



# Making Sense of Refugee Support

USING NARRATIVES TO EVALUATE A PROGRAM TO  
PROTECT AND INTEGRATE REFUGEES IN ECUADOR



Cover: An facilitator works through a SenseMaker questionnaire with an interviewee. *Photo by CRS staff*

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# Acronyms

<b>CRS</b>	Catholic Relief Services
<b>FARC</b>	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
<b>IHD</b>	Integral Human Development
<b>PRM</b>	Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration
<b>SILC</b>	Savings and Internal Lending Communities
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNHCR</b>	UN Refugee Agency

# Executive Summary

In 2016, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in South America conducted the final evaluation of a nine-year program supporting Colombian refugees and Venezuelan migrants, as well as vulnerable Ecuadorians. CRS—in coordination with its implementing partner, the Missionaries of St. Charles Borromeo (Scalabrini Mission)—worked in four provinces along the northern border of Ecuador and the province around the capital, Quito. The program included four key components: humanitarian assistance, social and economic integration, protection and social cohesion, and institutional capacity strengthening.

To conduct the evaluation, the CRS team chose the SenseMaker methodology. SenseMaker is a complexity-aware, narrative-based method that recognizes that people make sense of the world around them through stories about their experiences. It enables respondents to analyze and give meaning to their own experiences and allows the gathering and analysis of a large number of stories. In total, 484 project participants—including Colombians, Venezuelans and Ecuadorians who had received various services over the life of the program—participated in the evaluation.

The evaluation was framed using the Pathway to Human Development analytical framework (Figure 1 on Page 6), which proposes a pathway from emergency to recovery by providing scaled support over two or more years. Based on their responses, program participants were post-categorized into two groups: those who followed either a resilient pathway or a vulnerable pathway. The results show that participants who received support beyond the first six months of humanitarian assistance, at the median, followed resilient pathways, while those who received less than six months of support did not have enough time to recover and followed vulnerable pathways. The pathway followed by respondents was associated with changes in the four dimensions of Integral Human Development (personal well-being, livelihoods, empowerment and access to institutional services). Thus respondents who followed a resilient pathway also reported positive changes in these four dimensions.

The falls observed in the pathway were caused by multiple events that forced people to migrate and/or seek support, and their reasons varied by country of origin and gender. When comparing two types of shocks: (1) armed conflict or threats to life and freedom, and (2) economic crisis or loss of income or employment, the study found that people who experienced violence-related shocks had a steeper fall in their pathway than those who faced economic stressors. Participants in the study perceived human agency as the most important for recovery from shocks followed by financial assets. In addition, those who participated in CRS' Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) groups and received complementary support to develop entrepreneurial initiatives (training, mentorship, start-up capital and/or credit) felt that their livelihoods allowed them to cover their basic needs and to save.

Finally, the evaluation found that refugees contributed to economic development by—in order of relative importance—using local vendors, fostering innovation and creating employment.

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**Project participants faced major shocks that led to a steep fall in their pathway, but those who received support beyond the first six months of the humanitarian response, to adapt to their new situation and fully integrate into host communities, were able to recover to a better position than before the shock.**

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# Context

## GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS

At the end of 2016, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reported that 65.6 million people had been forcibly displaced worldwide by persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations.<sup>1</sup> Of these, 22.6 million were refugees, and more than half were under the age of 18. In the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants<sup>2</sup>—a set of commitments adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2016 to enhance the protection of refugees and migrants—actors committed, among other things, to:

- Support those countries rescuing, receiving and hosting large numbers of refugees and migrants
- Strengthen the positive contributions made by migrants to economic and social development in their host countries
- Improve the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance

In light of the unprecedented number of people living in exile and seeking international protection, and the commitments outlined above, the international community, including CRS, was led to evaluate the effectiveness of current programming in refugee support and to identify promising practices, not only in immediate humanitarian support, but also longer-term accompaniment for both refugees and host communities.

## HUMAN MOBILITY IN ECUADOR

The Colombian civil conflict continues to be one of the most significant crises in South American modern history. According to the Unit for Victims' Assistance and Reparation,<sup>3</sup> during the five decades of the conflict, 8.53 million people have been affected, of whom 7.26 million were forcibly displaced. Two years after the conclusion of a peace agreement between the Government of Colombia and the then Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a significant part of the population continues to suffer grave humanitarian consequences and forced displacement. The power vacuum left by the FARC's demobilization has led to territorial disputes between new and existing armed groups. The UNHCR has noted an increase in murders of, and threats against, human rights defenders and community leaders in the Pacific Coast region. In most cases, the victims are from indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. The situation is also exacerbated by the continued crisis in Venezuela that has led to an increasing number of Venezuelan migrants passing through Colombia into Ecuador. From 2014 to 2018, there were 170,169 asylum claims in the region made by Venezuelans.<sup>4</sup>

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**CRS evaluated the effectiveness of current programming in refugee support and identified promising practices, not only in immediate humanitarian support, but also in longer-term accompaniment for both refugees and host communities.**

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1. [Global trends: Forced displacement in 2016](#), UNHCR.  
2. [New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants](#), UNHCR.  
3. [Unit for Victims' Assistance and Reparation](#).  
4. [Operational Portal: Refugee Situations](#), UNHCR.

