



PHOTO: MYRIAMB/ADOBE STOCK

# BETTERTOGETHER

## CHALLENGE Innovating with Venezuelans for a brighter future

### THE CRISIS

Venezuela's political and economic crisis has led to 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).

The influx of Venezuelan migrants has placed additional strain on already fragile healthcare systems, public services, labor markets, community relations, and infrastructure in the host countries where they have settled. Migrants struggle to access food, water, education, employment, and health care. They lack reliable sources of information and internet connectivity, and often face xenophobia and violence in host communities.

### THE CHALLENGE

The JuntosEsMejor/BetterTogether 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 from anywhere in the world were eligible to apply, provided their solutions were implemented in at least one of the ten countries most affected by the Venezuela crisis.

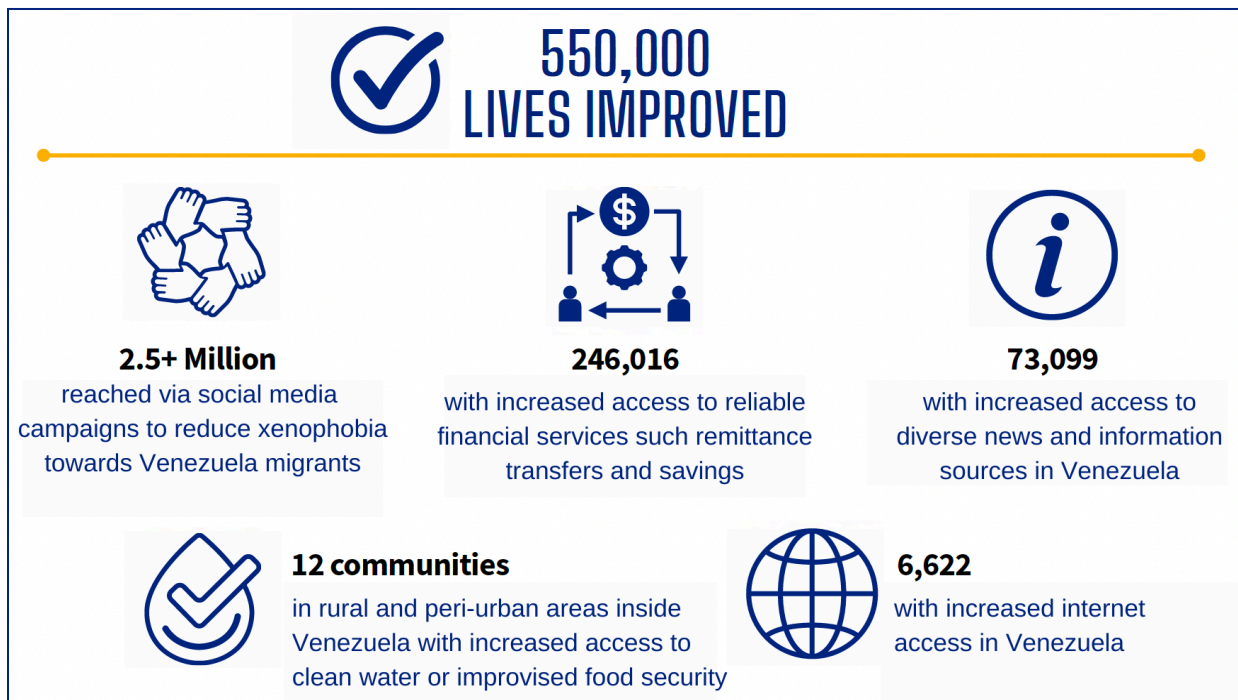
In total, 1,265 applications were submitted to the challenge, 518 (41 percent) of which were from organizations in Venezuela. Ultimately, the challenge made 35 awards (25 with funds from USAID and ten from the IDB) to 33 solver organizations in ten countries, including Venezuela. Of the organizations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



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## THE IMPACT

The JuntosEsMejor/BetterTogether Challenge demonstrated that investing a small amount of capital 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.



JuntosEsMejor/BetterTogether 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 serves as a model for designing and implementing 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.