

TODAS LAS  
MUJERES  
TENEMOS  
DERECHO  
A UNA  
SEGUNDA  
OPORTUNIDAD

Como una llave y vuelve a abrir puertas  
con esta **segunda oportunidad**



Photo credit: UN Women Mexico

# Second Chance Education Signature Features in Mexico

The approach of UN Women’s Second Chance Education (SCE) programme recognizes that, for women who are marginalized by crisis, poverty or harmful social norms, transformational change requires more than the offer of training or education alone. SCE works with women who have been held back by gender-based barriers and discriminatory practices all their lives without necessarily being aware of it. SCE provides access to practical support and life skills training that enable women to participate fully in whichever learning pathway they choose. Similarly, it recognizes the importance of social learning and personalized support throughout the SCE journey. This scaffolded approach has led to high retention and low dropout rates and is represented by SCE’s signature features.

The SCE signature features are outlined below with specific examples from SCE Mexico.

## SCE Signature Features





## ABOUT SCE IN MEXICO

In Mexico, women have fewer opportunities than men to generate income and participate in the labour market. When they do, they often earn less and are employed in informal jobs. Women also face challenges in creating businesses and continuing their education due to the burden of unpaid domestic work. Despite improvements in access to education, millions of girls and young women remain excluded from learning opportunities. According to the OECD,<sup>1</sup> 6 out of 10 people aged 12 and over who cannot read or write are women. Women also struggle to access and complete vocational training programs, limiting their job prospects.

Mexico's female labour participation rate is one of the lowest in Latin America at 45.9%, compared to 76.3% for men.<sup>2</sup> Less than one-third of women own businesses and their exclusion from the digital world has led to economic losses. The average monthly salary for women is 4,750 pesos (approx. 270 USD), which is 1,380 pesos (approx. 81 USD) less than men.<sup>3</sup> More than half of employed women (56.1%) work in the informal economy and 6.8 million adult women living below the poverty line lag behind in education.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> OECD (2022) 'Gender wage gap (indicator)', OECD, doi: 10.1787/7cee77aa-en. Available at: <https://data.oecd.org/earnwage/gender-wage-gap.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> and <sup>3</sup> Secretariat of Economy (2023), 'ENOE data for the 1st quarter of 2023', DataMexico: Profile of Mexico (Country). Available at:

<https://www.economia.gob.mx/datamexico/es/profile/geo/mexico>.

<sup>4</sup> INEGI (2023), 'Press Release No. 149/23: Statistics on the Occasion of International Women's Day'. Available at:

[https://www.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/saladeprensa/aproposito/2023/EAP\\_8M2023.pdf](https://www.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/saladeprensa/aproposito/2023/EAP_8M2023.pdf).

Women's economic empowerment is hindered by the disproportionate time spent on unpaid domestic work, lack of financial inclusion and limited social protection. Women dedicate an average of 50.2 hours per week to domestic and care work, compared to 19.4 hours for men.<sup>5</sup> Only 74% of women have access to financial products, compared to 82% of men.<sup>6</sup> These trends reflect broader socioeconomic and gender barriers, including poverty, early marriage, geographic isolation and unsafe learning environments.



SCE in Mexico aims to provide marginalized women with high quality education, entrepreneurship opportunities and vocational training. Launched in 2018, SCE set up 18 learning centres in the State of Mexico, Jalisco, and Puebla by 2019. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, SCE offered online courses through the Kolibri platform. By the end of 2023, 8,928 women had registered on the platform, with 55% completing courses online. The platform was later replaced by EdApp, with courses developed by implementing partners.

SCE's gender-sensitive learning content and training respond to participants' needs in each learning centre. Implementing partners, including SEPICJ, ProSociedad and Asociación Femenina ProMéxico, adapted methodologies to local contexts while ensuring access to core programme components: life project definition, socio-emotional skills, employment or entrepreneurship skills, digital skills, and financial education. SCE's implementation in in-person learning centres was supported by partnerships with state (the Government of the State of Mexico and the Secretariat for Substantive Equality between Women and Men of the State of Jalisco) and municipal governments (Government of Huixquilucan), civil society organizations (Comunidad Xamixtli), and private sector entities like HP, CEMEX and AMDOCS. It was also implemented through mobile learning centres that brought SCE's training offerings to remote and more marginalized localities in Puebla and the State of Mexico.

