



**SOSTENIBILIDAD**  **D**  
by 

# **SUSTAINABILITY** REPORT

2018 - 2019

*blplegal.com*

*Costa Rica* 

*El Salvador* 

*Guatemala* 

*Honduras* 

*Nicaragua* 

*Spain* 



## INTRODUCTION

At BLP we are proud of the famous phrase of one of our clients: **“There cannot be successful companies in failed societies”**. BLP recognizes that its success has been possible due to the opportunities provided by its environment and is interested in demonstrating its responsibility with the societies and sectors it works with.

We are also aware that the work of every law professional fulfills a fundamental social role for democracy, strengthens public institutions, and enables access to justice for different sectors of the population.

Thus, a transversal sustainability strategy is implicit in our business strategy, aligned to the actions we develop, jointly with the agreements reached by the community of nations to achieve 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 with the participation of states, companies and civil society.

In accordance with our commitment expressed by signing the Declaration of the Americas of the Vance Center in 2008, each of BLP's lawyers provides at least 20 hours of free legal services per year to projects that have a social impact with a priority human development issues.

From 2018-2019, BLP attorneys provided more than 4,000 Pro Bono hours. This amount is surprising, but what is more striking is the willingness of our staff to support these projects, with the same eagerness that they provide to any other firm endeavor.

This document summarizes the main sustainability actions developed by the Firm making visible our contact with the societies where we are working.

*Luis Castro, Managing Partner*

# 1 Background

In 2008 the BLP Foundation was created to promote and coordinate the carrying out of the Pro Bono work of all employees. We were the first firm in the region to sign the Vance Center Declaration of the Americas, committing ourselves that all the lawyers at the firm will donate at least 20 hours of legal services annually.

In 2017, BLP established a sustainability strategy that articulates all its efforts aimed at contributing to the human and social development of the communities in which our business operates, taking as a guide the 2030 Agenda for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals approved by the United Nations.

We start from the fact that our line of business has an impact on access to justice, on the prevention of corruption, and the strengthening of various public institutions. We are convinced that as lawyers we can be agents of change promoting social responsibility in companies, institutions, academies, etc.

We have prioritized the development of actions to promote and support initiatives that affect the quality of life and the enjoyment of the rights of social sectors that may be in a vulnerable situation.

In this report, we detail our sustainability actions in all our offices in Central America impacting inclusion, diversity, Pro Bono work, environmental and social sustainability.

*Vivian Liberman, Partner  
BLP Sustainability Strategy Coordinator*

# 2 Our Sustainability efforts

We started our sustainability work in 2008, when we founded the BLP Foundation, aiming to provide a Pro Bono legal service for projects that impact our society according to priorities in human development; entrepreneurship; gender equality and equity; social and labor insertion of people with disabilities; community; education; environmental protection and sustainability.

Through a sustainability strategy, BLP manifests its commitment to developing a program of active and responsible participation in solving problems in our society.

This is done through actions that contribute to the economic, human, and social development of the region, preventing environmental deterioration, promoting social justice, equity, and cultural diversity according to the goals set for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations.

*Irene Aguilar  
BLP Sustainability Director*

# THE IMPACT OF SOSTENIBILIDAD

by BLP

+ **80**  
PRO BONO  
BENEFICIARY  
NGOs

**31%**  
of  
PARTNERS are  
WOMAN

**0**  
WAGE GAP  
between  
MEN AND WOMEN

**1**  
FIRM IN  
CENTRAL AMERICA  
to sign the  
Vance Center  
PRO BONO  
DECLARATION

+ **3,363**  
PRO BONO hours

We have aligned  
our sustainability  
strategy with  
**17** SDGs  
(SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT GOALS)

In coordination with  
PRO BONO PARTNERS  
we held

+ **30**  
formal DISCUSSIONS  
on legal issues

WE COLLECTED

+ **53**  
KILOS of plastic bottle caps  
to fabricate  
ACCESSIBLE RAMPS  
on beaches for  
people with disabilities

+ **15**  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE PROJECTS

Approximate dollar amount

**\$672,636**

# 3 Working Areas

The sustainability strategy developed by BLP is based on achieving projects oriented toward the 17 Sustainable Development Goals agreed by the United Nations General Assembly. We developed structured planning based on the implementation of internal policies, voluntary services activities, and Pro Bono projects to contribute to the various goals set through the following thematic axes:



..... **1. Internal social responsibility:** Actions are promoted for the well-being of our collaborators with specific policies and measures that impact their professional development and their life project.



..... **2. Gender equity:** The female talent of our collaborators is promoted, as an essential part of the firm's success. Externally, business programs, actions, and policies are counseled to implement management systems in this area and carry out diagnoses of gender gaps. In 2018 **Inspiring Girls** Costa Rica and Honduras were founded to impact future generations of women by encouraging them to fulfill their professional dreams.



..... **3. Diversity in our working environment:** Through the development of policies and programs for the prevention of discrimination in the work environment of LGBTQ+.



..... **4. Environmental management:** BLP is the first legal firm that obtained the **Carbon Neutral** and **Blue Flag** certifications; a pioneer in all kinds of actions to mitigate possible ecological damage.



..... **5. Labor insertion of people with disabilities:** Through the implementation of actions for their promotion, as well as the hiring of disabled people and actions to encourage their hiring in other companies and institutions.



..... **6. Pro Bono work of all our lawyers:** They perform at least 20 hours of Pro Bono work annually, aimed at providing legal advice to non-governmental organizations and social projects that address issues such as entrepreneurship, the rights of children and adolescents, education, social and labor insertion of people with disabilities, gender equity, and community.



..... **7. Volunteering services activities:** BLP develops volunteering services programs annually in coordination with organizations that are beneficiaries of BLP's Pro Bono services, in which our staff participates in activities together with the community for environmental protection and legal training on environmental issues, human rights, popular legal education, and social advocacy.

