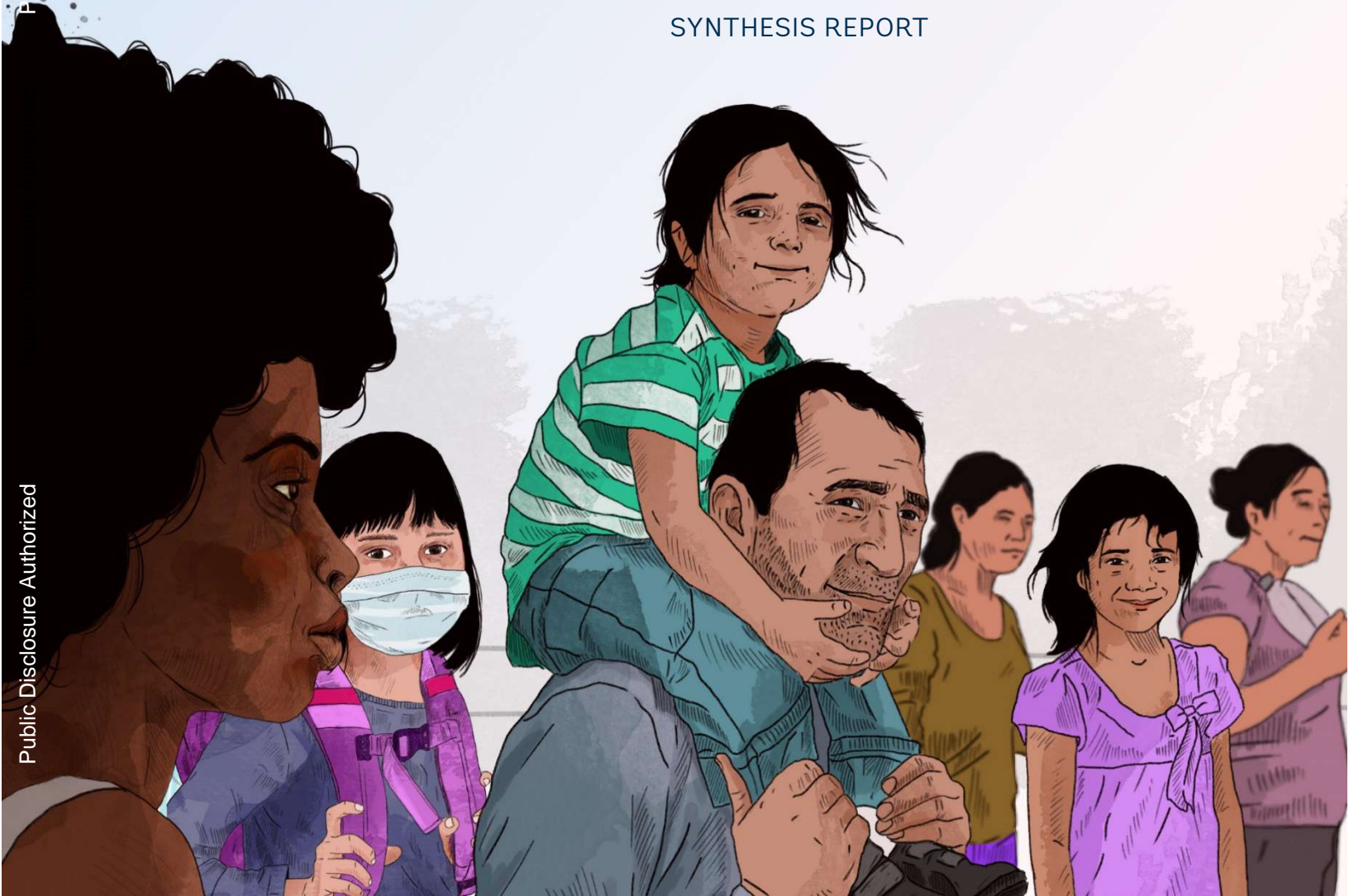


# HARNESSING OPPORTUNITIES FROM MIGRATION

IN CENTRAL AMERICA  
AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

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SYNTHESIS REPORT



WORLD BANK GROUP

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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CBP</b>	Customs and Border Protection Agency (USA)
<b>CCDR</b>	Climate Change Development Report
<b>CPF</b>	Country Partnership Framework
<b>DTM</b>	Displacement Tracking Matrix
<b>FCV</b>	Fragility, Conflict, and Violence
<b>IDB</b>	Inter-American Development Bank
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>GCFF</b>	Global Concessional Financing Facility
<b>GRID</b>	Green, Resilient, and Inclusive Development
<b>IADB</b>	Inter-American Development Bank
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>LAC</b>	Latin America & the Caribbean
<b>LGTB</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
<b>LISA</b>	Local Indicator of Spatial Association
<b>MHPSS</b>	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
<b>MIRPS</b>	Regional Protection and Solutions Framework for Mexico and Central America
<b>MPI</b>	Migration Policy Institute
<b>PTSD</b>	Post-traumatic stress disorder
<b>RRA</b>	Risk and Resilience Assessment
<b>SCD</b>	Systematic Country Diagnostic
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SIUBEN</b>	Single System of Beneficiaries (Dominican Republic)
<b>SPF</b>	State and Peacebuilding Fund
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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# KEY DEFINITIONS

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These are aligned with the 2019 World Bank Group Board Paper “Leveraging Economic Migration for Development” (World Bank 2019), the IOM Glossary of Migration, the UNHCR Master Glossary of Terms, the UNHCR Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons under the 1954 Convention (2014 Geneva revision), and the UNHCR Guidance on Racism and Xenophobia.

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## Assisted Voluntary Return

Is a comprehensive approach to migration management, which includes timely asylum adjudication, effective removal of irregular migrants, regular migration options, and accurate public information on those options, which, when implemented quickly, can serve as an effective deterrent to irregular migration (IOM 2015).

## Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration

Is the “Administrative, logistical or financial support, including reintegration assistance, to migrants unable or unwilling to remain in the host country or country of transit and who decide to return to their country of origin” (IOM 2019).

## Asylum seekers

Are individuals who seek international protection. In countries with individualized procedures, an asylum seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted a claim. Not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every recognized refugee is initially an asylum seeker (IOM Glossary of Migration).

## Circular migration

Is a form of migration in which people repeatedly move back and forth between two or more countries (IOM Glossary of Migration).

## Collective efficacy

Is defined as “the process of activating or converting social ties among neighborhood residents in order to achieve collective goals, such as public order or the control of crime. Empirically, collective efficacy has been represented as a combined measure of shared expectations for social control and social cohesion and trust among neighborhood residents” (Sampson 2010).

## Community resilience

“Implies a capacity for society to withstand and recover from hazards, stresses, and shock. It emphasizes a system’s ability not only to withstand adversity but to recover from it: not only to survive but to thrive” (Ingram 2014).

## Deportation

Refers to the forced displacement of civilians which is prohibited in times of occupation and noninternational armed conflict except when required for their security or imperative military reasons (IOM Glossary of Migration).

## Economic dimension of reintegration

“Aspects of reintegration which contribute to re-entering economic life and sustained livelihoods” (IOM, 2019).

---

## Forced return

Is the act of returning an individual, against his or her will, to the country of origin, transit or to a third country that agrees to receive the person, generally carried out based on an administrative or judicial act or decision (IOM Glossary of Migration).

## Gender-based violence (GBV)

“An umbrella term for any harmful act perpetrated against a person, based on socially determined gender differences, that inflicts physical or mental harm or suffering, threats, coercion and other deprivations of liberty.” (IOM 2019).

## Health

“As a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” (WHO, 1948).

## Homicide

Is defined as “unlawful death inflicted upon a person with the intent to cause death or serious injury” (UNODC 2019).

## Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

Are persons who have been forced or obliged to flee, or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border (IOM Glossary of Migration).

## International migrant

Any person who is outside a State of which he or she is a citizen or national, or, in the case of a stateless person, his or her State of birth or habitual residence. The term includes migrants who intend to move permanently or temporarily, and those who move in a regular or documented manner as well as migrants in irregular situations (IOM Glossary of Migration).

## Irregular migration

Is the movement of persons that takes place outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the State of origin, transit, or destination (IOM Glossary of Migration).

## Mental health

“A state of well-being in which the person realizes their abilities; is able to cope with the normal stresses of life; works productively and also contributes to others” (WHO 2004).

---

## **Migrants in vulnerable situations**

Are those who are unable to effectively enjoy their human rights, are at increased risk of violations and abuse, and who, accordingly, are entitled to call on a duty bearer's heightened duty of care (IOM Glossary of Migration).

## **Migrant worker**

Someone who engages in a remunerated activity in a country of which he or she is not a national (2019 WBG Board Paper).

## **Mixed migration (mixed movements or mixed flows)**

Is a movement in which a number of people are traveling together, generally in an irregular manner, using the same routes and means of transport, but for different reasons. People traveling as part of mixed movements have varying needs and profiles and may include asylum seekers, refugees, trafficked persons, unaccompanied/separated children, and migrants in an irregular situation (IOM Glossary of Migration).

## **Refugee (1951 Convention)**

A person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or membership in a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (IOM Glossary of Migration).

## **Reintegration**

"The process which enables individuals to re-establish the economic, social and psychosocial relationships needed to maintain life, livelihood and dignity and inclusion in civic life" (IOM 2019).

## **Return**

Is the act or process of going back or being taken back to the point of departure. This could be within the territorial boundaries of a country, as in the case of returning internally displaced persons (IDPs) and demobilized combatants, or between a country of destination or transit and a country of origin, as in the case of migrant workers, refugees, or asylum seekers (IOM Glossary of Migration).

## **Returnee**

"Generally understood as a person who returns to their place of origin, irrespective of the length of the absence or the modality of return. For the purpose of this Handbook, a returnee is a migrant unable or unwilling to remain in a host or transit country who returns to their country of origin" (IOM, 2019).



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## Service Mapping

“Service mapping is identifying and recording all providers and services within a given geographical region in a systematic way. It details what local services are available to local populations and returnees, what the criteria are for accessing those services, who offers those services, any risks associated with accessing services, and the quality of the services available” (IOM, 2019).

## Social capital

The institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society’s social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society—it is the glue that holds them together (World Bank 2011).

## Social cohesion

Is a sense of shared purpose, trust, and willingness to cooperate among members of a given group, between members of different groups, and between people and the state (World Bank forthcoming, 2022).

## Social dimension of reintegration

“Reflects the access by returning migrants to public services and infrastructure in their countries of origin, including access to health, education, housing, justice, and social protection schemes” (IOM 2019).

## Social health

For the WHO, social health is related to the social, economic, and cultural characteristics of populations and involves the work necessary to generate healthy environments, people’s skills to adapt to the environment, communities’ skills to self-manage in the face of change, the ability to face challenges, and the ability to develop satisfying relationships with others.

## Statelessness (1954 Convention)

Is the condition of not being considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law (UNHCR Master Glossary of Terms). De facto stateless persons are persons outside the country of their nationality who are unable or, for valid reasons, are unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country (UNHCR Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons under the 1954 Convention; 2014 Geneva revision).

## Temporary migration

Is the migration for a specific motivation and purpose with the intention to return to the country of origin or habitual residence after a limited period or to undertake an onward movement (IOM Glossary of Migration).

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## **Transit migration**

Refers to a person or a group of persons who temporarily pass through a country that is not their final, intended destination (and is distinct from stopovers during personal or business travel) (IOM Glossary of Migration)

## **Victimization**

Is the outcome of deliberate action taken by a person or institution to exploit, oppress, or harm another, or to destroy or illegally obtain another's property or possessions (Criminal Justice 2022).

## **Views and Perceptions for Returnee Integration**

The understanding of the opinions and judgments of the returned migrant population, where sociodemographic characterization, physical and mental health, and psychosocial aspects are covered.

## **Voluntary return**

Is the assisted or independent return to the country of origin, transit, or another country, based on the voluntary decision of the returnee (IOM Glossary of Migration).

## **Xenophobia**

Behavior derived directly from the perception that another person (the target or victim) is foreign to or originates from outside the home community or nation (as suggested by the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in the absence of an internationally recognized legal definition).



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Background

1. **By September 2022, approximately 6.2 million Central American and Dominican migrants lived outside their countries.** Many migrated along irregular pathways and fell prey to traffickers or “coyotes”. According to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency, only 44 percent of migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras were adults in 2021.

2. **Although migration from Central America has a well-established history, current flows are different from patterns observed five or ten years ago.** Development challenges arise mainly along four evolving dimensions (the 4Ns):

### i) New Demographics

Most Central American migrants and people who pass through Central America travel in family units or as unaccompanied child migrants.

### ii) New Trajectories

Simultaneous flows of emigration, transit, immigration, and return. Today, Central American countries are places of origin, but also witness in-transit migration and are increasingly becoming host communities for immigrants and returnees.

### iii) New Vulnerabilities

The migration of people from Central America to the Dominican Republic is mixed, with migrants facing different types and degrees of vulnerability. Among the most vulnerable are the more than 300,000 forcibly displaced persons, the 580,000 refugees and asylum seekers, and the 90,800 stateless people. For their part, labor migrants face vulnerabilities related to their working conditions.

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#### iv) Noteworthy Volumes

By June 2021, over 15.7 million people in LAC will be migrants and forcibly displaced, accounting for 19.2 percent of the world's forcibly displaced persons (UNHCR 2021),<sup>1</sup> having doubled in size over the previous 20 years. Five of the top 10 source countries for new asylum applications are in Latin America and pass through Central America (Venezuela, Honduras, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Guatemala)<sup>2</sup>. Of these, a significant portion are either already considered or could soon be considered to be in need of international protection. Notably, some of the most recent flows have involved the movement of large crowds at border areas. At the end of 2020, more than 867,800 people originating from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras remained forcibly displaced, almost 80,000 more than at the end of 2019.<sup>3</sup> Since 2018, Nicaragua has also seen a sharp increase in cross-border human mobility as conditions in the country continue to deteriorate. Official projections in Costa Rica, a primary destination for recent Nicaraguan migrants and refugees, estimate over 200,000 pending asylum cases by the end of 2022 (representing over 9,000 appointments per month and 5 percent of the total population). The rapid increase in the volume of migrants in the region implies a significant burden on national and local authorities, humanitarian agencies, and border communities to handle the population in transit as well as those who establish themselves permanently in these areas.<sup>4</sup>

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1. UNHCR Mid-Year Trends Forced Displacement in 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/618ae4694/mid-year-trends-2021.html>.

2. According to the UNHCR Mid-Year Trends Forced Displacement in 2021, between January and June 2021, new asylum applications summed 39,300 people from Venezuela, Honduras (33,900), Haiti (16,600), Nicaragua (14,600) and Guatemala (13,400).

3. AUNHCR Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/60b638e37/unhcr-global-trends-2020>.

4. Most countries have in place two main mechanisms to respond to the influx of people, namely the ordinary migratory framework –designed to regulate the entry of tourists, economic migrants and people with family ties to the country; and the asylum system, designed to provide protection to refugees.



## Motivating Questions

3. This synthesis report responds to two interconnected questions:

**i) What factors drive migration in Central America and the Dominican Republic? What predisposes people to stay or move?**

These can be rapid onset events (natural disasters, economic shock, personal threat to self or family) or slow onset events such as lack of opportunities, wage differentials, and information channeled through social networks.

**ii) What makes these migration experiences successful and mutually beneficial? What policies and institutional settings predispose migrants and their communities toward success?**

These refer, for instance, to the protection schemes available to migrants, refugees, vulnerable groups, and people in need of international protection; the social and institutional capacity support needed to enable legal migratory pathways; the essential services and policies people need if they are to settle and integrate socially and economically into host communities; and the reintegration services and opportunities available upon return.

4. **The World Bank has published a report on how client countries and the World Bank can maximize development impact and directly respond to migration and forced displacement in the region.** It identifies knowledge gaps and expands the evidence base on human development in Central America and the Dominican Republic. The report also provides a roadmap for potential interventions across various sectors and practical solutions to respond to human mobility.



## Methodology

5. **This synthesis report builds upon 18 months of World Bank support and analytics.** It was motivated by knowledge or coordination gaps identified in the “Stocktaking Report on Migration from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala” (World Bank Group 2021b, see Volume I). The report summarizes key findings and lessons from analytical, technical assistance, operational support, and policy dialogue activities.<sup>5</sup>

6. **The World Bank and the United Nations are working together to develop a regional strategy for human mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean.** The results of this work will help inform the operationalization of the 2023 World Development Report on Migration and Forced Displacement and the preparation of the World Bank regional strategy for the region.

7. **This synthesis report summarizes key findings and work done, presented in three volumes included as supplementary information.** Volume 1 entails a stocktaking report of the existing knowledge base on the region’s nature, drivers, and impacts of mixed migration. Volume 2 contributes to filling knowledge gaps identified in the report; Volume 3 documents efforts to strengthen existing regional platforms.

8. **This report uses quantitative and qualitative methods to yield a deeper understanding and design solutions centered on migrant experiences.** Quantitative methods relate to using and analyzing Censuses and household survey data, high-resolution satellite imagery for mapping transit routes and understanding climate-driven migration, social listening, and neuromarketing analysis. Qualitative methods include semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and qualified informants, focus groups, and technical roundtables.

5. Initiatives being supported by think tanks and other development partners were identified through several consultations carried out between July and October 2021, the WB-UNHCR Deep Dive in March 2022, and ongoing dialogue with IOM, IADB, and CABEI at the technical level.



## Key Findings

- 9. Key findings will be presented under two pillars, directly answering each policy question that motivates this synthesis report.** Pillar 1 summarizes the key findings of the Stocktaking Report (World Bank Group 2021b) and analytical contributions compiled under Volume 2. Pillar 2 responds to the second question, “**What makes these migration experiences successful?**” through lessons learned from analytical, technical assistance, and operational activities.

### Pillar 1

#### What are the factors driving migration in Central America and into the Dominican Republic?

- 10. Deep dives focus on areas where literature is still inconclusive to help shed new insights.** For example, the role of specific forms of violence, such as gang and gender-based violence, is not definitive. The drivers and impacts of migration among ethnic minorities such as Afro-descendants and Indigenous populations have been little explored.
- 11. The results of the Stocktaking Report and follow-up analytical work indicate that the intention and decision to migrate depend on multiple interconnected factors.** As other studies have found (Clemens 2017; Danielson 2020), the intention and decision to migrate are multifactorial. Instead, a combination of drivers and family, individual, school, and community risk factors, with different degrees of influence, appear to explain the desire to migrate.



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**12. Despite its multifactorial nature, four common factors appear distinctly in the literature as key drivers affecting mixed migration flows from Central America:**

**Factor 1**

**Welfare differentials between origin and destination countries are key drivers of migration:** National and international inequality, or disparities in living standards between countries of origin and destination, tend to increase migration (Brick & Rosenblum 2011; World Bank 2019; Mejia-Mantilla et al., forthcoming); interestingly, development in low-income countries tends to boost emigration.

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**Factor 2**

**Climate-related impacts trigger migration and internal displacement, especially among the most vulnerable.** Climate change impacts are linked to household-level liquidity constraints that trigger migration, mainly due to hydrometeorological events (earthquakes seem to have little or no impact, Halliday 2006). In Guatemala, for instance, the relationship between climate change and migration is robust (Mejia-Mantilla et al., forthcoming). In Honduras, our own analysis using remote sensing and World Bank's Groundswell data shows climate-driven displacement is concentrated in indigenous and afro-descendant communities. Climate change also puts migrant and refugee communities at higher risk in destination countries. For example, in Costa Rica, irregular migrants, particularly seasonal workers from Nicaragua, often work and live in regions with high hazard risk and lack access to social protection mechanisms. Further, by 2050, climate-driven migration in Costa Rica will expand from a minimum of 1,200 to 147,700 people expected to leave rural areas of origin and move to urban areas, particularly San Jose (OIM, 2022).

