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# Evaluation of UNHCR's Livelihoods Strategies and Approaches

COSTA RICA CASE STUDY  
FINAL REPORT  
DECEMBER 2018

Conducted by:  
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**TANGO**  
INTERNATIONAL  
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE to NGOs

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<b>Expected duration:</b>	June-December 2018
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<b>Countries covered:</b>	Global strategy review with primary data collection in Ghana, Costa Rica, India, Rwanda, and Turkey
<b>Evaluation initiated by:</b>	UNHCR Evaluation Service
<b>Evaluation manager / contact in UNHCR:</b>	Christine Fu, Senior Evaluation Officer

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## List of abbreviations

AED	Association for Development
CENDEROS	Centro de Derechos del Migrante
CO	Country Office
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
ET	Evaluation Team
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Growth Domestic Product
HIAS	Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
IDI	In-Depth Interview
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMAS	National Social Welfare Institute (in English)
KEQ	Key Evaluation Question
KII	Key Informant Interview
MC	Minimum Criteria for Livelihoods Programming
MERS	Minimum Economic Recovery Standards
MoL	Ministry of Labour and Social Security
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MYMP	Multi-Year and Multi-Partner
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PoC	Persons/People of Concern
SJM	Jesuits Migrant Services (in English)
TANGO	Technical Assistance to Non-Governmental Organizations International
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees



DECEMBER 2018

## Costa Rica Case Study

# I. Introduction of country context

1. This Costa Rica case study report is part of the global evaluation of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) livelihood strategy. The centralized evaluation was commissioned by the UNHCR Evaluation Service and independently conducted by Technical Assistance to Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO) International. The overarching purpose of this evaluation is to gather strategic and timely evidence on the effectiveness of refugee livelihoods programming from 2014-2018. The evaluation will inform organizational strategy and practice within UNHCR and external to UNHCR with partners, aiming to improve the economic inclusion of refugees and other people of concern (PoC). See the full evaluation report for the overall findings and recommendations.

2. **Country context:** In Central America, several countries are applying the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework, which derives from the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), aiming to ease pressure on the host countries, enhance refugee self-reliance, expand access to third-country solutions, and support conditions in countries of origin for return with safety and dignity.<sup>1</sup> In 2017, UNHCR Costa Rica coordinated a comprehensive consultation process, led at the presidential level, to move its response towards a whole-society/whole-State strategy. The outcome of this consultation was that it helped to guide government initiatives to support refugees, and it helped UNHCR to develop the integrated programme including ongoing communication and collaboration with government institutions.<sup>2</sup>

3. The combination of political stability and steady economic growth over the past few decades have resulted in Costa Rica having one of the lowest poverty rates in Latin America and the Caribbean. While previously heavily dependent on agriculture, Costa Rica's economy has recently expanded to include the

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR (2018). Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.

<sup>2</sup> CRRF Global Digital Portal (2018).

finance, pharmaceutical, and ecotourism sectors.<sup>3</sup> Costa Rica's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita has had an average growth of 4.5 per cent from 2000 to 2013, compared to 3.8 per cent for the regional average during the same time period.<sup>4</sup>

4. Costa Rica has a favourable legal and policy framework for the protection of refugees and asylum seekers in the country. The government allows refugees and asylum seekers access to basic services equal to that of nationals including access to the national social security system and to public education, scholarships, and job placement services. Refugees and asylum seekers can also participate in national welfare programmes targeting vulnerable populations living in extreme poverty. Additionally, Costa Rica ratified the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol in 1978.<sup>5</sup>

5. There are no settlements or refugee camps in Costa Rica. Currently, the refugees and asylum seekers are dispersed in urban areas, mainly resettling in the provinces of San José, Heredia, and Alajuela (the Gran Área Metropolitana), with fewer refugees in Puntarenas, Guanacaste, Cartago, and Limón.<sup>6,7</sup> UNHCR's operation in Costa Rica centres on refugees coming from Colombia, the North of Central America (NCA), and Venezuela. Costa Rica hosted more than 12,000 PoC in the country in 2017, a 51 per cent increase from 2016 (7,953).<sup>8</sup> Due to the recent political situation and civil unrest in Nicaragua, the influx of refugees seeking security and better conditions in Costa Rica has considerably increased through 2018. Current estimates for October 2018 include a total of 15,500 PoC from Nicaragua.<sup>9</sup>

6. **Programme overview:** In 2014, UNHCR and the International Labour Organization (ILO) conducted a joint market assessment in which the food and beverages and the commerce sectors were identified as having good potential for PoC inclusion into the labour market. This assessment was instrumental to guide the implementation of the Comprehensive Solutions Strategy (2014-2016) that included local integration, voluntary repatriation and resettlement in a holistic manner. The strategy is a solutions-oriented initiative that provides a practical methodology to find suitable solutions. The operation implemented the pilot Graduation Model and the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) scheme, "*Vivir la Integración*" (Living Integration), as the main livelihoods interventions until they merged in 2017. The initial Living Integration programme focused on working with private companies to hire refugees and complemented the Graduation Model<sup>10</sup> that supported entrepreneurship activities of PoC. When the two programmes merged, the name "living integration" was kept as a mechanism to continue working with CSR programmes and to implement an integrated approach.

7. UNHCR's Costa Rica operation seeks to support all registered PoC either through protection or livelihood interventions. From 2014 to 2016, the Graduation Model and Living Integration programmes included 1,769 direct and indirect participants, which was 22 per cent of the PoC population in 2016. During this timeframe, 568 registered PoC received livelihoods training: 418 in food handling, 85 in language skills, and 22 in elder care.<sup>11</sup> Of those trainees, 425, or 75 per cent, were hired. In the Graduation Model, 397 PoC participated in basic training and 248 benefited from entrepreneurship training, and ultimately, 194 were able to establish businesses.<sup>12</sup> In 2017, 1,109 PoC received cash grants and 1,384 legal assistance. For 2018, 400 PoC were planned to register in job placement services

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<sup>3</sup> UNHCR Costa Rica (2015).

<sup>4</sup> World Bank, The (2018).

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR Costa Rica (2018).

<sup>6</sup> ILO and UNHCR (2014).

<sup>7</sup> UNHCR Costa Rica (2018).

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR (2018).

<sup>9</sup> Current estimates provided through the CO's direct comment on the draft version of this report.

<sup>10</sup> Note: the country-specific terms of reference for this evaluation does not include review of the Graduation Model.

<sup>11</sup> Gender disaggregated figures are not available.

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR Costa Rica (2016).

and 657 to receive guidance on labour market opportunities.<sup>13</sup> These planned figures have since increased. The UNHCR livelihood unit in Costa Rica estimates for fiscal year (FY)2018 that 1600 refugee and asylum seekers will be assessed, 990 will register into job placement services, 1200 will participate in the job matching fairs with the "Get Employed Living the Integration" strategy led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MoL). Fifty-five new companies have joined the Living Integration scheme.

8. The overall budget of UNHCR in Costa Rica has increased 68 per cent from US\$ 2,885,870 in 2014 to US\$ 9,150,305 in 2018, with a major proportion as funding to partners (42 per cent in 2014 and 37 percent in 2018).<sup>14</sup> The budget designated for the livelihoods programme is shown in Table 1. The livelihoods budget increased from US\$ 202,804 in 2014 to US\$ 653,263 in 2017, then dropping to US\$ 413,980 in 2018.

**Table 1: UNHCR Costa Rica livelihoods budget 2014-18**

2014	\$202,804
2015	\$354,088
2016	\$271,249
2017	\$653,263
2018	\$413,980

Source: UNHCR (2018). 2014 Livelihoods OL/2015-18 Budgets.

9. Since 2017 UNHCR Costa Rica has implemented a multi-partner approach, where Fundacion Mujer, as part of Vivir la Integracion, has been providing employment services and is producing employment reports aimed at identifying the sectors of the national economy geared for potential employment.

Fundacion Mujer's livelihoods interventions include core training courses in financial literacy, legal empowerment, soft skills for employment, and certified skills training. Fundacion Mujer also works with the MoL on job matching schemes, technical assistance, and providing seed capital to refugee entrepreneurs. FUNDEPOS and Fundacion Omar Dengo also implement technical trainings. UNHCR has various operating partners: The Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Industry, Diversity Chamber of Commerce, and Business Association for Development, to advocate and coordinate efforts with the private sector. Finally, UNHCR works in close coordination with the National Social Welfare Institute (IMAS) and the MoL to advocate and build their capacity to support PoC.

