SUPER
HEROES
OF DEVELOPMENT 2023

LESSONS LEARNED THAT IMPACT LIVES

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To the executing teams in Latin America and the Caribbean, who with commitment and tenacity continue to effectively implement development projects despite the challenges and adversities that test them, this publication is for and about you.

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IMPACTING LIVES, CHANGING THE FUTURE

In **Peru**, political upheaval and constant turnovers in the upper echelons of the police force threatened the continuity of a public safety strategy. In **Haiti**, violence was an obstacle to the delivery of monetary transfers to beneficiaries. In **Barbados**, public services were overwhelmed by a series of emergencies that included coronavirus, a volcano eruption and a hurricane, which diverted the efforts of a public assistance program. In **Chile**, the pandemic and social isolation interrupted the implementation of a series of in-person workshops and courses meant to help people with disabilities join the labor force. And in **Ecuador**, a steel company decided to give recyclers a generous advance to feed their supply chain, but the measure ended up distorting the price of scrap metal and reducing suppliers' profit margin.

That was the scope of some of the challenges that the five projects chosen as finalists for Superheroes of Development 2023 faced. Each year, this initiative highlights and recognizes the work of teams that execute operations financed by the IDB Group in their countries. We received more submissions than ever before for the sixth edition of this initiative. They represented 141 projects from 25 of the Bank's 26 borrower countries, which suggests that there is a growing interest among executors in sharing their experiences so that we can document them and, even more importantly, tell people about them.

Superheroes is focused on rewarding the best lessons learned from the different operations because they are stories that can inspire the effective implementation of other initiatives. To put it differently, learning about a path full of challenges that someone else has navigated offers an opportunity to follow that learning curve for the next team that faces similar or comparable obstacles while implementing a different operation.

> "Development projects tend to face difficult questions, and we need evidence, not hunches, to answer those questions,"

IDB Group President Ilan Goldfajn explained at Knowledge Week, an annual event that celebrates knowledge as a tool for generating wealth based on its transformative power for economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Superheroes of Development awards ceremony was held during that week for this very reason. The lessons learned from the projects are seen as contributions of knowledge -evidence, not hunches- that add significant value to the projects' effectiveness and efficiency.

Goldfajn has insisted that the IDB Group should once again position itself as a knowledge bank "for impact." This means that knowledge is only useful if it changes lives; if more people are safe thanks to the lessons learned from Peru; if more at-risk people improve their lives using lessons extracted from Haiti or Barbados; if more citizens with disabilities join the labor force elsewhere in the region based on Chile's experience; if more recyclers find success inspired by the case of Ecuador. The initiatives featured here are examples of how to impact lives -sometimes just one- and how this helps rewrite the present and change the future, not only for individuals, but for entire families and communities.

THE COMPUTER SYSTEM

THAT TURNED **PUBLIC ASSISTANCE** ON ITS HEAD **IN BARBADOS**

BARBADOS

SOME PERIODS ARE SO CHALLENGING THAT THEY TEST EVEN THE MOST OPTIMISTIC PEOPLE AMONG US. Barbados was facing an urgent need to reduce poverty and unemployment and faced a series of national emergencies that threatened the execution of a project supported by the IDB and executed by the national government. The project's focus was providing social assistance and creating income for the country's most vulnerable.

First, coronavirus created a social, public health and economic crisis that generally overwhelmed the capacity of assistance services in 2020. Social distancing also caused the wide-scale suspension of many economic activities, and massive layoffs worsened the unemployment situation.

Then, in the midst of the pandemic, La Soufrière volcano erupted. Tons of ash rained down in April 2021, forcing the evacuation of some 16,000 people. Less than three months later, Hurricane Elsa tore the roofs off buildings, destroyed crops and demolished electricity infrastructure. The situation forced many government officials to turn their attention to the emergency and spend less time on the activities of this specific project, which, as we have noted, focused on income creation and the management of various social benefits.

An additional challenge that arose was providing basic training in reading, writing and mathematics so that the most vulnerable members of the community could access technical training programs -which were also offered as part of the project- and would have the skills necessary to aspire to better job opportunities. The instruction offered in this training includes basic skills like filling out a form or following instructions. The issue they came up against was widespread refusal from people who were so discouraged and desperate that they decided not to participate in the training. They had no income, no food and no particular skills.