<sup>5</sup> INEGI (2019), 'National Survey on Time Use (ENUT)', INEGI. Available at: <https://www.inegi.org.mx/programas/enut/2019/>.

<sup>6</sup> National Banking and Securities Commission (2021) 'National Survey of Financial Inclusion: Report of Results', National Banking and Securities Commission. Available at: [https://www.cnbv.gob.mx/Inclusi%C3%B3n/Anexos%20Inclusin%20Financiera/Reporte\\_Resultados\\_ENIF\\_2021.pdf](https://www.cnbv.gob.mx/Inclusi%C3%B3n/Anexos%20Inclusin%20Financiera/Reporte_Resultados_ENIF_2021.pdf).

In Mexico, SCE has been implemented with the support of the following responsible parties (RPs):



Servicio de Promoción Integral Comunitario Juvenil, A.C. (SEPICJ) was the implementing organization in Puebla from 2019 to 2023 and from 2021 it was also the implementing organization in the State of Mexico.



ProSociedad hacer bien el bien, A.C. (ProSociedad) was the implementing organization in the state of Jalisco. ProSociedad shared the role of responsible partner with Asociación Femenina ProMéxico (ProMéxico) until September 2022.



HP is a multinational information technology (IT) company that sells hardware, software and related business services. They have contributed by equipping the spaces used as learning centres and are part of an ongoing collaboration agreement.

