

# PICMCA

## PREVENTING IRREGULAR CHILD MIGRATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA

PROJECT FINAL EVALUATION: GUATEMALA, HONDURAS,  
EL SALVADOR, NICARAGUA AND MEXICO (2017 – 2021)



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Front cover image: Ledys Osorto, 19, pictured with her family in Nicaragua. Through her participation in the PICMCA project, she learned about the risks of irregular migration and gained support to start her own local business called Delicias Caf'Arte.

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# ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>CDN</b>	Canadian
<b>CLD</b>	Local Rights Committee
<b>COCOPRE</b>	Community Commission for Violence Prevention
<b>COIPRODEN</b>	Coordinator of Private Institutions for Children, Adolescents, Youth and Their Rights
<b>CONNA</b>	National Council for Children and Adolescents
<b>DINAF</b>	Directorate of Children, Adolescents and Family
<b>FGR</b>	Attorney General's Office
<b>FIAP</b>	Government of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy
<b>GAC</b>	Global Affairs Canada
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>GES</b>	Regional Gender Strategy
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-Governmental Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>ISNA</b>	Salvadoran Institute for the Integral Development of Children and Adolescents
<b>MIFAN</b>	Ministry of the Family
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NTMI</b>	Northern Triangle Human Mobility Information Management Initiative
<b>PGN</b>	Attorney General's Office
<b>PGR</b>	Office of the Attorney General of the Republic
<b>PICMCA</b>	Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America
<b>PNC</b>	National Civil Police
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SIPINNA</b>	National System for the Protection of Children and Adolescents
<b>SISCA</b>	Central American Secretariat for Social Integration
<b>SNDIF</b>	National System for the Integral Development of Families
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The final evaluation report of the Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA, the English acronym, and CONFIO in Spanish) project, completed by ERAK Consultants, measures the scope of the project results.

**Led by Children Believe, the project aimed to improve the well-being of children and youth at risk of irregular migration, and was carried out from 2017 to 2021 in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Mexico.**

The final evaluation was based on primary data from a survey, focus groups and semi-structured interviews in the five countries, as well as secondary data sources. The gender equality approach of the Regional Gender Strategy (GES) and Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) were key frameworks for the evaluation analysis. In spite of COVID-19 restrictions, the evaluation methodology was completed successfully through in-person activities, Zoom video interviews and digital surveys conducted via WhatsApp and email.



Irregular migration is a serious issue affecting Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Mexico, with many young people found migrating unaccompanied. (Photo by Juris Kornets)

The needs that gave rise to the creation and implementation of the PICMCA project were the high levels of irregular migration, particularly of unaccompanied minors and youth, from the Central America and Mexico geographic zone.

The causes that push children to migrate are violence, poverty and family reunification, all of which are related to the elevated levels of social exclusion that the State has generated. Each of the five countries have their own particular context related to migration:

- The northern countries, Mexico and Guatemala, are origin, transit and destination countries;
- The central countries, El Salvador and Honduras, are origin and return countries; and
- The southern-most country, Nicaragua, is both an origin and a transit country for extra-regional migrants.

Within this context, the PICMCA project was designed as a multi-year and multi-country initiative to contribute to the prevention of irregular migration of children and youth, through a strategy that addressed adverse drivers and structural factors in the countries of origin. The drivers and factors include high levels of violence, lack of employment, poor quality education, social exclusion and misinformation/lack of information on the dangers of irregular migration. The project defined three major areas of work in communities at risk of elevated migration rates:

1. Strengthening child protection services and violence prevention programs at the community level;
2. Increasing employment and entrepreneurship skills for the generation of income; and
3. Promoting gender-responsive engagement of youth with local, national and regional institutions.

**Overall, the key findings from the evaluation reveal strong outcome achievements and a high level of beneficiary satisfaction with the project.**

Specifically, in the area of protection, the percentage of children and youth who expressed that they feel safe in their communities in a survey conducted after the project ended was 91 percent, as compared to the baseline of 84 percent and an established goal of 90 percent. For the percentage of children and youth who reported that their lives would be better if they migrated, the project successfully reduced this result from 59 percent in the baseline measurement to 44 percent after the life of the project.

**The first objective of the project sought to improve the use of child protection services, focusing on violence prevention in communities (especially gender-based violence), and integrated the needs and interests of girls, boys, young men and women.**

At the end of the project, the outcomes for the reported use of child protection services surpassed the target. Diverse actors participated in these child-protection efforts and expressed a new-found awareness of the importance of protection to the community.



**A young woman learning about her rights and the risks young people, especially girls, face. The PICMCA project worked with young people, families and the broader community to strengthen child protection and violence prevention. (Photo by Juris Kornets)**

They highly valued the different strategies for preventing school dropouts, support with the strengthening and use of the child protection system, and the opportunity for their participation in general. Additionally, children and youth expressed an increased awareness of their rights and a notable improvement in their current situation related to violence and security at home, in the community and school, in comparison to three to four years ago.

The second objective of the project focused on youth skills development, employability and entrepreneurship. The outcomes were very positive with 43 percent of the youth participants obtaining employment after completing the training courses, compared to 13 percent in the baseline and a 29 percent target. Forty percent of the training participants reported having increased their income in the 12 months prior to the survey being taken and, coming in just under the targets, 78 percent graduated from vocational and technical training programs, and 95 percent gained experience with a potential employer or financial institution to support their entrepreneurial initiatives. The evaluation survey revealed that 80 percent reported having improved their knowledge and job skills, 71 percent felt the methodologies applied were effective and 53 percent agreed that the training courses were useful for getting a job.

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**Although employment efforts were negatively impacted by the pandemic, the participants valued the program for its job preparation and inspiring ideas for business ventures.**

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Youth civic engagement was the third area of work, which involved strengthening the participation and leadership of youth, through a gender-equality approach, to influence decision-making at the national and regional levels. Youth participation increased from 21 percent in the baseline to the target of 45 percent as a result of the project, and 84 percent of youth shared that they felt their opinions were heard and considered in their communities. The project also supported the empowerment of women. Notably, 38 percent of women assumed leadership roles, exceeding the initial target of 27 percent.

Through various courses, forums and workshops, the majority of youth increased their knowledge about the risks of irregular migration. When asked to rate the project's activities and their ability to achieve the objectives established, nine out of ten participants provided positive ratings.

The three areas of work had a total disbursement of CDN \$6,782,091, which was distributed across the five countries and spent over five years. Most of the spending was concentrated in the employability area, with Guatemala being the country with the highest allocation of funds (CDN \$1.1 million) and Nicaragua generating the lowest expenses (CDN \$343,000). The funds were put towards the purchase of training equipment, financing courses and seed capital funds, among other things. The majority of the resources went to workshops in life skills, job skills, entrepreneurship, gender equality, business advice and mentoring to improve the capacity and qualifications of youth seeking employment or establishing their own businesses.

Family reunification, difficult living conditions and experiences of insecurity in countries of origin are significant factors that increase irregular migration for girls and young women in particular, due to their gender. Therefore a gender approach, which contributes to the advancement of equality and female empowerment, was incorporated.

The PICMCA project was viewed positively by 94 percent of participants in promoting actions to prevent or eliminate violence against girls and women.

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**As well, 98 percent believed the project was successful in strengthening confidence and skills to report harassment or sexual violence, and 90 percent believed the project was able to promote the participation of girls and women, as well as increase trust in local protection institutions.**

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Barriers to progress on equality were mentioned as being primarily cultural issues and concrete suggestions were given for improving the work on gender equality. With the

project's emphasis on at-risk children and youth in vulnerable communities, a human rights perspective was also taken into account.

The project experienced several limitations related to external factors, the most significant being COVID-19 and its health and economic consequences. Social and political events in several countries (i.e. elections in Nicaragua and El Salvador), migrant caravans and tropical storms, also required constant adaptation. As well, language barriers and the lack of telephone and internet access affected the project's reach. Nonetheless, with respect to relevance, cost-effectiveness and sustainability, the project resonated highly with participants and staff.

In terms of relevance, the project succeeded in addressing the problems identified in the baseline study. Indicated by the results of the final evaluation survey and the overall opinions of those who participated in the focus groups and interviews, the strategies and activities of the PICMCA project were relevant as they accurately identified the needs and contexts of participants that needed to be addressed to prevent irregular migration.

It was essential for them to strengthen their capacity to

**The most important aspect for the sustainability of the achievements was the participation of local organizations and authorities in each territory.**

support child rights and create opportunities for women and youth's civic participation and leadership, which were weak prior to the project implementation. As well, children and adolescents were made aware of the risks of irregular migration and the alternative options they had in their local communities, such as support with employment and business ventures, civic participation groups, child protection mechanisms, etc.

Upon completion of the PICMCA project, a number of **good practices** were identified. They include:

- Developing activities through inter-institutional coordination;
- Developing campaigns on the risks of irregular migration, and promoting entrepreneurship and

- employment as alternative solutions;
- Adopting digital technology and measures to close the digital gap; and
- Fostering synergies and a collective impact by integrating and collaborating with different sectors and partners in the communities.

The principal **lessons learned** were:

- Irregular migration is a sensitive and relevant issue, and it is essential to identify and meet the needs of the population to mitigate it;
- Developing an approach in collaboration with municipalities and/or local actors is beneficial as they can provide project funding and/or logistical support; and
- Working with partner organizations at the community level is effective and strengthens the overall project.

By comparing the results of the final evaluation with the baseline, it was clear that the PICMCA project was effective in reducing the perception of children and youth that irregular migration leads to a better life. The following key **outcomes** contributed to this achievement:

- Improved the perception of security for children and young people in their school, family and community environments;
- Improved knowledge on the right to be protected from violence against girls and women;
- Increased knowledge about the child rights and

protection systems in municipalities, schools and/or communities along with their benefits;

- Increased women's participation and leadership;
- Increased the participation of young people in youth-focused civic activities, which helped improve the well-being of young people and address the causes of irregular migration;
- Improved the employability skills of young women and men;
- Improved income-generating mechanisms by strengthening enterprises and providing seed capital; and
- In all intervention areas, we successfully fostered the predominant participation of girls and women in the different activities of the project.

The pandemic will have long-term economic and social consequences, which will inevitably have an impact on young people. The PICMCA project has proven to be valuable and worth replicating. To contribute to the sustainability of the project outcomes, it is **recommended** that actions pursue the following:

- Strengthening child protection networks;
- Supporting the achievement of employability and youth entrepreneurship;
- Expanding coverage to municipalities with vulnerable youth through the application of the PICMCA project's methodologies and mechanisms, and the involvement of local actors who were involved in the project; and
- Promoting political advocacy for young people.



A young woman at home smiling while looking out her window. Photo by Juris Kornets.

# INTRODUCTION

This is the **Final Evaluation Report** of the Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA, in English, and CONFIO in Spanish) project, led by Children Believe. The evaluation, completed by ERAK Consultants and based on Global Affairs Canada's evaluation methodology, aims to identify the results of the PICMCA project, which sought to improve the well-being of children and youth in Central America and Mexico at risk of irregular migration.

As the project was implemented in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Mexico from 2017 to 2021, the report consolidates the strategies, methods and results obtained across the different national contexts.

**The analysis includes the direct contributions the project made to three specific areas of focus: strengthening child protection and violence prevention, increasing employment and entrepreneurship skills, and promoting women's and youth's civic engagement and leadership.**

A human rights lens was incorporated when assessing the work and results of the project. For each area of work, the final evaluation reports on and measures the results, comparing the scope of the achievements to the expected outcomes. Incorporating a gender analysis, the report examines the three areas of the PICMCA project and their outcomes based on key areas of action identified in the Government of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP). These action areas include human dignity and education, growth, inclusive governance and, particularly, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The evaluation was performed over nine weeks, from July to September 2021. The quantitative and qualitative

techniques carried out are described below:

## 1. Primary data sources:

A. *Survey*: A random sampling was identified from the total beneficiaries of the project<sup>1</sup> and four questionnaires were used. The sample size was 1,695 youth who were segmented by gender and country (30.6 percent male, 69.1 percent female and 0.4 percent undetermined). Seventy-three percent of the youth interviewed were in the age range of 18 to 29.

B. *Focus groups*: The qualitative phase of the evaluation was based on 18 focus groups with a total of 120 participants of varying age and gender. The groups were interviewed to gather their perceptions, knowledge, assessments, opinions and individual experiences. They were conducted in-person or online via Zoom video calls and the data was processed using the statistical software NVIVO12.

C. *Semi-structured interviews*: In consultation with each country's staff, 78 key actors, such as civil servants, community leaders, teachers and parents, were selected and questions were identified for individual interviews.

## 2. Secondary data sources: An in-depth review of supporting documents from the project, such as technical and administrative records, was carried out.

To ensure the reliability and quality of the data from these sources, the evaluation staff hired a team in each targeted country made up of a lead consultant, a coordinator and a team of pollsters. Pollsters were in charge of field data collection. Mobile devices and the *SurveyToGo* platform<sup>2</sup> were applied and generated links for virtual face-to-face interviews through a website.

The evaluation was carried out through the gender-equality approach of the Regional Gender Strategy (GES) and Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), which were important references for the analysis of the project. These approaches were considered in all stages of the evaluation,

<sup>1</sup> The sample was calculated from the total of direct beneficiaries per country with a margin of error of 5 percent and a confidence interval of 95 percent, as defined in the Evaluation Plan established prior to the data collection process.

<sup>2</sup> Survey ToGo is a system designed for the application of surveys through mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets.

including the design, data collection and analysis.

A results framework established at the onset of the project was the central measure for the evaluation. The framework identified four outcomes, one final and three intermediate, and related indicators, as described below:

- **Outcome 1000:** Improved the well-being of children and youth at risk of irregular migration in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Mexico.
  - **Indicator 1000.1** – Percentage of girls, boys and young women and men who reported feeling safe in their communities.
  - **Indicator 1000.2** – Percentage of girls, boys and young women and men who reported that their lives would be better if they migrated.
- **Intermediate Outcome 1100:** Improved use of gender-responsive child protection services and violence prevention programs in the community, that integrated the specific needs and interests of children and youth.
  - **Indicator 1100.1** – Percentage of girls, boys and young women and men who used child protection services and reported that they were responsive to their specific needs.
  - **Indicator 1100.2** – Percentage of girls, boys and young women and men who reported violence (gender-based and other) in their homes and communities.
- **Intermediate Outcome 1200:** Improved employment skills and experiences for at-risk young women and men to participate, on equal terms, in sustainable income-generating activities.
  - **Indicator 1200.1** – Percentage of young women and men who participated in job readiness programs that were gender-responsive and secured employment (including entrepreneurial ventures) within 12 months of participating in the training.
  - **Indicator 1200.2** – Percentage of training participants who reported an increase in earnings over the last 12 months.
  - **Indicator 1200.3** – Percentage of young women and men who reported improved

livelihood opportunities as a result of the training provided by the project.

- **Intermediate Outcome 1300:** Improved gender-responsive leadership of young women and men, on equal terms, to inform and influence regional and national decision-makers and the general public on how to address irregular child migration and the specific risks related to gender inequalities.
  - **Indicator 1300.1** – Percentage increase in young women and men who, after leadership skills training, increased their participation in civic activities related to youth well-being and protection through organizations at local, national and/or regional levels.
  - **Indicator 1300.2** – Percentage of forum presentations led by young women and men.
  - **Indicator 1300.3** – Verifiable responses from local, national or regional decision-makers to youth reports (i.e. policy measures adopted, public statements made, etc.).

