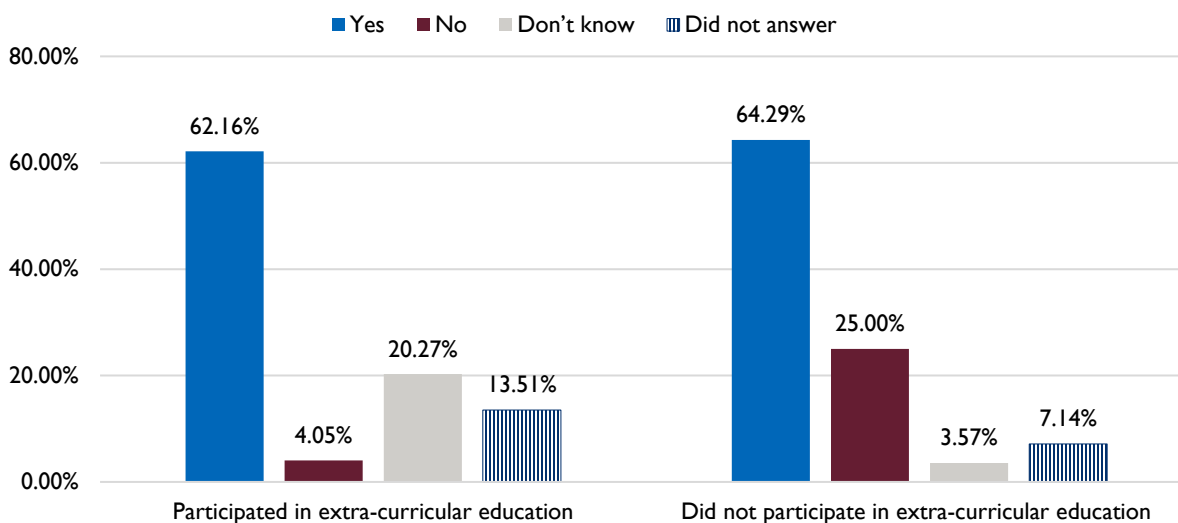
Perception of legal complaints according to the type of violence



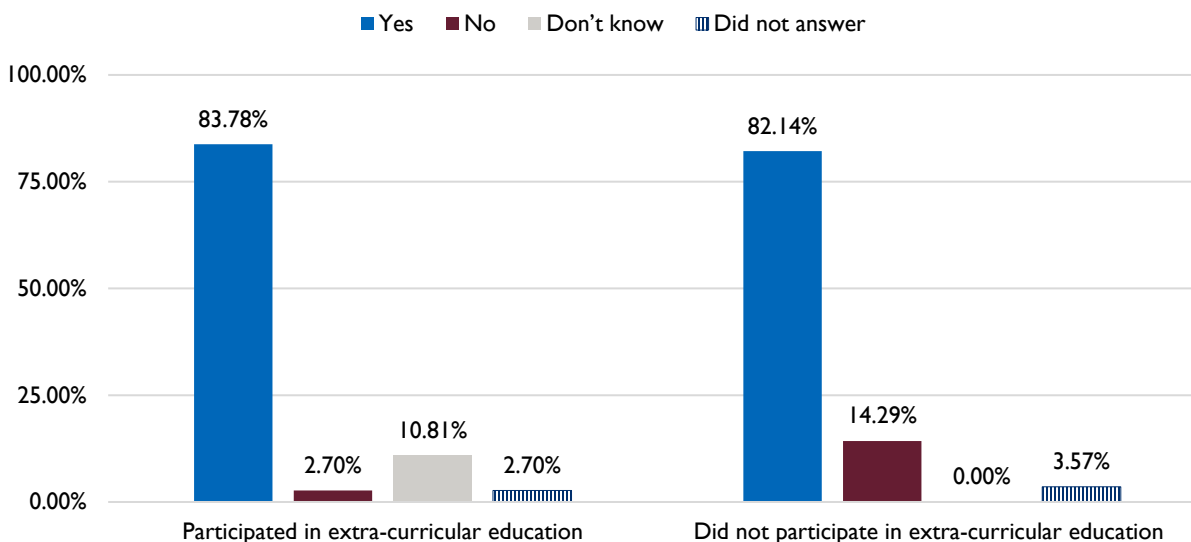
Participation in extracurricular education and whether they would report cases of violence against children



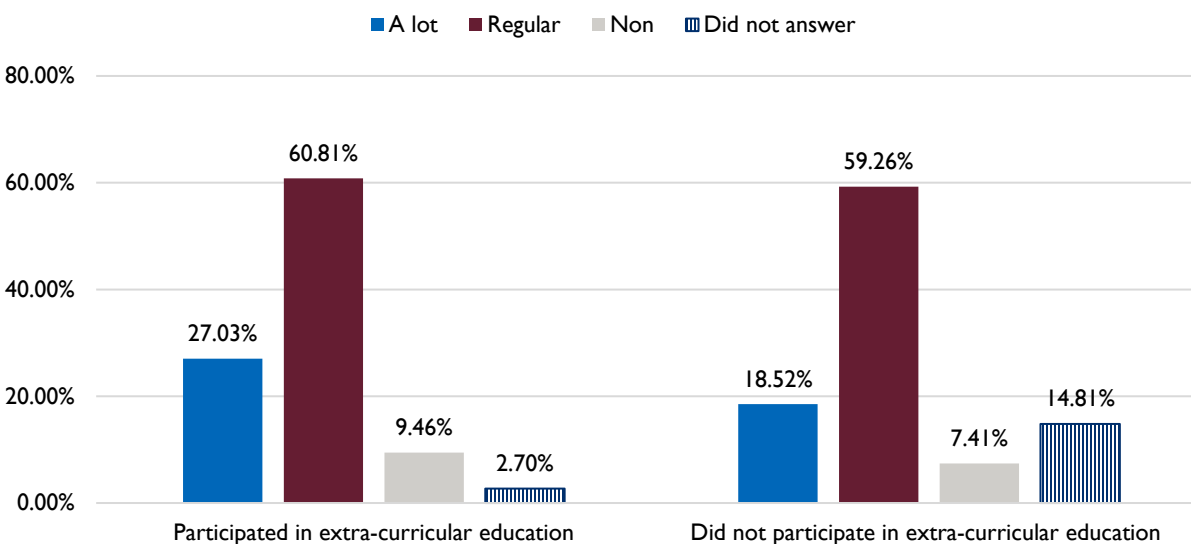
Participation in extracurricular education and if they would report cases of intrafamily violence