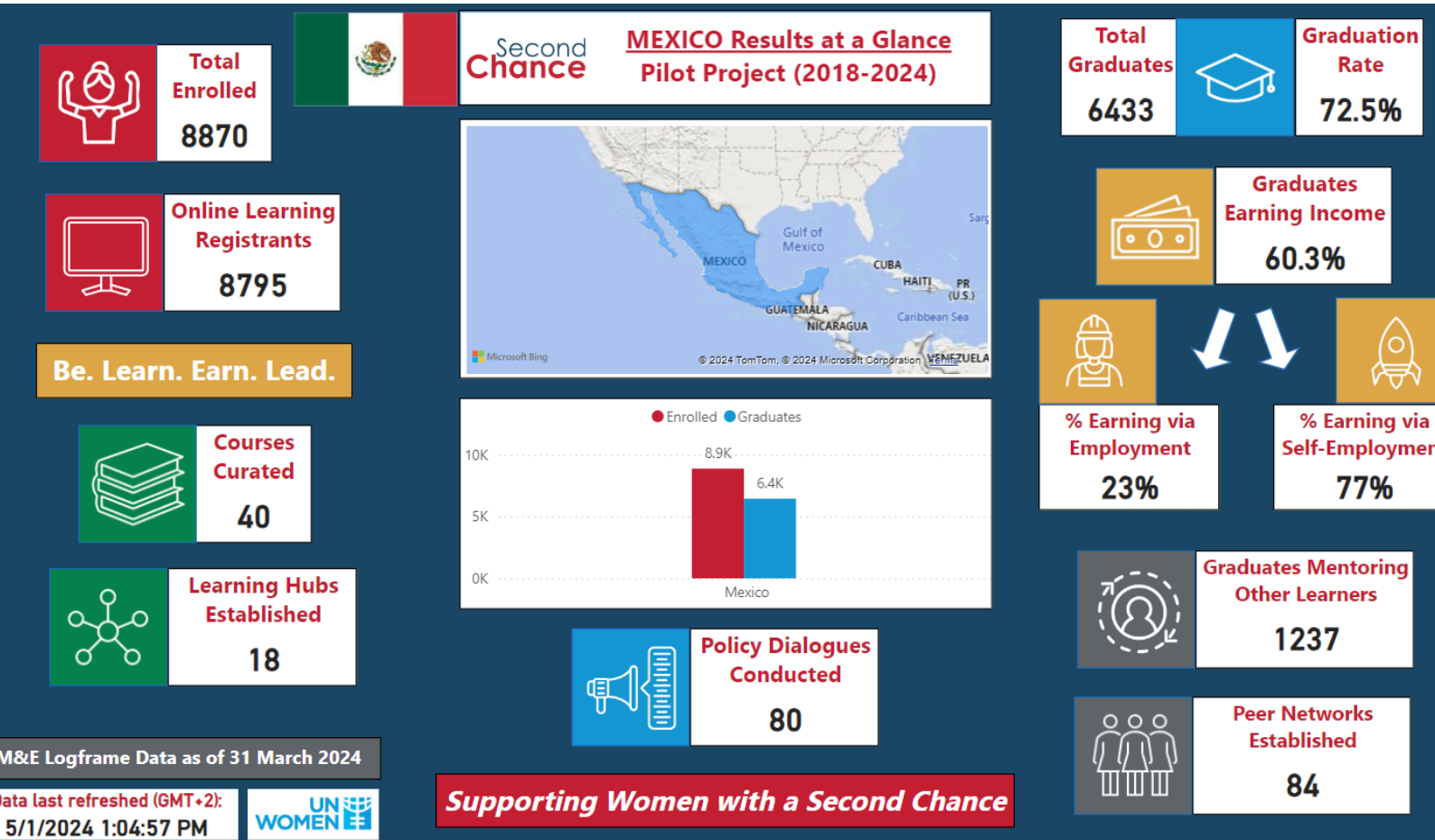


CEMEX is a Mexican multinational building materials company. As part of the collaboration with CEMEX, a Second Chance learning centre was established within the CEMEX Community Center in Tlaquepaque, Jalisco (Guadalajara's metropolitan area).



AMDOCS is a multinational telecommunications technology company. With AMDOCS, the company mobilized resources to bring SCE's Digital Skills course to 370 women in Guadalajara, Jalisco.