The principal limitation of the evaluation was the COVID-19 pandemic as it restricted face-to-face data collection in many cases. The initial plan involved the work teams from ERAK Consultant's central office being present in the five countries to provide support and follow-up, but this was prohibited by mobility restrictions. As a result, the work teams could only carry out virtual follow-ups on the activities. To support the collection of data in situations where gathering information face-to-face was not possible, surveys were sent via WhatsApp or email and in the case of interviews, they were conducted via Zoom video calls.

This evaluation report provides the background and context for the project in section two, detailing the development of its framework from social and economic perspectives. Section three presents a full analysis of the indicators and a description of the key findings for each of the three areas of focus, as well as from a human rights and gender-analysis perspective. It also addresses the limitations, relevance, cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the project. The final section summarizes the conclusions and recommendations based on the evaluation, and identifies good practices and key learnings.

# BACKGROUND

## Context of irregular child and youth migration

### The regional context

Irregular migration from Central America and Mexico has been constant in recent decades, even though immigration controls and U.S. policies to reduce it have intensified. The phenomenon of irregular migration remains one of the greatest challenges for the countries of this region.

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**U.S. Customs and Border Protection estimated that in 2014, more than 68,000 unaccompanied children from Central America arrived at the U.S.-Mexico border. In 2015, the number dropped to 40,000, but rose again in 2016 to more than 59,000.**

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According to data from the Migration Policy Unit of the Mexican Ministry of the Interior, in 2017, immigration authorities detected 18,300 foreign children in the Mexican territory from countries in the Northern Triangle of Central America: Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Of these children, 16,162 were returned to their countries of origin.<sup>3</sup>

Representatives from various human rights institutions as well as civil society and child and youth networks agree that violence is a significant reason for irregular migration. The causes that give way to violence are the lack of comprehensive protection by the State, organized crime, an absence of values, a lack of opportunities and decent employment, addictions, corruption, family disintegration, impunity and social exclusion. Additionally, common causes that motivate children to migrate are poverty, lack

of schooling and family reunification, all related to the elevated levels of social exclusion that the State itself has generated.<sup>4</sup>



Irregular migration is dangerous, but many children and youth in Central America and Mexico choose to migrate in search of better opportunities. Photo by Juris Kornets.

### The country context

**Mexico** is a country of origin (emigration), transit and destination (immigration) for migrants. Data shows that those who migrated during 2014 to 2017 from Mexico were primarily youth, and 25 percent of recent Mexican immigrants were children and youth under the age of 20.<sup>5</sup> Mexican migrants also show low levels of formal schooling.

Similar to Mexico, **Guatemala** is not only a country of origin, but also a country of transit and destination. According to data from the Northern Triangle Human Mobility Information Management Initiative (NTMI), most returnees to Guatemala reported that their main reason for migrating was the lack of employment (65 percent),

<sup>4</sup> Pastoral of Human Mobility - Catholic Relief Services. (2016).

<sup>5</sup> Canales and Rojas. (2018). Overview of international migration in Mexico and Central America. ECLAC.

<sup>6</sup> International Organization for Migration. (2021). Northern Triangle Human Mobility Information Management Initiative.

family reunification (15 percent) and low opportunities for education in their country (nine percent).<sup>6</sup>

Based on available statistical information from the NTMI, **El Salvador** is an important country of migrant origin and return. The magnitude of the problem of irregular migration in this country is apparent in the deportation data. According to the NTMI, in 2020, there were 10,840 persons deported, of which 9,701 were adults (83 percent men and 17 percent women), and 1,139 were children (58 percent boys and 42 percent girls).<sup>7</sup> Data from 2018 to 2021 shows that the most important reasons for migrating in the case of children were economic factors (50 percent), family reunification (27 percent) and insecurity (25 percent).

In **Honduras**, the number of deportees in 2019 increased compared to previous years. There were 109,185 returnees reported (68,583 men, 16,564 women, 14,177 boys and 9,861 girls).<sup>8</sup> Due to the mobility restrictions caused by the pandemic, there was a decrease in returns in 2020. However, it is important to note that even the threat of COVID-19 infection, it has not stopped migrants from leaving Honduras and the greater region.

Finally, **Nicaragua** is a country of origin for the migrant population and, to a lesser extent, a destination country according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Given its geographic location, Nicaragua is characterized as a transit country for extra-regional migrants. In Nicaragua, two migratory flows prevail, south-north and south-south; the latter stands out for the increasing trend of intraregional flows (temporary and permanent). It is of value to mention that there are cultural, historic, economic, and social relations and dynamics on either side of Nicaragua's borders with Honduras and Costa Rica that are among the key factors for intraregional and cross-border migration in Nicaragua. Another important factor for migration in the country is the demand for labour in El Salvador and wage differentials.

## PICMCA project design

Under the leadership of Children Believe and in partnership with ChildFund International and EDUCO (all members of the ChildFund Alliance), a joint effort was developed

to contribute to the prevention of irregular migration of children and youth in five strategic countries: Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Mexico.

The PICMCA project was a multi-year, multi-country initiative implemented from March 2017 to September 2021 (contract closed in December 2021) and with financial support from the Government of Canada (CDN \$12.6 million), through Global Affairs Canada (GAC).

The initiative contributes to reaching Goal 2 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which is to: "Mitigate the adverse drivers and structural factors that hinder people from building and maintaining sustainable livelihoods in their countries of origin, and so compel them to seek a future elsewhere."<sup>9</sup> The project approach was based on addressing the underlying causes identified in the baseline study, which pointed to high levels of violence and insecurity, lack of employment, poverty, lack of schooling, social exclusion and misinformation on the dangers of irregular migration.

**The three overarching areas for expected results from the project were:**

- 1. The strengthening of gender-responsive child protection services and violence prevention programs at a community level, which integrates the specific needs and interests of children and young women and men;**
- 2. An increase in employment and entrepreneurial skills and experiences for at-risk young women and men to participate, on equal terms, in attaining sustainable income-generating activities; and**
- 3. An improvement in gender-responsive and equal leadership from young women and men to engage in civic activity, inform and influence regional and national decision-makers along with the general public on how to address irregular child migration and the specific risks faced by children due to gender inequalities.**

To reach these expectations, the project pursued strategies that supported child protection services and schools, promoted work readiness and employment opportunities,

<sup>7</sup> International Organization for Migration. (2021). Northern Triangle Human Mobility Information Management Initiative.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> United Nations. (2018). Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

and facilitated the engagement of youth with local, national and regional institutions.

The target was to reach an estimated 61,000 direct and 144,000 indirect beneficiaries from the target group of youth and children at risk of unaccompanied migration to the United States, and a secondary group of children migrating regionally and from rural areas in their own country.

While the official name for the project is PICMCA, it is referred to in Spanish as CONFIO, which is not an acronym but a word that conveys the aspiration of the project – that youth and children will be able to affirm their trust and confidence (“CONFIO” in Spanish) in their communities, their countries and themselves.

The selection of communities was made considering elevated levels of poverty, lack of services and opportunities, and high rates of migrants, particularly to the United States. The data showed that migration in the selected communities is a common way of life, both in its legal and irregular forms, with a culture that reinforces the perception of the convenience and supposed benefits of migration.

**PICMCA was designed in consultation with target populations, community leaders, relevant government authorities and local partners ensuring ownership and compliance with government policies, and prioritizing the needs of children and youth.**

The project applied participatory and gender-sensitive approaches, seeking to engage children and youth as “agents of change” throughout its lifespan, and to create a broad base of support for the inclusion and engagement of young people in governmental and non-governmental institutions.

Through a commitment from the beneficiary communities, PICMCA sought to strengthen local governance structures, creating in each locality a shared process to improve the well-being of children and youth, and thereby prevent irregular migration. As such, the project was based on

the following key policies and international human rights treaties:

**Convention on the Rights of the Child:** Adopted in 1989, the Convention recognizes that all children and adolescents have the right to survival, development and protection from harm.

**The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:** Adopted in 2015 by the United Nations (UN) Member States, 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were identified as an urgent call to action for all countries in order to attain peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. Preventing and managing irregular migration contributes to achieving positive development outcomes identified in the SDGs.

**Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration:**

A UN global agreement on a common approach to better manage migration, which was finalized in 2018. It is comprised of 23 objectives, with Objective 2 being particularly relevant to the PICMCA project: “minimize the adverse and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin.”

**Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy:**

Established by the Government of Canada, the policy seeks to eradicate poverty and build a more peaceful, inclusive and prosperous world through a focus on addressing gender inequality. It is based on six action areas, four of which the PICMCA project incorporated in its work, as identified below.

- *Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls:* To reduce sexual and gender-based violence (GBV), strengthen women’s organizations and movements that promote women’s rights, improve the capacity of governments to provide services to women and girls, and improve gender analysis.
- *Human dignity:* Supporting access to quality education, particularly for women and girls.
- *Equitable (economic) growth:* Increasing women’s access to economic opportunities and resources, helping women and girls achieve the economic independence they need to take control of their lives.
- *Inclusive governance:* Encouraging greater participation from women and girls in decision-making.

# KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This section presents a descriptive analysis of the achievements made towards the PICMCA project's goals. The project's results framework was used to measure the achievements and analyze outcomes from the processes and activities implemented. Key findings were also identified and shared here. The analysis was based on a comparison of final and intermediate indicators, and data from participant surveys carried out as part of the final evaluation. The final evaluation survey was given to a sample group of young people who participated in the project, with 73 percent of respondents being between the ages of 18 and 29 years (1,231 people).

## Overall project outcome achieved

**Outcome 1000: Improved the well-being of children and youth at risk of irregular migration in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Mexico.**

**Indicator 1000.1 – Percentage of girls, boys and young women and men who reported feeling safe in their communities.** In the final evaluation survey, 91 percent of young people expressed they felt safe in their communities (91 percent of the females surveyed and 91 percent of males), surpassing the baseline of 84 percent and the target of 90 percent.

**This indicates that there was an improvement to the perception of local security.**

Among the actions that contributed to this achievement are the following:

- Strengthening of child protection services (formal and informal) at the community level and involving caregivers, teachers, children, youth and public servants;
- Facilitation of youth-participation spaces and promoting child rights and gender equality, which lent

to the development of youth leadership skills and civic engagement to influence community decisions; and

- Coordinating actions with national and local governments as well as civil society to promote, protect, prevent and restore the rights of children who are victims of child labour, discrimination, trafficking, abuse and other forms of human rights violations.

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**According to the focus groups conducted, the most valuable aspect of the PICMCA project was the creation of awareness in children and youth on the dangers of irregular migration and the alternatives offered by their country.**

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The alternatives named include employment, entrepreneurship and links to community organizations or other types of services that can help with employment or rights issues young people face.

**Indicator 1000.2 – Percentage of girls, boys and young women and men who reported that their lives would be better if they migrated.** The final results showed a drop to 44 percent of those surveyed affirming that their lives would be better if they migrated to another destination, compared to the baseline of 59 percent and the target of 46 percent. The project sought to reduce this perception by showing alternatives to irregular migration and making known the high risks of choosing to migrate, and was successful in achieving this. Activities such as school and community-based violence prevention programs were carried out, strengthening the role of caregivers in the care of children, promoting the use of referral mechanisms and practicing positive behaviours to create safe spaces at home and at school.

## Child protection and violence prevention

The first area of focus for the PICMCA project was to

strengthen partnerships and improve the capacity of governmental and non-governmental policymakers and practitioners to design and implement effective child protection systems as well as violence prevention programs in schools and communities, including programs designed to improve school retention.

### Outcome achieved

**Intermediate Outcome 1100: Improved the use of gender-responsive child protection services and violence prevention programs in the community (especially GBV), that integrated the needs and interests of children and youth.**

**Indicator 1100.1 – Percentage of girls, boys and young women and men who used child protection services and reported that they were responsive to their specific needs.**

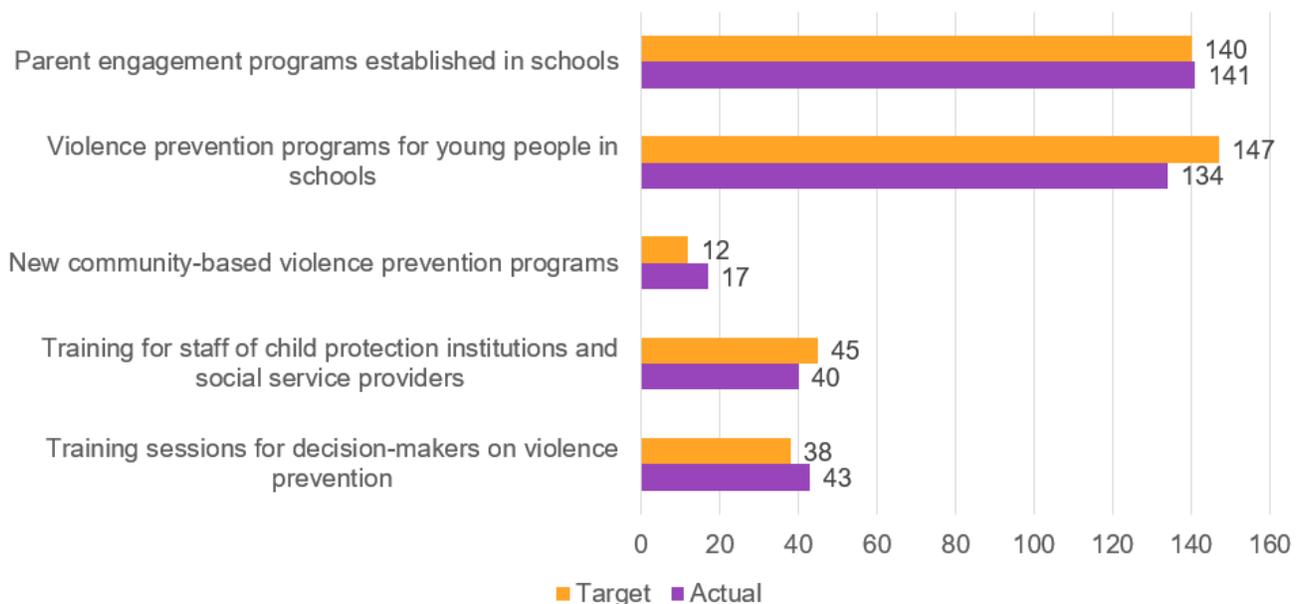
The overall performance showed that 28 percent of young people used these services, exceeding the target of 13 percent.

The countries contributed to this outcome by implementing a variety of programs. Examples include the “I Trust My School” campaign, which was aimed at caregivers and children to promote violence prevention, and the delivery of training to staff on the formal child protection system and to teachers on child rights and reporting mechanisms.

**These activities resulted in the development of action plans at the municipal level and, in close collaboration with the national protection networks, added to efforts at the community level to strengthen capacities in violence prevention and child protection.**

Chart 1 presents the performance status of some key output indicators; reflecting the level of attainment in reaching the project goals.

**CHART 1: OUTPUT INDICATORS FOR STRENGTHENING CHILD PROTECTION AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION**



Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

## Key findings

For the family status/living arrangement of the participants interviewed, 35 percent responded that they live with both their mother and father, 19 percent live only with their mother, five percent live only with their father, 16 percent live with their partner and 24 percent live with other relatives.

On the location status of the participants, 83 percent said that they live in their municipality (place) of birth and the

remaining 17 percent of respondents had moved. The following reasons were given for why they left their place of birth: 27 percent reported accompanying their family to seek financial improvement and six percent accompanied their family due to violence in their community. Related to personal decisions, nine percent left for study opportunities, 15 percent for employment and four percent due to violence.

Table 1 presents the mobility situation of the young people interviewed, disaggregated by gender.

