



PHOTO: MYRIAMB/ADOBE STOCK

BETTERTOGETHER

CHALLENGE **Innovating with Venezuelans for a brighter future**

THE CRISIS

Venezuela's political and economic crisis has caused the largest external displacement of people in the history of the Western hemisphere. As of July 2022, more than seven million people, or one in every seven Venezuelans, have fled the country, leaving behind friends, family, their communities, and professional and cultural ties. More than 80 percent of Venezuela's migrants have fled to other places in Latin America and the Caribbean, and nearly half are women, many of whom are traveling alone, placing them at particular risk of exploitation, social exclusion, abuse, and gender-based violence (GBV).

This outflow has increased stress on already fragile healthcare systems, public services, labor markets, community relations, and infrastructure in host countries where Venezuelan migrants settle. Migrants struggle to access food, water, education, employment, and healthcare. They lack reliable sources of information and internet connectivity, and often face xenophobia and violence in host communities.

THE CHALLENGE

The BetterTogether/JuntosEsMejor Challenge, jointly led by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), identified, funded, and strengthened ground-breaking solutions that improved the lives of Venezuelan migrants and their host communities. The ~\$13 million challenge was implemented from September 2019 to September 2022, with the support of more than 25 operational and outreach partners to amplify its reach and impact. Solvers could apply from around the world, provided their solutions were implemented in at least one of the ten countries most affected by the Venezuela crisis.

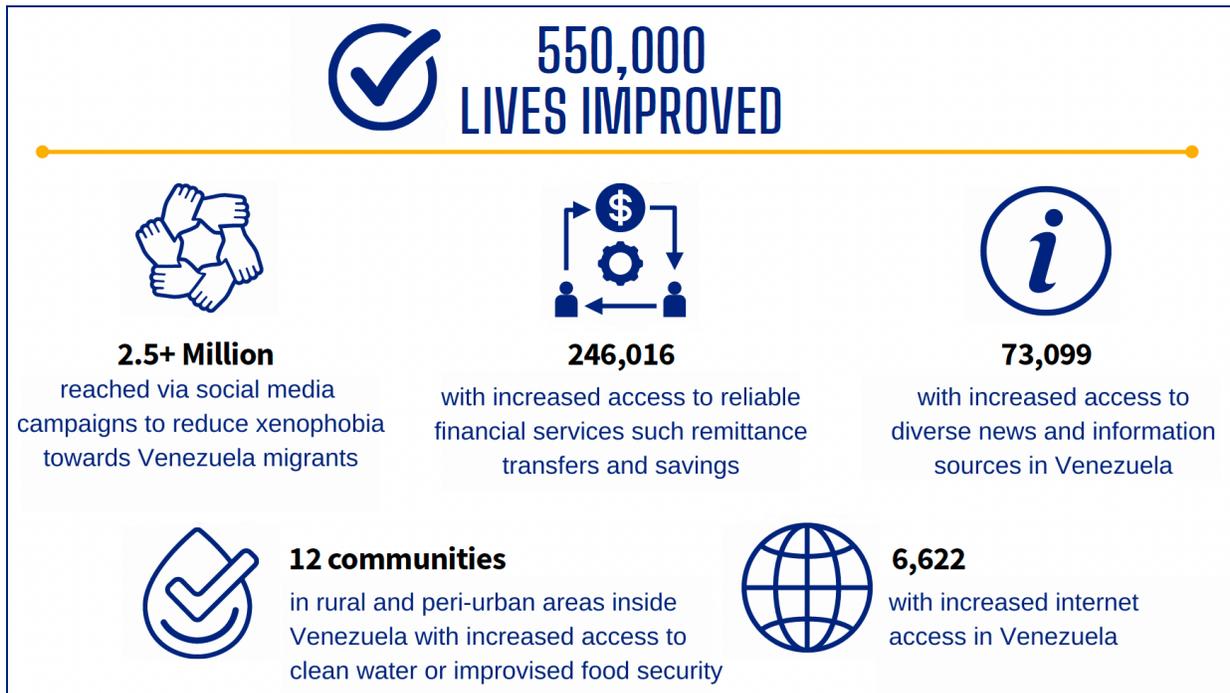
In total, 1,265 applications were submitted to the challenge, 518 (41 percent) of which were from organizations in Venezuela. Ultimately, the challenge made 35 awards (25 with funds from USAID and ten from the IDB) to 33 solver organizations in ten countries, including Venezuela. A total of 83 percent of the USAID-funded organizations were locally based, and 54 percent were new partners for USAID.



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

THE IMPACT

As the BetterTogether/JuntosEsMejor Challenge demonstrated, a small amount of capital invested in local organizations that are innovatively responding to critical development and humanitarian needs can generate high-impact results while building long-term, sustainable solutions. In just over a year of implementation, the challenge's solver organizations directly improved the lives of over 550,000 individuals. Among other achievements, solvers reached more than 2.5 million end users through social media campaigns to reduce xenophobia toward migrants; increased access to reliable financial services for almost a quarter million users; enhanced news and information for almost 74,000 users in Venezuela; provided clean water to 12 communities; and piloted a sustainable business model for internet access for over 6,600 users in one Venezuelan neighborhood.



BetterTogether/JuntosEsMejor provided customized support to help organizations establish long-term partnerships and attract additional investment to scale their innovations. Throughout implementation, 96 percent of solvers leveraged at least one key partner in testing and scaling their innovation, and half of all solvers had solutions that demonstrated support for or adoption by the private or public sector. In addition, 84 percent of solvers have concrete plans to continue scaling their innovation post-USAID funding. Four of the organizations have already received additional funding from USAID, the private sector, the United Nations, or the Colombian government to continue or expand their programs.

The JuntosEsMejor/BetterTogether Challenge offers an example of how to design and implement flexible programming that prioritizes and addresses the diverse needs of migrants and host communities in crisis and conflict situations. This model clearly shows that supporting locally-led innovation can meaningfully improve migrants' economic, social, physical, and mental well-being. With modest financial and technical assistance, challenge solvers developed, tested, and scaled sustainable solutions that will continue to improve the lives of Venezuelans, migrants, and host communities in the years to come.