Ecuador hosts one of the largest refugee and migrant populations in South America, and is hosting displaced people from both Venezuela and Colombia. In 2017, Ecuador’s General Assembly passed the Human Mobility Law, which codified certain rights for people in need of international protection. It was welcomed by the UNHCR as an example of comprehensive protection.<sup>5</sup> The operationalization of the law, however, including procedures for new arrivals to make applications, was not initially clear.<sup>6</sup> In January 2018, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ecuador adopted a resolution that complements the Human Mobility Law.<sup>7</sup> The resolution establishes refugee and statelessness status-determination procedures, provides guidance for facilitated naturalization, and includes key provisions concerning the access of refugee and stateless people to legal residence, documentation and fundamental rights. It also established a Refugee and Statelessness Commission. Considering these political conditions, many Colombians and Venezuelans continue to migrate to Ecuador. In 2017, the UNHCR reported 5,000 asylum applications from Colombians, a 10 percent rise on 2016.<sup>8</sup> In 2017, Ecuador also received 1,530 asylum applications from Venezuelans, up from 554 in 2016.<sup>9</sup> In the first three months of 2018, the UNHCR reported that 180,000 Venezuelans had crossed into Ecuador.<sup>10</sup>

## THE CRS APPROACH TO REFUGEE SUPPORT

CRS’ pursuit of just and peaceful societies and support for refugees is grounded in the **Integral Human Development (IHD)** framework, which promotes the good of the *whole* person and of *all* people. A distinct focus of the IHD is the power of systems and structures—i.e., institutions—to shape people’s lives, leading CRS to focus on root causes and drivers of violent conflict, including unjust relationships and structures. Guided by the IHD, and by the principles of Catholic Social Teaching upon which it is based, CRS seeks to promote more equitable access to and influence on structures and systems at all levels, while also cultivating healthy relationships within and across families, communities and societies. In this evaluation, CRS looked at Integral Human Development in its different dimensions:

- **Personal well-being** (psychosocial wellbeing, physical health, social cohesion, spirituality)
- **Empowerment** (human agency, gender equity, decision-making capacity, influence and advocacy)
- **Access to institutional services** (housing, basic services, education and health)
- **Livelihoods** (food security, nutrition, income and employment)

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CRS’ pursuit of just and peaceful societies and support for refugees is grounded in the Integral Human Development framework, which promotes the good of the *whole* person and of *all* people.

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5. [UNHCR welcomes Ecuador’s new Human Mobility Law](#). UNHCR News Briefing.  
6. [Ley Orgánica de Movilidad Humana Publicada en Registro Oficial No. 938](#), February 6, 2017.  
7. [Ecuador: Instructivo para el proceso de determinación de la condición de refugiados y apátridas en el Ecuador](#), January 9, 2018.  
8. [Presentation by the Director for the Regional Bureau for the Americas and the UNHCR Standing Committee \(2018\)](#), March 5, 2018.  
9. [Venezuela situation: Responding to the needs of people displaced from Venezuela. Supplementary Appeal January–December 2018](#), UNHCR.  
10. [Situational Update: Venezuela Situation](#), March 2018, UNHCR.

## CRS' WORK IN ECUADOR

CRS began working in Ecuador in 1955, providing direct humanitarian assistance. Over the years, CRS began to shift its focus toward sustainable development, strengthening the capacity of communities to overcome the challenges they face. With the aim of supporting the integration and integral well-being of people in need of international protection in host communities, and building a dignified future for recently arrived populations as well as for vulnerable Ecuadorians, CRS implemented projects seeking to fill gaps in humanitarian response, integration and human rights. Between 2009 and 2017, CRS invested more than US\$17 million in funding from the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration from the US Department of State as well as CRS discretionary funding. The Scalabrini Mission has been CRS' primary implementing partner in Ecuador. The Mission is a community of religious and lay people whose primary aim is to support migrants and refugees around the world. In Ecuador, it is one of the most important organizations addressing human mobility, both at a public policy and operational levels. Together with CRS technical advisors in gender, advocacy and microfinance, the Mission adopted the various methodologies that were examined in this evaluation.

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Between 2009 and 2017, CRS invested more than US\$17 million in funding—from the US Department of State as well as CRS discretionary funding—in humanitarian response, integration and human rights.

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To ensure that target communities are more self-reliant, that their rights are protected and they live in dignity, the project focused on four strategic components:

- **Basic humanitarian assistance** (distribution of food and basic household items, training on nutrition and human rights, psychosocial support, emergency medical services, and orientation for the regularization of their immigrant status)
- **Social and economic integration** (promotion of Savings and Internal Lending Communities as a platform to build financial education, foster savings, provide entrepreneurship training, and facilitate access to start-up capital and credit)
- **Protection and social cohesion** (self-help groups for women affected by violence, legal and psychological assistance, youth peacebuilding activities and advocacy to combat xenophobia and discrimination)
- **Capacity building and institutional strengthening** (advocacy activities, dialogue with local authorities, and training in leadership and peacebuilding)



# Sensemaker Evaluation

CRS recognizes the complexity of the contexts in which it works, and the importance of learning and innovation to improve the impact of its programs and enhance its influence over systems and structures that affect vulnerable communities; CRS therefore uses innovative methodologies and tools for evaluation. In 2016, after nine years of programming, CRS conducted the final evaluation of its refugee support program using SenseMaker.

