

PATHWAYS OF HOPE:

Findings and recommendations on complementing food assistance and livelihoods for vulnerable populations in Colombia



A mixed-methods study on humanitarian assistance pathways

October 2025

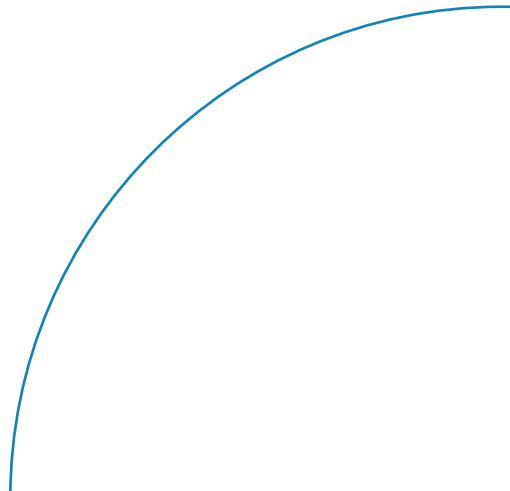
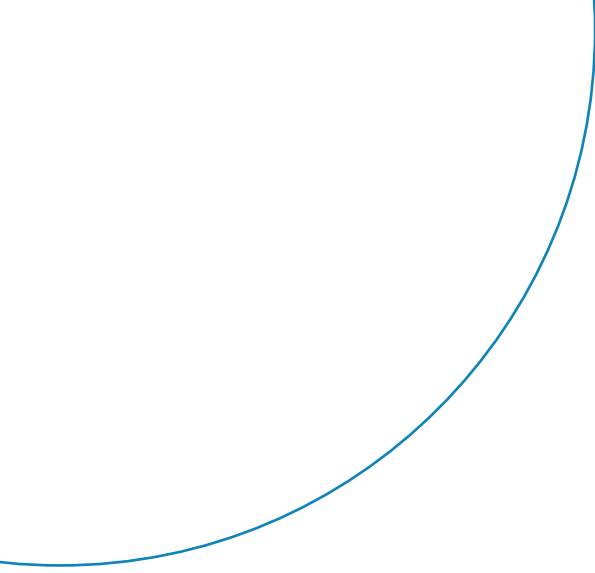


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Executive Summary

VenEsperanza is a humanitarian consortium funded by the United States Government, that provides food assistance and livelihood alternatives in Colombia. The intervention includes six months of emergency food assistance and the option to choose one or more livelihood pathways among employability training, entrepreneurship, and savings groups. Between 2024 and 2025, a study was carried out to analyze the financial and social outcomes of its implementation pathways using a mixed-methods approach, for which 1,060 surveys were administered, and 24 interviews were conducted with program participants.

The results of this research show that complementing food assistance with at least one of VenEsperanza's livelihood pathways is associated with improvements in food security, financial stability, integration, and social well-being. The most notable progress was observed among those who participated in mixed pathways, especially in the combination of entrepreneurship and savings groups, where business growth, group sustainability, and participation in household financial management were strengthened.

The study also confirms that the financial habits acquired are maintained after participants who completed VenEsperanza's livelihood pathways. Those who participated in the entrepreneurship pathway continue to invest in their businesses, while participants in savings groups allocate a larger share of their income to savings and reduce expenses.

These learnings are passed on to other family members, with a potential intergenerational effect on financial behavior. In the social sphere, female participants report a greater role in household decision-making, with more marked results in mixed pathways.

Relevant gender differences were also identified: although income increased for all participants, growth was faster for women than for men, highlighting the importance of continuing to deepen the differentiated results of this type of intervention.

The report concludes with strategic recommendations for programs that combine food assistance and livelihoods, such as: i) consolidating mixed pathways as a central strategy of the implementation model, ii) contributing to post-program sustainability of community networks, iii) incorporating practical training on migration regularization into the employability training pathway, iv) involving children and families in training spaces to enhance intergenerational outcomes, and v) continuing to strengthen frontline human talent, thereby contributing positively to participants' emotional and social well-being.