MORE THAN 20 SOCIAL PROGRAMS
ON A SINGLE PLATFORM

The government knew that it was important to have a comprehensive information system to improve the delivery of services to the population. Amidst the meteorological and economic problems that arose during the first few years of the project, they developed a platform to facilitate the government's administration of assistance services and simplify the processes that people had to complete in order to access assistance.

« According to a spokesperson for the project,**"THERE ARE SO MANY BUREAUCRATIC PROCESSES THAT IT PREVENTS PEOPLE FROM GETTING TO WHERE THEY NEED TO BE."** »

This led them to hire professionals to develop the computer system PULSE, Poverty Reduction Utilizing Labor and Social Empowerment. One of the system's key characteristics is its inter-institutional operability. It allowed professionals to cross-reference data and services from over 20 assistance programs in Barbados -including job training and intermediation entities. This facilitates coordinated and timely decision-making across agencies. By integrating strategies and databases, public entities strengthened their capacities, including their responses, coordination, monitoring and accountability.

Even better, PULSE allows households to request and receive the services they need through a single, user-friendly digital platform. They are no longer forced to complete a different process at each agency to access services that range from monetary benefits for food and education to legal assistance and childcare. "It is a centralized system that includes all of the programs so that people can seek out and receive any service they need," government representatives explain.

TEMPORARY JOBS FACILITATE PARTICIPATION IN TRAINING COURSES

A different intervention involved the challenge of generating income and offering job training opportunities to people who, unmotivated because of their limitations and skeptical about the future, were unemployed and chose not to enroll in the available training programs.

There were even some who showed interest at the outset but gave up along the way.

« **"SOME PEOPLE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANT TO BE SEEN AS IMPORTANT, AS A PERSON WITH POTENTIAL,"** the initiative's executors explain. »

They decided to use the Temporary Employment Program and offered fixed-term jobs in the public and private spheres that would provide income to all participants. As part of this strategy, the executors offered various training courses and support services during the period of the work contracts. This allowed the beneficiaries to strengthen their skills -both hard and soft- and to increase their motivation and opportunities to find jobs moving forward.

The initiative's promoters recall that personalized monitoring has been essential to their efforts, as demonstrated by the case of a mother of eight who earned her culinary arts degree: "We sat down to talk with her, walked with her, prayed with her and laughed with her. We knew what she had to offer, and through that process we were able to recognize her passion for cooking. The course that she took allowed her to prepare better meals for her family. She felt empowered! Helping people is not just about financial matters. It is also a question of providing emotional support and the importance of recognizing them."

The executing team believes that every person who changes their life with the help of social assistance or skills acquired through a job training program does much more than rewrite their own story: "These programs are not just a chance to change a person's life. They represent an opportunity to break the cycle of poverty and transform the future of entire families and future generations."

BECAME AN OPPORTUNITY TO REACH A WIDER AUDIENCE IN CHILE

THE PANDEMIC

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According to the National Study on Disability (2015), 20% OF CHILEANS over the age of 18 had some sort of disability. Only 4 out of 10 of them -over 2.6 million people- had recently engaged in any sort of productive activity. In addition, their monthly income was between 30 and 38% lower than that of other workers. The first case refers to those with a "mild to moderate" disability. The second refers to those with a "severe" condition.

C H I L E

These statistics basically suggest a lack of knowledge and the stigmatization of individuals who could perfectly well be productive members of the country's labor force. In an effort to give individuals with disabilities the opportunity to work, in 2017, Chile approved Law 21015, which established a clear mandate: public agencies and companies with at least 100 employees would be required to fill at least 1% of their positions with individuals with disabilities. But meeting that requirement involved more than a law. A comprehensive strategy was needed to allow the various labor intermediation stakeholders to prepare themselves and properly train both potential employees and the organizations that would employ them. Hiring individuals with disabilities required preparatory work raising awareness, providing training and making changes, among other things.

The result was the Chilean Productivity Agreement, a public-private platform for strengthening collaboration among the entities responsible for providing labor training and facilitating hires. The executing unit, Fundación Descúbreme, developed a pilot for the Metropolitan Region in early 2020. As part of the strategy, they designed a knowledge and qualification transfer program for organizations involved in job training and intermediation. Specifically, they created a series of courses and workshops that they were ready to offer, but they came up against an unforeseen obstacle: coronavirus and lockdown measures. This meant that training activities that had been designed to be held in-person could not be offered that way.