# 4 Specific contributions to impact on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals

Below, is a brief description of how through the BLP Foundation, the contribution of its members, and our team of professionals, BLP has worked with shared efforts with other institutions through strategic planning to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

BLP has made specific contributions to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by launching programs that impact several of the goals, showing their interdependence and relationship, essential key factors in sustainability.



## GOAL 1

End poverty in all its forms worldwide.

In our effort to achieve this objective, BLP worked inside and outside the firm with different staff members to generate an internal and an external contribution in our societies developing the following programs:

### Internal BLP programs aimed at achieving SDG 1:

- BLP Program “Impulso”



● In 2013, BLP launched the first stage of assistance and training financial project for its collaborators.

Through this program, BLP encouraged a study in which its employees could voluntarily show their personal financial concerns and receive advice.

● In 2019 BLP provided training workshops on techniques for preparing resumes and job interviews, aimed at relatives of our collaborators who were in the job search processes.



## External BLP programs aimed at achieving SDG 1:

- Yo Emprendedor

Yo Emprendedor is an institution that seeks to position entrepreneurship as a pillar of economic and social development, through a business competition where entrepreneurs from all over Central America compete to demonstrate their ideas and talents. BLP, in addition to being part of its Board of Directors, performs **Pro Bono** work for those who are winners of this competition.

- Potenciadora de Negocios y Microfranquicias

This is an initiative of CEMEX company that advises microentrepreneurs in Costa Rica so that they can distribute their products in supermarkets. With its **Pro Bono** support for this organization, BLP collaborates to encourage economic development by empowering and supporting the innovative and small entrepreneur.



### GOAL 2

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

The achievement of this goal has been a long-standing goal of the international community. BLP develops volunteer programs and **Pro Bono** services with different organizations to contribute to the achievement of this purpose and for this we supported the following foundations:

- Fundación Lloverá



The **Lloverá Foundation** was established in December 2012, to feed street inhabitants in the province of San José. The foundation is currently working on the problem of indigence throughout the country, relocating this population to shelters and treatment centers. Throughout the year, rescue activities are carried out in the different provinces of the country, with the support of public institutions and private entities such as BLP, seeking to provide them with quality of life. Both the internment and its socio-labor reinsertion are coordinated.

In addition to the **Pro Bono** legal work, BLP participates in voluntary services activities to collect basic basket products.



• Banco de Alimentos



One of the main **Pro Bono** beneficiaries of BLP influencing the prevention of poverty and hunger in the country is the Banco de Alimentos (Food Bank) Foundation, which through the business linkages, distributes food to vulnerable populations throughout Costa Rica.

During 2019 we participated in providing all kinds of Pro Bono legal support, but also by volunteering to support the organization of the storage and food for their social works.



• ACERPA



BLP provides **Pro Bono** services to the Asociación Centro de Rehabilitación para el Adicto [Association for the Rehabilitation of Addicts (ACERPA)], an organization that receives Pro Bono services and was established in San José in 1993. It contributes to solving a prevailing need on the addiction theme in Costa Rica.

• BLP's yearly voluntary efforts

**BLP** provides several voluntary services annually. This work is coordinated and organized according to the Sustainable Development Goals, but also and carried out with our beneficiary organizations. We also develop voluntary services that provide legal training on environmental issues, human rights, and popular legal education. During 2018 and 2019 we held talks on the rights of people with disabilities, environmental protection, immigration issues, women's and children's rights, entrepreneurship, etc.



Some organizations with we have coordinated legal talks are:

**Glasswing** is a non-governmental organization whose mission is to address the main causes and consequences of violence and poverty through education and health programs that empower young people and their communities.

Other organizations we have worked with are **RALRA** and **Bean Voyage**. The first is an organization in charge of supporting people in the process of refuge and the second promotes the economic development of women who work in harvesting and drying coffee.



**GOAL 3**

The human right to health and well-being is enshrined in this goal, which is why its scope is paramount in our company.

Internal BLP programs aimed at achieving SDG 3:

- Health Promotion in BLP

For two consecutive years, we have obtained the **recognition of Great Place to Work** through which our policies and the satisfaction of our staff are recognized with actions that favor the balance between family life and work.

BLP has a **Policy for the prevention and approach of HIV / AIDS** whose main objective is to respond to the challenge of internally managing the impact of HIV / AIDS in the organization, covering issues such as stigma and discrimination, ignorance concerning this thematic, and employee training.

BLP has a first-class **medical office** and team available for its staff, to provide medical attention at the workplace.



## • Policy for granting paternity leave

BLP has implemented a series of measures to ensure that all staff can have a better balance between family life and work, which allows employees to make a more equitable distribution of domestic work in their homes. Some of the measures implemented include flexible working hours, teleworking, paternity leave, and activities to involve the male sector in childcare.

## • Promotion of a culture of gender equality and equity

We have held inspiring talks and film forums to positive masculinity and promote a culture of gender equality and equity. In 2018, we invited Mrs. Laura Chinchilla, the country's former President, to tell us about the challenges she encountered on her way to her professional development until she became the country's highest authority. In 2019, we held a film forum on the movie The North Country with the participation of cinephile Mario Giacomelli and our human rights experts.

## • Flexible time and teleworking policy

At BLP we believe in taking the necessary steps to achieve an optimal balance between life and work. As such, the Firm ensures that lawyers, regardless of gender, find the balance they need, thus understanding the benefit and importance of staying in a productive and creative workplace.

The gender equality measures adopted by BLP have worked to double the participation of women in the workforce, as well as to retain talented professionals and allow our male staff to actively and responsibly assume their role as a parent.

With this in mind, BLP is committed to the continuous implementation of innovative measures to ensure the retention of their talent and the promotion of these people within the Firm.

## • Nursery room

Since 2012, BLP conditioned and equipped space to promote breastfeeding and care for the young boys and girls who accompany their mothers and fathers to work.