**TABLE 1: REASON FOR LEAVING PLACE OF BIRTH, DISAGGREGATED BY GENDER**

	Male	Female
<b>Accompanying my family – seeking financial improvement</b>	29%	71%
<b>Accompanying my family – violence in my community</b>	38%	62%
<b>Accompanying my family – other reasons</b>	25%	75%
<b>Personal decision – educational opportunity</b>	35%	65%
<b>Personal decision – employment opportunity</b>	26%	74%
<b>Personal decision – situation of violence</b>	58%	42%
<b>Personal decision – other reasons</b>	21%	79%
<b>Other reasons</b>	20%	80%

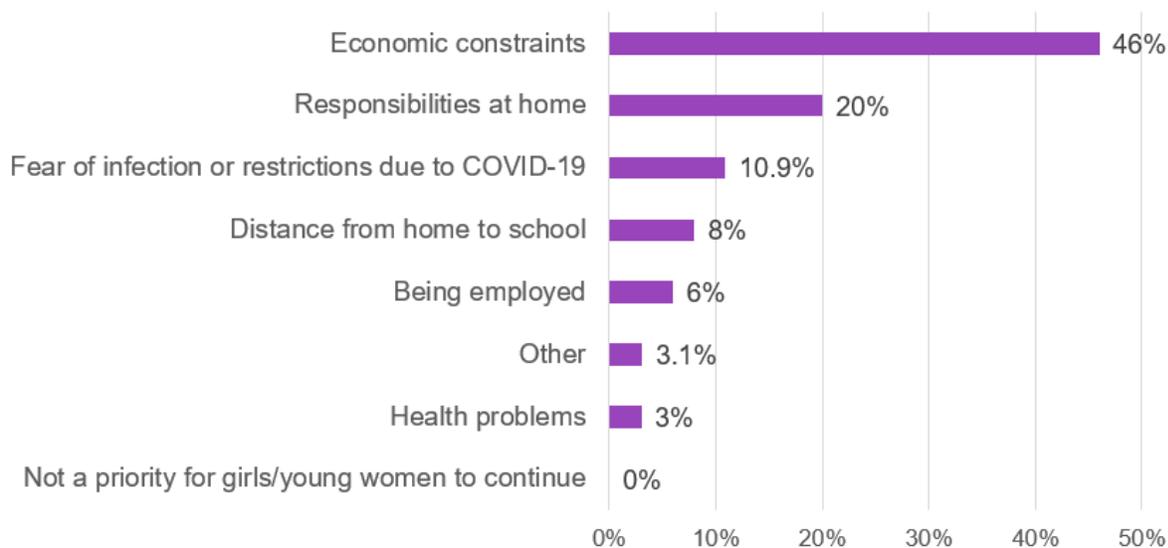
Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

For their school status, 64 percent responded that they are currently studying (63 percent of females, 66 percent of males), while 36 percent are not (37 percent of females, 34 percent of males).

The reasons for not studying include: economic limitations for 46 percent, having responsibilities at home (i.e. caring for siblings, children or other family members) for 20 percent and for 11 percent, fear of COVID-19 infection

or restrictions due to COVID-19. For eight percent of respondents, the great distance from their home to school was the reason for not studying and for six percent, it was due to being employed. The results are presented in Chart 2.

Important to note, 20 percent of female participants identified responsibilities at home being the reason why they were unable to continue studying, compared to only five percent of men who provided this reason.

**CHART 2: REASON FOR NOT CONTINUING SCHOOL**

Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

Supporting the identification of alternatives to migration was a critical factor for the PICMCA project in deterring child and youth from irregular migration. To assess the achievements related to this, the surveyed young people were first asked if they thought their lives would be better if they migrated to another destination.

Demonstrated in the analysis of indicators, 44 percent stated that their lives would be better if they migrated, which the project had successfully lowered from the baseline result of 64 percent. Participants were then asked if they could identify alternatives that people should consider before making the decision to emigrate to another country. For those who identified alternatives, the most common answers given were developing their own business, seeking employment and continuing their education. The full results are presented in Table 2.

Combined, 63 percent of survey participants identified some economic activity as an alternative to migration, with a higher percentage of females providing this response (61 percent) than males (28 percent), and 20 percent identified continuing their education as a reason not to migrate (20 percent of females and males).

**TABLE 2: ALTERNATIVES TO IRREGULAR MIGRATION IDENTIFIED BY YOUNG PEOPLE SURVEYED IN THE FINAL EVALUATION**

Alternatives to migration	Percentage
Develop a business venture	24%
Find a job	22%
Continue studying	20%
Study and work	17%
Improve skills through courses	15%
No alternatives identified	1%
Other	1%

Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

### **Civil servants, community leaders, teachers, parents and other key actors**

A major objective of the project was to improve the capacity and use of gender-responsive child protection services and violence prevention programs at the community level that integrated the specific needs and interests of children and young women and men.

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### **Engaging key actors from the community, such as civil servants, community leaders, teachers and parents, in the activities of the project was important to creating the structures and environments needed to support the safety and participation of young people.**

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From the interviews, 84 percent of the key actors responded that they did participate in the project activities (of those who participated in activities, 76 percent were female and 24 percent were male), reflecting a high participation rate and wide community engagement.

### **Child protection services**

The program implementation plan for the PICMCA project involved training for service providers in child protection and violence prevention. The intention was to address capacity gaps that existed to ensure child protection services were easy to access and child-friendly, and that PICMCA partners had expertise in creating child-friendly spaces.

Seventy-five percent of the respondents from the final evaluation (74 percent of female respondents and 76 percent of male) affirmed that they participated in project activities related to child protection and violence prevention services (i.e. rights committees, protection committees). Seventy percent reported having greater knowledge about services that protect child rights, while 30 percent stated that their level of knowledge remained the same. Therefore, gaining participation from target populations and providing knowledge were valuable for achieving this improvement.

Additionally, 94 percent of the respondents believed that coordination and mechanisms to identify or refer cases of children and youth at risk of violence have improved since the implementation of the PICMCA project. This demonstrates that it is possible to better orient a population to develop and use child protection services in their communities or municipalities through capacity building. According to a participant in a focus group in Honduras: “We have strengthened the tools that children should have to defend themselves against bullying or extortion in their schools... they are taught not to remain silent and to talk to the head teacher, parents or friends who can support them.”

Regarding the respondents’ assessment of the PICMCA project’s activities in cooperation with local protection groups, 63 percent of those surveyed viewed the activities as “very important” (63 percent of female respondents 24 years and older and 65 percent of male). Another 33 percent thought they were “important” (34 percent of female respondents 24 years and older and 29 percent of male).



**Training service providers and committees about child and youth rights was an important strategy that the PICMCA project implemented to strengthen child protection and violence prevention (photo taken prior to COVID-19).**

**Photo by Juris Kornets.**

These results reflect a high level of satisfaction with the project and the relevance of the activities, as the population believed the project contributed to addressing problems their community faced.

Reflecting this sentiment is the following statement made during a focus group session: "Among the areas of improvement that we have seen was the implementation of community structures, like parents' associations and all community-level instances where local actors intervene, to function as protection mechanisms." The baseline data clearly showed that children, youth and families were

unaware of formal child protection systems.<sup>10</sup> Presently, at the community level, 90 percent of those interviewed (90 percent of females and 91 percent of males) stated that their involvement in actions to prevent violence (especially violence against children and adolescents) has improved and this was due to the PICMCA project. Table 3 presents the full results, disaggregated by age.

**TABLE 3: IMPROVEMENT IN THE PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE IN VIOLENCE PREVENTION, DISAGGREGATED BY AGE**

		6-11 years	12-17 years	18-23 years	24-29 years	30+ years
<b>At the community level, have you increased your participation in actions that contribute to the prevention of violence (especially against children and youth)?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	88%	100%	100%	93%	89%
	<b>No</b>	13%	0%	0%	7%	11%

Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

**Referral system for child protection and violence prevention**

To deepen the impact of the project at local and municipal levels, a key goal of the PICMCA project was to increase the capacity of schools and communities to keep children safe and reduce dropouts. Forty-one percent of the final evaluation participants reported being aware of case referral systems for child protection and violence prevention (42 percent of females, 34 percent of males). This is a positive result because it is common for people to be unaware of the systems and services that provide care and protection. The following are the protection systems that were most frequently identified in Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico (the protection component was smaller in Nicaragua):

**Honduras:** Directorate of Children, Adolescents and Family (DINAF), and Basic Education Centre Dr. Centeno.

**El Salvador:** National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONNA), Salvadoran Institute for the Integral Development of Children and Adolescents (ISNA), Attorney General's

Office (FGR), Attorney General's Office (PGR), Court for Children and Adolescents (JENA), National Civil Police (PNC), and Local Rights Committee (CLD).

**Guatemala:** Attorney General's Office (PGN), and Community Violence Prevention Commission (COCOPRE).

**Mexico:** National System for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (SIPINNA), National System for the Integral Development of Families (SNDIF), United Children's Association of Ixtlahuaca, educational centres in the community, women's institutes, I Trust campaigns, workshops, training sessions and talks.

Those consulted were also asked if they were aware of the project supporting the creation of violence prevention programs, crime prevention programs or child and youth protection programs in schools or communities and 64 percent answered affirmatively. Of the people who answered yes, 59 percent rated the intervention of the PICMCA project as excellent and 36 percent rated it as good, totalling a 95 percent positive view of the project. Those responsible for child protection and violence

<sup>10</sup> Regional PICMCA Baseline Report. 2017.

prevention at the country level believed that the institutional coordination for training was effective since it engaged the principal institutions that have direct involvement with at-risk children and youth. Regarding knowledge sharing, a respondent stated: “they will have that knowledge and they will replicate it to guide the population on the risks of irregular migration.”

For the project activities implemented in schools or communities to serve children and young people at risk of dropping out of school, 68 percent of respondents answered that they know about the initiatives and 65 percent said that they participated in the programs (63 percent of female participants, 70 percent of male). Of the participants who were aware of the activities, 52 percent rated the intervention as excellent and 34 percent rated it as good, totalling an 86 percent positive assessment.

### Identified impacts

The baseline survey asked the children and adolescents interviewed whether they were aware of and used child protection services and found that few children and youth across the five countries used these services (10 percent). In the final evaluation, children and youth were asked if they made use of the services offered by the child protection system in their municipality, school or community, and 37 percent answered that they had. Table 4 presents the two results.

**TABLE 4: CHILDREN AND YOUTH WHO REPORTED HAVING USED CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES**

	Percentage
<b>Baseline</b>	10%
<b>Final Evaluation</b>	37%

Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

Furthermore, 94 percent reported that the services appropriately responded to their needs (31 percent of females ages six to 23 and 40 percent of males), which is much higher than the 68 percent who said the same in the baseline survey. Table 5 shows the satisfaction with child protection services received during the baseline and final evaluation.

**TABLE 5: CHILDREN AND YOUTH WHO REPORTED THAT CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES MET THEIR NEEDS**

	Percentage
<b>Baseline</b>	75%
<b>Final Evaluation</b>	93%

Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

Children and youth were asked about how they felt about their safety and security after having participated in the project. Sixty-one percent answered that they felt happy because they had learned a lot and 12 percent said they felt good because they now felt safer in their school. Three percent felt well because they now felt safer in their community, another three percent felt good because they now felt safer at home and a final three percent felt good because they felt much more respect from their peers. Table 6 presents the proportion of males to females who provided each of the responses.

**TABLE 6: HOW PARTICIPANTS FELT AFTER HAVING PARTICIPATED IN PICMCA PROJECT ACTIVITIES, DISAGGREGATED BY GENDER**

	Male	Female
<b>Happy because I have learned a lot</b>	35%	65%
<b>Good because I now feel safer in my school</b>	33.3%	64.9%
<b>Good because I now feel safer in my community*</b>	31.3%	62.5%
<b>Good because I now feel safer in my home*</b>	43.8%	56.3%
<b>Well because I feel greater respect from my peers</b>	37.5%	62.5%
<b>Other**</b>	66.7%	33.3%

\*Note 1: Responses from participants who did not identify their gender make up the remaining small percentage of the total response.  
 \*\*Note 2: Although the percentages for the ‘other’ category reflects a substantive value and difference, it is based on only three people: two males and one female.  
 Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

As part of the final evaluation to help assess the achievements in the protection of children, a comparative exercise was carried out to identify the changes for children and adolescents on a personal level, the family level and the community level as a result of the PICMCA project. Children and adolescents were asked to describe what their situation was like a few years ago (three or four years) and how they feel their situation is today.

**Changes on a personal level**

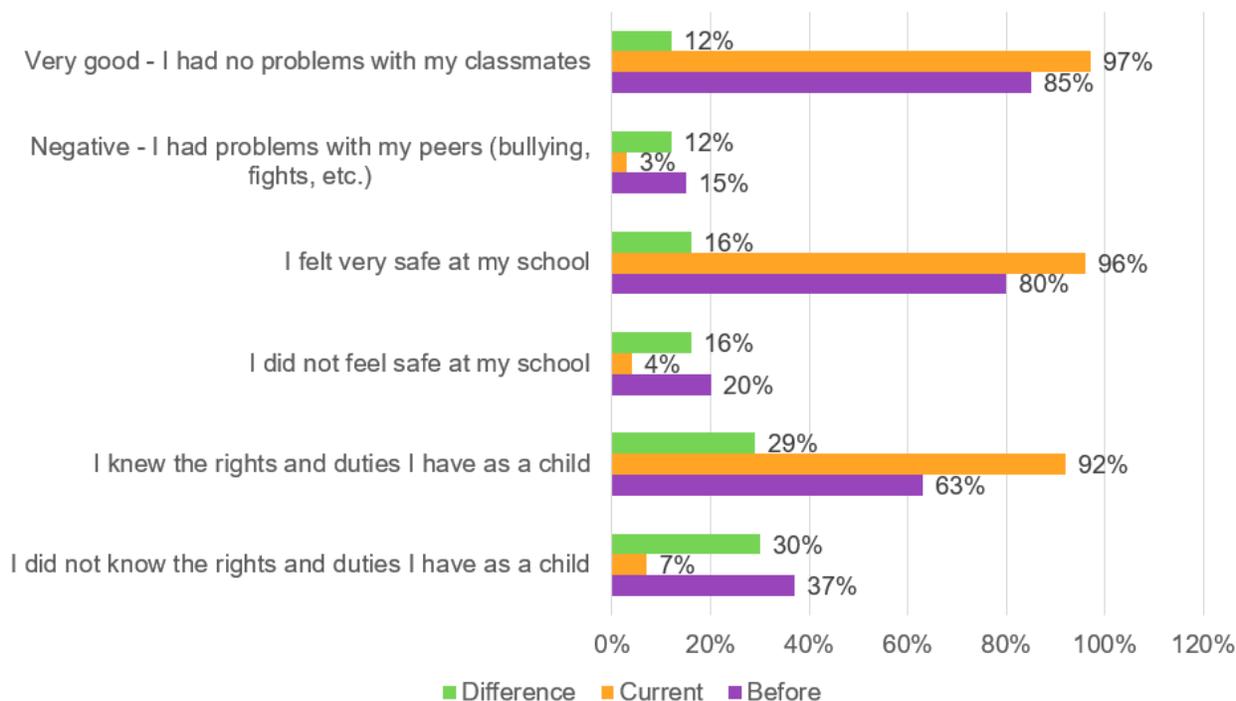
Eighty-five percent of those surveyed (87 percent of female respondents, 80 percent of male) reported that their past situation was very good and that they did not have any problems with their peers. When asked about their present situation, 97 percent answered that it was very good (98 percent of females, 95 percent of males), an increase of 12 percent. At the other end of the spectrum, 15 percent of respondents reported that their situation in the past was negative, that they had problems with their schoolmates

(bullying, fights, arguments, etc.). Today, only three percent described their situation as negative.