They also faced two other challenges that they had anticipated since the design phase. First, they lacked current statistical information. In fact, they were using statistics on disabilities from a 2015 survey -the same study cited at the beginning of this story- until 2022. That made it more difficult to design targets and indicators because they needed reference data to know where they were starting from and how far they could go. In addition, there was to be a change in government. The leadership turnover in various entities paralyzed some processes and threatened to throw the initiative's execution off track because several key partners are public entities.

A LACK OF STATISTICS AND A MANDATE TO PRODUCE THEM

IN RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGE POSED BY CORONAVIRUS, THE EXECUTORS MADE A RADICAL DECISION: they reformulated all of the courses and workshops for employers and intermediaries -such as foundations, consulting firms, municipalities and training agencies- so that everyone could access the planned trainings virtually.

After they digitized the content, they discovered something else. It wasn't another obstacle, but an opportunity: they could use the virtual materials to create online courses, multiplying their scope through some of the entities' web platforms. For example, the National Training and Employment Service *(Servicio Nacional de Capacitación y Empleo,* SENCE) included a course on its platform to train rapporteurs and instructors to teach exercises oriented towards individuals with disabilities. The initiative's executors note that with these virtual courses, "We leave installed capacity in agencies that have a role in the government related to training and creating job opportunities for people with disabilities."

On the other hand, in order to improve the quality of available statistics, the executing unit signed key agreements regarding access to information with several agencies, the most important of which was the agreement signed with the Social Development Ministry. This allowed the unit to obtain data related to employment, disability and social security, which were key to the execution of a subsequent study undertaken to assess the impact of Law 21015, which required businesses to hire at least 1% disabled people. The study collects and cross-references databases and interviews with stakeholders from the ecosystem. "We have contributed to knowledge creation by producing important statistics that we make available to decision-makers," the project's representatives note.

CONSIDERING CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT WITHOUT HALTING THE PROJECT'S EXECUTION

Given that it is a public-private partnership initiative, the Chilean Productivity Agreement had to implement a strategy that would allow it to maintain the continuity of its activities despite the upcoming change in leadership as a result of the election of a new government.

The project's design thus included the creation of a Technical Committee tasked with holding discussions and making decisions. The committee's membership would not be drawn from senior leadership, but would instead be comprised of mid-level officials who would remain in their positions alongside the leadership that would be replaced at other levels. The committee allowed them to maintain alliances and continue to execute processes during the presidential transition.

Fundación Descúbreme representatives proudly highlight the results of these efforts: "The Chilean Productivity Agreement has left its mark, designing and implementing training routes for key stakeholders in the ecosystem. Over 1,600 people with disabilities have been trained, 600 businesses have been strengthened and over 200 rapporteurs have been certified through our partnership with SENCE." In addition, disability

and inclusion awareness training has been implemented with nearly 800 public officials. The Foundation's representatives explain that this is key "for generating a paradigm shift regarding the potential of people with disabilities."

The executors are sure that this is just the beginning: "Our project is regional, so we will continue to expand the alliance of stakeholders in order to achieve inclusion and productivity in every region of Chile." As part of that goal of reaching new places, they now have tools and knowledge that they initially lacked, including virtual content, fresh statistics and a mid-level leadership structure that, they now know, serves to maintain execution during changes in the central administration.

REGULATORY FLEXIBILITY:

A VEHICLE FOR THE FORMALIZATION OF ECUADOR'S RECYCLING SECTOR

ECUADOR

ADELCA, ECUADOR'S LEADING STEEL COMPANY AND A KEY PLAYER IN THE STEEL INDUSTRY, IS ONE OF THOSE COMPANIES THAT BEAR THE BURDEN OF RESPONSIBILITIES THE SIZE OF THEIR SUCCESS.

Steel has been strategic for Ecuador's economy because of the important role that it plays in the infrastructure, energy and manufacturing sectors. However, in 2015, Adelca had just one plant, and it was operating at maximum capacity. Estimates suggested that there would be a 600,000-ton deficit in steel per year by 2030.

IDB Invest supported the construction of an additional Adelca plant, focusing its support on the development of a sustainable supply chain for scrap metal, its main input. The initiative included strengthening the Recyclers' Club, a model designed to contribute to the progress of recyclers. Since its creation in 2011, its membership has quadrupled. The company began to buy scrap metal from recyclers without intermediaries, offering them better prices and making them loyal suppliers.