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**Factor 3**

**High and chronic levels of violence remain drivers of migration. However, the direction and magnitude of these effects differ according to the incidence and prevalence of violence.** Violence

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hinders labor mobility domestically (while extortion hinders investment and growth) and causes waves of migration with a snowball effect<sup>6</sup>.

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#### Factor 4

**Family and community social networks are primary drivers of migration in Central America (Clemens 2017; Abuelafia et al. 2019; Danielson 2020; De La Cruz Méndez 2022).** Other literature finds that bilateral donor aid is associated with more robust personal and business networks between the giving and receiving countries, increasing migration flows to the donor country. Reintegration efforts often lack a family-centered approach.

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- 13. Migrants report that the main reasons for migrating include improving their income, escaping violence, reuniting with family members, and recovering from the impact of recurring disasters and extreme weather events (IFRC 2022).** The devastating socioeconomic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and continuing political crises are also factors that may continue to increase population movements.

## Pillar 2

### What makes these migration experiences successful and mutually beneficial?

- 14. The international community has traditionally focused on the economic benefits of human mobility.** However, little attention has been given to the social and cultural aspects of migration. The case for migration is premised on unlocking its economic potential, regardless of whether the displacement is voluntary or not. This is to be contrasted with the resistance to migration that is always framed in social terms.

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6. Clemens (2017) uses the homicide rate to determine violence levels.

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**15. Because the growing body of evidence is still too frequently disregarded, more than the economic argument on the benefits of human mobility is needed to advance migratory policies.** Despite rigorous research uncovering extensive evidence to the contrary, human mobility is still typically described as a problem. This disconnect has rendered our standard economists' toolkit insufficient to move the needle on this complex issue.

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**16. Social barriers often derive from a perception of difference or nonconformity, lack of social cohesion, or distrust among host and migrant communities.** Discrimination and self-exclusion in international labor agreements also play an essential part in these negative narratives. Our research recognizes migrants' contributions holistically—beyond their economic contributions as workers—as purveyors of new ideas, societal norms, and well-being.

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**17. Migrant vulnerability and resilience models are rooted in the belief that the human rights of all persons, including migrants, should be upheld, and promoted.** These models recognize that migrants and the households, communities, and groups they belong to are all situated in a broader environment. In view of the social barriers encountered, migration is a rational adaptation, coping strategy, and demonstration of resilience to vulnerability..

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**18. Overall, this report shows that understanding the conditions for successful migratory experiences in Central America and the Dominican Republic rests on four pillars.** These pillars (acronym: PAVE) relate to migration drivers and policy responses centered on the migrants' experience:

### **Protection and Safety (P)**

**19. Protection and Safety refers to the extent to which the physical and mental integrity of migrants and refugees can be enhanced and improved.** Rapid and chronic human mobility flows in Central America and into the Dominican Republic are associated with

higher risks for human trafficking, exploitation, harassment, abuse, prostitution, and victimization. Many women and girls cited violence—both within the household and perpetrated by criminal gangs—as a critical reason for fleeing their home country.

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### Access to Services and Participation (A)

- 20. Host communities face additive social and economic vulnerabilities that exacerbate the challenges and barriers to human dignity that people experience in conditions of human mobility.** The arrival of foreigners in lagging areas raises concerns about competition for jobs, natural resources, and access to already limited services. This synthesis report summarizes key challenges and opportunities for support based on situational analysis and operational engagements in two cases: Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic.

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### Views and Perceptions (V)

- 21. Views and Perceptions refer to the extent to which views held by firms, households, and policy makers can serve as enablers rather than barriers to success.** This document sheds light on key findings and lessons from a regional analysis of perceptions toward migration in Central America and the Dominican Republic.

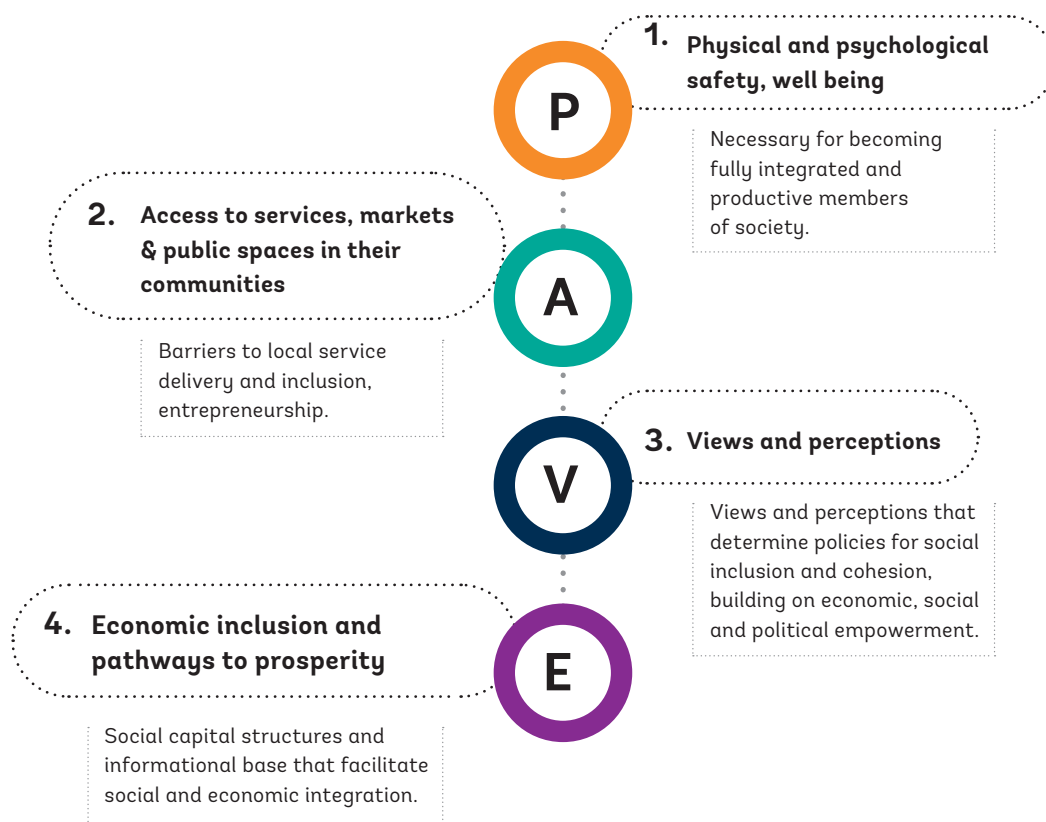
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### Economic and social inclusion pathways to prosperity (E)

- 22. These are the institutional mechanisms, social structures, and informational bases that facilitate social and economic integration.** They encompass short-term measures to provide humanitarian aid, medium-term access to essential social services, and long-term policy adjustments toward regularization and socioeconomic integration.

**23. When large regularization efforts are impossible or will take time, allowing people to work is also highly effective.** However, labor programs must be carefully designed and proportionate in size.

**24. Central American migrants seeking job opportunities in main destination countries are underutilized.** Existing processes might be challenging to navigate or understand for most people. Central American migrants might be too socially and economically vulnerable to apply through existing pathways. Nevertheless, they are not vulnerable enough to be considered refugees or eligible for asylum.



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## Opportunities and Policy Recommendations

**25. A common framework, focused on four pillars for response, emerges from regional and global experiences.** A combination of policies has allowed governments to easily navigate the complex, multilevel and multisectoral response required by these situations:

**a) Understand countries' institutional capacities, legal frameworks, and migration and asylum policies.**

The Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama are at relatively early stages in adapting to new and simultaneous human mobility flows (MPI 2021). Across the region, international organizations play a key role in supporting these efforts. Civil society is vital to expanding migrants' access to protection mechanisms and reintegration supports.

**b) Humanitarian and development investments must target migrant populations and host communities.** When people on the move settle in lagging areas, vulnerabilities related to a pre-existing lack of adequate road, housing, health, and education infrastructure typically compound those of the displaced population. There is also competition for jobs, services, and housing in urban areas across the region.

**c) Migrant and host communities' interactions can improve host community perceptions of the displaced population.** Identifying some of the most rigid and restrictive views and perceptions that inhibit the reintegration of returnees can help inform operational responses. These include providing clear information on mental health, psychosocial support, and how to access services.

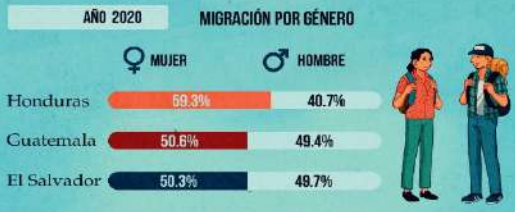
**d) Policies and programs should be designed around twin central elements: risk and resilience. Identifying when and where youth is at risk of problem behavior or participation in gangs can help improve the targeting and efficacy of interventions.** International organizations can provide common regional approaches to help adapt existing legal and institutional frameworks.



# MIGRACIÓN Y DESPLAZAMIENTO FORZADO EN CENTROAMÉRICA

Un nuevo rostro de la migración

Fuentes: Esri, USGS, NOAA. Fuentes: Esri, Garmin, USGS, NPS.

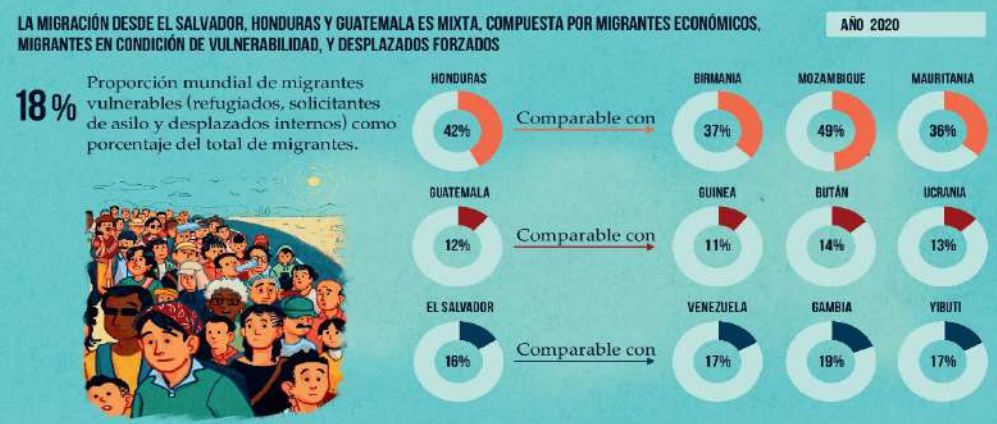
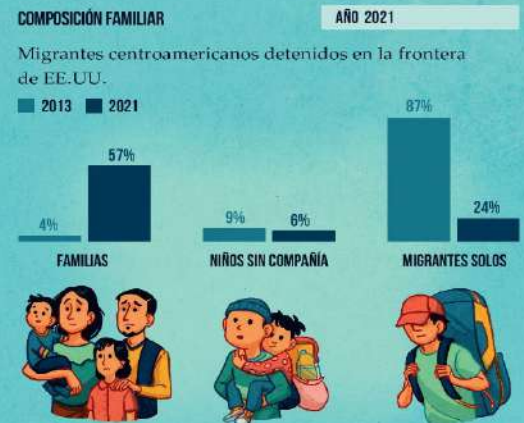


### MIGRACIÓN Y DESPLAZAMIENTO FORZADO POR DELINCUENCIA Y VIOLENCIA

La violencia dificulta la movilidad laboral y provoca oleadas migratorias (efecto bola de nieve). Ser víctima de un delito aumenta la probabilidad de migrar y la intención de migrar.



Los impactos del cambio climático están vinculados a las restricciones de liquidez que obligan a los desplazamientos internos y pueden desencadenar la migración. Los impactos sobre el ganado y los agricultores son peores.



Elaboración propia utilizando ACNUR, ONU-DESA, OIM, CEPAL, Banco Mundial, Instituto de Política Migratoria, Centro de Monitoreo de Desplazamiento Interno, Departamento de Seguridad Nacional de los Estados Unidos, y Censos Nacionales de Población. No refleja necesariamente los puntos de vista del Banco Mundial o de sus países miembros.



# INTRODUCTION

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## Central America is in the midst of four distinct human mobility situations

**26. The Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region is facing four massive, distinct—yet related— human mobility phenomena, and Central America connects them all.** If we exclude regions currently afflicted with war or armed conflict, then we note that Latin America is the region where most people migrate internationally. In addition to long-term established regular and labor migration patterns, LAC has four human mobility situations that demand an international response.

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**27. First, for decades LAC witnessed extensive mixed migration<sup>7</sup> phenomena, especially Central America.** Most Central American migrants (or others displaced across borders) reside in the USA, with increasing numbers in Mexico, Canada, Spain, and the Dominican Republic. Today, an estimated 7 million Central American & Dominican migrants live abroad (11.6 percent of the total population). The characteristics of these movements are changing, and increasingly involve large numbers of vulnerable populations.

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**28. Second, the Venezuelan exodus is increasingly relevant for Central American countries and the Dominican Republic.** SData from the Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants (R4V) shows that by September 2022, 144,545 were in Panama, and 30,107 were in Costa Rica<sup>28</sup>. By August 2022, over 150,000 Venezuelans arrived at the southern border of the USA seeking protection.

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7. Mixed migration (mixed movements or mixed flows) is a movement in which a number of people are traveling together, generally in an irregular manner, using the same routes and means of transport, but for different reasons. People traveling as part of mixed movements have varying needs and profiles and may include asylum seekers, refugees, trafficked persons, unaccompanied or separated children, and migrants in an irregular situation.

8. Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela. The Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants (R4V), as of September 5, 2022.

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**29. Third, Haitians are fleeing their country in alarming numbers following disasters, conflict outbreaks, extreme poverty, and political instability.** These trends accelerated after the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse and the magnitude 7.2-earthquake that devastated the country in 2021. Haitians also pass through the Darien Gap and increasingly settle in Mexico, Costa Rica, and Honduras during an extended transit period that can last up to 15 years (CBP data as of June 30, 2022).

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**30. Fourth, since 2015, extra-regional migratory flows have intensified.** These include highly vulnerable people from Africa, Asia and other regions who come through the Darien Gap<sup>9</sup>, passing through Central America on their way north to the USA.

## The increasing vulnerabilities of people on the move are posing major development challenges

**31. By 2022, roughly 6.2 million Central American and Dominican migrants were living outside their countries.** Many migrate through irregular pathways and fall prey to traffickers or “coyotes”. In 2021, according to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency, approximately 44 percent of migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras were adults.

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**32. Migration from Central America and into the Dominican Republic is mixed, with migrants facing different types and degrees of vulnerability.** Among the most vulnerable are the more than 300,000 forcibly displaced persons, the 580,000 refugees and asylum seekers, the 90,800 stateless people and sexual and ethnic minorities. For their part, labor migrants face vulnerabilities related to their working conditions.

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9. The Darién Gap is a geographic region consisting of a large watershed, forest, and mountains in Panama’s Darién Province and the northern portion of Colombia’s Chocó Department. According to the IOM, over 91,300 migrants crossed through the Darien in 2021, three times larger than in 2016. Of these, around 56,600 came from Haiti, while the rest came from Cuba (12,800), Venezuela (1,500), Bangladesh, Senegal, Ghana, Uzbekistan, India, and Nepal. <https://www.iom.int/es/news/mas-de-91000-migrantes-han-cruzado-el-tapon-del-darien-rumbo-norteamerica-este-ano>

- .....
- 33. The increasing numbers of refugees, migrants and forcibly displaced are posing major development challenges across countries of origin, transit, and especially in host countries in Central America.** Most countries face situations of human mobility for which it is difficult to articulate responses in the sense that they are increasingly hosting populations that cannot be neatly or accurately categorized as economic migrants, refugees, or asylum seekers respectively. For instance, an increasing share of migrants in Central America are considered vulnerable or in need of international protection but are not formally recognized (nationally or internationally) as refugees, asylum seekers, or stateless, hence they do not fit into “traditional” categories and frameworks for response<sup>10</sup>.

## Migratory flows are century-long phenomena, but current flows are different

- 34. In Central America, starting in 1942, labor shortages related to World War II prompted the USA to support two temporary labor programs during the postwar period to boost reconstruction and recovery.** After 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Immigration and Nationality Act. After that, family reunification from Mexico, Central America, Cambodia, and Vietnam became increasingly relevant in US immigration policy. In the 1980s and 1990s, many of those deported from the USA were gang members from the growing gang scene in Los Angeles. Restrictive immigration policies at destinations often reflect a failure to foresee side effects such as increased migration through alternative routes and channels.

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10. Most countries have in place two main mechanisms to respond to the influx of people, namely the ordinary migratory framework, designed to regulate the entry of tourists, economic migrants and people with family ties to the country, and the asylum system, designed to provide protection to refugees.

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**35. In the Dominican Republic, the foreign-born population exceeds 5.6 percent of the total population with growing inflows from Haiti and Venezuela.** The Dominican Republic has traditionally been a recipient of Haitian migrants and an important transit node for mixed migratory movements. The largest migrant groups are from Haiti (87.2 percent) and Venezuela (5 percent), in both cases fleeing their home countries in the wake of conflict, violence, political instability, and poverty<sup>11</sup>. Immigrants account for 8.6 percent of the total labor force.

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**36. In the Dominican Republic, migration flows add to a protracted situation of statelessness among populations of Haitian descent** On September 23, 2013, the Constitutional Court collectively and retroactively revoked the nationality of those born in the Dominican Republic since 1929. The vast majority of the population impacted by this ruling (Law 169-14) were Dominicans of Haitian descent. Over 68,360 persons were affected by Law 169-14, of whom only 26,000 had access to documents proving their Dominican citizenship. More than 90,300 remain stateless today. Of these, 25,645 do not have birth certificates, owing to discrimination and administrative barriers, and the remainder were born in the Dominican Republic to mixed couples.

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**37. However, current flows are different from patterns observed five or ten years ago.** New layers of complexity have changed the overall picture of migration: new trajectories with simultaneous flows of emigration, transit, and immigration; in addition to increased vulnerabilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, border closures, and the collapse of informal economies (in which migrants are overrepresented). Development challenges arise along four evolving dimensions (4Ns): (i) New Demographics; (ii) New Trajectories; (iii) New Vulnerabilities; and (iv) Noteworthy volumes.

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11. El deterioro institucional, la pobreza crónica, el desempleo, la violencia estructural y los servicios sanitarios precarios son las principales razones que explican el éxodo de los habitantes de Haití, mientras que los venezolanos están escapando de una compleja crisis social, política, institucional y económica. La migración haitiana es una de las más complejas y difíciles de la región (Matriz de seguimiento de desplazados de la OIM, febrero de 2021)

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### **i) New Demographics**

Most Central American migrants—and others who pass through Central America—travel in family units or as unaccompanied child migrants; in other words, the profile of the migrant is no longer that of a single working adult. For example, in 2013, only 4 percent of Central American migrants apprehended at the U.S. border traveled with family members. By 2021, that figure has grown to 57 percent; furthermore, unaccompanied child migrants accounted for 6 percent. Conversely, single migrants represented 24 percent of the total, down from 87 percent of all migrants apprehended in 2013<sup>12</sup>. This implies that protection and care protocols, as well as inclusion strategies, in host and transit countries, need to cater to the needs of a migrant population that used to be comparatively rarely encountered, but now commonly includes women, children, and young people.

### **ii) New Trajectories (and simultaneous flows of emigration, transit, immigration, and return)**

Today, Central American countries are not only places of origin, but also the intermediate locus of extended migration paths, and are increasingly becoming host communities for immigrants and returnees. In 2021, a total of 125,257 registered people had returned from the North of Central America: including 3,239 from El Salvador, 31,679 from Guatemala, and 36,833 from Honduras (IOM 2022).<sup>13</sup> Indicators such as the net migration rate do not necessarily shed light on the complex and simultaneous flows of emigration, transit, and immigration that Central American countries experience. Since 2018, Costa Rica has seen a spike in Nicaraguan refugees and vulnerable migrants entering the country, adding to the pressures occasioned by increased flows from Venezuela since 2015 (altogether, Nicaraguan and Venezuelans migrants represent 11.2 percent of Costa Rica's population). Intra-regional human mobility has expanded, with Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Panama the main destination and transit hubs.

