

Graduation Model

Pilot project 2014-2016

UNHCR Costa Rica

ABSTRACT

The present document analyzes the main quantitative results of the Graduation Model pilot project, based on the systematization of the information gathered from the files of each individual case. It presents the impact that the initiative achieved in the cases who already successfully completed the process.

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1. Introduction

The objective of this report is to present the main results achieved in the framework the “Graduation Model” (GM) project, implemented by the UNHCR in partnership with The Association of International Consultants and Advisors (ACAI) in Costa Rica over the period 2014-2016. The present document analyzes the main quantitative results of the project, based on the systematization of the information gathered from the files of each individual case. It presents the impact that the initiative achieved in the cases that already successfully completed the process.

The GM is an adaptation of a programme first developed in the '80s by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC). In collaboration with the World Food Program and the Government of Bangladesh, these groups targeted those living in extreme poverty. The methodology included provision of safety nets, livelihoods support, savings, and microfinance. The project's success led on to it being piloted in eight countries.

From 2014, UNHCR adapted this approach to launch a pilot project to work with refugee population. The GM holds promise for the poorest asylum seekers and refugees, thus enabling them to become permanently self-reliant using income generation strategies to find job placements or establishing their own business to satisfy their needs and those of the family group. The methodology applied in Costa Rica has been a combination of different interventions related to social assistance, livelihoods support and microfinance. The project provided personalized coaching, cash transfers to enable them to meet basic needs, training, access to health services, and access to valid documentation, among others.

The GM implementation was put into action in Costa Rica in 2014. Based on the principal of promoting self-reliance, the following interventions were implemented: home visits/social and livelihood assessments, socio-economic assessments, psycho-social support, assistance with an action plan for local integration in the country and comprehensive casework. The caseworkers involved are Social Work and Psychology professionals.

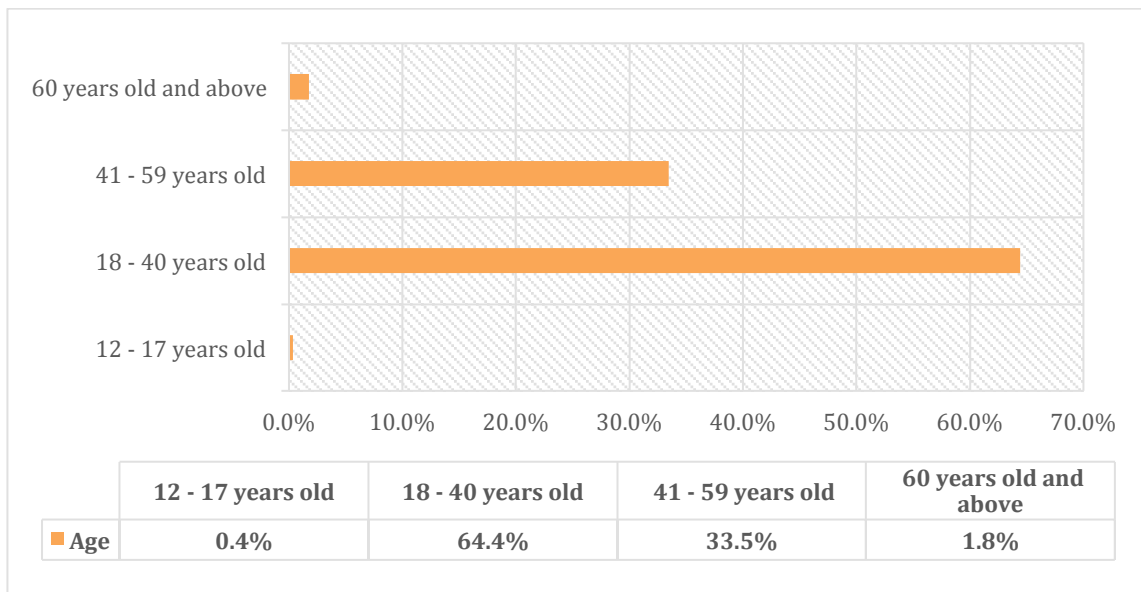
2. GM Participants profile

The GM participants were mainly asylum seekers and refugees. However, there was also another group of women participants composed of Costa Rican nationals (60%) and migrants from other countries (40%) living in a socially vulnerable condition in Desamparados, a borough of the capital. A total of **568 people participated** over the three-year implementation period, **429 PoC (75.5%)** were supported from the partner agency ACAI and **139 women (24.5%) from the host community** were supported by the House of Rights in Desamparados (HoR). With regards to **gender distribution**, 69.4% were women (394), 30.3% men (172) and 2 cases of transgender women.

As it was mentioned before, the GM worked with 568 direct beneficiaries, which respond to 462 families (323 families of PoC, 139 national families), in addition to 1,091 dependents who benefited as indirect participants of the project (673 PoC indirect beneficiaries, and 418 indirect participants from the host community), for a total of **1,659 participants**. In relation to the family structure, 59.9% are family groups, where it is found the conventional family group (father, mother, daughter/son) and the wider family group type, 27.8% female householder, 10% single people (mainly men) and 2.3% male householder.

In regards to **age groups**, the majority of the beneficiaries were mainly between two age groups, those of 18-40 years old and 41-59 years old, with a figure of 64.4% and 33.5% respectively. These main groups were followed by the over 60s bracket representing 1.8%. Lastly, two adolescents aged 12-17 years old constituting 0.4%, were considered atypical cases for the project and were included due to exceptional circumstances.

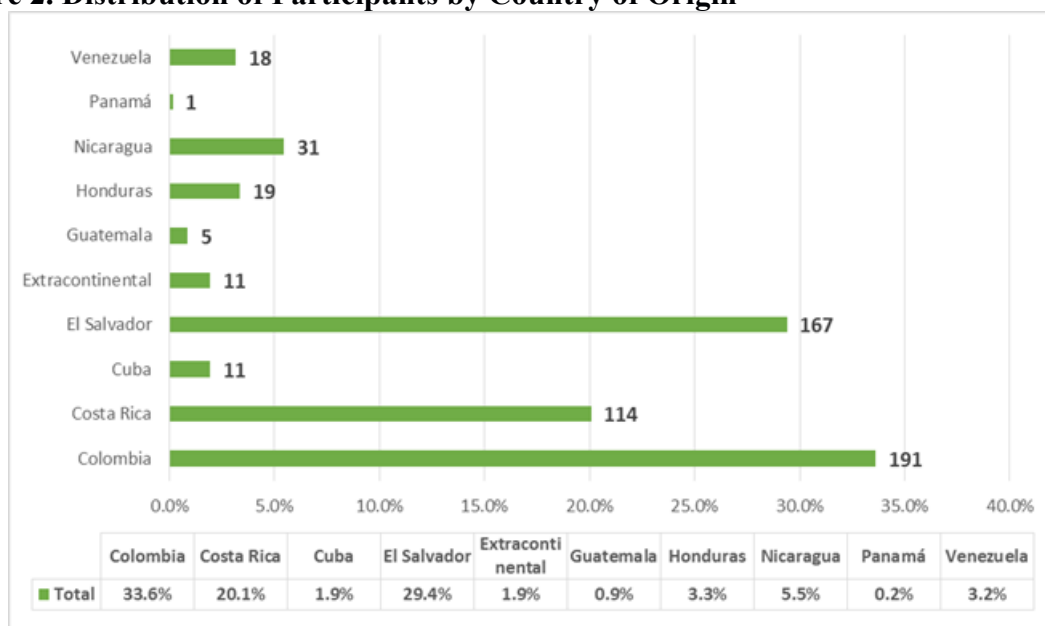
Figure 1. Age Distribution of the Participants



The majority of the **participants' nationalities** were Colombian (33.6% of the total), Salvadoran (El Salvador) (29.4%), Nicaraguan (5.5%), Honduran (3.3%) and Venezuelan (3.2%). As mentioned, there was also a group of Costa Rican women in vulnerable conditions representing 114 participants (20.1%).

