

# CEPIA

## ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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# JANUARY – DECEMBER 2024

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## Words from Our Directors

2024 was a time of challenges, commitment, and significant progress for CEPIA. In this annual report, we share with responsibility and transparency the path of our work, focused on promoting gender equality, defending human rights, providing comprehensive support for children and adolescents, and empowering communities in vulnerable situations.

As a non-profit civil society organization, our work is grounded in comprehensive care, collective action, and the strengthening of networks. Every project carried out this year reflects our approach to social change through a rights-based perspective, active listening, full awareness, and sustained commitment.

This report presents the achievements reached, the challenges faced, and the value of every person who is part of CEPIA, the communities we work with, and the partner organizations and institutions that accompany us on this journey.

In 2025, CEPIA celebrates its twentieth anniversary—a milestone that highlights two decades of tireless dedication toward a more equitable and inclusive society. We believe in the positive impact of collective effort, active participation, and network-based collaboration. This document is an invitation to continue building a future with more opportunities, more rights, and greater care for all people.

Likewise, we want to express our sincere gratitude to the CEPIA board of directors for their unwavering support and dedication.

***Laetitia Deweer, Funder & Development Director***  
***María José Cappa, Executive Director***



# Child Development and Comprehensive Care Center (CIDAI)

This program's main objective is to reinforce the comprehensive well-being of children and teenagers in vulnerable situations residing in the coastal communities of Santa Cruz. It aligns with the comprehensive care objectives of the national care network institutions; the National Children's Protection Agency (PANI) and the Mixed Institute of Social Aid (IMAS).

Additionally, CIDAI aims to strengthen comprehensive health; improve academic performance; develop life skills and the comprehensive development of children and teenagers. Those who integrate this program are children and teenagers between 2 and 17 years old, most of whom come from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds.



CIDAI Graphic 1. Socioeconomic condition of program beneficiaries

During the period from January to December 2024, a total of 158 children and teenagers attended the program daily.



*CIDAI Image 1. Children in the program on a trip*

During the 2024 period, the psychology department offered 91 children and teenagers' psychotherapy; additionally, 23 workshops were offered to the population, addressing topics such as drug prevention, healthy habits, sexual abuse prevention, improper relationships, proper use of social networks, and comprehensive sexuality.

Furthermore, weekly sessions of mindfulness and sound therapy were held for the groups, integrating exercises for relaxation and mindfulness. Each group had the opportunity to participate in weekly classes of body expression and sports as part of the program's curricular; thus, responding to strengthening health comprehensively.



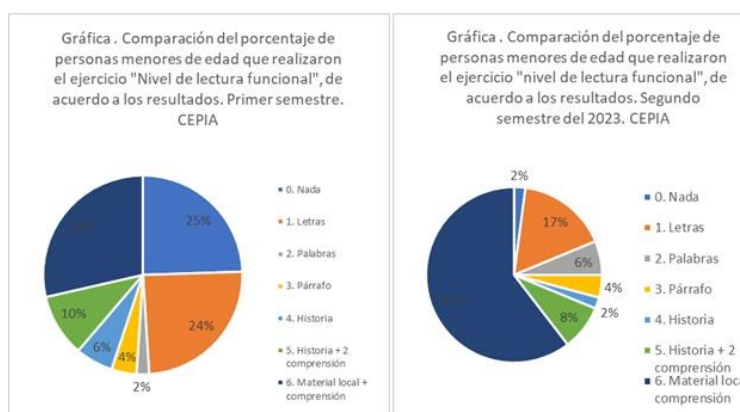
*CIDAI Image 2: Sound therapy session.*

Regarding academic improvement, as part of CIDAI's routines, activities were carried out to reinforce reading, writing and mathematics. Two weekly classes of 1 hour and 30 minutes of English as a second language were taught. Spaces for project construction were reinforced, where the objective allows children to develop research strategies.



CIDAI Image 3: Preschool children learning to trace their names

An important achievement in this area of work was maintaining an individualized space for reinforced reading and writing practices; this was achieved thanks to the contribution of volunteers and regular CIDAI teachers for individual sessions. One of the important aspects to highlight is the results obtained in the measurement tests carried out during two semesters in 2024.



CIDAI Graphic 2: Reading results in impact measurement tests We can see that a large percentage of children improved their reading level.

Regarding life skills development in children and teenagers, it is worth noting that during this year, workshops on self-awareness, conflict resolution, self-care and hygiene, and environmental awareness were developed. These learning spaces for participants have been possible not only due to the effort of teachers but also to the alliances developed with Universidad Latina —nursing and physical therapy students,

Centro Cívico por la Paz in Santa Cruz, Frame Projects , Universidad de Costa Rica — psychology students— Centro de Rescate de Vida Salvaje APAMI, Clean Wave organization, Instituto sobre Alcoholismo y Farmacodependencia (IAFA), The Leaderback Trust, Asociación Futuro Brillante, and the Office of the First Lady of the Republic of Costa Rica.

It is also important to highlight the significant contribution to the learning process of children and teenagers through activities such as the Parents' Museum where parents or guardians visit the care center and share an experience with their children and observe their progress 2 Museum activities were held this year.

Similarly, together with the group of volunteers and music teachers, the year closed with a talent recital, being a projection of artistic advances and learnings of the year. Each participant observed how discipline and hard work bear fruit in each of their life experiences.



*CIDAI Image 4: Children celebrating a special day*

In addition to these achievements; family work and the involvement of families into the program has allowed the development of children and teenagers to be fruitful. This is reflected in the work of the Social Work department, where socio-educational strategies and follow-up of families were developed, resulting in 57 socio-economic studies 15 individual follow-ups for participation, and 13 socio-educational and informative processes with families.



It is worth highlighting that another element of great help in achieving the goals during 2024 is related to the work carried out from listening spaces such as the Atelier; where children, through the guidance of teachers, were able to learn about their emotions and ways to express them.

Following this line of work, an indispensable element in the CIDAI program is to provide safe and full listening spaces to children and teenagers. Ensuring that the space and hours within the program are not only framed from care but that skills and protective factors can be enhanced.

#### CIDAI Program Testimonials

*Finally, the effort and satisfaction of each person who is part of the direct care staff of the CIDAI program are reflected in the testimonials of the participating population and the caregivers of the children and teenagers:*

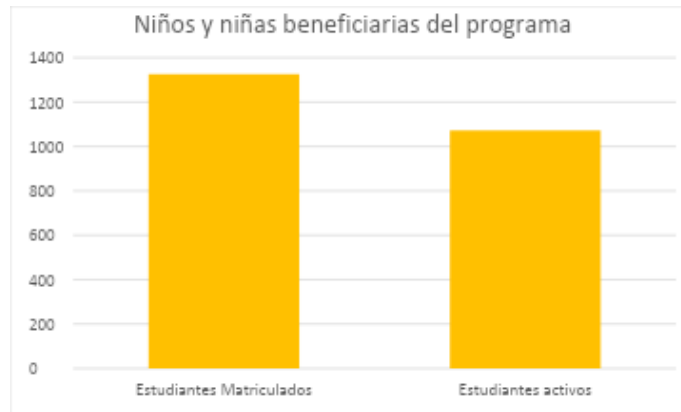
*“It is of great help in my case my son has learned to socialize better with other children and work in a team”* **CIDAI 1 beneficiary mother**

*“I was able to play instruments that at some point I wanted to play them, I could feel that I truly belong to everyone”* **CIDAI 2 beneficiary child**

*“Very nice and happy since every day my son has something to tell me and I always see him very happy and I am also happy because I can go to work knowing that they take good care of my son, he loves his teacher, God bless CEPIA and those who support them”* **CIDAI 3 beneficiary mother**

## After-School Program

This program aims to promote healthy lifestyles, artistic skills, academic skills, life skills, and comprehensive care for children aged 7 to 17 from the coastal area of the Santa Cruz canton, Guanacaste.



*Extracurricular Classes Graphic 3: Children benefited from the extracurricular classes program in 2024*

During 2024, 1325 children were enrolled in the different disciplines offered by the After-School program and a total of **1073 children** showed regular attendance in activities designed to strengthen their physical, mental, emotional, and social development.

Change of residence, change of school, interests in other activities, limited time of caregivers to provide support and motivation, health reasons, among others, were part of the reasons why 19.02% of the total enrolled could not complete the full program.



*Extracurricular Classes Graphic 4: Children participated in various activities in 2024*

Among the most popular activities were the Successful Girls Circles, with 220 participants, and the Successful Boys Circles with 85 participants. Among the sports, football was implemented, with **179 enrolled**, jiu-jitsu (**50**), pickleball (**15**), surfing (**32**), dancing (**14**), swimming (**76**), and skateboarding with the Happy Feet group (**22**), expanding the offer of recreational and sports experiences. Likewise, the program **I Am the Answer** integrated **234 minors**, promoting life skills, yoga, environmental education, and mindfulness. Other disciplines such as **English (103 participants)** and **music (104)** stood out for their contribution to cognitive and artistic development. **Tutoring classes** were attended by **30 minors**.

This participation overview shows the diversity of interests within the attended population and the importance of continuing to strengthen those disciplines with the greatest impact and demand.



*Extracurricular Classes Image 5: Children during camps engage in activities such as art.*

During 2024, **2 summer camps** were held, which took place during the school vacation period to enjoy recreation and learning time, with volunteers who provide support in these events. The communities where these camps were held were; El Llano — where the participation was 40 children during two consecutive days— and 27 de Abril, —with a participation of 115 children— on both occasions the benefited children enjoyed artistic and sports activities for two continuous days. It is worth highlighting the support

provided by the Asociación de Desarrollo of 27 de Abril for the successful development of this event.

The extracurricular activities offered children and teenagers a safe space for learning, recreation, socialization and comprehensive development. Each discipline promoted specific skills, from artistic expression to physical and emotional strengthening. Below is a detailed breakdown of each, highlighting their impact and participation.



*I Am the Answer Extracurricular Image 6: Children start the school year learning yoga classes with the I Am the Answer project*

### [I Am the Answer](#)

The objective of the **I Am the Answer** project is to provide knowledge and tools that promote a healthy, sustainable, and conscious lifestyle for children aged 6 to 8. The project was carried out in the Santa Cruz canton area for three consecutive years, and in 2024 it was implemented in 7 benefited public educational centers, impacting a total of 234 children who received 30 classes during the year.

The project expanded its reach with the implementation of the virtual modality, allowing more children to access its content thanks to professional videos provided by the Gaia Foundation. Through this initiative, 30 online classes were offered, designed for participants to practice from home. Each week, the videos were sent through a WhatsApp group managed with parents and teachers, facilitating the follow-up of the learning process. This space also served to share relevant information and photos of

families actively participating in the sessions. Additionally, some teachers used the videos in the classroom during their free time, integrating songs and meditations into daily learning.