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SenseMaker is a powerful way to hear directly from project participants, revealing the world through their eyes.  
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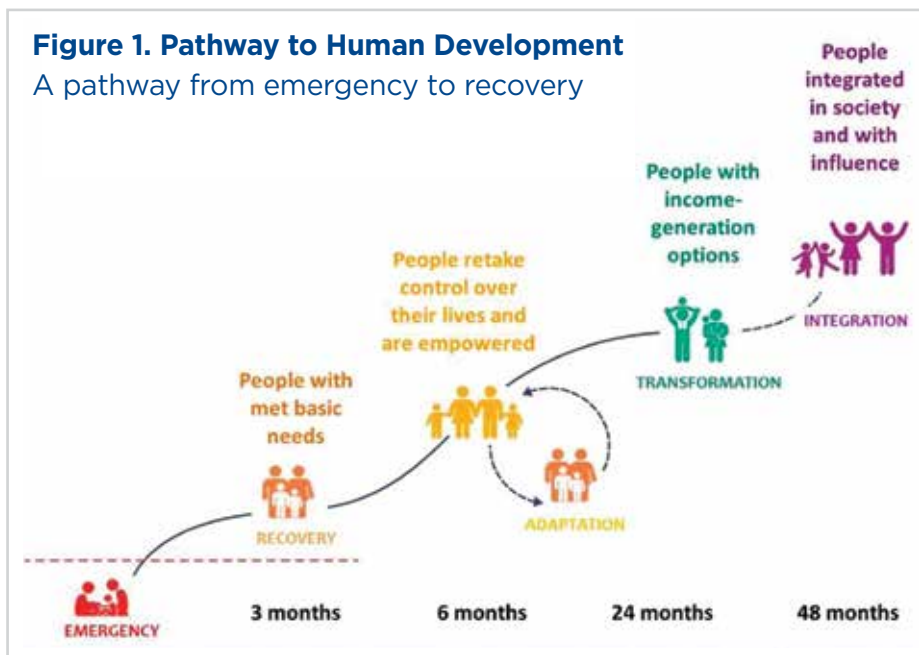
SenseMaker is a complexity-aware, narrative-based method aided by proprietary software, which can be used to conduct appraisals, monitoring processes, evaluations (baseline, midterm or final), and research studies. The Sensemaker methodology recognizes that people make sense of the world around them through stories about their experiences. Therefore, the starting point for the method is the narratives that people share about a specific experience related to the topic of inquiry. Because these short stories are usually about people's personal experiences, they help reveal what is taking place and what is important to the person sharing the experience. This makes SenseMaker a powerful way to hear directly from project participants, revealing the world through their eyes. Furthermore, the process of asking respondents to reflect on their own experiences, transfers the power of interpretation to the narrator and away from the expert. SenseMaker can be used as a standalone method or in combination with other more conventional assessment, monitoring, evaluation or research approaches.

The evaluation was framed using the Pathway to Human Development analytical framework (see Figure 1), which proposes a pathway from emergency to recovery by providing humanitarian aid to help refugees and vulnerable communities meet their basic needs. Once they have recovered, a pathway from recovery to adaptation begins as they pursue various livelihoods strategies that allow them to rebuild their assets. Once project participants have adapted to their new situation, the next stage is a transition from adaptation to transformation characterized by integration into their host communities and the fulfillment of their human potential. The evaluation asked questions about:

- **WHY** people migrate and seek support
- **HOW** the type of shock or stressor influences their pathway toward recovery
- **HOW** the pathway followed influences IHD outcomes
- **WHAT** the crucial factors that influence their pathway are
- **HOW** refugees impact local economies

**Figure 1. Pathway to Human Development**

A pathway from emergency to recovery



## METHODOLOGY

In Sensemaker, narratives are evoked by a predesigned, open-ended question called a prompt question. In this evaluation, narratives captured participants' experiences (past and present) and their perceptions of their experiences and current situation. To prompt project participants to share, they were all asked the same open-ended question:

*“Share the experience that drastically influenced you and your family’s well-being, and caused you to make the decision to come to Ecuador or ask for support for the first time at the Scalabrini Mission.”*

Narratives were collected by facilitators through direct interviews in each project location, carried out in a quiet setting selected by the beneficiaries themselves for security and privacy reasons. Before each collection process began, facilitators explained that the data collection was voluntary, anonymous and that confidentiality would be maintained. Beneficiaries were also told to tell the facilitator if they did not want to continue. Once participants had shared their stories, they were asked again for their consent for the stories to be shared.

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**The self-signification process is a way for people to make sense of their own experiences, reducing evaluator or researcher intermediation.**  
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## TOOLS

After respondents had shared their narratives, they provided additional information and insights by answering predesigned follow-up questions about the story they had shared. These questions are called signifiers. This self-signification process is a way for people to make sense of their own experiences, reducing evaluator or researcher intermediation, a feature of many qualitative methods. By using these signifiers, respondents themselves interpret and make sense of their own experiences. In other words, respondents decide what the experience means to them, providing a primary interpretation of the story and coding it.