I. Introduction

This report comprises four main sections. The Introduction presents the program background and describes the research design used for the analysis. The Results section presents the main financial, social, and emotional findings, with emphasis on the different livelihood pathways. Subsequently, the Recommendations section provides guidance applicable to VenEsperanza and to other programs that combine food assistance with livelihoods in humanitarian emergency contexts. Finally, Reflections are included on possible new lines of research that orient future actions and the potential replicability of the approach

1. Background

1.1. The VenEsperanza Consortium

VenEsperanza is a humanitarian consortium funded by the United States Government and led by Mercy Corps, in alliance with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Fundación Halü, and Save the Children. The program began in 2019 as a response to the Venezuelan migration crisis and to the needs of the returning Colombian population and host communities. Its current model integrates food assistance with three economic recovery pathways: entrepreneurship, savings, and employability training, with the purpose of facilitating families' transition from emergency toward more stable economic and social integration in Colombia.

VenEsperanza is currently implemented in Antioquia and Bolívar under Mercy Corps operations, in La Guajira through Save the Children, and in Norte de Santander through the International Rescue Committee and Fundación Halü. Initially, the program

focused exclusively on multipurpose assistance. Starting in its second phase, it incorporated livelihood strategies into the assistance, and it is currently advancing in its third phase of implementation, consolidating learnings and expanding its results. In previous phases, VenEsperanza was also implemented in the departments of Arauca, Santander, Valle del Cauca, Cundinamarca, Cesar, and Atlántico, also counting on the participation of partner organization World Vision in program implementation.

Between January 2023 and September 2025, VenEsperanza provided food assistance to 35,114 households and accompanied 7,295 households with livelihood programs. Of the latter, 3,520 participated in savings groups, 1,412 in the entrepreneurship pathway with seed capital, and 2,363 combined both modalities (savings and entrepreneurship) with food assistance. Most of the participants are women.

1.2. Livelihood pathways offer alternatives tailored to the needs of each household

- **Savings groups:** small collectives of 5 to 15 people who save jointly during ten-week cycles, establishing their own rules for amount, frequency, and use of resources, with the possibility of granting internal loans.
- **Entrepreneurship:** eight weeks of training in business planning, budgeting, marketing, and business presentation, and those who complete a viable proposal access seed capital to boost their business.

- **Employability training:** workshops on the labor market, resume preparation, development and strengthening of skills, and, when possible, connections to job fairs or placement processes.

Initially, those who opted to take more than one pathway had to do so sequentially. Over time, the model evolved toward simultaneous mixed pathways, especially the combination of savings and entrepreneurship in joint sessions. Currently, most participants begin their livelihood pathway after the first month of receiving food assistance.

2. Methodological Design of the Study

This exploratory study used a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design that combined the reach of quantitative data with the depth of qualitative analysis. The main objective was to analyze the financial, social, and relational outcomes of participants in VenEsperanza's different livelihood pathways, whether in a single (individual) pathway or a combination of pathways. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Identify observable economic and social well-being outcomes in the different combinations of pathways.
- Explore the factors that facilitate or limit the sustainability of these outcomes.
- Propose adaptations and improvements to optimize the livelihood pathways and their results.

In the quantitative phase, 1,060 telephone surveys were conducted with participants who completed VenEsperanza's livelihood pathways from the savings, entrepreneurship, and employability training pathways in September 2024. The study drew on VenEsperanza's administrative records and used a sampling design stratified by pathways and representative territories for the study participants. Balanced quotas were established to cover the different combinations

of livelihoods¹(Antioquia, Bolívar, La Guajira, and Norte de Santander). This design made it possible to identify comparable trends between pathways and regions, ensuring robust inputs for analysis.

The qualitative phase, based on the survey findings, consisted of 24 in-depth interviews (six per region) with participants strategically selected to reflect the diversity of experiences by combination of pathways, gender, and territory. This phase made it possible to explore the personal trajectories behind the quantitative results, identify factors that drive, or limit observed changes, and understand how participants apply in daily life the learnings acquired in VenEsperanza. It also provided testimonies about the influence of the pathways on family and community dynamics and emotional well-being, offering a more comprehensive view that complements the figures and reveals transformations that quantitative data cannot capture.