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12. Since 2008, there has been a significant increase in unaccompanied children apprehended at the southern border of the USA. Initially, Mexican children predominated, but as of 2012 the number of children from Central American countries was higher.

13. Following the creation of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in 2002, deportations of undocumented immigrants rose substantially in 2012 upon the authorization of an unprecedented federal budget to enable immigration enforcement and deportations. In 2020, a U.S. policy known as Title 42 authorized deportations due to health concerns amid the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the IOM, deportations of Northern Central American migrants rose 451 percent in the first quarter of 2022, compared to the same period in 2021.

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### iii) New Vulnerabilities

Violence, fragility, political instability, lack of economic opportunities and large welfare differentials, combined with the impacts of climate change—these are the factors behind growing human mobility<sup>14</sup>. Against this backdrop, even comparatively resilient economic migrants tend to face a nexus of vulnerabilities associated with irregular migration, including higher exposure to discrimination, abuses and human rights violations, as well as the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Equally fundamentally, this population also faces challenges in access to basic services in host countries, and exclusion from national systems, including early-childhood development, education, and COVID-19 vaccination programs<sup>15</sup>. Migrants and refugees from Venezuela, Haiti and Central America in LAC are among the most vulnerable groups impacted by COVID-19<sup>16</sup>.

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### iv) Noteworthy volumes

By June 2021, over 15.7 million people in LAC were migrants or forcibly displaced people, accounting for 19.2 percent of the world's forcibly displaced persons (UNHCR 2021),<sup>17</sup> a figure that had doubled in size over the preceding 20 years (see Figure 1). Five of the top 10 source countries for new asylum applications globally are in the region (Venezuela, Honduras, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Guatemala)<sup>18</sup>. At the end of 2020, over 867,800 people originating from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras remained forcibly displaced (almost 80,000 more than at the end of the previous year).<sup>19</sup> Since 2018, Nicaragua has also seen a sharp increase in cross-border human mobility as conditions in the country continue to deteriorate. Official projections in Costa Rica, a main destination for recent Nicaraguan migrants and refugees, are of more than 200,000 pending asylum cases by the end of 2022 (representing over 9,000 appointments per month and 5 percent of the total population).

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14. It is estimated that by 2050, over 17 million people in LAC will be forcibly displaced by climate change related shocks. Groundswell Report, 2021.

15. Even when legislation in each country is in place recognizing the right of migrant children and refugees to education, families often face difficulties when attempting to exercise this right, usually due to bureaucratic and administrative processes.

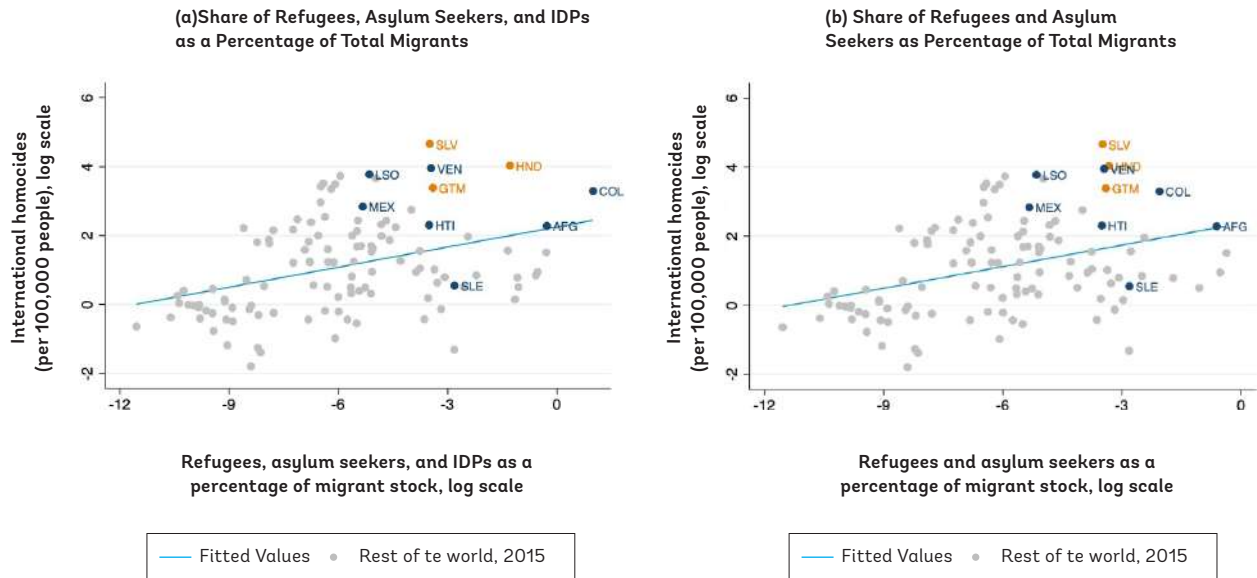
16. Davalos, M. 2020. Migrantes y Refugiados Venezolanos En El Perú: El Impacto De La Crisis Del Covid-19.

17. UNHCR Mid-Year Trends Forced Displacement in 2021. <https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/618ae4694/mid-year-trends-2021.html>

18. According to the UNHCR Mid-Year Trends Forced Displacement in 2021, between January and June 2021, new asylum applications summed 39,300 people from Venezuela, Honduras (33,900), Haiti (16,600), Nicaragua (14,600) and Guatemala (13,400).

19. UNHCR Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2020. <https://www.unhcr.org/60b638e37/unhcr-global-trends-2020>.

**Figure 1.**  
**Rate of vulnerable migrants and IDPS as share of total migration**



Source: Authors' own elaboration using UN-DESA, UNHCR, and World Bank data.

## Addressing impacts and opportunities derived from migration and forced displacement

- 38. Human Mobility in Central America is a development concern and an opportunity, particularly in the post-COVID 19 era.** Displacement, whether internal or across borders, is ultimately a coping strategy driven by poverty, social vulnerability, climate change impacts, fragility, violence and conflict, and lack of economic opportunities<sup>20</sup>.

20. World Bank. 2017. Forcibly Displaced: Toward a Development Approach Supporting Refugees, the Internally Displaced, and Their Hosts. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/25016> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO

Central America is also one of the most unequal regions in the world, and migrants and refugees are among the most excluded and vulnerable groups in the region.<sup>21</sup>

**39. The effective inclusion of migrants and refugees, and the protection and accumulation of the human capital they bring, can be a key pillar for reactivation and growth in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.** While migrants, asylum seekers and refugees have become poorer and more vulnerable due to the economic and health care crisis caused by the pandemic, and have higher exposure to the virus, evidence shows that their economic inclusion can boost economic growth in the mid-term, generating sufficient income and revenue to cover costs associated with their inclusion in host countries. For this reason, the World Bank recognizes the need to focus on longer-term social and economic challenges to help the displaced and their host communities.

**40. Addressing human mobility and displacement is vital to ensure a truly Green, Resilient, and Inclusive Development (GRID)<sup>22</sup>.** By 2050, it is estimated that at least 17 million people in Latin America will have become forcibly displaced by climate change related shocks (Groundswell Part 2 Report 2021)<sup>23</sup>. Importantly, this figure does not account for cross-border human mobility, so these are lower-boundary projections. Climate change impacts on agricultural production, livelihoods, water scarcity and land conflicts, compounded by natural resource degradation and limited access to basic needs services, are expected to trigger uninterrupted internal and cross-border human mobility<sup>24</sup>. Building on the seminal piece “Inclusion Matters: The Foundation for Shared Prosperity” (World

21. LAC Equity Lab, SEDLAC, and World Development Indicators.

22. Este informe está alineado con el documento expositivo del Banco Mundial sobre el desarrollo verde, resiliente e inclusivo, en particular con su pilar 2, a través de la promoción de la equidad y la inclusión de los migrantes en la recuperación económica.

23. Clement y otros (2021), Groundswell Parte 2: Actuar frente a la migración interna provocada por impactos climáticos, Banco Mundial, Washington, DC, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/36248>. Licencia: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

24. Wodon et. al., 2014; Šedová et. al., 2021.



Bank 2013), this document is aligned with the World Bank’s Fragility, Conflict, and Violence (FCV) Strategy,<sup>25</sup> the Latin America and Caribbean (LCR) Gender Action Plan FY21–25, LCR Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Action Plan<sup>26</sup>, and the WBG COVID-19 Response Approach Paper<sup>27</sup>.

**41. The international community has traditionally focused on the economic benefits of human mobility, while the social inclusion aspects have received less attention—and today these represent the main obstacle to maximizing its development impact.** Despite rigorous research uncovering extensive evidence to the contrary, human mobility is still typically described as a problem, and narratives in response to it have been framed in terms of losses for host countries. Programs that actively support the creation of narratives for building social cohesion between migrant and host community are still in their infancy, but they are beginning to usher in holistic and mutually beneficial approaches to inclusion<sup>28</sup>. With the number of international migrants on the rise globally, we urgently need to understand how different narratives about human mobility develop, spread, and take root.

25. The activities supported by this work are aligned with the FCV Strategy’s four pillars as 1) it addresses drivers of fragility such as gender inequality, patterns of discrimination, economic and social exclusion, and perceptions of grievances and injustice (pillar 1); 2) it keeps the Bank engaged in a crisis situation to preserve hard-won development gains, protect essential institutions, and build resilience (pillar 2); 3) it helps countries transition out of fragility by promoting approaches to renew the social contract between citizens and the state (pillar 3); and 4) it mitigates the spillovers of FCV, supporting countries and the most vulnerable populations and communities impacted by cross-border crises such as forced displacement and migration (pillar 4).

26. The task is aligned with the WBG Gender Strategy, as GBV is part of one of its pillars (Voice and Agency), with the Gender LAC Gender Action Plan FY21-25, which has GBV as one of the priorities areas, and IDA 19 that also includes GBV. Similarly, the grant is aligned with the LCR GBV Action Plan, specifically, pillar 2 “Helping prevent GBV through WB operations”, pillar 3 “Producing analytical evidence to inform interventions” and pillar 4 “promoting strategic engagement with stakeholders to address GBV.”

27. The activities supported by this work are aligned with the WBG COVID-19 Response Approach Paper’s pillar 2, protecting poor and vulnerable populations including migrants, refugees and internally displaced populations and pillar 4 “Strengthening Policies, Institutions and Investments for Rebuilding Better”.

28. According to recent research, how policy makers, community leaders, and members of the public see and talk about migration is, thus, intimately connected to the design and implementation of policies that affect not just newcomers, but the health of communities and countries. See: Banulescu-Bogdan, M. Et al. 2021. How We Talk about Migration: The Link between Migration Narratives, Policy, and Power. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/migration-narratives-policy-power>.



**42. To harness the benefits of human mobility as a development opportunity, the right set of policies and institutional design needs to be in place and adapted to the unprecedented challenges along the four dimensions (4 Ns).** In many countries in the region, the response requires adaptations to the legal, policy and institutional frameworks and actively building narratives that promote social cohesion to protect people on the move. Large-scale regularization exercises in destination countries will go toward alleviating short-term access to basic services, while significant investments are needed to ensure the inclusion of regularized populations into national systems and economies.



# Motivating **QUESTIONS**

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**43.** This synthesis report responds to two interconnected questions:

**i) What are the factors driving migration in Central America and into the Dominican Republic?**

In other words, what factors predispose people to move (or stay put)? These could be rapid onset events (natural disasters, economic shock, personal threat to self or family), slow onset events (lack of opportunities, limited human capital, limited jobs, wage differentials: with information percolating through social and business networks), insecurity (incidence and impacts of climate change, crime and violence, political instability), or structural economic shifts, among others.

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**ii) What makes these migration experiences successful and mutually beneficial?**

In other words, what array of policies and institutional settings predisposes migrants and their communities of origin toward success? These could be the protection schemes available to migrants, refugees, vulnerable groups, and people in need of international protection; the social and institutional capacity support needed to enable legal migratory pathways; the essential services and policies that migrants need if they are to settle and integrate socially and economically into the host community; and the reintegration services and opportunities available upon return.

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**44.** The key findings and recommendations of this synthesis report seek to show how client countries and the World Bank can maximize development impact and directly respond to migration and forced displacement in the region. This entails:

**a)** helping to identify knowledge gaps and expand the evidence base on human development in Central America and the Dominican Republic, including best practices and lessons learned;

- b) Identifying institutional and financial needs in client countries;
- c) Strengthening partnerships, platforms and alliances for enhanced integration at the regional, national and subnational levels; and,
- d) Providing a roadmap for potential interventions across various sectors and innovative solutions to respond to human mobility, including areas in which the World Bank has a comparative advantage to respond to those needs vis-à-vis other development partners and UN agencies.

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**45. This synthesis report contributes to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which recognize the contribution of migration to sustainable development and not only as a humanitarian concern (see Box 1).** It covers key findings from analytics, technical assistance, operational support, and regional dialogue on seven countries that experience simultaneous flows of emigration, transit, return, and immigration in Central America and into the Dominican Republic. However, due to limited time and resources, as well as selectivity considerations based on operational presence and data availability, country-level analytical pieces were focused on Honduras and Costa Rica, while technical assistance activities focused on the Dominican Republic.

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**Box 1.****Contribution of This Work to Strategic WBG goals**

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**This document contributes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which for the first time recognizes the contribution of migration to sustainable development.** Migration is an integral part of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, but further steps are needed to promote the social and economic well-being of migrants. The Policy Brief shows that whole-of-government or evidence-based policies should be reported uniformly. This work contributes to the pivotal target on migration (SDG target 10.7)<sup>29</sup>.

**This work proposes a comprehensive yet differentiated framework in which origin, transit, and destination countries can contribute to the SDG targets, as follows:**

**Origin countries** can leverage knowledge and financial spillovers by reducing information and transaction costs, leveraging social capital and networks, and empowering diasporic communities to increase the development impact of SDG targets on migration: 10.c (remittances), 10.7 (orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration), 8.7 and 8.8 (labor migration), 4.b (international student mobility), and 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2 (human trafficking).

**Transit countries** can facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people by easing mobility trajectories, protecting, and enhancing human capital, as well as refugees and migrants in the process of migration toward an international destination (SDG targets 5.2, 8.7, 8.8, 10.7, and 16.2).

**Destination countries**, including countries of return can promote the socioeconomic well-being of migrants by enabling legal pathways to economic opportunity, expanded access to services and opportunities, prevent discrimination and manage perceptions with evidence-based policies (SDG targets 4.b, 5.2, 8.7, 8.8, 10.7, and 16.2).

*Source: Authors' own elaboration of SDG Indicator 10.7.2 Policy Brief #1 (October 2019).*

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29. International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Department of Social and Economic Affairs (DESA), & Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2019). SDG indicator 10.7.2. In Migration Data Portal (p. 7). [https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/technical/Policy%20Brief\\_10.7.2.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/technical/Policy%20Brief_10.7.2.pdf)



## Methodology

**46. This synthesis report was motivated by knowledge or coordination gaps identified in the “Stocktaking Report on Migration from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala” (World Bank Group 2021b, see Volume I).** There are areas within the World Bank mandate where the Bank could add value to operational engagements based on the portfolio review completed in the Stocktaking Report, add to the existing body of knowledge, or to practical local initiatives being supported by other UN agencies (IOM and UNHCR), local and international think tanks, universities, and other development partners <sup>30</sup>.

**47. This document also complements key findings of parallel workstreams on migration being led by the Social Protection and Poverty & Equity Global Practices.** The key results from this work will help inform the operationalization of the 2023 World Development Report on Migration and Forced Displacement and the preparation of the World Bank regional strategy on human mobility in Latin America & the Caribbean.

**48. This synthesis report summarizes key findings and work done, presented in three volumes included as annexes, as follows:** Volume 1 entails a stocktaking report of the existing knowledge base on the nature, drivers, and impacts of mixed migration in the region; Volume 2 contributes to filling knowledge gaps identified in the stocktaking report; and Volume 3 documents efforts made to strengthen existing regional platforms, build new partnerships, and consolidate a regional community of practice of experts and policy makers.

**49. For the preparation of this synthesis report, we rely on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to better understand and design solutions centered on migrant experiences.**

30. Initiatives being supported by think tanks and other development partners were identified through several consultations carried out between July and October 2021, the WB–UNHCR Deep Dive in March 2022, and ongoing dialogue with IOM, IADB, and CABEL at the technical level.

Quantitative methods relate to the use and analysis of Censuses and household survey data, administrative records, high resolution satellite imagery for mapping transit routes and understanding climate-driven migration, social listening, and neuromarketing analysis to illuminate patterns in attitudes toward migration. Qualitative methods relate to the use of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and qualified informants, focus groups, and technical roundtables.

## Volume 1

### Stocktaking Report

50. **Completed on June 14, 2021, it entails a “stocktaking exercise” of the existing knowledge base on the nature, drivers, and impacts of mixed migration in the region.** This is a rapid and initial review of existing data and a systematic review of policy research and academic papers. It identifies areas of consensus in the literature and where knowledge and analytical gaps remain. It focuses on the three countries deemed to be in most urgent need at the time of preparation: El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Key findings are shown in four sections: (i) “Who are the migrants?” provides a summary description of recent migration flows, stocks, and sociodemographic characteristics; (ii) “What do we know (and not know?)” is based on a literature review about the drivers and impacts of migration, and identification of knowledge gaps; (iii) “How can the World Bank Group help?” provides a blueprint of proposed World Bank-supported activities and interventions in which the Bank would have a comparative advantage and the institutional experience needed to support its client countries in managing migration effectively; and (iv) “What can we learn from others?” documents lessons learned from international experiences, and proposes innovative solutions that can help to inform forthcoming operational engagements. It also provides an annotated bibliography of all the academic and policy research papers reviewed for this Stocktaking Report (World Bank Group 2021b).



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## Volume 2

### Analytical, Technical Assistance, and Operational Deep Dives

**51. Work compiled under Volume 2 contributes to filling knowledge gaps identified and prioritized in the Stocktaking Report (World Bank Group 2021b) described in Volume 1.** It expands the analysis to other countries in the region beyond El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Volume 2 consists of nine background notes derived from analytical work, technical assistance activities, and lessons learned from operational support covering seven countries: Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.

**52. Of the nine background notes, three regional pieces were developed in collaboration with UN agencies and other international development partners.** These are: (i) a rapid accessibility assessment to service providers for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) along migratory transit routes, written in partnership with IOM's and UNHCR's regional bureaux; (ii) an audience analysis of the joint WB-IOM Xenophobia Cero, a web-based community addressing antipathy toward migrants in Spanish-speaking countries in the region; and (iii) a shorter note, prepared as an input to the institutional assessment and migration journey map led by the Social Protection and Jobs (SPJ) Global Practice on the social mechanisms that inhibit inclusion in bilateral labor agreements.

**53. Six additional country-level pieces complete the remaining background notes in Volume 2.** These are focused on Honduras and the Dominican Republic. In Honduras, four inter-related pieces look at climate-driven displacement (Background Note No. 1, Aguilera and Cai 2022), violence-driven migration and the propensity of youth-at-risk to migrate (Background Note No. 2, Alda 2022; Background Note No. 3, Muñoz-Burgos 2022), and psychosocial support needs assessments for migrants, returnees, and the internally displaced (Background Note No. 4 Padron et al, 2022). These also helped inform inputs into the Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD), the Country Partnership Framework (CPF), the Risk and Resilience Assessment (RRA), and the Climate Change Development Report (CCDR). In

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the Dominican Republic, ongoing multisectoral policy dialogue on institutional and policy responses to migratory flows from Haiti and Venezuela, and a series of three knowledge exchanges, helped document lessons learned from: i) best international practices applicable to the national context on temporary labor migration programs (Summary Note No. 1); ii) improving the curricular and operational design of the first master's degree on migratory policies, development and human rights in the Caribbean (Summary Note No. 2); and iii) temporary regularization instruments and policies shared by Colombia (Summary Note No. 3). Altogether, the activities supported in the Dominican Republic helped inform a stand-alone operation on migration in the country, supported by the World Bank's State and Peacebuilding Fund (SPF).

