TÍTULOS SIN FRONTERAS

Geneva Challenge 2025

The Challenges of Migration
Latin America
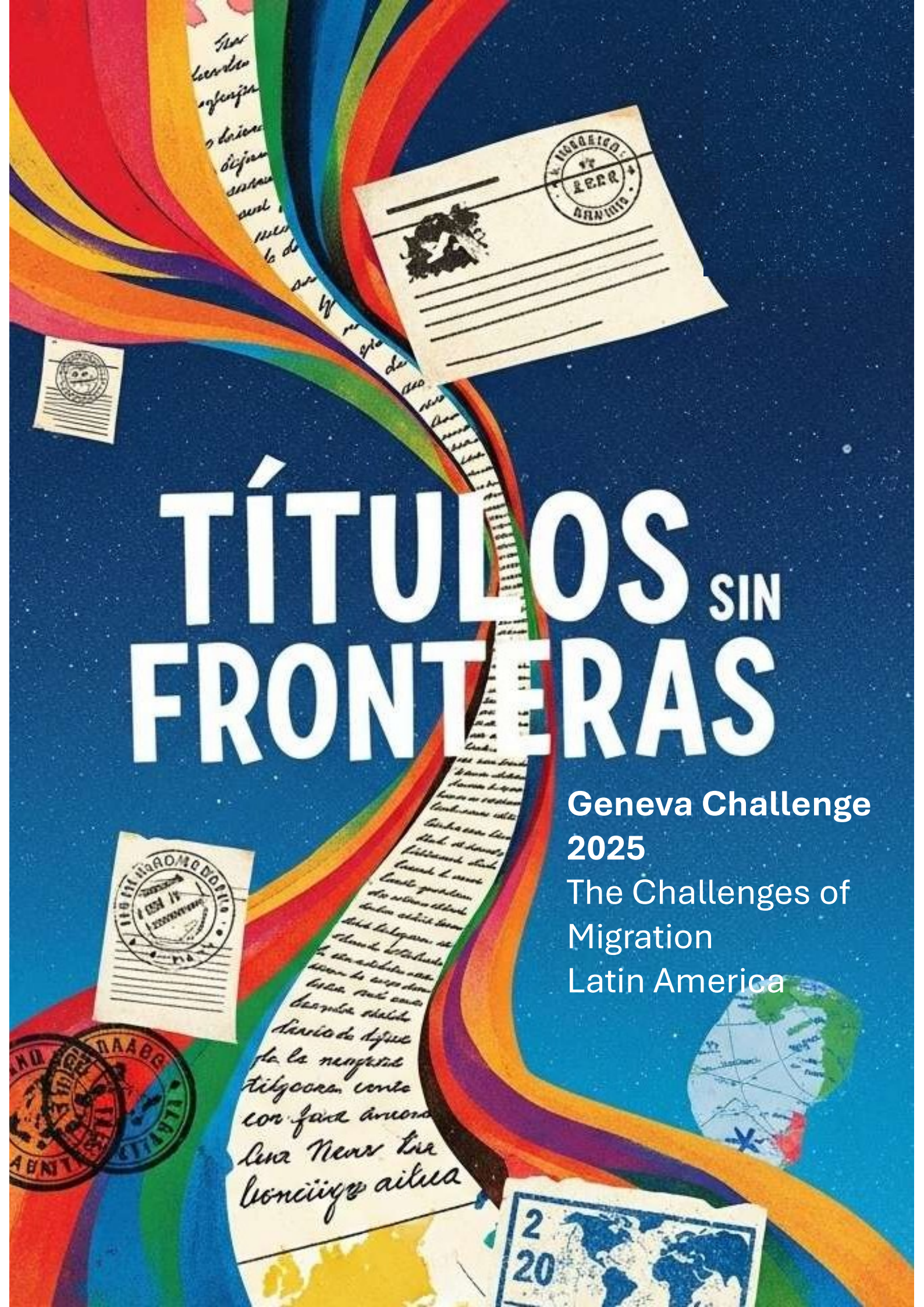
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Industrial Engineer from Universidad de Lima, Peru. Currently pursuing a MBA at Universidad del Pacífico, Peru. She is committed to sustainable development and holds a diploma in the subject. Throughout her academic and professional life, she has actively contributed to social projects and volunteer work, driven by her strong belief in equal opportunities for all. Her professional experience spans both corporate environments and a family-owned business, giving her a broad understanding of the social and economic challenges in Latin America.

