



# Corporate impact in Latin America

The Case of Ilunion

Latimpacto

## The Initiative

Ilunion, the business arm of the ONCE Social Group, manages around 50 lines of business, ranging from hotels and industrial laundries to contact centers and accessibility consulting.

Its operating model is based on creating employment for people with disabilities and groups at risk of exclusion, demonstrating that this social objective can be intrinsically linked to economic profitability.

Drawing on its experience and success in labor inclusion, Ilunion seeks to inspire and guide other companies by offering consulting services in universal accessibility and inclusive employment strategies.

Its approach focuses on demystifying disability in the workplace, promoting the idea that talent has no limits and that diversity enriches organizations, while responding to the needs of a market that is increasingly aware of the importance of inclusion.

With a strong commitment to creating optimal work environments and delivering service excellence, Ilunion positions itself as a benchmark in labor inclusion and a driver of social change in the business world.



### **Corporate:**

Grupo Social ONCE – Ilunion.

### **Economic Sector:**

Services.

### **Company description:**

Grupo Social ONCE is a Spanish organization that promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities through ONCE (National Organization of the Spanish Blind, financed by a social lottery), the ONCE Foundation (training, employment, and accessibility) and Ilunion, its business group.

### **Program Name:**

Ilunion.

### **Countries of implementation:**

Spain, Portugal and Colombia.

### **Target population:**

People with disabilities and groups at risk of exclusion.

# Impact Strategy Context

## The Challenge

People with disabilities, who represent around 15% of the world’s population, face a critical shortage of job opportunities and significant barriers to accessing employment. This situation is aggravated by negative perceptions within the business sector and by organizations’ lack of knowledge and experience in effectively implementing inclusive employment strategies.

The absence of documented, replicable success stories that clearly demonstrate the economic viability of inclusive business models limits the willingness of other companies to adopt these practices. As a result, job opportunities for this population segment are reduced, leading to demotivation and mistrust regarding employment promises.

From a business standpoint, excluding this group also means forgoing a substantial market segment, since people with disabilities frequently encounter accessibility barriers to products and services—for example, websites that are inaccessible for people with visual impairments, contact centers that are not adapted for people with hearing impairments, or physical spaces that remain inaccessible.

## The Solution

Ilunion argues that hiring people with disabilities and those at risk of exclusion should not be viewed solely as an end in itself but as a strategic means of building a more equitable working and social environment.

Its primary objective is to normalize the participation of people with disabilities in the labor market. To achieve this, Ilunion seeks to inspire other companies to recognize and value the talent inherent in this group and to replicate its inclusive model.

The impact that Ilunion aims to generate goes beyond its own internal operations and extends to the business sector as a whole. The organization understands disability as just another characteristic of an employee and strongly advocates for equal rights and opportunities in the workplace for this population, in line with its mission: “To build a better world with everyone included.”

# Governance Strategy

## The role of the corporate and its foundation

ONCE and its Foundation are the shareholders and main drivers of the Group's overall strategy, and they have defined labor inclusion of people with disabilities, universal accessibility, and inclusive education as core social objectives.

Through the General Council, they set the strategic direction that guides the actions of ONCE (as the world's largest provider of social services for blind and visually impaired people and operator of Spain's social lottery), the ONCE Foundation (with its three pillars of training, employment, and accessibility), and Ilunion (as the business group), requiring every line of business to uphold a strong commitment to inclusion, in line with shareholders' primary mandate.

## The role of the company

Ilunion's main role is to generate employment opportunities for people with disabilities and other groups at risk of exclusion through a profitable and sustainable business model. It operates as a holding company that brings together different lines of business across multiple sectors.

Ilunion implements the strategy defined by ONCE and its Foundation in the business arena, seeking a balance between economic and social returns.

## The role of external allies

External allies — such as municipal governments, disabled people's organizations, and compensation funds — are key territorial actors that help identify and connect with people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups seeking employment.

Municipal authorities and disability organizations contribute proximity and information on the target population, while compensation funds and similar institutions support the identification of candidates for job opportunities across the company's various business lines.

## The Value of Partnerships

Ilunion prioritizes building strategic alliances with key actors in the communities where it operates, with the goal of identifying people with disabilities and vulnerable groups for its job openings.

This public-private coordination strategy is crucial because it gives Ilunion direct access to, and a deeper understanding of, its target population, as well as detailed insight into local dynamics and realities. To this end, Ilunion focuses on forging relationships with potential change agents and allies, favoring genuine, collaborative partnerships over purely commercial, contractual arrangements.

These alliances are based on mutual support in achieving shared objectives, even when those objectives differ in nature. In broad terms, strategic partners significantly extend Ilunion's reach by acting as a bridge between the company and the community and by improving coordination among stakeholders to generate substantial collective impact in labor inclusion.