The four types of signifiers used to facilitate the self-interpretation of the narratives encourage participants to reflect before responding—a substantial difference from conventional polls or surveys. The four types of signifiers are:

- **Slider:** A type of signifier or follow-up question in which respondents are asked to signify what happened in the experience they shared by indicating where that experience falls along a continuum between two extremes.
- **Slider with stones:** A type of signifier or follow-up question in which respondents position ‘stones’, representing different elements, perspectives or options, along a continuum between two extremes. By doing so, they make a comparative assessment of the different elements or perspectives.
- **Triad:** A type of follow-up question in which respondents signify the relative importance of three predefined elements in their experience by indicating where in a triangle their experience lies in relation to the three elements.
- **Canvas with stones:** A type of signifier in which respondents place different ‘stones’ representing different elements, perspectives or options, on a two-way matrix of interrelated continuums, representing different dimensions of a concept, belief or outcome. By doing so, they can compare various elements in two dimensions.

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Using the above signifiers, the evaluation facilitated the self-interpretation of the narratives on the actions that respondents took to cope with their situation, their responses to adapt, and their strategies to integrate into host communities.

## SAMPLE DESIGN

To determine the sample size, the study population was defined as all project participants in the five provinces of Ecuador: Pichincha, Imbabura, Sucumbíos, Carchi and Esmeraldas. The sampling frame included a list of the 9,217 active project participants in FY 2016-2017. Assuming a maximum standard deviation of 0.5 for discrete variables, and with a 95 percent confidence level and 5 percent error margin, a sample size of 480 was calculated, using the following formula:

$$N = \frac{n^2 \times 1.96^2 \times 0.5^2}{0.05 \times n}$$

The final sample was made up of 484 respondents.

In addition, in SenseMaker, the primary driver for sampling design is the need to ensure a sufficient number of stories to allow for a meaningful visual pattern analysis across all levels of priority disaggregation or sub-group of interest. For any disaggregation or voice of interest, a minimum of 80 to 100 stories is recommended for effective pattern analysis.

To identify results at different stages of project intervention, three sub-groups of interest were defined:

- **Group 1:** People who had received basic humanitarian support and services and participated in the project for less than six months.
- **Group 2:** People who had received support and services from the project for more than six months and up to two years.
- **Group 3:** People who had received support or services from the project for more than two years.

The evaluation then randomly selected a stratified sample, with a minimum of 80 people representative of each group.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Shocks and stressors

All project participants experienced shocks or stressors that presented them with considerable challenges. The main shock for Colombian and Venezuelan refugees and migrants were threats to their lives or freedom. For Colombians, those threats were caused by one or a combination of the following, in order of importance:

- Extortion from guerrilla or paramilitary groups (31%)
- Fear of being recruited or having their children recruited by these groups (23%)
- Generalized violence and insecurity (21%)
- The death of family members or relatives at the hands of illegal groups (18%)
- The desire to disassociate from illegal groups (oneself or spouse/partner) (11%)
- Coincidental confrontation (8%)

For Venezuelans, these threats were caused by:

- Generalized violence and insecurity (60%)
- Extortion (18%)
- The desire to disassociate from the governing party because of its wrongdoing (9%)
- The death of family members or relatives at the hands of illegal groups (9%)
- Opposition to the government (5%)

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The evaluation randomly selected a stratified sample, representative of each group by length of support received from the program.

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Colombian nationals faced challenges related to the armed conflict that led to their decision to migrate, while Venezuelan nationals faced challenges related to social and political conflict but also the economic crisis. In addition, the study found that, for Colombian women, domestic violence and family disintegration were also reasons to migrate. Ecuadorians faced challenges related primarily to personal conditions such as a loss of employment or income, physical or emotional aggression, domestic violence, family disintegration, and illness or death of a family member. These differences were important for the interpretation of the results of this evaluation. While Ecuadorians faced long-term stressors that gradually affected their well-being, Colombians and Venezuelans suffered severe shocks that generated a sharp fall in their well-being as they were forced to migrate.

### Pathways to recovery

Project participants' perceptions of their pathways—that is, the trajectories toward recovery—varied between feeling very vulnerable and unprotected, and having many opportunities to progress. These trajectories were categorized as one of two pathways:

- **A resilient pathway** Project participants faced a shock that caused a severe fall in their level of well-being, but perceived that they had recovered from adversity and had therefore rebounded back to their original situation or to a better one.
- **A vulnerable pathway** Project participants had an even more severe fall and perceived that they were in the process of recovery, but had not yet reached the level they were on before they experienced the shock.