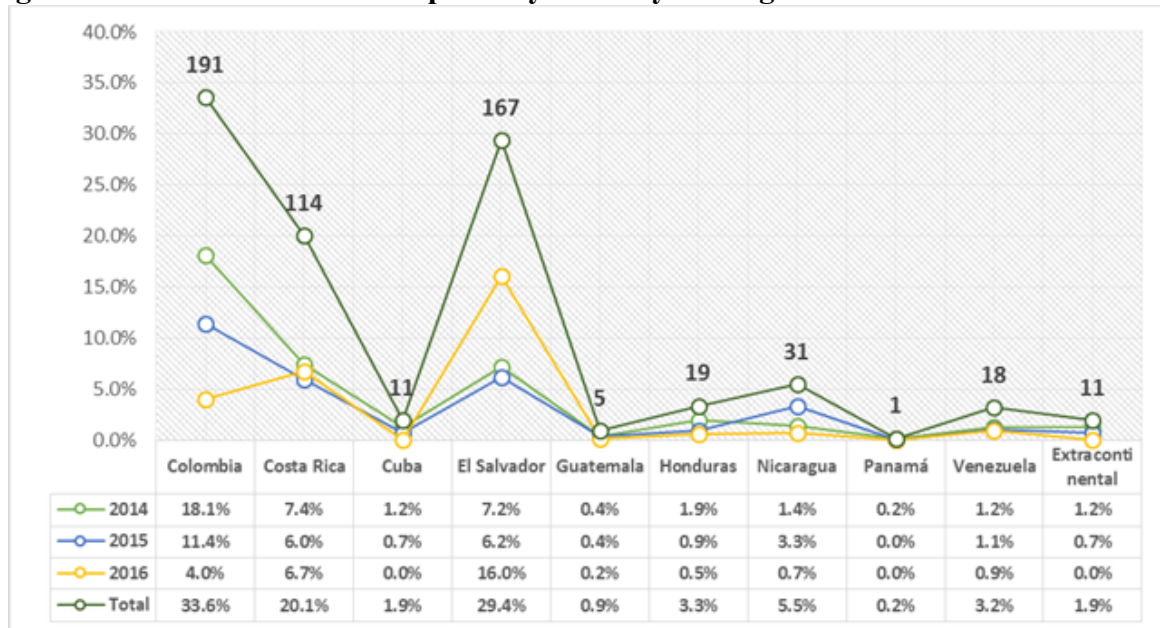
The “extra-continental” participants included in the GM represented 1.9% of the total of participants. This sector was formed of countries such as Nigeria, South Africa, Iran and Ethiopia. This group of nationalities mainly entered the project in the 2014 graduation cohort.

Figure 2. Distribution of Participants by Country of Origin



It is important to mention the increase in the Salvadoran population in the last two years and the reduction in the Colombian population. This shift has also required making adjustment to the GM operations in order to include this new caseload, with activities that were targeted to a very different profile such as the Colombian population previously identified.

Figure 3. Distribution of Participants by Country of Origin and Year of intake

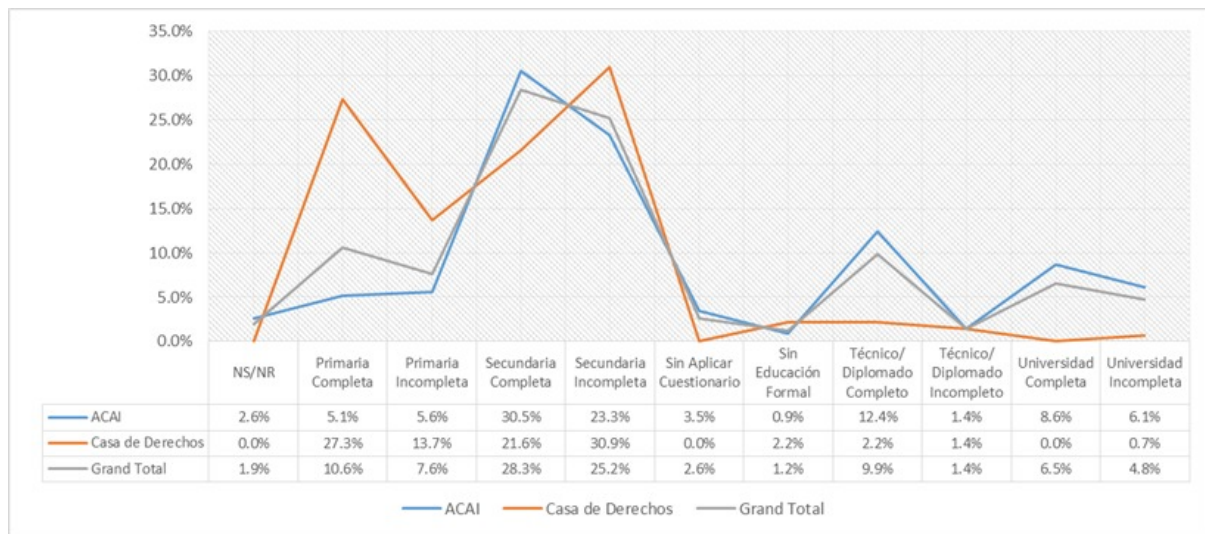


With regards to the **migratory status of the participants**, refugees and asylum seekers represented the same percentage (36%), followed by 6% permanent residents. Out of the total population from the host community, 120 were Costa Rican nationals (representing a 21%).

According to **geographic location** stated at the beginning of the project, 98% of the population was located in Costa Rica’s metropolitan area, focused on four main provinces of the Central Valley: Heredia (14%), Alajuela (12%), Cartago (4%) and San José, where the majority of the population was located (67%). The furthest provinces of Costa Rica barely registered any participation.

The difference in education levels and profile of the population between PoC and the women from the host community is relevant. The group of nationals shows a lower level of education, while PoC usually has secondary education and above.

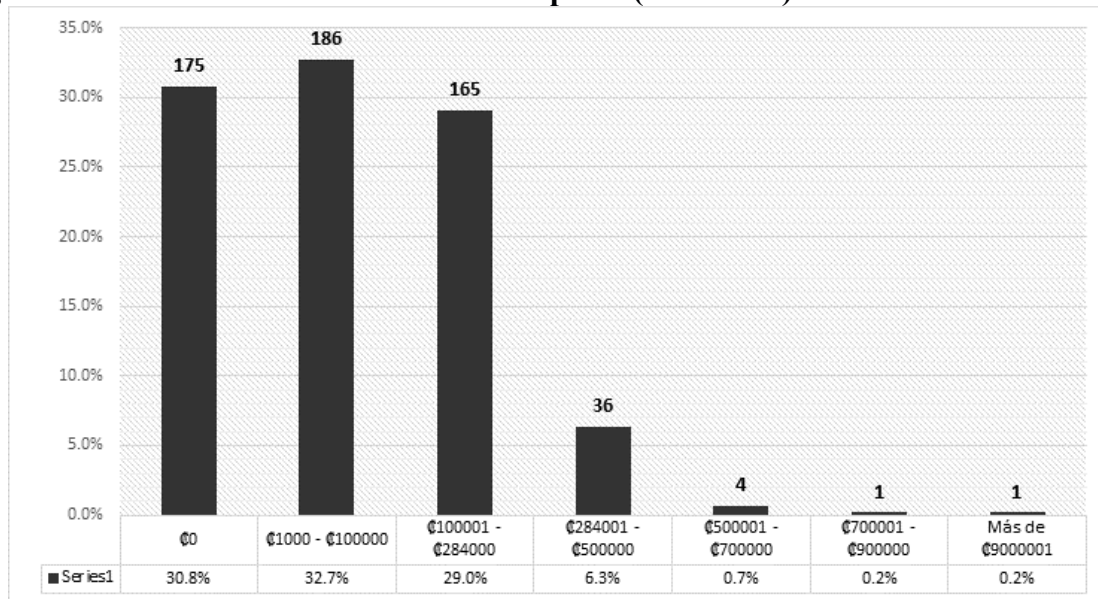
Figure 4. Level of Education: difference between PoC and national women



Regarding the **employment situation** when participants joined the project, half of the participants were **involved with some type of paid job (54.1%)**, either as a self-employed (18.1%), occasional employment (17.2%), or permanent employment (13.4%) or temporary (5.4%). On the opposite, **43.2% of the participants were unemployed** at the intake stage of the project, which implies the relevance of the project as an income generating intervention for participants to cover basic needs due to the lack of previous income generation to have the minimum required economic self-sufficiency.

At the moment the caseworkers applied the initial questionnaire of the project, the participants claimed to earn the following average monthly income: 30.8% do not have any income, 32.7% earns between ₡1,000 – ₡100,000 (\$180 aprox.), and 29% has an income between ₡100,001 – ₡284,000 (\$510 aprox.). A total of 42 cases were included in the project already complying with the income graduation criteria (₡284,000), because at the beginning of the project UNHCR included some “fast track” cases who only needed a punctual support to achieve a stable livelihood.