10. Costa Rica, as a middle income country, does not receive financial support from multilateral and bilateral donors. This has created a major test for the country to continue to address their development challenges such as poverty reduction and income distribution, which directly affects the government's capacity to respond to the needs of PoC.

## 2. Summary of country-specific methods

11. **Evaluation questions:** The evaluation team (ET) assessed three key evaluation questions:

- KEQ 1: How effective are UNHCR-funded livelihood interventions in reducing protection risks, strengthening resilience, and improving employment, income and/or savings levels of targeted persons of concern?
- KEQ 2: To what extent is there a positive correlation between desired livelihoods programme outcomes and high adherence to UNHCR's Minimum Criteria (MC) for Livelihoods Programming standards?
- KEQ 3: What are the different roles UNHCR has played in livelihoods programming? What has worked well in such roles and what are some constraints? What are lessons learned to inform the next iteration of the livelihoods strategy going forward?

12. Costa Rica was selected to be a Rapid Evaluation case study with a highly focused scope and short duration that included a hybrid approach with an external evaluator working with UNHCR staff. In

<sup>13</sup> UNHCR (2015-2018).

<sup>14</sup> UNHCR Costa Rica (2015-2018).

coordination with the UNHCR Costa Rica livelihood team, the evaluation methodology defined in the Inception Report was adjusted to the specific context for the Costa Rica Rapid Evaluation. The main contextual factors considered for the adjustment of the methodology were: there are no refugee camps in Costa Rica and most of the refugees are living in metropolitan areas, refugees are engaged in jobs or implementing small business, and PoC are coming from four main situations from the Americas Region (Colombia, North Central America, Venezuela and Nicaragua) with distinctive refugee profiles. The current livelihood programme has been implemented as part of an integrated model since the end of 2017, using a new approach with multiple partner agencies and lessons learnt from previous programmes. Based on these factors, the Rapid Evaluation focused on KEQ 1 i.e., how effective are UNHCR-funded livelihood interventions in strengthening resilience, and improving employment and entrepreneurship of targeted PoC, and KEQ 3, on the roles of UNHCR in livelihoods programming under the new approach.

13. This case study uses qualitative data to explore the resilience capacities of programme beneficiaries and how the programme contributes to the capacities. UNHCR defines resilience as: the ability of individuals, households, communities, national institutions and systems to prevent, absorb and recover from shocks, while continuing to function and adapt in a way that supports long-term prospects for sustainable development, peace and security, and the attainment of human rights.<sup>15</sup> Three categories of capacities contribute to resilience: adaptive, absorptive, and transformative capacities. Absorptive capacity refers to the ability of households and communities to minimize exposure to shocks if possible and to recover quickly after exposure<sup>16</sup> (e.g., disaster preparedness, access to evacuation routes).<sup>17</sup> Adaptive capacity is the ability of households and communities to make active and informed choices about their lives and diversified livelihood strategies based on changing conditions (e.g., access to market information). Transformative capacity relates to system-level changes that ensure an enabling environment, including good governance, formal safety nets and access to markets, infrastructure, and basic services. Social capital, oft described as the “glue” that binds people in society together, contributes to all resilience capacities. It is based on perception of norms, reciprocity, and trust between community members (i.e., bonding social capital); individuals and groups (i.e., bridging social capital); and individuals or groups linking with higher levels (i.e., linking social capital).<sup>18</sup> Linking social capital is often conceived of as a vertical link between a network and some form of authority (e.g., government or NGOs). Such links can provide resources and information and are thus important for economic development and resilience.<sup>19</sup> See Annex 4 for more information on the resilience measurement framework.

14. **Methods:** The ET used a mixed-methods approach to ensure triangulation of information. Prior to the fieldwork, TANGO conducted a desk review of over 100 secondary data documents (e.g., livelihoods monitoring indicators, programme documents) and external literature, and collected primary qualitative data. For the qualitative primary data collection, TANGO, together with the livelihood team in Costa Rica, determined the number of interviews and focus group discussions (FGD), including key informant interviews (KIIs) and identifying refugees for the in-depth interviews (IDIs). Partner agencies supported the selection of 36 refugees to participate in FGDs that represented four different groups of refugees: 1) refugees focusing on entrepreneurship initiatives, 2) refugees focusing on employment, 3) refugees in the early stages of the livelihood programme, and 4) refugees in vocational training to improve their skills. Refugees from different nationalities, ages, and genders participated in the FGDs. However, these FGDs were intended to better understand how refugees perceive current programme implementation with regards to employment or entrepreneurship overall, without separating groups by nationality or gender.

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<sup>15</sup> UNHCR (2017).

<sup>16</sup> Definition adapted from Béné, C. et al (2015).

<sup>17</sup> Vaughan, E. (2018).

<sup>18</sup> Chaskin, R. J. (2008).

<sup>19</sup> Aldrich (2012).

Refugees were purposively selected based on their participation in UNHCR livelihood activities (based on the four criteria above) and willingness to share their story. A few refugees who participated in UNHCR programmes and successfully improved their livelihood conditions were identified as positive deviants and asked to participate in the IDIs. Two positive deviant IDIs were conducted, one in Cartago and one in Heredia to better capture coping mechanisms and resilience pathways of refugees. Fieldwork was conducted from 11-17 September 2018. The total beneficiary interviews included 22 females and 16 males from 19 to 72 years old.

15. A KII of private sector stakeholders was held in the FGD format, which included six recruiters from private companies participating in the programme to explore their perception of employment of refugees, private sector needs, and options to improve the programme. The companies who participated in this FGD were: Pizza Hut, Sykes, Grupo Fiesta, Nítidos, Rem Soluciones, and M&J. An additional 11 KIIs were held with partner agencies, government institutions, and UNHCR staff (see Annex 2 for the listing of interviews). The total KIIs included 20 females and 18 males.

16. The Rapid Evaluation also aimed to build capacity among the livelihood team. In addition to the TANGO International consultant, the field ET included participation by all three members of the UNHCR Costa Rica livelihood team, one member from the UNHCR Livelihoods Unit in headquarters (HQ) in Geneva, and one member from the Regional Legal Unit who supports livelihood programmes in the region. During the interviews and FGDs one person led the interview and another person took notes in Spanish that were translated into English. At the end of each day a brief discussion was held with the ET to discuss major findings and coordinate the logistics for the following day.

17. At the end of the field mission a debriefing was conducted with the country representative and members of the livelihood team to present emerging findings. With the information collected during the field evaluation and triangulated with secondary data, the current report was prepared to feed into the centralized evaluation report. Main findings, conclusions, and recommendations were drawn from the desk review and information collected from the interviews with beneficiaries, government officials, partner agencies, and other stakeholders.

18. **Limitations/constraints:** Although the Rapid Evaluation was scheduled during Independence Day in Costa Rica and demonstrations and roadblocks against tax increases were held, there were no issues with accessing partners, government institutions, and locations where PoC live. On one occasion, the team separated into two teams to be able to meet with government officials and representatives from the private sector. Further, as a purposive sample of beneficiaries, the findings are not meant to be generalizable to the entire PoC population, but instead, exemplary of key emergent themes related to livelihood strategy.

## 3. Evaluation findings

### 3.1. Effectiveness and efficiency

#### Main findings: Factors that affect effectiveness and efficiency<sup>20</sup>

##### Design factors:

- **The MC, CRRF, Minimum Economic Recovery Standards (MERS), and previous lessons learnt from the Graduation Model were used to design the programme,**

<sup>20</sup> Main findings from desk review, beneficiary FGDs, and interviews with UNHCR staff, partner agencies, and other stakeholders.

incorporating market analysis to build skills of PoC that match demands from private companies.

**Internal factors:**

- An important element to the effectiveness and efficiency of the livelihoods programme in Costa Rica has been the flexibility of the team and adaptive management that allowed adjustments to the programme to improve attention to PoC. The annual budget cycle is a hindering factor.
- The adjustment of the UNHCR Costa Rica team structure integrating protection and durable solutions into one division with two units allows better coordination and integration between protection and livelihood units.