One of the recyclers in this case is Bonifacio, better known as "Uncle Boni." He has worked 40 of his 68 years in the recycling sector. Just before he reached retirement, he was fired from the company he had worked for for three decades transporting scrap metal and categorizing materials. "He founded his own company using his small severance pay," Adelca representatives explain. "He was the 'driver-buyer' and used a very basic truck. Day after day, he would scrap metal and buy materials that he later sold to an intermediary."

However, the company's representatives note, "They didn't pay Uncle Boni enough to cover his expenses" because "wholesale suppliers were looking for a higher profit margin and lowered the purchase price a lot." That was when, on the advice of a relative, Bonifacio contacted Adelca to become a company supplier.

REALITY CHALLENGES
GOOD INTENTIONS

The company's side of the story is more complex and was marked by several challenges. First, the development of the Recyclers' Club came up against a major legal barrier: As a private firm, Adelca must require its purveyors to issue invoices. In many cases, small-scale recyclers didn't even have ID cards, which meant that they had no way to issue receipts for sales.

THE LACK OF ACCESS TO FUNDING SOURCES ALSO BLOCKED MANY OF THE RECYCLERS FROM JOINING THE PROJECT.

As they did not have bank accounts or sufficient working capital, they did not have the resources they needed to collect scrap metal to sell to Adelca. In that context, the company decided to pay them a monthly advance equivalent to 100% of the scrap metal that the recyclers committed to procure.

However, what was initially a measure designed with the best of intentions ended up becoming an obstacle. By circulating more money in the market -because of the monthly advances-, the price of scrap metal that the recyclers purchased increased. This in turn reduced their profit margins. In fact, some even used the advance to purchase other recycling materials -like paper or plastic-, which was not part of the agreement with Adelca.

Rather than sitting on their hands, the initiative's executors took steps to remedy the situation. First, they contacted the Internal Revenue Service, the Ecuadorian entity responsible for requiring and monitoring commercial invoices. They engaged in a "binding consultation" to address what to do with the aforementioned requirement. By starting this dialogue, they allowed a broader discussion to take place that resulted in a plan: it was agreed that, for four years, recyclers could keep records of scrap metal transactions without having to issue traditional invoices.

TODAY, ALL RECYCLERS' CLUB MEMBERS ISSUE INVOICES

The plan allowed the company to purchase material from recyclers, who in turn committed to working towards formalizing their businesses, making their work more dignified and promoting recycling. Meanwhile, they still had to address the problem that had been caused by the well-intentioned advance.

The executors decided to adjust the amount. They would pay 85% of the advance, which they calculated was equivalent to the capital necessary to do the work. The remaining 15% would be paid when the scrap metal was delivered. According to Adelca estimates, this would allow recyclers to cover their family's basic needs for things like healthcare, education, nutrition and housing. They also adjusted the advance payment schedule from monthly to weekly, which kept larger amounts from circulating in the market and distorting the price.

"YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW HAPPY AND EXCITED HE WAS," ADELCA'S REPRESENTATIVES RECALL, REFERRING TO BONIFACIO.

"We helped Uncle Boni to take his first steps towards getting out of the informal economy, providing the training needed to complete his first invoicing procedure.... In the end, thanks to his efforts, a price that didn't involve middlemen and the club's support, Uncle Boni opened his own store."

This is just one of thousands of stories. Between 2014 and 2018, the number of scrap metal collectors increased from 7,000 to over 9,200, and the volume of scrap metal collected jumped from 193,000 tons to 215,000. Today, all Recyclers' Club members issue commercial invoices, which makes them eligible for bank loans.

The team at Adelca believes that people like Bonifacio are the true "superheroes of development" because of their ability to multiply the effects of a program like this one: "Uncle Boni has created job opportunities in his store, hiring primary recyclers, who are key to this business." His story is a powerful reminder of how a project can do more than change one life: it can transform entire communities and the future of new generations.