As a program closure, beneficiaries enjoyed a graduation trip, with recreational activities organized at the **Marina de Flamingo** and **Apami Animal Rescue Center**, celebrating the achievements reached.



*English Extracurricular Image 7: Children strengthen the learning of a second language.*

### English Classes

The English teaching project aims to teach minors a second language. During 2024, the project was introduced to **4 communities**, of which the details are narrated:

In **San José de Pinilla**, a total of **37 effective sessions** were provided to 2 different age groups, composed of 15 teenagers and 10 children. Of the teenager group, only 2 completed the process from start to finish, partly due to lack of interest and excessive fatigue due to the long school schedule. Once the first block ended in November, the person in charge of teaching decided to resign due to one of the project's main difficulties: the poor road conditions leading to the community. To ensure the continuity of these classes in 2025, the hiring of a professional residing in a closer area has been planned.

In **Playa Grande**, a total of **30 effective sessions** were held between the first and second cycle, benefiting 17 children. The English classes, taught at a basic level at Playa Grande School, were led by a specialized teacher. To ensure the continuity of learning, it is planned to resume sessions on January 16, 2025.

In **Brasilito**, English classes began in November, developing during the months of November and December with a total of **4 effective sessions**. During this period, 9 children participated (5 boys and 4 girls). For 2025, the reactivation of these classes has been coordinated at the Playa Brasilito Community Training Center, ensuring their continuity from January with a new teacher in charge.

In **Huacas**, English classes in Huacas began on December 7, becoming the most recent community to receive this educational offer from CEPIA. During this period, **3 effective sessions** were held, benefiting 17 children. To ensure the continuity of the program, it is planned to resume classes in February 2025 with the same teaching team.

#### [Tutoring and Academic Support](#)

The tutoring and academic support project was carried out in Playa Grande and Playa Brasilito; it focuses on reinforcing learning and providing educational support to students in the first and second cycle of primary education.

In **Playa Grande**, the project's main objective was to offer academic support to 13 children in fourth, fifth, and sixth grade at the public school. For this, a full-time teacher was available at the institution, who also taught individual classes adapted to the specific needs of each student.

Between February and October 2024, **60 sessions** were held, totaling approximately **474 hours of group teaching and 146 hours of individualized attention** in areas such as reading and writing and mathematics. Despite the cancellation of 9 sessions for various reasons, educational material was sent to the homes, allowing around 72 hours of autonomous learning to be recovered.

In total, this educational effort represented **692 hours of work**, achieving significant progress in 100% of the benefited students, reflecting the positive impact of the initiative on their academic performance.



*Extracurricular Image 8: Children strengthen their academic skills through group and individual tutoring*

The academic support program in Brasilito stood out for its personalized approach, allowing students with academic lag to strengthen their academic skills and self-confidence in their learning.

In this community, the project benefited 17 children aged 8 to 12, providing a space to close educational gaps and enhance their abilities. Directed at students from second to sixth grade, the program offered **104 effective sessions** between March and December 2024. During this period, individualized work was carried out to reinforce reading, writing and math comprehension, and promote the enjoyment of learning. Thanks to this initiative, 100% of the participants improved their grades and advanced to the next school grade, reaffirming the positive impact of this effort on the educational community.

## Art



*Art Classes Extracurricular Image 9: Children make crafts in their art sessions*

A total of 14 minors (10 girls and 4 boys) participated in the art classes between July and December 2024, a total of 9 sessions were held. The lack of volunteers was the main limitation to increasing the frequency of activities; however, with the incorporation of a new volunteer teacher, the program achieved stability in both the number of sessions and participation.

## Music School



*Extracurricular Image 10: Children strengthen their musical skills*

The CEPIA Music School began in April 2024 with the participation of five groups of children from the communities of Portegolpe, Huacas, Playa Grande, Villarreal, and Santa Rosa. Additionally, 5 minors received individual classes, benefiting a total of 103 participants. Throughout the program, between **24 and 37 sessions were held in**



**person**, guided by two specialized teachers with a focus on learning different instruments and creativity .

The sessions were held once a week at the CEPIA community center, facilitating the transportation of children from Playa Grande, Villarreal, and Portegolpe through the association's transport. As a result of the process, participants managed to create their own music, culminating the project with a recital on December 19. The impact of this initiative on the strengthening of artistic skills and musical expression within the community was highlighted.

In parallel, in Playa Brasilito, music teaching in conjunction with the **Good Vibes Rock School Music School** continued. **31 sessions** were held between March and December. Although the program had 14 enrolled children, constant participation remained at 5 minors (4 girls and 1 boy). One of the main challenges was the difficulty of matching the children's school schedules with the availability of the teaching team.



*Extracurricular Sports Image 11: Children receive dance classes*

## Dance

In October, the CEPIA, in alliance with **Elevate Movement Studio** and **YMCA Transportes**, awarded **14 dance and transportation scholarships** to children from the communities of La Garita Nueva, Matapalo, Huacas, and Brasilito.

The program focused on teaching jazz funk and hip hop, offering participants an opportunity to develop artistic skills and body expression. Between October and

December, 9 sessions were held, consolidating the interest and commitment of the beneficiaries.

In January, the dance and movement camp was held with live music thanks to our collaboration with Elevate The Beat and the La Paz community school. **20 children participated during 5 days** of teaching to generate self-confidence, physical activity, and socio-emotional well-being.



*Extracurricular Image 12: Children and teenagers enjoy surfing classes*

## Surf

At the sports level, the Surf 4 Youth (S4Y) project aims to train athletes and support them mentally and financially for participation in local tournaments. Valeska Montoya and Gal Bepmale are representative cases of the program's success, standing out in the national circuit competitions.

On the other hand, the beginner surf group in San José de Pinilla had **9 sessions with 17 children and teenagers** enjoying learning this sport. It is worth noting some, with the resignation of the teacher in August and the heavy rainy season that hit the area, hindering safe surfing practice. In December 2024, a new instructor was hired to reactivate surf sessions in January 2025.



*Extracurricular Image 13: Children receive swimming classes*

### Swimming

The swimming project aimed to strengthen children's aquatic skills, promoting accident prevention in bodies of water and fostering a safe and respectful relationship with the marine environment. It was supported by Vamos Youth and Connect Ocean.

Throughout the year, different enrollment cycles were held, reaching a total of 90 participants from various communities, of which 76 successfully completed the sessions, acquiring essential tools for their safety in the water. This activity stood out as one of the favorites among minors, although it faced challenges such as the cancellation of some sessions due to weather conditions and seasonal illnesses.

To ensure attendance, the program provided transportation twice a week, ensuring children's access to classes and reinforcing the commitment to aquatic education and child safety.

### Soccer

Soccer was characterized by constant attendance and high participation in local and larger tournaments. Throughout the year, children from different communities actively engaged in training and competitions, strengthening not only their sports skills but also values such as teamwork and discipline.

Regarding weekly attendance, the following data was recorded by community:

- 27 de Abril: 25 out of 35 enrolled children.
- Santa Rosa: 25 out of 40 participants attended regularly.
- Trapiche: 100% attendance was achieved, with 60 enrolled children.
- Brasilito: 18 out of 20 participants remained active in the program.
- Huacas: Complete attendance of the 24 enrolled children.



*Extracurricular Image 14: Children, adolescents who were part of a local soccer championship*

## Jiu Jitsu

Throughout 2024, Hero Academy continuously implemented its jiu jitsu training program aimed at children and adolescents in vulnerable conditions, either referred by educational institutions or enrolled by their legal guardians. The primary objective of this initiative was to foster core values such as discipline, respect, and perseverance, while also contributing to the participants' overall well-being by enhancing mental resilience, behavioral self-regulation, and stress reduction. During the year, the

program successfully expanded its reach to additional communities, thereby increasing the number of beneficiaries. The communities served during this period included Lorena, Huacas, Matapalo, Santa Rosa, El Llanito, Villarreal, Hernández, Linderos, Trapiche, 27 de Abril, and Paso Hondo. As part of the annual closing activities, a celebration was organized with the participation of all program beneficiaries, during which gifts were distributed as recognition of their commitment and effort throughout the year. The continuation of the program is planned for 2025, with the aim of further promoting the integral development of children and adolescents in participating communities, solidifying jiu jitsu as an educational and socially transformative tool.

### Pickleball

In May 2024, weekly pickleball lessons were launched in the community of Playa Brasilito, targeting a group of 10 children as part of the extracurricular activity program. As with other initiatives within this portfolio, attendance was affected by changes in academic schedules, resulting in an average participation of five minors per session. The activity was conducted using all necessary sports equipment and guided by three volunteers who provided technical and methodological support. In the second half of the year, the sessions were temporarily suspended due to the absence of the lead volunteer. Although efforts were made to resume the program with a new facilitator, the lack of a supporting volunteer team prevented its continuation. Additionally, several sessions were canceled due to adverse weather conditions that compromised the safety and logistics of the activity.

### Skateboarding with Happy Feet

As part of its broader efforts to promote sports, social integration, and holistic development among children and adolescents in Guanacaste, CEPIA has continued to strengthen its collaboration with Happy Feet and its founder, Nova Everson, in the management of the Villarreal Kaiman Skatepark. This space has proven to be a

powerful tool for social inclusion, value formation, and community building through sport.

The skatepark was originally constructed in 2013 with the support of Acción Joven, CEPIA, and other donors, on land belonging to the local technical institute. However, following a period of inactivity due to management issues and conflicts of interest, the facility remained unused for several years.

It was through the initiative of Nova Everson, a local skater and passionate advocate for the sport, that the park was successfully reopened in January 2021 under a renewed vision: to provide a safe, accessible, and stimulating environment for local youth. Since its reopening, the park has hosted extracurricular skateboarding clubs and has become an important meeting place for children and adolescents in the community.

In 2024, the program maintained weekly sessions led by national champion and professional coach Buho, who has played a key role in facilitating the learning process and motivating participants. The youth enrolled in the program have expressed high levels of enthusiasm for these sessions, which focus not only on skateboarding skills but also on developing soft skills and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Currently, 90% of the students enrolled through CEPIA own their own skateboards, and both technical and personal progress have been evident. Activities are complemented by recreational games such as soccer, trampoline, board games, and group dynamics, fostering an atmosphere of trust and camaraderie.

Beyond sport, the program incorporates elements of environmental education, cultural exchange, and participation in local competitions and events, fostering a sense of responsibility and belonging. As Nova Everson explains, “The hope is to continue with the programs and promote cultural exchange through skateboarding and other sports, to help young people and society as a whole grow closer together during this time of great transformation in the Tamarindo area and beyond.”

