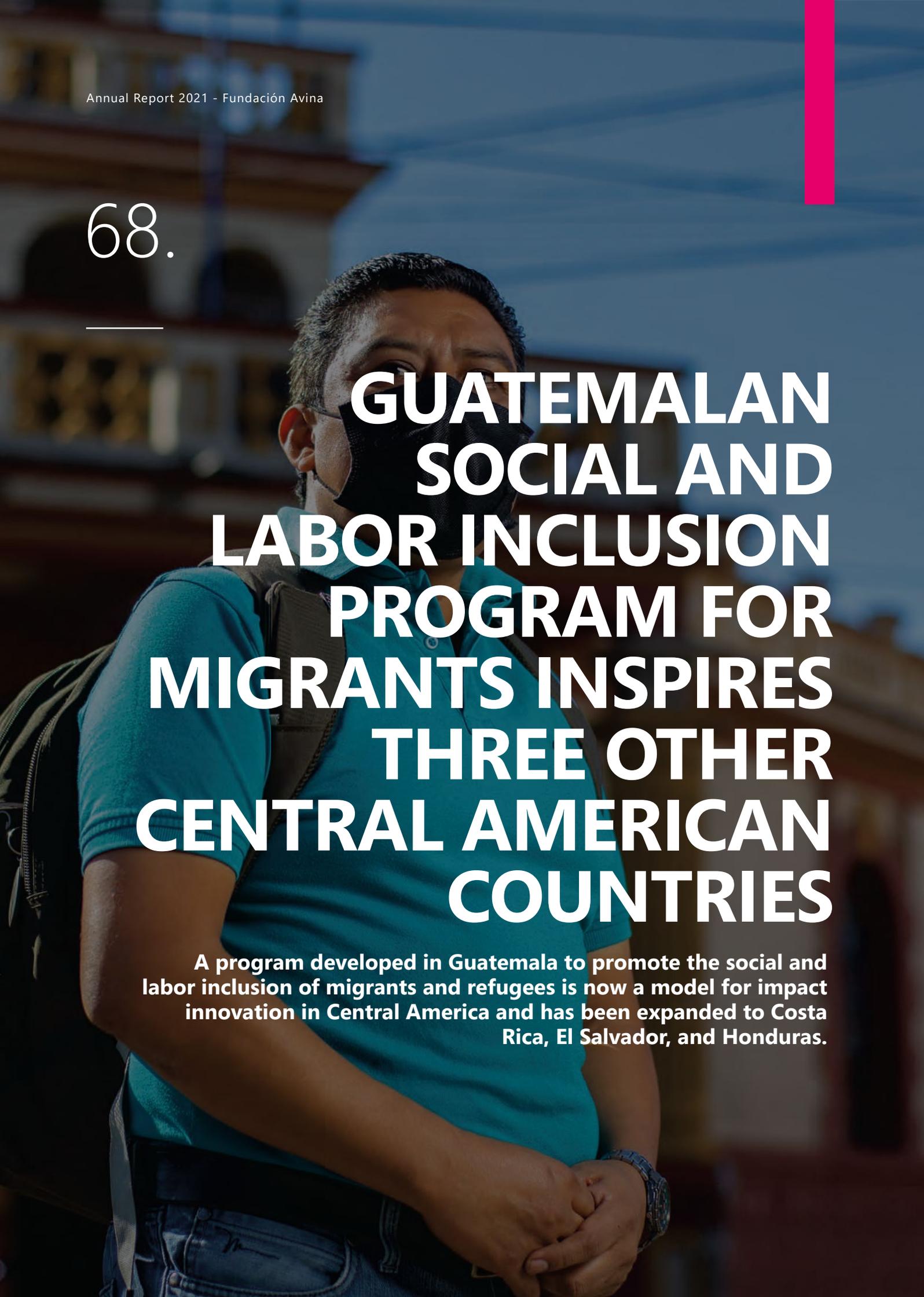


68.

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# GUATEMALAN SOCIAL AND LABOR INCLUSION PROGRAM FOR MIGRANTS INSPIRES THREE OTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES

A program developed in Guatemala to promote the social and labor inclusion of migrants and refugees is now a model for impact innovation in Central America and has been expanded to Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Honduras.

69.

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Since 2008, deportations of Central Americans from the United States - and, more recently, from Mexico - to their countries of origin have been steadily increasing. In this context, the "Guate Te Incluye" initiative emerged in 2016, aiming to develop a roadmap for multi-sector collaboration to create social and labor inclusion mechanisms for returned migrants.

The program developed in Guatemala ended up being a highly impactful social innovation in the ways it brought together different sectors and institutions and how it focused on psychosocial needs and job training for migrants while also recognizing and valuing the knowledge they possess. The model was replicated in El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Honduras.

Different entities from a wide range of sectors expressed interest in finding out more about the program and implementing similar ones in different human mobility contexts. The highest authorities dealing with migration, including consulates and ministries, along with the private sector and civil society organizations, joined forces with Fundación Avina on this initiative. The Guate Te Incluye project in Guatemala proved that, by offering opportunities and support to migrant populations, they can make important social and economic contributions to society and add value to their communities.

