



Cesia Lea Hernández Gómez, 21, a CRS YouthBuild graduate in Nicaragua, stands in front of the feed supply store she started in her rural community of Aguas Calientes. Photo by Oscar Leiva Silverlight /CRS.

Youth Workforce Development Program

BACKGROUND

In Latin America, one in five youth aged 15-24 are unemployed and out of school. These 20 million young people are desperate to succeed. What is stopping them? Families, communities and economies fractured by poverty and violence. Young people caught in this social and economic struggle are most likely to be both victims and perpetrators of violence — and most likely to migrate out. But by staying, they have the power to transform their lives.

Our flagship program, **YouthBuild**, an adapted version of the model developed in the United States in the 1970's, is helping young people in Latin America build the vocational and life skills they need to thrive. CRS' national partners are providing youth with intensive vocational training, with course options based on the demands of the local labor market and alliances with businesses that are looking for productive, trustworthy employees. The program also supports essential interpersonal and life skills, such as conflict resolution, self-esteem, and team work.

Across the region, **CRS** is working with governments and civil society organizations to incorporate the model into their youth and workforce development strategies for wider reach and greater impact.



WHO WE SERVE



Out of School and Unemployed Youth (16-25 years)

IMPACT

9,680

YOUTHBUILD GRADUATES SINCE 2009

400+

BUSINESSES PROVIDING JOBS TO YOUTHS

10

YEARS SERVING YOUTH IN LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

WHERE

EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, HONDURAS, NICARAGUA AND ECUADOR



PROGRAM COMPONENTS

🕒 COMPREHENSIVE, INTEGRATED MODEL:
The **YouthBuild** model includes 400-800 training hours for young people, half-time or full-time, over a period of 6 months, with another 6 months of follow up.

🛒 VOCATIONAL TRAINING:
Young people receive 200 hours of vocational training that meets market demand and youth interests. Course options include cooking, cosmetology, auto mechanics, computer repair, beekeeping, and customer service.

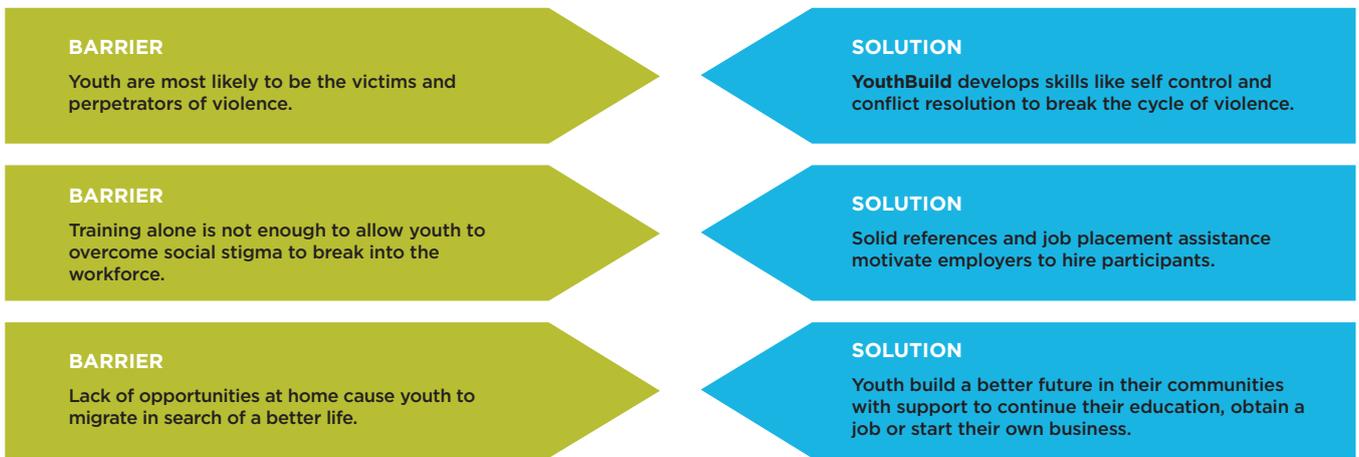
🧠 LIFE SKILLS AND JOB SKILLS:
The program supports essential life skills, including conflict resolution, communication, self-esteem, productivity, team work, responsibility and persistence. Employment specialists help youth prepare resumes and practice for job interviews while guiding them through the job-seeking process.

📦 ENTREPRENEURIAL TRAINING:
Startup initiatives offer hands-on experience in production, marketing and cost analysis. Youth start with the resources around them, allowing them to learn from failure while minimizing risk.

📖 EDUCATION:
Reinforces basic but critical academic skills, particularly in reading and math, and opens the door for future educational or job opportunities.

👥 COMMUNITY SERVICE:
YouthBuild participants put their new skills to work by serving their communities. Community development and service projects—such as building community centers and parks—help youth grow their leadership skills and practice conflict resolution and team work.

BREAKING BARRIERS



EVIDENCE-BASED YOUTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

A longitudinal study conducted by **FUSADES**, an independent research institute, between 2015 and 2019 looks at the effectiveness of the **YouthBuild** program as implemented in Honduras and El Salvador.

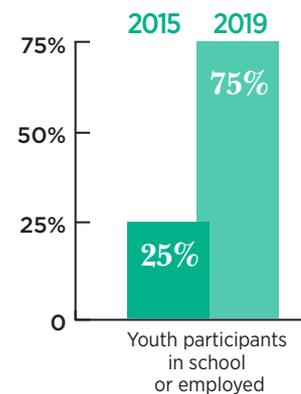
PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH WORKING OR IN SCHOOL BEFORE / AFTER PROGRAM

National household data from 2017 reports that only **3%** of poor urban youth in El Salvador have a formal job with benefits; **31%** of Salvadoran **YouthBuild** graduates have a formal job with benefits.

40%
Of program participants have considered migrating, even though **83%** (SV) and **72%** (HN) believe irregular migration is dangerous. **11%** of participants were internally displaced in the past year, which puts them at a high risk for migration.



Most graduates reported that their current salaries are an average of **30%** higher than what they were earning in their first job.



*Source: Longitudinal Study of Senderos Juveniles Cohort in Central America El Salvador and Honduras. FUSADES. January 30, 2019.