In relation to feeling safe at school, 80 percent responded that in the past, they felt very safe in their school (80 percent of females, 83 percent of males), whereas 96 percent confirmed that they felt very safe at school today (95 percent of females, 97 percent of males). This was an increase of 16 percent in positive perception. Twenty percent mention that in the past, they did not feel safe in their school, while only four percent felt unsafe today.

In the area of rights and duties, 63 percent mentioned that they already knew about the rights and duties they had as a young person (66 percent of females, 56 percent of males). This increased to 92 percent who currently know their rights and duties (96 percent of females, 86 percent of males), a significant increase of 29 percent. At the other end, 37 percent reported that they had not previously known their rights and duties, compared to 7 percent who currently do not know them. Chart 3 presents the full results.

**CHART 3: THE SITUATION ON A PERSONAL LEVEL FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN THE PAST COMPARED TO TODAY**



Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

**Changes at the family level**

Ninety-three percent of the young people surveyed (93 percent of females, 92 percent of males) reported that their situation at home was originally particularly good and that they had no problems with their family (Chart 4). Today, 97 percent (96 percent of females, 96 percent of males) answered that this was their situation currently, which is a three percent increase in positive perception. Seven percent answered that their situation was previously negative, that they had problems with their family, which dropped to three percent who currently described their family situation this way.

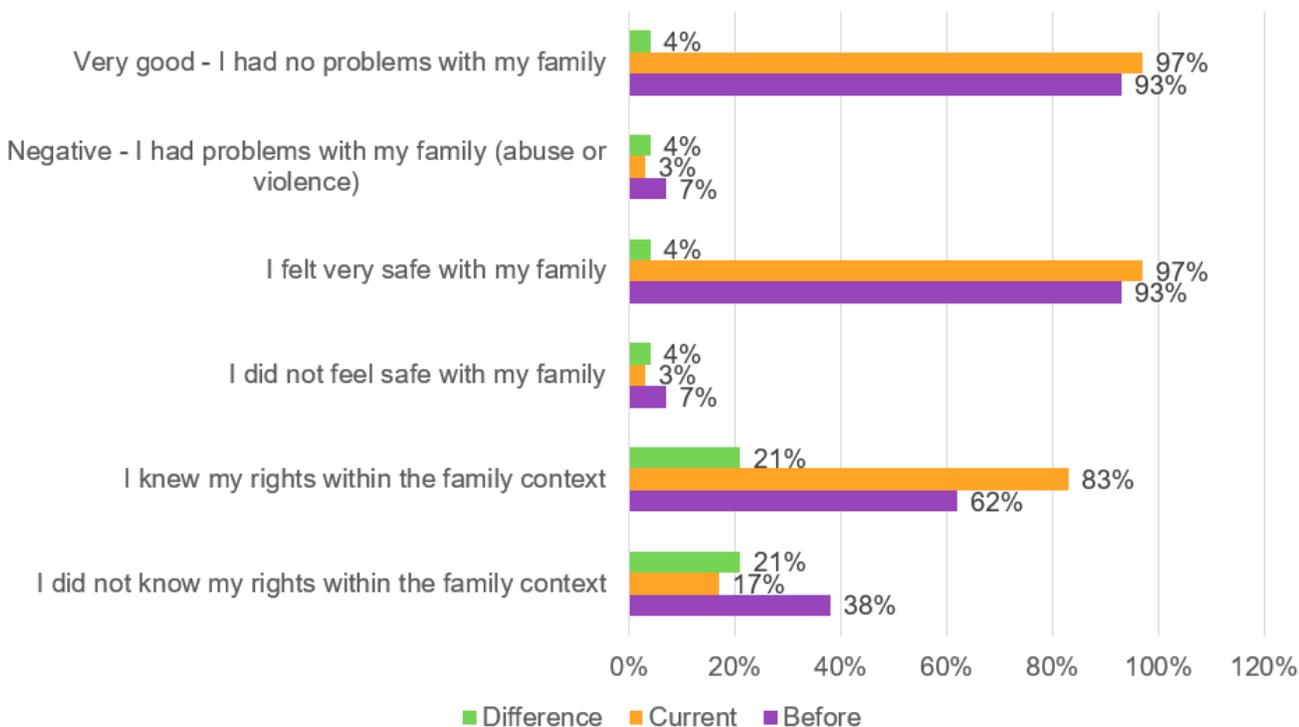
With regards to whether they felt safe with their family, 93 percent answered that they felt very safe in the past (94 percent of females, 92 percent of males). Today, 97 percent (97 percent of females, 99 percent of males) reported that this is how they feel currently, an increase of four percent.

On the other end of the spectrum, seven percent answered that they previously did not feel safe with their family, compared to three percent who currently do not feel safe.

Being aware of rights within the family context was an important area of assessment. From those surveyed, 62 percent said that in the past, they knew what their rights were within the family context.

**Today, 83 percent (85 percent of females and 80 percent of males) stated that they know their rights. This reflects a 21 percent increase in children and youth knowing their rights within the context of the family.**

**CHART 4: THE SITUATION AT THE FAMILY LEVEL FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN THE PAST COMPARED TO TODAY**



Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

**Changes at the community level**

At the community level, 86 percent of the child and youth survey participants (87 percent of females, 84 percent of males) said that their situation was originally particularly good and that they had no problems with their friends or neighbours. This rate rose 10 percent to 96 percent who currently feel that their community situation is particularly good. The positive impact of the project is similarly reflected for those who had stated that their situation was negative and that they had problems with their friends or neighbours (bullying, fights, arguments, etc.). Fourteen percent said this was previously the case, which dropped to only four percent today.

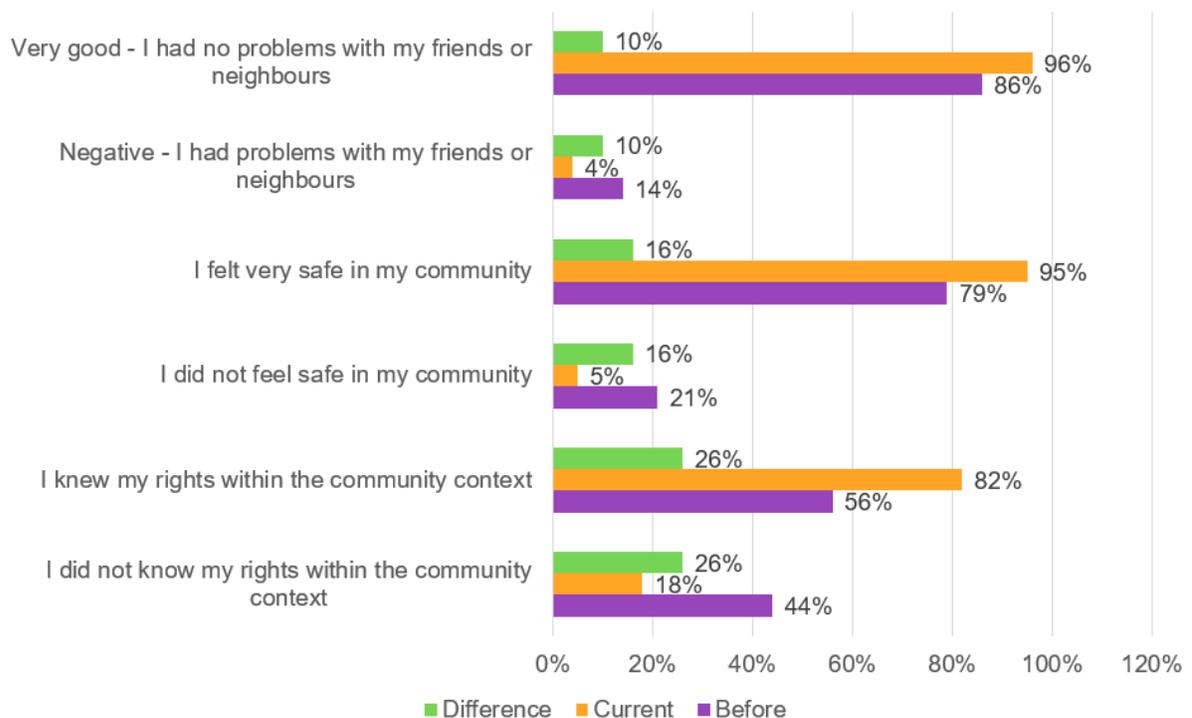
Seventy-nine percent responded that they felt very safe in their community in the past (79 percent of females and 78 percent of males), compared to 95 percent who currently feel very safe. This is a 16 percent increase in positive perception.

**Twenty-one percent responded that they previously did not feel safe in their community, which has dropped to five percent who stated that they do not feel safe in their community today.**

A total of 82 percent of the young people interviewed reported that, today, they know their rights in the community or neighbourhood context. In the past, only 56 percent knew their rights, which means there was a 26 percent increase in knowledge of rights.

All of the responses related to the community situation is provided in Chart 5.

**CHART 5: THE SITUATION AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN THE PAST COMPARED TO TODAY**



Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

Focusing on their present context, children and youth were asked about what the environment is like within the broader community where they live. Eighty-three percent answered that it is safe, compared to nine percent who considered it to be unsafe (Table 7).

**TABLE 7: SAFETY OF THE BROADER COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH, DISAGGREGATED BY GENDER**

	Male	Female
Safe Environment	83%	83%
Unsafe Environment	9%	9%
Unknown	7%	9%
Other	1%	0%

Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

Based on the data from personal, family and community levels, it is apparent that the current situation for children and youth reflects a positive change at all levels in comparison to their previous situation. The PICMCA project has, therefore, been effective in improving the safety of multiple spaces which children and youth occupy.

## Youth skills development, employability and entrepreneurship

This second key area of work sought to improve access to employment and income-generation activities for young people. The achievements were measured by the acquisition of skills and knowledge relevant to employment or entrepreneurship and the attainment of a job or launching a business venture.

### Outcome achieved

**Intermediate Outcome 1200: Improved employment skills and experiences for at-risk young women and men to participate, on equal terms, in sustainable income-generating activities.**

**Indicator 1200.1 – Percentage of young women and men who participated in job readiness programs that were gender-responsive and secured employment (including entrepreneurial ventures) within 12 months of participating in the training.** The survey data indicated that 43 percent of youth who participated in the employment programs obtained a job in the 12 months following their participation (39 percent of females and 66 percent of males). This outcome is much higher than the 13 percent in the baseline and the project target of 29 percent. Likewise, 40 percent of participants from the training programs reported having increased their income in the last 12 months (75 percent of females and 51 percent of males), compared to the 23 percent targeted.

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**The results reflect the fulfillment of the established goal, and training and workshops were central to this achievement.**

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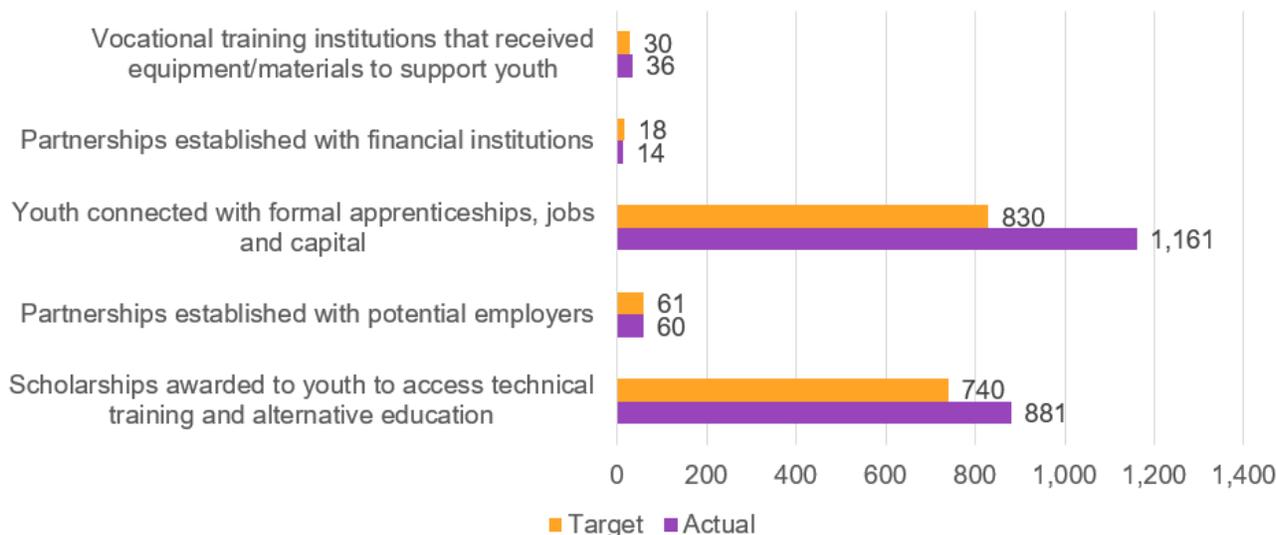
Examples of training programs that contributed to the success include life skills development, mentoring, business advice, vocational training and education related to gender and entrepreneurship.

Improving the skills and knowledge of young people, especially young women, was an important objective and strong gains were made. The project saw 78 percent of young women and men graduate from the vocational and technical training programs offered, which is shy just two percent of the target of 80 percent. Participation in the program helped a total of 837 young women and men (95 percent of the project target) gain experience with a potential employer or financial institution to support their business venture.

On the current employment status of program participants, 30 percent are students/apprentices, 23 percent are self-employed (entrepreneur) and nine percent stated that they have full-time, permanent employment. An additional 10 percent reported having part-time employment, nine percent are involved in domestic work and five percent work as farmers. Eleven percent are unemployed and looking for work, while three percent are unemployed and not looking for work.

Chart 6 shows the targets and actuals of several key output indicators to illustrate the project’s levels of achievement.

**CHART 6: OUTPUT INDICATORS FOR IMPROVING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP**



Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

### Key findings

The PICMCA project aimed to increase the skills and knowledge of young women and men to gain and retain employment, and help vocational institutions attract and retain youth at risk of irregular migration.

Eighty percent of the youth surveyed in the final evaluation (equally for males and females) believe their knowledge and job skills improved. Additionally, 71 percent positively assessed the methodologies used in the program (70 percent of women and 76 percent of men provided an ‘excellent’ rating).

A key result was an increase in income levels and in the number of young people with employment or entrepreneurial businesses from strengthening their skills at vocational centres, connections with the private sector and an endowment of seed capital.

According to the comparison in Table 8, in the baseline, only 15 percent of youth were identified as having

participated in employability training, which increased with the implementation of the PICMCA project to 25 percent.

**TABLE 8: YOUTH WHO PARTICIPATED IN EMPLOYMENT TRAINING**

	Percentage
<b>Baseline</b>	15%
<b>Final Evaluation</b>	25%

Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

### Employability

Of the youth surveyed, 53 percent strongly agreed that the training courses were useful in securing the job they presently have (only 26 percent disagreed). When asked about their ability to gain employment, 43 percent answered that they found a job within the past 12 months. On the effects of the

project intervention, 40 percent reported that their income increased from the employment they obtained. Participants in the focus groups shared a common sentiment expressed in the following statement made: “PICMCA was definitely a high-value project. Very sensitive issues (the risks of migration) were discussed, while cultivating the desire in young people to start a business or get a job. This helped make youth aware of the opportunities and options that exist locally.”