# SCE MEXICO RESULTS AT-A-GLANCE



## SUPPORT TO ADDRESS GENDER-BASED BARRIERS



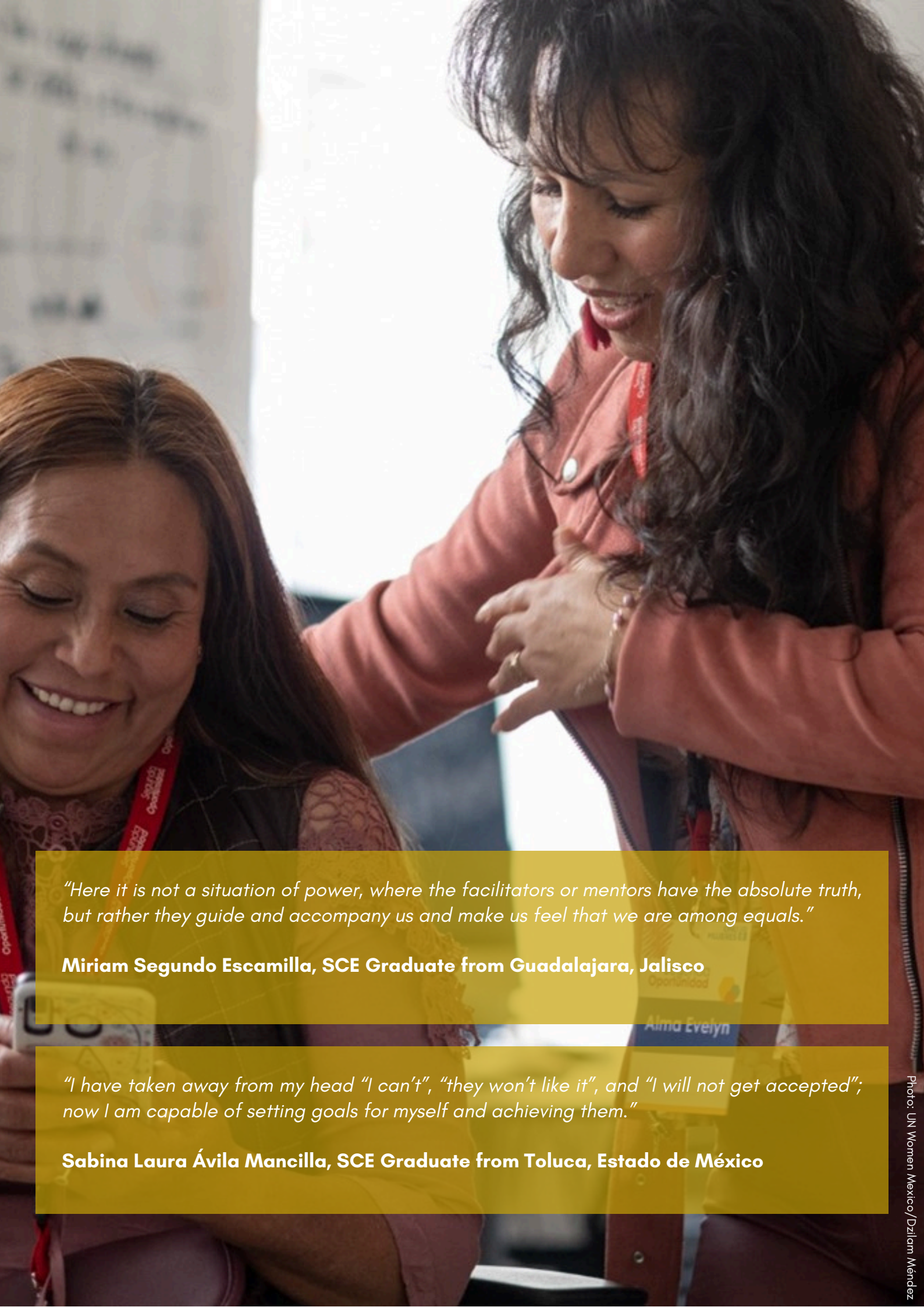
Support is provided to remove the constraints to women's participation in SCE. It may include access to care services to alleviate their care responsibilities such as child, disability and elder care, safe and affordable transport to the hubs, and engaging with men in families and communities to build their support. It can also include referrals to complementary social services to access professional support for gender-based violence, housing, personal finances, health or other issues.

SCE Mexico provides referrals to services complementary to those offered in the programme, for example specialized business counseling, linkages to psychological care, legal advice, health services and economic support, thanks to partnerships with state and municipal governments and civil society organizations.



## Miriam Segundo Escamilla and her SCE experience

The case of one participant of the learning centre located in the facilities of the Center for Meeting and Attention for Women (CREA) of the Secretariat for Substantive Equality between Women and Men (SISEMH) of the Government of Jalisco is illustrative of the support to address gender-based barriers provided by SCE. She became unemployed during the pandemic. In addition to the financial debts that were piling up, she was going through an emotional crisis. A friend of hers sent her information about Second Chance via Facebook; she approached CREA and enrolled in the personal development course. There she began what she calls her 'internal work path': accompanied by the team and her colleagues, she was referred to the psychology services offered by SISEMH and had access to a support network formed within the SCE programme. Some time later, encouraged by her peers and trainers, Miriam applied for a position as a Second Chance facilitator. She was selected and works at CEMEX's learning centre, boosting other women's efforts to acquire skills, while continuing her training to strengthen and formalize her business.