**External factors:**

- Vivir la Integración was designed to align with and strengthen the Costa Rican legal framework in support of PoC. The key agreements signed with strategic government institutions strengthens the attention to PoC and enhances the opportunities for PoC.
- External hindering factors include: the economic situation of the country and large influx of PoC from Nicaragua, combined with the lack of knowledge by private sector on government regulations regarding the rights of PoC.

**Finding on resilience:**

- The programme is building the absorptive, adaptive, and transformative resilience capacities of PoC, for example: absorptive capacity is built through the integrated approach that ensures basic needs of PoC are met; adaptive capacity is built through the trainings and job placements; and transformative capacity is strengthened through advocacy with government to include PoC in national programmes.

19. **Programme design:** Several factors positively affect the effectiveness and efficiency of the UNHCR Costa Rica livelihood programme including: the use of the legal framework in Costa Rica to design the programme; partnering with key strategic partners from private companies, foundations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and government institutions; and the use of MC, CRRF, MERS and lessons learned from the previous Graduation Model to design an integrated programme.

20. According to KIIs with UNHCR staff and partners, key elements from the MC for Livelihoods Programming that promoted efficiency and effectiveness were the Context Analysis and Socio-economic Assessment, the Livelihoods Market Analysis, looking for multiple and experienced partner agencies, and developing a context-specific Livelihood Strategy. These elements guided the design of the training programmes and identification of training institutions to build the capacity of PoC. This has been a major change from the previous livelihood programme, where training was based more on the existing skills of refugees as compared to a market-based approach to build their capacity to meet the needs of the market and private companies. UNHCR's approach to support market-driven skills training and jobs builds the adaptive resilience capacity of refugees<sup>21</sup> because it helps refugees adapt and diversify their livelihood strategies and develops their human capital, which they can use in various scenarios of the durable solutions.

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<sup>21</sup> Adaptive capacity is the ability of households and communities to make active and informed choices about their lives and diversified livelihood strategies based on changing conditions. Definition adapted from Béné, C. et al (2015).

21. Another key shift in the design is the **multi-partner integrated approach**. Working with multiple partner agencies increased UNHCR's ability to address key areas of support to PoC, as the current partner agencies are specialized organizations working in their specific roles. This approach brings more depth in attending to the needs of PoC: e.g., RET International provides psychosocial support and case management, and implements the agreement with IMAS; Centro de Derechos del Migrante, (CENDEROS) provides temporary shelter and psychosocial support; Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) provides legal counselling; Jesuits Migrant Services (SJM) provides training and legal counselling; and Fundacion Mujer provides training on livelihood activities including core training courses in financial literacy, legal empowerment, soft skills for employment, and certified skills training. Fundacion Mujer also attempts to match PoC who have existing skills/experience with opportunities, but on a case-by-case basis. Working with private academic institutions and foundations has also been instrumental to design and implement the training courses meeting the needs of PoC and business associations. They help by providing the market information and by bringing private companies to the programme: Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Industry, Diversity Chamber of Commerce, Business Association for Development, and others.

22. This design of an integrated, multi-partner programme meets various protection, physical, and psychosocial needs of PoC and supports their recovery in the face of stressors in the refugee context—ensuring protection and basic needs are met thereby strengthening their absorptive resilience capacity.<sup>22</sup> An integrated approach should have the capacity to meet all these needs. PoC are coming from different locations and for different reasons, and they need to adapt to the new social and economic context in order to function and be part of the host country in a sustainable manner. This PoC diversity must also be considered in delivering the integrated approach.

23. As UNHCR Costa Rica moved from a single implementing partner to a multiple-partner approach in 2017 there was a transition period where communication and coordination was affected. Government institutions, private companies, and some PoC were not fully aware of programme changes, as the transition affected information shared and coordination with partner agencies and PoC; e.g., some government officials were not aware of new partner agencies implementing livelihood activities, and some refugees kept looking for the old implementing partner for information and support. The livelihood team is aware of this situation and has been engaged in supporting the implementation of the programme to improve coordination and communication among partner agencies and PoC as well as adjusting roles and responsibilities.

### **3.1.1. Internal factors**

24. **Internal enabling factors: Staff structure and adaptive management.** During 2017, the CO made adjustments to its organizational structure to facilitate communication and coordination between protection and livelihood interventions. The main change in the structure was to consolidate the protection and livelihood units into one division under the supervision of one technical person. The units meet regularly, for instance, to forward protection cases on to the appropriate partner. This restructuring was particularly necessary when the multiple-partner approach was implemented, in order for UNHCR to ensure integrated activities across partners. This has improved coordination and decision making within the office to support programme activities.

25. Another major change was in the constitution of the livelihoods team, which now includes professionals with varied backgrounds that bring relevant skills, particularly for facilitating access to different institutional or private sector networks. This include a livelihoods team member with a protection background, as well. Although it is a small team, the UNHCR livelihood team in Costa Rica is energetic and interdisciplinary, with ample experience in government regulations, partnerships, protection and

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<sup>22</sup> Absorptive capacity refers to the ability of households and communities to minimize exposure to shocks if possible and to recover quickly after exposure. Definition adapted from Béné, C. et al (2015).

programme support. This team capacity has been instrumental to allow the current programme to be designed and implemented, together with the flexibility of the management and partners to adjust strategy as necessary.

26. **New tools for monitoring and evaluation:** The livelihood team is piloting a monitoring and evaluation platform developed by HQ to capture data from PoC and evaluate the impact of the programme: namely, it is the revised livelihood monitoring indicators. The team started implementing the tool in August 2018, which will provide more information and feedback as to the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of the programme. The livelihood unit plans to use the initial data collected to fine-tune the monitoring tool for future round of monitoring and evaluation.

27. **Internal hindering factors:** Another factor that affects effectiveness and efficiency is the **annual budget cycle**. Although the Costa Rica Country Office (CO) is implementing a multi-year programme, it is currently doing so with a single-year budget, which affects their capacity to plan and implement the multi-year programming. There is a similar challenge with the current HQ-level requirement of evaluating partner agencies every two years, since partner agencies working on programme implementation for livelihoods would need at least three years to be able to organize, implement and coordinate the integrated model before a final evaluation.

### 3.1.2. External factors

28. **Enabling legal environment and government partnership:** The single most relevant external factor affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of the livelihood programme in Costa Rica is the positive legal and policy framework for the protection of refugees and asylum seekers. UNHCR advocated with IMAS and signed a letter of understanding to allow PoC access to basic services equal to that of nationals, including access to the national social security system and to public education, scholarships, and job placement services. This was a key element for the design of the integrated programme and was enhanced by the strategic agreements signed with the MoL and IMAS to increase the visibility of the PoC within government institutions. UNHCR's advocacy work to ensure an enabling legal and policy environment for both the economic inclusion of refugees and the inclusion of refugees in social safety net programmes is an important contribution to building PoC resilience, specifically transformative capacity. Transformative capacity relates to system-level changes that ensure sustained resilience, including formal safety nets, access to markets, infrastructure, and basic services, which PoC have access to in Costa Rica because of UNHCR's advocacy efforts.<sup>23</sup>

29. **Enabling economic environment, but with limitations:** Costa Rica receives little international aid to support PoC. This affects the capacity of both government institutions and NGOs to raise funds and respond to urgent needs of PoC, particularly when there are large influxes of people seeking asylum in Costa Rica. This was the case when the large number of PoC from Nicaragua overwhelmed the immigration capacity to process the asylum requests, and UNHCR has worked to fill the gaps to support the process and avoid delays. Without the immigration process and government recognition of their status, PoC cannot access government social programmes or get a work permit, and Vivir la Integración cannot fully support them.

30. In Costa Rica there is a complex and vibrant private sector supportive of PoC, however, the economy is relatively small and has been affected by external factors like the reduction of commodity prices and increases in fuel prices. In 2018 there has been discussion in the Parliament on tax reform, sparking street demonstrations, which could lead to an overall budget reduction and the attrition of government positions. In a meeting with representatives from the MoL, the low rate of job creation in Costa Rica caused by external economic conditions was discussed. Although there has been decreases

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<sup>23</sup> Definition adapted from Béné, C. et al (2015).

in the unemployment rate, it remains high around 8.7 per cent.<sup>24</sup> These factors directly affect Vivir la Integración as the identification and creation of jobs for PoC is more difficult under these conditions. According to government officials interviewed, the level of informal employment is also high for Costa Rican nationals, around 42 per cent, and the government is working to reduce this rate. Vivir la Integración supports this process, and that makes the training of PoC to work in the formal sector even more important as it aligns with government regulations and strategies.