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Degree in Economics from the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (UNMSM), Lima-Peru. Currently studying the Master of Business Administration (MBA) at the Universidad del Pacífico (UP) in Lima-Peru. Her professional career has allowed her to lead multicultural teams to provide business solutions in different countries of the region, which has also allowed her to gain insight into the realities of various Latin American countries. Her interest in contributing to initiatives that promote the social and professional integration of migrants arises from her conviction that the knowledge and qualifications that these people bring with them are key assets for the development of the country that welcomes them.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In a global context marked by mass displacement and humanitarian crises, recognizing the talent of forcibly displaced migrants becomes an ethical, economic, and social imperative. Over the past two decades, millions of people have been forced to leave their countries due to war, persecution, economic collapse, or climate-related disasters. Many of them are highly skilled professionals: doctors, engineers, teachers, nurses, and specialized technicians who, upon arriving in their host country, face a structural obstacle that limits their integration—the inability to validate their academic degrees and practice their profession.

Degrees Without Borders (Títulos sin Fronteras) is an initiative that seeks to reverse this situation by recognizing the value of the prior skills and career paths of forcibly displaced individuals. The project proposes a comprehensive, accessible, and scalable model of professional validation, initially focused on Peru but designed to be replicated in similar global contexts. The goal is twofold: to empower forcibly displaced migrants through the recognition of their education and, at the same time, to strengthen the human capital of host countries by leveraging currently untapped talent.

In Peru, the scale of the challenge is clear. Since 2016, more than 1.5 million Venezuelans have migrated to the country. It is estimated that nearly 400,000 of them have technical or professional training. However, only a small fraction has been able to reintegrate into their professional fields due to expensive, slow, and poorly adapted validation processes that do not reflect the reality of forced displacement. This situation not only causes frustration, loss of income, and a decline in individual well-being, but also represents a structural waste of valuable human capital for the country's development.

The Degrees Without Borders proposal is based on four strategic pillars:

- Professional Diagnosis and Mapping: Use of a digital platform to identify profiles, experience, and documentation needs of forcibly displaced migrants.
- Institutional Coordination: Establishment of agreements with universities, professional associations, migration authorities, and multilateral organizations to create simplified and alternative validation pathways.
- Comprehensive Guidance and Support: Legal counseling, document translation, emotional and technical support throughout the validation process.
- Formal Employment Insertion: Verifiable digital certification, connection with employers, inclusive job fairs, and recognition of partner companies.

The model will initially be implemented in Metropolitan Lima through a pilot project capable of serving 500 people over 12 months. It will later be scalable to a national level and adaptable to international contexts such as Colombia, Chile, or Spain. Its sustainability will be based on a combination of public funding, international cooperation, and private sector partnerships.

The unique value of Degrees Without Borders lies in:
- Its systemic and person-centered approach.
- Its technical and legal feasibility within existing frameworks.
- Its digital component, which allows for scalability and efficiency.
- Its ability to influence public policy through evidence.

Validating degrees means validating journeys, skills, and aspirations. It means recognizing that migrants not only need help, but also have much to contribute. In a world in crisis, talent should have no borders.

1. INTRODUCTION: FORCED MIGRATION AND UNDERUTILIZATION OF TALENT

Forced migration has become one of the main human dynamics of the 21st century. According to data from UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2024), more than 120 million people are forcibly displaced around the world, a figure that has increased by 30% over the past decade. While media narratives often focus on immediate humanitarian aid (shelter, food, refuge), there is a less visible but fundamental dimension: the reconstruction of the professional life projects of those who migrate.

Recognizing migrant talent is not just a humanitarian issue. It is a key component of any sustainable development strategy. Displaced individuals arrive with knowledge, experience, and aspirations. But without mechanisms to formally recognize their educational and professional backgrounds, they become trapped in informal or underemployment, generating personal frustration and economic losses for host countries.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has emphasized the importance of labor integration for forcibly displaced migrants as a means to prevent cycles of poverty, dependency, and exclusion. Degree validation is a fundamental entry point for such integration.

In contexts such as Peru, the situation becomes critical. Although the country has maintained an open stance toward receiving Venezuelan migrants, state and educational structures have not adapted quickly enough to ensure agile and fair validation processes. The result: thousands of professionals working as delivery personnel, in cleaning, informal commerce, or unemployed, while sectors like health and education face a shortage of staff.

Degrees Without Borders emerges in this context as a concrete, viable, and transformative proposal. Far from offering an assistentialist solution, it proposes a logic of rights restitution and institutional strengthening. It promotes a vision where forced migration is not just a crisis to manage, but an opportunity to be channeled for the common good.