*"Here it is not a situation of power, where the facilitators or mentors have the absolute truth, but rather they guide and accompany us and make us feel that we are among equals."*

**Miriam Segundo Escamilla, SCE Graduate from Guadalajara, Jalisco**

*"I have taken away from my head "I can't", "they won't like it", and "I will not get accepted"; now I am capable of setting goals for myself and achieving them."*

**Sabina Laura Ávila Mancilla, SCE Graduate from Toluca, Estado de México**



## GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE LIFE SKILLS



Training and support in this area enable women to develop self-confidence, a sense of agency, and aspirations aligned with their interests, skills and circumstances. It is centred on an awareness of participants' strengths and the potential of all individuals, and the part that gendered roles, stereotypes and discriminatory norms play in everyone's lives. Gender-transformative life skills are context-specific and attempt to address intersecting inequalities. This training may provide the opportunity for participants to revisit, adapt or change established attitudes, behaviours and practices at individual, household and community level, often resulting in participants assuming new roles and responsibilities which may differ from socially expected gender roles. It is an essential foundation for subsequent training and for ensuring sustainable change to women's lives and community resilience.

In Mexico, participants acquire gender-transformative life skills through courses on personal development, financial literacy and digital literacy. Participants report improved self-confidence, with a 39% reduction in those perceiving lack of confidence and a 36% reduction in those perceiving lack of abilities as obstacles. Additionally, there is a 12% reduction in the perception of economic resources as a barrier, enhancing resilience and motivation to seek better opportunities.

A strategic partnership between UN Women and UNDP aimed to boost the financial health, resilience and economic autonomy of women in SCE. It included three components: 1) financial education with a gender perspective, 2) personalized follow-up, and 3) individual and group mentoring in financial product usage. In 2022, 243 women participated in the Financial Literacy Pilot, which improved their financial knowledge and practices. The pilot showed a 24% increase in financial resilience, a 22% increase in recurrent savings, a 37% decrease in those lacking financial products due to unfamiliarity, and a 47% increase in responsible credit management.