**This employment component of the project had the objective of improving the employment skills and experiences of at-risk young women and men to participate, on equal terms, in sustainable income-generating activities.**

To achieve this, the project included training and workshops to support the strengthening of life and employment skills, while simultaneously providing education about gender equality. Internships were also facilitated, as well as mentoring and access to capital.

In the interviews, project participants shared that training and experiences with the private sector were important for obtaining their first job. Connecting young people to internship experiences with potential employers enabled them to gain relevant experience and knowledge, and helped them secure employment. A primary challenge

in the implementation of the program was ensuring the attendance of the young people in training and their successful completion of the workshops. Despite this, it can be concluded that the project was successful in achieving its objective related to employability.

### Entrepreneurship

The vocational centres involved in the PICMCA project received equipment and training materials to assist in providing employment and entrepreneurial support to youth. Specialized programs were developed for young people in vulnerable situations, such as those at risk of irregular migration, and were able to support the youth through to graduation. These successes helped the centres expand their influence with key municipalities and targeted communities. In addition, the project linked youth with businesses that offered mentoring and with financial institutions to improve the knowledge of youth to better manage their business operations, revenue and expenses.

Upon completion of the program, youth were asked if they had started a business or entrepreneurial venture as a result of participating in the project. The results showed that 30 percent (29 percent of females, 33 percent of males) had launched a business after participating in the training courses or workshops. The positive results become much more visible when looking at the responses more broadly. Table 9 presents the entrepreneurial results disaggregated by age range.

**TABLE 9: ENGAGEMENT IN LAUNCHING A BUSINESS VENTURE, DISAGGREGATED BY AGE**

	12-17 years	18-23 years	24-29 years	30+ years
<b>Yes, before training or workshops</b>	14%	24%	37%	38%
<b>Yes, after training or workshops</b>	25%	31%	25%	40%
<b>I have not developed any ventures, but would like to</b>	56%	41%	36%	19%
<b>I have not developed any ventures, nor am I interested in doing so</b>	5%	4%	2%	2%

Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

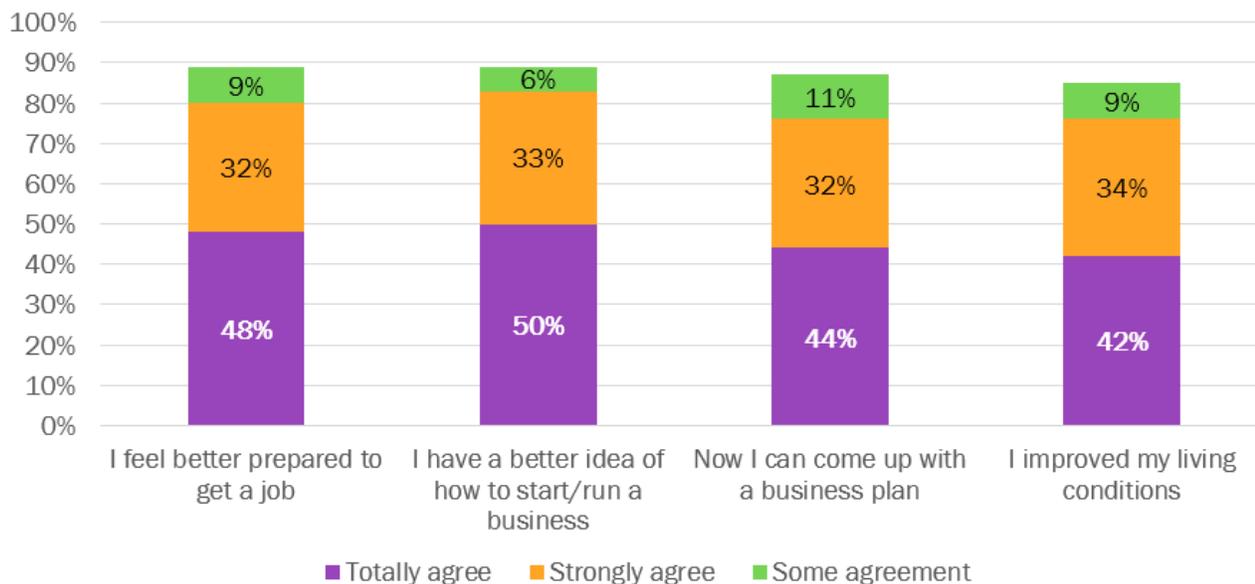
The answers reflect an important niche of young people who: 1) had already launched a business venture prior to participating in the training and are continuing their entrepreneurial efforts, 2) those who launched a business as a result of the training, and 3) those who expect to develop a business venture in the future. Combined, it is visible that the project made a significant achievement in generating a positive outlook and awareness of local opportunities among a high number of youth. The positivity and local possibilities directly counters the choice to migrate irregularly as a solution to life's challenges. The participants also expressed the same, with one stating: "I saw a positive way forward in my community. Many youth have become young entrepreneurs and now they have the means to be economically stable." This was a key result of the PICMCA project.

### Identified impacts

To determine the perspective of youth on the benefits of the project, a series of statements were presented to them for their agreement or disagreement. The statements ranged from their feelings of readiness for employment, their living conditions and their perceptions about the efficacy of the project activities. The results were overwhelmingly positive. In the following section, the degrees of positive responses are described.

Chart 7 shows the results from the youth's responses related to their readiness for a job or to launch a business, and improvements in their living conditions since participating in the PICMCA project.

**CHART 7: LEVEL OF AGREEMENT ON READINESS FOR EMPLOYMENT OR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND IMPROVED LIVING CONDITIONS**



Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

The majority of participants agree with the positive statements, conveying a high level of satisfaction with the project. Particularly valuable to highlight, the results demonstrate that the PICMCA project contributed towards generating confidence in young people that employment and entrepreneurship opportunities are attainable locally and are real alternatives to migrating irregularly. As well, the results

show that the project was able to directly address one of the main causes of migration, which is the lack of opportunities for income generation.

Concerning the quality of activities implemented by the PICMCA project to support income generation for young women and men, below in Chart 8 are the assessments from the youth participants.

**CHART 8: QUALITY OF PICMCA PROJECT ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT INCOME GENERATION FOR YOUNG WOMEN AND MEN**

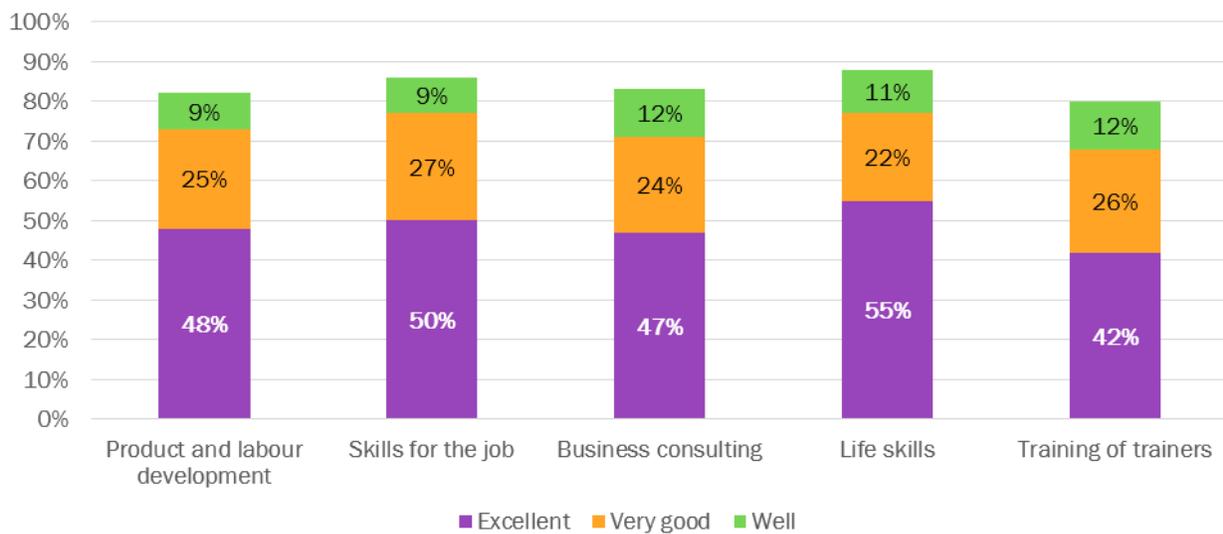


Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

Across the board, youth expressed strong contentment with the training and support they received. Finally, the results on the specific development areas the program covered are

illustrated in Chart 9. A high level of satisfaction with the PICMCA project continues to be reflected.

**CHART 9: VALUE OF THE PICMCA PROJECT TO AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP**



Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

It is important to note that there were several instances where businesses were no longer able to operate after their initial launch. The survey captured the business initiatives that were terminated and their reasons for closing. Based on the responses received, 38 percent reported closing due to COVID-19, 22 percent because of a decline in sales, the end of their funding was the reason for 15 percent and 9 percent closed due to personal problems unrelated to their business.

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**These findings point to a need for a post-project effort to track the results of the business ventures supported by the project to better understand the challenges young business people face after the project ends.**

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## Youth leadership and civic engagement

The youth leadership and civic engagement focus of the project aimed to increase and improve gender-responsive and equal leadership from young people to inform and influence national and regional decision-makers and the general public about the fundamental causes and alternatives to the irregular migration of children, as well as the specific risks faced by children due to gender inequalities. The strategic objective was to improve the participation and leadership of children and adolescents, females and males equally, to inform and influence decision-making at the national and regional levels, and the public on how to prevent irregular migration of children and adolescents.

### Outcome achieved

**Intermediate Outcome 1300: Improved gender-responsive leadership of young women and men, on equal terms, to inform and influence regional and national decision-makers and the general public on how to address irregular child migration and the specific risks young people face related to gender inequalities.**

**Indicator 1300.1 – Percentage of young women and**

**men who, after leadership skills training, increased their participation in civic activities related to youth well-being and protection through organizations at local, national and/or regional levels.** Forty-five percent of young people (48 percent of females and 39 percent of males) responded that after completing leadership-skills training, they increased their participation in civic activities related to the welfare and protection of young people through organizations at the local, national, or regional levels. This is a great improvement over the baseline of 21 percent and is in line with the project target of 45 percent.

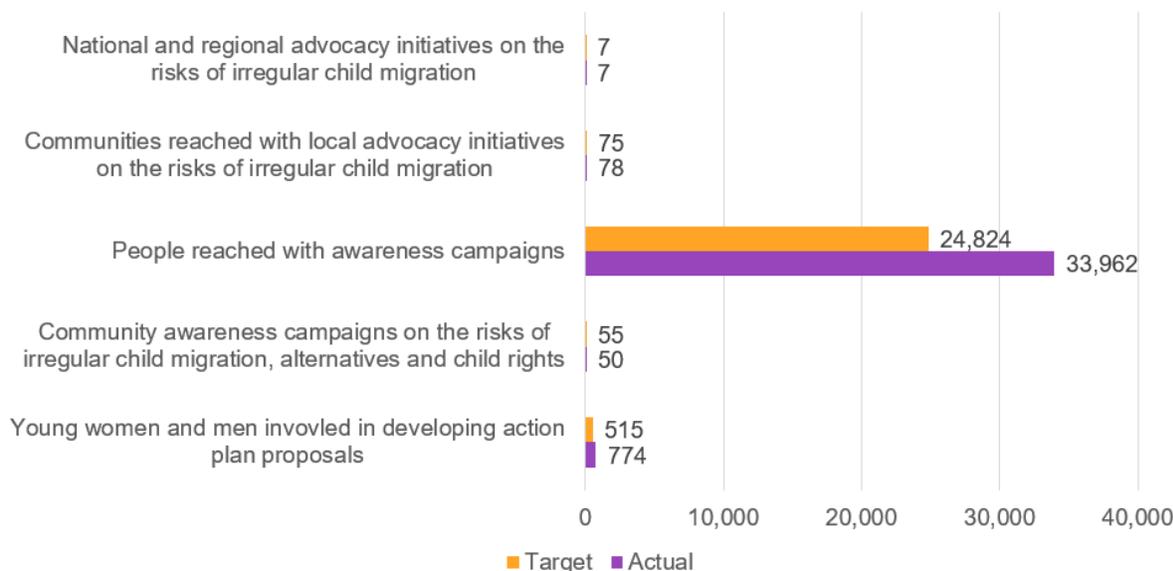
Further, 84 percent of young women and men confirmed that their opinion was now taken into account in their communities (82 percent of females and 90 percent of males).

**The result surpasses the target of 70 percent that was initially established. Additionally, 38 percent of women assumed leadership roles in their communities, again, exceeding the initial target (27 percent).**

Finally, related to generating greater awareness among national and regional decision-makers, key policy-makers and the general public about the risks of and alternatives to irregular child migration, 79 percent of all the young people, community members and decision-makers surveyed responded affirmatively. They confirmed that they received information about the risks of irregular child migration, alternatives to migrating and the rights of girls, boys and young women and men.

This achievement is four percent higher than the 75 percent target. The improvement was similarly reflected in the number of project proposals addressing risks and alternatives to irregular child migration being submitted to local or national authorities. Upon completion of the PICMCA project, 28 proposals were submitted surpassing the target of 21. Chart 10 presents the regional results for the key areas of activity related to the youth leadership and civic engagement component of the project.

**CHART 10: OUTPUT INDICATORS FOR IMPROVING YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**



Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

### Key findings

This component of the PICMCA project was based on three activities: 1) increasing the leadership capacity of young women and men; 2) increasing awareness among young women and men of their rights and the risks of irregular migration; and 3) increasing the awareness of decision-makers and the public of the risks and alternatives to irregular migration. The final evaluation, therefore, assessed these three activities.

Youth involved in the final evaluation were asked if they had participated in leadership courses, forums or workshops to improve their civic participation. Eighty-seven percent between the ages of 12 and 29 years (86 percent of females and 89 percent of males) said yes, suggesting a high interest in training for civic participation.

Youth were also asked about their participation in civic activities or their membership in community organizations or social groups engaged in civic activities. An understanding of the changes before and after being part of the PICMCA project was sought. Forty-three percent of the young people

interviewed reported already participating in such activities before their involvement in the project. After the project, there was a rise in participation to 45 percent participating in a new civic activity (48 percent of females and 40 percent of males between 18 and 29 years old) and 15 percent maintaining their participation in the same activity that they were involved in prior to the project. For the specific role they played in the organization/group they were involved with, 40 percent responded that they participated as a leader, which significantly surpassed the baseline of 23 percent (Table 10).

**TABLE 10. YOUTH PARTICIPATING AS LEADERS IN CIVIC-FOCUSED COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS**

	Percentage
<b>Baseline</b>	23%
<b>Final Evaluation</b>	40%

Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

Table 11 further breaks down the roles by gender with 37 percent being active key players of the group (37 percent of females and 37 percent of males) and 24 percent playing a supporting role (25 percent of females and 22 percent of males).

**TABLE 11: YOUTH ROLES IN CIVIC-FOCUSED COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, DISAGGREGATED BY GENDER**

	Male	Female
<b>Group leader</b>	41%	38%
<b>Active key player in the group</b>	37%	37%
<b>Support role</b>	22%	25%

Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

Through the interviews, participants expressed that the promotion of youth leadership in the PICMCA project was central to creating spaces for youth to rise up and raise their voices about civic matters relevant to them. As a result, youth were taking leadership roles in their communities. One beneficiary from Guatemala explained: "Youth now feel part of the community. I think the project was a determining factor because young people saw their opinions mattered, which they didn't feel was the case before in their community or family."