Integration of both phases was carried out through a process of triangulation of data and sources that made it possible to contrast and enrich the findings obtained in the survey with interview narratives. This methodological strategy ensured a holistic analysis capable of capturing both general trends and the particular experiences of participants. In addition, the results were reviewed and validated by a multidisciplinary team of professionals with experience in information analysis, humanitarian assistance, and livelihoods, who also participated actively in field data collection. This collaborative approach not only reinforced the soundness of the findings, but also facilitated identification of practical, contextualized recommendations to improve the design and implementation of programs that combine food assistance and livelihoods in migration contexts.

¹ This includes individual pathways (Savings groups, entrepreneurship, and employability training) and the combinations that may occur among them, which in the document are referred to as mixed pathways: Savings groups + entrepreneurship, Savings groups + employability training, employability training + entrepreneurship.

For more information on the methodological design of the research, consult [the methodological report here](#).



II. Research Findings

This section analyzes the financial and social outcomes derived from participation in one or more livelihood pathways, as well as the most significant outcomes of each pathway.

1. General Research Findings

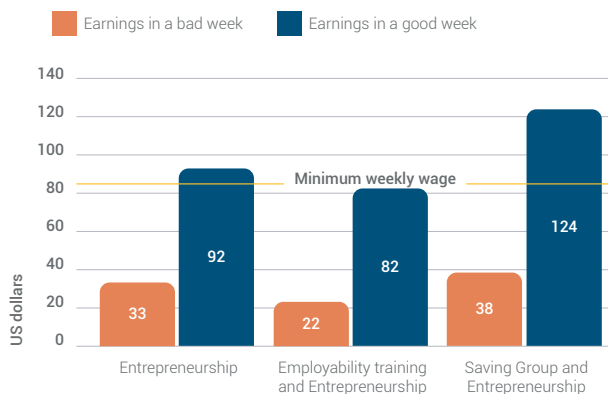
1.1. Increase in income, financial adaptation, and a savings culture

Participation in VenEsperanza generated substantial improvements in the economic situation of households, increasing income and reducing vulnerability.

In terms of economic perception, 84% of participants in the employability training pathway, 89% in savings groups, and 90% in entrepreneurship reported improvements in their financial situation. In mixed pathways, this benefit was even greater, reaching 91%. Likewise, while 13% of participants who completed VenEsperanza's livelihood pathways from individual pathways reported being unable to cover basic needs, in mixed pathways this proportion fell to 7%. Furthermore, as shown in Graphic 1, those who participated in Savings + Entrepreneurship achieved weekly income of up to USD \$124, exceeding the legal minimum weekly wage in Colombia² and exceeding the income of those who participated only in the entrepreneurship pathway and in the mixed employability training and entrepreneurship pathway. This finding shows the potential of mixed pathways to improve the financial situation of the Venezuelan migrant population in the country.

² The current legal minimum monthly wage in Colombia is USD 359 (COP 1,423,500), therefore the legal weekly minimum wage is equivalent to **USD 83.4**.

Weekly profit from entrepreneurship



Graphic 1. Weekly profit from entrepreneurship

Source: Authors' analysis. 2025.

In addition to increasing income, the program strengthened participants' capacity to face unforeseen events (medical expenses, repairs to the business, support for a family member, among others), expanding financial security in the face of emergencies and basic needs and thus reducing vulnerability to crisis situations. A sample of this is that 48% of study participants reported having resources to cover an emergency, and 73% said they can finance their household's economic needs. A father participating in the program in Bolívar **summarized how habits learned in the program allowed him to respond to a medical emergency:** "My child was hospitalized. That day at work I earned USD \$30 and spent USD \$37 on transportation and food for him... I was able to spend USD \$37 because I had USD \$12 saved, so these are things one learns day by day." In contexts with no access to health insurance, these habits become a mechanism to protect life.

Along these lines, VenEsperanza promoted sustained changes in financial and savings habits that not only benefit participants but also extend to their families and contribute to building a long-term economic culture. A mother in Antioquia expressed it this way: *“At home I have a little tin where I put some money aside, and each of my children has a little jar so they can save.”* Testimonials like this show how financial education not only strengthens the individual but also plants a savings culture across the family. Today, 97% of participants feel confident in their ability to save, and 82% remain optimistic about their financial future.

