



“Work is the only thing that gives substance to life.

Albert Einstein

UNHCR, our work is to ensure that our population of interest can achieve a secure life and can cover their basic needs, thus contributing to the dignity of persons and the enjoyment of their human rights

World Refugee Day 2015



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## National beneficiaries of the Graduation Model are being trained in order to establish their own business.

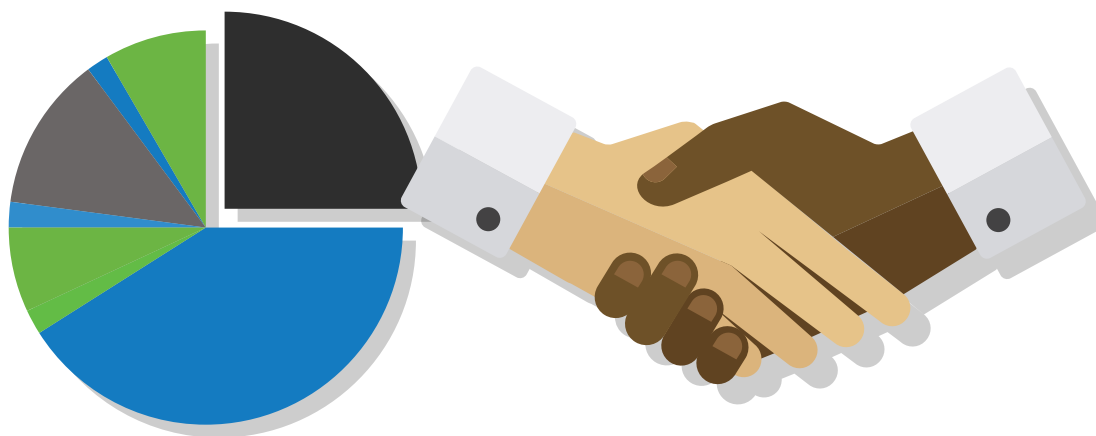
In the framework of the Comprehensive Solutions Strategy implemented in Costa Rica, and specifically the Graduation Model, includes the participation of 100 national women from the Desamparados Canton (south of San Jose) who live in vulnerable conditions, many of whom are victims, survivors or at-risk of gender-based violence. Their participation in the project is possible because of the cooperation agreement that UNHCR maintains with the House of Rights of the Municipality of Desamparados whose role is to provide national legal services and psychosocial care to refugees and migrants including counseling and litigation in family matters, gender based violence, refugee assistance, migration and labor rights, among others.

The national participants have access to the same opportunities and trainings as refugees and asylum candidates who are also part of Model Graduation. As part of this process, candidates whose interest is to generate self-employment income or self-employment received training on "How to start a business?". The objective of the course is to enable the participants to organize their ideas and develop their enterprise, so that by the completion of the course, they will be able to construct a business profile and to clearly manifest a project of their own in the future.



These courses are taught by the continuing education program of competitive capacity of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME-Focco) of the School of Economics at the National University of Costa Rica.

Thirty-three women are beneficiaries of this process and are supported through training, guidance and access to seed capital (and / or microcredit) in order to achieve their own economic activities that will generate the income needed to meet their living standards.



## The beginning of the delivery process of seed capital to support participating entrepreneurs



Doña Blanca is a Colombian refugee who has been in the country for 12 years. She and her husband have tried many times to undertake an economic activity that will generate enough income to live a dignified life in Costa Rica. They also overcome many difficulties to achieve stability in their lives. Before joining the Graduation Model, Doña Blanca used to informally sell Colombian meals; however this informal activity generated many problems, both legal and emotional.

Doña Blanca was given the opportunity to start a locksmith business, paying only a monthly rental and a business tax. For this reason, the National University referred her to the course “Start Your Business” conducted within the framework of the Graduation Model. In this course, Doña Blanca was able to prove that their project is profitable, which is why she was supported with seed capital for the purchase of a new key making machine. This activity has enabled Doña Blanca and her husband to cover all their expenses and operate the business. They have therefore not required any further financial support or assistance from the project.

Doña Blanca is one of the 88 participants who entered the Graduation Model in 2014 and has an interest in developing her own economic activity or self-employment. In order to do so, Doña Blanca and 55 other participants were trained to develop and organize their business idea in order to have access to seed capital provided by the project.