### Volume 3

#### Regional policy dialogue

- 54. Work compiled under Volume 3 documents efforts made to strengthen existing regional platforms, build new partnerships, and consolidate a regional community of practice of experts and policy makers.** Building upon existing networks of researchers and policy practitioners, this work spurred formal and informal regional dialogues with client countries, donors, partner development organizations, academia, and civil society working on migration issues in Central America and the Dominican Republic. Outcomes of this work includes a strengthened regional operational partnership with the IOM; the WB–UNHCR Deep Dive (the first regional coordination exercise of its type globally between the two institutions); and the World Bank's addition to the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework for Mexico and Central America (MIRPS) Support Platform as the regionalization of the Global Compact on Refugees.



# KEY FINDINGS

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**55. Key findings will be presented under two pillars that directly answer the policy questions behind this synthesis report.** The first pillar addresses the question, “*What are the factors driving migration in Central America and into the Dominican Republic?*” The second explains “*What makes these migration experiences successful?*” and looks at lessons learned from analytical, technical assistance, and operational activities.

### **Pillar 1**

#### **What are the factors driving migration?**

**56. Deep dives focus on areas where the literature is still inconclusive to help generate new insights.** For example, the role of specific forms of violence, such as gang and gender-based violence, is not definitive; meanwhile, the drivers and impacts of migration among ethnic minorities such as Afro-descendants and Indigenous populations have not been explored in depth.



**57. The share of young people and unaccompanied child migrants has increased in recent years, but little is known about the factors that push young people to leave their countries.** This work provides evidence to understand better how the probability of migration increases among at-risk youth in Honduras. It also examines the relative importance of various factors driving the intention to migrate among Honduran youth ages 10 and 18.



**58. The intention and decision to migrate is multifactorial.** Risk factors include social, economic and environmental drivers, alongside family, individual, school, and community risk factors, exerting varying degrees of influence.

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- 59. Wage differentials, climate change, violence and social networks are key drivers of migration from Central America.** Migrants report that the main reasons for migrating include improving their income, escaping violence, reuniting with family members, and recovering from the impact of recurring disasters.

### Factor 1

#### Welfare differentials between origin and destination countries

- 60. Development in low-income countries tends to boost emigration, while national and international inequality, or disparities in living standards in origin and destination countries increase migration.** Emigration generally rises with economic development until countries reach upper-middle income status. This relationship has been called the “mobility transition,” or the “migration hump”.

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- 61. Critics argue that no single unified theory explains why migration rises with development at the country of origin.** Other elements that play a role include the extent of shared borders, the prevalence of violence, and the stage of demographic transition. The main hypotheses revolve around rising income differentials, which change demographics, triggering more migration, and increasing actual (and bitterly perceived) inequality, in a vicious cycle.

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- 62. Migration is a response to perceived opportunity differentials mediated by individual and community networks.** Haas et al (2019) claims that to understand migration patterns globally, one must look beyond GDP differentials to opportunity differentials. These encompass security, stability, freedom, and public service provision, in addition to wage differentials.

**63. There is an overall consensus that welfare differentials help explain a large part of the drivers that motivate people to migrate.** From 2010 to 2020, for instance, the average per capita income in the USA (the main destination country) was USD 48,204.39, compared to USD 2,941.33 in El Salvador, USD 2,959.86 in Guatemala and USD 1,951.30 in Honduras<sup>31</sup>; thus 16 times higher than incomes in El Salvador or Guatemala, and 24 times higher than in Honduras<sup>32</sup>.

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**64. Migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua come from some of the poorest municipalities but not from the poorest households.** Migration seems to be an escape from areas with low living standards and few economic opportunities. An increase in the municipal poverty rate implies an increase in the probability of having a household member living abroad (migrant household).

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**65. Economic factors such as insufficient wages, lack of jobs, and low incomes are perhaps the most decisive factors behind the decision to migrate.** These results are consistent with studies that point at poverty and lack of opportunities at home as key factors driving migration from developing countries to richer countries.

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**66. The probability of having a migrant member is positively correlated to wealth in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.** These results are consistent with previous studies that conclude migrants usually come from the middle of the income distribution. (Similar results were found for Nicaragua, but they are not statistically significant.)

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31. Constant prices in US dollars, 2010.

32. Globally, from 2013–17, the average income in the high-income OECD countries was \$43,083, compared with \$795 in the low-income countries, a ratio of 54:1. Even if the latter were to continue to grow faster than the former, at current growth rates it would take 135 years to close the income gaps (World Bank 2019).

**67. The role of inequality in origin and destination countries was examined; the findings suggest that reducing inequality within countries of origin could increase emigration.** Reduced inequality within destination countries could also reduce immigration flows (Haas et al. 2019).

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**68. The probability of being employed is higher for Salvadoran and Guatemalan migrants than for their nonmigrant peers back home.** Migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras found work in higher productivity and value-added sectors, such as industry, services, and industry. These migrants earned more than three times what they would have made if they had not migrated.

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**69. Furthermore, migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras enjoy better living conditions than residents at origin.** Access to basic services in the USA, such as clean water and sanitation, is better among migrants from Northern Central America. In the case of Hondurans, for example, 40 percent of migrants had access to water and sanitation, compared to only 34 percent of their counterparts back home (nonmigrants). In terms of connectivity, migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras residing in the United States are more likely to have a computer and an internet connection at home than their compatriots back home.

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**70. Demographic transitions and imbalances between origin and destination countries may also help explain this relationship.** Until 2030, for every young person (ages 15 to 24), there will be 1.75 seniors (65+) in the USA, Canada, and Spain. By comparison, the ratio of old to young will be 2:3 in El Salvador, 2:5 in Honduras, and 1:3 in Guatemala. However, although migration flows are expected to rise for the next decade, projected demographic changes in origin and destination countries are expected to slow down the net migration rates in Honduras and Nicaragua (Aguilera et al. 2022).

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## Factor 2

### Climate-related impacts

**71. Migration in response to climate impacts may range from mobility as a proactive adaptation strategy to forced displacement in the face of life-threatening risks.** Migration decisions beyond the household level will be influenced not only by environmental changes, but also by a range of other drivers such as lack of employment opportunities, violence, political inaction, socioeconomic aspirations, and cultural values.

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**72. Climate change impacts are nevertheless linked to household-level liquidity constraints that trigger migration, mainly due to hydrometeorological events.** In Honduras and Guatemala, for instance, annual crop losses have been linked with increased international migration flows.

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**73. Disasters affect poor and marginalized segments of the population, who are more likely to migrate due to climate change.** The adverse impacts of disasters may also disproportionately affect women, Indigenous communities, Afro-descendants, and persons with a disability<sup>33</sup>. Economically, disasters have differentiated effects on men and women and racial minorities ([Figure 2](#))<sup>34</sup>.

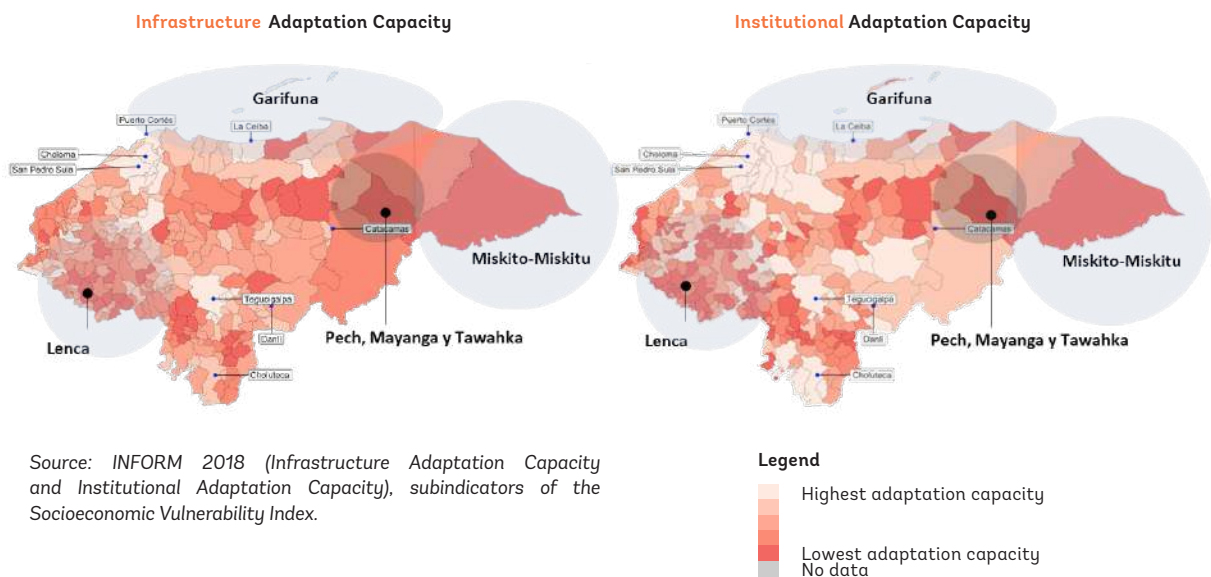
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33. Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants are the groups most severely affected by poverty and social exclusion in Honduras. While these groups account for an estimated 8.6 percent of the national population, rough estimates from Indigenous organizations indicate that more than 70 percent live in poverty and over half are unemployed. A lack of information from household surveys has translated into a lack of official estimates of poverty rates among these groups.

34. FAO 2017. Leaving No One Behind, Addressing climate change for a world free of poverty and hunger.



**Figure 2.**  
**In Honduras, local adaptation capacity to climate change is lowest among ethnic minorities**



Source: INFORM 2018 (Infrastructure Adaptation Capacity and Institutional Adaptation Capacity), subindicators of the Socioeconomic Vulnerability Index.

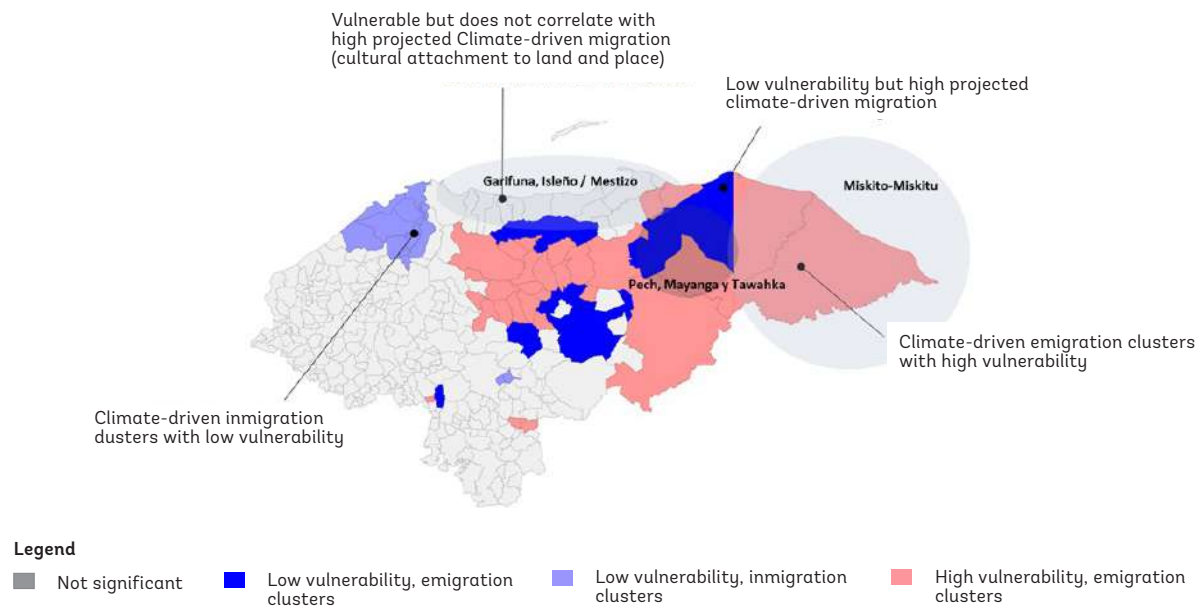
**74. Climate-driven displacement<sup>35</sup> is most likely to take place among Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities<sup>36</sup>.** Out-migration would be prompted by declining water availability and crop productivity, compounded by existing socioeconomic vulnerabilities to climate change impacts. The World Bank team used a local indicator of spatial association (local autocorrelation statistic, LISA) to identify clusters (and spatial outliers) for its analysis (see figure 3).

**75. Marginalized populations experience differentiated vulnerabilities and distinct patterns of climate-induced migration.** Permanent migration is only a last-resort adaptation strategy to climate change effects (Pons 2021, MacNeill 2020). Nevertheless, if the least optimistic climate projections prove to be correct, then even communities with deep connections to the land will probably be forced to move.

35. In the Groundswell data, climate-driven displacement refers particularly to internal migration by construction. However, analysis done in “BACKGROUND NOTE NO. 1. Social Vulnerability to Climate Change in Honduras” shows concentration of emigration clusters in border areas that are strongly correlated with international emigration.

36. Honduras was selected as a case study for in-depth analysis taking advantage of newly available datasets and the opportunity to leverage ongoing World Bank research on climate and violence-driven migration.

**Figure 3.**  
**Areas projected to displace large numbers of people due to climate change impacts in Honduras**



Source: own estimations using Groundswell's dataset (pessimistic scenario of climate-driven displacement projections at 2050); INFORM 2018 Socio-economic Vulnerability Index. Local bivariate spatial autocorrelation (LISA) statistics with socioeconomic vulnerability at core and climate-driven displacement in neighbors. Moran's I estimations with 99,999 permutations (level of significance = 0.01) using queen contiguity matrix. CUNY Institute for Demographic Research - CIDR, Center for International Earth Science Information Network - CIESIN - Columbia University, and The World Bank. 2022. Groundswell Spatial Population and Internal Migration Projections at One-Eighth Degree According to SSPs and RCPs, 2010-2050. Palisades, NY: NASA Socioeconomic Data and Applications Center (SEDAC). <https://doi.org/10.7927/c5kq-fb78>

### Low vulnerability, climate-driven emigration clusters (dark blue)

Areas like Northern Olancho and Gracias a Dios, with low socioeconomic vulnerability but high projections of people who could migrate due to climate change between now and 2050. These are places affected by agricultural productivity losses and projected lost or depleted livelihoods due to slow onset climatological events.

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### **Low vulnerability, climate-driven immigration clusters** (light blue)

Host areas; these clusters exhibit relative lower levels of socioeconomic vulnerability at the core or center of the cluster, surrounded by areas expected to host an influx of people attracted to more favorable conditions in terms of water availability and crop productivity. Examples are San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa, places that are already struggling with rural-to-urban migration trends as the country diversifies its economy to service sectors. These areas will likely require additional infrastructure investments and efforts to build metropolitan management capacities to cope with large population inflows.

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### **High vulnerability, climate-driven emigration clusters** (light red):

Climate-induced emigration hotspots; these clusters exhibit relative higher levels of socioeconomic vulnerability at the core or center of the cluster, surrounded by areas expected to push the largest share of people projected to migrate due to climate change impacts. Examples are la Mosquitia and the Pech-Mayanga-Tawakha territories, where out-migration would be driven by declining water availability and crop productivity and compounded by existing socioeconomic vulnerabilities. Investments to improve institutional and adaptation capacity, as well as community-driven investments, awareness raising, prevention and planning are most urgently needed.

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### **Not statistically significant clusters (grey)**

Notably, these are areas with high levels of socioeconomic vulnerabilities (as shown in Figure 4) but surrounded by neighboring municipalities whose populations are not expected to be prompted to migrate by climate change impacts. The Garifuna populations fall into these category, and plausible explanations are: their strong cultural attachment to land and place; or prohibitive costs associated with displacement, whether monetary (low savings, low-value assets or inability to “cash out”) or social costs (that is, cultural beliefs, social norms); or a lack of awareness of climate change impacts.

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**76. Climate change impacts are a more significant burden for women, particularly in developing countries.** Access to education has also worsened during pandemics, with potential long-term effects on human capital and productivity. The World Bank High-Frequency Phone Survey showed that 45 percent of Honduran households reported income losses after COVID-19.

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**77. Honduras is the only country in Central America with a gender disparity in its migrant population<sup>37</sup>.** Job losses have disproportionately affected informal, low wage, younger, and female workers. Rural Honduran women are increasingly organizing themselves politically and participating more proactively than in recent years.

### Factor 3

#### High and chronic levels of violence

**78. High and chronic levels of crime and violence remain important drivers of migration, but the direction and magnitude of these effects differ with respect to the incidence and prevalence of violence.** The role of specific forms of violence, such as gang violence and gender-based violence, is not definitive due to data and research design limitations. Causal links between migration and violence are often missing in the literature.

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**79. Since 2016, there has been an overall reduction in the homicide rate in Central America.** However, extortion has skyrocketed in Guatemala, and disappearances have increased in El Salvador. Some gang factions are becoming more sophisticated and collaborating with drug-trafficking organizations.

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37. UN-DESA, 1990-2020..

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**80. Homicide rates among youth ages 18 to 30 in Honduras remain higher than the overall population.** Such is also the case in Belize, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Panama (Infosegura 2022; Ministerio Público 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated violence risk factors for vulnerable communities, and Northern Central America remains among the world’s most dangerous places for women (US Institute of Diplomacy and Human Rights 2022).

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**81. The World Bank Group’s Stocktaking Report looks at how migration affects crime and violence in Central America.** Some results suggest that migration is not correlated with the prevalence of crime, while others argue that crime victimization is a push factor for migration.

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**82. On the other hand, we find that migration is positively correlated with the incidence of crime and violence, consistent with other recent literature.** Through qualitative work conducted in the five Honduran municipalities most affected by crime and violence<sup>38</sup>, we find that the incidence of gang-related violence plays a significant role in people’s intention to migrate in Honduras (Muñoz-Burgos 2022). Additional analyses using the 2020 Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) data also found that the incidence of victimization is positively correlated with migration and intention to migrate<sup>39</sup>.

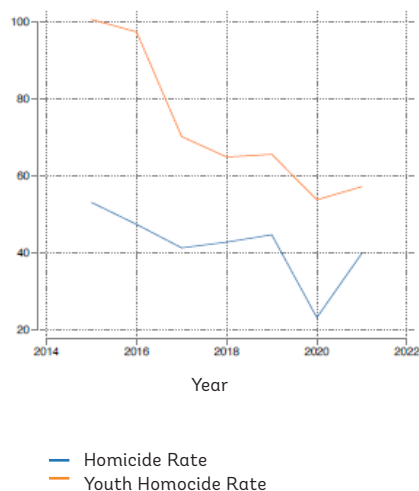
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38. As part of the qualitative component of the study, 40 semi-structured interviews were carried out in Choloma, Distrito Central, La Ceiba, La Lima, and San Pedro Sula, to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of violence on migration. The sampling for the study was intentional (non-random), target population ages 18 to 45. The information collected from the semi-structured interviews was analyzed through a focused codification approach to identify categories and then themes that provided the study’s main findings.

39. While the LAPOP survey data is not statistically representative and does not use probability sampling, its large sample size (27,863 from 2006 to 2016 for El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala) and periodicity provides a valuable source of qualitative information on public opinion that might be difficult to collect through household surveys. The LAPOP survey captures personal victimization by asking participants if they have been the victim of a crime in the past 12 months.