2. DIAGNOSIS OF THE PROBLEM IN PERU

2.1 The Magnitude of Forced Migration

Since 2016, Peru has experienced one of the most significant migration flows in its recent history. The arrival of more than 1.5 million Venezuelans has profoundly transformed the country's demographic, social, and economic landscape. While there are many aspects to address in this process—access to healthcare, housing, education, and legal protection—one of the least attended to is the validation of degrees and professional integration.

According to data from INEI and the Ministry of Labor, around 28% of Venezuelan migrants have completed university studies, and an additional 12% have technical or technological training. However, less than 10% have managed to validate their professional degrees in Peru. In many cases, this means spending years in the country without being able to practice, wasting both their education and prior experience.

2.2 Institutional and Regulatory Barriers

The system for validating and recognizing degrees in Peru is designed for voluntary and orderly migration contexts. It does not adequately consider the conditions of displaced individuals who:

- Cannot obtain original certificates from collapsed universities or those located in conflict zones.

- Are unable to apostille their documents due to consulate closures or diplomatic restrictions.

- They are unaware of the legal procedures and have no access to free guidance.

In addition, the procedures are often costly, complex, and lengthy. A validation process can take between 8 and 24 months, requiring official translations, fee payments, multiple legalizations, and academic evaluations.

In many cases, universities and professional associations do not have defined protocols for exceptional situations, nor do they offer validation options based on experience or professional portfolios. Bureaucracy operates as an exclusionary barrier, favoring those with greater financial resources or support networks, and leaving out those who need it most.

2.3 Individual and Structural Impact

The consequences of this situation are profound and multidimensional:

- Underutilization of human capital: Peru loses thousands of hours of skilled labor by not enabling the professional participation of these individuals.

- Increase in informality and underemployment: More than 70% of professional migrants work in activities unrelated to their field of study.

- Loss of skills: Not practicing their profession for years leads to obsolescence and the loss of technical competencies.

- Mental health impact: Frustration, anxiety, low self-esteem, and a sense of uselessness affect thousands of individuals whose professional development has been cut short.

- Social stigmatization: The inability to work reinforces social prejudices about migrants being "unqualified" or "incapable," when in fact the issue lies within institutional barriers.

2.4 Opportunity for Transformation

The current context, however, also presents an opportunity. The growing public discussion about migration, the advancement of digitalization, and the presence of international organizations willing to support inclusive initiatives create a favorable moment to rethink professional validation models.

Peru has the potential to become a regional benchmark by developing an innovative policy that combines social justice, institutional efficiency, and talent utilization. **Degrees Without Borders** seeks precisely to seize this historic moment.

3. PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

3.1 From Emergency to Rights Recognition

Forced migration cannot be addressed solely from an emergency or humanitarian assistance perspective. Displaced individuals are not "passive victims," but rights-holders with life paths, knowledge, and skills. In this regard, the right to work, professional dignity, and participation in the economic life of a host country must be central to any integration policy.

Denying professional practice to those who have invested years in their academic training and possess proven practical experience not only violates their rights but also perpetuates precariousness. This exclusion represents an individual loss, but also a missed opportunity for host societies.

Degrees Without Borders responds to this social and structural debt by proposing a legal, digital, and human solution to reintegrate forcibly displaced professionals into their fields of expertise.

3.2 Theoretical Approaches Underpinning the Proposal

a. Capability Approach

The proposal aligns with the **capability approach** developed by Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, which holds that development should not be limited to economic growth, but must expand the real freedoms and opportunities of individuals. A doctor who cannot practice due to bureaucratic barriers has had their freedom amputated, their human capital wasted, and their life project derailed.

Degrees Without Borders promotes the expansion of these capabilities, enabling individuals to freely choose to practice their profession, contribute their skills, and lead a fulfilling life.

b. Human Capital Theory

From a classical economic perspective, investment in education and work experience increases a society's productivity. Gary Becker, the father of the human capital concept, argued that a country's economy is strengthened insofar as it can mobilize and harness its population's training.

Peru is leaving "trapped human capital" in informality and underemployment. Releasing it through adequate validation mechanisms would boost labor productivity, improve tax collection, and stimulate key sectors such as health and education.

c. Social Justice

The proposal also embraces Nancy Fraser's three-dimensional social justice approach, which includes:

- **Recognition:** Valuing and legitimizing the professional identity of migrants.

- **Redistribution:** Ensuring access to the benefits of the formal labor market.

