

LOÍZA, PUERTO RICO

“This isn’t just a place where people can connect to high-speed Internet or access technology- it’s a place where residents can come together, build trust, develop solutions to the problems most relevant to their lives, and work toward promoting the wellbeing of their community.”

- José Moreno, Project Coordinator, Libraries Without Borders US



Bridging the digital divide requires an entire community - organizations, industry, and individuals - to commit to finding innovative solutions to pervasive challenges.



Digital literacy training is critical for ensuring broadband adoption among community members of all ages.

Hurricanes, gang violence, and poverty present Loíza, Puerto Rico with significant challenges. Despite the obstacles, community members are committed to their neighbors and to working together to improve their quality of life.

The Project OVERCOME effort in Loíza, led by Libraries Without Borders - US (LWB-US), connected three community centers with 5G hotspots and antennas. The three centers - Tocones and Piñones, Sector la 23, and Colobo - now offer Wi-Fi access and digital services, making each an educational and civic hub for their community. However, the Internet connection is only a part of the transformational impact of Project OVERCOME in Loíza, where local leaders paired the connectivity initiative with efforts to overhaul community centers for more effective use. Zuleima, an interior designer who facilitated conversations and placemaking efforts with the community, consulted residents on their wishes and needs for a renovated community space before work began. This move fostered community trust in the project and inspired volunteers.

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Activating Loíza's resident support built accountable relationships across the community, and ensured inclusive and equitable growth of digital education programs.



Project OVERCOME stimulated support from local organizations and funded the retrofitting of community facilities with new computer labs and solar power resources.

The community's eagerness to help was welcome, given the massive muscle power required to clean, paint, and restore the centers. Project volunteers organized a few "Gran Pintata" (Great Painting) events where the entire community came out to work on the centers. These events even yielded the birth of a local renovation business led by two cousins, Jose Luis and Alejandro. These cousins developed critical project management skills and the confidence necessary to venture into entrepreneurship by managing the workflow.



GRANTEE AND PARTNERS

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