**The positive changes made as a result of the PICMCA project were similarly reflected in the reception of the community to the opinions and leadership of youth (Table 12).**

Eighty-four percent of the youth surveyed at the end of the project believe that their opinion was taken into account in their community or neighbourhood (82 percent of females and 91 percent of males ages 18 to 29 years). This is much higher than the baseline of 53 percent and demonstrates the efficacy of the project activities.

**TABLE 12: PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH WHO FEEL THEIR OPINION IS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THEIR COMMUNITY OR NEIGHBOURHOOD**

	Percentage
<b>Baseline</b>	53%
<b>Final Evaluation</b>	84%

Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

An important note to make is regarding COVID-19 and its impact on youth leadership opportunities. To achieve the project objectives, youth forums on irregular migration were conducted. This involved the participation of youth at local and national levels. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions, these activities had to be carried out in virtual formats, which reduced the number of young people able to lead them.

**Despite the impact of COVID-19, participants shared that youth empowerment was an area of outstanding achievement for the PICMCA project.**

One person expressed, "we had more than 50 young people involved in civic activities who have gone on to develop activities through school advocacy groups." These findings reflect the successful attainment of the project goal to strengthen civic participation and empower young people at the local level.

In terms of having knowledge about the rights of children and youth before participating in the project, 30 percent of respondents said they already had a little, some or a lot of knowledge about the rights of children and youth. However, after participating in the PICMCA courses, forums and workshops, the respondents declared having increased their knowledge. Currently, 66 percent have much more knowledge and 31 percent have a little more knowledge on the subject (Table 13).

**TABLE 13. KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH BEFORE AND AFTER PARTICIPATING IN THE PICMCA PROJECT, DISAGGREGATED BY GENDER**

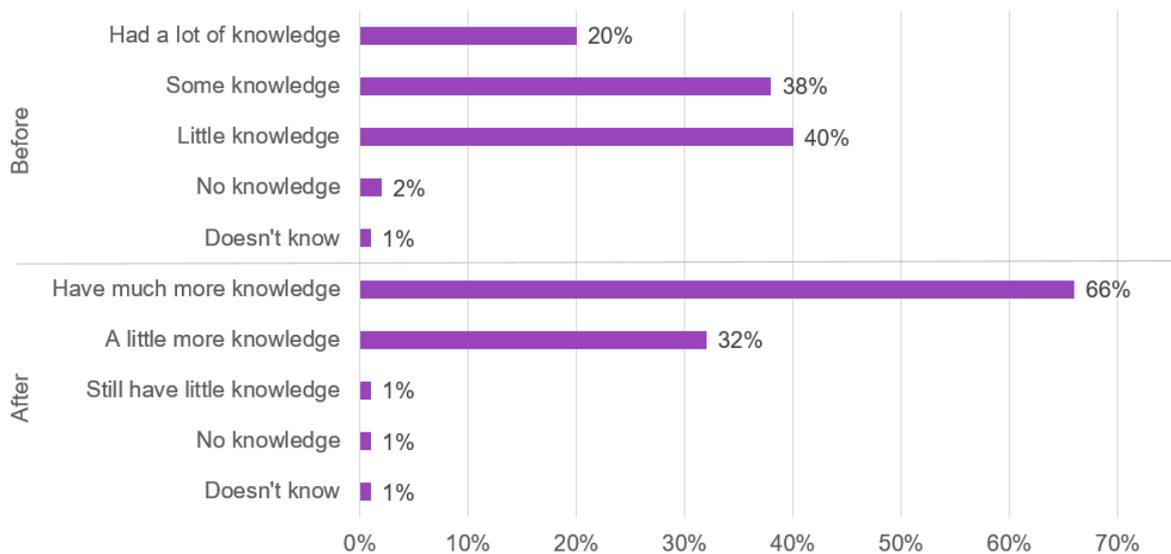
		Male	Female
<b>Before</b>	Had a lot of knowledge	19%	21%
	Some knowledge	40%	36%
	A little knowledge	36%	42%
	No knowledge	4%	1%
	Doesn't know	1%	0%
		Male	Female
<b>After</b>	Have much more knowledge	63%	68%
	A little more knowledge	34%	30%
	Still have little knowledge	2%	2%
	No knowledge	1%	1%
	Doesn't know	0%	0%

Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

In Chart 11, the degree of knowledge young women and men had about the risks of irregular migration for children and adolescents is presented. The data is organized by the level

of understanding and also by their knowledge before and after participating in the courses, forums or workshops of the PICMCA project.

**CHART 11: KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE RISKS OF IRREGULAR CHILD AND YOUTH MIGRATION BEFORE AND AFTER PARTICIPATING IN THE PICMCA PROJECT**



Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

The results reveal that before participating in PICMCA activities, 20 percent of respondents already had a lot of knowledge about the risks of migrating irregularly and 38 percent had some knowledge. After participating in PICMCA activities, a high degree of respondents reported increasing their knowledge: 66 percent currently have much more knowledge (68 percent of females, 63 percent of males) and 32 percent have a little more knowledge. It is clear that the PICMCA project aided in creating a greater awareness in young women and men about the risks of irregular migration.

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**The campaigns carried out by the project were an effective way to raise awareness with the community at large. Multiple campaigns were developed to draw attention to the risks of irregular child migration, the alternatives to migration, the rights of children and youth, and gender equality.**

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An interview with a key actor in El Salvador expressed: “Through the campaign My Heart is in My Nation, the risks of irregular migration were shown. Educational materials from the campaign were given to children and schools to help create awareness, as well.”

Of all those involved in the final evaluation, 79 percent responded that they had heard, seen or read information from campaigns. Interview participants were asked what topic from the campaigns they remembered most and the following responses were given: 51 percent identified the risks of irregular child migration and 9 percent stated the alternatives to irregular migration.

Eleven percent reported the rights of children and youth as being the most memorable, 16 percent stated the importance of equality between men and women and three percent said preventing sexual violence against girls and women.



**A youth participant from the My Heart is in My Nation campaign. The campaign, part of the PICMCA project, helped raise awareness about the risks of irregular migration.**

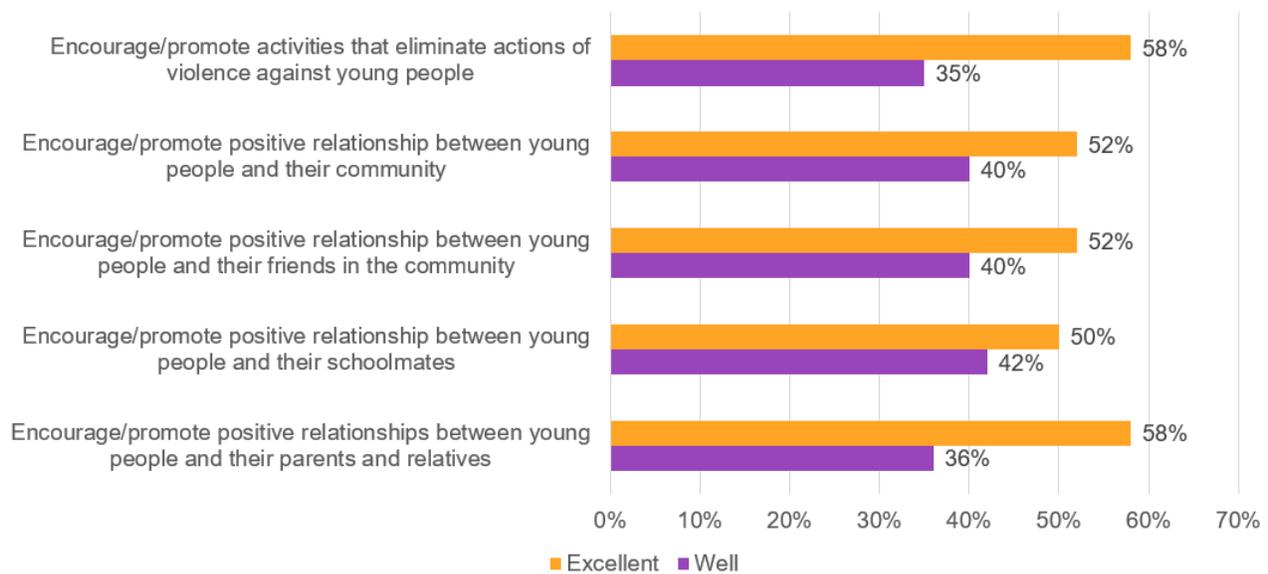
On a qualitative level, in some countries, the project staff interviewed felt that the responses from local authorities were positive. They explained that support was shown not only through the allocation of funds to the project, but “there were people who supported us in specific processes. For example, in the beginning, we did not have young people involved with the project; we were looking for them. It was through the three mayors that we were able to connect with youth.” Likewise, alliances with institutions at the national level generated momentum for the project activities.

### Identified impacts

Participants of the final evaluation (young people, families, community members, etc.) were asked to make a series of

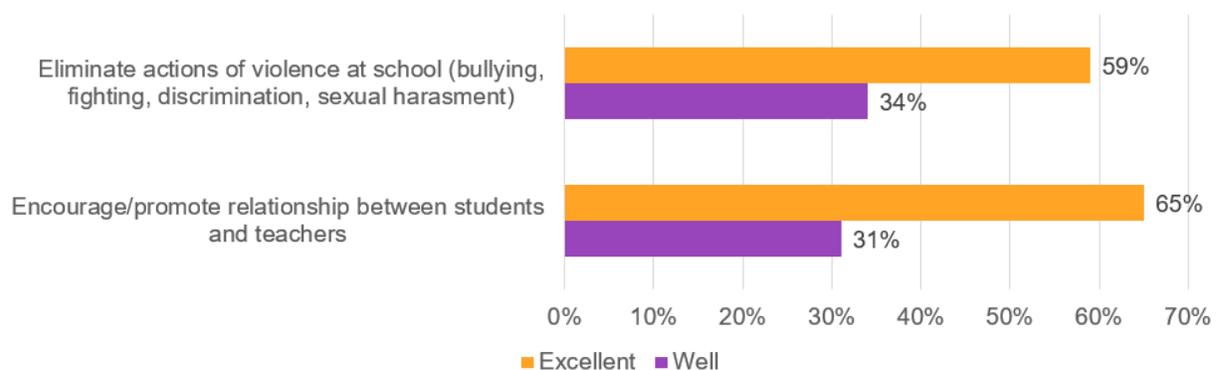
assessments about the work of the PICMCA project. The vast majority of responses were, once again, positive. Charts 12, 13 and 14 present the degree of positive responses from the assessments.

**CHART 12: VALUE OF THE PICMCA PROJECT’S CONTRIBUTION TO SUPPORTING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**



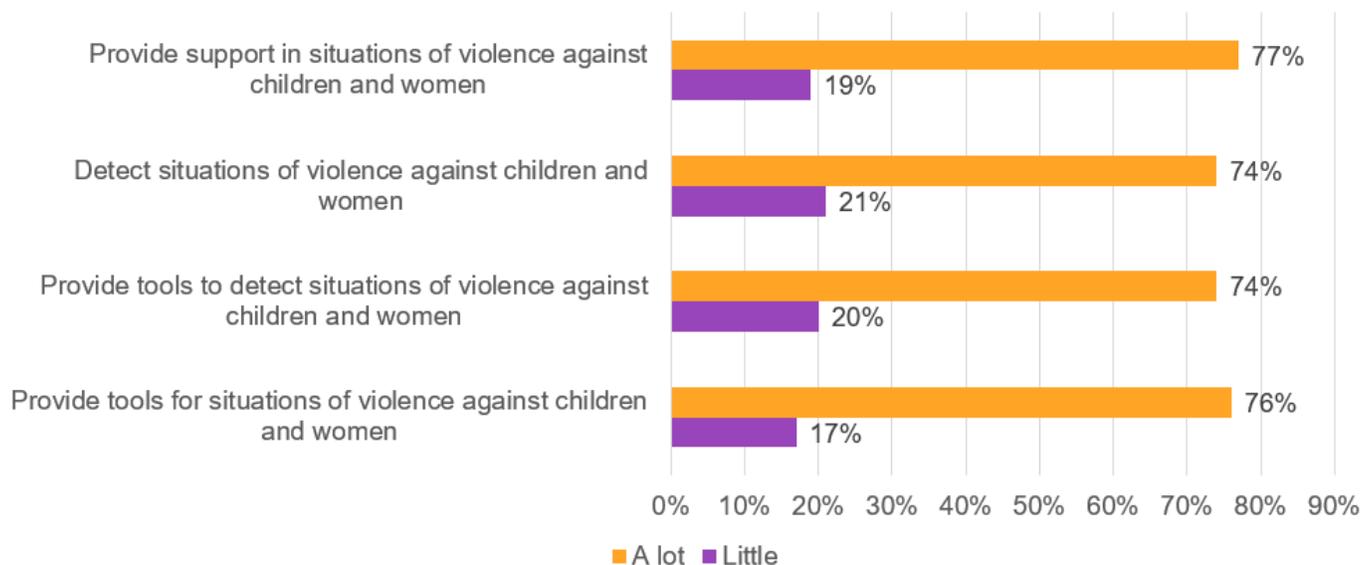
Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

**CHART 13: VALUE OF THE PICMCA PROJECT’S CONTRIBUTION TO SUPPORTING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AT SCHOOL**



Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

**CHART 14: EFFICACY OF THE PICMCA PROJECT IN MITIGATING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND WOMEN**



Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

Reviewing the results of the assessments as a whole, on average, nine out of 10 participants rated the project positively, which reflects a significant majority. The negative ratings do not exceed 10 percent of the global responses.

### Promoting gender equality

This section analyzes the application of the PICMCA project’s gender approach, its contribution to the advancement of equality between females and males, and the empowerment of girls and women through the three overarching areas of the project’s work. The approach is grounded in the Regional Gender Equality Strategy (GES) and Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP). Therefore, the GES and FIAP were used as references for this analysis, from the design of the intervention to the various impacts.

#### Results based on the Regional Gender Equality Strategy

Drawing on the objective of GES, the project’s gender strategy focused on the main factors that increase irregular migration of children and adolescents. These are family reunification,

difficult living conditions and insecurity in the country of origin. Girls and young women who experience these risk factors also face additional hardships due to their gender.

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**All study participants were asked directly if they believed the PICMCA project promoted actions to prevent or eliminate violence against girls and women, and 94 percent answered yes.**

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The activities that respondents identified supported this achievement were: educational talks, campaigns, courses, workshops, forums, trainings, infographics, information fairs and video forums. Respondents further specified that learning about women’s rights, women’s and children’s leadership in rural communities (since migration is more common in rural areas), and how to strengthen the protection system with gender and child protection approaches, were also critical.

Participants were also asked if they believed the PICMCA

project strengthened their confidence and skills to report harassment or sexual violence that they may experience personally or see in their environment. Almost all respondents, 98 percent, answered yes.

Additionally, they were asked about where they feel they can find the greatest support to report a situation of harassment or sexual violence, to which 40 percent responded from their mother and father. Eight percent identified their mother, 0.5 percent identified their father, seven percent stated people in their local school, 6 percent said community leaders and 37 percent said institutions and local authorities (i.e. police, human rights organizations, prosecutor’s offices, children’s institutes, etc.). The statistic about institutions and local authorities is important as it reflects an increase in trust in local protection institutions, which was low in the baseline study.

When analyzing the results of the surveys carried out with the child and youth participants, key actors, parents, teachers and project staff, nine out of ten recognized and indicated that the project activities promoted the participation of girls and women.

Eight out of 10 people surveyed mentioned that in PICMCA activities, materials were used to highlight the importance of equality between men and women, and the empowerment of women and girls. The same proportion indicated that methods were applied which contributed to learning about gender equality and the empowerment of girls and young women.