- **Representation:** Allowing migrant professionals to participate in professional associations, networks, and public spaces.

Degrees Without Borders connects these dimensions through a concrete proposal that goes beyond assistentialism and commits to institutional transformation.

3.3 Impact on the Host Country

Numerous studies have shown that the professional integration of migrants generates economic, social, and institutional benefits. These include:

- Increased national productivity.

- Reduction of labor shortages in sectors with staffing gaps.

- Formalization of employment and increased tax revenue.

- Diversification of the productive fabric and innovation.

- Reduction of social tensions and xenophobia by making the migrant contribution visible.

For example, in Canada and Germany, competency-based validation systems have been developed, allowing thousands of refugee doctors and technicians to be incorporated into the healthcare system, helping to address structural post-COVID crises.

3.4 Prevention of Negative Consequences

Failure to address this issue leads to negative consequences:

- Irreversible professional obsolescence.

- Secondary migration to other countries, resulting in the loss of trained human capital.

- Vicious cycles of informality, poverty, and exclusion.

- Increased dependence on aid programs.

- Deterioration of mental health due to frustration and marginalization.

This is why professional validation is not only a right but also a smart strategy to prevent thousands of people from shifting from productive contributors to vulnerable populations.

4. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

4.1 General Objective

To facilitate the economic and social integration of forcibly displaced migrants by creating an alternative, accessible, and fair system of professional validation, recognizing their educational and professional backgrounds, and enabling them to practice their professions with dignity.

4.2 Specific Objectives

SO1: Create a legal, digital, and free mechanism for validating degrees and work experience.

- Regulatory framework adapted to forced migration.

- Centralized validation platform.

- Alternative evaluation protocols (interviews, technical tests, portfolios, competency-based certification).

SO2: Promote the formal labor integration of migrant professionals in priority sectors.

- Verifiable certification with QR code.

- Partnerships with companies, job boards, and job fairs.

- Mentorships and complementary training.

SO3: Strengthen the autonomy and resilience of migrants through personalized guidance.

- Legal and emotional counseling.

- Document translation, technical support.

- Support from the beginning through labor insertion.

SO4: Generate evidence to influence public policies on professional integration.

- Impact indicators, publications, and lessons learned.

- Intersectoral dialogues with educational, migration, and labor authorities.

- National-level public policy proposal.

5. INTERVENTION STRATEGY

The strategy is based on a four-stage action model, supported by digital tools and the active participation of the migrant community.

5.1 Stage 1: Diagnosis and Mapping

A digital platform will be created, accessible from mobile phones and computers, where migrants will be able to:

- Register their personal, academic, and professional information.

- Upload any documents they have (even if incomplete).

- Indicate their professional area of interest.

- Receive a "suggested validation route" tailored to their profile.

In addition to providing individual guidance, this stage will enable the creation of a national database on migrant talent—useful for public policy, labor planning, and partnerships with companies.

5.2 Stage 2: Institutional Coordination

Key partnerships will be established with:

- SUNEDU and universities: to establish validation pathways based on competencies or portfolios.

- Professional associations: to offer technical tests, interviews, or adapted evaluations.

- Ministries of Education, Labor, and Foreign Affairs: to promote a flexible legal framework.

- Embassies and consulates: to facilitate alternative documentation or verify backgrounds.

This institutional work will seek to establish alternative recognition mechanisms such as:

- Certification of experience by professional associations.

- Practical exams when documentation is unavailable.

- Interviews by professional committees.

- Evaluation of technical portfolios (for architecture, design, technology).

5.3 Stage 3: Comprehensive Support

Each beneficiary will receive personalized and free support, provided by multidisciplinary teams (lawyers, job counselors, social workers). This support will include:

- Document translation.

- Review of CVs, cover letters, and portfolios.

- Preparation for interviews or technical exams.

- Emotional support in the face of barriers or frustrations.

- Community spaces to share experiences.

The approach will be centered on the dignity and autonomy of the migrant, respecting their process and context.

5.4 Stage 4: Labor Insertion with a Rights-Based Approach

Once the profile of the migrant professional has been validated, efforts will be made to integrate them into the formal labor market through:

- Digital certification of professional equivalency, with institutional backing and a QR code.

- Integration of their profile into partner job boards (LinkedIn, Bumeran, Computrabajo, public platforms).

- Specialized job fairs for migrant talent.

- Recognition of companies committed to inclusion (seal of "Migrant Talent Ally Company").

In addition, complementary training will be offered in:

- Local technical language.