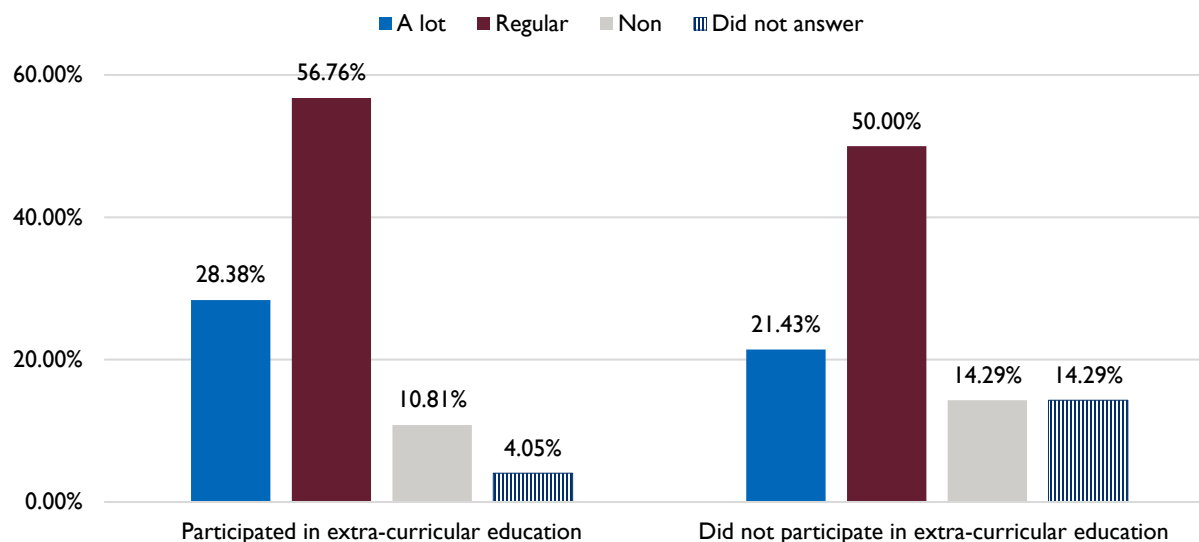
Participation in extracurricular education and if they would report cases of violence against women



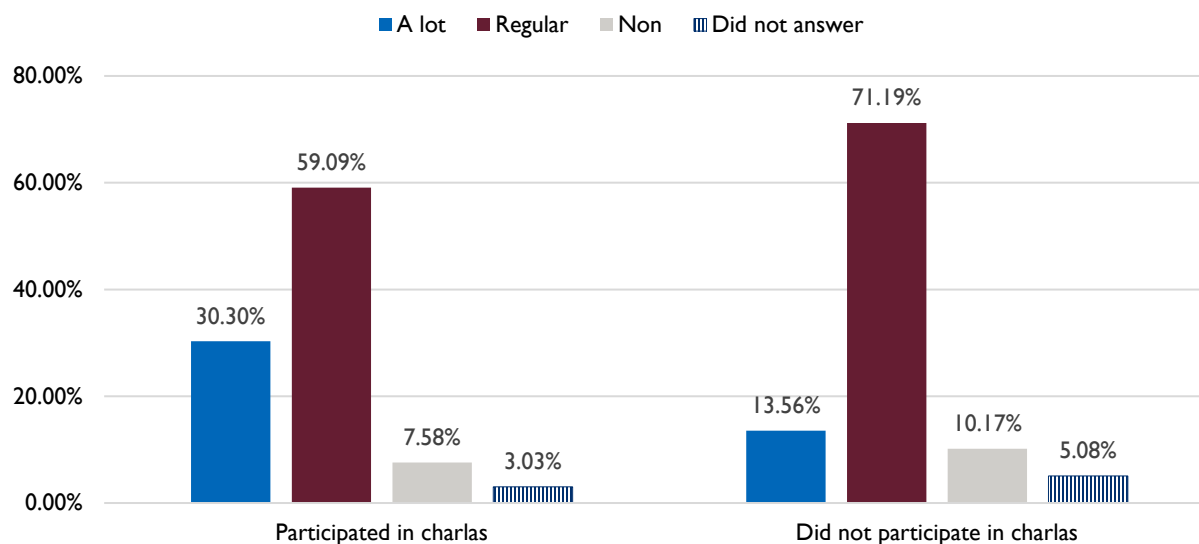
Participation in extracurricular education and the perception if there is more awareness about violence and how to report it



