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Case Study

Mirtha and the Humanitarian Operations Programme (HOP): An Impact Story

How HOP improved Mirtha's confidence and leveraged her work in her humanitarian work



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Aprendizaje liderado localmente
transformando vidas





Following my participation in the training, I was confident to accept and assume new responsibilities and functions within my organisation, some which I previously had rejected due to fear and doubt about my own abilities. The HOP gave me more confidence and security as I had more knowledge on humanitarian principles.”

- Mirtha

Meet Mirtha

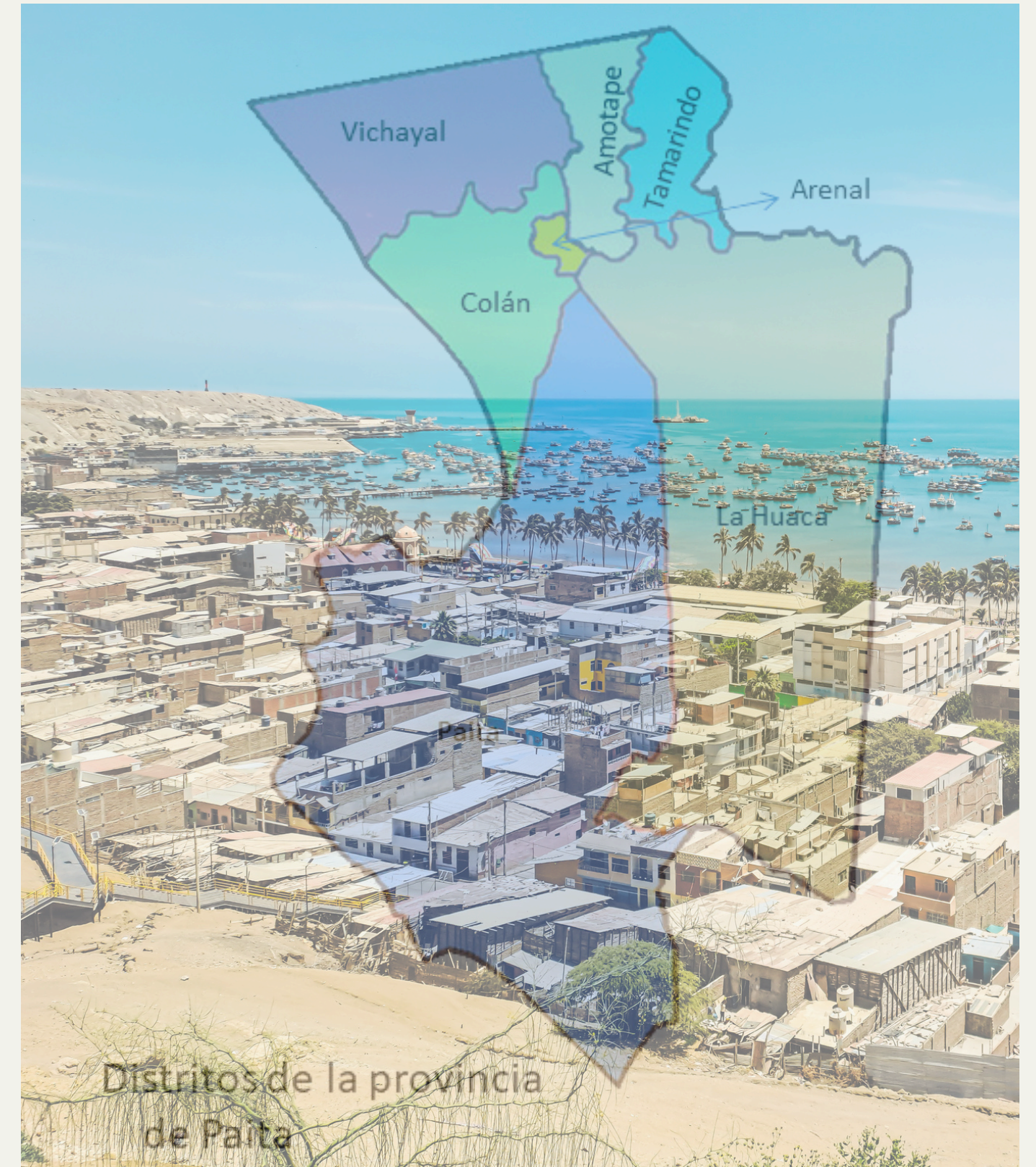
Mirtha Carrasco is an active contributor to the social development sector in northern Peru, particularly within the local NGO, CEDEPAS NORTE, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary (in 2024) of operations in the regions such as Piura, Trujillo, Cajamarca, and Lima Norte. Her role encompasses managing projects focused on governance, democracy, and the prevention of violence against women.

She serves as project executor and facilitator, coordinating diverse development initiatives. She handles the overall management of projects in governance and democracy, serving as focal point with various public agents and ensuring the successful execution of workshops and training sessions.



Mirtha specifically oversees projects in six districts of the province of Paita, aiming to empower local communities through capacity building related to citizen participation and violence prevention. Although her projects are related to social development, her interventions are based on vulnerable communities often hit by crisis and in need of humanitarian assistance.

Mirtha's participation in Humanitarian Operations Programme (HOP) was spurred by a direct invitation from the director of CEDEPAS NORTE, following a notable interaction she had during a training session with Save the Children that was centered on child and adolescent rights.