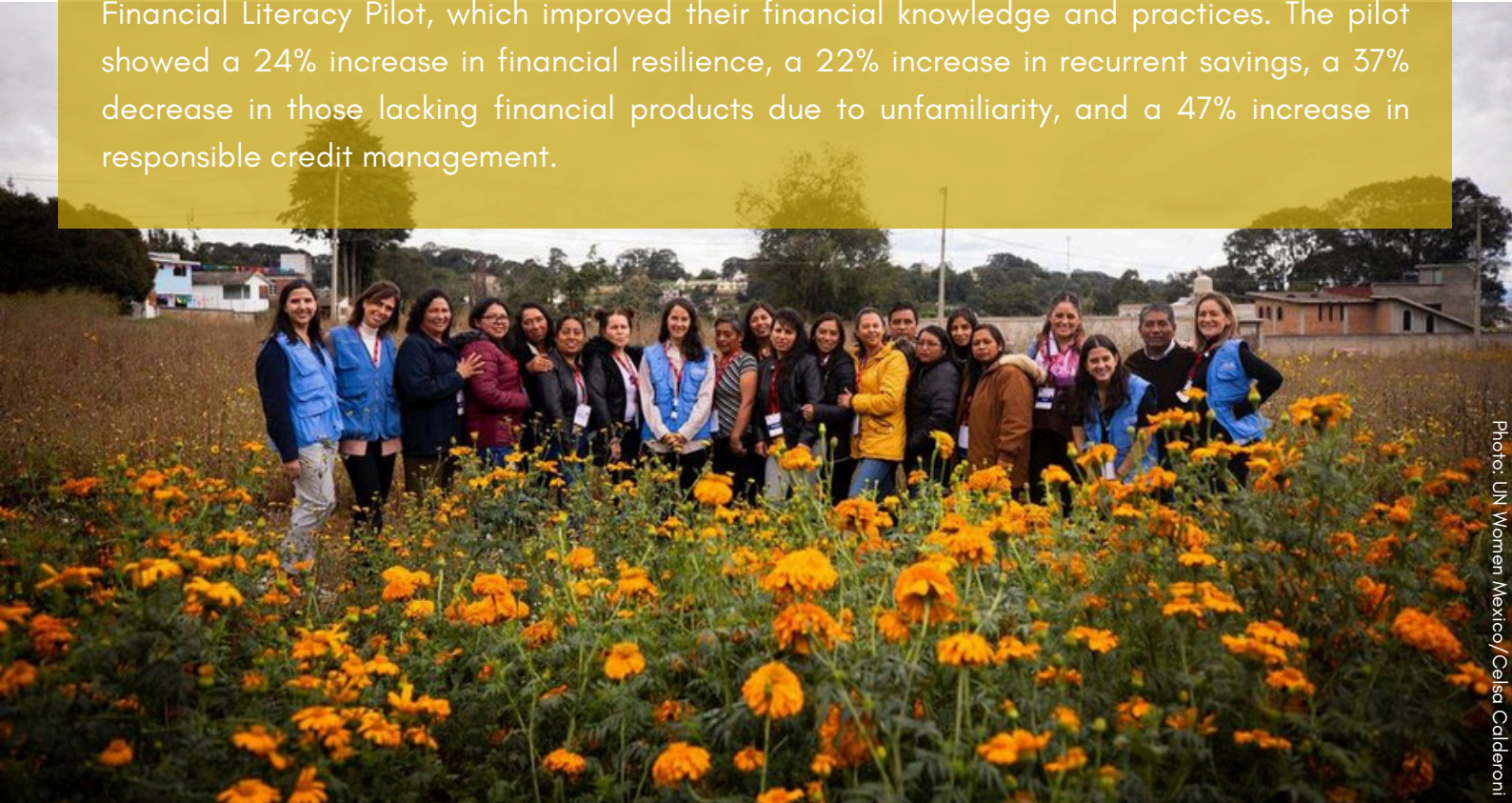




Photo: UN Women Mexico

## ONE SCE LEARNING PATHWAY



Women participate in one of three learning pathways: entrepreneurship/self employment, employment/vocational training or return to formal education. Each pathway is a progression of courses based on a globally standardized curriculum with locally relevant content tailored to participants in language, imagery and type of media. Industry and government connections are provided to link participants to education, jobs or business development opportunities during and after training.

In Mexico, each participant chooses her training pathway based on her personal profile, needs and desires. The three pathways proposed by Second Chance in Mexico are employment, starting or strengthening a business venture (entrepreneurship), and returning to education. SCE offers flexible schemes in face-to-face, online or hybrid modalities to complete the courses and participate in the workshops.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP



In Mexico, the most popular pathway for women enrolled in SCE has been entrepreneurship. Data shows that participants go from 14% entrepreneurs at the start to 28% six months post-programme. The COVID-19 pandemic and limited job opportunities have driven this interest. Entrepreneurship offers flexibility, crucial for the over 40% of participants who dedicate six or more hours daily to unpaid care work. It also removes age requirements and many barriers faced in formal employment, allowing women to apply their improved personal skills, a key interest in the programme.



## RETURN TO FORMAL EDUCATION



In Mexico, the education pathway was managed through a multisectoral approach. Implementing partners connected with educational institutions to provide opportunities for women to complete or reenter an educational level online or receive training for university entrance exams. Participants in Estado de México and Puebla completed primary school through a collaboration with the National Institute for Adult Education. Others received guidance for online university studies, completed high school, or were certified by a national competence framework, validating their qualifications for job opportunities.

## EMPLOYMENT



Employment was also targeted through a multisectoral approach. In Puebla, SCE's implementing organization SEPICJ partnered with a cable TV company to provide customer service training, opening specific job positions for participants. Other women found positions in the medical field as entry-level nurses or medical assistants through collaborative agreements between implementing organizations and employers or educational services from the region – strategic agreements with the national employment service also increased job opportunities for participants.

Also, other indicators such as unpaid domestic work reduced by 28%, temporary labour increased by 77%, 12% improved job conditions, 17% began job searches, and 30% enrolled in additional training. This data suggests that SCE training has started an empowerment process, improving women's lives and future opportunities despite current employment challenges.

## ADVOCACY AND POLICY WORK



SCE draws on its experience on the ground to advocate for removal of the structural constraints to women's participation in education, training and the workforce. SCE advocates for reforms of laws, policies and financial frameworks and the introduction of government programming to enhance women's economic participation.