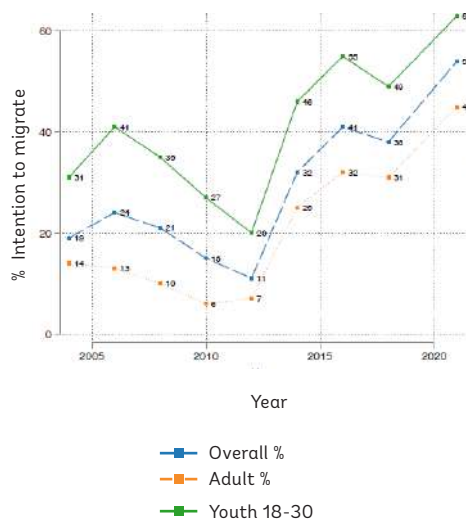
**Figure 4.**  
**Migration is not correlated with the prevalence of crime and violence**

a) Homicide rates among youth and adults are declining in Honduras, but remain high among the young



Source: SEPOL 2021.

b) Among young people the intention to migrate is more pronounced than among the overall population or adults, and it has been growing since 2012



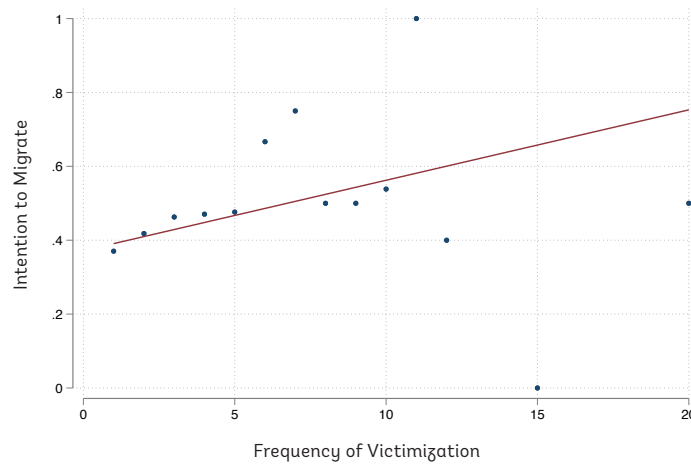
Source: SEPOL 2021.

**83.** The analysis of the LAPOP data shows that the frequency of victimization, which reflects the chronic nature of this problem in Honduras (rather than prevalence alone) increases the probability of wanting to migrate (Figure 5). Similarly, recent literature using experimental methods shows that violence<sup>40</sup> hinders labor mobility domestically (while extortion hinders investment and growth) and causes waves of migration in a snowball effect (Clemens 2017). For every additional homicide in Northern Central America, there is an increase in 0.9 additional apprehensions at the US border (Clemens 2017)<sup>41</sup>. Other authors show that victimization in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala are associated with a desire to migrate: the odds that victims of violence intend to migrate, compared to nonvictims, are 1.6 in Guatemala, 1.98 in El Salvador, and 1.93 in Honduras (Inkpen, Pitts, and Lattimore 2021).

40. Clemens (2017) uses the homicide rate to determine violence levels.

41. These estimate captures the average for the Northern Triangle Region-El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala.

**Figure 5.**  
**Intention to migrate correlates positively with frequency of victimization in Honduras<sup>42</sup>**



Source: Alda, 2022 using LAPOP 2020 data.

## Factor 4

### Family and social networks

- 84. Recent studies document family and community social networks as primary drivers of migration in Central America (Clemens 2017; Abuelafia et al. 2019; Danielson 2020; De La Cruz Méndez 2022). Alda (2022) shows that<sup>43</sup> family risk factors<sup>44</sup> appear to drive most of the variation in youth’s intention to migrate in Honduras<sup>45</sup>, while**

42. Each point in the graph represents a group of municipalities in Honduras.

43. Community factors refer to low neighborhood attachment, laws and norms favorable to drug use, perceived availability of drugs, community disorganization, transitions and mobility in the community.

44. Family risk factors refer to family history of antisocial behavior, parental attitudes favorable toward drug use, family conflict, family gang influence, weak parental supervision and poor family management.

45. The author’s results show that 31 percent of variation in intention to migrate amount youth-at-risk in Honduras is explained by community risk factors followed by the group of individual/family risk factors with 28 percent of explained variation. The third strongest group of explanatory factors is the cumulative index of problem behaviors, explaining 13.8 percent of the variation. Finally, the group of school risk factors explains 8.5 percent of the variation in the intention to migrate model.

school<sup>46</sup> and individual risk factors<sup>47</sup> variables were not significantly associated with the intention to migrate (see Table 1). Similarly, Muñoz Burgos (2022) finds that family disintegration and mobility and safety barriers in gang-controlled territories in Honduras are among the most important factors that affect economic opportunities and lead people to migrate.

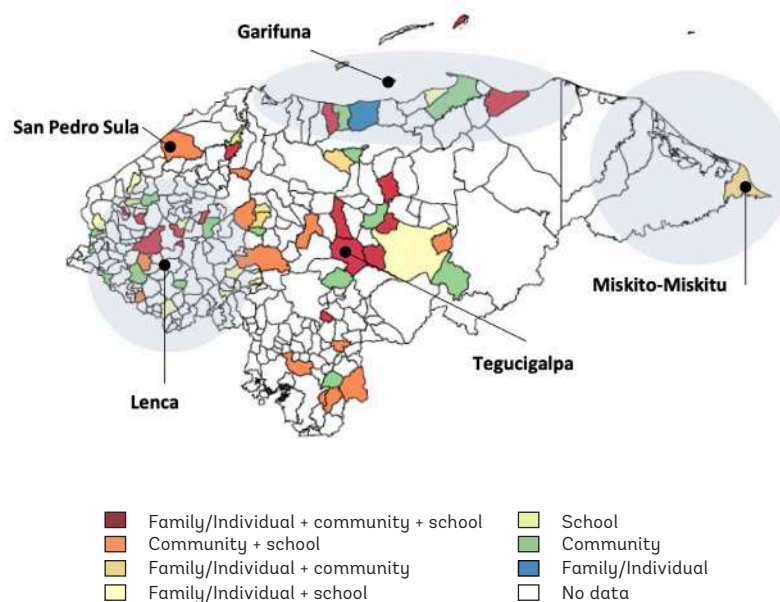
**85. When risk factors that drive youth's intention to migrate are spatially decomposed in Honduras, differentiated patterns emerge in urban areas and among ethno-racial minorities.** Most research to date using decomposition analysis on migration in Honduras and Central America has employed municipal level data (Alda, 2022). Using a similar approach, Alda (2022) ranks the effects of various risk factors at the individual and municipal levels, where the latter represent average effects across municipalities. When household survey data is aggregated at the municipal level, the relative contributions of each risk factor, and the combination of these, vary geographically and correspond to differences in urban-rural settings and ethnic differences (such as climate-driven migration patterns arising among vulnerable populations in Honduras as shown in Figure 3). For instance, in Tegucigalpa and La Ceiba, a combination of family/individual, community and school risk factors are the dominant drivers explaining youth's intention to migrate. However, in the Sula Valley, the most important drivers are community and school risk factors. Among Miskito communities, family and community factors are more prevalent, while Garifuna and Lenca populations exhibit higher heterogeneity across municipalities. For example, in La Ceiba, family risk factors are dominant, while community risk factors are more significant; Trujillo and Limón exhibit a combination of family/individual, community and school risk factors as seen in other urban areas (Figure 6).

46. School risk factors refer to academic failure and low commitment to school.

47. Individual risk factors refer to Rebelliousness, Rewards for Antisocial Involvement, Favorable Attitudes Toward Drug Use, Favorable Attitudes Toward Antisocial Behavior, Perceived Risks of Drug Use, Friends' Use of Drugs, Interaction with Antisocial Peer, Intentions to Use, Antisocial Tendencies, Critical Life Events, Impulsive Risk Taking, Neutralization of Guilt, Negative Peer Influence, Peer Delinquency.



**Figure 6.**  
**Drivers of young people’s intention to migrate in Honduras**



Source: Authors' own elaboration using Alda, 2022

**86. Family disintegration can be both a risk and a resilience factor in the intention to migrate.** When families remain cohesive and resilient, strong local family networks may serve as an anchor for people to stay (see Table 1). In Honduras, this effect seems to be stronger than the pull effects of family or networks abroad.

**87. Further, the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Needs Assessment in Northern Honduras shows that reintegration efforts often lack a family-centered approach, a critical element for their full participation in the economy and society.** Family groups informally provide essential resources to overcome depression and psycho-emotional conditions among forced, assisted, and voluntary returnees. However, families respond spontaneously and often

lack sufficient technical and financial tools to navigate the service system and to find social and emotional support for themselves. Family members express the need for help from government agencies in view of the lack of medical and psychological care, and the ways that the family circle promotes the well-being of families and their members. This is all part of the pressing need to find solutions to the multiple mental health and psychosocial difficulties evidenced within the study.

**88. Bilateral donor aid has been associated with increased immigration flows into the donor country, mainly driven by social network effects.** Bilateral assistance is associated with stronger personal and business networks between the giving and receiving countries, increasing migration. Multilateral aid has a small negative impact: a 1 percent increase in multilateral aid induces a 0.02 percent reduction in migration.

**Table 1.**  
**Summary of regression results on drivers of intention to migrate in honduras. Community and family risk factors seem to drive young people’s intention to migrate, while school and individual risk factors are not significant**

	Intention to Migrate		Intention to Migrate (Marginal effects)	
	Coefficient	Std. Error	Coefficient	Std. Error
Family Risk Factors	0,0124***	(0,0038)	0,0047***	(0,0014)
Community Risk Factors	0,0081**	(0,0033)	0,0031**	(0,0013)
School Risk Factors	-0,0050	(0,0040)	-0,0019	(0,0015)
Individual Risk Factors	0,0020	(0,0053)	0,0008	(0,0020)
Age	0,0296**	(0,0116)	0,0112**	(0,0044)

	Intention to Migrate		Intention to Migrate (Marginal effects)	
	Coefficient	Std. Error	Coefficient	Std. Error
Race <sup>a</sup>				
Mestizo	-0,2979*	(0,1540)	-0,1150*	(0,0596)
Lenca	-0,3565**	(0,1803)	-0,1371*	(0,0693)
Pech	0,0671	(0,5816)	0,0259	(0,2234)
Miskito	0,0863	(0,1834)	0,0332	(0,0707)
Maya Chorti	-0,3683	(0,3551)	-0,1415	(0,1335)
Tolupan	0,0200	(0,3984)	0,0077	(0,1539)
Literaty Level	0,0945	(0,2398)	0,0358	(0,0908)
Gender	0,0288	(0,0620)	0,0109	(0,0235)
Problem Behavior Cumultive <sup>b</sup>	0,0902*	(0,0468)	0,0342*	(0,0177)
Currently Studying	-0,0162	(0,1155)	-0,0061	(0,0437)
Place of Birth [Urban/Rural]	0,0883	(0,0819)	0,0334	(0,281)
Constant	-0,7968*	(0,4565)		
Observations	1847			
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0,0356			

a Garifuna is the comparator category.

b This includes information about the respondent being engaged in at least one of the following behaviors: Drug use, Truancy, Property Theft, Using a weapon, Selling Drugs, Engaged in violent behavior, and belonging to a gang.

Source: Alda (2022)

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## Understanding the interconnections

**89. Violence affects social capital and thus collective efficacy in communities, potentially reducing their ability to effectively prepare for—or collaborate after—an adverse event.** Families affected by natural circumstances are also more prone to leave their country because safe or viable places for internal migration are lacking.

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**90. The normalization of violence, the closure of businesses, and limited free mobility are perceived as economic issues, not security ones.** Discrimination by employers based on place of residence (highly violent communities) and gang extortions of small businesses are among the violence-related situations that affect economic opportunities and prompt people to migrate.

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**91. Personal and family safety comes at the expense of community resilience in Honduras, and in many cases, the former can only be guaranteed by leaving the country.** Muñoz Burgos (2022) concludes that although cooperation between neighbors in Honduras serves small collaborative efforts well enough, it is not enough to counter violence, migration, or other major issues. He posits that limited collective efficacy diminishes trust among community members and can negatively impact a sense of belonging, attachment to place, and civic and political participation: all important determinants in a person's decision to migrate.

### Pillar 2

#### What makes migration experiences successful?

**92. Social barriers to migration are the main obstacle to maximizing its development impact.** The international development community has typically made a case for migration premised on unlocking the economic potential of migration, whether voluntary or involuntary. This is to be contrasted with the resistance to migration which is almost always framed in social terms.

.....

**93. Despite a growing body of evidence, more than the economic argument on the benefits of human mobility is needed to advance migratory policies.** Despite rigorous research uncovering extensive evidence to the contrary, human mobility is still typically described as a problem. This disconnect has rendered our standard economists' toolkit insufficient to move the needle on this complex issue.

.....

**94. Social barriers often derive from a perception of difference or nonconformity, lack of social cohesion, or distrust among host and migrant communities.** Our research recognizes migrants' contributions holistically—beyond their economic contributions as workers—as purveyors of new ideas, societal norms, and well-being.

.....

**95. Migrant vulnerability and resilience models are rooted in the belief that the human rights of all, including migrants, should be upheld, and promoted.** These models recognize that migrants and the households, communities, and groups to which they belong are all situated in a broader environment.

.....

**96. Climate change impacts, for example, are expected to continue fostering migration from rural areas to urban centers and outside Central America<sup>48 49</sup>.** These factors can attenuate or exacerbate the vulnerability of migrants to harm (violence, exploitation, and abuse) and external shocks such as disasters or loss of employment.

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48. Wodon et. al., 2014; Šedová et. al., 2021.

49. Many semiarid parts of Guatemala will soon be more like a desert. Although the scientific models can project those changes with great precision, its human consequences have been relatively understudied until recently. Upon COVID-19, World Bank High Frequency Phone Survey show that 45 percent of Honduran households reported income losses, 31 percent deterioration of food security, and 13 percent job losses; impacts that were exacerbated by the Eta and Iota twin hurricanes. Such job losses have disproportionately affected informal, low wage, younger, and female workers. Yet, there is limited data on how this might translate into increased displacement, and there is no disaggregated data to understand the impact to Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations.

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**97. To harness the benefits of human mobility as a development opportunity, policies and investments need to consider resilience and vulnerability factors within the overall institutional design.** Notably, these include vulnerability and resilience factors of both migrants and host communities in a cohesive manner. Without intentional policy and institutional design, these benefits may be hard to realize.

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**98. Central American countries and the Dominican Republic have in place two main mechanisms to respond to the influx of people.** Also, national and subnational governments in transit and destination countries have developed innovative responses to address the challenges posed by increasing numbers of people moving to the region.

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**99. The World Bank’s Country Partnership Frameworks (CPF) need to address operational programming vulnerability and resilience factors sufficiently.** This is partly due to a need for more specific advice and guidance on operational issues derived from RRA. The report found that despite enhanced analytical development in this area, functional implications are not considered in strategic documents such as SCD and CPF.

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**100. Key findings and lessons learned have been derived from various tools, including analytical work, technical assistance, and operational engagements.** All these efforts have migrant vulnerability and resilience models at their core and aim to bridge the gap between diagnostics and operations.

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**101. Understanding the conditions for successful migratory experiences in Central America and into the Dominican Republic rests on four pillars (acronym: PAVE):** physical and mental integrity (P), access to services and participation (A), views and perceptions of migrants (V), and facilitating social and economic integration (E).

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### **Protection and safety (P)**

The extent to which the physical and mental integrity of migrants and refugees can be enhanced and improved as a necessary condition for becoming fully integrated and productive members of society; for instance, through protecting vulnerable groups among people on the move, including women, unaccompanied children's migrants, and the forcibly displaced.

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### **Access to services and participation (A)**

The extent to which access and quality of services can be enabled so that it preserves and builds (rather than erodes) social and human capital. For instance, through expanding access to infrastructure and national services systems

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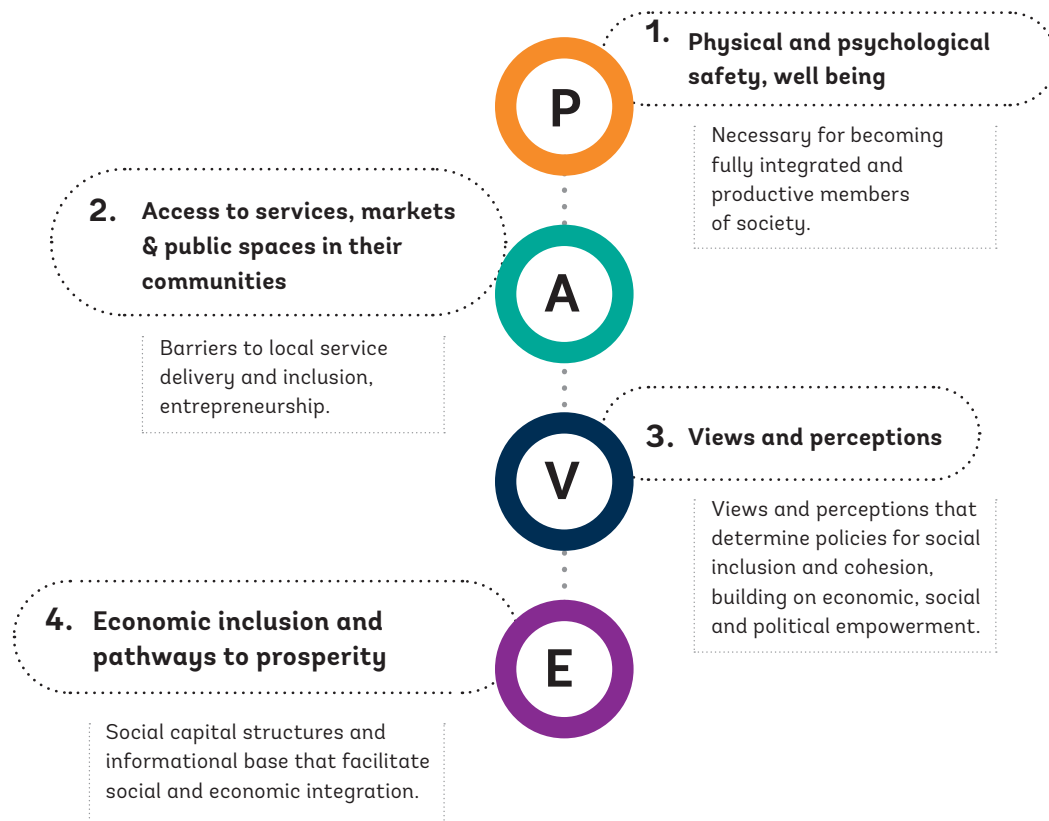
### **Views and perceptions (V)**

The extent to which views and perceptions of migration and migrants held by firms, households, and policy makers can serve as enablers rather than barriers to success. For instance, to tackle xenophobia, discrimination, and stigmatization of migrants.

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### **Economic and social inclusion and pathways to prosperity (E)**

The extent to which institutional mechanisms, social structures, and informational base facilitate social and economic integration.



## Protection and Safety (P)

- 102. Many women and girls cited violence—both within the household and perpetrated by criminal gangs—as a critical reason for fleeing their home country.** In communities affected by high levels of crime and violence, threats by the ruling gang to individuals and their families prompt many to flee under circumstances of heightened vulnerability. Upon return, deportees and voluntary returnees often struggle with reintegration due to a fear of being killed, putting their families in danger, being subject to gang threats, or lacking a sense of belonging<sup>50</sup>.

50. See Background Note No. 03 & Background Note No. 04 for more information.



.....

**103. There is no internationally accepted definition of “vulnerable migrant”, nor any clear identification procedures.** Major regional donor countries such as the USA and Canada have prioritized efforts to address these challenges. Canada spearheaded GBV prevention and protection efforts targeting women migrants. The USA has increased efforts to support women and girl migrant survivors of GBV upon arrival.

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**104. The World Bank’s social assessments have identified practices of forced recruitment and sexual exploitation with higher prevalence in border and urban areas.** Risks of social conflict are also prevalent due to competition for services and jobs in underdeveloped host areas. This analysis also identified rising exploitation, victimization, discrimination, and xenophobia against vulnerable women and LGBTI migrants in border areas.