SUPER
HEROES
OF DEVELOPMENT 2023
WINNER
2023

THE **KEYS TO NAVIGATING** THE **OBSTACLE** OF **VIOLENCE IN HAITI**

MOBILE PHONES AND VIRTUAL WALLETS:
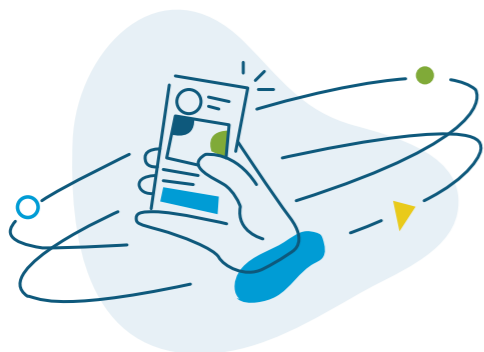
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HAITI

HAITI IS THE POOREST COUNTRY IN THE AMERICAS. Experts believe that some **4.3 million people -1 in 3-** go hungry there. One of the many factors that contribute to this problem is the loss of nearly **5,800 hectares of farmland** in the country's main farming region, Artibonite, due to the forced displacement of local residents because of the threat of gang activity in certain areas.

In an effort to improve food security, the IDB has supported various programs executed by FAES, the Haitian government's Economic and Social Assistance Fund *(Fonds d'Assistance Économique et Sociale)*. One of the plans supported by the Bank involves facilitating temporary income that provides a basic level of support to ensure that the most vulnerable can survive. These include young people known as "ninis" (who neither attend school nor work), female heads of household, and households with one or more members who have disabilities.

To bring this to fruition, unconditional transfer plans (in cash and in kind) have been implemented along with conditional transfer strategies. One example of the latter is "cash for work," a program that offers resources to fund community projects (such as local initiatives) that community members design and execute themselves. Community members can also find jobs through the initiatives and secure compensation.

Adélie is one participant in the "cash for work" program. She is a 24-year-old single mother who is unemployed, has no formal education and found an opportunity through the FAES initiative. "Her neighborhood floods every rainy season, so we hired her and other local young people to work on a clean-up and drainage initiative," the project executors explain. They add that the work is especially difficult in a context of danger and instability. "Adélie is very proud of her work, but the challenges are enormous. Threats by armed gangs, shootings and organized violence are all part of daily life."

Gangs and insecurity pose a challenge to the execution and monitoring of transfers to specific individuals and communities. There is a risk that monetary support may not reach beneficiaries, but fall into the wrong hands through coercion.

FINANCIAL TECHNOLOGIES WITH A HIGH POTENTIAL FOR PENETRATION

"IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR US TO UNDERSTAND THE BEST WAY TO WORK IN THIS CONTEXT," FAES executors explain. "We have had to adjust our schedules and material transport logistics based on conflicts between armed groups."

But it was more than that. Financial technology penetration is low in Haiti, which discouraged people from using virtual channels to make transfers. According to the 2017 Global Findex Database, less than 19% of people over the age of 15 received payments through digital channels that year. To make matters worse, many people who live in Haiti are undocumented, which makes it difficult to identify and reach them.

In fact, one underlying issue was the lack of adequate public records. There was little organized and detailed information on various at-risk groups within the population, which prevented the government from reaching them using differentiated public programs. Given that nearly half of all Haitians needed emergency food assistance at that time, finding a specific group of beneficiaries could be like looking for a needle in a haystack. As such, with the IDB's support, an exhaustive consultation process was conducted with the communities to present the goals of the intervention -and the population that they wanted to reach-, simultaneously encouraging people to take ownership of the project. "We had a common enemy: poverty," FAES executors recall. The dialogue process allowed them to identify a solution to the challenge of ensuring that monetary transfers actually reached the intended beneficiaries: the use of virtual wallets, a financial technology that has become increasingly popular in various parts of the world.

BUILD ON WHAT WAS ALREADY BUILT: A WEAK BUT EXISTING DATABASE

The project used virtual wallets managed by the two cell phone companies with the greatest coverage in Haiti.

These platforms allowed people to receive and send money using daily transactions that were reflected in digital "pockets" on their cell phones without the need for smart phones. The initiative had the additional advantage of promoting financial inclusion. The goals included reaching a total of 320,000 people with unconditional transfers -up to four monthly payments per family of up to $100 each, which was estimated to cover 70% of the basic grocery basket of an average five-person household.

When it came to the lack of public records, they decided to build on what was already built. They invested in expanding the scope of a lacking but existing database: SIMAST, the Information System of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor *(Système d'Information du Ministère des Affaires Sociales et du Travail).*

It was improved as a "targeting" tool, or instrument for segmenting and identifying different at-risk groups. Strengthening the system allowed executors to add 87,000 households to the government databases, and an additional 82,500 are in the process of being added. This will also make it easier to identify those who are most at-risk during future crises.