To assess the pathways that project participants followed in their narratives, and how the types of shocks influenced the pathway, a slider with stones was used to help them reflect on how they felt in four different moments—before the event, immediately after, sometime after and in the present—and place their responses along a continuum between feeling “very vulnerable and unprotected” and feeling they had “many opportunities to progress.” Findings show that despite the experience of violence, human rights violations and poverty that forced mainly Colombians to flee to Ecuador and/or seek support from the project, 28 percent of the participants were later able to progress toward an improved situation with more opportunities, overcoming their vulnerable situation. Thirty-seven percent of project participants were recovering but had not yet rebounded to the situation they were in before the shock. Only 5 percent of project participants experienced a downward pathway in which their situation continued to deteriorate. At the median, project participants had a steep fall as a result of the shock or stressor faced, but were able to rebound better. The study also found that violence-related shocks led to a steeper fall on the pathway. When filtering the answers by the type of shock or stressor faced, at the median, participants who faced a violence-related shock had a steeper fall than those who faced an economic shock (illustrated by the orange V-shaped pathways in Figure 2).

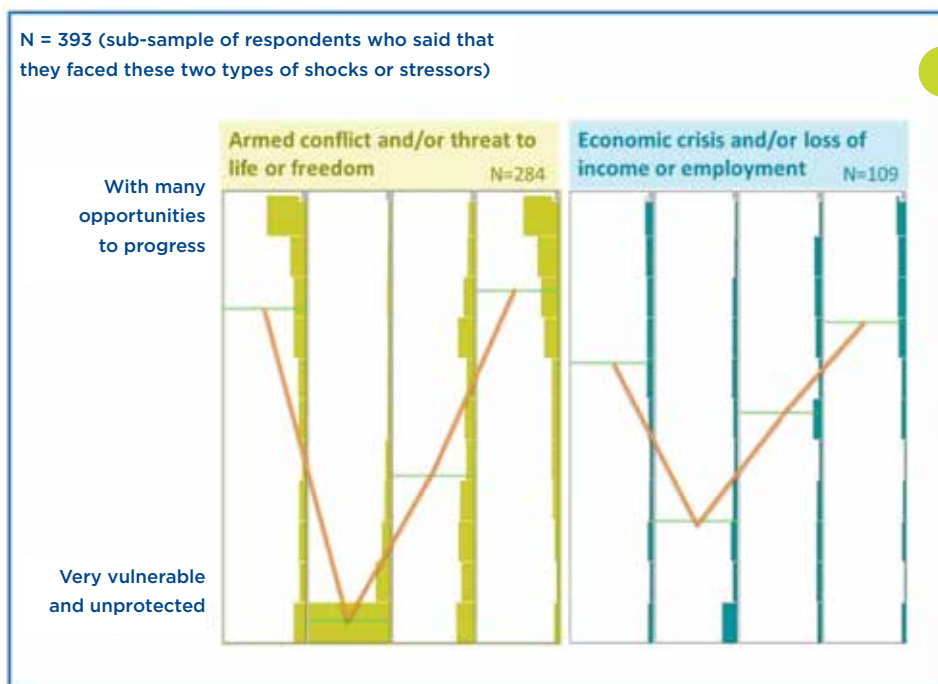
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A slider with stones helped project participants reflect on how they felt in four different moments—before the event, immediately after, sometime after and in the present—and place their responses along a continuum. This tool depicted participants' pathways from feeling 'very vulnerable and unprotected' to 'with many opportunities to progress'.

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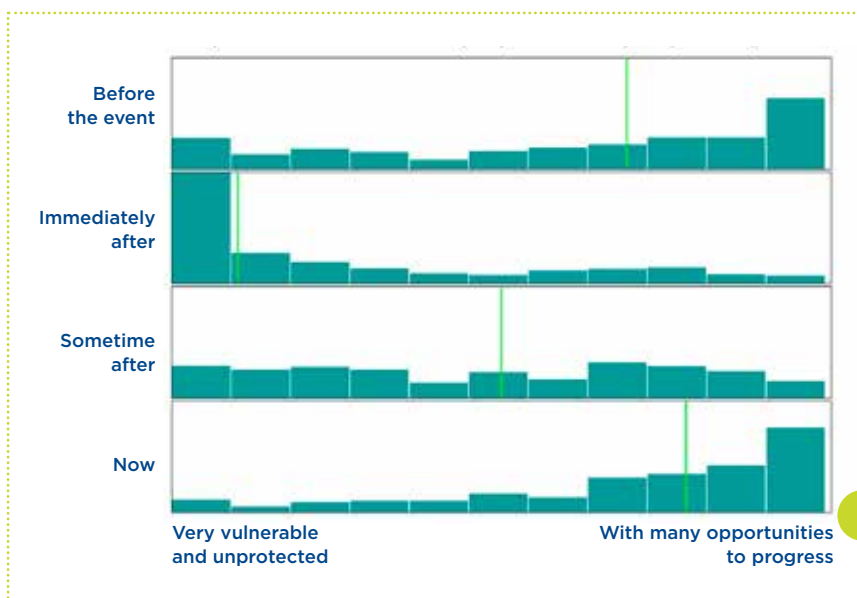
In addition, when filtering project participants by length of support received, it was observed that at the median participants who received support for more than six months after the humanitarian response, followed resilient pathways, while those who received less than six months of support, did not have enough time to recover and followed a vulnerable pathway.

**Figure 2. Pathways to recovery followed by type of shock or stressor faced**



**How to read the histogram**

The height of the bar graphs (in the illustration below) represents the number of people who responded about their experience at the points indicated on the graph (before, immediately after and sometime after the event, and now). The green line represents the median, with 50 percent of participants' responses to the left of the line and 50 percent to the right. By filtering this graph by type of shock, rotating the graphs, and connecting the median lines, the orange pathways were drawn.