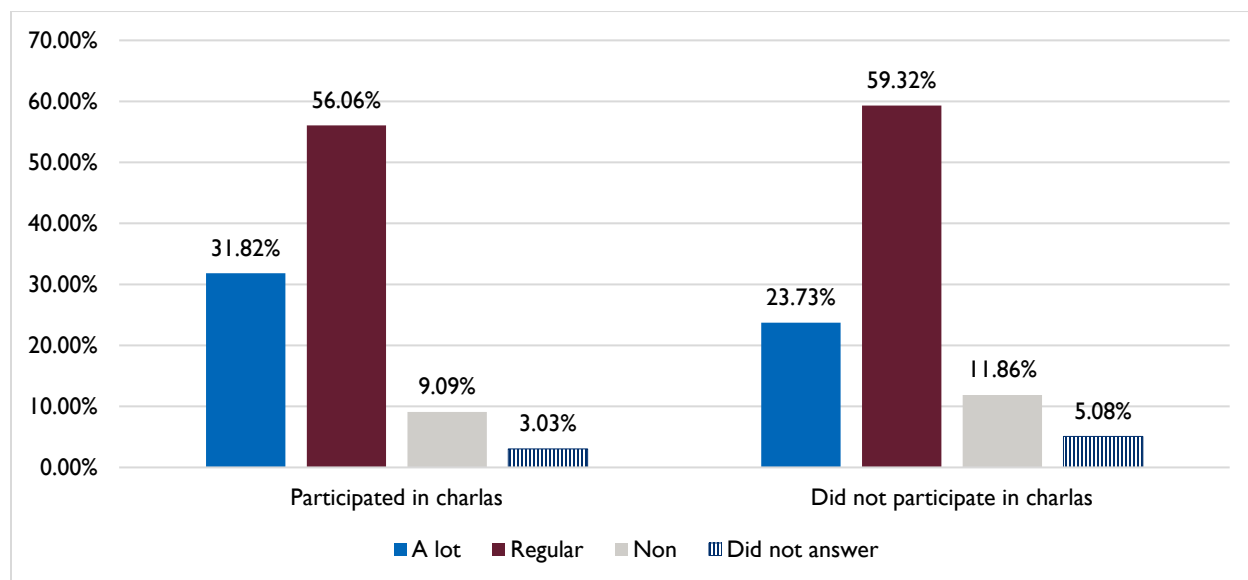
Participation in extracurricular education and the perception if there is more awareness about women's rights



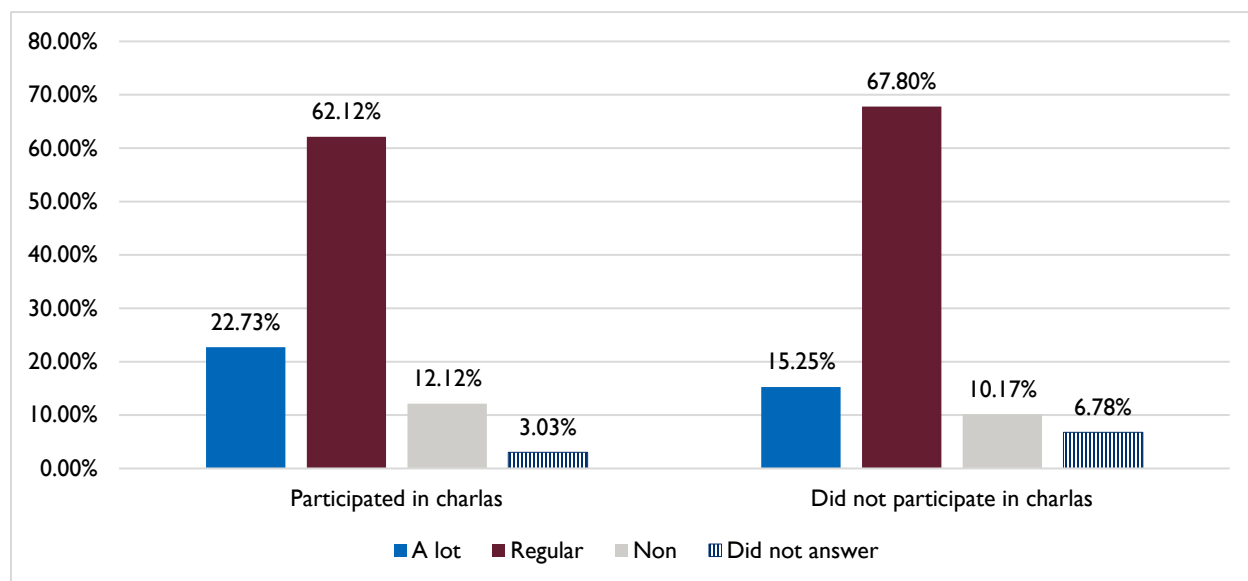
Youth who have participated in charlas and if there is more awareness about violence and how to report it



Youth who have participated in talks and to what extent there is more awareness about women's right

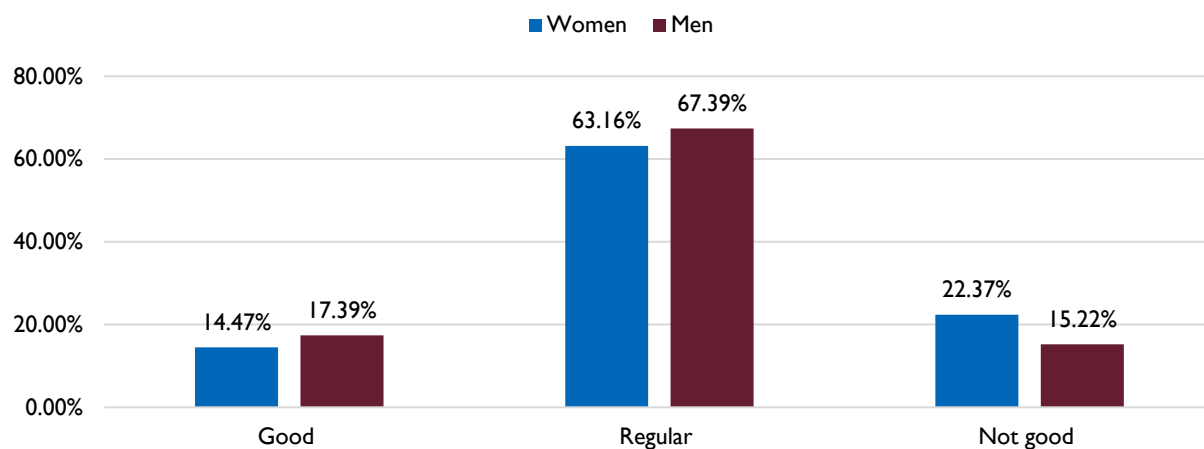


Youth who have participated in talks and to what extent there is more awareness about gender equality