This process was supported by the use of CommCare, a virtual open code platform, which allowed them to create a large-scale IT management solution to profile and track all of the beneficiaries of the various payments. Monitoring how much each person receives and when they receive it allows the project team to supervise the program's progress more adequately. "This is the first time that the government has had a single platform for

supervising social assistance, and we want to expand its use. We used to have to utilize each operator's tool, which made centralized oversight impossible," the executors add.

Thanks to her work with her neighborhood's sanitation and drainage project, Adélie has been able to save money and launch a small business that allows her to support herself and her child. FAES spokespeople explain that this story "is one of many that highlight the importance of community employment and local participation in the improvement of living conditions, particularly in difficult contexts."

SUPER HEROES OF DEVELOPMENT 2023
WINNER 2023

FOR THE **CONTINUITY** OF A **SECURITY PROGRAM** IN **PERU**

THE EMPOWERMENT OF POLICE BASES

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# P E R U

SECURITY IS A WIDESPREAD AND GROWING ISSUE IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN. According to World Bank calculations, the region represents 8% of the global population and 37% of homicides. Addressing this challenge is key for allowing citizens to be and see themselves as safe in their communities.

According to a 2022 survey, over 85% of Peru's population feels unsafe. In a different study, government officials found that 57% of homicides and 31% of robberies take place in just 6% of the country's districts (114 out of 1,874). In this context, the central government approved the project "Improving Services for Preventing and Addressing Crime in Communities At-Risk for Crime and Violence."

According to the executors of this strategy, "The growing insecurity threatens every aspect of our lives: where we live, where we walk, what time we go out. It is a reality that impacts every part of development." They add, "Our mission is to return Peru's 100 most dangerous neighborhoods to their residents and give them the benefit of feeling safer." More specifically, the plan is designed to reduce crime rates and increase the effectiveness of intelligence services in the police stations located in the areas with the highest levels of criminality. The entity Perú Seguro 2025 was created to implement it. This executing unit is part of the Interior Ministry, and its work focused on strengthening the investigation and prevention capacities of the police reporting to the ministry.

"We are changing the services provided in police stations in the communities that are most vulnerable to violence," the initiative's spokespeople explain. "We are changing the way that we train these police officers to align with today's challenges, and we are incorporating technology in order to improve the transparency, access and effectiveness of police services."
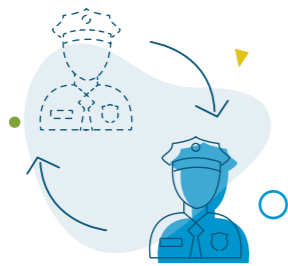
"APOLITICAL" RELATIONSHIPS IN CONTEXTS OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY

As in any development project, what is designed on paper is quickly challenged by reality. One of the main obstacles that arose in this case was the political turbulence that was caused by constant changes in the security sector senior leadership. From 2021 to 2022, Peru's minister of the interior changed 10 times, an average of once every two and a half months. As a result, there were nine general commanders and seven chiefs of police in just two years. The constant changes threatened the project's continuity because new officials refused to approve hires resulting from ongoing processes or tried to change the objectives and interventions that had already been stipulated.

> « "WORKING WITH POLICE IS NOT THE SAME AS WORKING WITH A HEALTH OR TRANSPORTATION SECTOR OFFICIAL," »

the spokespeople of Perú Seguro 2025 warn. "Police reforms are not made for the police; they are made with the police. I once heard someone say, 'The police only speak police.' It has been important and necessary to build trust and lasting relationships that allow us to work together."

The construction of solid and somewhat "apolitical" relationships has lent continuity to the project in times of instability. The key has been involving police agents and specialized staff in administrative and decision-making spaces within the project in order to ensure the continuity of the activities. "We work shoulder to shoulder with the mid-level leadership of Peru's National Police," the executors explain.

This has allowed them to accomplish two things. First, they have been able to move forward with the implementation of the initiative separate from the current minister or leadership. Second, they improved the quality of the project thanks to the contributions of police agents -who have first-hand knowledge of the reality on the ground- and specialized staff -experts in technical aspects. The continuity, knowledge and empowerment of the mid-level management team has reassured incoming police officials and helped them to understand the project in its entirety, thus avoiding delays or extra procedures due to misgivings or concerns.