## 3.2. Impact

### Main findings: Impact<sup>25</sup>

- **PoC interviewed by the ET who are participating in the livelihood programme are getting job offers and starting their own businesses to meet their basic needs.**
  - **PoC struggle to support themselves while participating in the trainings, support which UNHCR is considering for participants of six-to-nine month trainings in the future.**
- **For the impact of livelihood opportunities to be realized for PoC, it is critical that UNHCR provide information to private sector and other institutional partners on PoC profiles and policies related to the legal framework for PoC in Costa Rica.**
- **While there have been some challenges to access according to PoC focus groups, PoC are increasingly accessing social services and other supports from government social programmes due, in part, to UNHCR's work to sign agreements on such with government ministries.**

### Finding on resilience:

- **PoC interviewed use multiple and diverse coping strategies to address immediate needs, and some demonstrate the use of resilience capacities in the face of shocks or stressors; the programme may build on these to better link livelihood programming to resilience. (These coping strategies illuminated through FGDs and KIIs are summarized in the report text.)**

31. **Livelihood outcomes:** The ET conducted a positive deviant IDI with one refugee who has been able to start a successful business in Costa Rica, and her children have now completed higher education; see their full story in Annex 3. All beneficiaries who participated in the evaluation focus groups were employed either in the formal sector or self-employment, the majority through the latter. At the time of evaluation, overall programme data were not available on impacts pending implementation of the new monitoring tool. The Focus Data collected through HQ also does not provide information on impact, e.g., the number of people who received training and got jobs, evidence of increased income, etc.<sup>26</sup> The only indicator possibly showing impact is the report of: 70 per cent of PoC with their own business/self-employed have kept this livelihood going for more than one year from programme participation (which is 35 of 50 people). The Indicator Aggregation Reports provided by the CO primarily provide output measures on activities.

32. **Protection outcomes:** The link between protection and livelihoods is clear for interviewed PoC, partners, government institutions, and UNHCR staff. When PoC have an income, either from a job or a

<sup>24</sup> Trading Economics (2018).

<sup>25</sup> Main findings from desk review, beneficiary FGDs, and interviews with UNHCR staff, partner agencies, and other stakeholders.

<sup>26</sup> UNHCR (2015-2018).

small business, they can cover their immediate needs, which reduces their vulnerability. PoC with jobs not only have the income from their salary but also other benefits from the companies where they work (e.g., medical insurance, trainings, etc.), improving their living conditions and overall well-being. For these reasons, the livelihood programme works with private companies that comply with the labour regulations to ensure PoC are also protected from discrimination.

33. From the beneficiary FGDs and KII with partners, the ET found that PoC in Costa Rica tend to be very mobile with regards to livelihood activities as they look for better opportunities to build their livelihood. In many cases, PoC take the first possible opportunity to get a job to cover their basic needs and keep looking for better options in the same area such as in greater San Jose. This also includes PoC getting temporary jobs that nationals do not want. Trainings from Vivir la Integracion aim to build the capacity of PoC so they can enter the job market with better skills and conditions, and to reduce the time to get hired and obtain a better salary. This has also led to more stable jobs and living situations.

34. **Training linked to market demand:** As the programme evolved from the Graduation Model to a more integrated approach with Vivir la Integracion in 2017, a market approach has been implemented to better identify the profile of the PoC, common market practices (employment and small business), and private sector needs. This has allowed the programme to rethink and focus the training strategy to build the capacity of PoC so they can meet the requirements from private companies. PoC receive training on different livelihood areas: financial literacy, legal empowerment and soft skills for employment, certified skills training, etc. Several organizations are providing training to PoC, including Fundacion Mujer, Universidad FUNDEPOS de Costa Rica, and Fundacion Omar Dengo, who work with UNHCR to tailor their trainings to the needs of the PoC based on the market analysis of the requirements from private companies and government regulations. A key element of the training strategy has been the need to have condensed trainings in an accelerated pace so PoC can build their capacity in the shortest period of time (two to three months).

35. As a result of these trainings, PoC are getting job offers and starting their own businesses, which helps them meet their basic needs. When visiting FUNDEPOS, the ET talked with a refugee who participated in the trainings and is currently working to train other PoC. This visit exemplified the appropriateness of the training design to build the skills of PoC for direct links to jobs.

36. **Challenges in PoC access to job trainings:** PoC are faced with several challenges during the training process. The main one is the need to work and provide for their daily needs during long periods of training (six to nine months). The ET found this was the case, for example, where PoC were receiving a sophisticated training on CISCO but required full participation three days a week for nine months. This commitment makes it difficult for PoC to find additional full-time jobs while participating in the training. Private companies are interested in people with these skills, yet, PoC have to find a way to participate in the training and meet their daily needs. UNHCR Costa Rica is exploring the possibility to support PoC during long term trainings. Some PoC receive support from government programmes during trainings, and once they have a job they can start covering their own expenses.

37. **Information provision for private sector actors:** There is the need to keep institutions and private companies informed on current policies and practices to support PoC to get hired according to the legal framework in Costa Rica. UNHCR is key in communicating information on PoC profiles (skills and background) across partners and to the private sector. Fundacion Mujer implements the activity of gathering PoC profiles. During interviews with the private sector, many wanted frequent updates on the profiles of PoC to facilitate efficient job-matching.

38. UNHCR has organized a group of private companies that are convinced that PoC are good employees and who make the effort to hire PoC when jobs are available. Most of these companies are in the service sector (restaurants, security, tourism, call centres, etc.). They provide information to assess market practices to develop training strategies. Unfortunately, these companies do not have job

opportunities all the time, and their needs are fairly specific. Outside this group, the knowledge of government regulations, documentation, and work permits for PoC is not well-known across the private sector, and that poses barriers to PoC in obtaining jobs.

39. **Challenges in PoC access to safety nets and services:** Information gaps within government institutions and private companies are also an issue when PoC seek health, financial, and educational services. In some cases, PoC have not been able to access health services because the identification document from immigration is not recognized, and PoC are then forced to cover their health services from their monthly income. UNHCR is working on a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Social Security office to strengthen collaboration and support PoC to access health services. This issue also occurs at the financial institutions, where PoC find it difficult to access credit to start or expand their business. Fundacion Mujer has ample experience working on micro-finance and it is an area where the project can support PoC. Further, for PoC children to enter the educational system, PoC told the ET they have to look for “friendly” schools to accept their children, i.e., schools who understand the immigration documentation, allowing them to access the educational and health care benefits for their children. There have been improvements in this regard, as a result of UNHCR signing MoUs with the Ministry of Education for 2014-2017 and 2018-20121, but there continue to be challenges in access for PoC at the field level.