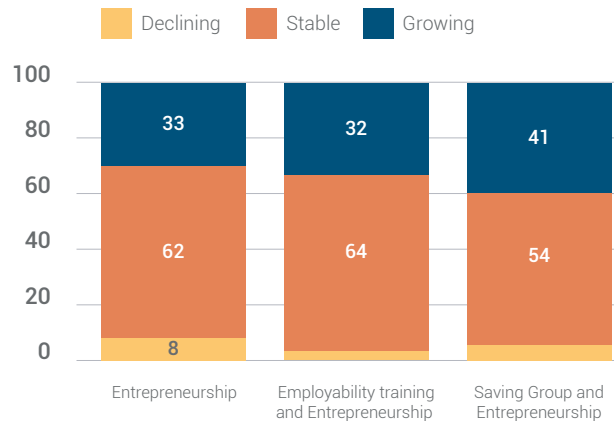
The program also promoted a virtuous cycle between saving and investing among participants who took

both pathways. 75% of entrepreneurs who participated in savings groups used part of their savings to boost their businesses. Meanwhile, 52% invested part of the profits generated by their entrepreneurship in savings groups, thereby increasing their savings capacity.

This was also reflected in the sustainability of the ventures, given that, as shown in Graphic 2, 41% of the businesses of people on the mixed savings and entrepreneurship pathway reported being in expansion, which is 11 points above the entrepreneurship developed in the individual pathway. In addition, 90% of those who combined these two modalities reported higher profits than the other groups.



Status of entrepreneurship (%)



Graphic 2. Status of entrepreneurship by participant pathway (%)

Source: Authors' analysis. 2025.

In summary, for those who participated in mixed pathways, VenEsperanza generated an increase in income and the adoption of sustainable financial practices, especially for those who participate in the savings groups and entrepreneurship pathway, and it also promoted a transformation in patterns of financial resource use at the family level. This process strengthened households' planning and forecasting capacities, installing a strategic vision for facing scenarios of uncertainty and adversity, and generated faster growth in participants' entrepreneurship and savings capacity.

1.2. Trust, family, and community as other human capital of VenEsperanza

Regarding social outcomes, VenEsperanza transformed how participants relate to their communities, their families, and themselves. Building trust, expanding networks, and strengthening self-esteem emerge as pillars of the program's social outcomes.

94% of participants stated that VenEsperanza helped them integrate socially. Although the employability training pathway, due to its shorter duration, reached 87% integration and 65% network expansion, the savings and entrepreneurship pathways (individual or mixed) far exceeded those figures: more than 83% of participants

reported having expanded their networks and more than 92% said they had made new friendships.

These ties were not limited to the program space, as many were consolidated over time, becoming emotional support and shared economic opportunities. One participant in La Guajira explained it this way: *"The savings group is no longer active, but we remained as a group, like a family, we talk, we write to each other. We formed a bond of friendship that I never thought we would reach. I was even the godfather of a child of someone from the savings group."*

In the family sphere, VenEsperanza generated positive transformations in couple dynamics and in household decision-making. **64% of participants consider that since joining VenEsperanza their relationship with their partner has improved**, and 62% stated that they now play a more active role in managing family finances. For others, what they learned marked a turning point: *"VenEsperanza taught us that to have a healthy economy we need good communication every day. We have to sit down and see how we are doing... That is how I apply it. My husband and I changed a lot in that regard,"* reported a participant from Norte de Santander.

This strengthening of community and family relationships was accompanied by a significant influence on emotional well-being, as shown in Graphic 3, where 99% of participants stated they improved their motivation to achieve personal goals, more than 97% strengthened their self-esteem and confidence, and 93% increased their ability to manage stress and anxiety. These results show that VenEsperanza not only improves households' financial conditions, but also contributes to emotional well-being, fosters empowerment, and creates an enabling environment for planning for the future.

In summary, the findings of this study show that complementing humanitarian assistance with engagement in livelihood strategies and close support not only contributes to income generation, but also strengthens community support networks, consolidates family preparedness for adversity, and promotes comprehensive well-being that encompasses socio-economic and emotional health dimensions.