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### **a) Protection against gender-based violence (GBV)**

**105. Many female migrants and refugees who experience GBV are unable—or choose not—to report it or seek services.** This is due to physical or legal barriers, social norms, and fears of arrest or deportation, among other reasons. Even where violence is reported, levels of impunity remain high, and response and restorative justice are very limited.

.....

**106. Transit is the phase of greatest vulnerability to GBV among women migrants and refugees in Central America and the Dominican Republic.** Many women and girls cited violence—both within the household and perpetrated by criminal gangs—as a crucial reason for fleeing their home country. Women also face retaliatory violence for having left, and discrimination and stigmatization upon their return.

.....

**107. GBV remains a critical and pervasive problem for the region.** In Honduras and El Salvador femicide is particularly prevalent. Social norms play an important role too, with 13 percent of men in Nicaragua believing that women should accept their husband’s or partner’s violent behavior against them.

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**108. Haiti has one of the highest rates of gender-based violence (GBV) in the world, with GBV affecting 29 percent of women of childbearing age.** In 37 percent of cases, this violence results in serious injury. Haitian migrants fleeing into the Dominican Republic are also subject to high rates of GBV before departure<sup>51</sup>.

.....

**109. Migration as an escape from gender violence makes visible the magnitude of structural violence and the justice system's weaknesses.** If the only way to escape from gender-based violence is to leave one's home country, despite exposure to situations of risk of trafficking, then it is a desperate measure.

.....

**110. Haitian, Venezuelan, and Colombian migrants are also subject to sexual exploitation and abuse during transit and upon departure, as well as Dominican nationals (MIREX and CITIM 2021).** The Dominican Republic is a preferred destination for the human trafficking of minors and sexual tourism<sup>52</sup>. Girls between the ages of 15 and 17 are among the most vulnerable to sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Traffickers rely on online "catalogs" to "sell" their victims to clients in private homes, rental apartments, and hotels.

.....

**111. The availability of GBV prevention and response services while in transit and upon return are limited for non-nationals, limiting their ability to seek protection and needed support.** In Latin America, only El Salvador and Mexico provide access to non-nationals (IOM 2016), while migrants and refugees in other countries report barriers related to legal status and relationship with law enforcement authorities for reporting GBV cases. Migrant women who seek protection in Costa Rica based on GBV grounds must prove the exhaustion of domestic remedies by all possible and reliable means or that their home countries have not acted with due diligence or are not willing or able to give such protection (SAS, 2022). This prevents many women in need of international protection from acquiring refugee status in Costa Rica.

.....

51. Enquête Mortalité, Morbidité et Utilisation des Services (EMMUS-VI 2016-2017), available in French at <https://www.dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/SR249/SR249.pdf/>

52. República Dominicana: Informe sobre la Trata de Personas 2022. Embassy of the United States in the Dominican Republic.

.....

**112. The World Bank is working to address gender-based violence (GBV) among women migrants in the Dominican Republic.** The World Bank has identified GBV as one of the most critical priorities for the region’s development.

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**113. The World Bank, the IOM, and the UNHCR worked jointly to analyze the intersection between transit routes and service providers to GBV survivors.** Using high-resolution satellite imagery, these transit routes were spatially intersected with Central America’s<sup>53</sup> national and local service providers. This exercise provided an unprecedented level of granularity to understand transit routes better, helping inform decisions across all three participating institutions.

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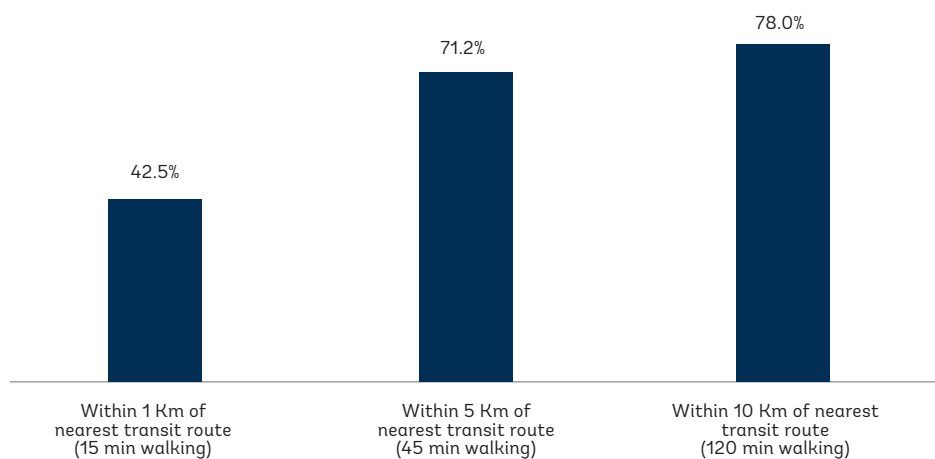
**114. Only 43 percent of care services for survivors of gender-based violence are accessible within a kilometer of the nearest migratory route in Central America, an IOM study has found<sup>54</sup>,** vThe study was validated with IOM and UNHCR country and field teams between April and May 2022 ([Figure 7](#)).

.....

53. This analysis includes seven countries in the region (Guatemala, Belize, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Panama) for which data on GBV service providers was available. It does not include the Dominican Republic.

54. The results of this work are documented in “Background Note No. 6”. Understanding the intersection between migratory routes and gender-based violence service providers in Central America: A rapid geospatial accessibility-to-services analysis and joint validation exercise with OIM and UNHCR”. Following international standards for migrant protection, datasets are kept for World Bank’s, IOMs, and UNHCR’s internal use only due to protection considerations given the sensibility of migratory route information.

**Figure 7.**  
**Share of service providers to GBV survivors**



Source: Authors' own elaboration

**115. The Social Protection Fund (SPF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) are conducting ground-truthing exercises to learn more about the barriers women and girls traveling along migration routes in Central America face.** Findings from the rapid accessibility analysis will help inform a more detailed assessment of the obstacles that women, girls, and women on the move face.

**116. In the Dominican Republic, the World Bank supports increasing national efforts to improve services for vulnerable migrants, including survivors of GBV.** This work complements parallel World Bank activities supported by SPF to address GBV in Haiti as part of the project to promote GBV services for women and girls (P179731).

**Box 2.**

**Summary of World Bank Support to Address GBV in the Dominican Republic**

**Prevention and Response to GBV among migrant women and support for implementing of the 2022–2024 National Plan Against Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking.** The Ministry of Women is strengthening response protocols and care services for women survivors of GBV. These services are offered in the Provincial and Municipal Offices for Women (OPM/OMM) of the Ministry of Women. Institutional strengthening will be achieved by (i) training public officials to identify human trafficking and smuggling and follow a survivor-centered approach; (ii) strengthening shelter conditions and systems for victims and close relatives; and (iii) undertaking awareness and sensitization campaigns targeted toward potential beneficiaries and selected communities.

**Strengthening care for women migrants in the Supérate Mujer Program.** The World Bank will finance technical support and help articulate interventions for eligible women and girl survivors of GBV, including eligible migrants. This support will provide: (i) information for eligible beneficiaries about their rights to access social benefits; (ii) access to specialized training on economic and financial inclusion; (iii) eligibility assessment for the National Happy Family Housing Plan and other cash transfer programs such as the “Women’s Bonus” granted by the Ministry of Women.

**b) Physical and psychological safety for returnee reintegration**

**117. IOM’s Reintegration Handbook provides practical guidance on the design, implementation, and monitoring of reintegration services for returnees.** The Handbook complements other tools on how to protect and assist victims of trafficking or migrants vulnerable to violence, exploitation, and abuse.

**118. International best standards for sustainable reintegration highlight the importance of holistic approaches that focus on the long term.** Reintegration can be sustainable when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with remigration drivers (factors that would otherwise induce them to leave home again).

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**Box 3.****Summary of the IOM Reintegration Handbook**

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The IOM Reintegration Handbook has been conceived as a hands-on tool targeting the various stakeholders involved in support for reintegration at different levels and stages of the return process. These may include, for instance, project developers, project managers, case managers, policy makers, and other reintegration practitioners.

The Handbook builds on an understanding that the goal of reintegration assistance is to foster sustainable reintegration for returnees and that this requires a whole-of-government approach through the adoption of coordinated measures, policies, and practices between relevant stakeholders at the international, regional, national, and local levels. The IOM Reintegration Handbook is structured into six modules:

**Module 1: An integrated approach to reintegration**

Describes the basic concepts of return and reintegration and explains IOM's integrated approach to reintegration. It also outlines the general considerations when developing a comprehensive reintegration program, including assessments, staffing, and budgeting.

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**Module 2: Reintegration assistance at the individual level**

Outlines suggested steps for assisting returnees, considering the economic, social, and psychosocial dimensions of reintegration.

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**Module 3: Reintegration assistance at the community level**

Guides on assessing community needs and engaging the community in reintegration activities. It also provides examples of community-level reintegration initiatives in the economic, social, and psychosocial dimensions.

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**Module 4: Reintegration assistance at the structural level**

Proposes ways to strengthen all actors' capacities and promote stakeholder engagement and ownership in reintegration programming. It suggests approaches for mainstreaming reintegration into existing policies and strategies.

## Module 5: Monitoring and evaluating reintegration assistance

Provides guidance and tools to design programs, monitor interventions, and conduct evaluations to maximize effectiveness and learning.

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## Module 6: A Child Rights Approach to The Sustainable Reintegration of Migrant Children and Families

Guides how to integrate and promote appropriate reintegration practices for returnee children.

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## Annexes

Provide additional valuable tools and guidance on specific reintegration interventions, including advice for mainstreaming environmental and climate considerations into reintegration programming.

Source: IOM Reintegration Handbook (2019)

**119. Of the Central American nationals (migrants) apprehended from 2014 through 2019, 28 percent were then repatriated to their countries of origin.** This suggests that these countries have received more than 400,000 deported migrants, a significant number to receive and reintegrate.

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**120. In 2022, there was a 209 percent increase in deportations from the USA and Mexico compared to the same period in 2021<sup>55</sup>.** Most Guatemalan returnees were deported on 419 flights (321 from the USA and 98 from Mexico) and 1,048 buses from Mexico. According to the IOM, 72.5 percent of Honduran returnees say they had not received reintegration support.

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55. These include statistics on returns and removals reported by the US Customs Border Patrol (CBP), US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

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**121. Many returnees lack the capacity to support their basic needs, including food, water, and housing, let alone deal with long-term socioeconomic risks.** They are often victims of violence along the route and face protection risks that have forced them to reintegrate. In El Salvador, previous needs assessments among returnees show physical safety priorities upon arrival. Guatemalan and Honduran returnees cite priorities on mental health to overcome trauma experienced during the migration journey and integrate successfully (like Salvadorian returnees, Hondurans also fear for their physical safety, especially if coming from communities affected by high rates of crime and violence).

.....

**122. The mental health and psychosocial support field are becoming a significant concern for all providing humanitarian and development interventions.** Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) must be incorporated to meet the diverse needs of migrants, taking into account the stage of the migration process in which they find themselves and the conditions of the context in which they operate. In addition, it is crucial to promote the generation of solid evidence on the impact of migration, in this case specifically on return, on mental health outcomes. This implies considering both the symptoms of depression, anxiety, or other pathologies and the effects on resilience, agency capacity, and other positive resources that arise in the face of adversity<sup>56</sup>. In addition to the humanitarian perspective, it is essential to strengthen socio-emotional skills to fully and effectively reintegrate returning individuals into the Honduran society and economy.<sup>57</sup>

.....

**123. The World Bank and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are working together to address barriers to successful social and economic reintegration of former migrants.** Honduras was selected as a case study due to the growing numbers of returnees and the analytical gaps identified.

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56. Rousseau, C., & Frounfelker, R. L. (2019). Mental health needs and services for migrants: an overview for primary care providers. *Journal of Travel Medicine*, 26(2), tay150.

57. The World Health Organization. (2021, August 31). Mental health and forced displacement. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-and-forced-displacement>



.....

**124. Psychosocial and support needs among returnees and their host communities are explored in this study.** The study collected primary data from 65 interviews and 17 focus groups. It aimed to map mental health and psychosocial services available to returnees. It also aimed to gain a better understanding of the contribution of returnees to their societies and economies<sup>58</sup>.

.....

**125. Opinions and perceptions of the returned migrant population in Honduras covered sociodemographic characterization, physical, mental health, and psychosocial elements.** The Kessler K10 scale was used to measure some variables, including anguish, loneliness, loss of appetite, low self-esteem, and stress, among others, aimed at evaluating psychological distress in terms of identifying the presence of depressive and anxious symptoms during the initial consultation of doctors and front-line health professionals in various countries of the world. At the end of this report, there is an analysis of specific results and cross-referencing with other variables used in the study.

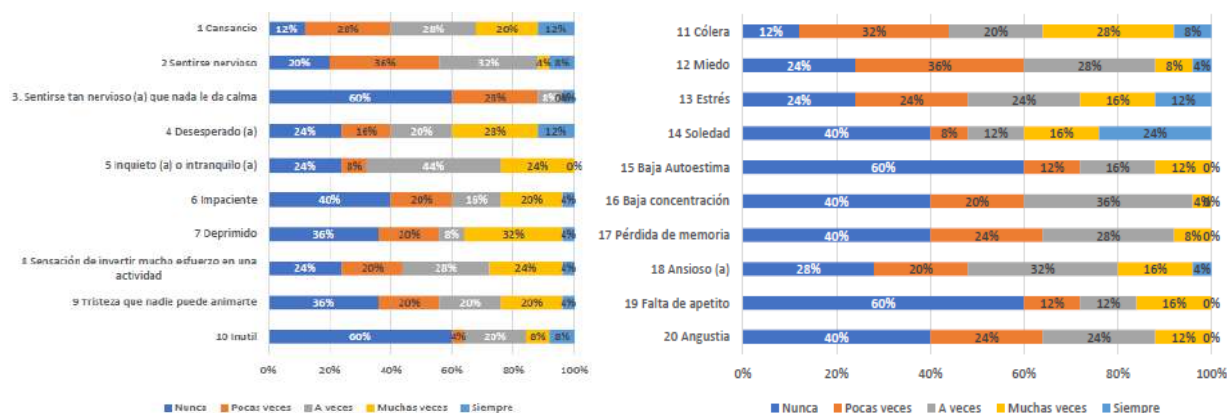
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**126. Findings from the needs assessments show that the mental health status of returned migrants is related to fatigue, nervousness, hopelessness, anxiety, despair, impatience, and symptoms of depression.** Similarly, anger or rage is present in stress and loneliness. Other predominant symptoms are memory loss, anxiety, and episodes of anguish. The difficulty of sleep quality and the presence of insomnia or nightmares in most migrants account for their conscious and unconscious emotional loads. In the same way, women are considered the head in charge and responsible for the family group. Interviews revealed that single mothers are more vulnerable because they suffer emotionally from losing their loved ones, constantly mourning the death (sometimes even mutilation) of their family members.

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58. See Background Note No. 04 for more information.

**Figure 8.**  
**Honduran returnees with deteriorated mental health**



Source: Padron et al. (2022), see Background Note No. 4, Volume 2.

**127. Women are most affected by the presence of anxious symptoms, stress, and feeling unproductive, while depressive symptoms are more prevalent among men.** The application of the Kessler K10 Scale shows the frequent presence of symptoms associated with anxiety in women. This aspect is related to gender roles and social norms prevalent in Honduran society. As head of a household, a woman feels the need not only to provide for and protect their families—providing constant support—but also to project an image of psychic indestructibility.

**128. Discrimination, lack of access to job opportunities or a stable income, stigmatization, and trauma are some of the factors that explain these symptoms among returnees.** Employers are reluctant to hire returnees due to their socioeconomic background or because of the place where they live.

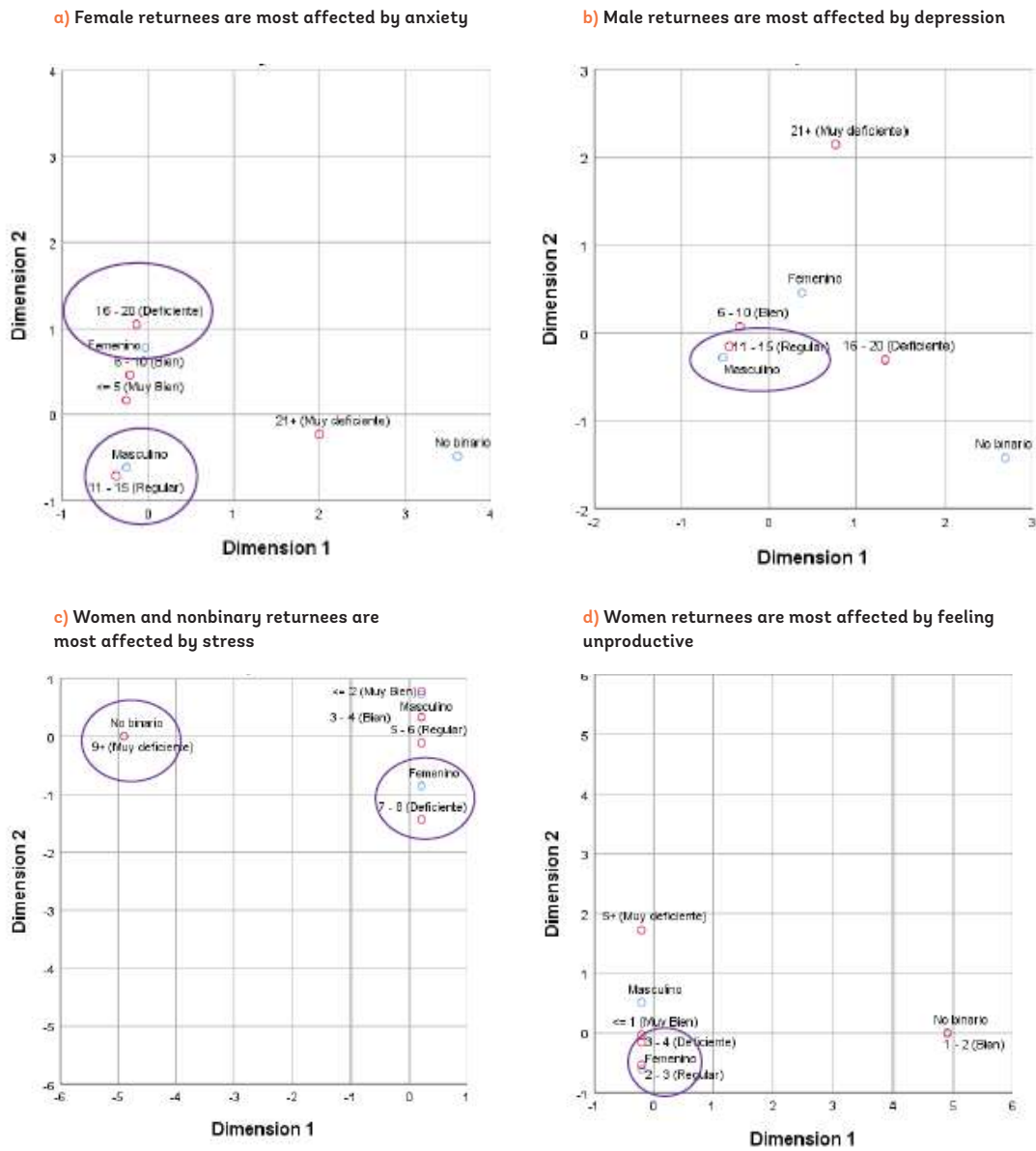
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**129. On service provision, we found that responses to mental health issues are predominantly medicalized instead of being steered toward more effective community or family-centered psychosocial models.** Prevalent social norms and professional practices show that disciplines such as psychology and social work have been undervalued. Despite evidence of their high effectiveness, service providers disregard community and family-oriented approaches and prioritize health processes purely from a medical perspective.