## External BLP programs aimed at achieving SDG 3:

### • Banco de Leche

The **Banco de Leche** (Milk Bank) **Foundation** was established as a Pro Bono beneficiary of the Firm. It was established when a former BLP lawyer died a few days after giving birth to her son, leaving him prematurely at risk for being intolerant to formula. The objective of the Foundation is to provide a sufficient supply of breast milk to newborn children who cannot receive that milk from their mother.



• **Asociación Pro neonatos**

BLP through the **Pro Bono** hours supports the **Pro Neonatal Association of the Adolfo Carit Eva Women's Hospital** in the neonatal activities and programs of that center.

• **Fundación para el Desarrollo del Hospital Nacional de Niños**

The Firm also provides **Pro Bono** services to the **Foundation for the Development of the National Children's Hospital** of the country, an institution that promotes and protects the right to health of the youngest population and promotes the full development of the National Children's Hospital for its most efficient performance and clinical excellence.

• **Paniamor Foundation**



It is one of the main NGOs in the field of childhood and adolescence worldwide. BLP provides **Pro Bono** advice to this foundation and thereby enhances its work for the care, protection, and promotion of the human rights of children.



**GOAL 4**

Ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all:

Education will be the main foundation for achieving all of these goals and the key to changing the world. For this reason, the **Pro Bono** contribution and voluntary services activities in this area are carefully considered.

External BLP programs aimed at achieving SDG 4:

• **Asociación Amigos del Aprendizaje**



The Asociación Amigos del Aprendizaje (ADA) [Friends of Learning Association] is a Pro Bono beneficiary organization of BLP that promotes spaces for fostering and training in reading and writing, literacy, aimed at school children. BLP Partner Vivian Liberman is part of its board of directors. This association seeks to improve the educational opportunities of children in public schools in Costa Rica, to enhance their participation as active and creative individuals in the knowledge society.

ADA promotes a paradigm shift in language teaching, reading, and writing, as the basis for educational success.

With ADA we provide an annually voluntary service activity called Tutor for a Day. Through this activity, our legal staff attends a low-income public school to share with children stories that have been written by children their age, who have won the contest "My Favorite Story" held by ADA.



- United World College (UWC)



Costa Rica is one of the headquarters of this important educational institution that imparts the International Baccalaureate to young people from different parts of the world, with a participatory methodology focused on solidarity, social justice, and peace. UWC is a Pro Bono beneficiary organization of our legal services. Also, UWC students visit BLP and do internships in our offices as sustainability actions. BLP partner Uri Weinstok is part of the Board of Directors of this educational institution.

- Lifting Hands



Lifting Hands is a foundation located in Bajo de Los Anonos since 2012, which seeks to improve the quality of life of people living in a context of high social vulnerability. Through corporate and individual volunteering, educational, psychological, health, and community development support have been provided to children, adolescents, and adults, through classes and tutorials taught in classrooms located inside a house with ample vegetation and a healthy environment.



## GOAL 5

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

To achieve this BLP objective, internal and other external projects have been drawn up, such as the following:

### Internal BLP programs aimed at achieving SDG 5:

- Development of gender equality and equity policies



Since 2007 and as a specific measure on the issue of gender equality, the BLP group of partners created in the organization a Commission for Gender Equality and Equity, to establish policies to reduce the gender gap in the firm.

- Development of talent retention policies

BLP, as part of its innovative initiatives, has implemented a talent retention program addressed to its working population, with an emphasis on lawyers, lawyers, and paralegals, the main core of its collaborators. The number of people benefiting from the talent retention policies is 55% and the program encompasses a series of measures that seek that this working population, which is made up of 50% women (legal assistants, associate lawyers, legal managers, and partners) grow professionally and remain in the firm through the years. BLP's team of professionals has 48 female lawyers and 36 male lawyers, evidencing that our firm is attractive to female talent.

This BLP Talent Retention Policy has been particularly sensitive to the retention of female talent as studies show that even though there is parity between men and women, upon graduation from law school women are still a minority in leadership positions in law firms. Even their participation in the legal market, in general, decreases significantly for the number of women who graduated<sup>1</sup>. From the foregoing, BLP has implemented measures for retaining their professional talent, with sensitivity towards female talent, among which are the Flexibility policies of Labor Days; Telework Policy; Scholarship Policy for Higher Studies; Annual Quality Award Policy; Breastfeeding Room Policy and Paternity Leave Policy, all of these previously described in the development of programs designed to achieve Objective 3, which undoubtedly complement the scope of Objective 5.



**ALONSO ARROYO**  
SCHOLARSHIP  
for **UNDERGRADUATE**  
studies

These policies developed and implemented by BLP in its offices have allowed it to be awarded:

**National recognitions:**

BLP has been recognized for its work in the search for gender equality and the improvement of its policies by different organizations such as the **National Institute for Women (INAMU)**, an award previously described, and also by the **National Council of People with Disability (CONAPDIS)**.

**International recognitions:**

The effort made by BLP in its constant work to achieve the objectives set to guarantee gender equality, equity, and inclusion, has been recognized with the following awards:



**International Financial Law Review: Women in Business Law Awards:**

(in the categories of:)

- **Best National Firm for Pro Bono in Latin America**
- **Law Firm of the year Central America**



**Chambers Diversity & Inclusion Awards:**

**“Most Inclusive Firm for LGBT+Lawyers”**, for its innovative inclusion and diversity policies in Central America.



**MOST INCLUSIVE FIRM**  
FOR LGBT+ LAWYERS

<sup>1</sup>In this regard, the study *A Current Glance at Women in the Law (January 2017)* by the American Bar Association shows how in the United States, those who graduate in Law, 47.3% correspond to women and 52.7%. However, the percentage of women in leadership positions within legal firms only reaches 18%. Likewise, the general participation of women in the legal profession reaches barely 36%. The document can be found at: [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/marketing/women/current\\_glance\\_statistics\\_january2017.authcheckdam.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/marketing/women/current_glance_statistics_january2017.authcheckdam.pdf)

BLP was nominated in the following 12 categories (only 2 firms in Latin America obtained that number of nominations).