Figure 5. Income Distribution of the Participants (2014-2016)

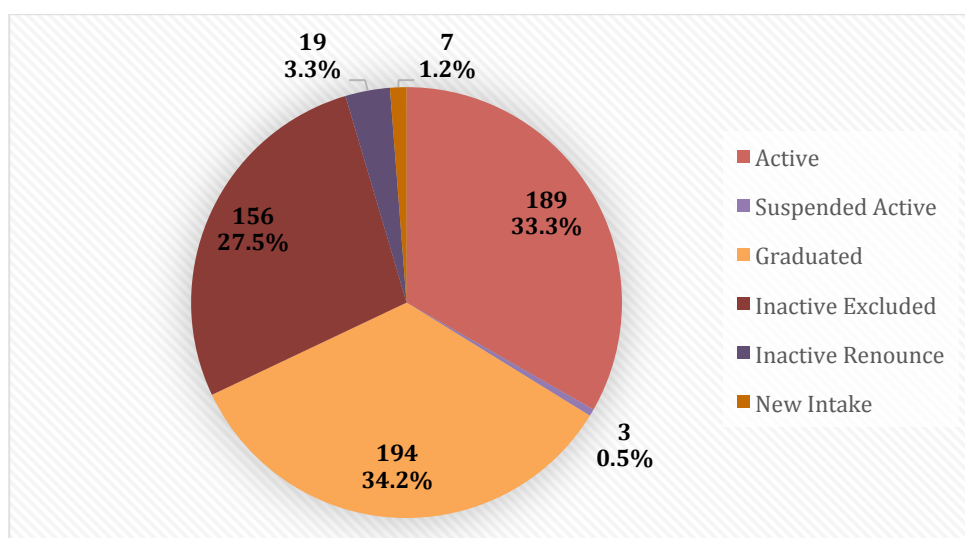


3. Main outcomes of the project

Based on the ongoing planning and adaptation of the Graduation Model since it was launched in 2014, UNHCR and partner agencies defined as a target the participation of 450 PoC and 150 women from the host community (for a total of 600 people). As it was mentioned before, during these three years, the Graduation Model reached 568 persons that represent a 94,6% of the planned figure.

Until January 10th 2017, 194 participants have graduated from the project and 189 cases are still active in the process. Regarding the rest of the cases, a total of 19 persons (3.3% of the total number of participants) dropped out of the project, while 156 cases (27.5%) were excluded from the initiative, mainly because the person did not commit with his/her process, left the country without notice, or he or she lost contact with the organization.

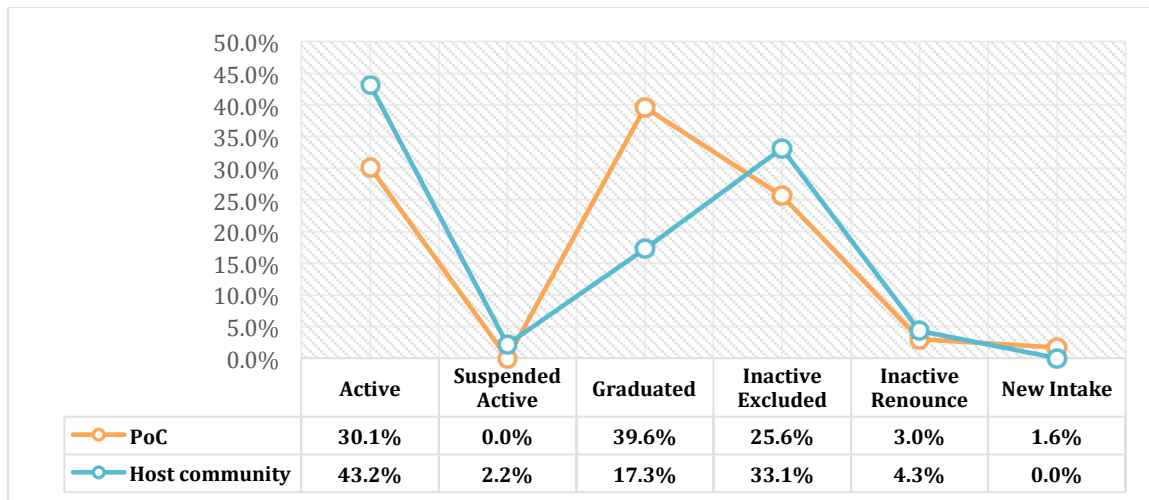
Figure 6. Current status of cases¹



It is worth mentioning, that the percentage of graduated participants is higher in the group of PoC than with local community (22,3% of graduated cases in the House of Rights vrs 39,6% of graduated cases of the refugee population). This could be related to the vulnerability profile of the women from the host community, and some difference in the interventions conducted with the individual cases.

¹ The categories refer to the following: 1. Active: cases that are active in the project; 2. Suspended active: cases whose process are on hold due to a medical or family condition that impedes to work from a livelihoods perspective; 3. Graduated: cases that already successfully finished the project and met the graduation criteria; 4. Inactive excluded: due to several reasons (mainly lack of commitment) UNHCR and partner agency decided to close the case; 5. Inactive renounce: cases that on a voluntary basis decided to leave the project.

Figure 7. Status of cases. Difference between PoC and host community.



During 2014-2016, UNHCR Costa Rica defined the following graduation criteria:

1. Achieved economic **self-sufficiency**, this entails having an income generating activity (own business or employment) stable and dignified, that allows the person to cover his/her own basic needs and those of the family. Having a gross minimum income of 284,000 CRC (minimum wage, approx. 520 usd) per month per household. The family saves at least 2-5% of their added monthly income.
2. Achieved **increased self-confidence**, which allows the person to have an assertive view of the future and a proactive attitude in regards to his/her situation in the country.
3. Enabled to build **support networks** within the community and the different social environments (schools, faith-based gatherings, development organizations, among others)
4. Carries **valid documentation**, the person has valid refugee and asylum seeking document and/or the appropriate ID card or permanent resident card.

The participants needed to comply with three of the four criteria to graduate (being the first one compulsory).

3.1. Outcomes of the main graduation criteria and related indicators

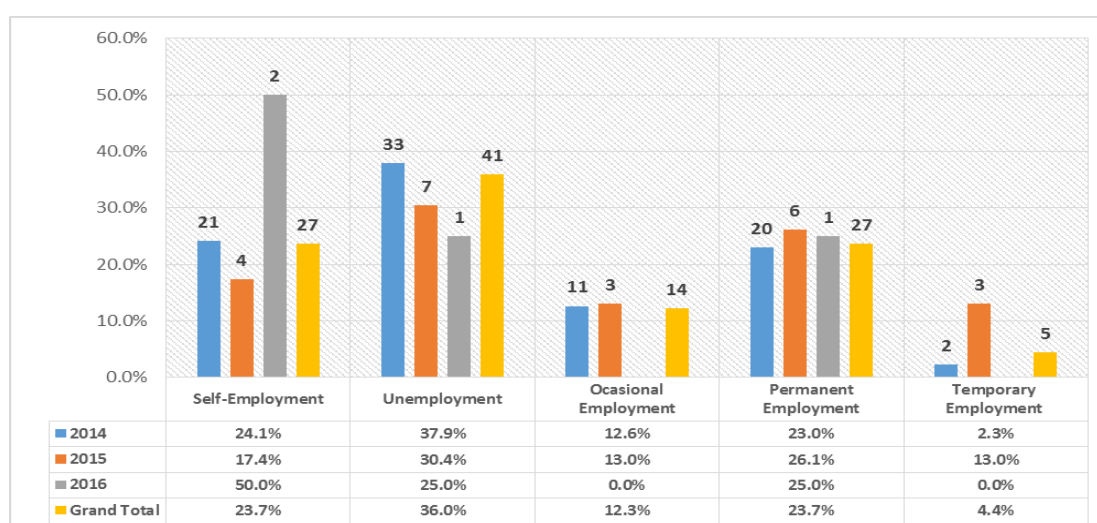
In the following section, the main impact indicators of the Graduation Model will be analysed. It is important to mention that the findings presented are based on the data of **114 graduated cases**, whose file is complete with all the relevant forms and information. The other 80 graduated cases are awaiting a final home-visit where the closure questionnaire will be applied. The impact analysis only considers the situation of graduated cases, comparing the graduation criteria at the moment the person was included in the project and at the moment he or she finished.