Participants in VenEsperanza showed improvements in well-being across several dimensions, as follows:

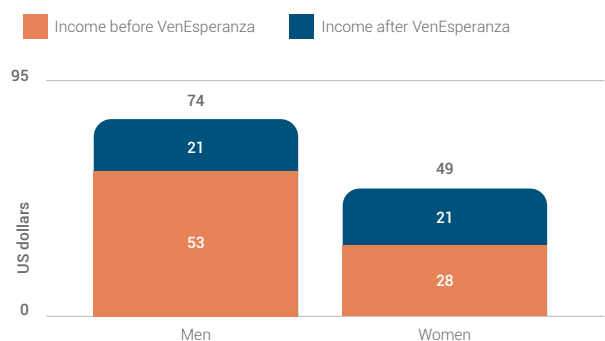


Graphic 3. Survey results for the question "VenEsperanza helped me to..." **Source:** Authors' analysis. 2025.

1.3. Women who transform income into autonomy and leadership

About 80% of VenEsperanza participants are migrant women who face high levels of vulnerability and food insecurity. Some unexpected results of this research show that they lead the program's economic and social progress. Although the increase in income after participating in VenEsperanza is USD \$21 for both men and women, this increase represents a greater percentage change for women. As shown in Graphic 4, men's initial income is higher and the resulting increase is 40%, while for women the increase is 75% relative to their initial income. Although women's income remains lower in absolute

Variation in weekly income of VenEsperanza participants



Graphic 4. Variation in weekly income of VenEsperanza participants **Source:** Authors' analysis. 2025.

terms, USD 49 per week versus USD \$74 for men, the rate of growth is significantly higher.

Furthermore, this result transcends the economic sphere, **as women report greater decision-making capacity in their households and reduced dependence on unequal or violent relationships.** As one participant in Bolívar expressed: *"I was able to see that a woman who has economic tools and the resources to say, 'I have' can also say 'I do not allow'. That fills me with satisfaction."* The change in income, together with decision-making capacity in the home, reflects a substantive change in women's financial autonomy.

In short, women are not only moving toward reducing income gaps but are also strengthening their role as protagonists of the financial and social well-being of their families, creating enabling conditions for putting down roots and integrating into their communities.

2. Findings by livelihood pathway

2.1. Entrepreneurship

The VenEsperanza entrepreneurship pathway provides participants with business management tools, and only those who complete the pathway can access seed capital, thus ensuring that businesses start on a solid foundation. **The results show that this strategy has been effective, as 75% of those who took this pathway managed to keep their businesses active at the time of the study.** Likewise, the experience of saving and undertaking together reinforced business stability, and most businesses were in consolidation or growth at the time of measurement, as shown in Graphic 2.

Although weekly earnings vary—as shown in Graphic 1, from weeks with income well below the minimum wage to weeks that exceed it—the data show that businesses in mixed pathways achieve significantly higher weekly income levels, that is, USD 124 compared to USD 92 in the entrepreneurship

pathway, approaching levels above the weekly minimum wage in Colombia.

Beyond the figures, the testimonies reveal positive changes in beneficiaries' confidence in their entrepreneurial skills. As one participant from La Guajira expressed: *"I can now handle the information. I know how, I already have my customers, and I am not shy about offering my services because I know it is something I do with a lot of dedication and that turns out very well."* Another participant in Antioquia highlighted how diversification was key: *"Previously, I focused on a single activity. If it did not work, I became stressed. Now, thanks to what I learned, I have several alternatives, and I do not depend on a single source of income."*

These results confirm that the entrepreneurship pathway, especially when combined with savings, not only boosts business viability but also strengthens the autonomy of migrant and host families.

2.2. Savings groups

VenEsperanza's savings groups offered participants much more than a shared cash box. They were spaces for financial learning, trust building, and community leadership. During their operation, they allowed families to save collectively, access small loans, and reinforce the discipline of saving as a daily practice.