The Villarreal Kaiman Skatepark stands as a valuable investment in the comprehensive well-being of Guanacaste's youth and a clear example of the positive impact that can be achieved through strategic partnerships, sport, and community engagement.

### Successful Girls and Boys Circles

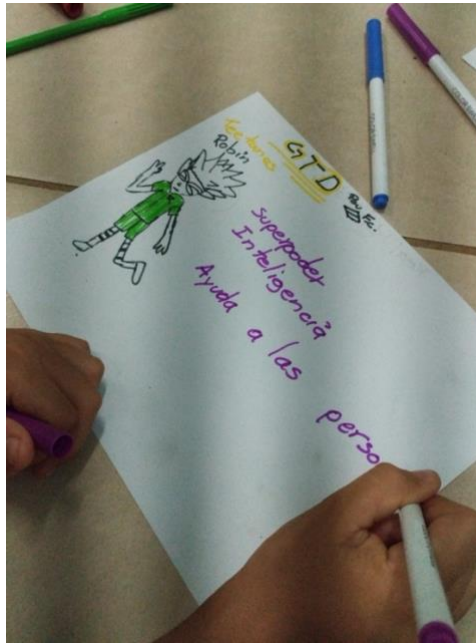


*Extracurricular Image 15: Girls enjoying a graduation trip*

The **Successful Girls Circles** aim to prevent gender violence and empower girls within a safe space. In each community, a safe and meeting space is sought for girls in vulnerable situations from strategically chosen communities. The specific objectives of the 44 weekly workshops are:

- The girls recognize the different forms of violence
- The girls build healthy relationships among themselves
- The girls break the silence when they or their peers are victims of violence
- The girls increase their personal safety strategies
- The girls have a positive self-image
- The girls increase their knowledge about human rights
- The girls recognize and respond to gender socialization
- The girls have basic knowledge about human development

220 girls participated in the circles during 2024.



*Extracurricular Image 16: Boys learning about positive masculinities*

For the first time in 2024, the **Successful Boys Circles** project was implemented, opening a safe space for training, education, and awareness of boys living in vulnerable conditions. The objectives are to offer a safe space for boys; to allow them to explore their vulnerability, to learn to use their personal power peacefully and equitably and additionally foster the construction of healthy relationships with their peers, families, and girls.

The Successful Boys Circles project was implemented for the first time in March 2024, benefiting **85 boys** from the communities of 27 de Abril, Paraíso, Portegolpe, Cartagena, and San José de Pinilla. The project faces the main challenge of resistance to changing thinking in a context where deeply rooted cultural traditions persist. In Guanacaste, machismo remains a determining factor, which generates some reluctance on the part of caregivers towards topics aimed at building positive masculinities.

#### [Extracurricular Classes Program Testimonials](#)

*“Thanks to the swimming classes, my children learned to swim”* **Extracurricular Classes 1 beneficiary mother.**



*“The surf training is very important for my son because he needs support for competitions and CEPIA has helped him a lot”* **Extracurricular Classes 2 beneficiary mother.**

*“We are very grateful to CEPIA for everything they have done for my daughters”* **Extracurricular Classes 3 beneficiary mother.**

*“Yoga classes are my favorite”* **Extracurricular Classes 4 beneficiary child.**

*“For me, the best moment is when we receive CEPIA (Yo Soy la Respuesta classes) at school”* **Extracurricular Classes 5 beneficiary girl.**

*“The jiu jitsu classes have helped improve the behavior of referred students”* **Ministry of Education faculty staff.**

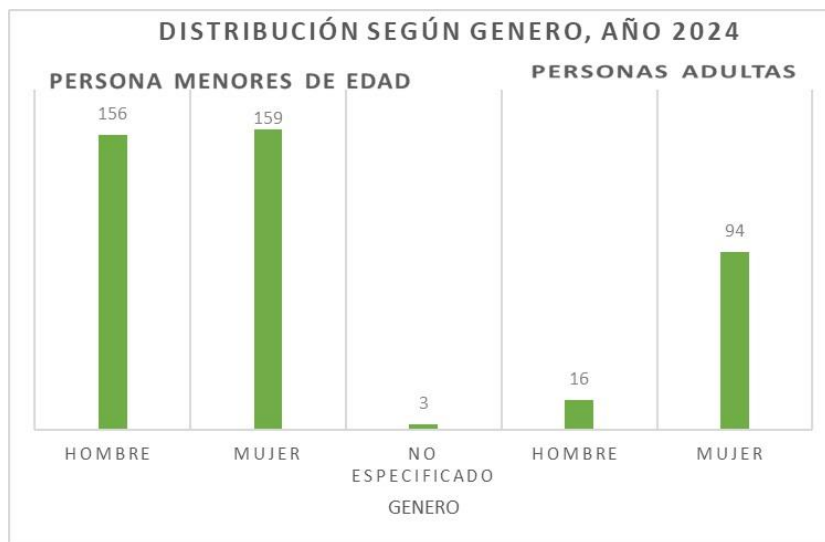
## Psychology and Holistic Health

This program operates as an integral health area from the different approaches of psychology according to the needs of the beneficiaries. Aimed at strengthening the mental and emotional health of minors and adults, this program benefits minors, their families, and adults in vulnerable and at-risk conditions in the coastal communities of Santa Cruz, regardless of their nationality.

In 2024, **802 people** were attended through individual psychotherapy, group therapy, and workshops. The total annual distribution of cases attended in psychological consultation corresponds to 428 people, of which **318 are minors and 110 are adults**; the average age of minors attended is 8 years and 6 months. The following graph shows that of the total number of minors who received psychotherapeutic processes, 159 are girls, 156 are boys, and 3 do not specify gender; and of the total number of adults attended, 94 are women and 16 are men.



*Psychology and Holistic Health Image 17: Minor receiving individual psychotherapy with art therapy technique for emotion management Psychology and Holistic Health*



*Graph 6: Total beneficiaries and gender distribution in 2024*

Regarding the most frequent reasons for consultation in minors, conduct disorder ranks first, emotional and depressive symptoms second, grief third, anxiety fourth, and sexual abuse fifth. In adults, the main reason for consultation is emotional symptoms, followed by grief, violence, anxiety, and sexual abuse.

The following table shows the comparison of the main reasons for consultation in minors over 8 years (2017 to 2024), reflecting 5 frequent reasons for consultation and a significant increase in conduct disorder, grief, emotional symptoms, depressive symptoms, and sexual abuse for this year 2024. This suggests that there is currently a greater demand for CEPIA's psychology service in terms of priority attention cases — which has seen the need to reinforce its human resources— reflecting a constant increase in attention. On the other hand, this data could reflect that the country's health system does not offer prompt attention, and the waiting time is very long.

In summary, this seems to indicate that in the coastal communities of Santa Cruz there is a clear demand for psychological attention (especially in cases of risk, acute and complex trauma) but there are great barriers to providing it; among them the limitations of the public sector and the high economic costs in the private sector, which has increased attention in CEPIA's psychology department over these 8 years.

MOTIVOS DE CONSULTA	AÑO 2017	AÑO 2018	AÑO 2019	AÑO 2020	AÑO 2021	AÑO 2022	AÑO 2023	AÑO 2024
TRASTORNO DE CONDUCTA	50	44	80	30	57	86	49	93
DUELO	5	3	17	9	26	19	12	29
SÍNTOMAS EMOCIONALES DEPRESIVOS	6	3	37	12	24	29	20	55
ANSIEDAD	4	4	26	13	18	26	24	22
ABUSO SEXUAL	8	3	17	8	14	20	11	21
VIOLENCIA INTRAFAMILIAR	5	3	-	-	18	6	1	1

*Psychology and Holistic Health Table 1: Most frequent reasons for consultation in minors during the year 2025.*

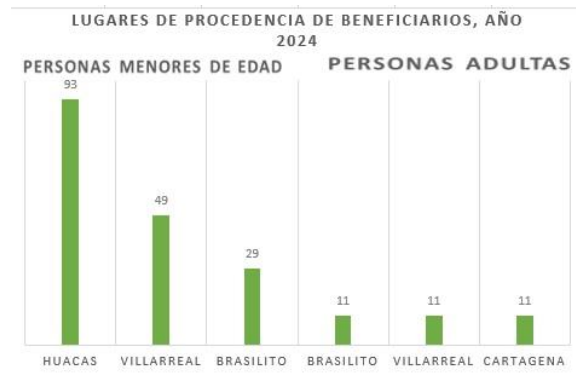
Regarding the increase in cases of child sexual abuse for this period (most of the abuses were not recently perpetrated), it could be an indicator that people are revealing what happened more easily in safe spaces and through the psychoeducation provided by various empowerment programs in CEPIA and the communities. Thus, the spaces of Successful Girls and Boys Circles and the community workshops, aimed at parents, in addition to the normalization and increase of therapeutic attention has benefitted the awareness and the disclosure of abuse. In this way, CEPIA's psychological staff attended 22 minors for trauma through Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy, highly recognized by the World Health Organization.



*Psychology and Holistic Health Image 18: Psychotherapeutic session for minors, sexual abuse prevention topic*

Although the psychology service covers most of the coastal area of Santa Cruz, it also received referrals and requests for intervention from places such as the canton of Carrillo, Santa Cruz central district, among other cantons. It is worth noting that the

places of origin of most of the minors attended in consultation are: Huacas, Villarreal, and Brasilito, and the adults attended mostly come from Villarreal, Cartagena, and Brasilito, as shown in the following graph. Most of the population attended this year is Costa Rican (258 minors, 89 adults) followed by Nicaraguans (58 minors, 15 adults).



*Psychology and Holistic Health Graph 7: Main places of origin*

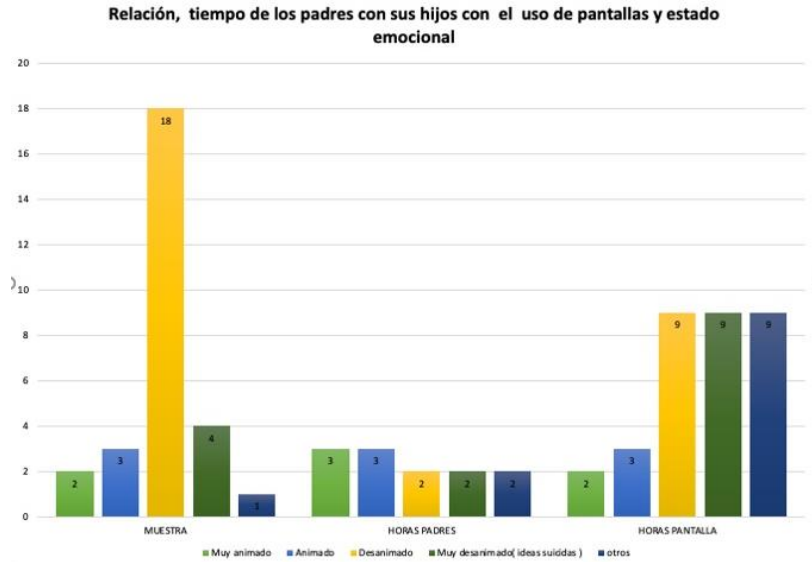
As part of the achievements reached, thanks to the work of the team composed of 6 professional specialists in the psychological area and volunteers, an exploratory study was conducted to analyze the relationship between family interaction time, screen use, and emotional lability in minors receiving psychology services. The sample consisted of 28 randomly selected children and adolescents, allowing valuable data to be obtained on these factors.