40. **Capacities and coping strategies to face shocks and stressors:** As discussed above (Section 3.1), the programme is contributing to various resilience capacities at the systems and household levels to support PoC in times of stress. PoC use different coping strategies to build and maintain their livelihoods, even when faced with various shocks and stressors. UNHCR may consider how the following capacities and coping strategies fit into the programme’s pathway to resilience. The box below summarizes the common desirable and less desirable, or positive and negative, coping strategies collected by the team during the field visit:

<b>Table 2: PoC positive and negative coping strategies to deal with stressors:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Positive strategies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Access to the social safety nets, formal and informal</li> <li>○ Access financial services for productive purposes such as livelihood assets (versus taking on debt to buy food)</li> <li>○ Plan for and designate savings for emergency situations</li> <li>○ Family support from abroad</li> <li>○ Support from other members of the society (social capital)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Negative strategies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Distress selling capital assets, reducing their livelihood capacity over the long term</li> <li>○ Returning to their home country where they face protection issues</li> <li>○ Borrowing from the informal sector at higher rates</li> <li>○ Increasing working hours during weekdays and weekends, particularly if workplace does not have labour protections</li> <li>○ Reducing food consumption to cover family expenses</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p><i>Source: Interviews with beneficiaries, partners, and UNHCR staff</i></p>	

41. The following evidence on PoC resilience capacities was gathered by the ET through FGDs with beneficiaries and partner KIIs:

- Family support from abroad is not common, but in some cases an option that makes the difference. The ET did not find systematic quantitative data on the total remittances received by

PoC to triangulate this point. This relates to the resilience capacity indicator of **bridging social capital**, in which PoC rely on social networks beyond their immediate community.<sup>27</sup>

- **Capital assets**, if available, provide an opportunity to build a stronger business; assets are important for resilience as they allow PoC to be more effective and efficient in their livelihood activity and to increase their income, which can be relied on in times of stress. While the approach of this programme is not to provide direct capital and assets to PoC, the programme will be able to better monitor in the future if refugees are able to increase their savings and/or assets as a result of their livelihoods. The programme may also explore **micro-finance options** for PoC in the future through Fundacion Mujer. This contributes to their absorptive and adaptive resilience capacity.
- Related to **financial inclusion**, PoC can open bank accounts in Costa Rica, although it is challenging for them because not all financial institutions recognize their identification document to open an account. UNHCR has been lobbying the financial institutions to ease the process for bank accounts so that PoC are able to save. Even a small amount of **savings** has reportedly been an important resilience capacity option for PoC when the necessity arises; for example, when they need to cover medical expenses if the public clinics do not accept their identification document (see previous discussion in this section on UNHCR seeking MoU with government on this issue). During one FGD, a PoC explained this issue in very clear terms, see the quote below.

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*“For refugees, it is forbidden to get sick.” ~Refugee, on the need to use what little savings they have to access medical care if the clinic does not accept their documents*

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- **Bonding social capital**, which are supportive social networks within the same community, is also very important for refugees; they may be living with relatives or friends to share costs and expenses while they look for job opportunities. Social networks among PoC in Costa Rica are less developed but are an opportunity to keep refugees informed to improve their opportunities. These social networks are formed either by nationality, by participation in trainings, or sharing common interests. From the FGDs, PoC mentioned that different groups have different levels of networks. For instance, Venezuelans tend to be better connected and have platforms on social media to help facilitate these connections. As people come from different countries with different educational and socio-economic backgrounds, social networks develop differently among PoC and are based on need, mostly around training and job opportunities. It is important when the programme provides a platform for refugees to connect through trainings, job fairs, and other activities.

### 3.3. Relevance of UNHCR's role (KEQ 3)

#### Main findings: Relevance<sup>28</sup>

- **Private sector and government think UNHCR is a good partner and the programme is relevant to their strategies and labour needs, and to the needs of PoC.**

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<sup>27</sup> From Annex 4: Bridging social capital for this evaluation means ties to the host community, indicating greater social inclusion. e.g., those with social ties outside their immediate community can draw on these links when local resources are insufficient or unavailable. Some PoC may heavily depend on remittances.

<sup>28</sup> Main findings from desk review and interviews with UNHCR staff, partner agencies, and other stakeholders.

- **UNHCR is highly relevant as a catalytic actor supporting the implementation, filling gaps with government agencies, and being an advocate so that current policies and procedures are implemented according to the legal framework.**
- **With the ongoing implementation of the CRRF, UNHCR will need to continue in the high-level and strategic role to guide the process of full PoC integration.**

**Finding on resilience:**

- **UNHCR's role in systems-level changes and improving the enabling environment is critical for building transformative resilience capacity.**

42. **Facilitator, coordinator, and advocate role:** The livelihoods programme has significantly changed during the period of this evaluation (2014-2018), from the Graduation Model to Vivir la Integracion, UNCHR has thus played different roles during this time. These roles are coherent with its mandate as livelihood activities are strengthening the livelihood conditions of PoC and preventing protection risks related to lack of livelihoods. Currently, UNHCR is playing not only the facilitator role but also supporting programme implementation, filling the gaps with strategic interventions, and advocating so rules and regulations are implemented by government and private companies. Vivir la Integracion is based on two strategic factors: 1) PoC get access to national government social programmes and 2) the increased participation of private companies to hire PoC, along with regulations that allow PoC to start small businesses.

43. With the supportive legal framework and government institutions in Costa Rica, the strategic role of UNHCR is not to directly implement activities. Rather, UNHCR's role is to ensure policies are implemented and to facilitate coordination among different actors. During an interview with a partner agency, it mentioned that the government still largely expects UNHCR to be the main counterpart engaging in advocacy with this partner. UNHCR is working to strengthen government institutions so they can meet their mandate and lead the support to PoC. Clear examples of the advocacy role are gaining the signatures of strategic agreements (and MoU) with government institutions to enhance the participation of PoC in the government social programmes. At the same time, the facilitator role means promoting communication between private companies and partner agencies to support training and facilitate access to the job market for PoC.

44. UNHCR also plays a coordination role between all the partners to facilitate communication and coordination so partners work well together. UNHCR ensures there is a smooth referral pathway of PoC to relevant partners based on PoC need and partner expertise. This has been a central element in the design and implementation of Vivir la Integracion. Fundacion Mujer is the key partner receiving financial support from UNHCR to implement livelihood activities. FUNDEPOS and Fundacion Omar Dengo also receive funding from UNHCR to implement technical trainings. All other government, private sector, and institutional partners are operating partners who do not receive direct funds from UNHCR.

45. **Role in CRRF:** The ongoing implementation of the CRRF in Costa Rica will reinforce this strategic role of UNHCR. CRRF supports the country to continue improving its asylum system and enhancing the Costa Rica's capacity to ease access to durable solutions through economic and social integration. Within this framework, UNHCR should continue working as advocate, facilitator and coordinator to support the sustainability and scalability of the integration process at the national level. In this process, UNHCR should be looking at the overall big picture, legal, social, economic and political, and how these areas affect PoC. With this evidence, UNHCR should be guiding the integration process to facilitate protection and economic inclusion of PoC into the society.

46. **Strategic adjustments with changing conditions:** Since the end of 2017, the programme moved to a multiple-partner approach and this change required close monitoring and support to partner agencies. UNHCR provided direct support with technical advice, coordination, and communication with government institutions and other partners. According to KIIs with partners and UNHCR staff, this was a strategic action that allowed the livelihood team to determine the need to adjust activities and roles to improve the support to partner agencies. For example, the design of the integrated programme requires, as a starting point, that all PoC register with the Immigration Authority, proceed to an evaluation from IMAS (for social security), and then register with RET international to get connected to other livelihood and protection supports. From here, PoC would be directed to other partner agencies based on their needs. However, PoC were looking directly to partners based on their needs instead of going through the full registration process, and that caused problems with partners in keeping track of PoC to help them properly. The livelihood team had to train partner agencies to provide the initial induction to the programme and then refer PoC to the appropriate partner agency.

47. During 2018, a large influx of PoC from Nicaragua overwhelmed the capacity of the Immigration Authority to process all requests of asylum. UNHCR immediately provided support to fill the gap by hiring temporary staff to support this process. This was an important activity since the support of PoC starts when the Immigration Authority receives the request for asylum and later the work permit is granted.

### 3.4. Sustainability and scalability

#### Main findings: Sustainability and scalability<sup>29</sup>

- **Current Costa Rica livelihood activities depend on UNHCR financial support, thus the sustainability beyond UNHCR is not secure.**
- **The scalability of the programme in Costa Rica depends on the capacity of partner agencies and government institutions to work in different locations such as outside San Jose, and on the market situation of new areas with regards to jobs or business opportunities for PoC.**
- **UNHCR's increasing efforts to include government institutions in key activities, including the MoL are clear and should continue, as this will achieve a greater level of national ownership of the programme.**

#### Finding on resilience:

- **This finding relates to UNHCR's role as facilitator and advocate (Section 3.3). To achieve economic inclusion for PoC throughout the country and for the long term, there must be transformative capacity of government and other development actors. By bringing together these actors, UNHCR Cost Rica is developing the vision for the future that the programme will be implemented at scale and with sustainable funding.**

48. **External environment:** According to KIIs, the sustainability of PoC livelihoods depends on the continuation of these external elements where PoC are living and working. Changes in the government policies or market and private sector conditions may considerably affect the sustainability of their economic inclusion. There are examples where PoC do not get the status of refugee, losing their work permit and jobs, which immediately affects the sustainability of his/her livelihood as they need to look for other options to generate their needed income. As part of the integrated approach, UNHCR partners like HIAS and SJM provide legal counsel to PoC and help them appeal their cases.