Strategic alliances are therefore key to expanding the scope of Ilunion's impact, especially in recruiting for open positions.

For further elements to help maximize impact, see the report Corporate Impact in Latin America.

# The Impact Strategy

Ilunion operates around 50 business lines in labor-intensive sectors—such as hotels, industrial laundries, contact centers, nursing homes, facility services, circular economy activities, and accessibility consulting—with a shared objective: to hire people with disabilities and groups at risk of exclusion, using economic profitability as a driving force. Its international expansion began in Colombia with industrial laundries in 2015, and it now has operations in Medellín and Bogotá, where it aims to be an innovation and quality benchmark in the sector.

## 4 Pillars of the Business-Social Model:

Inclusion of people at risk of exclusion is intrinsically linked to economic profitability.

1

### People

Hiring diverse talent and investing in the adaptation of physical spaces, social benefits, equal treatment, continuous training, feedback, and a humanistic leadership style that values each employee's uniqueness. This includes building an attractive employer brand and forging strategic alliances to identify and attract talent.

2

### Excellence

Maintaining high-quality standards across all operations and demonstrating that labor inclusion is a source of added value rather than a limitation. Metrics such as absenteeism, staff turnover, and customer satisfaction show that employee well-being and commitment translate into high levels of satisfaction with the services provided.

3

### Sustainability

Operating a self-sufficient, profitable business model that does not depend on donations, positioning inclusion as a long-term, sustainable business strategy.

4

### Transformation

Inspiring and supporting other companies to advance in physical, social, and technological accessibility for both workers and customers, thereby helping to drive a broader shift toward more inclusive business models.

## Impact Measurement

Ilunion's social impact assessment is structured around a set of key indicators focused on the well-being and retention of its workforce. The organization uses quantitative metrics such as absenteeism and staff turnover as proxies for the quality of the work environment and employee satisfaction, interpreting them as indirect reflections of working conditions and the degree of employee integration.

In addition, Ilunion conducts annual employee satisfaction surveys to gather direct, qualitative feedback on staff work experience. While the potential bias inherent in self-reported satisfaction is acknowledged, the survey results provide valuable insight into employees' levels of happiness and engagement.

In Colombia, survey data have shown a high proportion of workers reporting satisfaction with their jobs; combined with low absenteeism and turnover rates, this points to a strong sense of commitment and satisfaction among Ilunion employees in that country. The consistency between quantitative and qualitative indicators strengthens the evidence of the positive impact of Ilunion's inclusive model on workplace well-being.



## The Impact Achieved



### 340 jobs created in Colombia,

64% of which are held by people with disabilities and 11% by individuals from groups at risk of exclusion.



### 30% return on sales in Colombia,

with EBITDA exceeding USD 2.5 million in 2024.



### 93% of employees in Colombia

report feeling happy in their jobs.



### Work absenteeism rate of just 2%.



The customer satisfaction score of  
**8.5 points out of 10 for services**



*"Our objective is to hire people with disabilities and groups at risk of exclusion, and our means of achieving this is to generate economic profitability. The more we grow, the more people with disabilities we hire, and the better for our objective, which is the normalization of this group in ordinary employment. We do not care what the disability is; for us, it is just another characteristic of the candidate. We hire the person who best fits the profile we need.*

*But in addition to offering a job opportunity, we want to be the best place to work in every respect, so that people feel happy working with us—and that is precisely what our figures reflect.*