After graduation, the sustainability of the groups faced challenges. Only between 9% and 12% continued active—depending on the pathway—operating on average two to three additional months. This low continuity is explained mainly by participant mobility, geographic distance between members, lack of resources to cover transportation costs, absence of savings kits (such as a box and register), and the perception that the group can only function with program accompaniment. However, although the collective structure weakened, the learnings remained: **88% of participants in savings and in savings combined with employability training, and 79% in**

savings and entrepreneurship, expressed satisfaction with what they managed to save, and almost all reported feeling more confident in their capacity to continue saving on their own. As one participant from Antioquia expressed: *"In VenEsperanza they taught us about the petty cash box. We always have something for emergencies, and we continue to apply that."*

Likewise, it is important to mention the benefits and challenges of sustaining community practice. A participant from Antioquia stated: *"I proposed it—does anyone want to continue? But when we left, the same commitment was no longer there. In the end, only two of us continued saving together."* This shows that, although the community model may fade after

accompaniment ends, it leaves individual capacities that strengthen households' financial adaptation.

In summary, although sustainability of savings groups as formal groups is limited, learning in financial habits and the social bonds generated prove that they are a seed of change, capable of multiplying both in household economies and in the strengthening of community networks.

2.3. Employability training

The employability training pathway at VenEsperanza offered participants practical tools for navigating the labor market: resume development, interview prepara-



ration, soft-skills development, and, in some cases, participation in job fairs or placement processes. However, **the data reveal that, although motivation to enter the formal labor market is high, structural barriers linked to migration status severely restrict access to real opportunities, affecting 73.6% of participants in phases 2 and 3 who do not have regular migration status.**

At the time of the survey, 27% of participants in the mixed employability training and savings pathway, 23% of participants in the employability training pathway, and 14% of participants in the mixed employability training and entrepreneurship pathway reported being employed. Despite low employment rates, those who managed to enter the labor market expressed satisfaction with their jobs. 66% of participants in employability training, 75% in employability training and entrepreneurship, and 79% in employability training and savings said they were satisfied with their employment. These findings show that, although limited, the pathway can generate positive results when access barriers related to migration status are overcome.

The testimonies refer to the importance of the Temporary Protection Permit (PPT, for the Spanish original) as an enabling condition for entering the labor market. A participant from Bolívar explained: *“When you see the barriers and difficulties to finding employment, you decide to lean toward entrepreneurship because it is a quick response to your need. If the barrier were not so great, employability would be an option because who would not want to be employed? And being a professional, for example, not having the permit was the reason I did not join the employability training pathway.”* Another participant summarized it this way: *“VenEsperanza does a good job because they teach us how to write our resume and how to present our work experience, but it is beyond their control that someone is not regularized, which I think is the biggest problem, and that one cannot regularize oneself.”* In summary, the employability training pathway provides transferable capac-

ities and motivation, but its results are conditioned by migration status.

3. Emerging finding

3.1. Human capital

Beyond financial and social outcomes, the research revealed a notable finding: **the VenEsperanza team was perceived as a determining factor in the program's success.** Far from limiting themselves to imparting technical content, the program's facilitators and professionals became trusted references, providing emotional support and close accompaniment at critical moments for participants. The team's empathy, dedication, and professionalism made the difference. A participant from Norte de Santander shared how he regained trust in others: *“Before VenEsperanza, I did not even go out on the street. When the Savings Group started, it helped me trust other people. It helped me reintegrate into society”.* Another, from Antioquia, summarized it this way: *“At VenEsperanza you feel very listened to and valued, because it was not only about going to learn. They motivated us a lot.”*

These testimonies show that this accompaniment went beyond workshops and technical support provided by the team. In Bolívar, a participant recalled how the closeness of a team member supported her amid deep grief: *“I had just lost one of my sons and another had been in an accident, and that staff member from VenEsperanza always followed up, calling me three times. I felt like family because I do not have anyone here.”* These voices show that the human quality of the staff is a driving force that reinforces the technical competencies acquired and allows participants to plan for the future with greater confidence.

This experience shows that livelihood programs depend not only on content, but also on teams capable of generating meaningful connections, trust, and motivation. Under this logic, work teams become a variable that includes not only what is delivered, but who delivers it and how it is delivered.

