



LATIN AMERICA

LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF'S APPROACH TO TECHNOLOGY

Information Communications Technology for Development (ICT4D) involves using Information Communications Technology (ICT) to solve problems and improve people's quality of life, especially for those in developing countries, where appropriate technologies can accelerate stages of development. In this way, ICTs such as mobile phones, the internet, radio and other technologies that allow people to more easily connect with each other can be used as tools to share important information, helping farmers to increase agricultural productivity, aiding in the protection of the environment and facilitating the collection of vital information in disaster situations.

Through our core values of innovation and accompaniment, Lutheran World Relief (LWR) and our partners are equipped with the flexibility and means to adapt ICT to provide lasting solutions to poverty, injustice and human suffering.

LWR's core value of innovation drives us to learn, adapt and grow, and the incorporation of ICTs into our programming flows naturally from this effort. Our field offices, working closely with our partners, have the freedom to employ different ICTs that best meet a community's needs.

LWR's core value of accompaniment, which ensures our partnerships are based on mutual trust and respect, shared values and objectives, accountability and transparency, and a willingness to learn, adapt and grow together, makes certain that our ICT4D initiatives are easily adapted by the people we serve and are appropriate for their context.

Learn more about how LWR is utilizing technology across Latin America.

Central America: Mobile Cocoa Toolkit

Cacao Móvil is a digital platform designed to enhance the competitiveness of organizations and small-scale cacao producers. By offering a suite of technological tools, Cacao Móvil promotes effective knowledge management and fosters the creation of networks and learning communities.

The platform features a mobile application and website (www.cacaomovil.com), which houses a comprehensive content library based on LWR's Cacao Toolbox guides. These guides focus on best practices for cacao cultivation, providing users with access to relevant sector data and essential documentation.

Cacao Móvil also connects the community through virtual forums and events broadcast on social media, reaching over 15,000 followers. These events provide invaluable information on marketing strategies, improved market access, and industry updates.

In May 2024, the platform underwent significant enhancements, including a redesign of its application that incorporated an artificial intelligence-based chatbot. This feature, trained using content from the LWR Toolbox guides, improves user interaction and support. This evolution was made possible through the USDA-funded Maximizing Opportunities in Coffee and Cacao in the Americas (MOCCA)



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project, positively impacting over 20,000 producers across Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, and Ecuador.

Additional tools within the Cacao Móvil platform focus on specific topics relevant to the cacao sector:

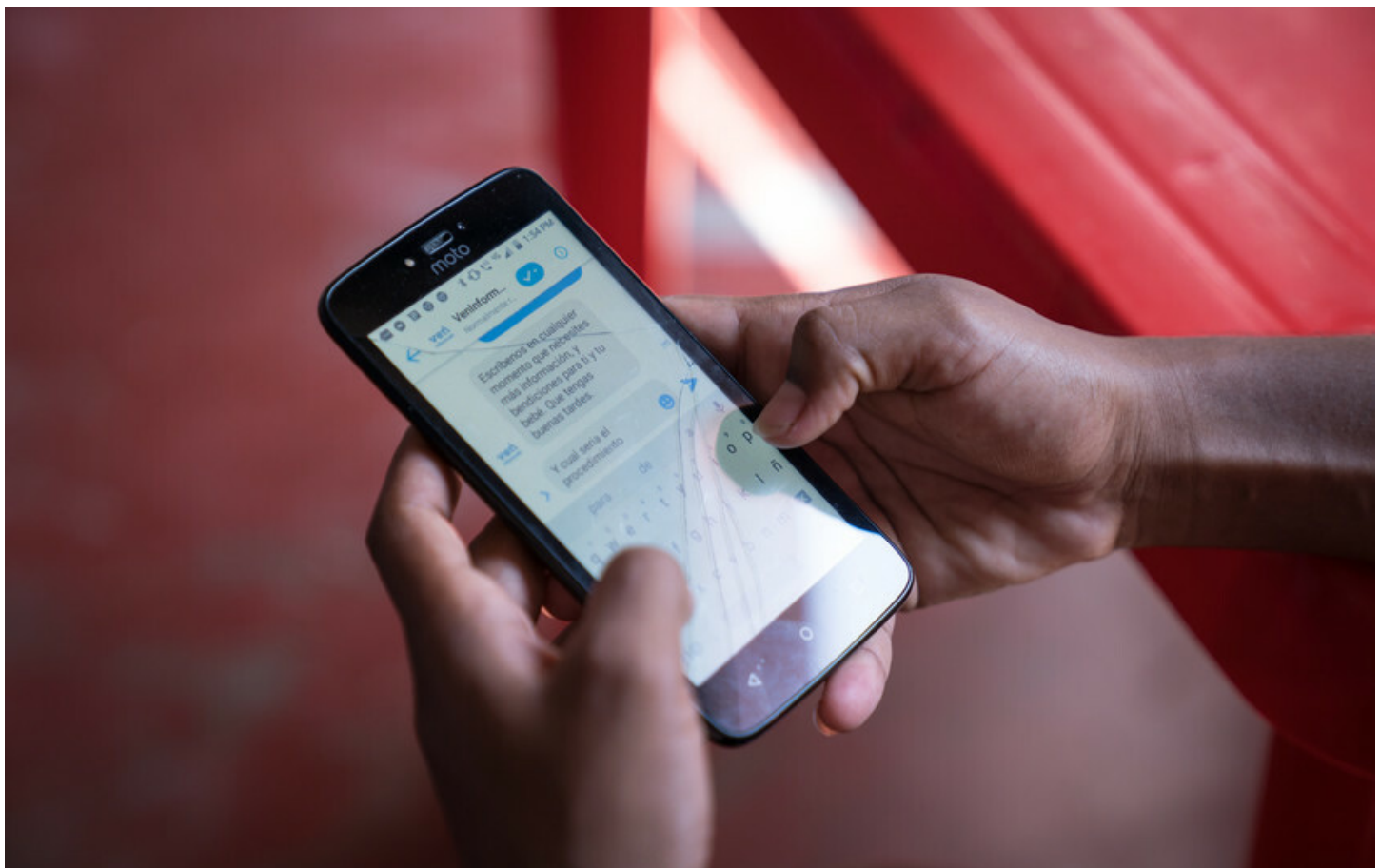
- **Cacao Flavor Map:** Available at cocoaflovormap.cacaomovil.com, this web tool facilitates market connections by highlighting the unique characteristics of a variety of specialty cacaos for sale.
- **Learning at Home:** Accessible at aprendo.cacaomovil.com, this virtual learning space offers self-paced short courses tailored to the cacao guides for producers and field promoters.
- **Gender Tool:** Found at genero.cacaomovil.com, this resource provides gender guides for producers and organizations, emphasizing the importance of promoting gender equity in the cacao sector and enabling organizations to conduct gender gap assessments.
- **Cost Tool:** Located at costos.cacaomovil.com, this tool allows users to perform simple cost/benefit analyses and identify break-even points for organizations by analyzing a series of data inputs.

Platform Reach:

- **Website:** From August 2023 to August 2024, the website recorded 99,991 users, with 425,301 actions performed on the site. The redesigned website currently averages 1,200 unique monthly users.
- **Mobile Application:** The app boasts 887 active users and has been downloaded over 1,000 times across 176 countries. It's noteworthy that following the reengineering in July 2024, the mobile app downloads reset to zero, while the previous version had over 10,000 downloads.
- **Social Media:** With a Facebook community of 15,620 followers and 1,036 followers on Instagram, Cacao Móvil has reached over 721,567 people (37% women) through its organic posts over the past year.

Peru: Supporting Refugees and Immigrants

Launched in Peru in 2018, LWR's digital platform **VenInformado** was created as a response to the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela that led to a significant influx of migrants and refugees into the country. The platform aims to deliver valuable, accurate, and timely information in a clear and accessible manner, assisting newcomers in accessing essential resources for their legal, social, and economic integration into their host communities.



Since its inception, LWR has collaborated with various organizations to enhance the VenInformado platform's holistic support services. Encuentros SJM has played a crucial role in providing legal information and guidance, assisting migrants and refugees in obtaining legal status in Peru. Additionally, short-term mental health and livelihood support initiatives were introduced in collaboration with CAPS and Equilibrium. During the COVID-19 pandemic, LWR, with the aid of medical experts, disseminated vital information on disease prevention and vaccination efforts.

