



Corporate impact in Latin America

The Case of riisa

Latimpacto

The Initiative

The Integrated Waste Management program is designed to mitigate the challenges of inadequate solid waste management and to overcome the socioeconomic lag in vulnerable communities in Monterrey, Mexico, to stimulate the local economy and promote social mobility.

The central objective of this program is to promote the economic empowerment of residents and dignify the role of waste collectors by recognizing the market value of waste and transforming a negative environmental externality into a sustainable business opportunity.

At the same time, the program seeks to strengthen the value chain of riisa, a recycling company, by integrating local microentrepreneurs into its supply network.

The program is based on awareness-raising and technical support to help communities establish community collection centers, on business formalization by guiding collectors in structuring their microenterprises, and on direct linkage with buyers by connecting collectors with companies such as riisa. In this way, their work is dignified, their income is maximized by eliminating intermediaries, and the supply chain of waste management companies is strengthened.

This model turns an environmental problem into a catalyst for social mobility.



Corporate:

riisa (Recuperaciones Industriales Internacionales, S.A. de C.V.).

Economic sector:

Industrial / Waste management.

Descripción de la empresa:

riisa is a Mexican company specializing in the recovery and recycling of metals and plastics, transforming them into high-quality raw materials.

Name of the program:

Integrated Waste Management.

Countries of implementation:

Mexico.

Target population:

Waste collectors in the La Campana-Altamira community (Monterrey, Mexico).

Capital invested to date:

MXN 1,174,000

Impact Strategy Context

The Challenge



The La Campana–Altamira community, located in the municipality of Monterrey, faces an environmental problem caused by inadequate solid waste disposal, which is worsened by the lack of collection services in the highest areas of the neighborhood, as it sits on a steep hillside that is difficult to access. The high volume of waste generated in the surrounding metropolitan area further aggravates this situation, leading to severe pollution of the Arroyo Seco, a vital waterway that runs through the community.

Residents of La Campana–Altamira experience the negative consequences of this problem through environmental deterioration and exposure to health risks. This area is also characterized by high levels of violence, significant socioeconomic vulnerability, and persistent social and economic marginalization, creating a complex context of environmental degradation, limited access to basic services, and overlapping socioeconomic challenges and violence.

The Solution



The Integrated Waste Management program is founded on the premise that proper waste management is not only an environmental necessity and commitment but also a significant opportunity to generate economic value and foster social mobility.

The program seeks to raise awareness, formalize, and dignify the work of waste collectors within the community, highlighting their activity as a legitimate, sustainable source of decent income and recognizing collectors as agents capable of transforming their conditions of vulnerability.

This transformation is based on recognizing the business potential associated with waste, which in turn generates economic empowerment and reshapes the social perception of this work. It not only involves integrating collectors into formal markets but also supporting their transition toward an entrepreneurial mindset.

Governance Strategy

The role of the corporate

Beyond its financial contribution, riisa plays an active role in integrating the program's results into its own value chain and commercial operations, particularly through the development of new suppliers emerging from the community and strengthening its supply network.

The company also extends its involvement by including existing suppliers in the training initiatives promoted by the Foundation, driving continuous improvement throughout its chain.

In addition, company employees participate in the program by providing technical support on recycling-industry practices, helping to enhance the monetization of the collectors' work.

The business foundation

The riisa Foundation's vision is "Sustainable communities by engaged citizens." Starting from this aspiration, it initially approached the program from a conservation perspective and later incorporated a strong focus on social mobility.

The Foundation's role is to promote and activate citizen participation in response to the environmental and social challenges facing local communities. To do this, it brings together key actors and efforts, contributing the technical, territorial, and business knowledge needed for effective program implementation.

The Foundation also provides strategic guidance and vision, steering the overall direction of the program to ensure alignment with sustainable development and social mobility objectives.

The role of allies

SOSAC: This ally specializes in community work and awareness-raising. Its primary function has been to build close relationships with the La Campana-Altamira community, facilitate awareness workshops on the importance of recycling, and motivate residents to become actively involved in the collection initiative. SOSAC is instrumental in establishing the program's participatory foundations.

Promover: Its main role is to provide trade-specific training, tools, and business support so that collectors can recognize themselves as entrepreneurs and grow their businesses. This includes support for formalization, professionalization, scaling, and technical skill development, with the aim of enabling collectors to reach a competitive level and generate decent incomes.

The Value of Partnerships

The program's strategy is built on forming partnerships with expert organizations at every stage of implementation. These alliances bring together SOSAC's convening power, the coordination, support, and vision of the riisa Foundation, and the business training offered by Promover, along with riisa's financing and technical backing as a company that requires this raw material in its supply chain.

These partnerships provide access to specialized knowledge, enable more efficient use of resources, and ensure holistic support for the community, allowing each actor to contribute from its role to achieving the program's objectives.



The Integrated Waste Management initiative is implemented through these collaborations, which expand its reach by strategically involving additional stakeholders who contribute networks and expertise.