For the methodology, measurement instruments such as the pre-test (applied at the beginning of the psychotherapeutic process) and the post-test (used at the end) were employed, with the aim of evaluating changes in emotional state and screen use habits.

The results revealed that **18 of the 28 participants presented emotional lability at the beginning of the process, manifesting symptoms such as low mood, emotional instability, and poor emotional management, in some cases leading to self-harm behaviors.** Additionally, these minors spent between 3 and 5 hours or more a day in front of screens (cell phones, tablets, computers, or television), while their parents or caregivers dedicated less than two hours a day with them and even, in some cases, did not share time at all.

The analysis of these findings suggests that less interaction with parents, more screen use, and greater emotional vulnerability are correlated. This pattern coincides with the data recorded in the table of reasons for consultation for the year 2024, where 35 additional cases of depressive symptoms were reported compared to the year 2023.

These results highlight the need to implement intervention strategies focused on strengthening family bonds, appropriate screen use, and psychoeducation on parental control. Understanding these factors will allow for the design of more personalized and effective interventions for the emotional well-being of children and adolescents.



Graph 8: Exploratory study results

Therapeutic groups became a space for growth and mutual support for 20 people, generating profound and lasting changes, becoming another achievement for this year as the implementation of group psychotherapy from a psychoeducational and psychotherapeutic approach represented an innovation in the institution's service . Grief therapy (psychotherapeutic approach) was offered to a group of 8 adults, where 6 participants experienced particularly notable progress, achieving greater acceptance of their loss and developing tools to move forward according to the satisfaction survey results. The psychoeducational therapeutic group on emotion

management had the participation of 7 people, and the positive discipline group had 5 parents.

The diversity of participants and the therapeutic success obtained demonstrate the potential of this approach to reach more people and address the specific needs of each individual through collective healing, expanding the scope of our interventions.

Regarding the satisfaction of the services provided by CEPIA in terms of psychological attention, it can be affirmed that of the 23 adults who responded to the satisfaction survey (a pre-test is conducted at the beginning of treatment and a post-test at the end), **22 out of 23 people (95%)** indicated feeling pleased, and 100% of them indicated observing progress at the end of the process.

The **36 workshops held in educational centers and at CEPIA's Child Care and Development Center** reached a total of 356 people, including teachers, children, adolescents, and families, contributing to creating healthier and more enriching educational environments in the area, thus demonstrating a wide reach of the program. The distribution of all workshops corresponded to 16 public educational centers and 23 workshops for CIDAI. The main topics addressed included violence prevention in educational centers, positive discipline for parents, self-care for teachers, human trafficking, child sexual abuse prevention, and violence from a legal perspective.



*Psychology and Holistic Health Image 19: Psychoeducational workshops for coastal communities from a community psychology approach*

## Holistic Health

During February 2024 in order to offer better service in the health area, a Health Fair was organized. This activity aimed to facilitate access to health services for people who do not have regularized their migratory status. In collaboration with various entities and individuals, CEPIA managed to gather several professionals who offered their services voluntarily. The initiative included the participation of Universidad Latina, with its students, Navarro & Alpízar laboratory, dentist Gina Salazar, otolaryngologist Luciano Sousa, holistic therapist Wendy Abarca, and osteopath Daniela Gasparin. Throughout the morning, free consultations were provided to adults and minors. In total, 73 people received attention, which included blood pressure control, blood glucose testing, throat, nose, and ear examination, anemia detection, educational talks on breast cancer prevention, as well as holistic services focused on stress management, posture improvement, and addressing chronic health problems through alternative therapies.

During the first quarter of the year, therapeutic yoga sessions were offered by volunteer and instructor Cathy Vanhabost, who provided 5 weekly sessions.

Likewise, through the alliance between CEPIA and the Ojos del Mar ophthalmology clinic, 2 visual health campaigns were carried out in public schools; Paraíso and Cartagena, in which approximately 100 eye exams were conducted. From these interventions, 22 people received free glasses in Paraíso, while in Cartagena, 5 minors accessed this service.

Finally, regarding holistic health, thanks to volunteer Vesna; part of the CIDAI beneficiaries received weekly sound therapy sessions, promoting the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of adolescents.

## Psychology and Holistic Health Program Testimonials

*“At first, I arrived with my heart in a thousand pieces, not knowing what to do, with my emotions and feelings out of control. Thank you for allowing me to feel and join the group; it helped me understand that what I was experiencing was part of the grief, the loss of my daughter. Now I feel with much faith and hope and happy for the professional*



*help I received and being able to help someone who is in this situation. I am very grateful” **Psychology and Holistic Health beneficiary, group therapy.***

*“I have seen progress in seeing myself in the future and being more confident in myself, in my feelings and behavior” **Psychology and Holistic Health beneficiary, individual therapy.***

*“She talks more with me, shares more things, doesn't cut herself anymore, is in a dance group” **Psychology and Holistic Health beneficiary, individual therapy.***

### Sunflower Group

The Sunflower group is a program aimed at providing support and opportunities to children, and adolescents with additional needs in the communities. During the year 2024, a total of 28 participants took part in the various activities and services designed to promote their integral development and well-being.

As part of the work with families, the delivery of informational packages was implemented for parents whose children received a recent diagnosis of autism or Down syndrome. These materials provided key information about the condition, guidance on the first steps to follow, and contact with specialized counseling professionals. Throughout the year, 6 new families received these resources, facilitating their adaptation and support process.



*Sunflower group Image 20: Children in music classes*

In the therapeutic field, access to speech therapy was strengthened through sessions provided by a professional at CEPIA's community center. Nine children received specialized attention for 6 months, with meetings scheduled twice a month, significantly contributing to the improvement of their communication skills.

The program also incorporated aquatic therapy sessions, promoting physical activity and socialization in an aquatic environment. Children and adolescents participated in these sessions held once a month, complemented by a special surfing activity at the beach. Eight participants were part of this initiative, benefiting both in the development of motor skills and in strengthening their confidence and autonomy.

For adolescents, the monthly meeting space continued; allowing various recreational and cultural activities that fostered socialization and the development of interpersonal skills. During the year, participants enjoyed experiences such as dinners in Tamarindo, video game nights, artistic painting sessions, salsa classes, a boat tour of the Tamarindo estuary, a lunch and tour at Marina Flamingo, among other activities. Five adolescents were part of this group, regularly attending each of the meetings.



*Grupo Girasol Image 21: Weekend trip*

Another key space within the program was music therapy, which was developed with biweekly sessions at CEPIA's facilities. In these classes, children and adolescents learned to express themselves through music and play various instruments. Six participants attended consistently, allowing significant progress in their emotional and social development.

As part of the year's closure, the traditional Christmas Party was held at Rancho Villareal Clubhouse, a space for coexistence for children and their families. During the activity, 22 participants enjoyed music, recreational activities, and the delivery of Christmas gifts.



*Grupo Girasol Image 22: Adolescents field trip*

For the year 2025, the Sunflower group program will continue its work with new strategies and activities aimed at enhancing the development of participants. Among the main novelties, the incorporation of occupational therapy is planned as a key tool to improve the autonomy and well-being of children, adolescents, and young people. Additionally, the first overnight camp will be organized for the group of adolescents, with the aim of strengthening their independence and social skills in a coexistence environment.

#### [Sunflower group Program Testimonials](#)

*“This group is very important for my son. He is always excited to come to the activities and see his friends” Grupo Girasol beneficiary mother of a 16-year-old teenager. “My son gets excited every time we have aquatic therapy, he even prepares his things the day before” **Sunflower group beneficiary mother of a 9-year-old child.***

## Care for families living in vulnerable conditions

This program works to ensure the accompaniment of families in vulnerable conditions from the Social Work area; aimed at providing timely, efficient, and equitable services to families accessing the various programs of the organization. The main goal is to ensure that 100% of people requiring Social Work services receive some type of care and coordination, thus ensuring comprehensive attention to individuals.

Thanks to CEPIA's Social Worker and trained volunteers, a total of 43 families who requested support and had risk factors were visited, which after the visit were rated according to the parameters of the Multidimensional Poverty Indicator. As part of this process, 11 meetings with volunteers were held throughout the year, in which the cases of the visited families were reviewed, allowing for more structured follow-up and better coordination in the attention provided.

It is worth noting that the nature of this program permeates integrally different areas of CEPIA's work and government institutions, thus working in an interdisciplinary and interinstitutional manner. In this sense, a total of 12 visits were made to families referred to CEPIA for priority attention, food assistance, clothing and footwear, and advice and information on various topics for the convenience of the family unit.

Together with the Psychology department, 11 interventions were provided to requests for cases referred by the latter with feedback on the findings, as well as recommendations.

In a key role as a liaison and intermediary to inform families about their rights and the state services available to them, the program made 22 institutional referrals to entities such as the Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social (IMAS), the Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social (CCSS), and the Ministerio de Educación Pública (MEP), with the aim of facilitating families' access to the goods and services they require.

According to the needs presented by the families in the area, and the financial possibilities of the organization, the food package program was available, and a total

of 58 emergency food packages and basic supplies were delivered this year. Additionally, considering the need and urgency of certain cases, 5 comprehensive interventions were carried out with families in priority attention situations.

554 backpacks with school supplies for primary school and 400 for secondary school were distributed, as well as 300 uniforms to children living in vulnerable and highly vulnerable conditions.

With the aim of improving the process of support requests from families, an online form was implemented in June, allowing people to request services and access CEPIA's programs. Thanks to this tool, approximately 60 requests have been received, of which 100% have been attended to. As a result, 20 referrals have been made to different CEPIA programs, while the remaining requests were managed directly by the the Social Work area.

Finally, 11 fresh food packages were delivered weekly to women volunteers who support the organization's programs.

## Women Empowerment

The women empowerment program consists of three interrelated projects.

- **Vida Mujer** aims to protect and promote the sexual and reproductive rights of low-income women through sexual education, IUD insertion, and free medical follow-up.
- **Women Entrepreneurs:** women receive material support, mentoring, and financial and business education to grow their business.
- **Women Circles:** a safe space for women to share stories while learning and exploring a variety of skills every two weeks.