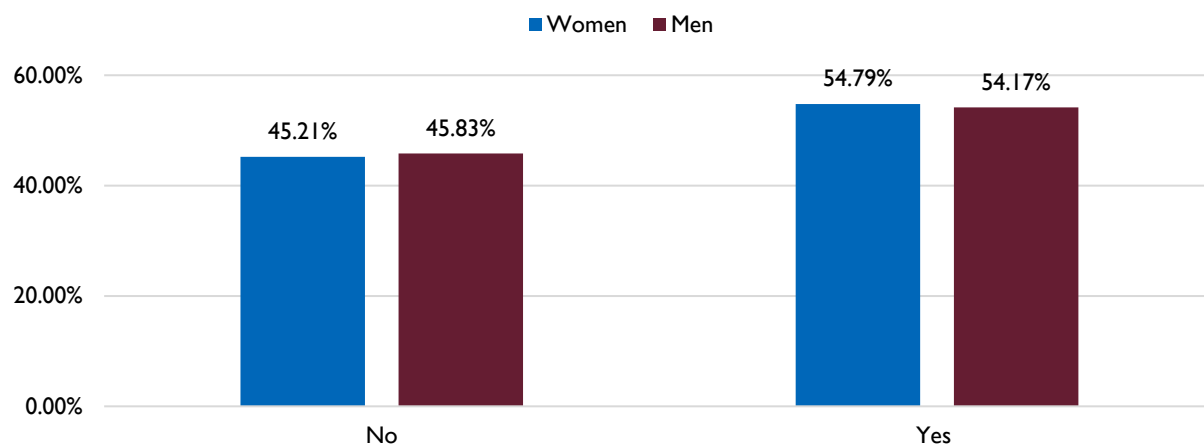


MIGRATION

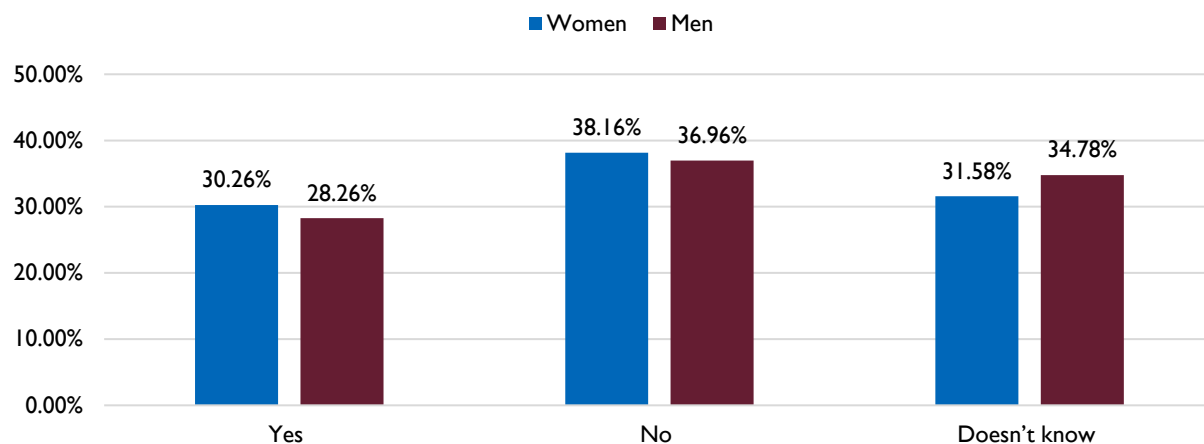
Perception of the future in the country by gender