3.1.1. Graduation criteria #1: Economic self-reliance

Refugees and asylum seekers

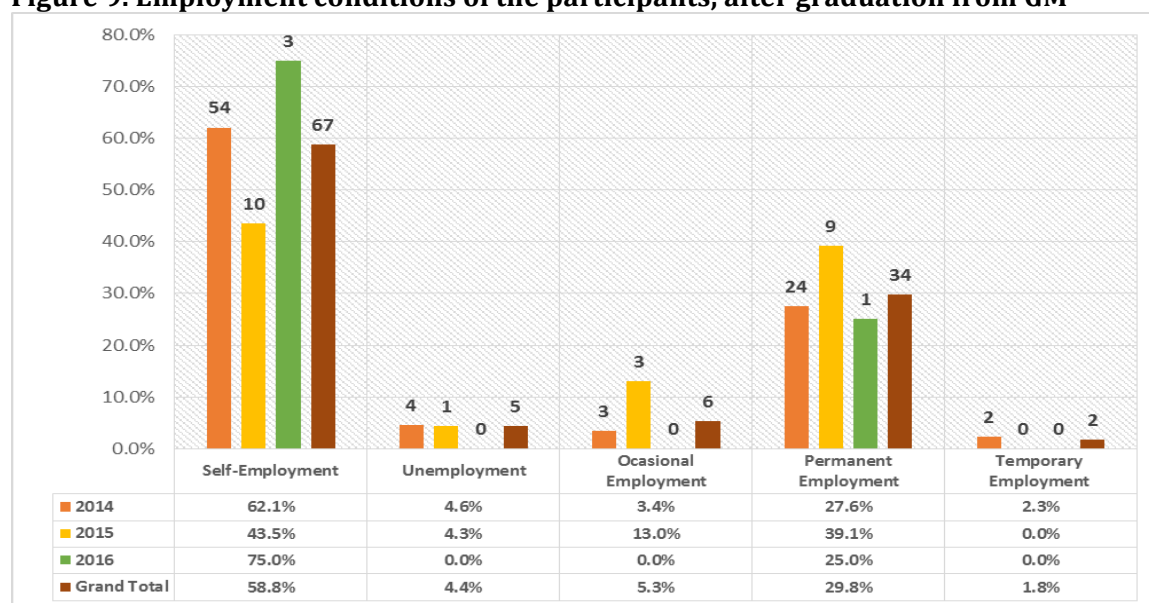
The employment conditions of the participants at the moment of intake in the GM project shows an inclusion of 37.9% unemployed people in 2014, 30.4% in 2015, and 25% in 2016. At the moment of graduation, the percentage of unemployed participants was almost completely reduced, 2014 (4.6%) and 2015 (4.3%)². Meanwhile, the 4 participants of the 2016 cohort who were unemployed when they started the Graduation Model and so far they have graduated successfully acquiring permanent employment. The percentage of participants who had occasional or temporary employment at the time of intake in the GM was reduced, this is shown in the increment of permanent employment and self-employment at the exit time of the project.

Figure 8. Employment conditions of the participant, previous intake to GM



² The reason why not every graduated person was employed at the end of the project, is because there was a positive change in the situation of another member of his/her family that lead to meet the graduation criteria of the household.

Figure 9. Employment conditions of the participants, after graduation from GM



In regards to the second component of the economic self-sufficiency as a criteria for graduation, referred as **family group income**, the findings shown that at the end of the project 78.9% of the households reached an monthly income equal or higher to the national minimum wage.

Table 2. Income of the family group, by the time of the direct beneficiary graduated from the project

Family income higher than 284,000 CRC	2014		2015		2016		GRAND TOTAL	
Yes	68	78.2%	19	82.6%	3	75.0%	90	78.9%
No	15	17.2%	3	13.0%	1	25.0%	19	16.7%
No Answer	4	4.6%	1	4.3%	0	0.0%	5	4.4%
GRAND TOTAL	87	100.0%	23	100.0%	4	100.0%	114	100.0%

In relation to what is mentioned above, the following tables show the increase in the monthly average income of the direct participant of the Graduation Model.

Table 3. Income of the GM Participants at Intake Stage.

Income of the GM Participants at Intake Stage.	2014		2015		2016		GRAND TOTAL	
Not Report Income	13	14.9%	4	17.4%	1	25.0%	18	15.8%
From 1000 to 100000	25	28.7%	6	26.1%	1	25.0%	32	28.1%
From 100001 to 284000	36	41.4%	11	47.8%	0	0.0%	47	41.2%
From 284001 to 500000	10	11.5%	2	8.7%	1	25.0%	13	11.4%
Higher to 500000	3	3.4%	0	0.0%	1	25.0%	4	3.5%
GRAND TOTAL	87	100.0%	23	100.0%	4	100.0%	114	100.0%

Table 4. Income of the GM Participants at Graduation Stage

Income of the GM Participants at Graduation Stage	2014		2015		2016		GRAND TOTAL	
Not Report Income	3	3.4%	1	4.3%	0	0.0%	4	3.5%
From 1000 to 100000	11	12.6%	4	17.4%	0	0.0%	15	13.2%
From 100001 to 284000	35	40.2%	8	34.8%	1	25.0%	44	38.6%
From 284001 to 500000	31	35.6%	8	34.8%	2	50.0%	41	36.0%
Higher to 500000	3	3.4%	1	4.3%	1	25.0%	5	4.4%
No Answer	4	4.6%	1	4.3%	0	0.0%	5	4.4%
GRAND TOTAL	87	100.0%	23	100.0%	4	100.0%	114	100.0%

Table 5. Change of Income of the GM Participants compared to Intake Stage

Change of Income of the GM Participants compared to Intake Stage	2014		2015		2016		GRAND TOTAL	
Income Increased	57	65.5%	17	73.9%	3	75.0%	77	67.5%
Income Decreased	18	20.7%	2	8.7%	1	25.0%	21	18.4%
Income Maintained	8	9.2%	3	13.0%		0.0%	11	9.6%
No Answer	4	4.6%	1	4.3%		0.0%	5	4.4%
GRAND TOTAL	87	100.0%	23	100.0%	4	100.0%	114	100.0%

From the 77 participants that perceived an increase of income, 66% is from a range of 1,000 to 200,000 CRC. In addition, 27.2% reached a stable economy that increased between 200,000 to 400,000 CRC. Stands out the 10.9% of these participants who achieved an income increase of 400,000 CRC, contextually this is a considerable income increase.

Table 6. Graduated participants range of income increases since the moment of intake

Range of income increases (CRC)	2014		2015		2016		GRAND TOTAL	
From 1000 to 200000	38	66.7%	12	70.6%	1	33.3%	51	66.2%
From 200001 to 400000	16	28.1%	3	17.6%	1	33.3%	20	27.2%
Higher to 400001	3	5.3%	2	11.8%	1	33.3%	6	10.9%
GRAND TOTAL	57	100.0%	17	100.0%	3	100.0%	77	66.2%

Regarding the development of a habit of saving money, the results show an improvement among the participants. The amount of participants who did not save money at the time of

intake was reduced from **86.5% to 32.4%**. The 21.2% of the people could save between 1.000 and 20.000 CRC monthly, and 14.2% more than 20,000 CRC per month. In addition, it is also noticeable that there is a increase on the population who have a bank account and access to savings/finance services, mainly at the public banks “Banco Nacional” and “Banco de Costa Rica”, and the private bank “BAC”.

Figure 10. Participants saving capacity at the moment of GM intake and GM graduation