<sup>29</sup> Main findings from desk review and interviews with UNHCR staff, partner agencies, and other stakeholders.

49. **Building soft and hard skills:** Internal factors affecting the sustainability of the livelihoods of PoC are more related to soft skills for PoC to adjust to the working environment and socio-cultural aspects of the country. Fundacion Mujer provides trainings to PoC that includes soft skills to understand and better function in the Costa Rican society, but this acculturation takes both time and willingness. Private companies hiring PoC have a positive perception of their work ethic, commitment, and willingness to work harder than nationals, and they provide technical trainings to invest in PoC hard skills. Yet, not all technical skills are transferable from one country to another, and the local regulation and hiring practices in Costa Rica require local titles and diplomas. This is an area where UNHCR partners are working to build the skills of the PoC and provide an initial or basic diploma that allows them to get hired.

50. **Financial constraints:** Current livelihood interventions implemented by partners depend financially on UNHCR. These include trainings from Fundacion Mujer, FUNDEPOS, Fundacion Omar Dengo, and others. However, there are clear examples where partners provide scholarships to refugees when the number of participants reaches the minimum to provide the training. Some of these trainings have been open to Costa Ricans as well. This could create the demand for those trainings to continue in a sustainable manner without the intervention of UNHCR.

51. The sustainability of interventions depends on the ability to raise funds to implement project activities, which should be an interest of many stakeholders at the national and international level. This is an opportunity for UNHCR to work with partners and build not only their capacity to coordinate and implement the programme, but also to explore opportunities with other donors and financial institutions. Some partners have the experience to work internationally and can bring that experience to fundraising. At the same time, UNHCR can advocate co-responsibility to donors and other countries on the work Costa Rica is doing to support PoC in the region. There is also potential for sustainability to be built through strategic investments in seed money for key projects. For example, Fundacion Mujer has ample experience working in micro-finance and could explore opening this option to PoC if seed funding is available.

52. **Factors for scalability:** The scalability of the programme in Costa Rica depends on: the **capacity of partners and government** to implement the programme in multiple locations across the country and the **economic/market situation of new areas** with regards to jobs or business opportunities for PoC, which is also closely related to the capacity of private companies to hire PoC. The involvement of private companies and partners in the design of the programme escalation is critical to define the size and level of activities in new areas. Local partners may need financial support to implement the programme in areas outside San Jose, which means the programme budget would have to increase in the short term, until activities can be handed over to other partners and government.

53. The current partners implementing capacity building, training, and market assessments have experience working in other areas of the country; e.g., both Fundacion Mujer and FUNDEPOS are providing trainings and have experience working in other parts of the country. The government's vocational training programme needs strengthening in order for PoC to better access this service. As Vivir la Integracion is an integrated approach, the challenge would be to support other partners providing psychosocial and legal support if they do not have the experience working outside San Jose.

54. Organizations like Association for Development (AED) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry can help to reach major companies from main the industries in Costa Rica, including those inside the San Jose area and outside. They can also help educate the industries on the rights of PoC and support the creation of jobs. Scaling the programme outside San Jose will require a market analysis of potential opportunities. AED and the chambers could help to identify those private companies outside San Jose and advocate for the support of PoC. Finally, the MoL, as a key public institution that coordinates the relationship with the private sector and others, plays a critical role in the sustainability and scalability of the integrated programme in Costa Rica.

## 4. Summary of evaluation question findings

### KEQ 1: Effectiveness

55. The programme contributes to the resilience capacities of PoC through the following:
- Absorptive capacity: Integrated programming meets protection, physical, and psychosocial needs of PoC.
  - Adaptive capacity: The demand-driven approach in close coordination with the private sector builds the human capital and diversified livelihoods of PoC.
  - Transformative capacity: Continued advocacy to ensure the enabling legal and policy environment promotes the economic inclusion of refugees and includes refugees in social safety net programmes.
56. The legal framework in Costa Rica enables employment and entrepreneurship initiatives for refugees, but requires more information, communication, and coordination with government and private institutions to allow a more fluid implementation of the law to support PoC to build their livelihoods.
57. The profile of PoC in Costa Rica is wide and diverse with clear differences based on the country of origin. This creates the need for a flexible approach to support refugees to meet employment and entrepreneurship opportunities based on their skills as they match with job/market opportunities. The livelihood model needs to be open and flexible to accommodate the needs and conditions of PoC within the legal framework and market conditions. Flexibility has been an important element to the effectiveness and efficiency of the livelihoods programme in Costa Rica, emanating from the team, the programme design and adaptive management and implementation, allowing adjustments to improve attention to PoC.
58. As a result of UNHCR's programme, PoC are getting job offers and starting their own business to meet their basic needs. With the support and mobile equipment from the Livelihood Unit in HQ, a revised livelihood monitoring system has been implemented in Costa Rica since August 2018 to better capture outcomes of interest including changes in resilience capacity. This is an area of opportunity to capture data and to provide feedback about the tool.
59. PoC use multiple and diverse coping strategies to address immediate needs. PoC are accessing social programmes to get housing support, trainings, education for children, and other services from public programmes; though, there have been some issues with their access to services.
60. The adjustment of the UNHCR Costa Rica structure integrating protection and durable solutions into one division with two units allows better coordination and integration between protection and livelihood interventions. Livelihood interventions need to be closely related to protection activities to reduce vulnerabilities and increase resilience capacities of PoC.

### KEQ 2: Minimum Criteria

61. The MC, CRRF, MERS and previous lessons learnt from the Graduation Model were used to design the programme, incorporating market analysis to build skills of PoC that matches demands from private companies. The use of these guidelines is a best practice to guide the design and implementation of integrated livelihood interventions. Staff from UNHCR indicated that the inclusion of multiple partners helped to increase efficiency of the livelihood programme. Fundacion Mujer indicated that market analysis was the most useful tool to design the programme and helped them also to build a relationship with private companies.
62. The implementation of the multiple-partner approach allowed the use of multiple partners with experience in their areas to support PoC. The transition period from one to multiple implementing and operational partners created information gaps with government, partners, private companies and PoC. The livelihood team is aware of this situation and working to improve communication and coordination.

### KEQ 3: UNHCR's Role

63. The CO is playing an advocacy, coordinator, funder, and facilitator role. UNHCR is highly relevant as catalytic actor and facilitator, supporting implementation and filling gaps with government agencies while also advocating that current policies and procedures are implemented according to the legal framework. UNHCR efforts in Costa Rica have focused on strengthening government policies, as well as improving PoC use of available social assistance programmes, avoiding duplication or creating parallel systems. This role will continue to be critical as UNHCR provides guidance with the CRRF process.

64. Private sector and government institutions consider UNHCR to be a good partner, particularly in supporting the integration of refugees within employment schemes and with technical trainings to improve the matching of refugee skills with jobs profiles.

65. The scalability of the programme in Costa Rica depends on the capacity of partners to work in different locations and with their own expanded resources, and on the market situation of new areas with regards to jobs or business opportunities for PoC. The large influx of PoC from Nicaragua with different profiles and skill sets may require implementing Vivir la Integración in areas outside the metropolitan area of San Jose.

## 5. Programme-specific recommendations

### Recommendations for the UNHCR livelihoods team in Costa Rica:

- I. By early 2019, continue monitoring and **strengthening the capacity of partner agencies** to ensure proper attention to PoC, and **bring in new partners with the capacity to reach new areas and go to scale**. This could include cross-visits and coordination meetings among partner agencies, strengthening their administration and programming capacity as well their communication and fundraising ability (thus preparing for handover in the future). Further coordinate with partner agencies to provide a subsistence allowance (housing) when strategic and long-term trainings are implemented to ensure PoC fully participate in the training and to reduce drop out.
- II. By mid-2019, and in coordination with the protection team, **develop a Communication Strategy** to share information and updates and to **scale up information dissemination** with government institutions, partner agencies, private sector, and PoC. It is important to keep informed the PoC, private companies, and government on the different roles, responsibilities, and activities implemented by partner agencies to better support PoC. This information could be made available on a website or on social media. Another mechanism to explore is the use of text messages sent out periodically to PoC regarding changes in government policies, employment opportunities, and financial opportunities. Also, newsletters to partner agencies, private companies, and government institutions to keep them updated and in communication can be used to improve the coordination and knowledge of the programme.  
  