### Women Entrepreneurs

The project aims to support women in the process of transforming their subsistence initiatives into stable sources of income, promoting their economic and personal autonomy for the integral well-being of their families and communities.

Through this project, technical training processes are facilitated, from a vision that fosters the development of personal skills and interpersonal relationships (life skills). From a practical and collaborative approach, four workshops were designed that address topics directly related to entrepreneurship management. Providing tools to women who, in their multiple daily activities, balance multiple roles such as parenting, household chores, and seeking family sustenance.



**Women Entrepreneurs Image 22:** Beneficiary of the project sharing her tortilla-selling business during a session.

The experiential learning spaces included personalized individual mentoring according to the needs of each beneficiary. These mentoring sessions were carried out during visits to their homes, allowing them to have close and adapted support for their process.

As part of the project's benefits, direct support was provided to eight entrepreneurs in managing donations through the virtual platform donorsee.com. The participants presented their stories, initiatives, and needs through a brief video. During the indicated period, six women completed their goal, and the donations received allowed them to receive items valued at an average of \$400 per entrepreneur, such as sewing machines, fryers, pots, and other essential tools that contribute to improving the quality of their products and the operation of their business.



**Women Entrepreneurs Image 23:** Beneficiary of the project with equipment acquired through donations made via the donorsee platform.

The participants of the Women Entrepreneurs project are women who lead small informal businesses, mostly subsistence, with the aim of generating income and improving their quality of life. Throughout the year, they have explored various entrepreneurship strategies, adapting to the economic and seasonal conditions of the

province of Guanacaste. Factors such as variability in tourist demand and climatic conditions represent significant challenges for the sustainability of their businesses. During the high season —usually during the dry season— the flow of visitors boosts commercial activity, while in the low season, that is, during the rainy season, many communities face difficulties due to the precariousness of road infrastructure and floods, limiting access to markets and customers.

In the 2024 , 70% of the beneficiaries were dedicated to food sales, while the remaining 30% consisted of entrepreneurs who resell clothing and other household items through catalogs, as well as providing massage, beauty, sewing, handicrafts, and handmade jewelry services.

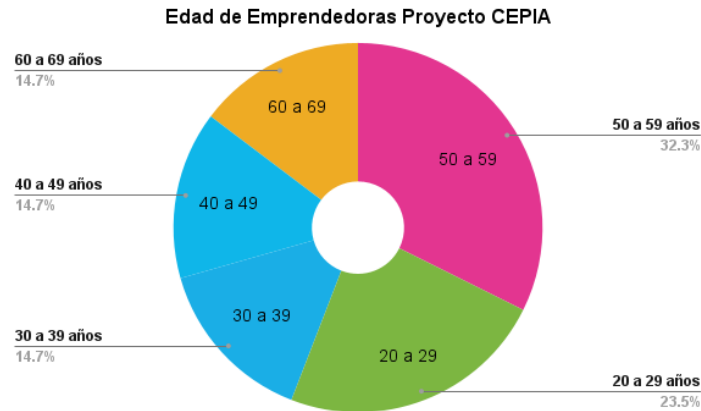
The sociocultural diversity of the participants in the project has enriched the training spaces, favoring the exchange of knowledge and experiences.

The group is composed of 20% immigrant women, mainly from Nicaragua and Colombia, of which 6% have refugee status and 14% have residency. The remaining 80% are Costa Rican. All of them reside in coastal communities —characterized by being highly vulnerable localities— in the canton of Santa Cruz.

Most of these women are single mothers or grandmothers with a history of domestic violence, who, in addition to their businesses, are responsible for between one and six children, adding an additional layer to their socioeconomic situation.

It is also essential to highlight the difference in age range and education levels, which, far from being an obstacle, has strengthened the group dynamics. This diversity has favored the creation of a collaborative and supportive environment, where mutual support among entrepreneurs has become an invaluable resource for joint growth.





**Women Entrepreneurs Graph 9:** Age range of women benefited by the project.

Thanks to the great interest of the participants, a group of 38 entrepreneurs has been consolidated, far exceeding the initial goal of 20 women. This high demand has even led to the creation of a "waiting list" for those who wish to join the project.

Regarding the four workshops mentioned in previous paragraphs, which were 100% participatory, practical work was done on the daily challenges faced by entrepreneurs, using real examples and situations adjusted to their specific needs. The topics addressed included product development, budget and cost management, marketing and promotion strategies—including the use of digital tools to facilitate commercialization—as well as time management skills, sales techniques, negotiation, among others.



**Women Entrepreneurs Image 24:** Beneficiaries during a session on budget preparation for their businesses.

The first workshop, "Knowing My Business," allowed participants to conduct a self-diagnosis of their projects, identify strengths and weaknesses, and develop improvement plans. In the second workshop, "The Art of Entrepreneurship," essential life skills such as resilience, creativity, leadership, and assertive communication were developed, facilitating the generation of strategies to face both personal and business challenges.

"Every Colón Counts!" the third workshop developed, delved into financial management, addressing topics such as budgets, cost classification, and financial planning, with practical examples based on their own businesses. In "Connected Entrepreneurs," the fourth and final workshop, participants explored social media management and the design of digital marketing strategies to increase the visibility of their businesses.

In addition to technical training, these workshops provided a space for the exchange of experiences, strengthening bonds of solidarity among entrepreneurs.



**Women Entrepreneurs Image 25:** Atmosphere within the project's practical workshops.

During the year, the goal of visiting 25 entrepreneurs out of the 38 project beneficiaries in the communities of Belén, Cartagena, Portegolpe, El Llano, Brasilito, Matapalo, La

Garita, Huacas, Villarreal, and 27 de Abril was successfully met. During the visits, they received support in the donation processes and individual mentoring sessions.

#### *Women Entrepreneurs Project Testimonials*

*"Thank you very much for all your help, interest, and contribution. Now it is up to us during this break to put into practice what we have learned, and when we resume the project, we can provide feedback to each other with our growth." Women Entrepreneurs Beneficiary.*

*At the end of the "Every Colón Counts!" workshop, a group of women stayed longer to accompany Mrs. Corina, who wanted to do an exercise to know the costs and set a price for the chicharrones. So she also shared her technique, the adventures, and skills to kill a pig for weekend sales.*

*Every morning, Justina gets up early to grind the corn and make the traditional tortillas, which she sells both in supermarkets in Brasilito and by order. After delivering her orders, she attended the workshops, where she took advantage of every opportunity to participate and learn new techniques, which she immediately put into practice. Stephanie, our Belgian volunteer, watches her attentively.*

#### *Women Circles*

The CEPIA Women Circle strategy has been designed not only as a physical meeting space but also a safe space for personal growth, emotional and spiritual development of the beneficiaries.

It is intentionally created so that the experience can have a radical positive effect inside each woman and in the relationships outside the Circle; with their environment, their families, their community. Since it proposes a way were communicating with sincerity and affection is a reality in the group, to build a safe place; until this way of communication becomes habitual in their lives and is also expected with other people.

The project works to build spaces of solidarity to promote empowerment, mental and emotional health in adult women in vulnerable conditions in the coastal area of Santa Cruz from a gender perspective.

It is composed of a total of 28 women and is developed at CEPIA Community center . These participants are mostly Costa Rican, Nicaraguan migrants, and one Colombian migrant. Many of them are heads of households, with minors in their care, which requires them to play an active role in identifying viable alternatives for the economic sustainability of their homes.

Most of them are between the ages of 40 to 65; and come from communities such as Cartagena, Lajas, Matapalo, La Garita Nueva, Huacas, El Llano, Villarreal. From vulnerable contexts due to manifestations of different types of violence: social, economic, patrimonial, gender, physical, psychological.

The Circle strategy is developed through bi-monthly meetings of two hours duration, creating a space designed for the personal and collective strengthening of the participants through various practices that foster connection with themselves, emotional expression, and mutual support. During the year 2024, multiple activities focused on mindfulness, body connection, verbal expression, singing.

The mindfulness sessions allowed women to improve their ability to be present, manage stress, and promote calmness through breathing and relaxation exercises. At the same time, body connection was enhanced through movement, body expression, and creativity, promoting the physical and emotional health of the participants.



**Women Circle Image 26:** Mindfulness and body connection exercise to work on the here and now.

The *Word Circle* was consolidated as a space for reflection and active listening, where each woman could share her personal experiences in a safe and respectful environment. Similarly, singing was incorporated as a tool for expression and healing, favoring connection with one's voice and the group.

Rituals and ceremonies were an essential part of the Circle, providing a symbolic framework to mark personal transformation processes, celebrate life, and strengthen the bond with cultural roots. These practices allowed participants to connect with their history, lineage, and identity.



**Women Circle Image 27:** Expressing the result of their work, a space for reflection and learning.

Throughout the year, workshops with diverse approaches were developed, including identity and roots, art therapy, non-violent action, self-care, migration, assertive communication, and human trafficking prevention. Practical activities such as making handmade bracelets and edible figures were also carried out, promoting creative and productive skills.

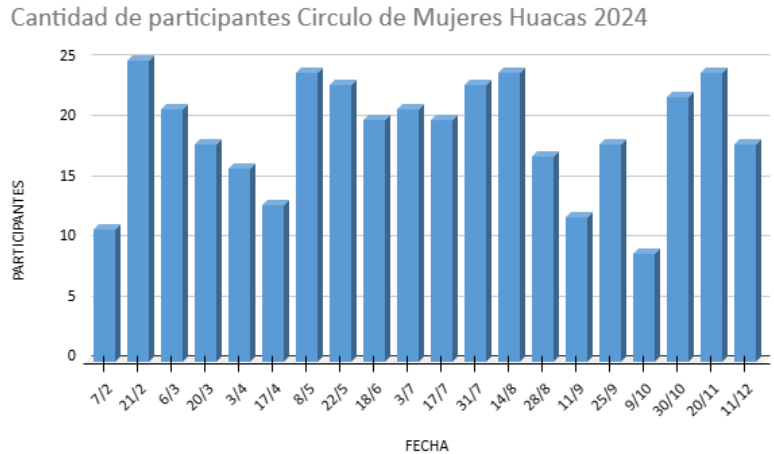
The Women Circle continues to consolidate as a space for growth and empowerment, providing tools for personal and collective transformation.



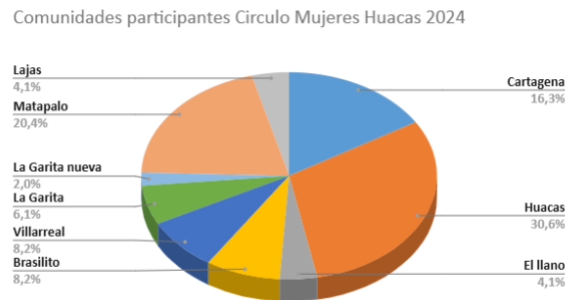
**Women Circle Image 28:** *Woman in ceremonial exercise connecting with her ancestral lineage.*



**Women Circle Image 29:** *Year-end closing gathering.*



**Women Circle Graph 9:** Number of participants – The graph indicates the number of participants per workshop during the year.