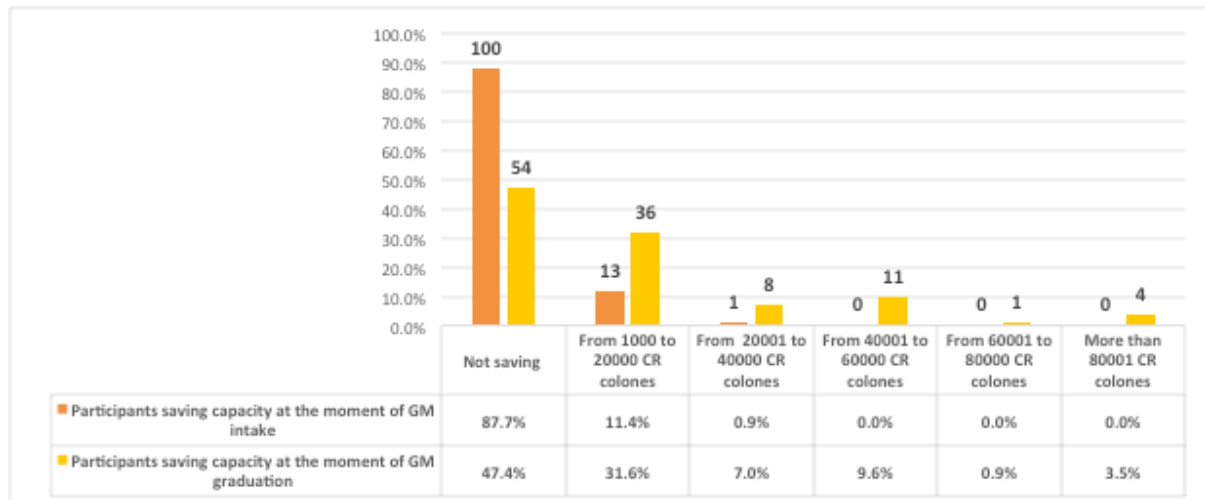
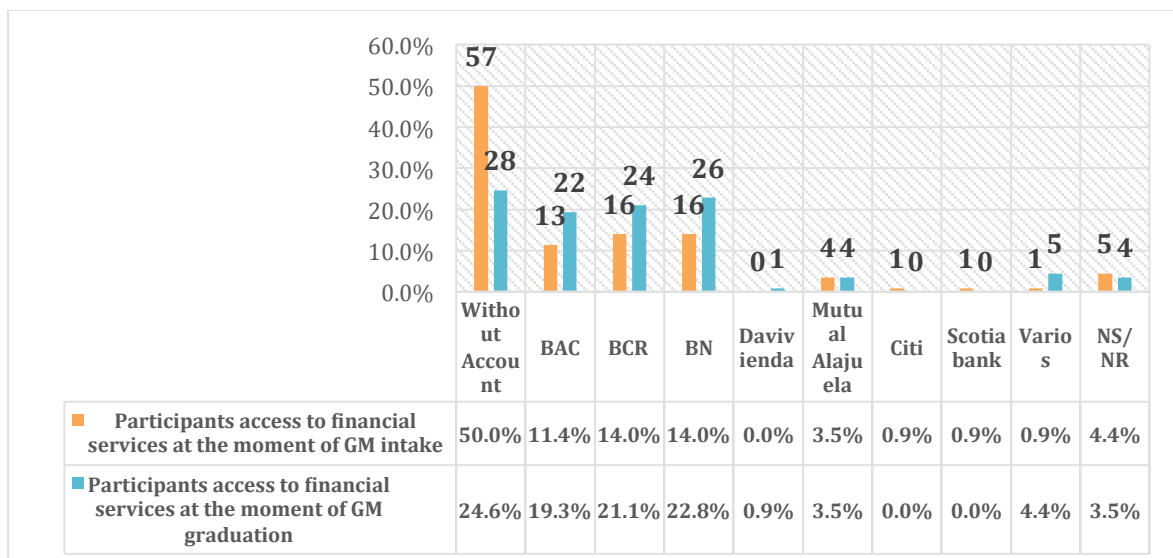


Figure 11. Access to financial services

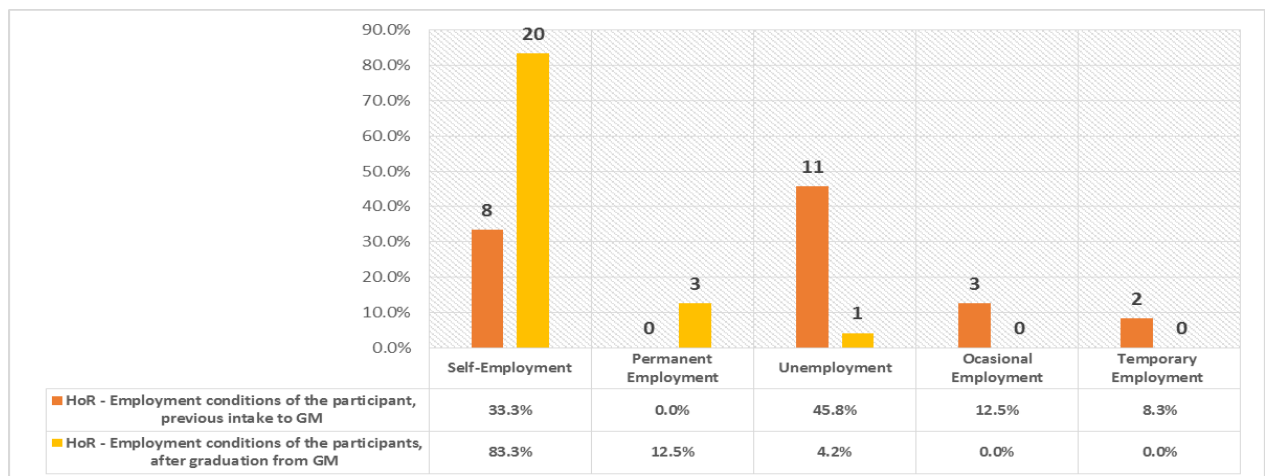


Women from the host community (HoR participants)

In regards to the employment conditions of the participants supported by the House of Rights (HoR), it is concluded that there was a decrease in the unemployment from 45.8% at

the moment of intake to 4.2% (1 person) at the time of graduation. From the population that started the project receiving an income, the temporary employment (8.3%) and the occasional employment (12.5%) with unfavourable working conditions disappeared, leaving a significant majority of 83.3% population with an entrepreneurship that allows to cover not only basic needs, but also the potential of more opportunities for a better future.

Figure 12. Employment conditions of the participants, at the moment of intake and graduation (House of Rights)



The family income shows that 66.7% of the households graduated having a monthly income above the minimum wage (284.000 CRC), and that 83.33% increased their income.

Table 7. Change in the monthly income compared to Intake Stage

Change of Income of the GM Participants compared to Intake Stage		
Income Increased	20	83.33%
Income Decreased	2	8.33%
Income Maintained	2	8.33%
GRAND TOTAL	24	100.0%

Table 8. Family group income at graduation

Family income above 284.000 CRC (minimum wage)		
Yes	16	66.7%
No	3	12.5%
No answer	5	20.8%
GRAND TOTAL	24	100.0%

In regards to the host community saving capacity, the population who did not save, not only decreases to less than half from the moment of intake to the project, from 95.8% of the population to a 41.7% by the time of graduation, but also the amounts of money saved diversified finding a maximum of 4.2% who saves more than 50,000 CRC monthly. The participants who created a small but efficient habit of saving money to cover emergency expenses increases in a representative way from 4.2% of the participants to 20.8%. In addition, the House of Rights participants reduced the people who did not have bank account by half, from 45.8% at the time of intake to 25% at graduation.

3.1.2 Graduation criteria #2: increased self-confidence

This criteria is based on the self-perception of the participants, and it is measured through three main variables: 1) vision towards the future; 2) family dynamics; 3) emotional wellbeing. The first variable was not included in the first version of the intake form, therefore it will not be analyzed in this section.

Refugees and Asylum seekers

The coaching process offered by the caseworkers, as well as the changes in the economic and social situation of the families had a positive impact in the emotional health of the participants. As it is shown in the graphics below, there is a 57.9% increase in the perception of PoC who considered their emotional wellbeing had improved after participating in the project. It should be mentioned, that in the framework of the project a 26.5% of participants (or a member of their household) benefitted from psychological counselling.