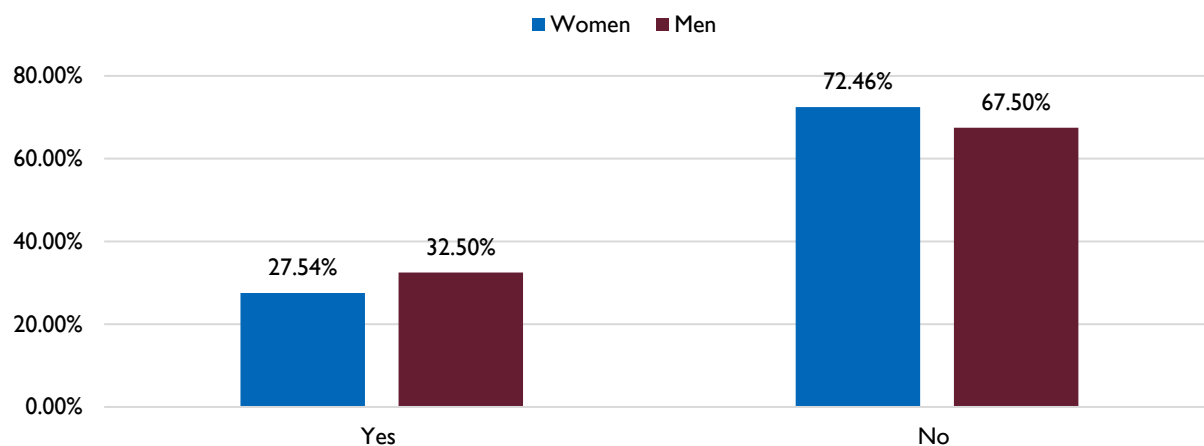
Intention to migrate by gender



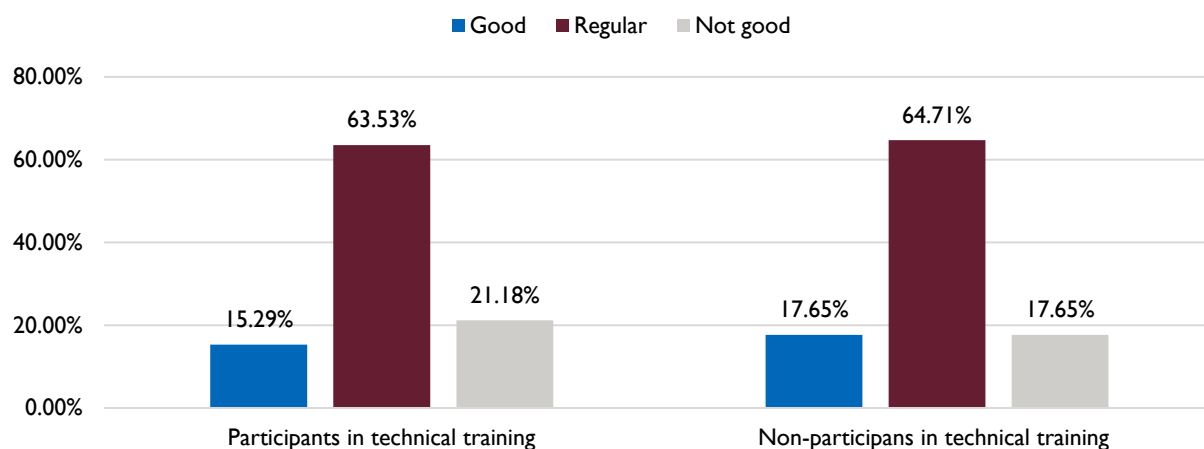
Intention to move to another country



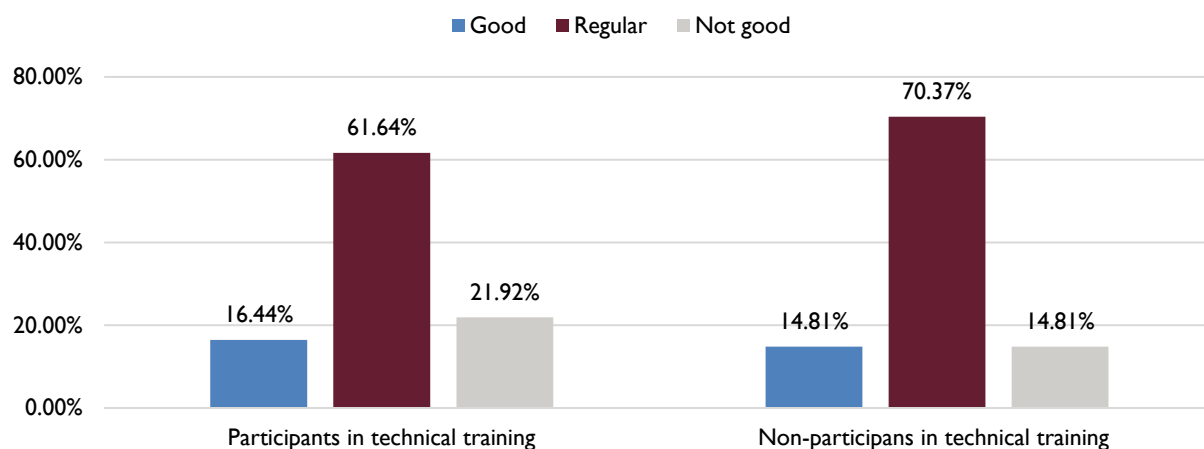
Who have taken actions to migrate



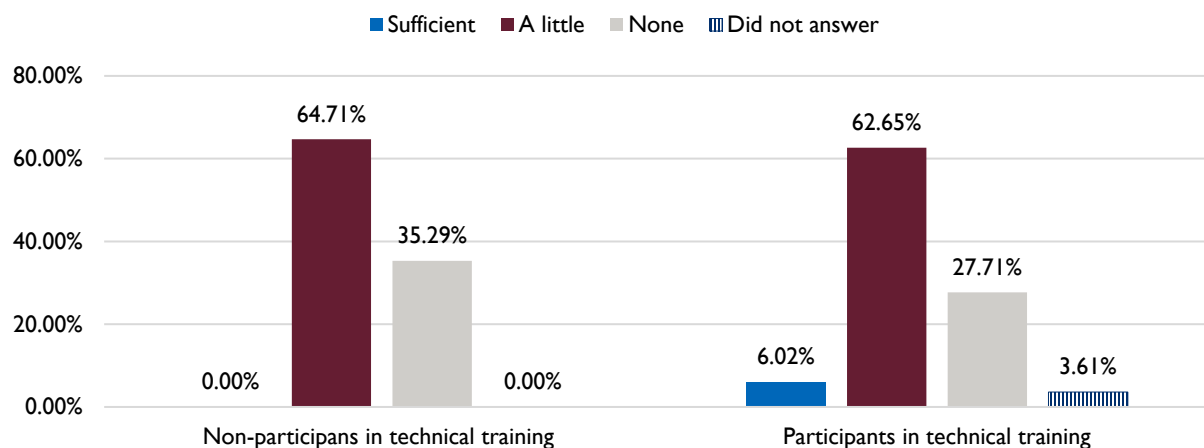
Perception of the future vs technical training



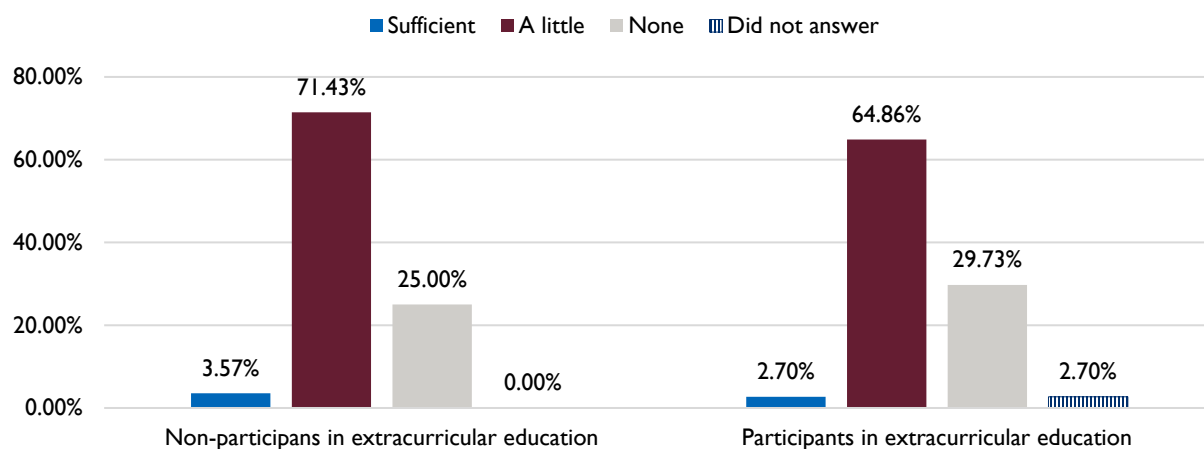
Perception of the future vs. extracurricular education



