

OFFICIAL LAUNCH of the Graduation Model in Costa Rica



On October 29th, 2014 the official launch of the **Graduation Model** in Costa Rica took place. Around 200 people, including beneficiaries and their families, along with staff from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Asociación de Consultores y Asesores Internacionales (ACAI) and Casa de Derechos. The event took place at the Elections

Supreme Tribunal auditorium in downtown San José.

The discussion panel was comprised by Roberto Mignone, UNHCR's representative in Costa Rica, Elisa Carlaccini, UNHCR's Durable Solutions Unit representative in Costa Rica, Erick Brenes, lead consultant of the Graduation Model in Costa Rica, and Gloria Maklouf,



Director of ACAI. The event took off with an overview of the Graduation Model presented by Roberto Mignone, followed by an in depth presentation by Erick Brenes, explaining the process and timeline of the Graduation Model. Upon conclusion of the official presentations time was given to allow interaction between the discussion panel and the attendees, where questions and ideas were exchanged and answered.

During the event the beneficiaries of the Graduation Model and their families had the opportunity to interact and meet other participants and their families. These beneficiaries were also given a welcome letter together with a Graduation Model t-shirt, the act of "putting on" the shirt symbolized their commitment and willingness to "graduate" from the program.

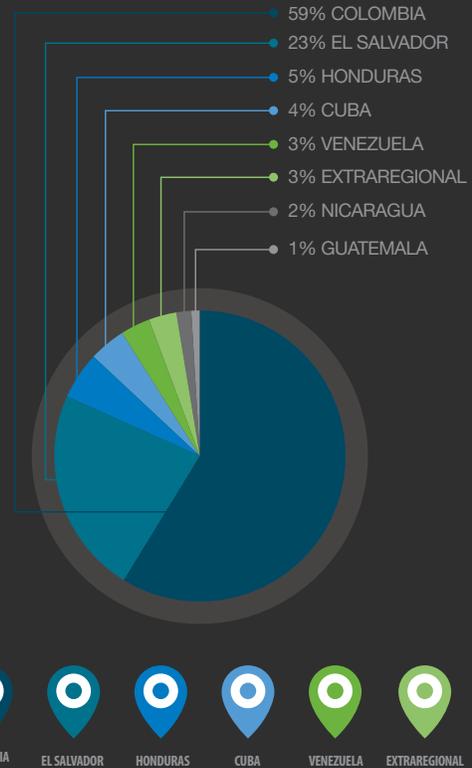
The Graduation Model targets the most vulnerable people and seeks to improve their socioeconomic conditions permanently. This year the Graduation Model is working with a total of 250 people (200 refugees and asylum seekers,



and 50 local women from the Desamparados county under extreme vulnerability according to Costa Rican standards). The participants of this project are people who live under conditions of extreme poverty and face difficulties to reach self-sufficiency. The main goal is to allow these people to become self-sustainable through social protection, creating employment opportunities, mentoring and microfinance.



In the project there are participants from different countries, which are represented in the following graph:



International experts visit the Costa Rican GRADUATION MODEL

This past September the **Graduation Model** team in Costa Rica was visited by two Graduation Model methodology experts. Janet Heisey, Director of Technical & Strategic Alliances of Trickle Up, an NGO that seeks to reduce extreme poverty through the application of various Graduation Model techniques, and Syed Hashemi from BRAC University in Bangladesh, visited the team to analyze the local context and provide feedback.

During their visit various meetings took place with ACAI and Casa de Derechos from the Desamparados local government, the main implementing partners of UNHCR in this project. Home visits were also made during this period to expose the experts to the socioeconomic conditions in which the beneficiaries live, and allow them to better understand the context of the Graduation Model in Costa Rica.



With the main goal of ensuring success, the visits allowed the Graduation Model national team to reflect and analyze the different stages and processes, as well as identify possible success and threat factors that the Graduation Model in Costa Rica may encounter during its lifecycle.



Beneficiaries of the **GRADUATION MODEL** start their training



One of the key components of the **Graduation Model** is without a doubt the various courses and workshops the beneficiaries attend to receive their training. Attending these workshops is especially important as they help participants not only build and enhance their existing skills, but also acquire and develop new knowledge. These skill and capacity-building workshops are therefore essential for participants to overcome the existing socioeconomic barriers and reach self-reliance, either through employment or opening their own microenterprise.

The Graduation Model participants will have to follow core training, regardless of whether their interest lies in opening their own microenterprise or employment. This

core training is comprised by a Financial Education course (offered by BAC San José) which aims at creating a certain standard of business skills such as family savings, creating budgets and proper management of income and assets. These skills are considered necessary by the Graduation Model team to ensure its beneficiaries can understand and manage their finances.

In addition to the Financial Education course, participants will also have to follow a Legal Empowerment course. Through various workshops, topics such as social justice, family and human rights, access to services such as education and healthcare, among others will be discussed and ensure participants understand their legal rights in the country. This course aims at informing and allowing the Graduation Model participants and their families have access to services which are many times unknown to them.

Finally, workshops covering psychosocial related areas to ensure the participants mental health and well-being, allowing them to build on their self-esteem and create social networks. Topics such as communication, leadership and organization, as well as personal empowerment, among others were covered during these workshops.



More information at:



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