**Individual Nominations:**

- Gender Diversity Lawyer of the Year - Central America: Vivian Liberman
- Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year: Vivian Liberman
- Future Leader – Gender Diversity: Irene Aguilar
- LGBT+ Equality Lawyer of the Year: Andrea González
- Outstanding Ally Award: Eduardo Calderón

**Firm Nominations:**

- Pro Bono Program of the Year
- Corporate Social Responsibility Program of the Year
- Most Pioneering Firm for Gender Diversity
- Most Inclusive Firm for Minority Lawyers
- Most Inclusive Firm for LGBT+ Lawyers (BLP and FerradaNehme were the only nominees)
- Most Innovative Program for Employee Health and Well-being
- Outstanding Firm for Furthering Diversity and Inclusion

External BLP programs aimed at achieving SDG 5:

• **Inspiringgirls** 

In 2018 BLP considered it important to contribute to gender equality and equity in our communities and founded the international organization **Inspiring Girls** in Costa Rica and Honduras. Through Inspiring Girls and its allies, low-income girls and adolescents are brought, an inspiring message from women who have achieved their professional dreams and personal development, encouraging them to persist in their studies and choose professional careers in all areas, particularly in those that are not usually chosen by women because of the cultural barriers that exist in the world.





**GOAL 7**

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.

BLP provides Pro Bono services to associations and foundations that pursue this goal and work to guarantee access to that energy, such as:

- **Asociación Costarricense de Movilidad Eléctrica (ASOMOVE)**

The general purpose of ASOMOVE (Costa Rican Association for Electrical Mobility) is to promote electric mobility so that society is less dependent on fossil fuels and has the proper recharging infrastructure and incentives.



The Association has a specific purpose for which BLP collaborates with its **Pro Bono** work to achieve the association's goals.

- **Comisión Resiliencia al Cambio Climático de Monteverde (CORCLIMA)**

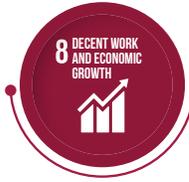
As part of the efforts launched by the firm to promote the use of environmentally sustainable means of transportation, BLP provided **Pro Bono** legal services to the CORCLIMA (Monteverde Climate Change Resilience Commission) in the implementation of the "Monteverde Electric Route" initiative whose purpose is to establish a circuit of chargers for electric cars in the community of Monteverde, Puntarenas.

- **Environmental volunteers**

We have focused our environmental efforts on education programs, which include awareness campaigns, participation in compensation initiatives and external talks to share the culture of recycling; so that our actions are not limited solely to the work of the Firm, but have an extensive effect on the personal lives of our collaborators, their homes and communities.

Additionally, our company is part of the Environmental Alliance of the Municipality of Santa Ana, with which we have carried out voluntary service activities such as cleaning of rivers and beaches, painting schools, work in the collection center of the Municipality, tree planting campaigns in La Libertad Park, etc. We also participated in the tree planting project of La Sabana Metropolitan Park with the Scotiabank, as well as volunteers with the PANI and awareness talks about the Ecological Blue Flag Project.





**GOAL 8**

Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

In this objective BLP encompasses internal and external goals to achieve compliance, therefore it has been developed as follows:

- BLP's internal policies for decent, proper work that prevents discrimination

BLP has established internal policies to protect and satisfy the right to work of every one of its employees. One of the fundamental principles of the work environment at BLP is a rule of non-discrimination toward everyone, defining specific actions both to encourage a diverse team and to promote the widest participation of women in all areas of BLP's legal practice; commissions to analyze the labor integration of people with disabilities and the LGBTI population, etc.

- Blog Humanizando Mentes (Humanizing Minds) and the promotion of the new Labor Procedural Code

The Labor & Employment practice at BLP directs its sustainability actions in two ways. On the one hand, it periodically develops a blog with information on essential labor law issues and also provides training to companies on the scope of the regulations of the Labor Procedural Code that came into force a few months ago.



- Job placement for people with disabilities



Supporting our sister foundation **Yo Puedo ¿y Vos?**, we promote the labor and educational insertion of people with disabilities. This foundation has managed to place more than 553 people with disabilities in more than 40 contracting companies.

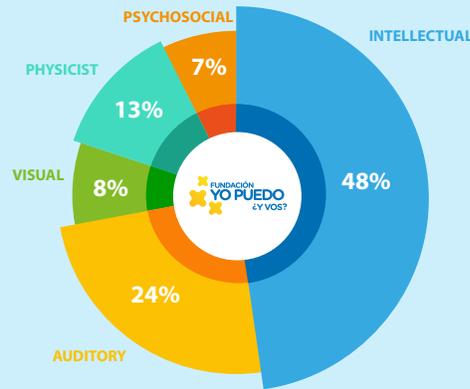


**+40**  
COMPANIES  
CONTRACTING  
persons with disabilities

**+250.000**  
TRAINED  
INDIVIDUALS

**+500**  
JOB POSITIONS  
ADAPTED FOR  
DISABLED PERSONS  
under the foundation's aegis

PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE INCLUDED ACCORDING TO THEIR DISABILITY CONDITION



CONDITION	NUMBER OF PEOPLE
Intellectual	264
Auditory	135
Visual	45
Physicist	70
Psychosocial	40
Total	554

• Policies of non-discrimination and support for diversity

In 2016, BLP signed a commitment at a national level to obtain the **Sello de Equidad de Género (Gender Equity Seal)** (granted by Costa Rica), to entities that demonstrate that they have institutional practice and commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals. Also, in 2018 we were part of the companies that committed to the Principles of Women's Economic Empowerment at the request of the United Nations Development Program.



COMISIÓN SELLO IGUALDAD DE GÉNERO BLP

In 2017, BLP was the only firm in the country that signed the **San José Declaration** with specific obligations for the non-discrimination of LGBT+ people. We ratified this signature in 2019 when we began a process of diagnosis and policy development to prevent discrimination in the workplace for LGBTI.