The delivery process of the seed capital began in May 2015 once the participants completed their training processes with the National University and delivered a document with the profile of the project they want to undertake. Subsequently, a committee composed of representatives from UNHCR and ACAI Rights House determined the amount allocated to each beneficiary according to their type of project, as well as their social and economic conditions. On average, each person receives \$500 worth of seed capital to invest in what is most urgently required such as the purchase of any machinery, equipment or raw materials. This process will benefit 55 people who are mainly interested in self-employment. However, it is expected that between 2014 and 2015 at least 150 entrepreneur beneficiaries will be requesting support from the project.





## The Graduation Model partners receive training in livelihoods



Partners of the Graduation Model (ACAI and House of Rights) received training to further develop capacities and ensure that interventions in livelihoods are deployed from the Model Graduation with a multidisciplinary approach. This was one of the objectives proposed to the caseworkers in Partners of Graduation Model who have been following the participants' progress from the beginning. The training was held during the first week of May, with the participation of the implementing partner's collaborators and other institutions such as the National University, BAC San José, Ministry of Labour and Search.

The training process covered the areas of employment, self-employment, savings and coaching processes, livelihoods and overall coordination of interventions on livelihoods.

The training started with the employment component, which was facilitated by a National University professor who is also the coordinator of continuing education of the competitive capacities of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME Focco-). This training focused on what makes a good entrepreneur, identified the elements to form a small business and strategies for monitoring self-employment. The issue of employment was then addressed by colleagues who coordinate the program "Living the Integration," the Ministry of Labor and the job recruitment agency, Search. Some of the contents studied were labor rights and duties of refugees and identification of employable skills, among others.

BAC San José facilitated a workshop to introduce savings and personal finance, which includes essential themes in order to create a family budget, savings and debt management and tools for monitoring budgets. Additionally, the organization "Coaching Life" gave a presentation on the coaching process and their application as a tool for self-improvement. Finally, the training ended with a presentation and introduction to livelihoods in accordance with the strategy of UNHCR. Graduation Model topics were explored in depth and the Partners discussed how livelihoods would be carried out for the participants as well as how to utilize different instruments for project implementation such as questionnaires and Plan of Life.

Livelihoods have been an essential component of UNHCR's operation in Costa Rica, not only because it is through these that refugees and asylum-seekers can seek the possibility of having an income-generating activity, but also people achieve better living conditions in the country, integrate more effectively into Costa Rican life, and contribute to the country's development.

## Graduation Model is officially presented to the beneficiaries of 2015.



On May 14th, the pilot project the "Graduation Model" was officially launched on the premises of the National Cultural Center (CENAC). Around 200 people attended including the participants, their families, staff of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Association of Consultants and Advisors (ACAI) as well as the House of Rights from the Municipality of Desamparados. The event was attended by the Vice-President of the Republic of Costa Rica, Ana Helena Chacon, and representatives of other institutions such as the Municipality of Desamparados, the Business Association for Development (AED), Women Foundation, Joint Institute for Social Aid (IMAS), the National Program of Support to Micro and Small Enterprises (PRONAMYPE), the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) and the Directorate General of Immigration (DGME).

The main table was composed of Gloria Maklouf, Director of ACAI, Mauren Fallas, Mayor of the Municipality of Desamparados, Elisa Carlaccini, Durable Solutions Officer and Ana Helena Chacon, Vice President of the Republic. The activity began with welcoming and encouragement speeches given by the members of the main table. Afterwards, a video explaining to the participants in what the graduation model and its implications was projected. Also, the folkloric dance group from the municipality of Desamparados performed and finally the event concluded with the presentation of two successful experiences of 2014 participants.





During the activity, the beneficiaries and their families had the opportunity to meet other families and participants. In addition they were given different materials which will be useful during the process.

In order to implement the Graduation Model, UNHCR works closely with its main implementing partner, the NGO ACAI, and the House of Rights of the Municipality of Desamparados for national candidates. The project was incorporated into the National Development Plan 2015-2018, which has counted with the support of various public institutions and the possible inclusion of refugees into the national public social security programs and poverty reduction, thus ensuring long term sustainability. It should be noted that, dialogues with the government are being carried out, specifically with the Vice President of the Republic, which is committed to support UNHCR in its mission and has expressed the possibility of providing the conditions so that refugees can access to the programs of poverty reduction established by the government.



Boletín N°4  
Modelo de Graduación Costa Rica  
Junio 2015



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