Figure 13. Emotional wellbeing perception at the moment of intake and graduation

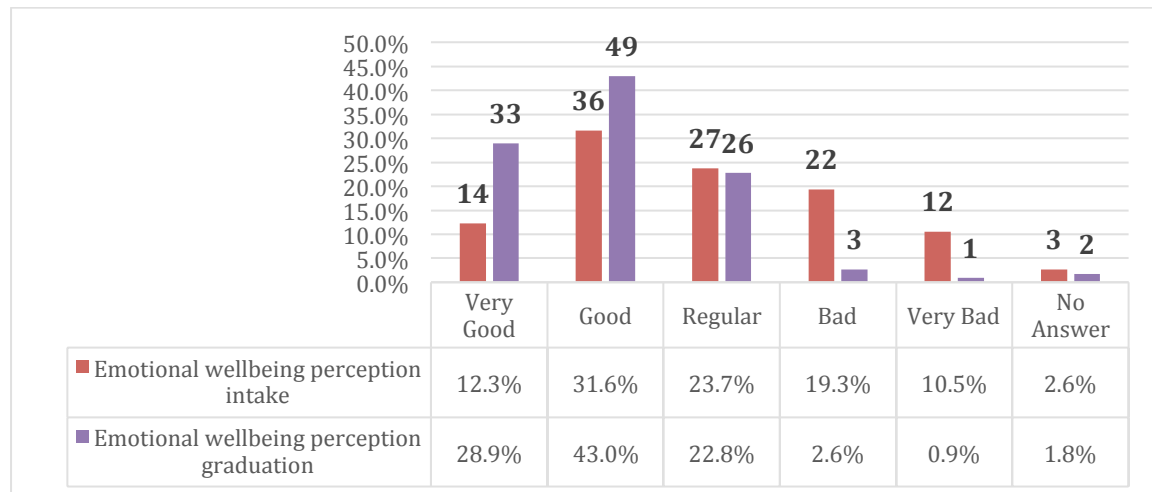
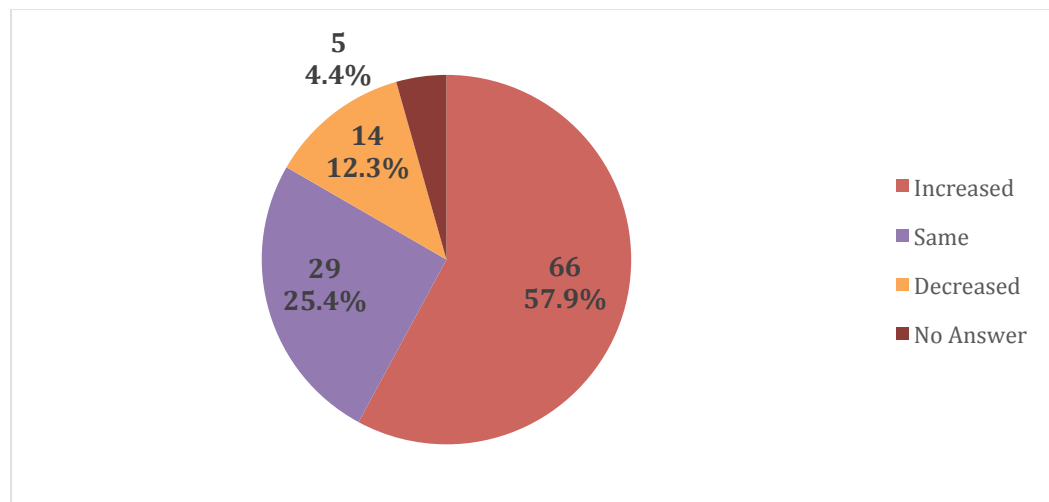


Figure 14. Change in the perception of wellbeing from intake to graduation

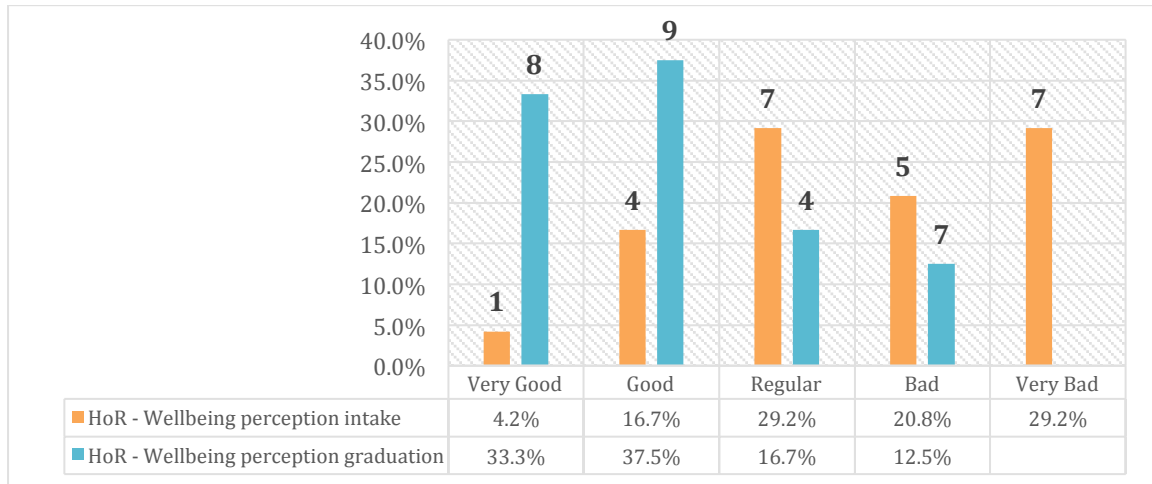


Women from the host community (HoR participants)

In regards to women from Desamparados, it is shown that the participants who received psychological intervention started the process with negative perception of their own emotional wellbeing. Women stated having a moderate well-being (29.2%), low (20.8%) or very low (29.2%), for a total of 79.2% of participants whose well-being was not optimum at the GM intake stage. The figures changed completely at the time of graduation, people self-reported having a high (33.3%) and very high (37.5%) well-being, for a total of 70.8% reporting a positive perception of their own well-being, which is encouraging for the project. The percentage of participants who stated having a low well-being diminished considerably (from 20.8% to 12.5%), and the percentage of participants who stated having a very low well-being completely disappeared by the time of graduation. As a result can be concluded that the

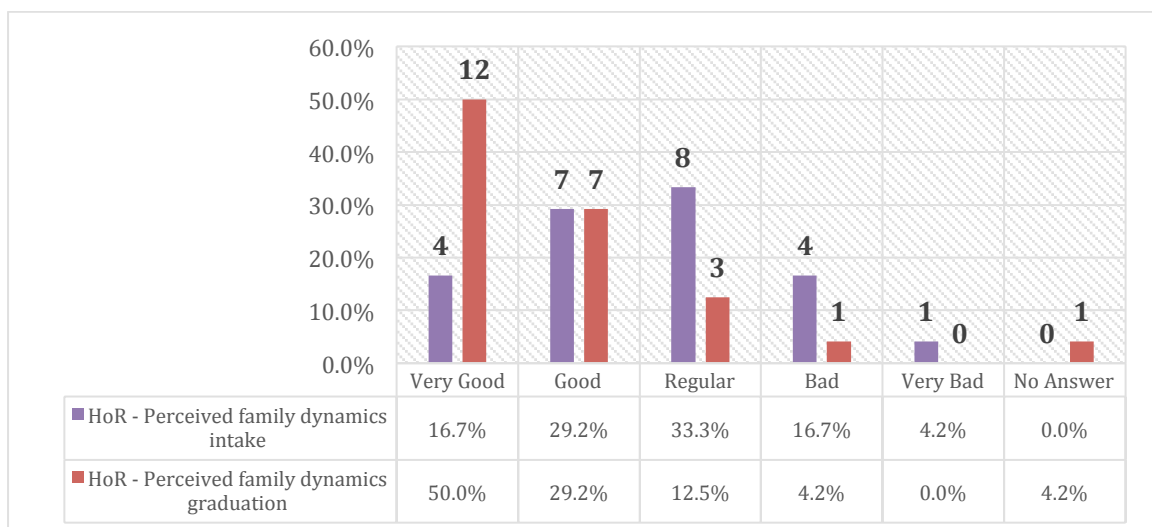
psychosocial coaching intervention was significantly successful in improving participants' emotional health. It should be considered that 37.5% of the beneficiaries received psychological support throughout the project.

Figure 15. Emotional well-being perception at the moment of intake and graduation



There is a reciprocal relationship between the environment and a person's self-esteem and this is why the family dynamics are very important as an aspect to consider within the participants performance in the project. The HoR participants reached a positive increment, in which 79.2% of the population achieved graduation with positive (29.2%) or very positive (50%) family dynamics. People who stated having started the program with regular family dynamics was reduced from 33.3% to a 12.5%.

Figure 16. Family dynamics from the intake stage to the graduation stage.