## Why does Fundación Avina support this initiative?

Fundación Avina seeks to scale collaborative processes with proven results. In this case, we helped promote a social innovation that requires commitment and collaboration between different sectors and institutions.

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## What did Fundación Avina and its allies do?

Fundación Avina added value through the development of the strategy, program model, and roadmap to promote the inclusion of migrants and refugees in the labor force. The program phases include addressing psychosocial needs, getting identification and official documents in order, certifying abilities and competencies, and facilitating employment or productive entrepreneurship. These direct services are complemented by raising awareness through communications and connecting different sectors to change the negative perspective and stigma associated with migrants and refugees, replacing it with a positive vision that highlights the many skills this population can contribute to their communities.

### Impact Achieved

**Quality of Life.** This model helps improve quality of life for migrants and refugees, their families, and the communities to which they return, contributing new skills and talents, along with the cultural and social exchange that comes with diversity.

**Public Policies.** In each country where this innovation is taking place, certification programs for migrants have been established and institutionalized: 5 in Guatemala, 2 in El Salvador, and 2 in Costa Rica. The purpose is to develop national instruments to help future migrants and refugees bridge the gap to achieve social and labor inclusion.

**Networks for Replication, Education, and Learning.** This initiative entailed four processes of multi-sector collaboration (including the public, private, civil society, international aid, and academic sectors), one in each country, that brought together 24 stakeholders in Guatemala, 20 in El Salvador, 10 in Honduras, and 8 in Costa Rica.

70. “

*The mechanisms for multi-sector coordination proved to be the birthing ground for networks, spaces, and public policies that facilitate the inclusion of migrants and refugees in their country of origin or destination. Migration can be challenging for communities to manage, but it can also generate economic, social, cultural, and other value for the cities that receive migrants. The right to migrate and the right to return must be supported by initiatives like these to make them a reality."*

**Cynthia Loría Picado, Fundación Avina**

*"Seeing the impact achieved in Guatemala definitely convinced us to bring the program to El Salvador. This is what we've achieved, in our case: 1) We created a council of 20 organizations that work on behalf of migrants returning from forced migration. This council created a strategic plan and is still operating two years after the conclusion of the project with Fundación Avina. 2) We've created three pathways to employment, including local and national programs and professional certification. 3) An employment ecosystem has taken shape, where supply and demand are connected and training is provided. 4) We've documented and systematized these methodologies."*

**Haydeé de Trigueros, CEO of Fundemas, El Salvador**

*"Urban migration is a complicated issue that encompasses several disciplines, sectors, and geographic areas. The projects developed with Fundación Avina in Guatemala promoted new partnerships and conversations between entities working on*

71.

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*urban migration at the local, national, regional, and global level. These projects stimulated worldwide reflection about the role and the potential of cities when it comes to managing migration to and from mid-sized cities and taking advantage of the opportunities it presents."*

**Anacláudia Marinheiro Centeno Rossbach, Regional Manager for Latin America and the Caribbean for Cities Alliance.**

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Impact on Fundación Avina's Strategic Pillars  
**Just and Regenerative Economy**

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Impact on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



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## Impact in Numbers

**1,647,000**  
**people directly**  
**impacted**

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**3,000,000**  
**people indirectly**  
**impacted**

## Impact on the Components of the Collaborative Process

73.

 <p><b>Relevance</b></p>	<p>In Central America, thousands of people are arriving as deportees from the United States and are returning without the plans, tools, or networks needed for their integration into local society.</p>
 <p><b>Tipping Point</b></p>	<p>In each country, professional and vocational certification programs existed, but they did not include mechanisms to recognize abilities acquired abroad. In many cases, workers returned with years of experience in North American industries, but they had no way of proving or validating this knowledge.</p>
 <p><b>Scalability</b></p>	<p>Based on the experience in Guatemala, multi-sector agreements to implement similar programs were sought in Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Honduras.</p>
 <p><b>Collaboration Deficit</b></p>	<p>These countries lacked strategies to help migrants achieve true social and labor inclusion.</p>
 <p><b>Social Capital</b></p>	<p>In each country, a multi-sector alliance for labor inclusion was established. We worked with public institutions that create standards and oversee certification programs for professions and vocations. We worked with the private sector to identify relevant competencies and abilities and to secure their commitment to including migrants. We also worked with professional training organizations.</p>
 <p><b>Unifying Vision</b></p>	<p>To facilitate mobility and social and labor inclusion, especially among the migrant and refugee community in Latin America.</p>
 <p><b>Shared Action Agendas</b></p>	<p>The multi-sector alliance in each country is focused on creating the conditions for migrants' social and labor inclusion.</p>
 <p><b>Innovation</b></p>	<p>This model represents a new and innovative form of multi-sector collaboration. Previously, these stakeholders were not working in coordination and dialogue between sectors was nonexistent. Some humanitarian assistance was provided to the migrant population, but there was no mechanism for their social and labor inclusion that took advantage of the competencies they acquired abroad. This model is receiving technical and financial support from different institutions.</p>
 <p><b>Incidence</b></p>	<p>Certification criteria have been established for migrants at professional and vocational training institutions in all four countries.</p>