

THE STORY OF ERICKA

“The Graduation Model changed me”.

Ericka



Ericka was forced to flee her home country of Honduras and arrived to Costa Rica in 2013. She and her children had received multiple death threats from the so called “maras”, a gang that has also forced many other Hondurans to flee their country.

Since her arrival in Costa Rica, she and her family have received financial support to cover the costs that forced displacement entails. Being a single mother with three under aged children, Ericka was a suitable candidate for the Graduation Model.

By taking part in this pilot project, Ericka received a small subsidy so she could sell “tamales” and have an income, allowing her to provide for her children and herself. She was also an active participant and took part in all workshops and courses that are part of the Graduation Model.

In November of 2014, Ericka was hired by a meatpacking company as a charwoman. This job has given her a steady income and made her a proactive woman, allowing her to cover basic needs and improving the quality of life of her family and herself.

Ericka is grateful to be part of the Graduation Model, as she affirms that the guidance and support that the project has given her helped her overcome difficult times and she assures to be both financially stable and emotionally strong.



Furthermore, she emphasizes the importance of the financial training and legal empowerment courses, as well as the psychosocial assistance she received, as she assures this has helped her become self-reliant and aware of her rights and obligations in the country.

The GRADUATION MODEL beneficiaries receive training to open their own business



On January 16th, training began for the Graduation Model participants that are set to open their own micro business and become self-employed. So far 70 participants of the total 120 that are meant to become self-employed have taken part in these courses.

The beneficiaries were divided into two different groups depending on the status of their project. Those who only have an idea of the business they would like to start are following a course called “Como iniciar su negocio” or “Starting your own business”. The aim of this course is to develop that idea they have into a more concrete and clear notion of the business they would like to start.

On the other hand, those who have already developed their business idea into a clearer, income generating project, are taking a course called “Planes de negocio” or “Business plan”. The aim of this course is to help the beneficiaries create a business plan in order to have access to microcredits and start their own business.



Both courses are being given by the Program for Continuing Education in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (Focco-Mipye) program of the National University of Costa Rica.

The purpose of these courses are to offer the beneficiaries assistance and guidance in order to have access to a microcredit that will allow them to start their own business and become self-reliant, providing for their families and themselves.



Meeting with the private sector to create employment opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers



On January 22nd the Office held a meeting with companies belonging to the private sector as well as chambers from various industries. The purpose of this meeting was to open up a discussion and create synergies that will allow the creation of job opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers that are part of the Graduation Model.

Among the attendees were representatives of companies like Pizza Hut, Subway, Manpower, Search and Cargill, as well as representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Tourism, The Chamber of Restaurants, among others. UNHCR's Implementing Partners ACAI and Casa de Derechos were also present in this meeting.

The meeting began with Elisa Carlaccini, Durable Solutions Officer of UNHCR Costa Rica, presenting "Vivir la Integración" and the "Graduation Model" to give an overview of the socio-economic inclusion programs UNHCR Costa Rica is implementing in the country. The market research results that UNHCR undertook together with ILO were also presented during the meeting to give more specific information on which areas and sectors in Costa Rica are in more demand of employees.

The attendees were also asked to fill in a document where they could explain the kind of profiles their company or industry is specifically looking for. This was done in order to know what kind of training and workshops UNHCR and its IP's can offer to the Graduation Model participants to ease their job insertion.



Interview



Gloria Maklouf

“The main purpose of this project is to allow the beneficiaries reach their life goals by becoming locally integrated and reaching self-reliance in a sustainable manner that will grant them a higher quality of life”.

Gloria Maklouf, Executive Director of ACAI, UNHCR’s main implementing partner in Costa Rica and of the Graduation Model. ACAI has over 20 years of experience in offering guidance, support and assistance to refugees and asylum seekers in Costa Rica.

Based on her experience, Gloria explains what the aim of the Graduation Model is:

1. How does the Graduation Model benefit refugees?

The benefit of the Graduation Model is that it helps refugees reach stability in their lives at an economic, personal, social and emotional level. The Model offers the necessary tools to reach this stability by providing the creation of safety nets

and assistance in various needs that refugees are often encountered with.

In this sense, the Model seeks to position refugees not as weak and vulnerable people due to their past experiences, but as strong and capable people that are able to move on with the help and guidance that this project offers. It is when the beneficiary is able to find a way out of a particular situation, where he or she is able to feel secure and accomplished, that the ultimate goal can be reached, which is an effective local integration.

2. How does the Graduation Model help refugees in an effective manner?

Given the proximity that ACAI has with refugees and asylum seekers, the Graduation Model helps us understand their situation in Costa Rica. Although each case is different, the Model helps us understand crucial qualitative information of specific refugee sub-groups, i.e. elderly people, adults, teenagers, children, single mothers, LGBT cases and so on. Having this information allows us to create and adjust our efforts to better serve the refugee population.

Also, the creation of multidisciplinary work teams fosters the creation of knowledge and strategies that help us create solutions and effective ways of serving the refugee population. The Model entails strategic components like doing home visits, in-depth interviews, observation, participation, psychological therapy, psychosocial reports, legal orientation, among others, that help us better understand the needs of People of Concern.

3. What impact or benefit is expected from this project?

The main benefit that is expected from this project is that the beneficiaries are able to reach their life goals in a sustainable manner that helps them have a higher quality of life. For this to happen, reaching self-reliance and local integration are key. Forced displacement implies a loss of self-belonging and the process to locally integrate in a new country can be full of challenges, questions and fear. It is in this sense that the Model seeks to assist refugees in every possible way to better adjust and fully integrate into a new society. By doing so, we expect that the beneficiaries of the Graduation Model are able to reach better economic, social and job inclusion opportunities, in a way in which their family, structural and emotional wellbeing is enhanced.



More information at:



Phones: (506) 2296-6800 . (506) 2296-0785
E.mail: modelodegraduacioncr@gmail.com