**Women Circle Graph 10:** Huacas Circle Communities – The graph indicates the communities from which the women in the group come.

**Women Circle Brasilito**

During 2024, the Women Circle in Brasilito was established as a meeting and support space for the women of the community, replicating the model and methodology of the Women Circle at the Community Center in Huacas. In this period, with 12 active participants in 2024, there was an average attendance of six to seven people per session, aged between 40 and 70 years.

The nonattendance of some members was influenced by factors such as changes in residence, domestic responsibilities, and work commitments.

The sessions were structured around three main topics: self-care, stress and emotion management, and self-knowledge. Among the activities most valued by the participants were yoga and meditation sessions, as well as crafts associated with

themes of self-love and empowerment. Additionally, practical workshops such as the creation of edible figures and jewelry were held.

The Women Circle in Brasilito has been a safe space for the community, promoting trust, learning, and strengthening support bonds among its members.



**Women Circle Image 30:** Edible figures workshop as part of the activities of the Brasilito Women Circle.



**Women Circle Image 31:** Jewelry workshop as part of the activities of the Brasilito Women Circle.

The main achievements of the program have been qualitative, reflected in the positive changes reported by the participants in their overall well-being. Out of a total of 23



women, 14 have improved their sleep habits, 18 have incorporated some physical activity into their routine, and 20 have started regular medical check-ups.

Among the most valued learnings, participants highlight the strengthening of self-esteem, the development of greater self-confidence, the practice of self-love, the recognition of their personal worth, the promotion of communication, and the creation of support networks. They also mention the importance of conscious breathing, the practice of gratitude, and the pursuit of emotional well-being.

One of the most significant achievements is the continuity of the group for five years, with a stable core of 25 women. Throughout this time, the space has promoted psychic and emotional healing processes that have positively impacted the physical health of the participants.

Regarding the most impactful workshops, participants highlighted those focused on relaxation, breathing techniques, self-esteem strengthening, as well as practical sessions on crafts and cooking.

Transforming structures rooted in years of patriarchal culture is a continuous and complex process, one of the main challenges of this project. The work with the participants focuses on identifying and questioning the received upbringing models, imposed gender roles, and those that have been internalized. However, there are still areas where significant changes have not been observed and require more attention, such as physical health care, acceptance of bodily changes, adoption of healthy eating habits, self-valuation, and emotional expression.

#### [Women Circles Testimonials](#)

*"... today I needed to come because a nerve in my face became inflamed, causing a lot of pain in my ear and jaw, the right side of my face, and I have low defenses due to all the treatment they have given me to relieve me. So today I wanted to come... because every time I come, I leave very happy with what we see here, and I leave feeling very good... and today I leave very happy because I feel all the nerves settled, right? And as*

*if I released all that stress, all that was there, although the doctor doesn't know where it comes from, I think it's from accumulated stress..." **Women Circle Beneficiary 1.***

*"... I had never experienced such deep breathing, and it did take me somewhere else, I felt like I was going, and I heard you say, return to your emotions, return, and I said, but what's happening to me, twice, as if I got lost, as if I wasn't here, it was something strange, that's what I felt, I don't know, something like expressing those emotions made me want to leave, I don't know very well what kind of emotions, during the breathing, but for me it was very beautiful, and I would like to do it again..." **Women Circle Beneficiary 2.***

*"... today I felt the benefit in my back, my lower back hurts a lot, and my left leg down to the bottom, and when I work, it hurts more, and when we did the exercises, I couldn't stand it, and then I managed to relax, and I felt incredible relief, I feel that by breathing better, the pain was relieved, and it didn't hurt almost at all... this technique helps a lot..." **Women Circle Beneficiary 3.***

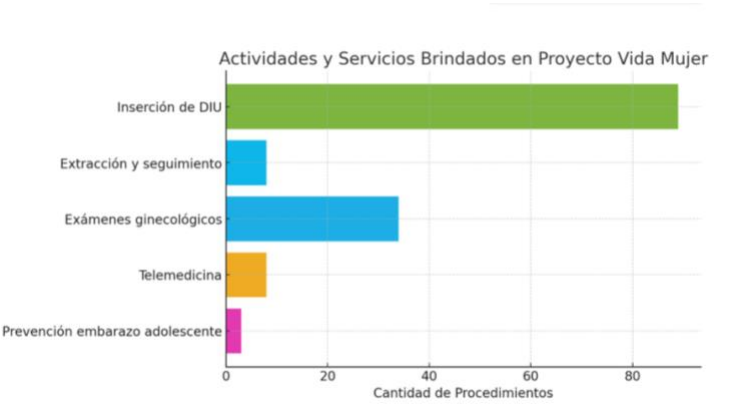
### Vida Mujer

The Vida Mujer Project continues its work in the province of Guanacaste, providing access to quality and long-lasting contraceptive methods for women who wish to exercise their right to safe and autonomous reproductive health. Through this program, the insertion and removal of intrauterine devices (IUDs), gynecological consultations, and telemedicine support are facilitated, allowing more women to make informed decisions about their well-being and family planning.



**Vida Mujer Image 32:** Explanatory session on IUD insertion.

During 2024, 89 safe copper T insertions were carried out within the framework of five gynecological clinics organized with the support of allied private medical professionals. Additionally, five IUD removals were facilitated, and three women received follow-up consultations, managing to retain their device. In the field of prevention and detection of gynecological diseases, 20 Pap smears and 14 ultrasounds were performed, providing essential tools for women's health care. Through telemedicine, eight women received remote support, eliminating geographical barriers and facilitating access to medical guidance. Furthermore, the program continues to support three adolescents in pregnancy prevention, ensuring their monthly access to contraceptive methods and contributing to their ability to complete their education without interruptions due to unplanned pregnancies.



**Vida Mujer Graph 11: Vida Mujer Services 2024.**

Looking ahead to next year, the Vida Mujer Project faces the challenge of expanding its reach and responding to the growing demand for gynecological services in the region. A key aspect will be ensuring the safe removal of IUDs placed in previous years and the possibility of replacing them with new devices, offering continuity in access to long-lasting contraception.

Clinic	Number of beneficiaries
<b>Haucas Beach Side Clinic</b>	35
<b>Centro Médico Nosara</b>	26
<b>Santa Cruz</b>	15
<b>Hucas Health and Beauty Clinic</b>	13

**Vida Mujer Table 2: Intrauterine Device Insertion.**

To achieve these goals, efforts will be made to strengthen alliances with more health professionals and expand the capacity of gynecological clinics, ensuring that more women can benefit from dignified and safe access to reproductive health services. The project's sustainability and education on sexual and reproductive rights will continue to be fundamental pillars for the empowerment of women in Guanacaste.

## Legal Orientation

The legal orientation program is a free service aimed at providing advice on legal issues, mainly related to violence and human trafficking, as well as facilitating access to information on migration issues through joint work with other organizations.

Among the program's objectives is the identification of victims of violence or human trafficking; advising the identified population and providing follow-up to each case, as well as facilitating informative spaces for migrants through campaigns carried out by external institutions.

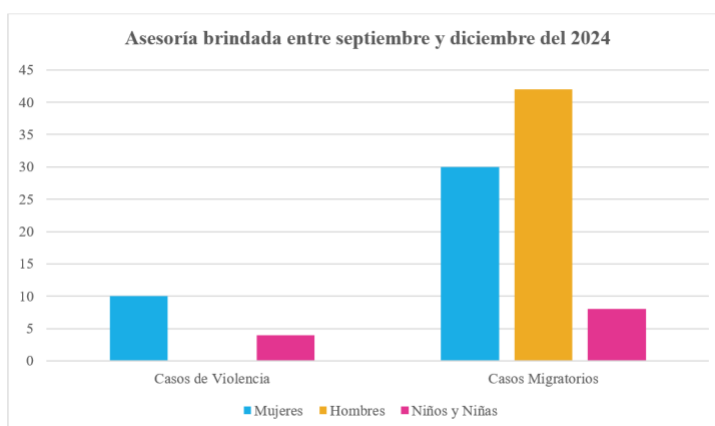
During 2024, the legal advisory program provided assistance to a total of 248 people, aged between 10 and 68 years of Costa Rican and Nicaraguan nationalities. Of this total, 125 were women and 36 men attended between January and July, and 87 people between September and December.

The advice covered migration, civil, family, criminal, alimony, and domestic violence issues. This year, 25 cases were identified as priorities in domestic violence, who received legal advice and follow-up to proceed in defense of their rights in an informed manner. Of this last group, 10 were women, two boys, and two girls, represented by their caregivers. Additionally, three of them were of Nicaraguan nationality and 11 Costa Rican.

While the other 80 people are migrants who benefit from the information tables, in this case with the presence of Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), which facilitated the explanation of the procedures and requirements that people must carry out to be asylum seekers in Costa Rica. Of the beneficiary population in these information tables, seven people were referred to HIAS (three girls, three women, and one man), in addition to two girls and three boys accompanied by their legal representatives, 27 women, and 41 men who attended the information campaign.

During 2024, the Legal Orientation program recorded an increase in violence cases during the second half of the year, where the main victims are women, followed by girls

and boys, evidencing vulnerability in terms of gender and age, making advice on procedures and rights for this population crucial.



**Legal Orientation Graph 13:** Advice provided between September and December 2024.

Between September and December 2024, a total of 14 consultations related to various types of violence were addressed, with psychological and economic violence being the most frequent. The people attended were able to inform themselves before initiating a legal process.

In addition to requests for help on migration issues, as mentioned in collaboration with HIAS.

This year has reflected budget challenges and the need to implement new tools that facilitate the orientation process for beneficiaries. In this way, beneficiaries can defend their rights, access protection mechanisms, and, in relevant cases, regularize their migration status to opt for decent jobs and basic services. It is expected that 2025 will be a year of constant improvements and strengthening of resources and alliances for the benefit of the people served by this program.

#### Legal Orientation Testimonials

*"Thanks to your help, I will be able to get my refugee card to have a better job and help my family."* **Legal Orientation Beneficiary 1**

*"They have helped me know what I can do and get out of this situation that has tormented me for years."* **Legal Orientation Beneficiary 2**

*"It is a difficult situation, but I know I can count on you, who have helped me a lot and are always attentive."* **Legal Orientation Beneficiary 3**

## Professional Training and Employability

The Professional Training program aims to educate and empower adults, providing them with skills for work and life.