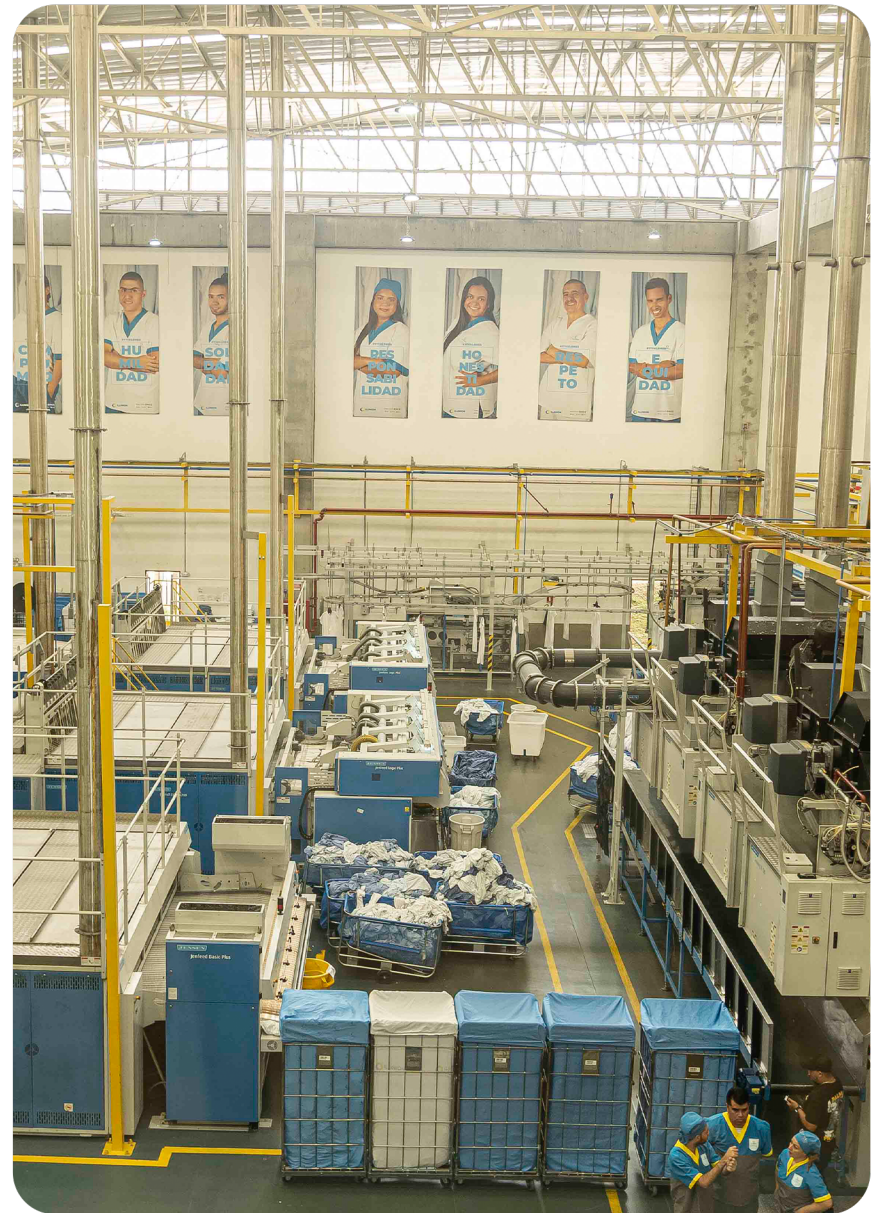
*However, the great difficulty we face lies in reaching and empowering these people with disabilities. Many arrive with a mind-set of 'I can't,' so our greatest challenge is helping them believe that they can."*

**Francisco Centeno** - Director of International Business Development at Ilunion.

## Articulation With the Business

Ilunion operates on the premise that labor inclusion must be economically viable; otherwise, it cannot be sustained over time. This conviction underpins its recruitment approach, which focuses on finding and hiring talent without discrimination on the grounds of disability, viewing disability as just one more characteristic of the employee, comparable to any other professional attribute. Meritocracy therefore guides personnel selection, but always from an inclusion-oriented perspective.

In this way, Ilunion's operations and business model are fully aligned with the core objective of Grupo Social ONCE: to promote the labor inclusion of people with disabilities in a self-sufficient way and with significant market impact. Hiring people with disabilities, in this framework, is not treated as an act of charity but as a fundamental and sustainable business strategy that combines economic profitability with social value creation.



# Lessons Learned

## Corporate branding is a valuable asset

Entering new territories brings the challenge of reaching people with disabilities who have long faced a lack of opportunities and who often distrust employment promises.

Building a solid, trustworthy employer brand is therefore essential so that this frequently “invisible” talent feels safe to come forward and participate in new job opportunities. This requires not only offering positions but also demonstrating a genuine, sustained commitment to their inclusion through consistent practices and messaging.

## The value of conscious leadership

International expansion into markets such as Colombia and Portugal has shown how complex it can be to transfer an organizational culture rooted in Spain to contexts with very different dynamics and values.

The key lies in leaders acting as role models so that local teams both understand and internalize the company’s social purpose and can integrate it with business objectives, adopting the organization’s values. This is achieved through humanistic leadership that places people and inclusion at the center of decision-making.

## Profitability as a catalyst for impact

The success of an inclusive business model such as Ilunion’s depends not only on the genuine commitment to inclusion at the highest levels (for example, from shareholders like ONCE) but also on making that purpose a reality through a profitable business model. Inclusion must not rely on external subsidies or donations; it needs to be economically viable in its own right.

Showing that inclusive employment is both profitable and beneficial is the most powerful lesson, as it validates the model and encourages its replication in the wider market.

## Learn More

[www.gruposocialonce.com](http://www.gruposocialonce.com)

We are grateful for the contribution to the preparation of this case study from:  
**Francisco Centeno** - Director of International Business Development at Ilunion.