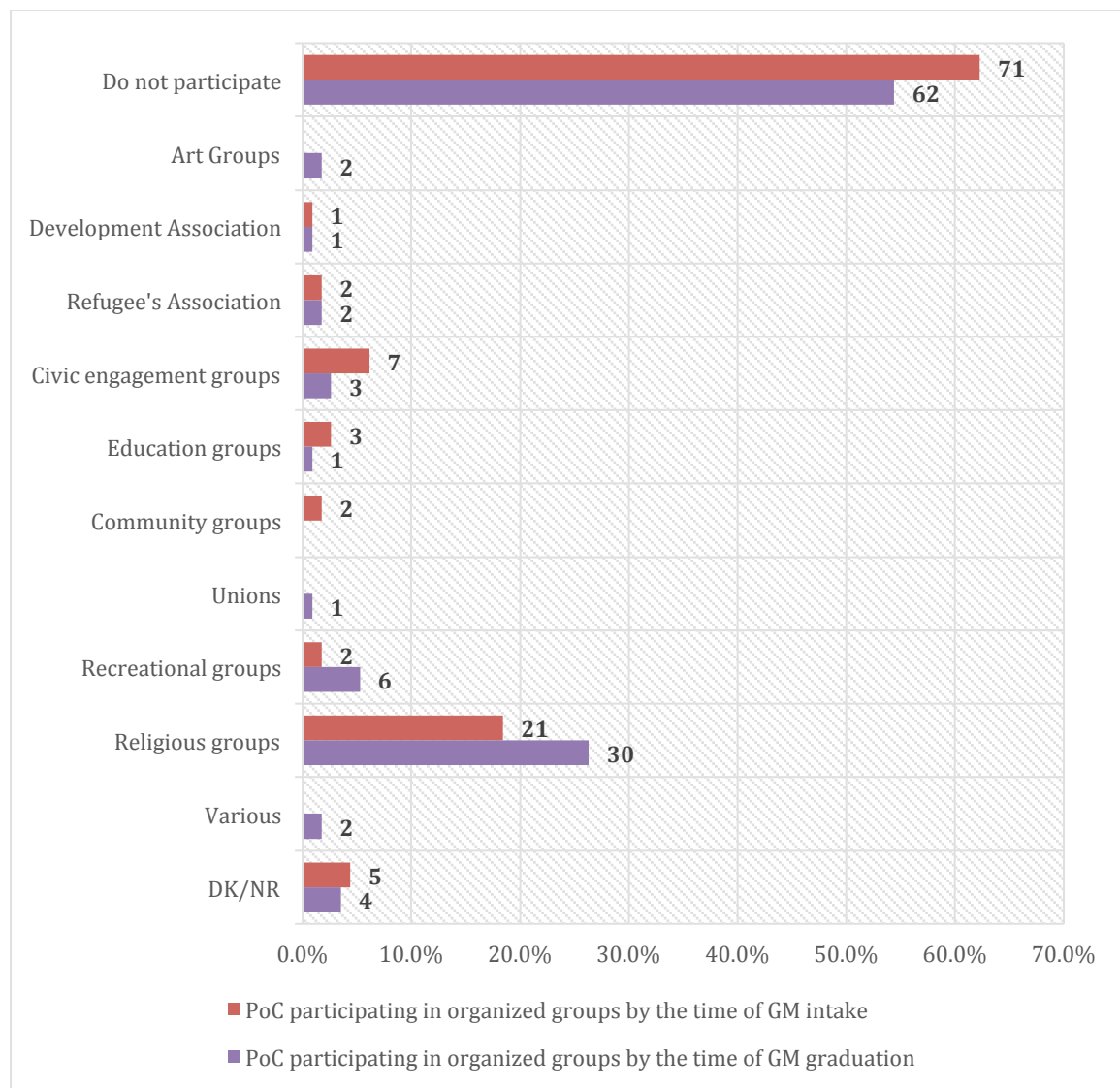


3.1.3. Graduation criteria #3: Building Support Networks

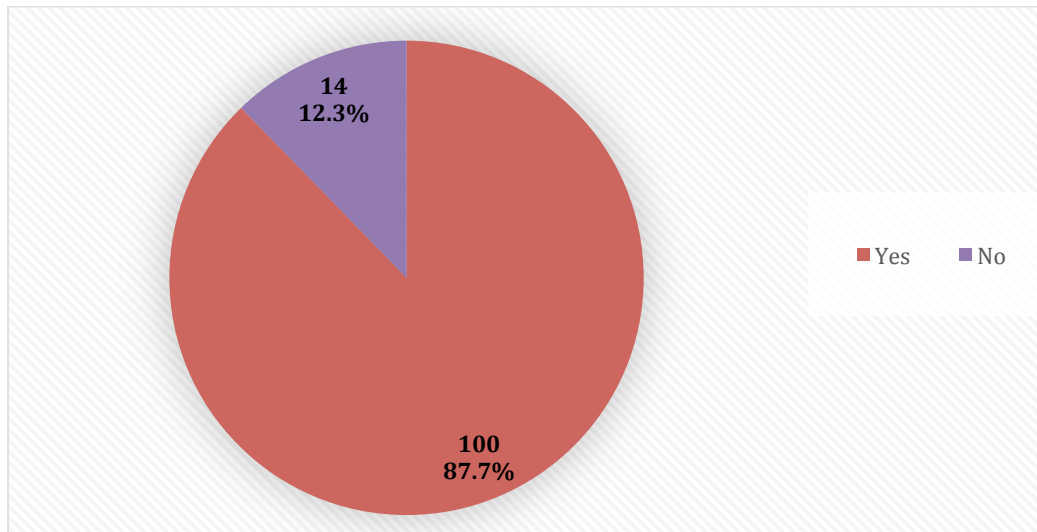
Refugees and asylum seekers

Figure 17 below shows the diversity of groups in which the persons participated during the project. Religious groups are the most attended, as it would seem that the population finds religious congregations as a place to socialise and find comfort. This supportive environment might help to overcome the sense of rootlessness that refugee and asylum seekers might experience due to the forced displacement. In addition, 87.7% graduates shown to have a supportive person from the family group or the community (Figure 18).

Figure 17. PoC participating in organized groups by the time of intake and graduation



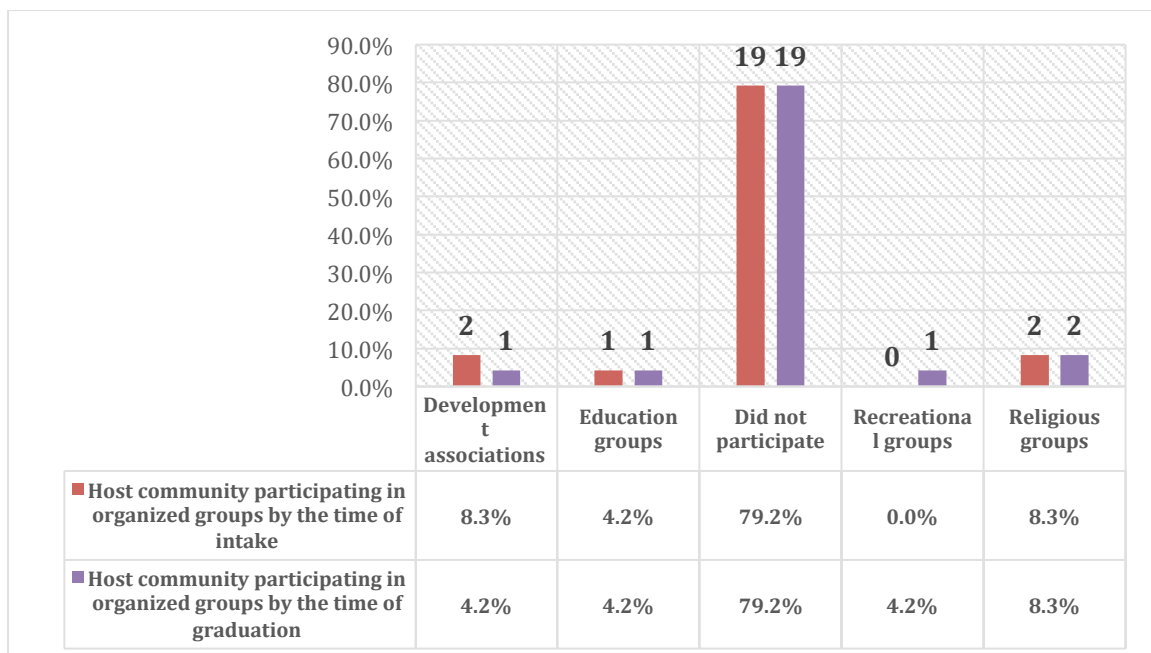
Figures 18. PoC who stated receiving support from a person



Women from the host community (HoR participants)

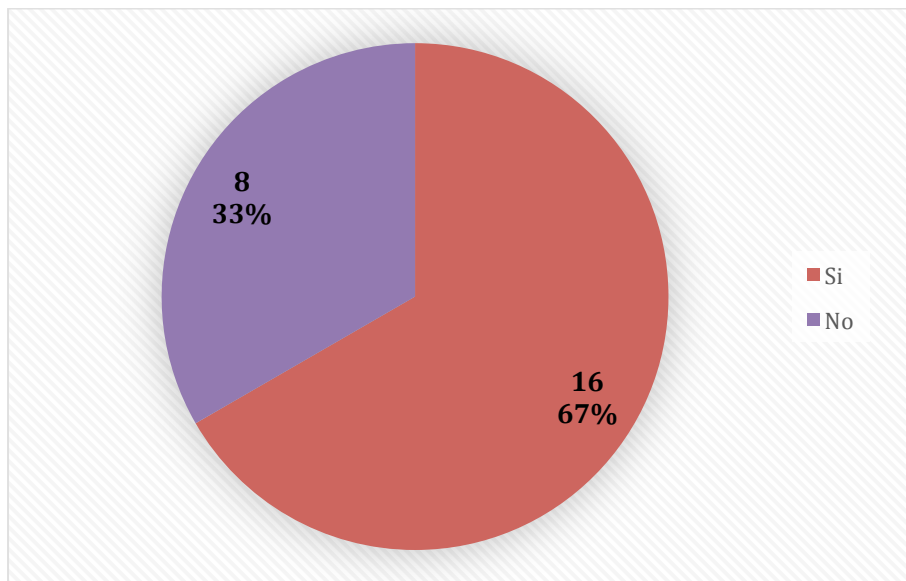
The analysis of the participants from HoR shows that their support networks are based on 4 main types: Development associations (4.2%), Education groups (4.2%), Religious groups (8.3%) and finally Recreational groups which increased at the time of graduation (4.2%).

