

to the regional report on maturity (IDB and OAS, 2020) and the National Cyber Security Index (NCSI)¹¹. In this index, El Salvador ranks 119th out of 176, compared to Guatemala, which ranks 118th and Honduras 122nd, while Costa Rica and Panama outweigh the region in step 77th and 75th respectively.

Cyber threats in El Salvador are on the rise. According to a report by Fortinet (2023)¹² with data from FortiGuard Labs, El Salvador experienced 24 million cyber-attacks attempts during the first quarter of 2023. Threats continue to grow and evolve not only in the country but at a general level. The Latin American and Caribbean region suffered more than 360 billion cyber-attacks attempts in 2022. According to the same report, cybercriminals often use malicious code distribution through *phishing* attacks¹³ and corrupt *office* documents to launch attacks, especially denial of services and *ransomware*¹⁴. According to internal Checkpoint data, on a weekly basis organizations (mainly private) in El Salvador are under attack 964 times, 3.7 % of which are affected by crypto miner and 6.4 % by ransomware compared to an overall average of 2.3 % and 4.0 % respectively. In order to measure the cost of a data leak at company level, IBM Security stated¹⁵ in its 2023 report that the health sector has the highest overall cost for data breaches, reaching \$10.93 million in 2023, followed by the financial sector with \$5.9 million, pharmaceuticals with \$4.82 million, energy with \$4.78 million and the industrial sector with \$4.73 million; while an infringement in LAC rose from an impact of \$2.8 million in 2022 to \$3.69 million in 2023, on average.

IDB Lab Operation: “Promoting cybersecurity and youth employment in Panama”. Since 2022 BID Lab has been implementing an operation with NUMU Corporation in Panama that aims to develop skills and create cybersecurity-related jobs, with an emphasis on improving women’s participation in the sector and expanding access to affordable cybersecurity services for SME businesses. This operation has inspired the project in El Salvador, given its progress and results, including: (I) Establishment and launch of a center of excellence for cybersecurity services with European standards and norms; (II) more than 290¹⁶ certified young people in cybersecurity, with 108 women, of these 237 were identified at the beginning of the training process as unemployed¹⁷ and 25 as informally employed; and (iii) the development of a career opportunity fair with the participation of 12 companies between banks, telecommunications providers, cybersecurity and logistics companies, from which 120 young people in cybersecurity courses were contacted through short interviews and networking, thereby facilitating job supply and demand for their employability. Many of the elements that this operation has progressed, and the learning will be used to accelerate innovation and impact in the El Salvador project (Cyberlamarr). Also, the project will consider EU cybersecurity standards and norms as done in Panama project with IDB Lab.

Over the past years, the IDB has undertaken significant efforts to support cybersecurity in the LAC region, thereby accumulating valuable experience in this area. Specifically, experience has been gained executing the projects “Improving Human Resources Capacity in Cybersecurity” (ATN/CF-15598-RG), which has been in execution since 2016 with support from the Government of Israel; and “Strengthening Cybersecurity Capacity in LAC” executed since 2021. In addition, the Bank has technical and administrative expertise in the execution of Research and Dissemination projects, in particular through its Innovation and Citizen Services Division. Senior Lead Specialists of this division are part of the design and implementation team of this project.

Target population and characteristics. The primary beneficiaries (rights holders) of this project will be young people between 18 and 29 years old, although there will not be any discrimination of age if there are interested older people, with different degrees of university education or training programmes with a technical profile, with the minimum requirement of having completed secondary school. It is important to note that efforts will be made

¹¹ This index measures what a country is so prepared in terms of legislation and capacity to respond to a threat. It is produced on the basis of public information and constantly updated by e-Governance Academy (eGA), in cooperation with the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

¹² [Threat landscape in El Salvador](#), Fortinet 2023.

¹³ Phishing attacks are fraudulent emails, text messages, phone calls or websites designed to deceive users to download malicious software or *malware*, share confidential information or personal data (e.g. social security and credit card numbers, bank account numbers, login credentials) or other actions that expose your organisations. Source: [IBM](#), 2024.

¹⁴ Rescue malware, or ransomware, is a type of malware that prevents users from accessing their system or personal files and requires payment of a ransomware in order to be able to access them again. The first ransomware variants were created at the end of the 80s, and payment was to be made by post. Today ransomware creators are calling for payment to be made using cryptocurrencies or credit cards. Source: [Malwarebytes](#), 2024

¹⁵ <https://www.ponemon.org/>

¹⁶ Some 10% of the project beneficiaries in Panama come from the interior of the country, where access to job opportunities is more limited and average salaries are lower compared to Panama City. According to IDB data (Panama Country Strategy 2021-2024, IDB Group), there is a significant disparity in salaries between urban and rural areas, which aggravates the situation of these young people from the interior who have less access to well-paying jobs. This disparity further accentuates the economic precariousness of young people from these areas.

¹⁷ This places them in a situation of economic dependence on their parents or guardians, even though they are of legal age. Source: NUMU Corp, May 2025.