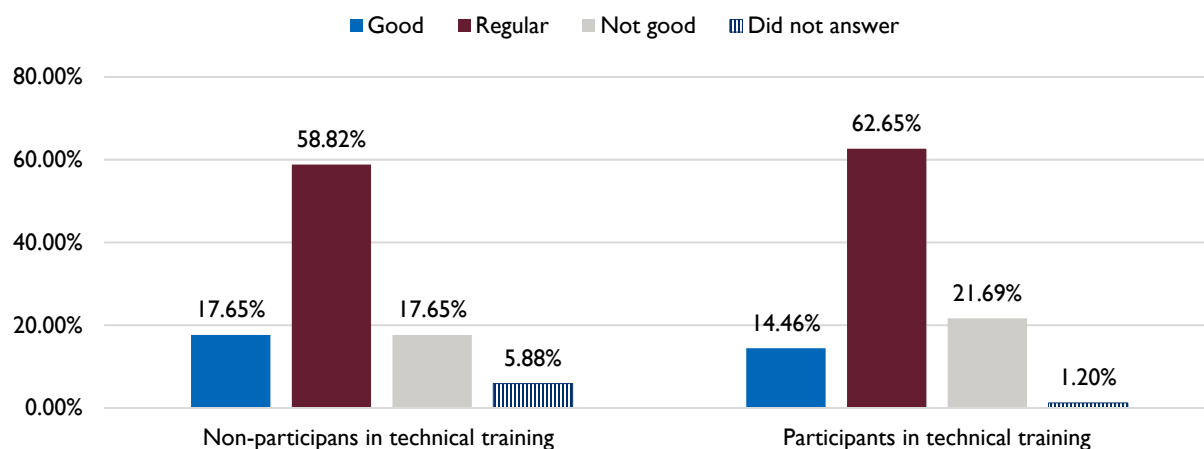
Technical training and accessible job opportunities/enterprises



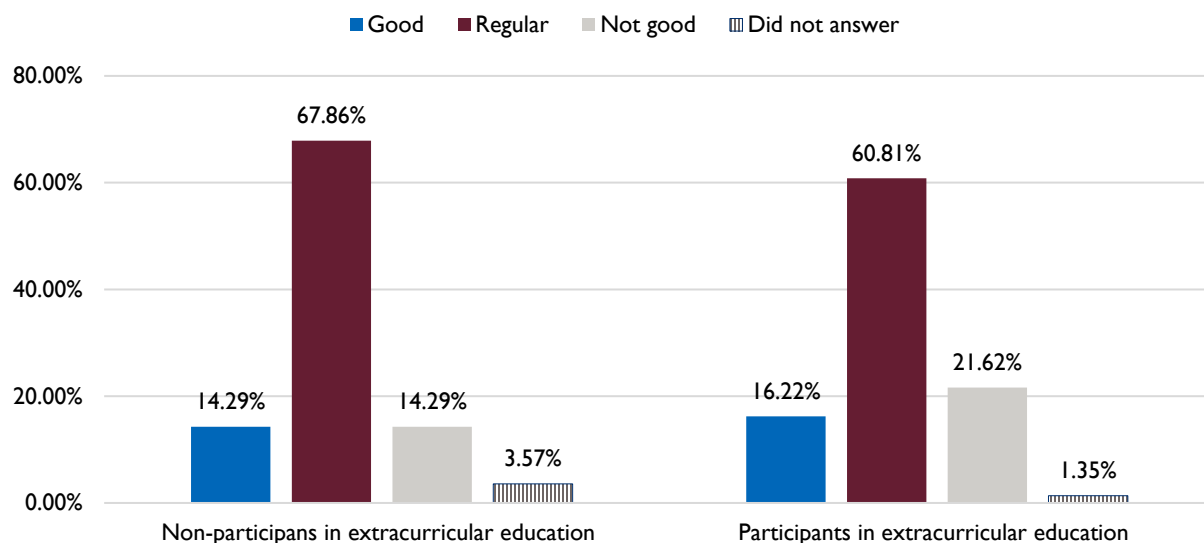
Extracurricular education and accessible job opportunities/entrepreneurship



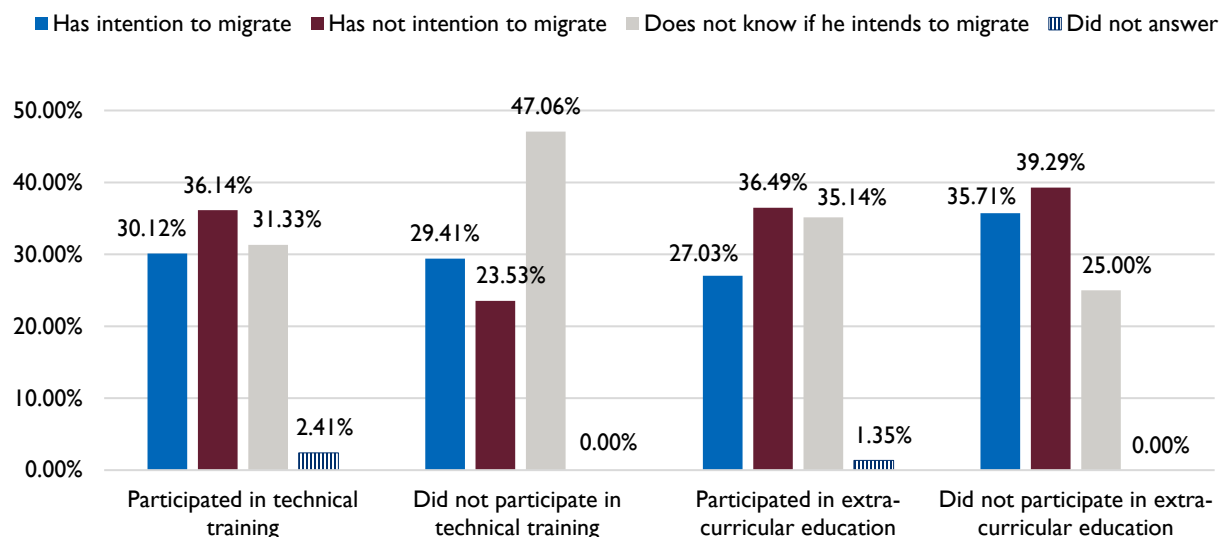
Technical training and perception of the future