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

The Impact Strategy

The Integrated Waste Management program began in 2020 as a response to the environmental conservation challenges in the La Campana–Altamira area, and in 2022 it incorporated a social mobility perspective and aligned its narrative more closely with riisa's core business purpose. Throughout its evolution, the program has been developed in phases: the first focuses on awareness-raising and building a connection with the local community, highlighting both the value of waste and the importance of not polluting the river. The objective at this stage is to emphasize the value of collectors' work and their role as the first link in the recycling chain, which then paves the way for establishing collection centers and fostering community organization, ultimately leading to the professionalization and formalization of these enterprises.

Across all stages, community building serves as a fundamental cross-cutting axis, since a cohesive, collaborative social fabric tends to show greater resilience in the face of challenges, encourages mutual learning, and supports higher potential for growth and impact scalability.



Impact Measurement

Impact measurement primarily relies on the indicators defined by SOSAC, with the flexibility to add metrics that are relevant to riisa and its Foundation.

A four-pronged measurement system is used to define both output and outcome indicators for each approach, and information is gathered on current or short-term impact as well as long-term impact (expected results over a ten-year horizon).

The four measurement approaches are:

- 1 **Leadership:** Continuity and stability of community work teams over time.
- 2 **Capacity:** The extent to which local action points are maintained and continue generating environmental, economic, and social benefits in the community.
- 3 **Result:** Creation of jobs and generation of monetary or in-kind income for the leaders of local collection points.
- 4 **Change:** Improvement of public spaces and reduced pressure on ecosystems, including the amount of material that has been recycled.



The Impact Achieved



18 active collection points.



558 kg of biodegradable
household waste composted.



195 kg of fertile soil produced.



176 kg of CO2
equivalent sequestered through composting.



"At the beginning, through the alliance with SOSAC, we set out to build environmental awareness and activate community participation to clean up the stream, but in 2022 we decided to shift the focus and bring the program closer to the company's core.

We have made significant progress as a foundation thanks to Latimacto's vision, and one major lesson was that we could generate greater impact by aligning the work of the riisa Foundation with that of the company. We changed our strategy, and since then, we have focused on the social mobility generated by recognizing the value of collectors' work and by ensuring proper waste management.

Although the program is concentrated in this area, it is designed to be replicable, which is why we have invested in documenting practices and lessons learned that can serve as a reference for other regions."

Luz María Garza de Llaguno

President of the riisa Foundation.

Articulation With the Business

The Integrated Waste Management program is directly linked to riisa's business model and serves to strengthen and expand its value chain. By promoting a culture of recycling, along with community organization and participation around material separation and collection, recycling is recognized as an economic activity that enables upward social mobility and connects the community more closely with riisa's value chain.

This strategic approach encourages collaborative organization within communities, builds a sense of agency, activates environmental stewardship, generates income, and channels valuable recyclable materials into formal markets. It also creates a ripple effect that can inspire other community members to get involved.

The business training provided through the alliance with the Promover Foundation benefits not only newly incorporated collectors but also existing riisa suppliers, with the explicit goal of professionalizing their operations and increasing their productive capacity.



Lessons Learned

The power of collective action

Achieving significant operating volumes is essential for integrated business models such as this recycling program to generate substantial value. Experience has shown that initial low volumes can be effectively overcome by building a cohesive community among participants and leveraging collective action.

The ability of a strategic partner like SOSAC to foster this cohesion among new collectors has been decisive in demonstrating that community collaboration is not only a social objective but also a strategic factor that directly affects the operational viability and long-term sustainability of the corporate project. Encouraging collaboration and knowledge sharing among grantees can amplify the program's impact and resilience.

Strategy design should focus on the target population

A key differentiator of the program has been its focus on dignifying the work of collectors, recognizing and treating them as generators of valuable resources. For this reason, it chose to pay for materials instead of offering product exchanges.

By centering the strategy on the dignity of beneficiaries and their real needs—through monetizing collectors' contributions—the program not only sustains motivation to participate but also elevates participants' social status and self-esteem, transforming how their work is perceived.

To achieve this, it is essential to deeply understand beneficiaries' motivations, incentives, and barriers, recognizing that not everyone is in the same situation or pursues the same goals.

Facing environmental challenges

The transition of informal actors, such as waste collectors, into formally registered business entities is hindered by a mix of cultural, economic, and social barriers.

These barriers can include unfamiliarity with legal procedures, limited financial resources to cover registration costs or taxes, distrust of formal structures, and the complexity of legal and bureaucratic frameworks for business formalization, particularly in contexts such as Mexico.

This underscores the need to design comprehensive strategies that take into account not only legal requirements but also the capacities and socio-economic realities of beneficiaries, for example, through specialized legal and financial support or by exploring simplified associative models.

Learn More

www.fundacionriisa.mx

We are grateful for the contribution to the preparation of this case study from:
Lucy Garza de Llaguno - President of the riisa Foundation.
Mariana Aguirre - Social Responsibility and Riisa Foundation Manager.