NO EXTENSIONS OR POSTPONEMENTS IN SPITE OF THE CRISES

Another measure has been key to the project's success. The executors identified a pattern that allowed them to anticipate some predictable changes in leadership: those that tend to occur over the course of the first quarter each year.

They concluded that it was counterproductive to schedule the signing of management reports or authorization of adjudications for that part of the year. On the one hand, outgoing officials tend to leave certain decisions in the hands of their successors. On the other, new officials avoid signing documents pertaining to processes that preceded their tenure, which causes them to be put on hold until those officials can be fully brought up to speed. This led the executing unit to organize the processes in a way that allowed them to complete reports, calls for submissions and adjudications prior to the end of each year, thus closing out cycles in advance with officials that they knew would be replaced in the coming months.

These measures have been so effective that implementation times for the program continued as scheduled in spite of various social and political crises, and there are no plans to request a postponement or extension. Only a small percentage of the initiatives that the IDB supports can say the same. This is the result of certain noteworthy levels of execution. Even prior to the end of 2023, more than 80% of the budget projected for all of 2024 had been awarded, which guarantees the development of the strategy.

There is no question that this experience can inspire other Latin American and Caribbean governments to implement security strategies that can come to fruition regardless of changes in upper leadership. "We have learned to make progress together with the police," Perú Seguro 2025 representatives explain. "In complex areas like security, the IDB offers important added value, and we are demonstrating that we, as a country, can do this."

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OF DEVELOPMENT 2023

11 LESSONS LEARNED
FROM SUPERHEROES OF
DEVELOPMENT 2023

LESSONS WITHIN REACH
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LESSONS WITHIN
REACH FOR EVERYONE:

11 LESSONS LEARNED FROM
SUPERHEROES OF DEVELOPMENT

When someone clears a path, they don't just make their own journey easier. They also allow everyone who comes after them to move past that point without stopping. We are looking for something similar when we share learnings from development projects: we allow other initiatives to move forward thanks to the knowledge generated by someone else. We extracted the following list of 11 lessons from the stories of the five Superheroes of Development 2023 finalists whose cases are described in this publication:

BARBADOS

- A series of unexpected crises overwhelmed the capacities of the Barbadian government: coronavirus, then the eruption of a volcano and finally a hurricane. Due to these emergencies, the government was forced to divert resources from the project that was designed to generate income for the most vulnerable and increase efficiency in the administration of aid. But despite these challenges, they managed to introduce an interinstitutional and interoperable information management system named PULSE, which brings the services offered through over 20 state social programs together in a single place. The experience showed that when government entities face a significant increase in demands and tasks -which they must respond to quickly and adequately-, they can turn to robust IT platforms. These serve two purposes in such situations. First, they allow them to respond to beneficiaries in a timely manner through a single channel used to process the support that various institutions require. Second, governments can centralize updated data from various sources and, based on this, make efficient decisions and transparently report on their progress.

- In the development of the training program, they determined that many people with no job experience decided not to participate due to a lack of motivation. They understood that people who lack minimum competencies and experience were not self-confident and thus did not take advantage of available courses. They decided to offer temporary jobs -which do attract people because they include compensation- and offer training during the contract periods. Considering the above, the development of intermediation strategies directed at people with insufficient minimal skills should include leveling courses offered while work contracts are being completed. As participants generate income, they strengthen their skills and become more confident about potential job vacancies.

CHILE

- The pandemic and resulting social distancing measures forced executors to digitize a series of courses and workshops that had initially been designed as in-person experiences. The goal was to train labor intermediation stakeholders -individuals who would be responsible for training people with disabilities and the organizations that would hire them. This allowed them to use the content on web platforms, thus multiplying their reach. The experience led us to the conclusion that when labor intermediation ecosystem organizations are trained virtually, the courses and workshops have the advantage of becoming part of the digital libraries of various entities, which makes them available to more users.

- The project did not have up-to-date statistical information and lacked access to databases on topics such as employed people with disabilities. This meant that detailed knowledge of the labor context of this population was not available, which made it difficult to establish indicators and goals. In other words, it was difficult to propose an arrival point without knowing the starting point. To address this, the executors signed information access agreements with key entities and conducted their own statistical study on labor inclusion of individuals with disabilities. Given the above, it is recommended to invest in specific data research and production strategies in similar cases so that they can contribute to the baselines used to develop objectives.