Seventy percent (68 percent of females and 74 percent of males) rated the activities as excellent in promoting equality between men and women and the empowerment of girls and women. Table 14 shows the full results.

**TABLE 14: ASSESSMENT OF THE PICMCA PROJECT’S PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY, DISAGGREGATED BY GENDER**

	Excellent	Good	Regular	Deficient	Unknown
<b>Male</b>	73.6%	21.3%	2.6%	0.2%	2.2%
<b>Female</b>	68.0%	26.6%	2.3%	0.2%	2.9%
<b>Undisclosed</b>	83.3%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

Regarding gender equality and women’s leadership, a male participant described the learning experience as follows: “The gender-focused activities that promoted women’s leadership were interesting. Giving women the opportunity to lead their teams first caused us some uncertainty because, typically, men do not let women give the orders. However, along the way, we assimilated to the idea and the time came when we supported it.”

When asked about the greatest limitations or barriers participants believe persist in their environment that limit the progress of equality and empowerment of girls and women, the following stand out:

- Out-of-date thoughts and actions by some population groups
- People who are sexist and set in their ways
- People who are unaware of their rights due to a lack of information, including young people who live in

dysfunctional home environments that limit their opportunities to learn and grow

- Domestic violence
- Violence by illicit groups
- Media that perpetuates traditional/unequal gender roles
- Silence from victims and onlookers/community members
- Closed-mindedness of family members who promote that woman should stay at home
- A lack of distinction between equality and equity

Regarding the project activities that participants feel can be improved or developed to promote equality and empowerment of girls and women, the following were stated:

- Conduct more talks to further develop knowledge about rights and gender equality

- Activities in coordination with schools
- Seek more participation from males (children, youth and adults)
- More dynamic, engaging activities
- Inclusion of more youth stories to resonate with a greater number of people
- More courses on the rights of girls, adolescents and women in communities
- More youth-centred activities to reinforce that young people can contribute good things
- More exhibition fairs to increase learning opportunities for young people

Despite these limitations, for PICMCA participants and community leaders, the project successfully promoted and incorporated gender equality into processes and activities. The overall results indicate that the project's gender strategy was not only effective and beneficial at the project level, in promoting and gaining a high level of representation from women in all PICMCA activities, but also at the community level. The strategy helped empower girls and women, strengthening their civic participation and role in the community, as reflected in the interview responses and qualitative findings. When the interviewed population was asked to rate the participation of women in social, economic and community spaces, 60 percent said that it increased a lot, while 24 percent felt it increased slightly.

### **Results based on Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy**

The PICMCA project addressed four of the six areas of action that Canada's Feminist International Policy (FIAP) pursues. These are human dignity, equitable (economic) growth, inclusive governance and gender equality and empowerment. The alignment of the project activities with these areas of action is described in the following section.

#### ***Human dignity: Supporting access to quality education particularly for women and girls***

The project managed to encourage young people, especially girls, to continue their studies or re-enrolment in school. This included supporting young people at risk of dropping out and working with schools to develop concrete actions to support their students. The result is encouraging and also raises the importance of studying within the educational system of

the young person's respective country in order to access job opportunities after completing their studies.

The strategy that contributed to this area of action was the project activities focused on child protection and violence prevention. Support for girls' education and care for those who were at risk or had dropped out of school were among the most important initiatives carried out.

A large sample of female respondents involved in the final evaluation were asked to identify important gender activities related to education that the project carried out, and they specified training and efforts to strengthen the protection of children and the prevention of gender-based violence. The participants of these activities were comprised of 76 percent females and 24 percent males.

**The strategy, therefore, contributed to women's access to violence prevention programs and the results indicate that women's participation was high in training activities where their capacities and knowledge were strengthened.**

Although a high engagement rate of females is a positive result, the project should take into account that it is important to involve a high number of males in gender-based topics, as well. This is to help create more awareness with males about gender discrimination and the impact of their negative actions towards women. Key actors expressed the same, in that gender strategies should not be limited to involving or serving more females in relation to males, but it means identifying and rectifying deficiencies and gaps in society to better serve females.

#### ***Equitable (economic) growth: Increasing women's access to economic opportunities and resources***

The project's work focused on youth employability and entrepreneurship contributed to strengthening the capacities and ability of young women to access work and gain business experience. The result was achieved by incorporating initiatives to raise awareness about the negative effects of unequal economic practices between men and women. Training for entrepreneurship and employability were carried out with both

females and males, with a greater prioritization of females in vulnerable situations. Similarly, the provision of seed capital prioritized vulnerable females who received at least 60 percent of the total funds distributed. According to the participants interviewed (from focus groups and individual interviews), support to strengthen the economic empowerment of young women through training and access to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, as well as seed capital, were key in enabling them to make progress in securing income-generating activities and becoming independent.



Pictured, a young woman who gained support from the PICMCA project to start her own business as a make-up artist. Improving the income-generating abilities of young people, especially young women, through employment or entrepreneurship was a critical area of focus for the project (photo taken prior to COVID-19).

### ***Inclusive governance: Promoting greater participation of women and girls in decision-making***

The PICMCA project's gender strategy aimed to increase the participation of females in spaces at the organization/group level and community level, promote equality between females and males, and empower girls and women. The activities carried out were successful, contributing to greater access to and participation in organizations/groups for females and their occupation of leadership positions.

Also noteworthy, as a result of the project, greater overall community participation in child protection and violence

prevention services was achieved, as well as increased awareness of these protection services. From a gender perspective, there was increased involvement of males and, importantly, females in these important community systems and services.

### ***Gender equality and empowerment: Reducing sexual and gender-based violence, strengthening women's organizations and movements that promote women's rights, improving the capacity of governments to provide services to women and girls, and improving gender equality.***

The gender strategy contributed to raising awareness among young people and parents on the risks of and alternatives to irregular migration, and on human rights by incorporating a gender approach that highlighted violence against girls and women. According to focus groups conducted, the "I Trust My School" and "I Trust My Community" campaigns were key initiatives. They were important for empowering females and creating spaces for their increased participation, including in youth committees, which were comprised primarily of girls between ages 16 and 20. To this end, actions aimed at increasing knowledge about the rights of children and youth, with an emphasis on young women, was one area of critical success for the PICMCA project.

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### **Regarding efforts to strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment to reduce sexual and gender-based violence, the majority of beneficiaries interviewed believed that the actions implemented did well in promoting the prevention and elimination of violence against girls and women.**

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When young women and men were consulted on their knowledge of rights, they recalled the PICMCA training they participated in and mentioned the following rights: the right to education, decent work, health, recreation, participation, identity, gender equality and sexual and reproductive rights. The activities participants mentioned that contributed to these results, particularly for women, include:

- Soft skills training workshops, which encouraged women to lead their own work teams

- The provision of seed funding for entrepreneurial ventures, especially those led by women
- Efforts made to ensure the equal participation of women and men in all the activities of the project; this involved scheduling the day and time of the workshops according to the availability of the majority of the female participants, which was key to guaranteeing their participation, and the promotion of females in leadership positions in organizations/groups, such as youth committees
- Strengthening the inclusion of girls and women, and promoting their rights and their empowerment enabled them to demand and exercise their rights; this was exemplified, for example, through the effort the project made to prioritize the participation and training of women and prioritizing entrepreneurial ventures led by vulnerable young women for the allocation of seed capital
- Supporting the economic empowerment of young women; participation from females of different ages, in situations of poverty, pregnant women, situations of risk and vulnerability was primarily sought for each of the life skills workshops to offer them the skills and opportunities to become independent
- For young women in Mexico, rights education and capacity-building efforts allowed them to bring forward at the community level a municipal agenda with a gender focus

Also discussed with participants were the barriers that persist in the environment limiting the advancement of gender equality. When asked about what further initiatives the project could pursue to help overcome these barriers, participants expressed that providing more workshops led by people trained in issues of violence against women would be effective, as well as creating recreational spaces for the equal participation of females and males.

### Addressing human rights issues

A human rights approach implies the fulfillment of principles and values that recognize and promote human dignity, such as equality, equity and freedom. A gender approach contributes to the fulfilment of human rights as it aims to address inequalities that disadvantage and violate the rights of a group of people, in this case, females and young people. In this regard,

participants were asked if they believed the PICMCA project adequately identified and selected their target population with the aim of advancing human rights, and 91 percent answered yes. Participants were also asked if the project implemented activities that identified and responded to environmental risks in schools, training centres or communities. To this, a high percent answered in the affirmative (80 percent), as well.

**Having at least eight out of 10 people feel that the project identified the appropriate population to work with – that is, vulnerable, marginalized groups like children and females – and addressed the risks in their environments, is highly positive.**

It reflects that the project interventions/activities tackled inequalities and responded to the needs of marginalized populations. Furthermore, it reflects that the objectives of the project were achieved, which were to emphasize the rights of the most vulnerable people, highlight the factors that threaten their rights, generate spaces for the population (especially young people) to organize and actively participate in civic discussions, and have alternatives to irregular migration.

### Project limitations

The project was affected by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic over the 2020 to 2021 years, a period when key results were expected to be attained. Mobility restrictions, the halting of classes and the cancellation of face-to-face activities forced a temporary suspension of the project's programs. On top of this, globally, the pandemic triggered mass economic instability, food insecurity and greatly aggravated pre-existing inequalities and problems such as unemployment and poverty.

With lockdown measures implemented during the pandemic, reliance on technology and digital connections grew exponentially. The digital divide grew along with it as many people, especially in remote areas, struggled with access to education, services and general opportunities for growth due to a lack of necessary equipment, internet access, etc. This was a significant limitation for the project.

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## Many individuals from the targeted population lacked the conditions at home and/or in their community to facilitate the education sessions, training and technical assistance delivered.

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Locally, social and political events that emerged in Nicaragua and the elections in El Salvador were additional factors that had an impact on the ability to implement project activities. As well, the phenomenon of migrant caravans and the effects of hurricanes Eta and Iota, which hit Honduras and Nicaragua, also left an impression, limiting the achievement of the project's goals. Despite these obstacles, adaptations to the project activities and scope were managed in order to continue offering the programs and services, and mitigate irregular child and youth migration.

In some of the project's intervention communities, especially in Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico, there were various native populations with their own unique language and culture. Connecting with all these populations was a challenge for the project as there was a lack in translated material, staff who speak the native language and familiarity with the specific culture, needs, social situations and conditions to provide proper program support (i.e. with entrepreneurial ventures).

## Project relevance

A natural area for assessment is whether the project successfully addressed the problems identified in the baseline study. As indicated by the results from the final evaluation, the PICMCA project was successful in developing strategies and activities that were relevant, as it correctly identified the needs and contexts of children and youth at risk of irregular migration and addressed the causes pushing them to migrate.

The project was designed based on three key areas of work: strengthening child protection and violence prevention, increasing skills for employment and entrepreneurship, and

improving gender-responsive leadership and youth civic engagement, which technical staff and beneficiaries were involved in defining and developing. This collaborative process lent itself to the prioritization of the target population's key needs and addressing the challenges faced. "The project came to encourage non-migration to the United States, and it was done in a way that was very favourable for young people; it was conscious of their problems and needs," said a professor during the interviews. The empowerment of the beneficiaries was also an achievement of the project that was derived from their involvement in shaping its work.

Other actors, such as local partners, who were involved in the implementation of the project had some influence, as well, mainly in the creation of local youth committees and the youth-led processes of strengthening the response to irregular migration at the community level. The knowledge and experience of local partners were key for attaining positive results particularly related to school activities involving children, youth, teachers and parents that addressed challenges faced by populations at risk of emigrating.<sup>11</sup>

As described in previous sections of the report, the design and implementation of the PICMCA project were effective at addressing the lack of employment and identifying income-generating opportunities for young people. Therefore, the economic needs of youth identified in the baseline study were met. Further, the support provided to youth by the project achieved a multiplier effect at the family and community levels by generating employment more broadly and improving local economic activity.

**Related to leadership and youth civic engagement, the project was able to fill a void that was identified in the community about the lack of opportunities for young people to bring agendas forward and make proposals to different levels of government (community, municipal, state and national levels).**

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<sup>11</sup> For example, the partner EDUCO in El Salvador had knowledge and experience in education and in the development of projects with populations in vulnerable conditions, which were beneficial for the implementation of the PICMCA project. Similar benefits were experienced with partners in the other project countries.

This work was especially valuable in Mexico. Through the project's support in creating proposals, youth committees were formed to engage in civic activities, and they continued on to educate and motivate their communities using the knowledge and tools they gained. A young participant from a focus group said the following: "It is definitely a high-value project where the most sensitive issues of the community were touched, and with this, we were able to develop in young people the desire to shape their community and raise their voices."



**Through the PICMCA project, young people gained the skills, confidence and opportunities to raise their voices and engage in civic matters that affect them (photo taken prior to COVID-19). Photo by Juris Kornets.**

The trainings and workshops delivered as part of the PICMCA project included cross-cutting themes of civic participation, leadership, prevention of violence and adolescent pregnancy, and creating a culture of peace, social development and equality. Based on the positive feedback from participants, it can be concluded that these activities had significant relevance, as the themes covered were major social issues that existed, and the project's achievements were beneficial for all participants.

Finally, a key aspect in responding to the needs of young people at risk of migrating and creating conditions that encourage them to stay in their communities, was

strengthening the system of protection for children's and women's rights in their municipalities. In the case of women, participants from the final evaluation surveys, focus groups and interviews felt that the project provided them with tools and knowledge to strengthen local violence prevention mechanisms, empower more women and raise the importance of women's participation in social spaces. These achievements were similarly reflected for children and youth, as well.

There were critical advancements made through the PICMCA project to reduce the risks of irregular migration affecting vulnerable populations like women and children. However, there were many lessons learned, as well, through the implementation of project activities. These lessons must be considered and acted upon by local actors in order to sustain the advancements made.

### Cost-effectiveness

The cost-efficiency analysis of a project evaluates the profitability/value of the investments. It is achieved by comparing the costs incurred to implement the project against the performance of the project and the attainment of its goals. The measurement of the PICMCA project's performance is based on results obtained from the perspective of the beneficiaries served during the life cycle of the project, as well as from a qualitative analysis on the improvement in the living conditions and the well-being of participants as a result of the project.

Overall, the PICMCA project had a strong performance, meeting or exceeding 82 percent of its goals. Although 13 percent of its targets were not met, the performance was considered good and only six percent of the targets saw an underperformance. In the project's five countries, three specific areas of work – child protection, employability and civic participation – were focused on and promoted through the project's activities. Based on an analysis of each of these components, the performances were rated as follows:

- Child protection (Component 1100) had a high performance at 83 percent
- Employability (Component 1200) achieved 75 percent
- Civic participation (Component 1300) achieved 87 percent

**All the ratings were high, but the activities related to improving civic participation and leadership, component 1200, were the best performers.**

The three areas of work had a total disbursement of CDN \$6,782,091,<sup>12</sup> which was distributed across the five countries and spent over five years. Most of the spending was concentrated in the area of employability, with Guatemala being the country with the highest allocation (CDN \$1.1 million) and Nicaragua with the lowest expenses (CDN \$343,000). The funds were used for the purchase of training equipment, financing courses and the provision of seed capital, among

other expenses. Most of the resources went to training and workshops in life skills, job skills, entrepreneurship, gender equality, business advice and mentoring to improve the skills of youth seeking employment or to establish their own business.