BLP develops awareness by internal and external actions on non-discrimination for clients and other organizations, through the analysis of gender equity and equality issues. It has also promoted training for non-discrimination of LGBTI people in our work team and employees of our clients and partner organizations. We are part of the **Pride Connection** organization, an initiative of the Business Development Alliance (AED) to generate private sector initiatives on inclusion for the LGBTI+ community.



## GOAL 10

Reduce inequality within and among countries.

In its work of achieving the SDGs, BLP has pursued with great enthusiasm the reduction of inequality in countries and between countries, but to do so, it must begin by reducing inequality among those who inhabit these countries, a reason why it has been considered as essential to work on the differences between human beings and show that we are all equal by the internal policies and external voluntary services we implemented:

### Internal BLP programs aimed at achieving SDG 10:

#### • Policy for the Development of Human Talent and Inclusion: People with disabilities

BLP through its internal policy has implemented a strategy with actions to promote an inclusive work environment. One of the primary purposes is that all our colleagues find an optimal environment for the full fulfillment of their job responsibilities. In this way, specific actions have been established so that those persons with disabilities carry out their work under equal conditions, always taking into account their needs and conditions.

Some of these actions are:

- Awareness process and internal training of the entire Firm on attitudinal and physical accessibility for people with disabilities in the workplace.
- Adaptation of tasks to the capacities and abilities of people with disabilities working at the firm.
- Support for training and studies (flexible working hours, accompaniment by office staff, sponsorship of collaborators, among others) so that people with disabilities in the Firm continue with their academic training.

BLP has focused on supporting employees with disabilities in its central offices while planning to extend inclusion initiatives to our regional offices. BLP is frequently invited to participate in fairs, talks, and national events, to meet the objective of strengthening inclusive contracting in other companies and to publicize the measures, actions and good practices that the Firm has achieved by hiring persons with disabilities.



#### • Pro Bono Challenge Project

In 2018, BLP launched the **Pro Bono Challenge Project** through which a first edition was made requesting BLP legal assistants to form groups and propose Pro Bono projects to the Firm. More than 14 very interesting Pro Bono projects related to BLP's priority work areas were presented and after the written presentation, competitors orally defended their projects.

Three winning projects have the support of BLP to be carried out. With this competition, two important objectives were achieved: (i) promoting the commitment to Pro Bono legal services in the younger BLP population; and (ii) identifying Pro Bono projects with high impact at a national level.



## External BLP programs aimed at achieving SDG 10:

- **Fundación Desarrollo Humano Vital (DEHVI)**

DEHVI (Vital Human Development Foundation) is dedicated to promoting the integral development of early childhood, the family, and the community through various opportunities that impact the quality of life of its participants. BLP has contributed in various aspects with its **Pro Bono** services to this institution.

- **Fundación Voces Vitales Costa Rica (VVCR)**



Vital Voices Foundation Costa Rica is a **Pro Bono** organization that benefits from BLP's legal services to contribute to the promotion of female leadership and enhance the development of women's human rights. It should be noted that this organization is a local chapter of the global organization Vital Voices Global Partnership with representation in more than 146 countries and its motto is the reflection of its mission: "Investing in women transforms the world".



**GOAL 6:** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

**GOAL 11:** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

**GOAL 12:** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

**GOAL 13:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact.

**GOAL 14:** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.

All these objectives are related to each other and BLP addresses them with a comprehensive strategy. We are leaders in environmental management, raising awareness among our people, and adopting measures that have a positive impact on society and the environment.

In environmental management, for the sixth consecutive year, we have received Carbon Neutral certifications from INTECO. We also have the recognition for complying with the Country 2.0 Carbon Neutrality Program in the Carbon Neutral category, the second time we were recognized in the framework of the Pre COP 25 for our effort and ambitious goal of decarbonization of Costa Rica.

## Internal BLP programs aimed at achieving SDG 6, 11, 12, 13 and 14:

- Programa Bandera Azul Ecológica (PBAE):



BLP stands out for the interest and accomplishment of corporate social and environmental responsibility initiatives. This is why since 8 years ago, we have been awarded the **Ecological Blue Flag Program**, Climate Change Category, carrying out different actions that have generated positive environmental effects such as renovations based on the use of natural light, changes and preventive maintenance to all vehicles that are part of the firm's fleet, and an increase in the variety of environmentally friendly cleaning products to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Additionally, BLP as a member of the Environmental Alliance of Public and Private Companies of the Municipality of Santa Ana has collaborated with more than 15 companies in the implementation of the Ecological Blue Flag Program, accompanying them in the process through meetings and a cycle of monthly talks in topics such as rational use of water, wastewater treatment, energy saving in homes and companies, comprehensive waste management, sustainable purchases, preventive maintenance of air conditioners.

Since participation in the Ecological Blue Flag Program began, the commitment of our team to obtain the expected results has been solidified. In this sense, the projects have had lines of action located in the BLP offices, but with transversal effects that have reached households. Water purifiers directly connected to drinking water pipes and low-consumption sanitary ware were installed in the office. To protect the water resource, environmentally friendly or biodegradable products for cleaning, such as the ECOCLEAN brand were purchased.

BLP in its voluntary service work has given awareness talks about the Ecological Blue Flag Project at the New Horizon Christian School in Ciudad Colón, to the Association of Friends of Learning (ADA), and to the community in the development of this important environmental project.

- Program to decrease the use of paper and promote its reuse

This is one of the most successful projects in reducing the use of paper, through a campaign that promotes its reuse. With this program, annual paper consumption has been reduced by 70%. We have the support of our colleague Giovanni Morales, who is part of our inclusion program and who has already been at the Firm for 8 years. Picking up the paper from each of the offices every day, he selects it and distributes it again in the printers.

- Program to reduce electricity and fossil fuel use

These programs are developed through the installation of the NEST thermostats to reduce the electricity consumption of the air conditioners, renewal of the Firm's computer equipment, as well as the implementation of the Telework Policy (since 2017), achieving the benefits of energy-saving.