- National labor regulations.

- Organizational culture and soft skills.

6. PILOT MODEL: IMPLEMENTATION IN METROPOLITAN LIMA

6.1 Why Lima?

Metropolitan Lima is the Peruvian city with the highest presence of forcibly displaced migrants. According to INEI (National Institute of Statistics and Informatics) (2023), more than 70% of Venezuelan migrants reside in Lima, along with a growing Haitian, Colombian, and African population. In addition to concentrating demand, Lima also offers greater institutional capacity to implement a robust pilot project:

- Presence of public and private universities willing to collaborate.

- Institutions such as SUNEDU (Superintendence of Higher University Education), the Ministry of Labor, and the Medical College of Peru.

- Metropolitan Municipality of Lima, which has a program to support the migrant population.

- Active NGOs such as Encuentros – SJS, VeneActiva, HIAS, Plan International, among others.

- Digital job platforms and international cooperation agencies with offices in the city.

6.2 Scope and Duration

- Pilot duration: 12 months

- Initial target population: 500 forcibly displaced professionals

- Estimated cost per beneficiary: USD 100–150

- Total projected investment: USD 60,000–75,000 (co-financed by international cooperation, competitive funds, and private partnerships)

6.3 Pilot Stages

1. Open call and registration on the digital platform.

2. Personalized evaluation and mapping: classification by profession, level of documentation, and urgency.

3. Individualized validation routes: technical tests, interviews, portfolio reviews, etc.

4. Personalized counseling: legal, psychological, technical, and employment support.

5. Digital certification: with local equivalency recognized by partner universities and professional associations.

6. Job placement support: inclusion in job boards, fairs, and professional networks.

7. Impact evaluation: satisfaction surveys, employability, and integration indicators.

6.4 Expected Learnings

- Validation of processes and timelines.

- Identification of unforeseen barriers.

- Necessary adjustments for national replication.

- Development of a methodological guide for scaling.

7. GLOBAL REPLICABILITY MODEL

The proposal has been designed from the outset with the potential for adaptation to international contexts. The barriers to professional recognition for forcibly displaced migrants are common in several countries experiencing migration crises. For this reason, the **Degrees Without Borders** model seeks to be replicable in host countries that:

- Have a high proportion of migrants with technical and professional training.

- Lack flexible validation mechanisms.

- Are open to improving institutional efficiency through digital support and partnerships.

7.1 Elements Facilitating Adaptation

- Open-source digital platform, allowing reuse without costly licenses.

- Modular model: diagnosis, coordination, guidance, certification, and insertion.

- Human rights-based approach, adaptable to various legal frameworks.

- Ability to incorporate multiple languages and country-specific documentation.

7.2 Priority Countries for Replication

- **Colombia:** second country with the largest number of Venezuelans and early experiences in competency-based validation.

- **Chile:** growing reception of Haitian, Colombian, and Venezuelan migrants; high demand in health and education sectors.

- **Spain:** Latin American migration with challenges in professional credential recognition; linguistic and cultural similarities.

- **Canada:** compatible competency-based validation model; presence of displaced populations from Afghanistan and Syria.

- **Germany and Poland:** reception of Ukrainian refugees; need for technical professional talent.

7.3 Scaling Strategy

1. Validation of the Peruvian pilot and publication of a methodological manual.

2. Presentation before international forums (IOM, UNHCR, UNESCO, IDB).

3. Identification of local partners in each country: governments, universities, NGOs, bilateral cooperation.

4. Technical and contextual adaptation of the system.

5. Local training and model transfer.

8. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The success of the proposal depends on a multisectoral collaboration architecture. It will require the involvement of public, private, academic, social, and international actors.

8.1 Government Institutions

- **SUNEDU:** reform of academic recognition procedures.

- **Ministry of Education:** curricular validation and bridge programs.

- **Ministry of Labor and Employment Promotion:** inclusion in migrant employability policies.

- **Migrations Peru:** identification of beneficiaries.

- **Local and regional governments:** territorial implementation.

8.2 Academic Sector

- Universities such as PUCP (Pontifical Catholic University of Peru), UNMSM (National University of San Marcos), UARM (Antonio Ruiz de Montoya University): validation pilots, adaptive programs.

- **Technical institutes:** retraining in practical skills.

- **Regional university networks:** continental scaling.

8.3 Professional Associations

- Medical, Engineering, Nursing, Legal, and Psychology Colleges.

- Inclusion of validation through professional trajectory or specialized interviews.