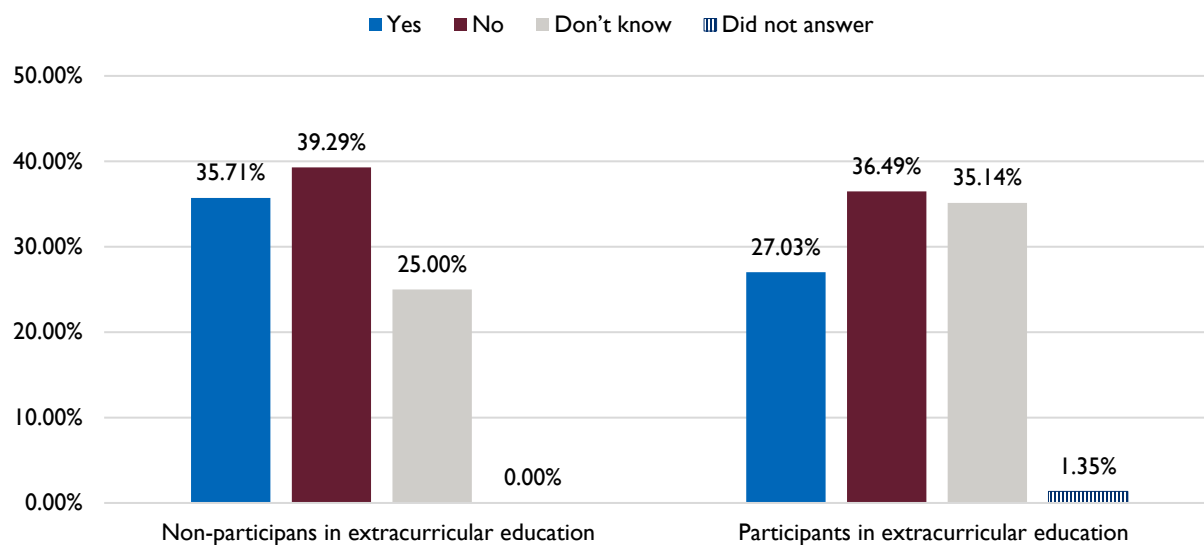
Extracurricular education and perception of the future



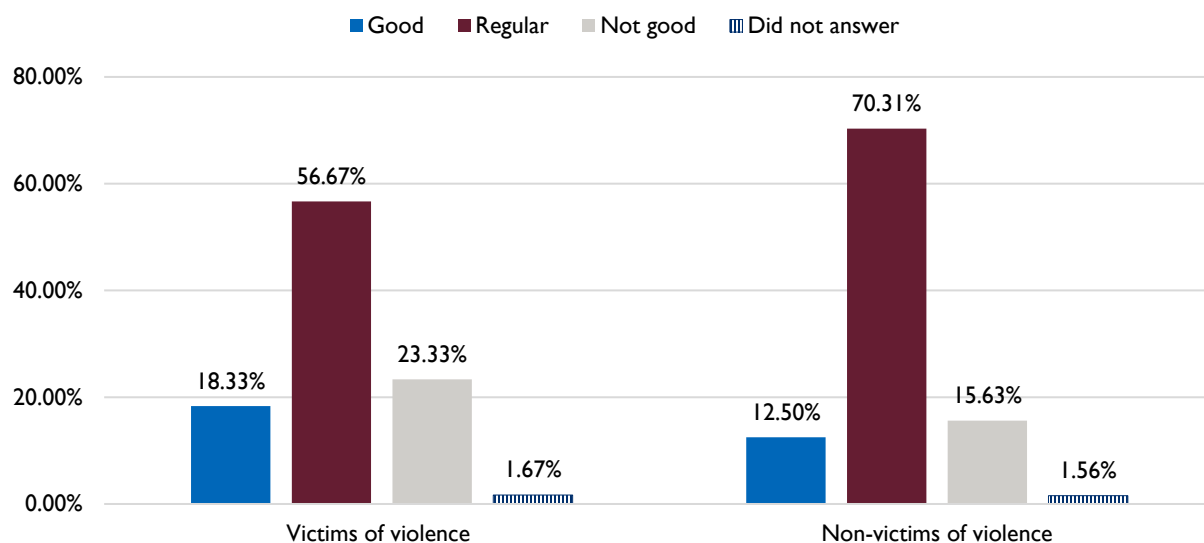
Technical training, extracurricular education and the intention to migrate