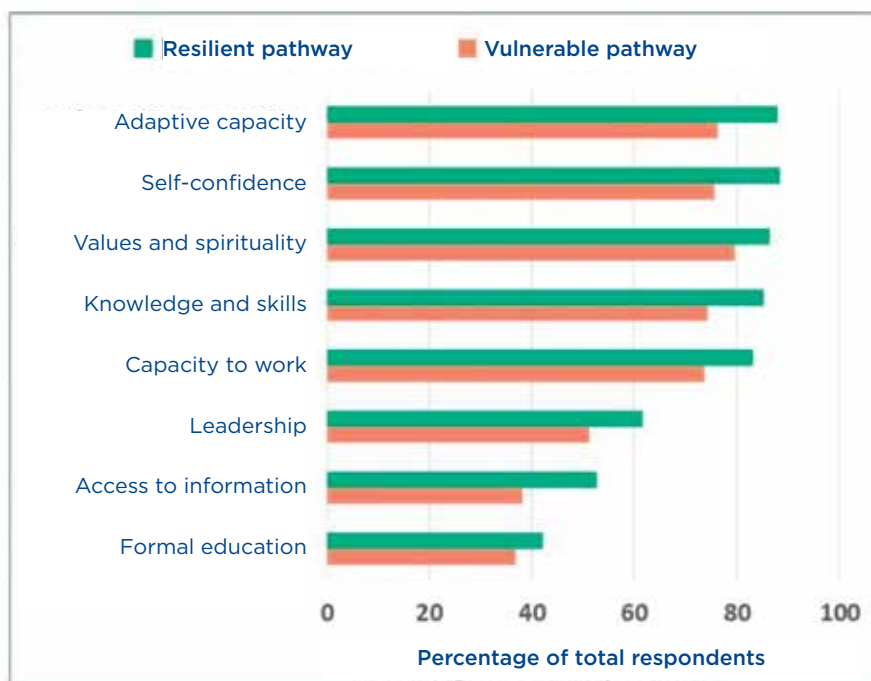
**Humanitarian assistance was key for coping** The project offered participants basic humanitarian aid to help them cope, which included the distribution of food and basic household items, training on nutrition and human rights, psychosocial support, emergency medical services, and orientation for the regularization of their immigrant status. This was considered by almost all refugees as very helpful because it relieved the pressure of meeting their basic survival needs and helped them focus on their recovery.

**The role of human and social assets in recovery** The results show that once relieved of the pressure of meeting their basic needs, refugees found that human agency played an important role in their recovery. Thus, a higher percentage of participants who followed a resilient pathway responded that these personal characteristics were important to move forward after the event that led them to migrate to Ecuador, than those who followed a vulnerable pathway. (see Figure 3). Among the elements of human agency, more than 80 percent of respondents perceived the following as most important for recovery from shocks: having adaptive capacity and self-confidence, values and spirituality, knowledge and skills, and capacity to work.

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**Among the elements of human agency, more than 80 percent of respondents perceived the following as the most important for recovery from shock: having adaptive capacity and self-confidence, values and spirituality, knowledge and skills, and capacity to work.**  
 .....

**Figure 3. The role of human agency in coping**

*Thinking about the experience you shared, which of the following personal characteristics have helped you move forward?*



N = 342 (sub-sample of Colombians and Venezuelans)

**From coping actions to adaptive responses** The project did not limit its support to the provision of basic humanitarian aid, but also implemented activities to support sub-groups of project participants to adapt to their new situation. This included the promotion of SILC groups to help build financial education, foster savings, provide entrepreneurship training, and facilitate access to start-up capital and credit. SILC group participants (40%) who received complementary support to develop entrepreneurial initiatives perceived them as helpful for adapting to their new situation and for overcoming challenges. To assess the outcome of this support, a slider was used so respondents could indicate the extent to which their current livelihoods allowed them to save to achieve their longer-term goals, or if they did not even allow them to cover their basic expenditure. Refugees who participated in SILC groups and received complementary support felt that their livelihoods allowed them to cover their basic needs and had started saving toward longer-term goals. But those who did not participate in SILC groups tended to have a harder time covering their basic expenditures (See Figure 4).

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**Project participants who joined SILC groups, and received complementary support to develop entrepreneurial initiatives, felt that their current livelihoods allowed them to cover their basic needs and start saving to achieve their longer-term goals.**

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**Figure 4. Effect of participation in SILC groups on livelihoods**

*As a result of the experience you have shared, your family's current livelihoods activities allow you to ...*