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**130. A mapping of the mental health services available for the vulnerable returned migrant population in Honduras was carried out.** The Centers for Attention to Returned Migrants (located in Omoa, San Pedro Sula, and Belén) are where health care is provided. Also, CRISTOSAL is a foundation that provides care to displaced people, the LGBTI population, and returnees, with areas of work related to accompanying victims, human rights monitoring, strategy communication, strategic litigation, and human rights education. In addition, the Red Cross offers psychology and nursing professionals in the Migrant Assistance Center and the IOM delivers seed capital to returned migrant women and men. CONAMIREDIS offers physical and mental health services; the Mennonite Social Action Commission (headed by the Episcopal Church of Honduras) provides psychological and spiritual care in the different shelters for returned migrants, and the Solidarity Network (which incorporates culture, health, education, food, and income) works to reduce the causes of poverty.

**Figure 9.**  
**Gender differentials and mental health status among honduran returnees (2022)**



Note: Row and column points, symmetrical normalization of variables in each panel.  
 Source: Padron et al. (2022) (see Background Note No. 4, Volume 2)

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**131. The prevalence of medicalized models to address mental health issues has exacerbated alcohol consumption and abuse of certain psychoactive substances among returnees.** This requires specialized care services, especially considering the significant health risks and overdose deaths due to the unregulated quality of drugs available. These specialized services may also include processes or treatments to minimize the consumption of alcohol and drugs among the returnee population.

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**132. Facing limited protection and MHPSS services, the family unit is one of the few resilience factors for returnees.** For a returnee, upon arrival, the family is the first resource. Families are the first reference group because they intuitively support returnees in overcoming feelings of frustration, sorrow, and sadness. They also offer comfort when evaluating the decision to migrate, which typically involved selling everything prior to venturing out (not merely penniless, but saddled with debts); upon return, life must therefore be reconstructed from the ground up, from zero.

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**133. Sexual minorities and other marginalized populations are at higher risk of exclusion as families do not offer support.** LGBTI communities and organizations of people with disabilities reported discrimination, human rights violations, and stigmatization before and after travel abroad. The family unit may not provide a safety net to an individual from one of these communities who is perceived as abnormal and detrimental to the families' social capital as conceived under prevalent social and cultural norms.

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**134. Most families and returnees interviewed would welcome MHPSS services if made available, but they say these services are not easily accessible, affordable, or adequately targeted to their needs.** The experience of voluntary assisted or forced return triggers other potential behavioral and mental health risks related to relationships between couples, children, and multi-family households. The lack of psychiatrists and psychologists within public health services significantly exacerbates the mental health gap in this context.

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**135. The gap analysis of MHPSS services available to returnees highlighted the failure of national strategy to provide:** (i) unified registration, promotion, and prevention programs that are easy for returnees to access and understand; (ii) a family-based approach to destigmatize mental health and place higher importance on relationships and communication; (iii) sufficient spending on mental health to render psychology and psychiatry services more accessible; (iv) balanced teams that include professionals and representatives from organizations, businesses, churches, municipalities, schools, families, communities, and associations; (v) specialized psychosocial care for returned migrant women whose mental health is likely to have been impacted by the trauma of sexual abuse suffered on the migratory route; (vi) or strategies to serve various vulnerable populations, such as LGBTI individuals, or those with disabilities.

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**136. The findings from the needs assessments provide valuable lessons for strengthening MHPSS and family-oriented interventions for better returnee reintegration in Honduras.** This work leads to a better understanding of the effects of recent movement trends among migrants who have returned to northern Honduras. By assessing how current human mobility flows impact returnee and host communities, this work aims to inform operational responses from the World Bank and other international development partners when designing sustainable reintegration efforts.

### **Access to Services and Participation (A)**

**137. Recent World Bank studies at the global level reflect the social and economic benefits of the arrival of migrants and refugees, especially when they are allowed to work and enjoy freedom of movement and access to essential basic services in host communities (World Bank 2022).** Thus, it is crucial to understand and carefully analyze the conditions in which the communities of origin, transit, destination and return manage access to services and participation if migrants are to integrate effectively throughout the migration spectrum.

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**138. Multisectoral efforts that combine a humanitarian response with development investments in countries of origin, transit, destination, and return have proven highly effective (World Bank 2022).** Those programs that benefit migrants and host communities and that focus on economic and social integration have successfully mitigated risks associated with large inflows of people. Efforts that bridge humanitarian and development efforts and focus on social cohesion between host and migrant communities work best.

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**139. However, host communities typically lag in development outcomes before migrants, refugees, and returnees arrive.** People on the move tend to settle in two types of areas: cities and peripheral border areas:

**i) Large cities and urban areas**

People on the move increasingly settle in urban areas where access to opportunities (especially jobs and education) is abundant and large agglomerations provide a sense of anonymity. Within cities, refugees, returnees, and migrants in vulnerable circumstances often settle in informal settlements or areas with low-quality housing, infrastructure, and public services as they are more affordable.

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**ii) Border areas where the state presence is limited**

Border areas where the state presence is limited create an outlet for migrants to go “under the radar” and settle either temporarily or permanently as they look for better opportunities. These are typically geographically and economically set apart from the capital or growth centers and tend to house refugees, returnees, and migrants in precarious circumstances.

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**140. Host communities face combined social and economic vulnerabilities that add to the challenges and barriers to human dignity that people on the move experience.** This pre-existing situation effectively reduces the likelihood of locals and foreign-born newcomers enjoying public goods and services deemed crucial for personal development. Further, an influx of foreigners in lagging areas arouses concerns about the competition for jobs, natural resources, and access to already limited services.

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**141. The lack of voice and agency of marginalized host and migrant communities limits their capacity to participate in policy-making processes in meaningful ways to them.** Host and migrant communities in developing countries are at risk of having lower rates of human capital accumulation and skills preservation in the long run and being unable to identify and profit from development opportunities. These inequalities give these excluded groups an unsteady footing in life, with lasting consequences for their individual and group well-being.

.....

**142. The World Bank's response to the migrant crisis has progressed beyond traditional sectoral policies to a more holistic approach focused on social inclusion and institutional adaptation.** The World Bank has identified 69 specialized sectoral responses to address migrants' vulnerabilities, with communications and perceptions management at the center of its response framework.

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**143. The World Bank has published a report on the migration situation in Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic.** For Costa Rica, this provides a rapid assessment of the challenges and opportunities for institutions, communities, and people on the move. This note also presents potential opportunities opened up by the challenges identified.<sup>59</sup>.

### **Costa Rica: expanding access to infrastructure and services to migrants and refugees coming from Nicaragua and Venezuela**

**144. Costa Rica, historically a welcoming country for migrants and refugees, has undergone a new wave of migration characterized by an increased number of Venezuelan migrants since 2015 and a spike in Nicaraguan migrants since 2018 (MPI 2021; DGME 2022).** By June 2020, regularized migrants accounted for 595,870 people, of whom 66 percent were Nicaraguans, 5 percent Colombians, and 3 percent Venezuelans. Together, they represented 11.2 percent of

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59. See Background Note No. 07.



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the total population. As of June 2022, people of concern represented 4 percent of the population (10,646 refugees and 180,256 asylum seekers), an increase of more than 1,400 percent over the preceding five years (2016–2021). Of these, 92 percent were Nicaraguans, 3 percent Venezuelans, 2 percent Colombians, and 1 percent Cubans and other Central Americans.

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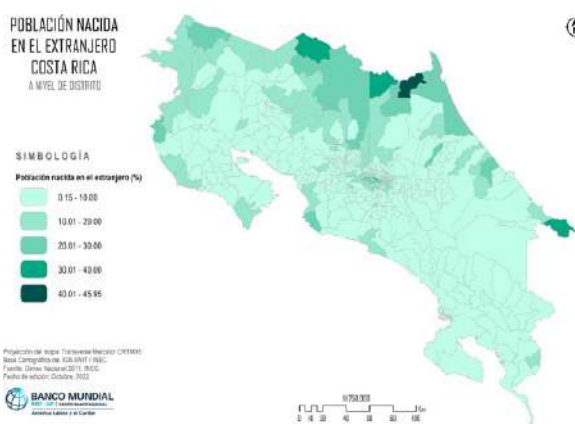
**145. This new migration wave coincided with budget cuts to crucial migration entities, putting pressure on the migration system.** Nicaraguans and Venezuelans account for a very significant number of applications for refugee status, but only 3,828 have been granted refugee status.

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**146. The impacts of these migratory flows are disproportionately concentrated in the northern region (Figure 10).** As of November 2021, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported more than 20 irregular entry points in maritime and terrestrial border areas. The 150 communities with refugee and asylum seeker populations are concentrated in five cantons: Upala, La Cruz, Los Chiles, Guatuso, and San Carlos.

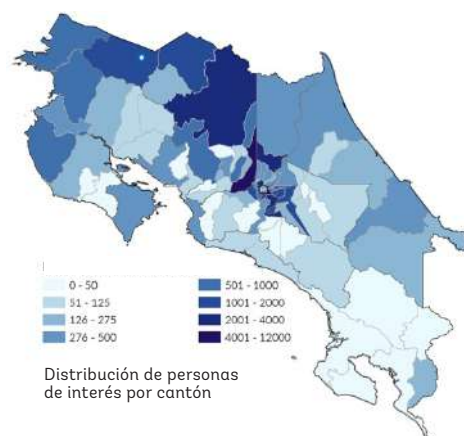
**Figure 10.**  
**Geographic distribution of foreign-born population in Costa Rica**

**a) Share of Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and IDPs as a Percentage of Total Migrants<sup>60</sup>**



Source: own calculations using 2011 Census data

**b) Geographic distribution of people of concern to UNHCR (refugees and asylum seekers)**



Source: UNHCR based on proGres v.4 registration database, as of Nov 2, 2022

**147. Competition for limited resources amid the COVID-19 pandemic and an economic slowdown has resulted in a spike in xenophobic attitudes and discrimination toward migrant populations in Costa Rica.** World Bank analysis shows Costa Ricans are not intrinsically xenophobic and score below the regional average on the share of xenophobic messages shared on social media per million inhabitants. However, the data show rising antipathy toward Nicaraguans as they enter the country in unprecedented numbers. In Costa Rica, there is a general perception that Nicaraguan migrants have caused social services to collapse, or at least deteriorate, particularly the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (Voorend and Sura-Fonseca 2019).

60. While the absolute magnitude of human mobility flows of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees has grown exponentially since the date of the last Census (2011), the relative incidence of these flows remains similar, and the geographic impacts largely unchanged. Areas that hosted large numbers of foreign-born people remain main host communities today, most notably Huetar Norte, Brunca in the South, and the GAM.

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**148. Despite having solid institutional and policy responses by local and national authorities, Nicaraguan and Venezuelan migrant populations in Costa Rica remain vulnerable.** Around 11.3 percent of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica live in poverty, compared to 6.4 percent of their counterparts (Mora Roman & Guzman 2018). Also, 12.3 percent of Nicaraguan migrants live in overcrowded conditions (compared to 4 percent for natives), with 70.7 percent living in vulnerable urban areas (Mora Roman & Guzman 2018). Nicaraguan migration to Costa Rica has been predominantly low-skilled, with 78.6 percent of working-age migrants possessing an incomplete secondary education or less (Blyde 2020). However, the new wave of Nicaraguan migration since 2018 includes a significant cohort of individuals with higher education, estimated at 53 percent, according to one study (Fundación Arias 2019). Of Venezuelans, approximately 42 percent are unemployed. Of those employed, 42 percent work in the informal sector (IOM 2021). About 48 percent of Venezuelan migrants have a college degree, and 21 percent have a technical degree (IOM 2021). Venezuelan migrants cite a lack of economic resources (78 percent) as one of the main challenges they face, along with a lack of documentation, difficulty accessing health services, and access to food and water, among others (IOM 2020).

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**149. Costa Rican institutions face infrastructure, financial and human resource constraints that prevent them from meeting the demands placed on them as a consequence of the new wave of migrants and refugees.** The humanitarian protection system is overburdened by the high number of asylum applications (the only regularization mechanism for many people) so the country has had to rely heavily on international donors for support. As of June 30, 2022, Costa Rica hosted 204,728 asylum seekers and 11,205 refugees, 89 percent (192,180) of whom are Nicaraguans. The country could finish 2022 with over 250,000 pending cases (approximately 5 percent of the population). From 2015 to 2019, the number of applications for protection submitted yearly increased more than 18-fold.

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**150. The World Bank's Migratory Strategic Plan for Costa Rica aims to improve the collection, operability, and analysis of migratory records.** It will also target infrastructure investments in vulnerable and lagging areas, including regions disproportionately affected by large migrant inflows, and address tensions between locals and migrants. The World Bank aims to mobilize support among other international development partners.

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## Dominican Republic: strengthening institutional, statistical, planning, and coordination capacities for enhanced migratory management

**151. The Dominican Republic is facing rapidly growing migratory flows from Haiti and, to a lesser extent, Venezuela.** Lolmmigrants account for 5.6 percent of the total population—one of the highest immigration rates in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)—and 8.6 percent of the total labor force. Those from Haiti represent 87.2 percent of all migrants, while Venezuelans account for 5 percent<sup>61</sup>.

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**152. Inflows are expected to continue as immigrant populations flee their home countries following outbreaks of conflict, violence, poverty, and political instability<sup>62</sup>.** Institutional deterioration, chronic poverty, unemployment, structural violence, and precarious health services are the main reasons for the exodus of Haitians from their country, while Venezuelans are escaping a complex social, political, institutional, and economic crisis. Haitian migration is one of the most complex and challenging in the region (IOM DTM Feb 2021). The number of Venezuelan migrants has doubled in the past six years,<sup>63</sup> while the Haitian population grew by 8.6 percent from 2012 to 2017. Immigrants arrive in circumstances of increasing vulnerability, as refugees, asylum seekers, stateless people of Haitian origin or descent, forcibly displaced persons, and unaccompanied migrant children<sup>64</sup>.

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**153. Although the country has traditionally been a recipient of Haitian migrants,<sup>65</sup> it struggles to respond to growing demands.** Like regional and global trends, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in economic contraction and budget cuts that impacted infrastructure investments and access to services.<sup>66</sup>

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61. National Immigrant Survey (ENI) 2017.

62. Institutional deterioration, chronic poverty, unemployment, structural violence, and precarious health services are the main reasons for the exodus of Haitians from their country, while Venezuelans are escaping a complex crisis. (IOM DTM Feb 2021).

63. According to data from the ENI 2012 and ENI 2017.

64. 4V, UNHCR data platform. New trajectories, simultaneous flows of emigration, transit, and immigration, and increased vulnerabilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, border closures, and the collapse of informal economies have led to an increase in the number of people seeking refuge in neighboring countries.

65. (2018, June 4). ENI-2017 Segunda Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes - Versión resumida del informe general. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Retrieved April 1, 2022, from <https://reliefweb.int/report/dominican-republic/eni-2017-segunda-encuesta-nacional-de-inmigrantes-versi-n-resumida-del>

66. Although these impacts were less acute in the Dominican Republic than in other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, the effects of mobility restrictions and disruptions to value chains and tourism disproportionately affected immigrants and vulnerable populations in the country.

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**154. In line with global trends, negative attitudes toward migrants increased in volume and intensity during the COVID-19 pandemic (and during elections).** A comparative analysis of social sentiment and attitudes toward migration shows that xenophobia is substantially higher in the Dominican Republic than in comparative countries. Between 2020 and 2021, 1,400 xenophobic messages per million inhabitants (most against Haitians) were shared in social media and news outlets, almost double the rate seen in such countries as Costa Rica, or Panama, that host proportionally more immigrants (as a percentage of their respective populations).

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**155. The Dominican Republic recognizes that strengthening social and economic integration through adequate policies, processes, and services can help maximize the net developmental gains of immigration.** The Dominican Republic has a permanent immigration policy that is selective, favoring qualified immigration, investors, and retirees based on national needs. It also has clear mechanisms to facilitate temporal workers agreements, and transition across migratory status. However, easing foreign labor market frictions, managing migration flows, and strengthening conditions for the social and economic integration of migrants remain challenges that can be turned into development opportunities. Dominican labor law (Labor Code) establishes that “at least 80 percent of the total number of workers in a firm must be Dominican” (Art. 135) and Art. 136 establishes that salaries of Dominican workers must amount to at least 80 percent of all workers’ compensations (excluding technical and managerial positions), effectively limiting the marginal productivity of the immigrant labor force and its potential contribution to economic growth and development.

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**156. The migrant population in the Dominican Republic is proportionally twice the size of that experienced by Colombia in 2018, but receives much less international assistance.** EPresident Luis Abinader has requested international support to respond to mixed migratory flows, especially considering the fragile situation in Haiti<sup>67,68</sup>. The country has asked for help to alleviate fiscal pressures related to the provision of critical infrastructure and services.

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67. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/09/19/haiti-protest-fuel-inflation-gang-violence-food-insecurity-henry/>.

68. <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/en-espanol/noticias/story/2021-09-22/presidente-de-r-dominicana-pide-al-mundo-ayudar-a-haiti>.

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**157. The World Bank is providing development assistance to the Dominican Republic.** Between 2021 and 2022, it shared best international practices and technical assistance through a series of knowledge exchanges with national authorities, business leaders, and academia. These focused on (i) better understanding of what has worked (and not worked) on temporary labor migration programs in Australia, Canada, Germany, and New Zealand (see Summary Note N01); (ii) recommendations for improving the curricular and operational design of the first master’s degree on migratory policies, development and human rights in the Caribbean (see SN02); and (iii) lessons learned on the design and implementation of temporary regularization instruments and policies shared by Colombia (see SN03).

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**158. The Dominican Republic has taken concrete steps to strengthen migratory management.** Supported by a US\$5 million trust fund, the government is strengthening institutional and statistical capacities. These measures include improving administrative records, social registries, and migratory statistics for managing orderly and safe movements ([see Box 4](#)).

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**159. The Dominican Republic relies heavily on migrant workers domestically and abroad.** Agriculture is still the sector with the largest demand for immigrant workers,<sup>69</sup> and other sectors have grown their demand for foreign-born workers as immigrants increasingly settle in urban areas. In other sectors, such as Tourism and Retail trade, immigrant workers represent 17.5 percent and 14.4 percent of the total labor force, respectively<sup>70</sup>. In 2020, remittances were at a historical high<sup>71</sup>, growing by 12 percentage points from 2019 and reaching 10.6 percent of GDP.

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69. According to Cruz and Vargas (2019), of the total agricultural labor force, 28.2 percent is Haitian, 26.1 percent comprises immigrants of other nationalities, and 0.1 percent are people born in the Dominican Republic to foreign parents.

70. Instituto Nacional de Migración (INM RD), Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM) y Organización Internacional del Trabajo (OIT). (2020). Estimación de la demanda de trabajadores extranjeros en los sectores construcción y agropecuario en República Dominicana. Santo Domingo.

71. Over the past decade, remittances average around 7 percent of GDP (WDI).

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**160. These efforts complement initiatives financed by own-source resources and smaller donations by other international development partners.** These include activities supported by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), IOM, UNHCR, UNAIDS, UN Women, World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the International Labor Organization (ILO). These efforts also complement the regional commitments to achieve a more sustainable solution to the Venezuelan and Haitian situations agreed in the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection released on June 10, 2022.

**Box 4.**

**Summary of the Dominican Republic Multisectoral Response to Migratory Flows Project**

**Project development objective**

Supported by the SPF, this is to improve the institutional, statistical, planning, and coordination capacities to inform policy dialogue toward a multisectoral and inclusive response to migratory flows in the Dominican Republic. The project is structured under three pillars:

**Pillar 1 aims to strengthen the statistical capacity to inform national policies to respond to migratory flows in a comprehensive and articulated manner.** The pillar will support the improvement of the registry of migrants in conditions of vulnerability, pilot a migration module in the Single System of Beneficiaries (SIUBEN: *Sistema Unico de Beneficiarios*), install an open-source platform to register households that lack identity documents, and strengthen the interoperability of migratory registries with the General Directorate of Migration.