The [Humanitarian Operations Programme \(HOP Core\)](#) is one of the most important trainings recently launched for Spanish speakers in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) by the Humanitarian Leadership Academy, covering essential elements of humanitarian response such as conducting rapid needs assessments, proposal writing, conflict sensitivity programming, safeguarding in emergencies, humanitarian principles, wellbeing in emergencies, working with multicultural teams, gender equality, among others.

Mirtha's consistent engagement with topics pertinent to young women and children, coupled with her expertise; positioned her as the ideal candidate for further contributions to her organisation.

Mirtha's experience with HOP

Mirtha's training experience revealed profound transformations in her approach to project management, particularly in her understanding of accountability, gender inclusivity, and practical application of learned skills.

Initially, Mirtha viewed accountability as a straightforward task limited to financial oversight. She described her process as *"I used to sit down every month, go through all expenses I had made, and prepare reports... that meant accountability to me."* However, HOP training led her to realise deeper implications, which she articulated as *"the most important [accountability] process is before the communities we work with."*

This insight marked a shift from a traditional approach to a more community-centered accountability practice.

Additionally, her participation in HOP helped her take a critical look at the effectiveness of her organisation's gender policies. She questioned their practical implementation with a poignant reflection *"Our organisation has a cross-cutting axis of gender focus, but how is this really translating and projecting into our activities?"* This skepticism prompted her to ensure that gender considerations were actively integrated into all phases of project execution, moving from theoretical commitment to tangible action.

As an immediate result, Mirtha worked to promote greater participation of women from vulnerable communities in the decision-making processes during a CEDEPAS NORTE project implementation; a change from the previous male-dominated setups. This was a direct result of Mirtha's strategic enhancements post-training, aimed at fostering greater inclusivity and diversity.

The HOP training programme also featured a challenging simulation exercise, initially overwhelming for Mirtha, yet it turned out to be highly beneficial to her. She described the experience as "*overwhelming at first...but it was the best for me as I had no previous experience (in humanitarian response).*" This exercise bridged the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, enhancing her skills in real project formulation. Subsequently, Mirtha applied these new skills effectively in a proposal she presented for European Union funding and in active project management.

Overall, Mirtha's training experience not only equipped her with vital skills, but also instilled a deeper commitment to applying these skills in a manner that emphasizes community engagement, gender sensitivity, and effective management. Her journey underscores the transformative power of targeted training and professional development.

The impact on CEDEPAS NORTE and Mirtha's work

After completing her training, Mirtha actively shared her newfound knowledge and insights with her organisation, aiming to integrate the learning across various branches and departments. Mirtha approached the dissemination of information methodically, beginning with direct discussions with her director to facilitate an organisational understanding of the training content. This was critical as it allowed for a coordinated approach to applying the training insights across the entire network.

The impact of the training on her work was significant, since Mirtha gained a newfound confidence, which she described as “greatly enhanced” post training. This confidence allowed her to take on new challenges and responsibilities within her organisation, particularly in areas that had previously intimidated her due to their complexity or her lack of direct experience.

Mirtha articulated the broader impacts of the training, explaining how it enabled her to view her projects and responsibilities through a more informed and confident lens. She stated, *“(with my team) we have incorporated learning in many practical ways. For instance, we stop and see certain issues undergoing our project and start asking how does it relate to cross-cutting considerations, are we applying the Do No Harm principle?”*

"I also ask myself how to understand issues with what I have learn?"

This indicates Mirtha's proactive approach to integrating training insights into everyday work tasks, enhancing the effectiveness and relevance of her projects.



Furthermore, Mirtha emphasized the continuous learning aspect, which she pursued by engaging in further training and seeking knowledge beyond her initial areas of expertise. This ongoing pursuit of knowledge has broadened her understanding and capability, allowing her to tackle complex issues with greater confidence and skill.

Final reflections

HOP training is transforming the way local NGOs such as CEDEPAS NORTE approach project management and community engagement. By embedding the principles of continuous feedback and accountability directly into their operational frameworks; Mirtha's projects are slowly starting to make an impact within her organisation, making CEDEPAS NORTE more adaptive and responsive to the needs of the communities they serve. This approach not only improves project outcomes, but also ensures that these outcomes are sustainable and aligned with the community's evolving expectations.

On a personal level, Mirtha's development through the training highlights the critical role of ongoing professional education in the growth trajectories of development and humanitarian sector leaders. Her increased knowledge and skills have not only enhanced her effectiveness in her role but have also instilled in her a deeper sense of purpose and commitment. Her personal growth contributes directly to her local organisation's overall capacity to strengthen its impact in their communities.

About the Humanitarian Leadership Academy

The Humanitarian Leadership Academy (HLA), hosted by Save the Children (SC), has a key role to play in supporting humanitarians across the world to deal with crises. Our purpose is to shift the power of handling such crises to those most affected and best placed to respond. With Salesforce as a partner from April 2023 to April 2024, the HLA reinforced its capacity to design and implement training programs through its Regional Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean, enhancing emergency response capacities for local NGOs, CSOs, government officials, as well as local SC staff. The expansion of HLA in the LAC region is relevant, considering that Save the Children works in 18 countries, through seven country offices, three member offices, a number of project offices and a network of partners that can be benefited by the work done by the Academy.

Project: Salesforce, humanitarian capacity building in LAC through HLA. | Topics: Capacity building, humanitarian response.

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