**Humanitarian aid and human development opportunities**

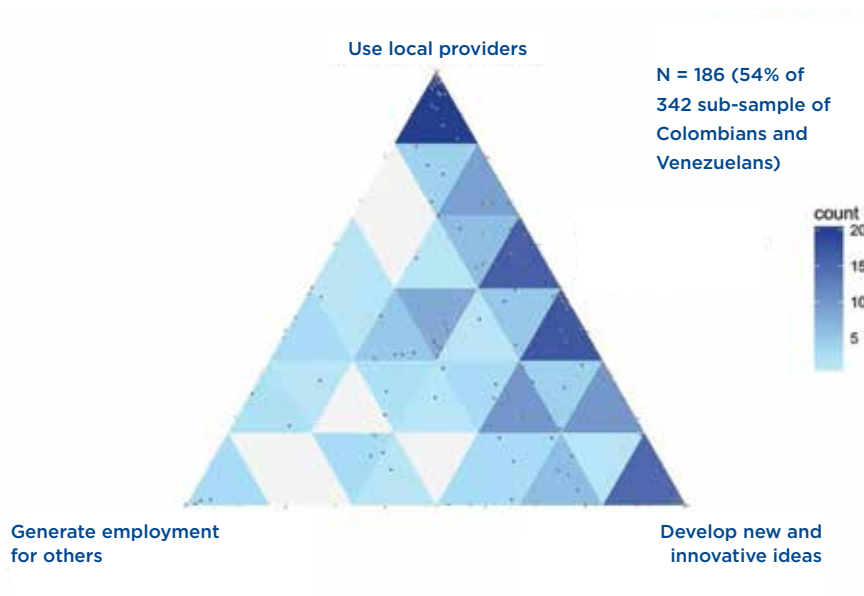
Evaluation outcomes show that to support project participants along a sustainable pathway to recovery, and to achieve the associated positive changes in the four IHD dimensions, it is important to not only provide humanitarian response (first six months), but sustained support for at least two years. It is this sustained support that provides opportunities for refugees to adapt to their new situation, transform their livelihoods and lives, and integrate into their host communities. By filtering the same slider mentioned above by the length of project support received, the results show that, at the median, people who received support for less than six months were closer on the continuum to the “not even able to cover basic monthly expenditures” extreme, while people who participated for more than two years were closer to the middle and more likely to say that they could save to achieve longer-term goals.



**Refugees' contribution to local economic development** Despite the belief that Colombian and Venezuelan refugees take jobs away from Ecuadorians, the results of the evaluation show that they contributed to local economic development. A triad was used to assess this contribution, which was made either by generating employment for others, using local providers, and/or developing new and innovative ideas. Each response is represented as a dot in the triad. The results show that 54 percent of participants responded to this signifier (each response represented by a dot on the triad), illustrating that they contributed to local economic development via one of these mechanisms (dots that are toward the corners of the triad), a combination of two of these mechanisms (dots that are along the sides of the triad) or a combination of the three (dots that are inside the triad). This means that when refugees are supported to develop their livelihoods they are not a burden on society (see Figure 5). The concentration of responses in different areas of the triad shows that the use of local providers and the development of new and innovative ideas (darker areas) played a relatively greater role than the generation of employment (lighter areas).

**Figure 5. Contribution of refugees to local economic development**

*By developing yours and your family's livelihoods, you ...*



Using a multiple-choice question about the respondent's primary livelihood activity, the evaluation found that for 65 percent it was the selling of goods and services (microentrepreneurial activities) and for 5 percent it was agricultural activities, showing that 70 percent were self-employed, reinforcing the previous finding.

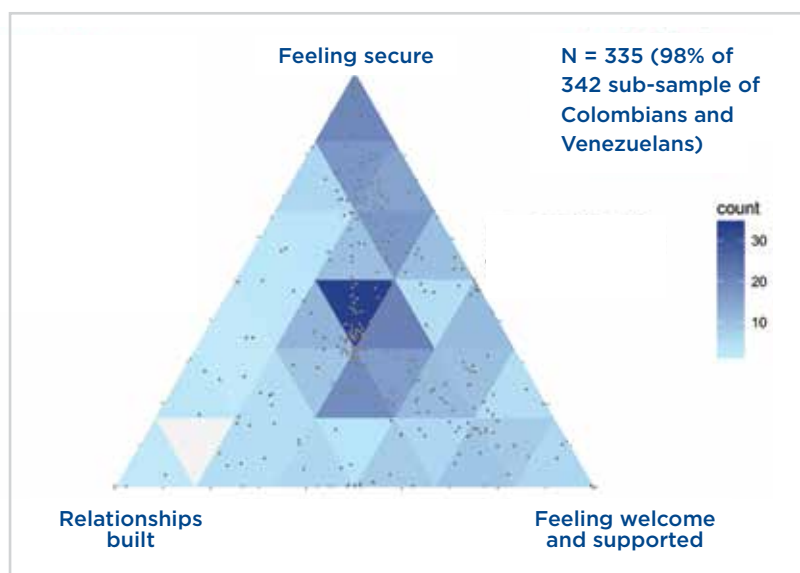
**Enabling environment for recovery** A triad (Figure 6) was also used to assess the enablers for refugees' integration into host communities, and their relative importance. The results show that almost all (98%) felt welcome, supported and secure, and built new relationships, which contributed to rebuilding their social capital and strengthening social cohesion. The tendency is to consider all three aspects as equally important, although feeling secure had a higher relative importance.

However, in a triad assessing barriers to integration, for 80 percent, a combination of violence, discrimination and, to a lesser extent, a perceived lack of solidarity were negative factors affecting their recovery. For men, discrimination was found to be the greater challenge, while women tended to report that all three challenges were equally important.