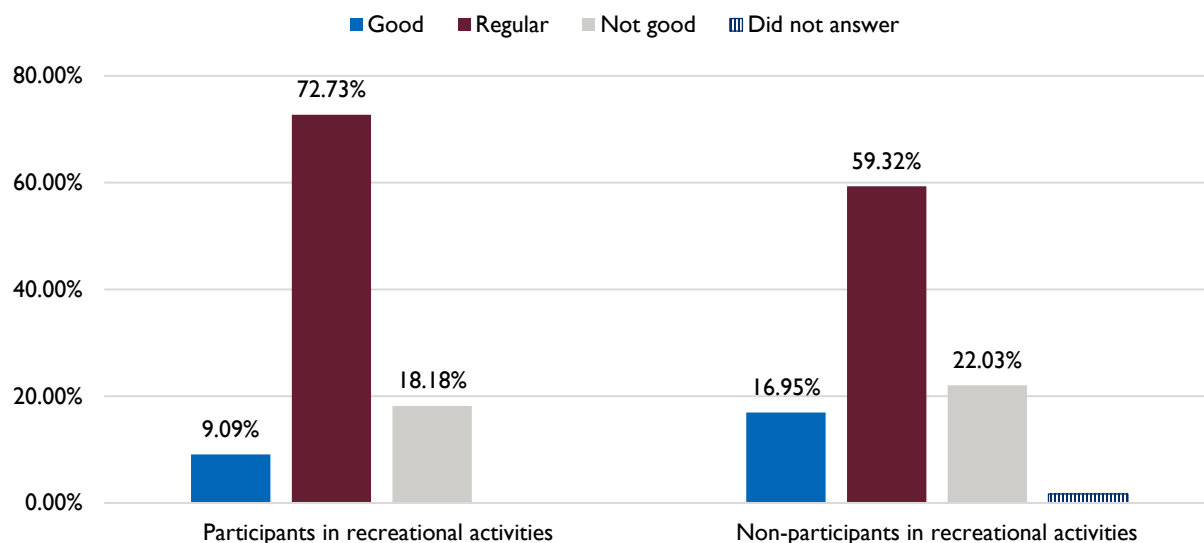
Extracurricular education and intention to migrate



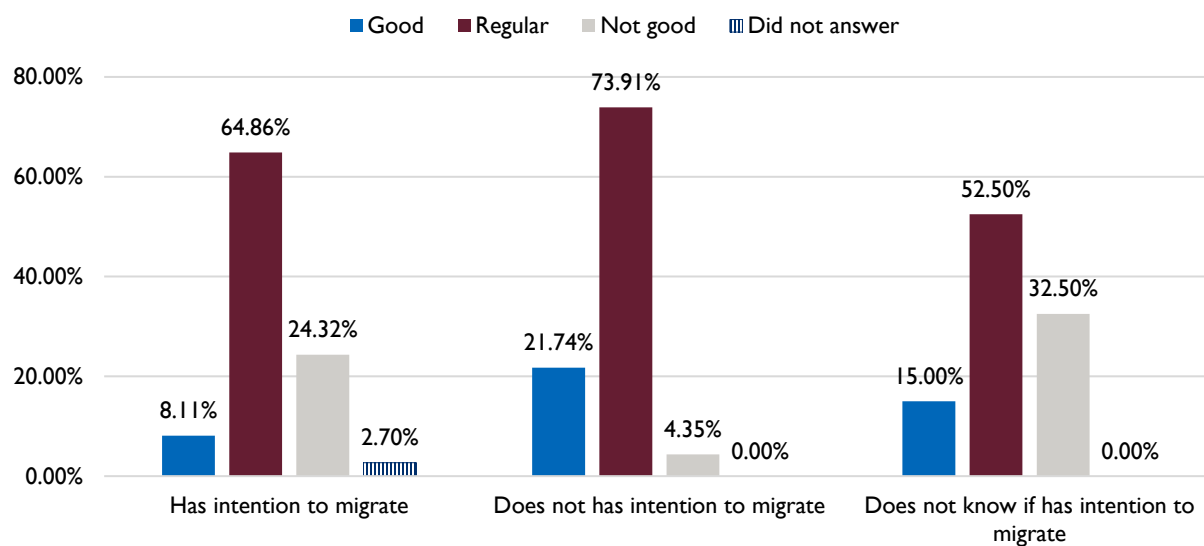
Youth victims of violence in the last year and the perception of the future in the country



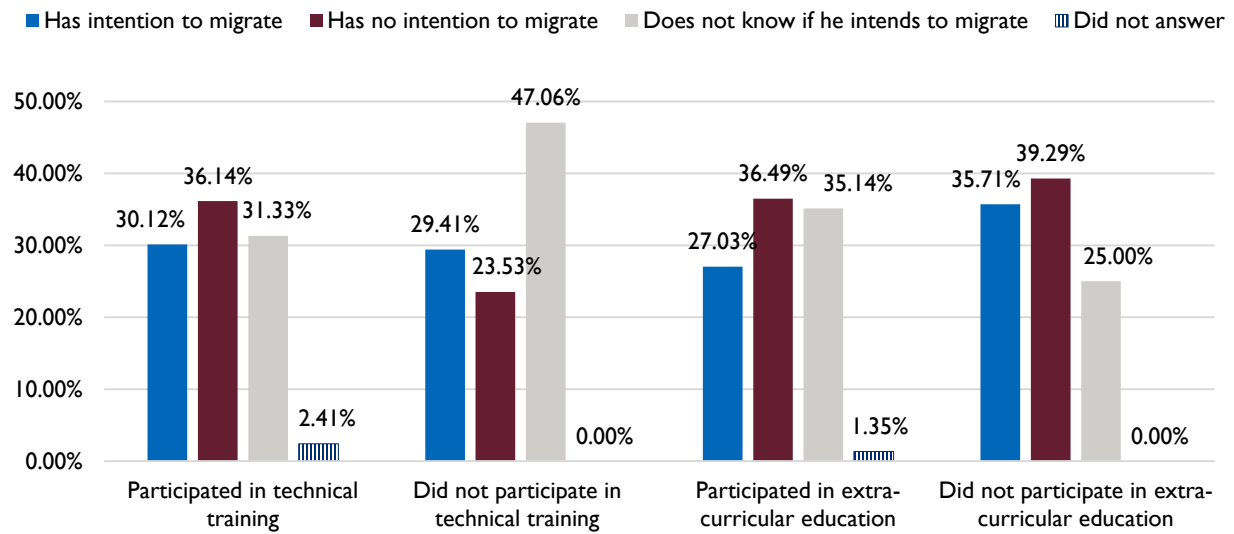
Youth participants in recreational activities and the perception of the future in the country



Optimism about the future and intention to migrate in the next 3 years



Technical training, extracurricular education and the intention to migrate



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