Like the global programme, SCE in Mexico aims to influence multi-sectoral policies, scale up training, and generate funding to strengthen educational programmes at all government levels. An example of advocacy was a Strategic Council in Tehuacán, Puebla, promoting development, gender equality and violence-free lives for women. Until December 2023, the Council included partners from public, private and social sectors, as well as women representing various organizations and SCE participants.

SEPICJ, SCE's implementing partner, used a Strategic Council to convene business, academic, social, and government sectors quarterly. They explored new thematic areas, digital inclusion, human development and joint cultural initiatives, facilitating job access and raising awareness about gender and non-hegemonic masculinities.

Notable advocacy efforts included the Conferences for the Inclusion of Women in the Labor Market in Jalisco, organized by UN Women, the Secretariat of Innovation, Science, and Technology of Jalisco, and ProSociedad, with over 200 attendees from various sectors discussing best practices. In 2023, an experience exchange between SCE participants, Goodwill Ambassador Ximena Sariñana, and UN Women Representative Belén Sanz took place in 'La Soledad' greenhouse, where SCE women grow vegetables for commercialization and consumption. Eleven graduates shared their impactful stories. Singer-songwriter Ximena Sariñana, UN Women Mexico's first Goodwill Ambassador, uses her platform to promote women's economic empowerment and education access.

## E-LEARNING



SCE draws on its experience on the ground to advocate for removal of the structural constraints to women's participation in education, training and the workforce. SCE advocates for reforms of laws, policies and financial frameworks and the introduction of government programming to enhance women's economic participation.

*"I feel very confident taking online classes because I can manage my time better and I don't stop learning even when I'm at home."*

**Cinthya Ayala, SCE Graduate from CEMEX Center, Jalisco**

This education model offers flexible learning delivery and adaptable content, encouraging women's participation. However, internet access and technology are not common for women in semi-urban or rural areas in Mexico, including SCE participants. To address this, the programme provided basic technology courses and equipment within learning centres, resulting in over 90% of participants completing at least one SCE course.

Through a partnership with the Government of Jalisco, over 8,000 women accessed SCE online content via tablets distributed through the Fuerza Mujeres programme from 2020 to 2021. A study by SISEMH highlighted the positive impact of this collaboration in facilitating online learning. Infrastructure provided by HP to learning centres also helped narrow the gender digital gap.

Photo: UN Women/Dzilar Méndez

## PERSONALIZED SUPPORT



Personalized support underpins women's participation throughout their SCE journey. It includes social and instructional support and can be provided through a range of approaches including mentoring, tutoring, peer networks and advisors.

*"I have a child with a disability; discrimination and lack of opportunities made me wonder what would become of him. Then we both started taking pastry lessons to occupy our time. When I entered Second Chance, I decided to use the knowledge I had to start our own little business."*

**Sabina Laura Ávila Mancilla, SCE Graduate from Toluca, Estado de México**

## MENTORING

The mentoring aspect of SCE in Mexico stands out as a crucial feature of the programme. Mentor training is recognized as a best practice within Second Chance. Through mentorship, participants enhance their leadership skills, providing empathetic support and sharing their own experiences to help others strengthen their personal and technical abilities. Having a female mentor serves as a tangible example for participants, inspiring them to pursue their goals. This individualized support fosters social interaction and enables participants to develop life and digital skills alongside their studies with the guidance of facilitators or mentors.

As of March 2024, there are six active networks with over 490 participants supporting each other. These networks facilitate project promotion, information sharing, technical assistance and access to training and employment opportunities. They include networks for women entrepreneurs, knowledge management, mentors and support to mitigate dropout rates. Additionally, five participant groups are in the process of establishing agricultural cooperatives<sup>1</sup>, enhancing market access and promoting the equitable distribution of benefits among producers.

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<sup>1</sup> Agricultural cooperatives are user-owned and user-controlled businesses from which benefits are derived and distributed equitably on the basis of use. This structure helps producers assure markets and supplies, achieve economies of scale and gain market power through jointly marketing, bargaining, processing and purchasing supplies and services.



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