The program's activities are carried out under the commitment to promote inclusion, equal opportunities, and the development of competencies that allow beneficiaries to access decent jobs, improve their current working conditions, or start independent projects, thus contributing to economic and social growth.

The beneficiaries are composed of people between 18 and 59 years old, of different nationalities—mostly in vulnerable conditions—and residents of various communities in the coastal area of the Santa Cruz canton.

During 2024, the program implemented key activities in the area of vocational or technical courses, focusing on Air Conditioning, Electricity, and Plumbing. These trainings were designed to provide practical and theoretical competencies, boosting employability in sectors with high labor demand in the area.

The Air Conditioning course allowed students to gain knowledge to install, maintain, and repair mini split air conditioning systems, ensuring compliance with technical standards. A total of 18 students participated, and 16 successfully completed their training.

Meanwhile, the Electrical Installations in Buildings course trained participants in the installation and maintenance of electrical services for houses, offices, and hotels, adhering to the Costa Rican Electrical Code.





**Professional Training and Employability Image 33:** *Students in their Electrical practices*

And the Plumbing course provided knowledge on techniques for installing and maintaining piping systems, interpreting plans, calculating and budgeting materials, and correctly installing sanitary fixtures.



**Professional Training and Employability Image 34:** *Students in their Plumbing practices*

The last two courses mentioned started with 16 enrolled students, and their graduation took place in January 2025. On the other hand, the impact measurement of both activities will be carried out starting in April of the same year.

The program implemented a series of additional courses, aiming to improve the employment opportunities and personal development of the participants.

One of the most relevant courses was Computing, which was conducted with six groups, graduating 44 students. This training from the National Learning Institute (INA)

taught essential computer skills, aimed at improving the competitiveness of the participants.

Meanwhile, the English course, offered in three levels (basic, intermediate, and conversational), is one of the most sought after by community members. These classes are especially important for those seeking to integrate into the tourism sector, as proficiency in English is a key skill for interacting with tourists and international clients.

In the maritime work area, the Basic Embarkation course provided 36 students with fundamental knowledge for working on vessels, covering topics such as safety standards and first aid. This training is crucial for those seeking employment in aquatic activities, such as fishing or tourism related to the sea, areas with high demand in the region.



**Professional Training and Employability Image 35:** *Students in their Basic Embarkation practices*

Another course with high demand is the Pool Maintenance course from INA, which graduated 11 students and provided the technical skills necessary to perform maintenance and repairs on pools, a highly required service in both residences and hotels and vacation homes.



**Professional Training and Employability Image 36:** Students in their Pool Maintenance practices

Finally, the Food Handling course trained 35 students in good practices for the safe handling of food in restaurants, cafeterias, and bars. This training allows participants to access jobs in the food and beverage sector, as it is a legal requirement.

This year, the Goal Achievement and Self-Assessment workshops were fundamental in supporting students in their training process. These sessions, in which 56 people participated in total, focused on providing practical tools to overcome the obstacles they faced during their training and guide them towards achieving their goals.

Through participatory dynamics and self-assessment spaces, confidence was promoted among the participants, and a safe environment was created where each of them could expose their main challenges in the work or personal field and face them with practical solutions.



**Professional Training and Employability Image 37:** Self-assessment workshops and solution search to face challenges in courses

As a key activity, in 2024, the program carried out for the first time a business incubator project. Due to the motivation identified in graduates of the Air Conditioning and Electricity courses to create their own company, the program's main donor proposed forming a group and providing them with the necessary tools to develop this project. Workshops on administration, finance, marketing, and the creation of a business plan were designed and executed, distributed in 24 sessions.

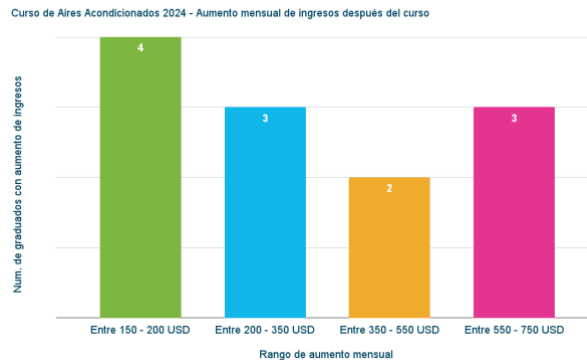
Currently, two graduates continue to participate in the project, which is in the stage of reviewing the business plan developed by the participants with the guidance of an expert in the field.

It can be evidenced that the Training and Employability program achieved significant results during 2024, reflecting its positive impact on the lives of the beneficiaries. As in the case of the Air Conditioning course, where out of the 18 people who started, 16 successfully completed the program: representing an 89% promotion rate.



**Professional Training and Employability Image 38:** Air Conditioning Course Graduation

Six months after the course ended, 12 of the graduates participated in the impact measurement survey. Before the course, only three of these students worked in the air conditioning field. After the course, 12 students, that is, 100%, reported employment in this sector, reflecting a significant increase. Additionally, nine students reported having started offering their services as independent workers, and all surveyed graduates indicated having experienced an increase in their income after completing the training. In the following graph, you can see the ranges of income increase in dollars and the number of students reporting being in each range.



**Professional Training and Employability Graph 12:** Monthly income increase perceived by students after graduation

During the year, 405 students participated in the courses, and 196 successfully completed them. Additionally, 101 students are still in training, with their completion date scheduled for 2025.

The evaluation survey was sent to the 196 graduated students, of which 34% (67 people) responded. 72% rated the course as "very good" or "excellent." And 63% perceived a "high" or "very high" impact on their lives.

Along with the advances and achievements, the program also faced significant challenges that highlight areas for improvement to strengthen the impact of the activities.

One of the main challenges was student exclusion (nonattendance or drop out). Although a graduation rate of 73% was maintained, a total of 108 students were forced to abandon their classes, mostly due to family, economic, health, and work reasons. This once again highlights the need to continue providing comprehensive support to participants, promoting strategies that allow them to complete their training. It is worth noting that the exclusion rate has decreased compared to previous years, where it reached 40%.

Another significant challenge was related to the budget, as the drop in the dollar value forced the program to cut planned groups for the English course, limiting learning opportunities for the community.

Additionally, the Basic Embarkation course suffered an unexpected interruption by INA. Of the seven initially scheduled groups, only three were offered, leaving a waiting list of more than 100 people who could not access this training.

Finally, in the Business Project, there were also challenges, as a few weeks after the project started, four participants decided to separate from the process.

This led to a second selection of graduates, who participated in most of the workshops. However, the group faced complex situations related to communication, commitment, and problem-solving, resulting in only two participants remaining in the project. Now, the action plan for 2025 consists of the committee, composed of the donor, the CEPIA Development and Strategy Director, the program coordinator, and a finance expert, finalizing the review and approval of the business plan.

Subsequently, a loan will be managed for the purchase of the necessary equipment to start operations, as well as the legal constitution of the company.

#### Professional Training and Employability Testimonials

*"CEPIA with its free courses opened doors for me to improve myself, now I communicate more fluently in the English language. Also, thanks to the help with my resume, I found a stable job in a restaurant called Twentys, where I have a very well-paid weekly salary. I am super grateful and highly recommend the courses of any kind."*

#### **Professional Training Beneficiary 1**

*"Thanks to the course, I was able to clarify many doubts about Air Conditioners, and thanks to God, the teachers, and the coordinator, my goals are being fulfilled little by little, now I can work alone with confidence."* **Professional Training Beneficiary 2**

*"Grateful to CEPIA for the opportunity they gave me to learn, have a degree, and improve my income to have a more stable economy for my family. Thank you, God bless all the staff and the institution."* **Professional Training Beneficiary 3**

*"The knowledge acquired in Air Conditioning systems has greatly facilitated me to get and perform my own jobs in air conditioning and refrigeration."* **Professional Training Beneficiary 4**

## Environmental Education

During the year 2024, various environmental initiatives were carried out with the active participation of students, especially from the schools of Lorena and Tempate. These actions contributed to strengthening the commitment of the educational community to environmental care.

The Planet Guardians from the schools of Lorena and Tempate, part of the I Am The Answer project, participated in the Environmental Fair held at the Flamingo Marina. This activity allowed them to enjoy various educational workshops on crucial topics for environmental conservation. Additionally, they took a guided tour that allowed them to learn about the history and importance of mangroves, a key ecosystem for local biodiversity. The students also enjoyed a snack that complemented the experience and strengthened the bonds of coexistence among the participants.

The students of the Basic English course carried out an Environmental Management project with the aim of beautifying the sports plaza of Huacas and its surroundings. This project consisted of painting the concrete benches and collecting trash in the area, promoting a cleaner and more pleasant space for the community. Through this activity, the students not only improved the environment but also learned about the importance of maintaining public spaces in optimal conditions for their enjoyment and conservation.

As part of the reforestation initiatives, trees were delivered to the CEPIA community (beneficiaries, donors, and volunteers, as well as the general public); a total of 180 trees were distributed on June 5th in celebration of World Environment Day. This action, coordinated with the participation of the community, contributed to the increase of green areas around the institutions, promoting sustainability and environmental care.

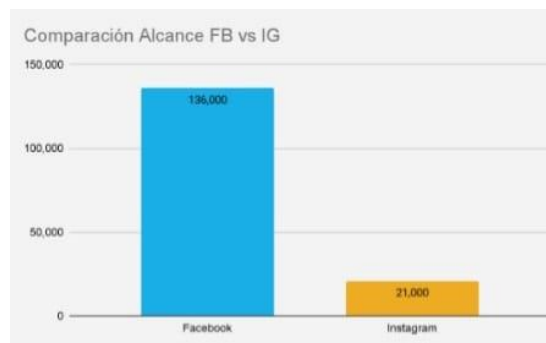


## Communication Department

The Communication Department has achieved significant progress in its management of social media, campaign design, and content generation during the last period. On Facebook, a total of 264,300 views and a reach of 136,000 users were achieved, consolidating this platform as one of the main tools for connecting with the community. Currently, we have 18,654 followers, representing an increase of 1,500 followers in this period.

On Instagram, the presence continues to grow steadily —although at a slower pace than Facebook— with a total of 82,000 views and a reach of 21,000 people. The community on this platform has grown to 3,002 followers, with an increase of 398 new followers in the reported period.

Additionally, the Facebook group "Amigos de CEPIA" continues to demonstrate its relevance as a space for interaction with the community, adding 90 new members to reach a total of 4,000 members. During this time, the content shared in this group was viewed by 26,359 people, reflecting the interest and active participation of its members.