In 2014, we implemented the Fleet-Magic system, a comprehensive satellite control mechanism for vehicle fleets where the consumption of hydrocarbons, fuels, and oils is managed automatically. This system allows us to effectively create courier routes, generating exact fuel control consumption and thus a more efficient use of it.

## External BLP programs aimed at achieving SDG 6, 11, 12, 13 and 14:

- Contribution to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment

During 2019 BLP contributed to Pro Bono legal research with its team in Honduras and Costa Rica on the human right to a healthy environment. This investigation was based on the regulations and jurisprudence on this subject at the request of the Clifford Chance law firm and with it, we also contributed to the report presented by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, David Boyd.

- Agua Tica



Agua Tica is part of the **Latin American Alliance of Water Funds** and is the first public-private and civil society water fund in Costa Rica to carry out, foster and promote activities aimed at protecting and increasing capacity sustainable management of water resources sources, to ensure the quantity and quality of water for human consumption and production in the Greater Metropolitan Area of San José, Costa Rica.

This water fund is an innovative model of actions scientifically focused on regulating the water regime through erosion control on slopes, safeguarding the quality of surface water in recharge areas and captured springs, taking into account the vulnerability water in the face of climate change.

BLP is a founding partner of this initiative together with AyA, Coca-Cola FEMSA, FEMSA Foundation, CRUSA Foundation, Dirección de Aguas, ESPH, FIFCO, FUNDECOR, UNAGUAS, The Nature Conservancy, Banco Nacional, UNA, and UNA-SIL.

In 2019, Agua Tica received recognition as one of the five projects designated in the Water, Food and Energy Security category, during the session "Expo 2020 Dubai-Spotlighting SDG Action Solutions", held at the United Nations in New York. Those in charge of the selection highlighted the potential of Agua Tica to be adapted, replicated, and scaled to achieve a greater global impact.

- ECOLONES Initiative



This public-private alliance created to comply with solid waste management, through the creation of a new currency that rewards the commitment to recycling, seeks to raise the awareness of people to recycle through a virtual economic incentive that may be cashed. BLP is part of this initiative and carries out exchanges with a value that generates savings for the company in the application of shared corporate responsibility.

- Programa Pro Parques y Alianza de Santa Ana

As part of this initiative where environmental issues are developed, BLP serves as a center for collecting plastic lids so that they can be reused and converted into access ramps to beaches and recreation centers for people with disabilities. In 2019 BLP managed to deliver a total of 53 kilos of plastic lids allocated for this initiative that promotes the access of people with disabilities and their enjoyment of the right to recreation and culture.

## • Volunteer service programs in environmental management

BLP Costa Rica this year initiated actions signaling to other BLP offices in the region to begin mitigation processes for environmental damage to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and demonstrate this effort through regional environmental certifications. There is already a network in place in such offices for designing and implementing environmental management actions.

In relation to environmental management, more than 8 volunteer activities have been held, including coordinating with different companies. Within these programs, the following can be listed:

- Cleaning of beaches, rivers, and planting of trees.
- Support with Pro Bono services to non-governmental organizations working on the subject such as Marviva and Friends of Isla del Coco.
- Collection of plastic container lids.



Recognitions granted to BLP in its work to achieve these objectives:

## • Blue Flag, Carbon Neutral and Country 2.0 Carbon Neutrality Program Certifications

For its environmental management BLP has been certified as **Carbon Neutral** by the Institute of Technical Standards of Costa Rica (INTECO) for the sixth consecutive year. Recognition was also received from the Climate Change Directorate (DCC) of the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE) for complying with the **Country 2.0 Carbon Neutrality Program** in the Carbon Neutral category, the second time BLP was recognized in the framework of PreCOP 25, in the effort and ambitious goal of decarbonization in Costa Rica.



## • PRECOP Recognition and Business Commitment to Increase Climate Ambition

BLP is a pioneer in various actions to mitigate ecological damage. As a sign of this effort aimed at contributing to the environment, the Costa Rican government granted BLP recognition in PRECOP. The firm has signed along with a group of companies a commitment to work to mitigate climate change.

The Business Commitment to Increase Climate Ambition was also assumed jointly with the Ministry of Environment and Energy, the Business Alliance for Development, with which the commitment was acquired to contribute with leaders and policymakers to strengthen and improve ambition of the Costa Rican contribution to this global goal.



## GOAL 16

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

BLP's actions to achieve this objective are directed through the following policies and actions:

### • Anticorruption Policy

BLP, as a regional company, is committed to providing its services in compliance with the highest ethical and legal standards. Aware of the international requirements in this matter, BLP has developed the following:

- 1 Regional Anti-Corruption Policy:** Its purpose is to implement a regional code and ethics policy to reinforce the standards and principles by which the conduct of the professionals that comprise it must be governed.
- 2 Annual Training:** BLP trains all its employees in the region on anti-corruption issues, both with respect to the applicable national and worldwide legislation, and the firm's internal policy.
- 3 Annual Certifications:** All staff members in the region subscribe once a year a certification in which they agree to comply and declare that they have complied with the applicable legislation and the internal policy on corruption.

This project is very useful for BLP internally, and for clients who witness the commitment to provide services under the highest ethical standards.

### • Human Rights, Business and Development Practice

In 2018 BLP established the legal practice of Human Rights, Business and Development, using as background the principles of the Guide of the International Bar Association. The practice offers our clients the possibility of examining processes, business policies, and managerial decisions from the perspective of international protection of human rights.

The firm has answered queries related to issues of diversity, accessibility, educational inclusion, gender equity, non-discrimination, among others, arising from cases related to various legal practices including banking, labor law, administrative procedures, and others). To this end, BLP makes available to its clients a highly qualified work team on corporate issues, litigation, public international law, human rights, sustainability, and social development. Training and workshops have also been held for companies and organizations on these topics.

