

Supporting the strengthening of government institutions and civil society capacities to improve the protection of vulnerable migrants in transit



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



Fast Facts

Country: Mexico

Duration: January 2013 to September 2015

Implementing UN Agencies: IOM; UNDP; UNFPA; UNHCR; UNODC

Other Implementing Partners: Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Interior; Commission of Aid to Refugees; National Migration Institute; migrant shelters; CSOs

Budget: \$3,121,708

Key Words: Migrants; health; empowerment; capacity-building; personal security

BACKGROUND

Over the past 15 years, states in the southern border region of Mexico have become an important transit destination for thousands of irregular migrants. Most travel from Central America driven by persistent poverty, food insecurity, natural disasters and violence in their home countries. On their journey, these migrants often face extreme hardship and physical

insecurity as they travel with limited access to basic shelter and essential social services. Many fall victim to organized criminal groups who prey on their vulnerable situation. Instances of violence, sexual abuse, kidnapping and human trafficking can occur, underlining the importance of comprehensive measures to promote safety.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary goal of the programme is to improve the human security of migrants in transit through southern Mexico. This is to be achieved by building the capacity of government institutions and civil society organizations to provide essential services, while promoting peaceful coexistence between migrants and host communities. To this end, the programme is centered around three objectives: (i) strengthening the capacities of federal and state government institutions to enhance the effectiveness of their assistance to

migrants in transit; (ii) improving the capacities of civil society organizations, specifically shelters, to provide improved assistance to migrants in transit, especially vulnerable migrants and potential refugees; and (iii) through dialogue on the rights of migrants and cultural events, promoting greater engagement with host communities, thereby breaking barriers and reducing fears and prejudice of migrants by the local population.

BENEFICIARIES

The programme benefits approximately 300,000 vulnerable migrants in the states of Chiapas, Oaxaca and Tabasco. At the same time, close to 800 federal and state government officials and 14 migrant shelters

and civil society organizations are directly engaged through capacity-building activities. Host communities living on migrant routes also benefit from improved services and social cohesion.



APPLYING THE HUMAN SECURITY APPROACH

The unique situation of people on the move presents a significant challenge in providing solutions that comprehensively respond to the complex and multi-faceted insecurities faced by these groups. Through consultation with civil society organizations and working closely with migrants in southern Mexico as well as relevant national and local government authorities, human security was identified as the most effective tool to strengthen and consolidate on-going efforts. By combining the protection and empowerment needs of vulnerable migrants, the human security approach provides the needed mechanisms to integrate the work of government institutions responsible for the protection of migrants with civil society organizations attending to their basic needs. Together such a comprehensive approach bolsters the capacity of federal and state government institutions as well as civil society organizations to provide the essential services needed to transit migrants and to equip vulnerable migrants with the skills and the knowledge needed to migrate in a dignified and secure manner.

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the programme promotes training on standardized operating procedures for the identification, assistance

and referral of vulnerable migrants; supports greater sensitization and training on the health needs of transit migrants, especially sexual and reproductive health; and strengthens improvements to the existing shelters available to vulnerable migrants. Meanwhile, as knowledge is the most effective way to empower transit migrants, the programme acts as a vital source of information on security issues, legal entitlements and available shelter and support. At the same time, through dialogue and joint cultural events, receiving communities will be engaged in activities that can help foster peaceful co-existence and garner greater understanding of the rights of migrants in transit.

Lastly, migratory challenges require multi-sectoral and integrated actions by all actors responsible for ensuring a more people-centred response to the protection of vulnerable migrants. The programme is therefore based on a participatory framework that brings the United Nations system together with the local government departments, relevant national ministries and civil society organizations. Such an approach is critical in providing a sustained level of comprehensive assistance to ensure the survival and dignity of vulnerable migrants.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

(i) The programme successfully integrated human security principles into Mexico's Special Migration Programme, shifting the focus from traditional security measures to a people-centered approach. This policy emphasizes migrant rights and empowerment, addressing migrants' vulnerabilities to foster sustainable development while ensuring migration management aligns with broader goals, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

(ii) A network of migrant shelters was established, improving emergency response and fostering dialogue between shelters and government institutions. Thirty-three shelters received technical assistance, and 17 shelters were provided with essential supplies. Certification programmes and workshops helped shelter staff address human trafficking and human rights violations, enhancing their ability to support migrants effectively.

(iii) Over 800 federal and state officials were trained in protecting migrant children and addressing migration issues. Collaboration between authorities, civil society organizations, and UN agencies improved coordination and streamlined interventions, making responses to migration challenges more efficient. This led to the capacity building of government institutions, enabling better protection and support for migrants.

(iv) The programme also addressed the health needs of migrants, particularly their sexual and reproductive health. Health professionals received certification,

and a new information system was created to track and respond to health issues more effectively. The distribution of emergency kits and roll out of awareness campaigns reinforced health rights, ensuring more equitable access to care.

(v) Efforts to improve social cohesion involved local host communities, encouraging collaboration with migrants through participatory activities such as sports and community clean-ups. A communications campaign raised awareness about migrants' rights, promoting understanding and tolerance, and reducing misconceptions.