The strategy should also include **advocacy and communication** with relevant government offices and financial institutions to educate them on the current regulations to facilitate the process of financial inclusion for PoC.
- III. By mid-2019, **evaluate the pilot monitoring and evaluation system** (HQ's revised livelihood monitoring system) to collect outcome data and support programme adjustment. Considering the CO's key role as facilitator/coordinator, the CO should also **explore outcome indicators to measure systems-level achievements**. Information from the monitoring system can be enriched

with information collected from the lifeline (protection hotline) to monitor communication, implementation, and perception issues on the livelihood and protection activities.

#### Recommendations for the Country Representative in Costa Rica:

- IV. By the end of 2019, prepare a funding strategy for **multi-year budgets** that can support the current multi-year and multi-partner (MYMP) programme. Annual budgets are not enough to support a successful livelihood programme, which may require a three-year budget. This funding strategy should **include partnership opportunities with other development actors to adequately resource (and eventually handover)** some activities of the livelihood programme. There are other NGOs and United Nations agencies that could be interested in funding activities or participating in Vivir la Integración.

As part of the funding strategy, advocate for international financial support based on the large influx of PoC into Costa Rica and the co-responsibility of countries in the region. Explore with Fundación Mujer the opportunity to work on micro-finance activities with PoC.

- V. By the end of 2019, and based on the large influx of PoC from Nicaragua during 2018, evaluate and prepare an Implementation Plan to implement Vivir la Integración outside the metropolitan area of San José and in the northern part of the country, looking for the largest commercial and productive areas where partners can implement the programme. The programme may have to adapt trainings to build the capacity and PoC skills based on the local economies, business, and markets conditions of other regions. This Implementation Plan will have to include technical support to partners (and funding to some partners) to jumpstart the operation and advocate with local governments and private companies to implement the programme. Although a challenge, it is also an opportunity to **prove the malleability of the Vivir la Integración model** to different socio-economic conditions that may be similar to those in other countries.

#### Recommendation for the Regional Office:

- VI. By the end of 2020, **build the technical capacity, not only of the team in Costa Rica, but also from other countries in the region** to improve programme design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of livelihood interventions that build pathways to economic inclusion, resilience and self-reliance. This could start by creating a work plan and prioritizing livelihood countries, then setting up spaces for regular cross-sharing visits, workshops, seminars, etc. in the region.

## 6. Conclusions to contribute to overall livelihood strategy

Note: these final points will contribute to the strategic recommendations provided in the centralized evaluation report, but as such, they are not written to be specific recommendations.

66. **Contributions to good design:** The use of the MC, MERS, CRRF, and lessons learnt from previous livelihood programmes allows the design of an integrated programme to respond to the needs of PoC. Best practices to design integrated programmes should include a context analysis and socio-economic assessment, a livelihood market analysis, and work in partnerships with strategic organizations with expertise in their areas. The project design should not only ensure market-based strategies to build the capacities of PoC, but also look at the supply side to communicate information on PoC profiles (specifically skills and background) to private companies and enhance the hiring process.

67. **Integrated team structure:** UNHCR should review the benefits and lessons learnt of the integrated team structure in Costa Rica to potentially apply the idea globally. This includes the need for

diverse capacities within the livelihood team, particularly those that allow UNHCR to fill the advocacy, facilitator, and coordinator roles with government, private sector, and development partners.

68. **The role of UNHCR:** UNHCR should be the advocate, facilitator, and coordinator of the integration process. UNHCR should be looking at the overall big picture, legal, social, economic and political, and how these affect PoC. With this evidence, UNHCR should be guiding the integration process to facilitate protection and economic inclusion of PoC into the society.

69. **MYMP and flexibility:** The design of a livelihood programme should incorporate the MYMP funding approach to provide the necessary technical, managerial, and financial resources to implement a successful programme. At the same time, it is important to incorporate flexibility into the design to allow the programme to be adjusted based on changes of external and internal factors. The flexibility is incorporated with multi-year programming including multiple partners with different expertise, flexible multi-year funding, and with constant monitoring to identify key areas to improve. With this, the partnering policy that requires evaluation every two years should be reconsidered for longer timeframes for development-oriented work (i.e., livelihoods).

70. **Facilitating access to existing programmes, services, and market demand:** UNHCR livelihood programmes should be designed to strengthen and use government policies and social programmes to both support PoC's conditions and to avoid duplication or creating parallel systems. At the same time, livelihood programmes should be linked to CSR initiatives from the private sector to support PoC with jobs or business opportunities to build their livelihoods. The programme should have a strategy for how to use these government and private sector partnerships to take the livelihood interventions to scale, reaching a larger proportion of PoC in country. UNHCR should also incorporate sustainable elements into the project design. This means identifying partner agencies with fundraising capabilities or developing funding strategies that can identify donors or mechanisms to support livelihood interventions at scale.

71. **Need for exchange of livelihoods and resilience experiences in the region and beyond, and need for clarity on how livelihoods fits into the larger resilience and self-reliance framework:** Based on the experience of the integrated programme in Costa Rica, the mechanism used to design and implement Vivir la Integracion could be shared with other countries with similar characteristics: an enabling legal environment that allows PoC to obtain work permits, government agencies collaborating to support PoC, private companies with CSR programmes willing to hire PoC, and market/economy conditions that allow jobs and business opportunities for PoC. The programme contributes to absorptive, adaptive, and transformative resilience capacities of PoC, though the livelihood programme strategy may not explicitly recognize those contributions. UNHCR HQ can support the CO to better link livelihood programming to the pathways of resilience, such as by providing guidance and documentation on how UNHCR sees their livelihood programming contributing to the larger resilience and self-reliance framework.

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## Annex 2: Interview Lists

### Key informants

List of persons and institutions consulted.

Note: both individual and small group interviews were conducted

**Total Number Key Informants: 38 (20 females, 18 males)**

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION- KEY INFORMANTS				
Name	M/F	Title	Date (D/M/Y)	Location
<b>UNHCR CO</b>				
Miguel Urbano	M	Durable Solutions Officer	10/09/2018	UNHCR CO San Jose
Jorge Rodriguez	M	Durable solutions Assistant	10/09/2018	San Jose
Gabriela Vargas	F	Durable Solutions Assistant	10/09/2018	San Jose
Fabio Siani	M	Regional Protection Officer	10/09/2018	San Jose
Ellen Lee	F	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	10/09/2018	San Jose
Milton Moreno	M	Country Representative	10/09/2018	San Jose
Marcela Rodriguez-Farrelly	F	Protection Officer	17/09/2018	San Jose
<b>Government stakeholders</b>				
Guillermo Zuniga	M	National Employment Director, Ministry of Labour and Social Security	13/09/2018	Restaurant Olive
Marcos Solano	M	Employment Generation Director, Ministry of Labour and Social Security	13/09/2018	Restaurant Olive
Johnny Ruiz	M	Labour and Migration Director Ministry of Labour and Social Security	17/09/2018	Ministry of Labour and Social Security
Maria Leiton	F	Technical Assistant Manager, National Social Welfare institute (IMAS)	13/09/2018	National Social Welfare institute (IMAS) office
Berny Vargas	M	Legal Advisor, National Social Welfare institute (IMAS)	13/09/2018	National Social Welfare institute (IMAS) office
Yariela Quirós	M	National Social Welfare institute (IMAS)	13/09/2018	National Social Welfare institute (IMAS) office
Name not available for listing	M	National Social Welfare institute (IMAS)	13/09/2018	National Social Welfare institute (IMAS)office
Roxana Quesada	F	Inclusion and Human Development Director, Migration Authority	13/09/2018	Migration Authority
<b>Partners (NGOs, UN Agencies, Donors)</b>				