Child protection was the area of work that received the second highest allocation of funds, with El Salvador receiving the largest allocation (CDN \$702,000) and Nicaragua having the lowest expenditure (CDN \$41,000). The funds were primarily used to provide training for personnel from national and local governments, and civil society to improve their capacity to promote, protect and prevent the violation of child rights. Critical activities were carried out in municipalities to strengthen child protection systems, as well.

The full distribution of funds across all five countries and for each of the three overarching areas of work is presented in Table 15.

**TABLE 15: FINANCIAL INVESTMENT IN THE THREE OVERARCHING AREAS OF THE PICMCA PROJECT'S WORK, DISAGGREGATED BY COUNTRY (CDN\$)**

Key areas of work	El Salvador	Nicaragua	Guatemala	Honduras	Mexico	Regional
Child protection (Component 1100)	\$701,942	\$41,420	\$445,401	\$404,406	\$264,127	<b>\$1,857,296</b>
Employability (Component 1200)	\$903,610	\$342,718	\$1,109,110	\$747,336	\$534,351	<b>\$3,637,125</b>
Civic participation (Component 1300)	\$308,914	\$278,268	\$237,795	\$220,679	\$242,014	<b>\$1,287,670</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,914,466</b>	<b>\$662,405</b>	<b>\$1,792,306</b>	<b>\$1,372,421</b>	<b>\$1,040,492</b>	<b>\$6,782,090</b>

Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

The cost breakdown for the implementation of project's activities reflects that 27 percent was directed to activities for child protection, the employability component received 54 percent and civic participation received 19 percent. The actual expenditure is based on the total cost to reach 100 percent of people who would benefit from the activities. The average cost for female beneficiaries was CDN \$124.53 (57 percent of the total beneficiaries were female) and for male beneficiaries it was CDN \$127.61 (43 percent of the total beneficiaries).

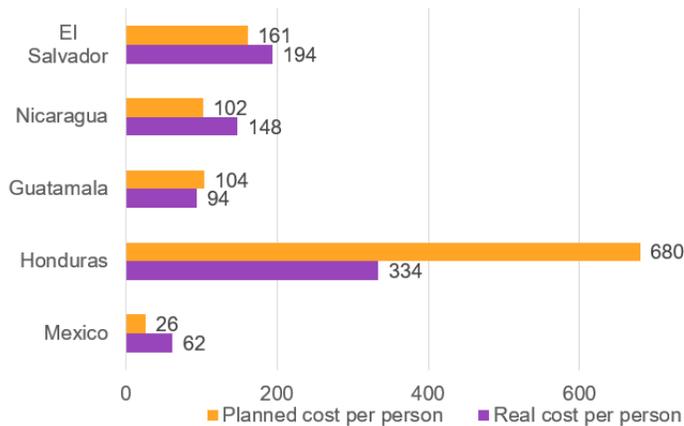
It is important to note that the activities for each of the three components did not generate the same expense in each country and this was related to a variety of factors, such as

variation in local pricing and the number of people the activities reached. Chart 15 provides a data illustration to demonstrate the impact of reach on expenses.

When analyzing the costs per person, Honduras had the highest cost (CDN \$334 per person). When comparing Honduras' real cost per person versus the planned cost, the data shows a significant drop, which was the result of the country doubling the number of beneficiaries over their planned target. El Salvador had the second highest cost per person (CDN \$ 194). Their real cost per person ended up slightly higher than their planned cost as a result of reaching 89 percent of the number of people targeted.

<sup>12</sup> Financial information provided by Children Believe Nicaragua. August 2021.

**CHART 15. PLANNED VERSUS REAL COST PER PERSON, DISAGGREGATED BY COUNTRY**



Source: Final evaluation of the project: Preventing Irregular Child Migration in Central America (PICMCA). El Salvador. ERAK Consultants. 2021.

Looking at both the performance and expense information, we can conclude that the PICMCA project has proven to be a cost-effective initiative, overall. The benefits outweigh the cost per person in all three of the project's components.

## Sustainability of results

In developing the PICMCA project, efforts were made to establish strategies and capture lessons learned that minimize risks and maximize potential opportunities to support the sustainability of the project results. The most important actions aimed at sustainability were the participation of local organizations and authorities in strengthening their capacities related to child rights, the promotion of civic participation and the creation of community leadership opportunities. Weaved through these initiatives, children and adolescents were made aware of the risks of irregular migration and of the alternatives that they had in their local communities, which include business or employment opportunities, involvement in civic participation groups to change their environment and the availability of child protection mechanisms, among others.

As a result of the project, alliances and coordination structures were established, which continue to operate, and the beneficiaries served/trained have passed on the knowledge and skills they gained to the broader community. For example, during the final workshop of the PICMCA project in Mexico, young people from each of the communities designed a

matrix where they identified the most relevant activities for civic participation needing monitoring and follow-up; this monitoring will be carried out by local and national institutions.

In Honduras, the training process through the School of Political Advocacy was crucial in creating interactive youth spaces at a national level. Further, the municipal government of Choloma will be moving ahead with implementing the public policy "Establishing a Responsible Citizen Culture".

In the case of Guatemala, the participation of municipal actors in training sessions was key to developing knowledge about child protection mechanisms at these levels of authority and gaining their support in efforts to provide alternatives to irregular migration.

In El Salvador, the role of the municipalities was central to helping committees create a culture of peace (these groups involved the whole family, as well, in order to influence private spaces where women and children can be exposed to violence) and developing youth enterprises and organizations.

In Nicaragua, the Ministry of Family, Children and Youth institutionalized project-inspired activities through a methodological manual that was approved and endorsed by the Presidency of the Republic and used in all training carried out by the ministry. This adoption by the ministry led to various institutions that are a part of the child protection system also being strengthened.

What is apparent is that, to contribute to the continuation of the PICMCA project results and maintain conditions in which children and young people are not pushed to migrate irregularly, it is critical to involve a broad expanse of actors from various levels as strategic partners. The strategic partners of the PICMCA project include children, youth, families, community members, schools, national governments, partner organizations, ministries of the public sector and private institutions.

**In developing their knowledge and capacity through the project activities, these partners can internalize tools and good practices, and continue applying them beyond the completion of the project.**

# KEY LESSONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Good practices

A good practice is an action that has proven to have effective results and is worthy of replicating. In implementing the PICMCA project, there were many pragmatic experiences and opportunities to test initiatives and learn about what works and what does not. The following are key good practices that were identified, followed by the lessons learned:

- The development of campaigns on the risks of irregular migration and promoting entrepreneurship and employment as alternative solutions for youth, are effective methods to reduce the irregular migration of young people.

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- **A critical foundational step for the project's success was developing strategies based on the needs assessment of the population at risk of irregular migration, findings from the baseline study and involving the target population itself in the project design.**
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- Tailoring employment/income-generating activities, which considers mobility, technological resources, training needs and the context of participants, is important to make sure the program and services are relevant and properly serves them.
- Adopting digital technology, making it available to marginalized populations and taking additional measures to close the digital gap are critical to ensure these populations are not further excluded in their access to resources and opportunities.
- The PICMCA project implemented actions that promoted the participation of females in particular. This was essential for ensuring the supports and services offered reached this underserved population. For example, emphasis was placed on female-led

entrepreneurial ventures in the provision of seed funding and allocation of other resources, which resulted in 65 to 70 percent of young women being direct beneficiaries.

- Inter-institutional collaboration in the development of activities is valuable as it draws on a breadth of strengths and experiences, leading to stronger initiatives.

- **Integration and coordination with different sectors and partners in communities helps foster synergies and a powerful collective impact.**

- Joining efforts with regional institutions, such as the Central American Secretariat for Social Integration (SISCA), is valuable for the exchange of knowledge and practices on irregular migration prevention.
- The engagement of community leaders to assist young entrepreneurs is helpful in creating a stronger youth employment culture and economy, overall.
- Involving the local government and having a specific point of contact to support community activities contributes to the participation of youth and coordination with other organizations/entities.

## Lessons learned

- Irregular migration is a relevant but sensitive issue. Interventions to meet the needs of the population were appropriately structured in the PICMCA project. However, some of the challenges/barriers faced were related to the region's diversity of culture, language and access, as well as high levels of violence in some areas. Greater diversity in the language of materials, languages spoken by project staff and awareness of cultural contexts would have been beneficial.
- Ensuring the exact alignment of the interventions in each country of implementation was a challenge and the project learned that it was necessary to, instead,

focus on aligning short-term emergency responses (i.e. COVID-19) with long-term investments during year four of the project. This was particularly critical for the recovery and resilience stages of Children Believe's COVID-19 response and the employability component, which is linked to livelihood. The project made adaptations framed by a livelihood approach and allocated key resources and valuable tools for income-generating activities during the pandemic.

- Involving municipalities or local actors in the development and implementation of project activities was an effective approach as they were valuable in providing funds and/or support with logistics, gathering participants and helping create awareness about the risks of irregular migration and alternatives to migrating.
- Working with partner organizations at the community level is highly productive. The efficient adaptation of the project's programs to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic was achieved through continuous, regular communication with project teams and partners. The ongoing dialogue was essential as it allowed the monitoring of progress in the attainment of goals and generated joint strategies towards the fulfillment of the main objective.

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- **Investing in volunteers is important as it provides a sense of belonging, ownership and purpose, in addition to offering support to project teams. In El Salvador, the community facilitators were young women who began as volunteers for the PICMCA project and worked their way up.**

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- The project applied a digital inclusion approach, enabling children and youth to access digital technologies by providing mobile data plans for internet access and usage, and promoting digital education. The supports and activities were critical for overcoming barriers and generating opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic.



**The PICMCA project's digital inclusion approach provided young people with the technology and internet access needed to continue learning and gain more opportunities. This was especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

- Actions taken to encourage gender equality required special measures (i.e. childcare subsidies, child-friendly spaces and program gender quotas) to ensure the correct groups at risk of irregular migration were targeted and benefited from the services offered.
- Among the lessons learned at the country level, connecting with institutions of society and coordinating with local actors to strengthen civil society were key factors to reduce the causes of irregular migration of children and adolescents.
- In Guatemala, the implementation of the project in rural areas provided a different context to consider (conditions, vulnerabilities, challenges, etc.) and learn from, which helped strengthen the project, overall.
- In El Salvador, it was important to work directly with employers from the start of the project to ensure greater youth employment. In terms of entrepreneurship, new business ventures were prioritized over businesses that already had some level of development. This strategy helped create opportunities for those who were new to entrepreneurship and needed income-generating activities.

- The central challenge in Honduras was to break the paradigm of thought that youth are not interested in public policies and civic matters. It was essential to bring awareness to the fact that it is not about a lack of interest. Rather, youth civic engagement requires development and believing young people are uninterested creates a barrier to youth leadership and engagement in the community.
- Working with the private sector was essential in Nicaragua, specifically as it provided access to a network of women entrepreneurs who were valuable to the project.

## Conclusions

The main conclusions about the PICMCA project were drawn from a comparison between the final evaluation and the baseline studies. The conclusions, along with identified opportunities for further action, are shared below:

- In comparing the results of the final evaluation with the baseline, it is clear that the PICMCA project was effective in reducing the perception that irregular migration leads to a better life (in children and adolescents). The following project outcomes contributed to this change:
  - An increase in beneficiaries' perception of security in their communities;
  - An improvement in knowledge about rights, violence prevention and protection;
  - Greater knowledge about child protection systems in municipalities, schools and communities;
  - A rise in women's participation and leadership; and
  - An increase in the participation of young people in civic activities and acquisition of employment.
- There was an improvement in the general perception of security for children and youth in their school, family and community environments. These results could be attributed to the following project interventions:
  - Providing education about rights, laws and securing protective environments;
  - Raising awareness about the specific risks children and youth face; and
  - Creating spaces where children and youth are recognized as engaged citizens and promoting their participation in decision-making processes.

- According to the results obtained in the interviews, focus groups and surveys carried out, the project improved the employability skills of young women and men, and supported their income-generating ability by the strengthening their entrepreneurial capacity and providing seed capital.

**The prospect of obtaining a livelihood locally offers alternatives to emigration for young women and men, which is critical evidence of the PICMCA project's relevance.**

- The project demonstrated the importance of working at the local level on issues related to youth civic participation (with a gender focus) and changing the idea that young people do not know how to express their opinions or lack an interest in civic matters. The School of Political Advocacy in Honduras, for example, implemented effective mechanisms for the empowerment of youth and the young people's achievements are noteworthy given the vulnerability of youth and the adverse conditions preventing their active citizenship.
- The PICMCA project is seen to have made significant efforts in ensuring the sustainability of results through the high level of participation from local organizations and authorities in child protection, and in strengthening the capacities of communities on child rights.

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**In addition, actions were carried out that succeeded in influencing national policies.**

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For example, in Nicaragua, the issue of irregular migration was taken up by the Ministry of the Family, Children and Youth. In relation to employment, the project established partnerships with the private sector to create programs to train young people and strengthen their technical, entrepreneurial and life skills. These programs had a lasting effect on the operation and involvement of some private sector organizations

in such activities. Likewise, civic participation and community leadership were generated, especially among young people, and there is lasting evidence of their activity after the completion of the project.

- From a gender perspective, the income levels of all the participants increased, along with the empowerment of women in economic activities. The greatest limitations observed were in the lack of alliances/relations with the private sector, which would have improved the possibility of identifying more job experiences and entrepreneurial support for youth.
- In all areas of the intervention, the participation of girls and women predominated. Therefore, the cross-cutting strategy of the gender approach in the analysis, design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation was effective and had a direct impact on the positive results of the project.

### Recommendations

- The pandemic will have long-term economic and social consequences. Therefore, it is necessary to identify actions aimed at strengthening child protection networks and ensuring the attainment of youth employability and entrepreneurship.
- Continue to build upon the achievements in the employability and entrepreneurship component, and incorporate measurements on the stability of young people in their jobs, job promotions or business growth. If these initiatives only rely on the initial creation, it does not provide a clear sense of its impact in the medium and long term.
- Promoting political advocacy for young people should be a priority, given the positive impact achieved through the project experience.
- Disseminate the lessons learned from PICMCA to support other organizations and strengthen similar initiatives.
- At a general level, it is evident that the PICMCA project strengthened gender equality in all the activities performed, in all areas of intervention

and in all five countries. However, it is important to mention that equality is something that decision-makers, communities and local leaders must maintain and continue improving. The gender approach is a medium and long-term process, which means that it must be maintained over time. As time passes, contexts change and gender needs must continuously be assessed so that contributions made to gender equality remain effective and of value for communities to grow.

- Although it has been possible to obtain greater participation from females, it is important to involve a good number of males in gender equality issues, as well, to raise awareness about the role they play in transforming society from the traditional patriarchal model that has been perpetuated.
- The project was able to demonstrate the effectiveness of referral and reporting mechanisms for the protection of rights and the prevention of violence against children and women. Therefore, these tools should continue to be monitored and replicated.

- **Based on the commendable results of the PICMCA project, it is recommended that this initiative be replicated in more communities where children and youth continue to be at risk of irregular migration.**

Thus, gaining the participation of more municipalities, utilizing local actors who participated in the project as leaders and adapting the methodology to the local context (i.e. language and cultural factors for indigenous populations) to ensure the benefits reach more vulnerable children and youth, and further reduce the number of irregular migrants.



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**Children Believe is a member of ChildFund Alliance, a global network of 12 child-focused development organizations working to create opportunities for children and youth, their families and communities. ChildFund helps nearly 23-million children and their families in more than 70 countries overcome poverty and underlying conditions that prevent children from achieving their full potential. We work to end violence against children; provide expertise in emergencies and disasters to ease the harmful impact on children and their communities; and engage children and youth to create lasting change and elevate their voices in decisions that affect their lives.**

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