- Chile's government transition led executors to take measures to prevent the initiative from being suspended given that changes in leadership often implicate replacements of high-profile officials, which can in turn cause delays in some processes. A Technical Committee was formed to address the matter. Its members were specialized mid-level officials with decision-making power who ensured that the project would move forward without having to wait for new leaders to be installed. This experience suggests that decision-making spaces can be "institutionalized" during political transitions using second-tier hierarchies so that projects are not interrupted or delayed.

ECUADOR

- Adelca, Ecuador's leading steel company, proposed developing a network of scrap metal suppliers and increasing their loyalty by offering to pay more. The initiative serves as an example of how to simultaneously pursue social and corporate goals. The company faced a legal challenge along the way: it had to require recyclers to submit invoices, but they were unable to do so because the sector has high levels of informality. Adelca decided to work with authorities at the Internal Revenue Service, which offered the suppliers a four-year grace period during which they were exempt from issuing invoices. Projects that face the challenge of formalizing specific groups of workers can team up with officials to offer a temporary loosening of legal and tax requirements in exchange for workers pledging to professionalize their activities.

- The project executors recognized the importance of offering an advance during the process of creating the Recyclers' Club, which was to serve as a mechanism for securing a sustainable scrap metal supply. They decided that the money would allow recyclers to access the working capital that they needed to get the scrap metal that they would resell to Adelca. But this caused a problem: by giving everyone a 100% monthly advance, they distorted the price of scrap metal because greater flows of money increased the prices and lowered recyclers' profit margins. Some also used the advance to buy and resell materials that were not part of the agreement. This was solved by making the disbursements weekly instead of monthly and by lowering the percentage of the advances to 85%. They estimated this to be the amount necessary to do the recycling work and that the other 15%, the final payment, was the earnings. This suggests that advances should be designed using a process that involves anticipating the impacts in similar cases involving sectors that are moving towards formality and that the amounts should be adjusted throughout the process in order to prevent causing changes in the market.

HAITI

- The execution of a monetary transfer program in Haiti was undermined by various factors ranging from criminal gangs that could intercept the resources to undocumented beneficiaries who were difficult to find. Limited use of digital tools discouraged the idea of utilizing electronic disbursements. In response, the executing unit partnered with Haiti's two main mobile phone companies. Each of them was responsible for managing their mobile wallets -applications that allow digital transactions to be completed without the use of cash. This facilitated the safe disbursement and systematic monitoring of resources and the registration of undocumented beneficiaries because each person had to provide the basic information necessary to acquire a SIM card in order to use the virtual wallet. In similar situations, when it is impossible to use financial channels, we suggest partnering with companies or entities with significant network coverage that can facilitate the electronic transfer of social assistance resources as well as efforts to identify and reach undocumented people.

- FAES, the project's executing unit, did not have a robust information system that would allow it to reach Haiti's various groups of at-risk individuals, which made it difficult to find them and offer them specific programs. The project leaders decided to invest in strengthening SIMAST, the Information System of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor *(Système d'Information du Ministère des Affaires Sociales et du Travail)*. Though the platform had insufficient data, it was already operational, which allowed them to build on existing infrastructure and avoid starting from zero. They also used an open code computer application to design a solution for tracking monetary transfers. This case shows that projects can leverage previously developed and existing solutions, particularly those that are free and open access, to improve weak or outdated social information systems. The goal was to nurture more complex databases, such as those that include and compare healthcare, education and housing conditions in the populations to be targeted using different programs.

PERU

- Peru's constant political and police upheaval threatened the continuity of a security program. In response, the initiative's executors empowered police bases and technical staff to make administrative decisions. This meant that the project's progress would depend on them and not higher profile figures whose futures were uncertain. The process showed that it is beneficial to delegate high-level responsibilities to mid-level staff in contexts of political instability. Such an approach allows initiatives to move forward swiftly and ensures that experts implement ongoing strategies.

- One opportunity that the executors identified was that certain transitions in police leadership could be anticipated. These changes tended to take place during the first quarter of each year. Keeping this in mind allowed them to recognize that it was best to complete key administrative procedures prior to that period (for example, approvals of important disbursements). If they waited until the quarter in which leadership shifts occurred to do so, they ran the risk of hindering processes because it is common for outgoing officials to leave certain decisions to incoming leadership. This experience suggests that when it is possible to pre-dict leadership transitions, a timeline of activities and milestones can be designed so that key decisions can be made before ongoing processes lose their momentum.

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