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**Refugees felt secure, welcome and supported, and were able to build new relationships, which all contributed to the rebuilding of their social capital and the strengthening of social cohesion.**  
 .....

**Figure 6. Enablers for refugee/migrant integration**

*Did you experience any of the following? If so, what helped you to overcome the experience shared?*



**Strengthening social cohesion as a transformative strategy**

The program's theory of change proposed that once people had adapted to their new situation and could pursue their livelihoods and rebuild their assets, the next stage was for them to transition from adaptation to transformation by fully integrating into their reception communities and reaching their full human potential. To this end, the program promoted self-help groups for women affected by violence, and provided psychological and legal assistance to support the healing process. It also worked with youth to promote peaceful behavior, and foster just and healthy relations between host and refugee communities. In addition, the program worked constantly through various mechanisms to combat xenophobia and discrimination.

Another slider with stones was used to assess how refugees felt on a continuum between “very dissatisfied” and “very satisfied” in relation to their integration into host communities. Results show that in order of closer to farther from the satisfaction side of the slide, they felt satisfied with the acceptance and respect they received from others, their participation and contribution to these communities, and the possibility of receiving support from these communities. However, the level of satisfaction was higher among those refugees who had received support beyond the first six months of the humanitarian response.

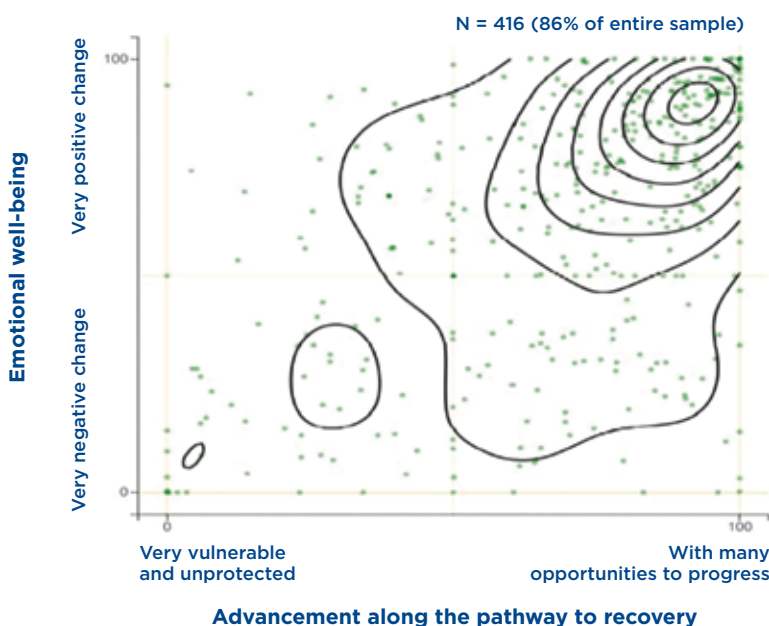
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**Project participants tended to be satisfied with the acceptance and respect they received from others, their contribution to their host communities and the possibility of receiving support from them. This level of satisfaction tended to be higher among refugees who had received support beyond the initial six months of the humanitarian response.**

.....

**Integral human development outcomes** Results show an association between the pathways followed by project participants and perceived changes in their integral human development (IHD) in its different dimensions: personal well-being, empowerment, access to institutional services, and livelihoods. SenseMaker also enables the combining of signifiers using XY plots to test assumptions on the relations between two concepts or issues. Using this feature, it was possible to observe that project participants who felt more advanced on their pathway to recovery also perceived positive changes in the different dimensions of IHD. Such XY plots can also be visualized using contour maps. Figure 7 confirms the finding by showing a strong concentration of responses in the upper-right corner. It also enables the identification of “weak signals”, as in the lower-left corner, showing that some project participants perceived that their emotional well-being changed negatively, and they felt vulnerable and unprotected. Weak signals, and not only means or medians, are an important feature of SenseMaker as they can help identify either threats that need to be addressed before they become a strong pattern, or emergent practices that may be desirable to scale up. In this case, program teams can select the narratives in the lower-left corner to better understand why this is happening, and identify interventions that could help move these participants toward the upper-right corner of the graph.

**Figure 7. Advancement along the pathway to recovery and changes in emotional well-being**



## Method matters

A final and important conclusion from the Sensemaker evaluation in Ecuador is that method matters. CRS understood that many of the participants had undergone tremendously traumatic experiences. In evaluating the program, CRS wanted to minimize, to the extent possible, the risk of causing further trauma. When the facilitators concluded the survey and asked respondents exit questions, it was found that, unlike other data collection methods, the process of responding was enjoyed and appreciated by respondents. It helped respondents reflect on their lived experience in a different way. Some respondents shared that this was the first time they had talked about what had happened to them. Others shared that they appreciated the opportunity to be listened to. Sensemaker allowed the evaluation team to remain people-centered. It promoted the active participation of respondents and helped them feel comfortable. In a human rights context, we must ensure both research quality and respect for human dignity. Sensemaker allowed CRS to achieve both.

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**Sensemaker allowed the evaluation team to remain people-centered. It promoted the active participation of respondents and helped them feel comfortable.**  
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