Ericka Linares	F	Director of Social Dimension, Business Association for Development (AED)	11/09/2018	AED's office
Olga Sauma	F	Director Business Association for Development (AED)	11/09/2018	AED's office
Susana Marin	F	Academic Coordinator FUNDEPOS	12/09/2018	FUNDEPO's office
Sergio Navas	M	Vice-Dean FUNDEPOS	12/09/2018	FUNDEPO's office
Zobeida Moya	F	Director Fundacion Mujer	12/09/2018	Fundacion Mujer's Office
Yescarleth Rodríguez	F	Business Intelligence Coordinator Fundacion Mujer	12/09/2018	Fundacion Mujer's Office
María Jesús Blanco	F	Fundacion Mujer	12/09/2018	Fundacion Mujer's Office
Laura Castellon	F	Fundacion Mujer	12/09/2018	Fundacion Mujer's Office
Marcelo Carvajal	M	General Manager, Fundacion Omar Dengo	12/09/2018	Fundacion Omar Dengo' office
Johanna Bermúdez	F	Programa Computación, Fundacion Omar Dengo	12/09/2018	Fundacion Omar Dengo' office
Eduardo Monge	M	Coordinación de proyectos y relaciones con socios, Fundación Omar Dengo	12/09/2018	Fundacion Omar Dengo' office
Ileana Esquivel	F	Chamber of Commerce	12/09/2018	Chamber of Commerce
Camila Mirillo	F	Chamber of Commerce	12/09/2018	Chamber of Commerce
José Salas	M	Chamber of Industry	13/09/2018	Chamber of Industry
Francisco Gamboa	M	Chamber of Industry	13/09/2018	Chamber of Industry
Christianne Eppelin	F	RET International, Director	14/09/2018	RET International
Sofia Trigueros	F	Coordinator House of Rights Municipality of Desamparados	14/09/2018	House of Right office
<b>Private Sector or Finance Institutions</b>				
Gabriel Sandi	M	Pizza Hut	13/09/2018	UNHCR CO San Jose
Roy Mena	M	Sykes	13/09/2018	UNHCR CO San Jose
Isabel Barrantes	F	Grupo Fiesta	13/09/2018	UNHCR CO San Jose
Jimmy Corrales	M	M&J	13/09/2018	UNHCR CO San Jose
Maria Esquivel	F	M&J	13/09/2018	UNHCR CO San Jose
Marieta Blanco	F	Private company	13/09/2018	UNHCR CO San Jose

## Beneficiary interviews

Beneficiary Interviews Summary:

**Total number of beneficiary interviewees: 38 (22 females, 16 males)**

Type- if applicable	# of participants	# of males	# of females	Date (D/M/Y)	Location
<b>FGDs</b>					
Entrepreneurs	7	3	4	15/09/2018	UNCHR CO San Jose
Employment	10	2	8	15/09/2018	UNCHR CO San Jose
Early stage of livelihood program	9	4	5	15/09/2018	UNCHR CO San Jose
Vocational training and business model	10	6	4	15/09/2018	UNCHR CO San Jose
<b>IDIs or Positive Deviants</b>					
IDI Positive Deviant	1	0	1	13/09/2018	Cartago
IDI Positive Deviant	1	1	0	14/09/2018	Heredia

## Annex 3: Positive deviant refugee story

### Costa Rica: a refugee's story of rebuilding their life and business



#### Age

0-17 Maria\* was born in El Salvador. She was the 7<sup>th</sup> of 8 children in her family. Her father was an estate manager and her mother operated a small business. They moved several times, but she always had the opportunity to go to school. She stopped school in the ninth grade when she married, at age 17.



18-25 Maria and her new husband quickly started a family. Her first child was a girl, and two years later she gave birth to a son. She did not work during this time and was dedicated to her family. After eight years of marriage, Maria and her husband separated. He continued to pay her rent until she could be independent on her own.



26-36 Maria **started a business** that sold tortillas, pupusas, and groceries. They had a decent life and her children were in school. She made the down payment to buy a house using her **savings and financial help** from her brothers who lived in the US. She used the new house for her business. One day the gangs called and asked for \$3000, and if she did not pay by the next day, they threatened to kill her children. Her family helped her pay the money and escape.



37-39 She left the country with her two children. For the next few years they lived back and forth in Nicaragua and Costa Rica. They continued to deal with issues of extortion and threats in Nicaragua. Maria and her daughter became ill from the stress. UNHCR helped to keep them safe and organized their travel to settle in Costa Rica.



40+ Enabling environment: During this time legislation was passed in Costa Rica, and she was able to get a **work permit**. Eventually they were granted refugee status. Starting life over was not easy at first. Maria developed severe anxiety and needed treatment, and her children dealt with allergies and migraines. Her brothers continued to **support them**, and her children were now old enough to work.



During this time, an organization called ACAI provided Maria with **legal and psychological support** and she was able to participate in other projects, such as the Graduation Model, which provided her with **seed money** to start a business. Maria also worked taking care of the elderly. Her daughter entered the university and her son was trained in vocational skills.



UNHCR and ACAI continued to follow up with Maria, providing guidance and training for her business. The amount of business grew over three years from about 94,000 colones of transactions per month (US\$ 157) to 3 million colones (US\$ 5,020) per month today. They had the family goal of **buying a car** and achieved it, and the next goal is to buy a house. Her business now gives her the opportunity to hire other refugees. She tells other people to keep going, trying to give them **confidence**, and offers them help.



Maria is very proud of her children who have good jobs and finished college. They enjoy spending time together and would like to travel around the country and even visit family abroad someday. Maria rarely needs treatment for her anxiety any more.

\*Name changed

## Annex 4: Resilience capacity indicator examples

1. **Absorptive capacity is the:** Ability of households and communities to minimize exposure to shocks if possible and to recover quickly after exposure.

- Informal Safety Nets (e.g., involvement in savings groups, zakat, mutual help groups, civic or charitable groups, religious groups, women's groups)
- Asset Ownership (e.g., productive assets and livestock gained through the programme)
- Local shock preparedness plan or protection structures in place and disaster risk reduction (DRR) (e.g., awareness of disaster preparedness plans (for natural hazards) and about their awareness of how to prevent protection risks such as SGBV trainings or through conflict management committees, or how to report abuses.
- Household savings (e.g., use savings to cope with a shock in place of negative coping strategies such as distress sale of productive assets, taking children out of school to work, or taking on consumptive debt)
- Bonding Social Capital (e.g., connected to informal safety nets, above, it is seen in the bonds between community members. It involves principles and norms such as trust, reciprocity and cooperation, and is often drawn on in the emergency context, where PoC work closely to help each other to cope and recover)

2. **Adaptive capacity is the:** Ability of households and communities to make pro-active and informed choices about their lives and their diversified livelihood strategies based on changing conditions.

- Livelihood diversity (e.g., what have been the opportunities for PoC to diversity their livelihoods and income sources? What livelihoods can be sustained in the face of different kinds of risks/shocks?) and asset ownership (same as above)
- Human capital (e.g., basic literacy, primary or higher education, trainings received)
- Access to financial services (e.g., access to bank accounts, loans, micro-credit)
- Psychosocial adaptations (e.g., confidence, perceived ability to adapt and be self-reliant)
- Bridging social capital with the host community and to others in different risk environments (e.g., those with social ties outside their immediate community can draw on these links when local resources are insufficient or unavailable. Some PoC may heavily depend on remittances, for example. For this evaluation, it may also mean ties to the host community indicating greater social inclusion.)

3. **Transformative capacity is the:** System-level changes that ensure sustained resilience, including formal safety nets, access to markets, infrastructure, and basic services.

- Access to basic services (e.g., nearby health centre, primary school, security services, etc.)
- Policy changes regarding work permits and mobility.
- Access to formal safety nets (government, NGO, or UN- provided food or cash assistance for relief or for the most vulnerable)
- Access to infrastructure (e.g., water and sewerage systems, shelter, electricity, telecommunications, paved roads)
- [For rural areas] Access to livestock services or natural resources (e.g., grazing land)
- Access to markets (e.g., regulations and policies that allow PoC to access work permits, land, formal employment in all sectors)
- Linking social capital (e.g., this type of social capital is often conceived of as a vertical link between a network and some form of authority or power, for example, if a refugee group leader is designated to participate in local government decision making)