After a recent partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the platform was rebranded as **VenInformado InfoPa'lante** and became part of the SignPost network, which comprises over 20 communication platforms dedicated to supporting migrants and refugees globally. A new map service feature now allows users to easily identify and connect with humanitarian organizations that can provide urgent assistance.

Over the past six years, VenInformado has implemented a comprehensive 360-degree communication strategy, fostering a digital community of over 63,000 individuals across its Facebook and Instagram accounts. Through clear and engaging posts, relevant webinars, and engaging video content, along with a sustained investment in advertising, the platform has reached over 1.8 million people on Facebook and 911,000 on Instagram from October 2023 to August 2024. The website (veninformado.pe) attracts an average of 30,000 monthly users seeking detailed information on legal, educational, health, or livelihood processes. The platform's expert team has delivered over 50,000 direct, free, and personalized orientations to more than 45,000 unique individuals in Peru and beyond, achieving a 9% return rate among users, primarily women from Venezuela aged 25 to 44, who are in irregular legal status.

Honduras: Transforming Youth Mental Health

Recognizing the critical importance of mental health, particularly during adolescence and early adulthood, LWR launched **EmpleandoMentes** (EmployingMinds) in November 2023 in Honduras. This digital communication and orientation platform offers free resources focused on mental health, emotional guidance, and soft skills development. Drawing on the extensive experience and 360-degree strategy of VenInformado, EmpleandoMentes aims to effectively engage with the youth population across the country.

In addition to providing valuable content through social media posts, reels, videos, and blog articles, EmpleandoMentes introduced an innovative contest called *Proyectate*



SaludableMente (Project Yourself in a Healthy Way). This initiative leveraged digital tools and social media to encourage young people to intertwine mental health themes with the production of video spots, fostering the creation of impactful messages that promote self-care and the importance of seeking specialized assistance when needed.

To enhance data collection and processing, EmpleandoMentes and VenInformado have established streamlined processes for capturing insights from various contact channels, including social media, web portals, and help desk interactions. These processes, developed through comprehensive analysis, facilitate the integration of information into Power BI dashboards. This approach minimizes human error, providing crucial indicators and a thorough historical overview of each platform's performance. Consequently, LWR can more accurately identify and anticipate the needs of their target audiences, enabling agile responses and effective tracking of project goals. This data management system is vital for monitoring, standardizing, and optimizing the management and impact of social initiatives.

In its inaugural year, EmpleandoMentes has successfully built a digital community of 2,800 followers across its social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube), achieving a cumulative reach of 1 million on Facebook and 110,000 on Instagram (from November 2023 to August 2024). The website has attracted 14,000 users since its launch, significantly boosted by the engagement generated from the mental health TV spots contest.

Technology in Emergency Operations

As global trends indicate a rising number of individuals at risk from both natural and human-induced disasters, alongside escalating economic costs, LWR is dedicated to empowering vulnerable communities to prepare for and mitigate their disaster risks. In the face of complex natural disasters and humanitarian crises, ICTs enable LWR's emergency programs to respond swiftly and effectively, addressing the immediate needs of those affected so they can embark on their long-term recovery as soon as possible.

In response to climate emergencies in Central America, LWR launched a mass SMS and push notification system through the Cacao Móvil app to keep cacao producers informed. During the severe 2020 hurricane season, these messages delivered critical information, ensuring the safety of producer families and minimizing damage to plantations. This direct communication strategy was designed to reduce losses while reinforcing our commitment to community well-being.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, the Latin America team successfully replicated the SMS initiative by disseminating prevention and vaccination messages to users of Cacao Móvil and VenInformado across Peru, Honduras, Nicaragua, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Guatemala. This effort was bolstered by social media posts and webinars, which provided reliable expert information to ensure health protection at home and in workplaces.

The Corus Effect

Founded in 1945, Lutheran World Relief is an international development and aid organization working across Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East. We collaborate with local partners to grow inclusive and climate resilient rural economies, reduce poverty, and we respond to natural disasters and humanitarian crises.

Lutheran World Relief leads rural economic development programming at Corus International, an organization that unites an array of world-class nonprofits and businesses, each with specialized expertise. Our reach and capabilities are amplified by the other global leaders in our Corus family, including IMA World Health, CGA Technologies and Ground Up Investing. Together, we bring the multi-dimensional, holistic solutions needed to truly achieve lasting change.



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