During that same year, this practice area provided a consultancy to UNICEF Panama office to elaborate and develop a training process for the prevention of commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents focused on the tourism sector in Panama. This program was developed in Panama City, Coclé, Chiriquí, and Bocas del Toro in coordination with the Panamanian Hotel Association (APATEL).



## • Support in migratory processes

As part of BLP's efforts to achieve a fairer and more inclusive society, the firm's Department of Global Mobility & Relocation has assumed the legal direction of multiple migratory processes completely free of charge, mainly helping people with irregular immigration status and with few economic resources. This legal advice addresses people regularizing their legal status so that they can become part of the state structure.

## • Alliance with Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)

The alliance between BLP and HIAS consists of participating and providing training to both the work team of this organization and the users of its services to offer basic tools of the national and international legislation that protects refugees.

In support of HIAS, the BLP Department of Global Mobility & Relocation assists certain refugee processes on a **Pro Bono** basis. The objective is to help people that have had to flee their country of origin for reasons of race, sex, religion, nationality, social group, or political opinion and finding themselves in a vulnerable situation, have requested protection from the Costa Rican State.



### GOAL 17

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

The partners and directors of BLP volunteer on the boards of organizations with relevant actions on work-related issues. The firm recognizes that it is necessary to make and strengthen alliances with institutions and non-governmental organizations to achieve the common objective of sustainable development in all the communities where it has activities.

We want to highlight that BLP was part of the creative board of the Fundación Pro Bono España during 2019.

### BLP team members participate in organizations that promote development in the region.

**Eduardo Calderón**, who was President of the Costa Rican Bar Association, currently chairs the Fundación Yo Puedo ¿y Vos? and is part of the Board of Directors of the Pro Hospital de Niños Foundation.

**Adriana Castro** is the founder and executive director of Fundación de Leche Humana Catalina Vega, which works for the rights of premature babies admitted to hospitals, guaranteeing facilities for attachment and access to breast milk. She is also the director of the Latin American Forum of the International Bar Association as well as of the Young Lawyers Committee of that organization.

**Luis Chacón**, a BLP partner, is the Controller of the Costa Rican Institute of Fiscal Studies ICEF and Prosecutor of the International Fiscal Association IFA, Costa Rica Chapter.

**Andrea González** is part of the Sexual Diversity Commission of the Costa Rican Bar Association.

**Luis Castro** is part of the Board of Directors of Yo Emprendedor.

**Neftalí Garro** is a Controller of the Italo-Costa Rican Chamber of Industry and Commerce; legal advisor and coordinator of the Legal Committee of the Association of Private Insurers (AAP). There can only be insurers on the committee but he participates in the sessions in that condition. He is also the president of the Board of Directors of the Costa Rican Association of Insurance Law and Bonds (ACODES), Costa Rica chapter of the International Association of Insurance Law (AIDA). He is a member of the board of directors of the INTERLAW law firm network, Chair of LatAm, and Chairman of the board of directors of the Insuralex insurance law firm network, of which BLP is the only member in Costa Rica. He is also the sole male officer of the IBA's Women Lawyers' Interest Group.

**Randall González** is President of the Costa Rican Association of Human Resource Managers (ACGRH) and is Director of Labor Relations for Latin America of the Inter-American Federation of Human Management Associations (FIDAGH).

**David Gutiérrez**, is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Pro Bono Spain Foundation, honorary founder of the Omar Dengo Foundation, honorary founder and President Emeritus of the CRUSA Foundation.

**Luis Hernández** is Vice President of the Banking Commission of the International Chamber of Commerce-Costa Rica Chapter.

**Anneth Jiménez** is the coordinator of the Pro Bono Commission of the Bar Association. In May 2018, she coordinated a workshop to exchange Pro Bono good work practices. This activity commemorated the 10th Anniversary of the entry into force of the Pro Bono Work Declaration of the American Continent and the signing of the Pro Bono Declaration for Refugees and People in Need of International Protection.

**Ronald Lachner** is part of the Board of Directors of the Chamber of Exporters of Costa Rica (CADEXCO), as well as the Board of Directors of the Association of Free Zones of Costa Rica (AZOFRAS).

**Vivian Liberman**, is part of the Boards of Directors of the Association of Development Companies (AED) -which is also a Pro Bono beneficiary organization of BLP-, the National Council of Corporate Responsibility, and the Friends of Learning Foundation. She is also part of the Executive Committee of Women in the Profession of the Vance Center for Latin America and the Committee on Civil and Economic Rights of the Vance Center. Vivian was the founder and president of the Inspiring Girls Costa Rica Foundation.

**Karla Aguilar** is the founder of the Inspiring Girls Foundation in Honduras. She is also part of the Energy Committee of COHEP and AMCHAM in Honduras.

**Harold Lantan** since 2004, has been a member of the Board of Directors of the Salesiana Salvador del Mundo Foundation (FUSALMO), which works on technology education for disadvantaged children and youth in high-risk areas.

**Andrés López** is Controller of the Costa Rican Chamber of Commerce and is a member of the Chamber's Commission of Women Entrepreneurs.

**Irene Aguilar** is part of the Board of Directors of the Fundación Yo Puedo ¿y Vos? and Inspiring Girls Foundation. She is also a Controller for Asormari.

Furthermore, BLP has extensive experience and has developed a legal practice called *International Trade*, which encourages a universal multilateral trading system, based on open and fair rules in the framework of the WTO, which is vital for the economic and human development of our societies.

BLP lawyers are regularly consulted on various legal issues and issues of national interest, publishing articles in the press and participating in round tables and media interviews.

**Luis Ortiz** is a full member of the National Council of Private Higher Education; vice president of the Iberoamerican Association for Regulatory Studies; co-coordinator of the Administrative Law Commission of the Costa Rican Bar Association; legal advisor to the Board of Directors of the Chamber of Banks and Financial Institutions of Costa Rica. In addition, he held the position of prosecutor of the Investment Fund Chamber for two consecutive periods. He is also a member of the Costa Rican Institute of Scientific Procedural Law, the Iberoamerican Association of Energy Law and the Center for Studies of Administrative, Environmental and Urban Planning (CEDAU).