Figure 19. Host community participating in organized groups by the time of intake and graduation of the project



As it is shown above, 79,2% of participants did not participate in any organized group at the moment of intake and graduation. It could be concluded that the project did not have much incidence in the aspect of building support networks in the case of national participants, mostly because the host community might have already other support avenues, which were not contemplated by the project.

Figure 20. Host community participants who stated receiving support from a person/or group



Even though the vast majority of women did not engage in any organized group, it is important to mention that 67% indicated at the end of the of the project that they count with at least two persons in whom they can rely on.

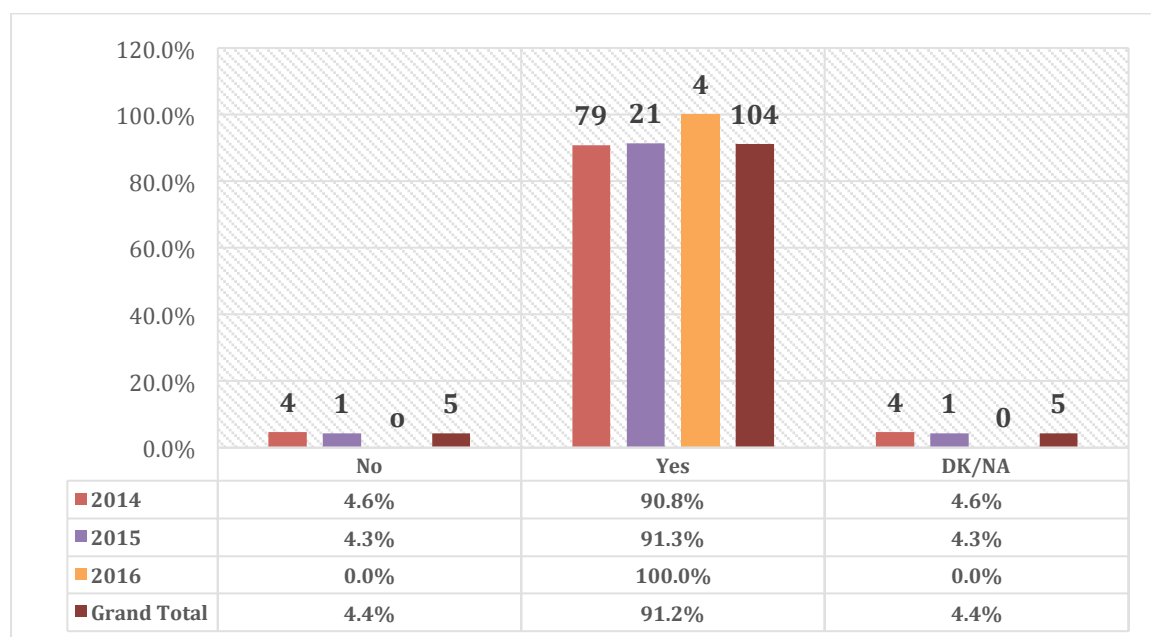
3.1.4. Graduation criteria #4: valid documentation

Refugees and asylum seekers

The fourth graduation criteria, which refers to Valid Documentation only applies to PoC. It is also important to notice the migratory status from the moment of intake. As it is shown on Figure 21, the participants were mainly refugees and asylum seekers. A steady number of refugees graduated only with a slight increase in the 2014 and 2015 cohort, 55% and 59.5% respectively.

The figure 21 shows how 91.2% of PoC finished the project holding a valid refugee documentation. In 44.1% of the cases, UNHCR through its partner agency provided economic assistance targeted for the purpose of renewing documentation benefiting the participants or a person of his/her family. This assistance was provided because in the country the cost for the revalidation of the ID is 98 USD, in addition to the requirement of affiliation to the Social Security scheme. In average, the amount given to these beneficiaries was 102, 255 CRC.

Figure 21. Participants with valid documentation at the moment of graduation



4. Participants' duration within the project

The time scale for graduated participants in the GM project is between 13 to 24 months, mainly, which represents 72.6% of the total graduated participants. There were also some particular cases which have less than 6 months (4.6%) or more than 31 months (1%).

Table 9. Duration time of graduated participants in the GM

Tiempo de Estadía en Modelo de Graduación	Total	Porcentaje
De 0 a 6 meses	9	4.6%
De 7 a 12 meses	31	16.0%
De 13 a 18 meses	80	41.2%
De 19 a 24 meses	61	31.4%
De 25 a 30 meses	11	5.7%
De 31 a 36 meses	2	1.0%
Total	194	100.0%

During the time in the project, the graduates have been economically supported, mostly with the provision of capital seed for those who opted for self-employment (53.6%), an average of 287,228 CRC, followed by housing (38.7%) and food (22.2%) or the complementary support which is both, housing and food (29,9%).

Table 10. Type of economic assistance received by the graduated participants

Type of support	# of beneficiaries	
Seed capital	104	53.6%
Technical training	54	27.8%
Materials for technical training	10	5.2%
Education	20	10.3%
Cash assistance top pay debt with the health security	17	8.8%
Health (services at private sector)	19	9.8%
Housing and Food	58	29.9%
Housing	75	38.7%
Food	43	22.2%
Cash assistance to renew ID	57	29.4%
Transportation subsidy	77	39.7%
Others	14	7.2%

4. Field testing of livelihoods indicators

The indicators shown below are based on the information of 114 people who finished the Graduation Model, specifically 67 in the self-employment track and 47 in the wage-employment track.

ACCESO AL AUTOEMPLEO FACILITADO				
Resultado esperado	Área	Indicador	Beneficiarios Directos	Beneficiarios Directos (%)
Incrementado el acceso a medios de subsistencia	1. Capital humano fortalecido	% de Pdl seleccionadas que completan formación para el autoempleo	67	100.0%
	3. Capital financiero y productivo suministrado	% de Pdl que reciben capital semilla (<i>cash grants</i>)	58	86.6%
		Valor promedio del capital semilla recibido	₡292,913 CRC	NA
	4. Acceso a servicios financieros facilitado	% de Pdl que reportan tener acceso a servicios de ahorro	49	73.1%
		% de Pdl que reportan tener acceso a créditos	8	11.9%
		% de Pdl que reportan haber ahorrado dinero	39	58.2%
Incrementada la resiliencia	8. Ingreso por autoempleo facilitado	% de Pdl que reportan haber incrementado su ingreso comparado con el año anterior	45	67.2%
	9. Ahorros de autoempleo facilitado	% de Pdl que reportan haber incrementado sus ahorros comparado con el año anterior	38	56.7%

ACCESO AL EMPLEO FACILITADO				
Resultado esperado	Área	Indicador	Beneficiarios Directos	Beneficiarios Directos (%)
Incrementado el acceso a medios de subsistencia	1. Capital humano fortalecido	% de Pdl seleccionadas que completan formación para el empleo	47	100.0%
	4. Acceso a servicios financieros facilitado	% de Pdl que reportan tener acceso a servicios de ahorro ²	33	70.2%
		% de Pdl que reportan tener acceso a créditos	1	2.1%
		% de Pdl que reportan haber ahorrado dinero	21	44.7%
Mejorado el empleo	5. Acceso a empleo facilitado	% de Pdl que han sido empleadas	27	57.4%
Incrementado a la resiliencia	7. Ingreso por empleo facilitado	% de Pdl que reportan haber incrementado su ingreso comparado con el año anterior	32	68.1%
	8. Ahorros por empleo facilitado	% de Pdl que reportan haber incrementado sus ahorros comparado con el año anterior	18	38.3%