III. Recommendations



1. Consolidation of the intervention model

Below is a set of cross-cutting recommendations for food assistance and livelihood programs in contexts of migration and vulnerability.

1.1. Scale mixed pathways as the central axis of the model

The research shows that mixed pathways, especially Savings + Entrepreneurship, generate more robust and sustainable outcomes than individual pathways, by simultaneously boosting business growth, financial autonomy, emergency response, and the strengthening of community networks. Testimo-

nials reflect that the experience of saving and undertaking together reinforces motivation, trust, and a sense of community: *“When we saved together and at the same time planned for the business, I felt more supported and more motivated to continue.”*

It is recommended to consolidate mixed pathways as a central strategy of the model, prioritizing their implementation in new cohorts and tailoring them to participant profiles. This implies:

- **Accessibility – Short term:** Continue promoting workshops that are accessible to all participants, including single mothers and fathers who can attend with their children. Additionally, in coordination with other programs or public entities,

provide case-management support to facilitate school enrollment or registration for children and adolescents who are not enrolled.

- **Implementation – Medium term:** Continue forming groups by geographic proximity (same neighborhood, commune, or locality) to strengthen community integration and facilitate the sustainability of savings groups and post-graduation collective activities.
- **Program design – Long term:**
 - Incorporate elements in entrepreneurship modules that reinforce the importance of saving.
 - Integrate mixed pathways as a central policy in livelihoods in contexts of vulnerability, linking them with public and private programs for training, employability training, and access to credit.

Consolidating these strategies not only amplifies household autonomy and preparedness for emergencies but also accelerates socioeconomic integration processes of migrant and vulnerable populations.

1.2. Strengthen livelihood pathways as spaces of integration and dignity

Participants value that livelihood pathways not only improve their economy, but also become spaces for listening, recognition, and dignified treatment. These safe environments foster trust, mutual support, and community integration, generating effects that transcend the time of participation in the program. To enhance this result, it is recommended:

- **Accessibility – Short term:** Enable training spaces for children in some sessions so that families can learn together, promoting the transmission of financial habits to the next generation.
- **Implementation – Medium term:** Invite participants who completed VenEsperanza's livelihood pathways as *program ambassadors* so they can

share experiences and answer questions from their perspective.

- **Strategy – Long term:** Identify early those participants going through acute crises (violence, complex migratory grief, impacts of armed conflict, among others) to offer additional psychosocial accompaniment and ensure safety conditions.

Consolidating these spaces as environments of trust and dignity not only promotes social cohesion and emotional well-being but also turns participants into active agents of support and resilience within their communities.

2. Deepening results by pathway type

2.1. Savings groups

Although most savings groups did not continue functioning after graduation, participants state that the experience left lasting marks on their savings and money-management practices. This indicates that the true value of the pathway lies in its capacity to foster financial habits that endure over time and are transmitted to family and community. To consolidate this legacy, it is recommended:

- **Accessibility – Short term:** Provide personal savings kits at graduation (notebooks, pens, practical guides, savings boxes) to encourage individual practice.
- **Design – Medium term:** Strengthen participants' capacity to replicate what they have learned with their families and close networks, for example through community replication modules, training of trainers, spaces to share learnings with other community or family members, and identification of savings leaders who promote these practices in the community.

- **Strategy – Long term:** Turn financial concepts into memorable, easy-to-remember messages, ensuring that learning transcends the training space.

In this way, savings groups can evolve from a temporary methodology to a sustainable practice that promotes financial habits and community solidarity beyond the program cycle.

2.2. Employability training

The results show that the employability training pathway faces a structural challenge: without regularized migration status, participants do not perceive this pathway as useful and, in many cases, opt for entrepreneurship as an immediate alternative. This limits access to formal employment and reduces opportunities to connect with formal or institutional offers. To strengthen this pathway's outcomes, it is recommended:

- **Design – Medium term:**
 - Include practical modules on migration regulations in Colombia (regularization pathways, documentation, benefits, and limitations), together with expanded case management such as children's schooling. This may imply a longer but more comprehensive pathway.
 - Develop an employability training pathway with differentiated elements for Colombian participants and migrants with work authorization, connecting them directly to formal opportunities in their territories (job banks, partnerships with compensation funds, agreements with SENA, among others).
- **Strategy – Long term:**
 - Promote self-employment and individual services to the community for those seeking autonomous livelihoods but who do not wish to undertake formal entrepreneurship.