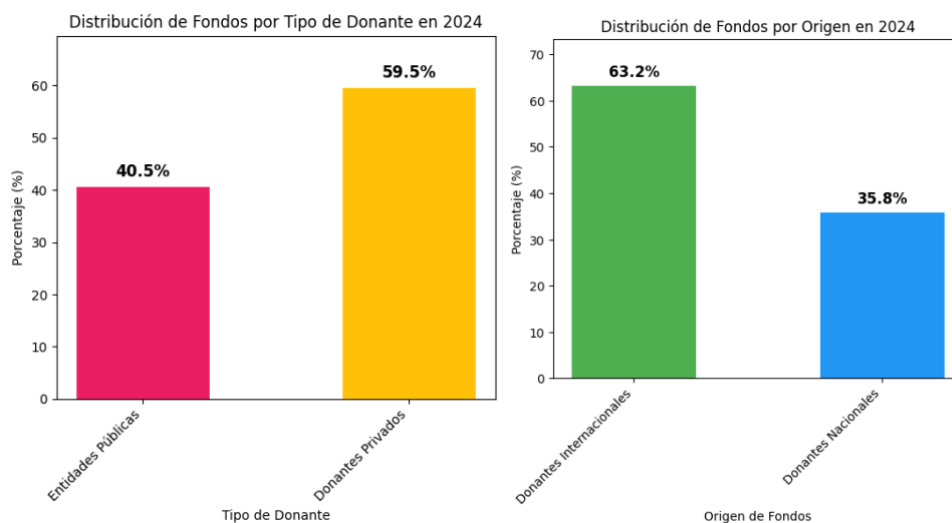
*Graphic Communication Department 13: Social media reach during 2024*

Through these platforms, responses to messages and user inquiries have been provided, promoting direct interaction and generating a positive impact on the dissemination of CEPIA's activities. Regarding email marketing campaigns, these have achieved an average open rate of 24.65%. It is important to highlight that the CEPIA 2023 annual report obtained the highest open rate (with 44%), demonstrating significant interest from our audience in this type of content. These campaigns have

been key to keeping donors, volunteers, and strategic allies informed about our activities, programs, and achievements. The demographic analysis of the audience indicates that the majority belong to the age range between 25 and 44 years, with 76.5% being women. Geographically, the locations with the highest interaction are Tempate, San José, and Santa Cruz. In relation to international traffic, Costa Rica leads as the country with the highest participation, followed by the United States, Nicaragua, and Canada, reinforcing our ability to impact both locally and in communities outside the country.

## Fundraising

Fundraising is one of the fundamental activities for the sustainability and growth of the organization, as it allows financing the programs and projects that directly impact the communities we serve. Through strategically organized events, we seek to generate the necessary resources to strengthen our initiatives. Regarding the distribution of funds raised in 2024, it is highlighted that 63.2% came from international donors, 35.8% from national donors; while of the total of these same funds, 40.5% were contributed by public entities and the remaining 59.5% came from private donors.



*Graphic Fundraising 14: CEPIAs' donors' distribution 2024*

During the year 2024, the only fundraising activity organized by the organization was the International Surf Film Festival, held on March 15 and 16 at TRIO Tamarindo. The highly successful event was attended by 450 people and raised a total of \$39,300.

Additionally, an important collaboration was achieved with a key donor, through which an investment of \$191,000 was made for the remodeling of the community center. This intervention represents the largest renovation the building has received since its

construction in 2014, significantly improving the facilities and therefore the well-being of the children, adolescents, and adults who receive classes daily<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information about our financial statements and donors, we invite you to visit our website at the following links <https://cepiacostarica.org/reports/> y <https://cepiacostarica.org/donors/>

## CEPIA Staff 2024

### Board of Directors

Simonetta Paola Daniele, *President*

Martin Salerno , *Vice President*

Maureen Navarro Vallejos, *Secretary*

Vincent Guillaume Gabriel Barrabe, *Treasurer*

Roberto José Cespedes Chavarria, *Member 1*

Wenceslao Mendioroz Nogaro, *Member 2*

Natalia Gallego Moreno, *Member 3*

Jorge Eduardo Alers Soto, *Comptroller*

### Administrative

María José Cappa *Executive Director*

Laetitia Deweer *Director of Development and Strategy*

Lucia Castro *Advisor to the Strategy and Development Directorate*

Grettel Chacón *Administrative Assistant*

Rodolfo Monge *Financial Advisor*

Gina Malavassi *Communications and Design*

### Coordinators

Priscilla Arias Rodríguez *Coordinator of Afterschool program*

Karen Cerdas *Care for families living in vulnerable conditions*

Karla Marín *CIDAI*

Claudia Angulo *Psychology and Holistic Health*

Wendy Valverde *Vocational Training and Employment*

Geneva García *Women's Life Project*

Courtney Borquet *Girasol Group*

Ariana Guido/Katherine Madrigal *Legal Guidance*

Tricia Araya *Women Entrepreneurs*

### CIDAI

Natasha Guerrero *Early Childhood Assistant*

Masiel Viales *Preschool Teacher*  
Francinie Gutiérrez *Preschool Assistant*  
Graciela Gómez *Primary 1 Teacher*  
Yulieth Rodríguez *Primary 1 Assistant*  
Keyla Campos *Primary 2 Teacher*  
Belquis Gutiérrez *Recreation Specialist*  
Danny Chavarría *Music Teacher*  
Dimitris Kyriakoulis *English Teacher*  
Micaela Ribeiro *Body Expression and Atelier*  
Juan José Labra *Driver*  
Luis Villegas *Driver*  
Wendy Obando *Cook*  
Erenia Blandon *Cook*

#### Psychology and Holistic Health Department

Patricia León *Psychologist for Adults*  
Eleana Alcocer *CIDAI Psychologist*  
Carlos Delgadillo *Psychologist in Brasilito*

#### Extracurricular Class Facilitators

Sugey Álvarez *Girls' Circle Mentor*  
Sary Barrantes *Girls' Circle Mentor*  
Wendy Abarca *Mentor for "I Am the Answer"*  
Alejandra McLeac  
*Tutoring Teacher – Brasilito*  
Yoselin López *Tutoring Teacher – Playa Grande*  
Raymundo Pérez *Boys' Circle Mentor*  
Paul López *Music Teacher*  
Leonel Diaz *Afterschool program Driver*

## Volunteers 2024

### Local Volunteers<sup>3</sup>

Alejandra Parody	Gabriela Valenzuela	Ligda Rodriguez
Alejandro Ugarte	Gaby Abarca	Luciano Sousa
Alex Zepeda Hill	Greivin Ocampo	Luis Villegas
Alexandra Mols	Griselda Rodriguez	Luisa Noemy Reyes
Alexis Heller	Hernandez	Rosales
Allyson Rappaport	Guido Salas	Luisa Reyes
Andrea Diaz	Guy Cherit	Marcela Porras
Andrea Mena Castro	Hannia Gutierrez	Maria Beltran
Andrey Juárez Molina	Heather Lober	Maria Edith Arrieta Ortiz
Angie Mora	Hellen Ramirez	Maria Fernanda Murillo
Anne Hipskind	Guzman	Maria José Abugattas
Arianna Viquez	Inge Marie Castro	Maria Jose Fernandez
Ashley Degaris	Isabel Schraeder	Maria Perkins
Aya Nathan	Itziar Arzak	María Ximena Bepmale
Belquis Rosales	Ivonne Lizeth	Marian Paniagua
Brenda Carey	Valderrama	Mariangel Mora
Camila Lopez	Javier Castaneda	Maricris Sison
Carolyn Herman	Javier Lopez	Marilu Caravaca
Carrie Brown	Jennifer Jimenez	Martha Ligia Alvarez
Cathy Deweer	Jerome Daniel Flament	Mendez
Chakiris Mena Facio	Jessica Barba	Marys De Bakker
Chelsea Ortega Monge	Jessica Williams	Melissa Cerdas
Christian Retana	Jimena González	Metzi Hovenga
Cindy Gutierrez	Cerdas	Mike Owen
Courtney Borquet	Jodi Gallant	Benediktsson
Courtney Borquet	Jorge Castillo	Milvia Baynes
David Cothran	Jorge Sagot Salgado	Mónica Masis
Deyanira Madrigal	Josiel Silva	Monica Montes Morales
Chacon	Juan Carlos Naranjo	Monica Solis Worsfold
Diana Fuentes	Vasquez	Nathalie Salazar
Diane Sagrillo	Karen Ortiz Aparicio	Nico Elgart
Dra Alejandra Castro	Karen Sheppard	Nila Leiserowitz
Barboza	Katherine Madrigal	Nova Everson
Dyalá Cerdas	Kathya Arrieta Arrieta	Pablo Gutierrez Solano
Elizabeth Daly	Kelle Rich	Paul Oporta
Elly Hasay	Kerri Schmeling	Pilar Cardozo
Ernst Van Der Poll	Kriz Umaña Chacon	Rachel White
Fiorenza Eche copar	Leandre Barri	Raquel Aguilar
Gabriela Saborio	Leo Almanza Fallas	Raquel Leon

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<sup>3</sup> Volunteers residing in the coastal area of the Santa Cruz canton

Richard Ramirez  
Richie Ramone  
Roberto Britto  
Roulán Jimenez  
Chavarria  
Sara Laurin  
Sary Daniela Barrantes  
Sebastian Horton  
Stefani Bonilla Jimenez

Stephanie Lippens  
Tamara Ponce  
Tania Esquivel González  
Ulises Najul  
Valery Contreras Steller  
Velma Jimenez  
Verbenna Sousa  
Vesna Todorovic  
Walbin Sanchez

Wendy Abarca  
Ximena Bepmale  
Yardana Cherit  
Yorhany Pizarro López  
Metzi Hovenga Barboza  
Kimberly Fallaw  
Claudia Angulo  
Adriana Flores

#### Temporary Volunteers & University Student<sup>4</sup>s

Enna Angervuori  
Paola Hassoun  
Elizabeth du Boi  
Sionit Mondragon  
Katharina Kellner  
Vanessa Reich  
Janina Powoden  
Ruben Rohrbach  
Alexandra Tziga  
Timothée Girard  
Alexis Minel  
Milan Harfst  
Diego Ellen  
Alisson Alvarado

Liz Baltodano  
Erick Carmona  
Maria José Sánchez  
Lisseth Cordero  
Natalia Fernández  
Selena Figueroa  
Yerkin Jiménez  
Camila Medina  
Lely Gómez  
Brenda Gómez  
Josué Medrano  
Thamara De Los  
Ángeles Zeledón  
Matti Leschly

Chace Qubty Quatles  
Tiago Rodríguez  
Lea Hammerschick  
Teresa Schlegl  
Dilara Kosar  
María Ara  
Raquel López  
Widny Carmona  
Clarisa López  
Francisco Muñóz  
Maikel Sánchez  
Angie Bustos Carvallos  
Aracelly Moya Duarte

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<sup>4</sup> Foreign volunteers or national students who perform University/highschool Community Work hours or International Student Internships.