2023 CLA CASE COMPETITION

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Case Title:

Driving results & local ownership with systems-based CLA in Colombia

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Summary:

Migration from Venezuela has grown steadily since 2016, now with an estimated 6 million Venezuelan migrants worldwide, and approximately 2.8 million in Colombia. Under the USAID/Colombia Venezuela Response and Integration (VRI) IDIQ, we have taken a systems approach to Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA). Recognizing that the complexities of mass migration requires a whole-of-system response to ensure migrants have access to rights and that there is mutual migrant and receptor community integration. In this submission, we discuss the application of our CLA approach to our support to municipal governments under VRI's first task order, Integra (Migration Management Activity), which supports the Colombian government and multi-sectoral actors to improve their collective responsive-capacity to the challenges of migration management. Through intentional, robust, and local systems-based CLA; and through using tools like USAID's 5Rs Methodology, and co-creation; Integra has collaboratively engaged municipal governments and other system actors to understand system needs, build individual and joint capacities, and co-implement local solutions. As a result of this holistic approach, local system actors own the CLA process, and have strengthened their support to migrants, returnees, and receptor communities. Taken together, these processes have yielded substantial outcomes for Colombia. Ultimately, they offer lessons learned for impactful CLA work that may be adopted by others.

1. **WHAT: What is the general context in which the case takes place? What organizational or development challenge(s) or opportunities prompted you to collaborate, learn, and/or adapt?**

Almost three million Venezuelans have migrated to Colombia, fleeing social, economic, and political hardship in search of employment and essential services. This massive population influx, coupled with sizable numbers of Colombian returnees and internal persons displaced by 50 years of armed conflict, acutely strained public and private services and systems, particularly in urban areas and border towns with high concentrations of migrants. While Colombia has extensive experience assisting internally displaced persons, its systems were not prepared to handle incoming mass-migration. In response, USAID/Colombia designed Integra to work with the Colombian national and local governments; civil society organizations (CSOs); the private sector; and migrants, returnees, and receptor communities to address these challenges and support co-creation of the institutional, economic, and social architecture of inclusive prosperity.

Former President Duque's 2021 announcement that Colombia would grant temporary legal status to approximately two million Venezuelan migrants and support integration provided an important window of opportunity for Integra to leverage political momentum and collaborate with local actors to help strengthen services and long-term integration for migrants, returnees, and receptor communities. Fulfilling this commitment would require government; civil society; and private, local-system actors to collaborate and adapt. As such, Integra implemented a systems-based CLA approach to facilitate local actors to build on existing initiatives, tailor evidence-driven methods, and empower migrants and host communities via co-created solutions. The following responses discuss this approach from the lens of Integra's support to municipal governments, as a piece of overall local-system strengthening.

2. **What two CLA Sub-Components are most clearly reflected in your case?**

External Collaboration

CLA in Implementing Mechanisms

3. **HOW: What steps did you take to apply CLA approaches to address the challenge or opportunity described above?**

Integra's CLA approach uses local-system tools and active collaboration to "listen" to municipal systems, deeply understand their existing challenges and priorities, and co-identify local solutions within and between entities. Ultimately, this strengthens individual actor- and overall system-capacity. We outline key steps to this approach, using the example of its application with municipal governments, as follows.

Step 1: Apply local systems tools to gather evidence and launch active collaboration. Following comprehensive systems-mapping, we engaged national and municipal government offices and agencies, civil society, and other sectors—in addition to key focus groups with migrants—to gather information and evidence on a cross-section of traditional and non-traditional actors. With municipalities, we engaged public officials from our nine target cities that are home to 60% of migrants and returnees in Colombia, and held sessions to understand their 5 Rs: results, roles, relationships, rules, and resources. While context, resource, capacity, and political challenges vary dramatically by municipality and even neighborhood, we learned through this process that municipal governments' responses to migration were all largely 1) focused on humanitarian assistance, with little planning for the medium- and long-term; 2) fragmented, with unclear roles, responsibilities, data, and information; and 3) lacking shared vision and coordination mechanisms for migration governance or service delivery, including limited civil society participation. These sessions painted a picture of system actors' strengths and weaknesses, and helped develop a baseline of overall system-capacity nationally, sub-nationally, and locally. They also helped launch formal collaboration to strengthen individual and shared capacity.

