

Leadership in Action Reflection

Mexico City, July 4th to August 15th, 2025

Made Possible Thanks to

**The Laidlaw Foundation,
Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne,
and Makesense Americas.**

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August 25th, 2025

42 days, 20,000 kilometers

The Beginning

Given my background and the experiences that shaped who I am today, I made a promise never to shy away from challenging environments. I spent my last two years of high school at an international school in Israel—a school that fostered conflict resolution and mutual understanding, a mission often seen as especially difficult in that part of the world.

Before starting my LiA experience, I already knew it would be an invaluable opportunity to continue what I had begun years ago. And so, I made the most of it.

This report is my attempt to share how the six weeks I spent in Mexico City, working alongside determined and driven people, enriched my toolkit and brought me one step closer to the impact I aspire to have in this world.

General Overview

During my stay in Mexico City as part of the central LiA project with `makesense_americas`, I worked alongside three other Laidlaw scholars in collaboration with **Rennueva**, a plastic and paper recycling organization based in the city. As the largest urban area in North America, Mexico City generates one of the highest and least sustainable levels of waste on the continent, making Rennueva's mission particularly impactful.



Picture 1 – The three scholars and I on our first visit to Rennueva.

Over the course of six weeks, our team focused on improving Rennueva's digital platform, with the goal of making it more interactive, user-friendly, and informative. Together with another scholar, I was responsible for coding the website and implementing the designs provided by our design-focused teammates. In addition, we coordinated

a group of five local volunteers who supported us throughout the project.

Beyond our immediate team, we were part of a wider cohort of 15 Laidlaw scholars from the United Kingdom, the United States, and Hong Kong. Based on our backgrounds and interests, we were distributed across four local organizations tackling rampant issues in Mexico, primarily related to climate change and gender-based violence.

Challenges

Unexpectedly for me, Mexico City—which I had imagined as a sunny haven—turned out to be far rainier than I anticipated. What was less surprising, however, was the language barrier. Although I studied Spanish for two years in high school, I had never lived for such an extended period in a country where I spoke the language only at a basic level. Since English is not widely spoken in Mexico, the situation initially felt like an insurmountable challenge. Yet, it quickly became an invaluable opportunity to revive and strengthen my Spanish. After six weeks, I can confidently say I am able to handle most day-to-day conversations in the language.

Our project itself also came with challenges. We were a group of four scholars, split into two pairs working on different but interdependent tasks. With little understanding of each other's work, the setup created moments of inefficiency. In the first few days, progress was slow, and collaboration was limited. With time, we got to know each other better. Those long meetings put us on the same page and gave us the necessary updates about each other's tasks which made the group effort more unified. Eventually, this structure pushed us to communicate more effectively, clarify our responsibilities, and rely on one another in a way that ultimately strengthened the outcome of our work.

Some challenges arose from internal discussions within the larger group of scholars. While always respectful and well-mannered, these conversations were particularly enriching. I not only gained new insights into the topics themselves but also practiced engaging in sensitive discussions with people whose experiences and perspectives differ greatly from my own.

Such discussions are often avoided because they can feel “too risky,” but I believe the greatest learning happens when we step outside our comfort zone and allow our firmly held beliefs to be challenged. For me, that is what makes these conversations just as important as they are difficult.

Our Project

Our team consisted of four Laidlaw scholars. From the outset, the project was not straightforward. The final objective was unclear at first, and much of our early work was spent asking questions, researching the context, and refining the problem we wanted to address. Through persistence and collaboration, we gradually clarified our path and defined a concrete set of deliverables that aligned with Rennueva’s mission.

After working closely with Rennueva to define a clear objective, we set our goal on showcasing the carbon dioxide emissions mitigated by each user directly on their personal account page within Rennueva’s web platform. Rennueva sources its plastic from private citizens as well as corporate companies. We believed that showing users the amount of carbon emissions they directly helped reduce would serve as a motivating factor, encouraging increased participation in plastic donations.

We divided into two subgroups to maximize efficiency. Two of our fellow scholars in the team focused on design, research, and coordination with both Rennueva’s staff and the volunteers who supported our project. Meanwhile, the third scholar and I concentrated on the technical implementation, integrating the new designs into the website and ensuring their functionality. Over six weeks, our collaboration went far beyond the initial scope of the project. Together, we introduced a fresh layout and added a variety of interactive elements, such as leaderboards, progress trackers, and dynamic graphics. These features were designed not only to improve user experience but also to inspire greater participation in recycling and deepen engagement with Rennueva’s donors.



CERRAR SESIÓN

El Top de Rennueva 🏆

Perfil	Rango	Nombre	Plástico reciclado (kg)	Emisiones de carbono evitadas (kg)
	1	Aaa	16.5	67
	2	Bbb	14.3	58
	3	Ccc	9.2	37
	4	Ddd	6.1	24

SIGUE MI TRAYECTORIA ↗

Tu Progreso ↗

Impacto de la huella de carbono 🌱

Ahorrate

0,2

kg de CO₂

Conducir

1

km con un coche de gasolina

Árbol de incentivos 🌳

¡Completamos juntos este bosque!



MI PROGRESO 🌱



CERRAR SESIÓN

Solicitudes de recolección

SOLICITAR RECOLECCIÓN

ID	Fecha de creación	Fecha de estimada de recolección	Estado	Cancelar
781	7/28/2025	---	Solicitada	CANCELAR
782	7/28/2025	7/31/2025	Recolectada	CANCELAR

Dirección

EDITAR

Mapa de dirección con campos de entrada:

- Calle:
- Número exterior:
- Número interior:
- Colonia:
- Código postal:
- Ciudad:
- Estado:



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La Página de Rennueva

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ENVIAR ➡

Set of Pictures 1 – Some screenshots taken from Rennueva’s new platform that we designed and implemented..



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Perfil de usuario

Nombre

Apellidos

RFC

Correo electrónico

Teléfono

The project required us to apply technical expertise, adopt design thinking approaches, manage volunteers, and delegate effectively across our team. We encountered challenges, especially in the beginning, but through teamwork and open communication, we were able to overcome them and even deliver results that exceeded the original scope.

Reflection and Personal Growth

Being able to reflect on our six-week journey in Mexico City, this experience has been truly rewarding and enjoyable. Working directly with Rennueva and knowing that our efforts were making a tangible positive impact on the environment was deeply fulfilling. Beyond the technical skills I applied and developed—such as web development, design implementation, and project coordination—I gained invaluable experience in teamwork, communication, and collaboration. Navigating challenges, clarifying objectives, and coordinating with both my fellow scholars and Rennueva’s team strengthened my ability to lead within a team setting.

This project also pushed me to step outside my comfort zone in meaningful ways. Engaging in sensitive discussions with scholars from diverse backgrounds, many of whom had different perspectives and experiences, taught me the importance of respectful dialogue, active listening, and considering multiple viewpoints. I also had the opportunity to immerse myself in Mexican culture, practice my Spanish, and navigate daily life in a city very different from my own—skills that enhanced my independence, confidence, and cultural awareness.

Overall, this experience has left a lasting impact on both my personal and professional growth. I leave Mexico City not only with a strengthened skill set and meaningful contributions to Rennueva's mission but also with cherished memories of teamwork, cultural exploration, and shared learning that will continue to shape my approach to future projects and challenges.