**Adolfo Pineda** is President of Casa Alianza in Honduras.

**Andrew Merren, Jorge Brizuela, Lillian López** and **Fernando Gómez** are founding members and part of the Board of Directors of IFA Internacional (International Fiscal Association) in Honduras.

**Luis Ruiz** is a member of the Board of Directors of the Guatemalan Chamber of Intellectual Property.

**Mauricio Salas** has chaired since 2014 the Administrative Council of the International Center for Conciliation and Arbitration (CICA-AMCHAM) and is Controller of the Costa Rica Forever Association.

**Rodolfo Salazar** is a Member of the Board of Directors of the Center for the Defense of the Constitution (CEDECON) in Guatemala, Secretary of the Board of Directors of the Asociación Civil Salud Digna (an association that carries out activities related to bringing health to vulnerable areas of Guatemala City), is President of the Board of Directors of the Civil Association Young Alliance NGO, which implements development projects in children and youth in vulnerable areas, and is a Rotarian and was President of the Rotary Club of Valle de Guatemala.

**Juan Carlos Tristán** is president of the Anti-Corruption Commission - Costa Rica Chapter of the International Chamber of Commerce. In addition, he is a member of the Ibero-American Group of Compliance Lawyers, and representative of Costa Rica in the Anti-Corruption Commission of the International Association of Lawyers (IBA). He is also a founding member of the Costa Rica chapter of the World Compliance Association.

**Ximena Martín**, is part of the Board of Directors of the Costa Rican Bar Association.

**PRO BONO BENEFICIARIES**

# 5 Description of sustainability actions in Central America.

## EL SALVADOR



During 2019 in El Salvador we supported Contextos organization with **Pro Bono** work that help in the development of critical thinking skills and work with high-risk children and youth. We have also supported the Saint Francis Ministries that carry out community development to influence the human development of a high-risk community in El Salvador.

We have provided legal advice to the creation of the NGO Ambulance of Desire that grants wishes to seriously ill people. Pro bono support was provided to the organization Entrepreneurs of the World, which help entrepreneurs and start-ups in their planning and launch process. Pro Bono support was provided for the constitution of the NGO Peace2World that conducts meetings of groups in situations of vulnerability to generate spaces for communication and understanding, as well as that of the Justice and Gender Foundation (FUJUSGEN) whose main objective is to promote gender equality. It was first established in Costa Rica but later was also established in El Salvador.

BLP El Salvador's office supplied Pro Bono work in the preparation of the draft law "Venture Capital Companies", which aims to encourage national and foreign investors through tax benefits to invest in companies of young entrepreneurs in computing, robotics, mechatronics, and green industry. The bill was recently presented to deputies from all political factions for discussion.

## HONDURAS



During 2019, in Honduras, we supported the projects of the Vance Center and other organizations on a **Pro Bono** basis. We highlight the Pro Bono help we provided in the protection of the human rights of an LGBTI person who was persecuted in that country because of his sexual orientation.

BLP also supported various projects related to legal and immigration procedures for families with underage children in the process of repatriation to the United States.

In Honduras, several BLP lawyers have been part of the "Union of Women Lawyers" group since 2016, in which they carry out empowerment and leadership activities promoting the role models of Honduran women. In this Union, philanthropic, mentoring activities have been developed, as well as the preparation of documents, such as the Doing Business guide that will be presented at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tegucigalpa.

## NICARAGUA



In Nicaragua, during 2019 an agreement was signed with **Glasswing** to assist them in various ways in their projects. One of these collaborations was to support them in the legal procedures for authorization and issuance of public deeds of permits so that 30 minors participate with the **Glasswing Foundation** in a Central American Meeting in Honduras to share experiences in education.

Also, in Nicaragua within the framework of the Unreal Educational Campaign created by the **International Trademark Association (INTA)** ([www.inta.org/unrealcampaign](http://www.inta.org/unrealcampaign)), BLP carried out in collaboration with the Central American University a talk addressed to students between 18 and 23 years, focused on promoting students' interest in Intellectual Property.

In Nicaragua, BLP also supported the preparation of the local chapter of the Central American Data Protection Study coordinated under the auspices of the **Panamanian Institute of Law and New Technologies (IPANDETEC)**. Likewise, BLP together with IPANDETEC held a talk addressed to different telecommunication companies, student sectors and users about the main results of the study carried out.

In 2019, we also provided service to the **DataGuidance** platform with a review of the data protection regulations in Nicaragua for the financial markets. This review aims to provide businessmen and users in general with a practical guide to the Nicaraguan legal framework on this topic.

Through the Regional Financial Education and Health Program (EySF) of **BAC Credomatic**, on October 8, 2019, a Financial Talk was held for **BLP** and **RE-SOLVE** collaborators in Nicaragua to provide them with tools to improve their financial health and adopt sustainable lifestyles. Topics such as managing a personal budget, implementing responsible consumption habits, inappropriate use of financial products, and over-indebtedness were addressed.

## GUATEMALA



Our headquarters in Guatemala has started the environmental sustainability strategy to establish the baseline of consumption and start with processes to reduce the consumption of water, electricity, and paper, to obtain the environmental license and qualify to obtain the certification of Green Office in this country.

Furthermore, we have contributed **Pro Bono** to national projects promoted by the Vance Center.

## 6 Its course / North / Future plans

BLP is proud to have celebrated in 2018 a decade of **Pro Bono** work promoted and led by the BLP Foundation. As an important part of a society committed to achieving these goals, BLP will continue to work with great determination on the goals set by the international community, and on its scale, BLP will continue to accumulate achievements now at a regional level, guided by the objective of deepening the scope of the Sustainable Development Goals with which we have made a major commitment.

We will continue to strive for recognition as a company that promotes gender equality, sustainable human development, and the development of actions for the full inclusion of diversity in all our practice areas.