Step 2: Co-create interventions, but also measurement and learning tools. Integra used information from sessions to set mutual priorities, brake down information siloes, and elevate local voices in decision-making processes. We worked with each target municipality to co-design tailored work plans and interventions to strengthen coordinated governance and service delivery. Based on local actors' awareness of the weaknesses in their collective capacity to deliver migration management, municipalities opted to work with us to co-design an instrument to measure municipal capacity-growth, drawing on USAID's Local Systems Framework and using Carnegie Mellon's Capability Maturity Model (similar to USAID's CLA Maturity Tool). Municipalities used the tool to track government capacity-growth, and later expanded it to measure holistic local systems coordination elements, sparking greater collective action, and collaboration. Municipalities and Integra also co-designed joint learning spaces like pause-and-reflect sessions and after-action reviews to learn from activity results and adapt.
Step 3: Leverage parallel capacity-building processes to strengthen overall local system capacity. Through our parallel CLA and capacity building processes with national and municipal government entities, CSOs, the private sector, and others, Integra helped build and combine individual actors' strengths in interventions. For example, public officials identified the need for migration roundtables that, with Integra support, now operate in each target city. The roundtables facilitate government and multi-sectoral coordination around migration issues, and require action and follow-up plans by mandate. To address limited civil society participation in governmental migration processes, Integra also worked with CSOs and Community Action Boards to help systematically strengthen CSOs' organizational and advocacy capacity, and community work in social cohesion, trust, and integration. As a result, CSOs now have a seat at migration roundtables in each target city. National and municipal government entities also coordinated with Integra to design a toolbox to guide all roundtable participants in matters of national and sub-national coordination, gender equity and social inclusion, learning and adapting, etc.

4. RESULTS: Choose one of the following questions to answer.

We know you may have answers in mind for both questions; However please choose one to highlight as part of this case story

A. DEVELOPM ENT RESULTS

Co-creating each element of CLA and taking a systems focus has ensured local actors' full ownership over implementation, contributing to stronger local-migration-systems with the capacity to reach consensus and develop long-term visions, and improved outcomes that benefit peoples' lives. This approach has facilitated important progress toward Integra's expected outcomes, including strengthened data management, implementation, and technical capacity. See examples below.

1. Municipal performance measurements revealed the extent of information and data dispersion regarding migration, hindering institutions' and implementing partners' ability to effectively target services. Integra facilitated local actors to consolidate primary and secondary sources (e.g., data from Community Action Boards, CSOs, the National Administrative Department of Statistics, and local governments) to produce geo-maps in target cities that illustrate migratory pressures, vulnerability levels (via the Multidimensional Poverty Index), and distances between key service locations. Municipal governments adopted these maps to design strategies to better target services toward migrant, returnee, and receptor populations (e.g., service fairs and mobile mayoral services). This contributed to the almost one million regular migration statuses that Integra has facilitated as of March 2023.

2. Our joint measurement and learning processes also highlighted the need to strengthen service quality and access. Through individual capacity building and joint coordination efforts, the national government, municipal mayoral offices, and Integra launched 11 "Intégrate" Centers in nine cities, in less than two years. The centers are elevated one-stop-shops that put a wide range of integration services at migrants' fingertips. At the centers, government entities, CSOs, and private sector actors provide ready entry-points for migrants to obtain regular migration status; register for health and education services; and seek employment, legal, psychosocial, or differentiated services (e.g., LGBTQIA tailored support). Under consolidated case management, centers mitigate barriers that migrants frequently face to accessing integrative services, such as time constraints with work and caregiving, as well as unclear service information. As of March 2023, centers have provided 79,227 individual services to 48,813 individuals. To further facilitate access to services, the cities and centers have also held a total of 20 service fairs attended by 7,910 people.

5. **ENABLING CONDITIONS: How have enabling conditions - resources (time/money/staff), organizational culture, or business/work processes - influenced your results? How would you advise others to navigate any challenges you may have faced?**

Each development context offers distinct opportunities and challenges. In Integra's case, USAID's dedicated resourcing for migration priorities, a culture of intellectual safety and support within our Integra team, and Colombia's inclusive actions that backed our implementation sails with political winds; have all been key to smoothly obtaining buy-in from local actors, and achieving early results using CLA. For example, the Colombian government laid out a strong enabling environment for Integra's work, via action to improve access to regular migration status and services (e.g., "Puntos Visibles"—government stands brought to citizens for registration), a push for "Intégrate" centers, and anti-xenophobia campaigns. However, we have also faced challenges to these enabling conditions, given uncertainty in government priorities under the new presidential administration (i.e., political delays due to personnel turnover and redefinition of priorities). Our local-systems tools and locally-owned CLA efforts facilitate Integra and our partners to adapt as needed. Through this foundation, we have collaboratively navigated recent political bottlenecks, continued to liaise with political champions that we built across the government, and adjusted technical activities to facilitate continued implementation that improves peoples' lives. In matters of migration and in other sectors, we highly recommend that other development implementors also engage local systems-oriented tools that are tailored to the particular geographic and sectoral operating context. Doing so allows implementors to listen to the local system, learn about its progress and results, and involve its stakeholders. This helps teams to best discover the effects of co-designed interventions, and adapt interventions to improve results.