- Participation in technical exams or evaluation committees.

8.4 Civil Society

- NGOs with experience in migration (Encuentros, HIAS, VeneActiva, CEDETES, etc.).

- Organized migrant networks.

- Emotional and community support spaces.

8.5 Companies and Employment Platforms

- Bumeran, Computrabajo, LinkedIn.

- Business associations: CAPECO, COMEX, CONFIEP.

- Recognition seal for companies that hire validated talent.

8.6 International Cooperation

- IOM, UNHCR, IDB, ILO, UNESCO, USAID, GIZ.

- Funding, technical assistance, and international visibility.

9. EXPECTED RESULTS AND SUCCESS INDICATORS

The success of **Degrees Without Borders** will be measured based on concrete outcomes, both at the individual and institutional levels.

9.1 Expected Results of the Pilot

- 500 migrants with validation processes initiated.

- At least 300 degrees or professional trajectories recognized (60%).

- Formal labor insertion for at least 200 people (40%).

- Reduction of underemployment in 50% of the cases served.

- Increase in average income by at least 30%.

- Creation of at least 50 active partnerships.

9.2 Impact Indicators

- User satisfaction (>85%).

- Number of partner companies hiring validated migrants.

- Levels of self-esteem and emotional health (qualitative indicators).

- Reduction in average validation time and costs.

- Publication of public policy based on the pilot experience.

10. SUSTAINABILITY AND FUNDING

10.1 Possible Funding Sources

- National and international competitive grants.

- o Geneva Challenge, Innovate Peru, Fondo Emprende, etc.
- International cooperation:
  - o UNHCR, IOM, USAID, European Union, IDB Lab.
- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):
  - o Companies in the health, technology, and education sectors interested in diverse talent.
- **National government and municipalities:**
  - o Participatory budgets and social programs.

10.2 Long-Term Sustainability Model

- Integration of the validation system into government platforms (SUNEDU, MINEDU).
- Technological and methodological transfer to other countries.
- Training of government personnel in alternative validation pathways.
- Possibility for migrants who achieve formal employment to contribute symbolically to the fund (voluntary solidarity contribution).
- Creation of a permanent unit for migrant professional validation within the Peruvian State or as an autonomous institution.

11. RISKS AND MITIGATION PLAN

Like any institutional transformation project, **Degrees Without Borders** faces potential legal, operational, cultural, and financial barriers. However, the model has been designed to anticipate and respond swiftly to these risks. Below are the main risk scenarios and their corresponding mitigation strategies:

Risk	Description	Mitigation Strategy
Institutional Resistance	Some entities may show disinterest or regulatory rigidity.	- Generate empirical evidence of the pilot's positive impact. - Involve key actors from the beginning through agreements. - Promote civic pressure and public advocacy.
Lack of Political Will	Government changes or shifting priorities may delay processes.	- Shield the project with multiple alliances and civic legitimacy. - Seek support from international organizations and autonomous municipalities.
Migrant Misinformation or Distrust	Fear of complex procedures, legal exposure, or discrimination.	- Awareness campaigns with positive testimonials. - Free and community-based counseling with the presence of migrant networks.

Social Stigmatization	Negative stereotypes about migrants that hinder their employment.	- Positive communication: success stories, productivity data. - Public recognition for inclusive companies.
Budget Constraints	Economic instability or funding delays.	- Diversify funding sources. - Low-cost, high-impact pilots to attract investment. - Technical volunteering and partnerships with universities.
Technical Complexity of the Validation Process	Lack of alternative protocols or standardized criteria.	- Participatory design with professional associations. - Formation of interdisciplinary evaluation committees. - Development of area-specific protocols based on best practices.

The resilience of the model lies in its flexibility, multidimensionality, and rights-based approach. Even in adverse contexts, it can be implemented on a small scale and scaled up progressively.

12. CONCLUSION

In a world marked by migration crises, social polarization, and job insecurity, recognizing the knowledge of migrants is not only an act of justice but also a strategic decision. It is not just about allowing someone to practice their profession, but about restoring dignity, generating well-being, and activating dormant potential.

Degrees Without Borders offers a concrete, technically viable, and ethically essential solution: validating the education and experience of forcibly displaced individuals, enabling them to contribute to the societies that receive them. In the face of discourses of fear, exclusion, or unfair competition, this proposal demonstrates that professional integration is possible, profitable, and transformative.

By implementing this model, Peru can position itself as a regional leader in migration innovation, while also inspiring other countries to replicate good practices focused on human rights and sustainable development.

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