- Include a public-policy advocacy component to promote expanded access to migration-regularization mechanisms and labor-inclusion policies by demonstrating the economic integration potential of migrants with regular status.
- Participate in coordination spaces with local and national authorities, generate alliances with the private sector, and incorporate clear figures from the regional labor market, sharing concrete opportunities to manage employability expectations from the outset.

Transforming the employability training pathway into a bridge with actionable tools toward the labor market requires recognizing legal barriers and, at the same time, innovating with differentiated solutions to become an engine of sustainable economic and social integration.

2.3. Entrepreneurship

The entrepreneurship pathway strengthened participants' business confidence but also revealed their desire to continue professionalizing their businesses. To promote continuous improvement of this pathway, it is recommended:

- **Implementation – Short term:** Formalize and energize online communities as practice spaces where entrepreneurs share advice, learnings, and opportunities.
- **Design – Medium term:**
 - Incorporate a module specializing in digital marketing and social media.
 - Establish partnerships with public and private entities that offer training in business management, business roundtables, entrepreneurship fairs, and collaborate with local governments to promote and showcase initiatives at the local level.



- **Strategy – Long term:** Create a second phase of executive training aimed at participants who have sustained their businesses for at least one year, with advanced content in strategy, finance, and scaling. This phase could also include access to a second, smaller capital allocation for expansion of their enterprises.

With this reinforcement, the entrepreneurship pathway not only promotes business creation, but also accompanies participants on the path to growth, innovation, and the consolidation of sustainable enterprises.

3. Human talent and institutional sustainability

3.1. Strengthen staff support and well-being

Human talent: VenEsperanza's success is explained not only by its pathways, but also by the quality and empathy of its team. Investing in their training and well-being is key to sustaining financial, social, and emotional results among participants. To maintain and promote this intangible capital, it is recommended:

- **Implementation – Short term:** Include psychological first-aid training for facilitators so that they adopt a trauma-sensitive approach to accompanying participants in times of crisis.
- **Design – Medium term:** Recognize and strengthen human quality as part of the intervention model by offering spaces for innovation and continuous training to build the team's socio-emotional competencies.
- **Strategy – Long term:** Institutionalize a human-talent development plan in humanitarian programs with incentives and resources so that teams become multipliers of good practices.

3.2. Recognize the human dimension as part of the model

Caring for and strengthening staff not only improves implementation quality, but also enhances trust, motivation, and transformations in participating communities.

IV. Research and learning horizons in the sector

This report identifies new lines of research to strengthen evidence generation for strategic decision-making:

1. **Explore intergenerational effects** to understand how participants' learnings are passed on to children and grandchildren and generate long-term resilience.
2. **Compare the results of livelihood pathways with food assistance** to gauge their added value and strengthen the socioeconomic integration strategy.

3. **Analyze the model's potential for replication in other contexts of vulnerability** (armed conflict, emergencies due to natural disasters, among others) to identify comparative advantages and the adaptations needed in diverse contexts.

Consolidating these lines of research and action will strengthen the evidence, refine the model, and scale a livelihoods approach that contributes sustainably to the integration of migrant and host populations in Colombia and the region, as well as to addressing other vulnerable populations.

VenEsperanza Program

Implemented by the consortium formed by:

International Rescue Committee (IRC) | Fundación Halü | Mercy Corps | Save the Children

Consortium Coordination Team

Diego Prado | **Director**

Juan Camilo Riveros | **Technical Deputy Director**

Camila Jaramillo | **Reporting and Development Manager**

Nicolás Beltrán | **Strategic Partnerships and Advocacy Specialist**

Juan Sebastián Abello | **Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Officer**

Alejandra Vera | **Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist**

Ángela Peñaloza | **Communications and Design Officer**

Katrina Keegan | **External Research and Learning Consultant**

Angélica Ochoa | **External Research and Learning Consultant**

Patrick McCabe | **Research and Learning Intern**

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