**Pillar 2 aims to support the strengthening of multisectoral institutional, planning, and coordination capacities to provide a multisectoral response to migratory flows in the Dominican Republic.** The pillar will support technical consultancies to review migration management's legal and institutional framework, offer policy recommendations, and conduct awareness-raising and sensitization activities.

**Pillar 3 will increase investments to improve the support for vulnerable migrants, including women and survivors of GBV. The pillar aims to produce data on the flow and profiles of market vendors and users in two of the nineteen binational markets between the two countries.** It also seeks to improve the prevention and response to GBV among migrant women regardless of migratory status.

## Views and Perceptions (V)

**161. Large migratory flows and forced displacement can profoundly affect social cohesion among and between displaced persons, host communities, and communities to which displaced persons return.** Forced displacement may undermine or strengthen social cohesion through several mechanisms, including the trauma or mobilization effects of the displacement experience—and the impact of population inflows on goods, services, markets, jobs, and the environment.

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**162. There is now an urgent need to understand how different narratives about human mobility develop, spread, and take root.** Literature and programs that actively support the creation of narratives for building social cohesion between migrant and host community are still in their infancy, but they are beginning to usher in holistic and mutually beneficial approaches to inclusion<sup>72</sup>.

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**163. Xenophobia in Central America and the Dominican Republic rises with the share of immigrants as a percentage of the overall population.** The intensity of negative attitudes toward migration in the region also reflects historical tensions between host and migrant populations. There is dissonance between top-down narratives from government and political leaders and bottom-up narratives that spread through person-to-person contact, media, and social media channels (Figure 11).

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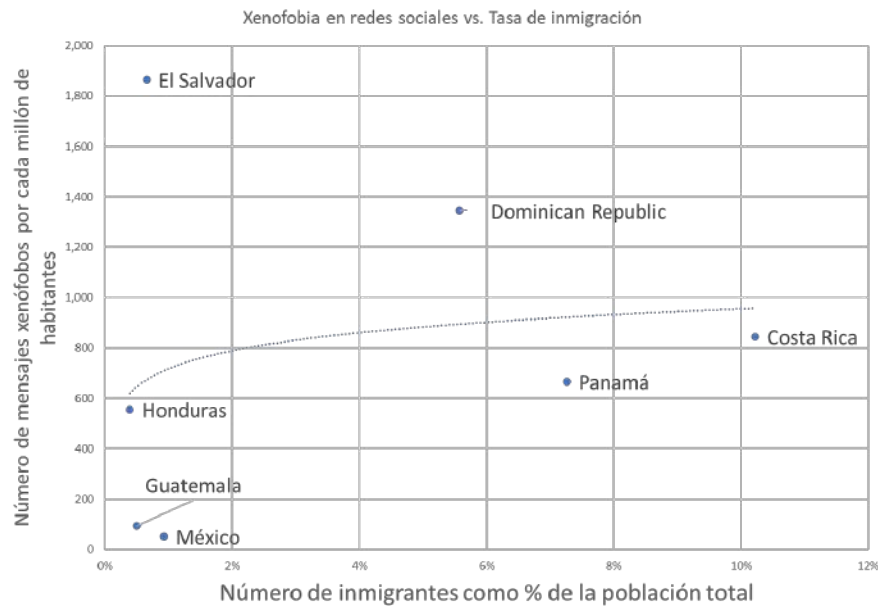
72. According to recent research, how policymakers, community leaders, and members of the public see and talk about migration is, thus, intimately connected to the design and implementation of policies that affect not just newcomers, but the health of communities and countries as a whole. See: Banulescu-Bogdan, M. Et al. 2021. How We Talk about Migration: The Link between Migration Narratives, Policy, and Power. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/migration-narratives-policy-power>



**164. Narratives can influence migration policy in powerful ways.** The narratives can be shaped by peers and neighbors, media and social media, and politicians at all levels. They can also develop and take root in institutions, particularly those responsible for crafting and implementing policy.

**165. There is relatively little evidence on the role of xenophobia and attitudes about migration in Central America and the Dominican Republic.** Understanding xenophobia implies understanding a highly interconnected network of social phenomena that affect the emotional stability of people considered foreign in their host communities. Just as solidarity, tolerance, empathy, and cooperation can be taught to young children and adults, all their opposites are likewise learned conditions that acquire a cultural ethic.

**Figure 11.**  
**Xenophobic messages in social media rise as the share of immigrants**



Source: Authors' own elaboration using IOM data from comparable sentiment analysis carried out between 2020 and 2021.

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**166. This work sheds light on key findings and lessons from a regional analysis of perceptions toward migration in Central America and the Dominican Republic.** Annexes provide details on the methodology utilized to understand existing narratives and evaluate the “Zero Xenophobia” campaign. Through this work, we explored regional experience and lessons learned managing risks of increased xenophobia through behavioral change, communications, and social outreach interventions at the regional, national, and local levels. <sup>73</sup>.

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**167. In mid-2022, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) launched a web community that draws attention to manifestations of xenophobia and speaks out against them.** The IOM’s Western Hemisphere Program (WHP) supports the platform and targets Spanish-speaking audiences in Central America and the Dominican Republic. It achieved a total of 13,315 website visits, with a wide range of audiences of men and women of all ages up to 65.

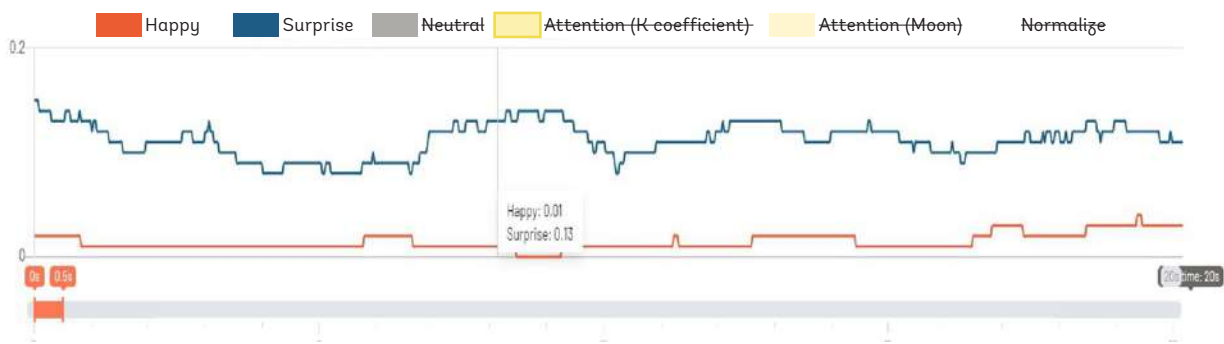
.....

**168. The “Zero Xenophobia” initiative’s launch was informed by an audience and neuromarketing analysis by the World Bank.** This work aimed to identify the best way to build narratives around migration in Spanish-speaking countries in Central America and the Dominican Republic. Graphic art, videos, and the website were evaluated for their impact on participants.

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73. See Background Note No. 05.

**Figure 12.**  
**Neuromarketing tracks attention to hot spots across alternative visual materials**



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**Box 5.****Key Findings from the Zero Xenophobia Audience and Neuromarketing Analyses are Summarized Along Five Key Messages**

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**Key message #1.**

**Consistent with global studies, people between 18 and 24 years of age represent a narrow window of opportunity for changing narratives about migration.** In all countries, the website has a high degree of acceptance and attractiveness, especially in the segment of people between 20 and 24 years old. However, the site evaluations are only partially positive in the 25 to 35 years segment. This indicates a fractional acceptance of the website, whereby the latest adult generation has a better perception of it than millennials (born in the 1980s and 1990s).

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**Key message #2.**

**Friends without being in the spotlight.** People are not generally hostile toward migrants, but they are not willing to fight on social media against people who are. People think it is wrong but don't want to be perceived as the defender of the cause. This means that it is crucial to find a way for them to help without feeling exposed.

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**Key message #3.**

**Xenophobia is directly associated with other forms of discrimination, such as homophobia.** The mental associations between these types of discrimination call for integrated efforts on social inclusion to avoid fragmentation. These phobias are articulated as a discourse of power and supremacy over the weak and helpless. Xenophobia and racism are always accompanied by ethnocentrism and cultural supremacy that stir up irrational fears. When participants resort to the argument that foreigners will take away what they have, an automatic, emotional defense mechanism is activated. Resorting to the narrative of hatred or contempt for the stranger is part of the justification for protecting one's own.

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**Key message #4.**

**Narrative systems and prevalent social norms validate discrimination, which can be countered by building proactive, empathetic narratives on social media.** The study participants take a passive attitude based on the notion of "freedom of speech" that could effectively allow xenophobic narratives. The participants' discriminatory patterns are normalized by support from pivotal agents such as the school or the family. This does not mean that people are socialized to generate hate speech, but rather that people find transmitters and receivers in spaces such as school or family.

**Key Message #5.**

Creating an empathetic reaction from any communication involves making the migrant population human. The basis for xenophobia lies in the stereotyped image of impoverished immigrants that has been constructed. Any campaign must break the blinkered logic that sustains discrimination. Diversity and acceptance of cultural richness will flow from an evidence-based, internationalist view of human evolution and history. This is the conceptual core that must be addressed. All cultures have contributed to our shared cultural wealth.

**Economic and social inclusion pathways to prosperity (E)**

**169. Regularization efforts have proven to be the single most effective policy measure for maximizing the economic and social benefits of migration.** Short-term measures to provide humanitarian aid, medium-term access to essential social services, and long-term policy adjustments toward regularization and socioeconomic integration have effectively responded to displaced persons' needs. These measures can also help mitigate the possible negative impacts for host communities and provide the stepping stone for migrants and refugees to contribute to the development of their host country.

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**170. Host countries that grant regular status under precise terms and procedures will likely achieve smoother integration and better development outcomes.** Regularization over a sufficiently extended time horizon provides stability and influences households' decisions on economic activities, investments, and savings. International experience also shows that integration positively impacts host communities and internationally displaced persons.

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**171. Integration measures that are time-bound and targeted explicitly to migrants have a shorter adjustment period for host communities and tend more rapidly to harness the development benefits of inclusion.** International experience also demonstrates that host countries that have mainstreamed the integration of refugee-like populations into national public service and benefit systems have achieved more lasting results. These have proven more cost-efficient than migrant-specific systems and contribute to reducing tensions between migrants and local populations.

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**172. When large regularization efforts are impossible or will take time, allowing people to work is also highly effective, but labor programs must be designed carefully and proportionately.** Some labor mobility programs available to migrants from Central America are relatively small (and complex) and do not consider the various degrees of vulnerabilities of migrants.

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**173. As the main country of destination for Central American migrants and people on the move, the USA enables over 131,000 temporary working visas of year in agricultural and nonagricultural jobs, and an additional 65,000 exclusively for Central American and Haitian migrants.** Under an employer-driven program to incentivize labor mobility, the USA allows employers or agents who meet specific regulatory requirements to bring foreign nationals to fill temporary nonagricultural jobs. The U.S. Congress set a cap of 66,000 nonagricultural temporary working visas, or “H2-B visas”, per fiscal year, with 33,000 for workers who begin employment in the first half of the fiscal year (October 1 to March 31) and 33,000 for workers who begin employment in the second half of the fiscal year (April 1 to September 30). Any unused numbers from the first half of the fiscal year are available for employers seeking to hire H-2B workers during the second half of the fiscal year. An additional 65,000 visas are available each year, of which 20,000 are exclusively to hire migrants from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Haiti. A similar program was approved on October 12, 2022, enabling 24,000 temporary working and residence visas for Venezuelans.

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**174. Despite efforts to provide economic incentives to use and expand legal avenues for Central American migrants seeking job opportunities, current pathways are underutilized.** In the USA, for example, in fiscal year 2021, the temporary working visa program for nonagricultural workers filled only 1 percent of its capacity.<sup>74</sup> Other European destinations, such as Belgium, Germany, Spain, the UK, and the Nordic states, have also emerged as options for expanding labor market access for international workers across all skill levels. Canada already has long-standing arrangements with central America and the Caribbean, which may present an opportunity to build upon.

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74. FY 2021 USCIS Annual Statistical Report.

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**175. Central American migrants might be too socially and economically vulnerable to apply through existing pathways as regular economic migrants but are not vulnerable enough to be considered refugees or eligible for asylum.** Existing processes might be difficult to navigate or understand for most people. While market access has been granted through the available slots, entry requires that these pathways be supported by an ecosystem that employers, future employees and communities can all trust.

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**176. Destination countries recognize the need to simplify the application processes for working and nonworking visas.** Cass R. Sunstein is known for his academic research on behavioral economics and for mainstreaming “nudges”—small, choice-preserving changes—that helped simplify regulation during his time as Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. His appointment is evidence that the USA recognizes the need for further simplification to make existing migratory programs effective. For its part, Canada changed how it refers to its immigration quotas and now points to “immigration targets” by types of skills instead of “immigration quotas or limits”.

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**177. These small changes respond to growing evidence showing that how we talk about migration is as important as the content of immigration policy and processes.** LGlobal research shows how policy makers, community leaders, and members of the public see and talk about migrants is intimately connected to the design and implementation of policies. In Latin America and the Caribbean, Peru has incorporated behavioral insights into its response to Venezuelan immigration in recent years.

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**178. High socioeconomic vulnerability increases entry barriers and needs for protection and support systems throughout the migration spectrum and upon return.** Current mechanisms for temporary migration are seen to be insufficient as well as under-utilized, typically allowing other legal and illegal pathways to remain preferable. Social norms and culture influence how potential employees receive and analyze information, often resulting in distrust, lack of awareness, or self-excluding decisions with regard to existing legal pathways.

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**179. Ultimately, the mismatch between available legal pathways through H-2B visas (demand side, employers) and potential Central American employees is one of mutual trust.** With rising misinformation, there is also low trust in official communications (only 16 percent of migrants in LAC trust official websites). In comparison, an estimated 60 percent prefer social media or WhatsApp groups, and 29 percent rely on friends and family to get reliable information about migration pathways. Discrimination in countries of origin can affect their ability to open a bank account, get an ID, or even be considered by recruiters. Self-exclusion from international labor agreements and legal migratory pathways can come in the way of societal gender norms, group identity, misconceptions, household dynamics, or negative community beliefs or attitudes.

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**180. Well-managed labor mobility has the potential to improve social and economic development in both origin and host countries. However, the right set of socially sensitive policies and approaches must be in place.** Policy decisions in migrant origin and destination countries can turn skilled migration into a drain or a gain (CGD 2020). Skilled emigration creates a range of potential economic benefits for migrants, their families, their destination countries, and their origin countries—benefits that can turn into harm without free labor mobility. Unskilled emigration is increasingly recognized as vital to developed economies, as they provide essential services locals are unwilling or uninterested in providing to higher value-added industries.

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**181. Without socially sensitive systems, existing pathways might lose efficiency and relevance.** Traditional pathways, categories, and frameworks for response need to be adapted to current conditions and social contexts predisposed toward nonparticipation. Groups at risk of exclusion can fail to benefit from development interventions unless they are specifically targeted to reach those groups.

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**182. Lessons from Global Skills Partnerships and Temporary Workers Programs offer insights applicable to improving labor mobility in Central America and the Dominican Republic.** Partnerships between origin and destination countries are agreements where migrants are trained in their home countries for specific skills that are highly valuable in both countries. Not all trainees migrate, and those who stay contribute to their local communities and the national economy. Destination countries benefit from training new workers at a lower cost and targeting the specific skill sets they need.

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**183. In Germany, the skilled migration and destination training approach indirectly benefits origin countries through remittances and innovation transfer, but they must actively augment skills.** The main difference between these approaches is the sending countries' readiness to provide work-ready skills. Germany has a tiered ranking system—red, orange, or green light—that indicates whether a country is far, reasonably close, or very close to the training standards of Germany.

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**184. The World Bank supported German employers to overcome their hesitation to source labor from Morocco by financing and facilitating the preparation, placement, and integration of Moroccan youth in Germany.** This required Bank financing to create and improve Morocco's structures capable of signaling interest, ease, and confidence to overseas employers unfamiliar with or unwilling to include Moroccan youth in their (already quite international) workforce. A close partnership with the public recruitment agency in Morocco (ANAPEC), the GIZ, including WB-financing of upfront costs of preparation, recruitment, travel, and integration, was the key to creating a positive and inclusive narrative around the importance and ease of participating in legal pathways for mobility.

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**Box 6.****Summary descriptions of some Global Skills Partnerships pilots in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa (MENA), Eastern and Central Asia (ECA) countries, and Australia–Pacific.**

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**Germany’s public/private skills partnerships with MENA and ECA countries:** Germany has built migrant labor agreements with origin countries such as Sri Lanka and Vietnam to maximize the mutual benefits of labor migration. Faced with demographic decline, by 2060, the aging of the German population will have reduced its workforce by 30 percent. GIZ’s projects have allowed migrants access to the German labor market through three approaches:

**a. Origin Training**

(Whereby GIZ provides training in the country of origin before migration, and the skills are then recognized in Germany; nonmigrants are also trained);

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**b. Destination Training**

(Whereby GIZ helps recruited migrant workers access training and apprenticeship programs after they arrive in Germany);

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**c. Skilled Migration**

(whereby GIZ works with governments in countries of origin to responsibly recruit and prepare nurses to support the upskilling and recognition of their existing skills and place them with German employers that have acute labor needs).

**The Australia–Pacific Training Coalition (APTC)**

Began in 2006 and was officially created in July 2007. APTC finances technical and vocational training in Fiji, Papua Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. The most common areas/sectors for demand are: Automotive, Construction & Electrical, Manufacturing, Tourism, Hospitality, and Health & Community Services.

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**Belgium–Morocco Labor Migration Model (PALIM)**

An innovative labor migration model linking Morocco’s growing information and communications technology sector with a shortage of qualified ICT workers in Flanders. An estimated 30,000 IT professionals are needed annually, and training needs to be sufficiently aligned with labor market needs. While some trainees migrate, others are employed by the Moroccan private sector.

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**Belgium–Nigeria–Senegal MATCH Program**

MATCH is a 36-month initiative aimed at providing highly skilled individuals to private sector companies. By joining MATCH, companies from Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands are supported with the sourcing and recruiting of African talent. The program also facilitates the recruitment of a limited number of talented Nigerian and Senegalese people already residing in the EU.

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**185. Temporary Workers Programs also offer valuable lessons for Central America and the Dominican Republic.** In the Dominican Republic, these lessons have helped inform the design of improved temporary labor migration schemes. Spearheaded by the National Institute of Migration (INM), the country is implementing a program to periodically estimate the demand for foreign labor to improve the governance of labor migration schemes, especially the right balance between the public and private sectors. Informed by systematic analysis of academic and policy research, the Program considers elements to better articulate supply and demand through permanent consultations with stakeholders such as business leaders and workers' associations, the periodic publication of diagnostic reports on labor migration, and the implementation of monitoring and evaluation plans. Similar efforts could be made in other destination countries in the region.

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**186. In New Zealand and Australia, the World Bank worked with national authorities and private sector leaders to design and implement a well-functioning temporary worker program.** Historically, these workers from the Pacific had been excluded from accessing economic opportunities overseas. Community-based programs were designed to improve the information base, provide meaningful oversight of selection and recruitment and instill confidence among overseas employers.

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**Box 7. Summary of Temporary Workers Programs in New Zealand and Australia**

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**New Zealand Recognized Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme**

The RSE was established in 2007 to recruit seasonal workers from overseas when there are not enough New Zealand workers. RSE employees can stay in New Zealand for 7–9 months during any 11-month period. Up to 14,400 RSE places were available as of 2020/21 (up from 8,000 in 2009). A report found challenges with worker well-being, family separation, and unequal distribution of opportunities.

**Australia Seasonal Worker Programme**

The program contributes to the economic development of nine participating countries. Overall, this is a highly rated program with opportunities for improving female and rural participation and reducing the risks of the exploitation of unpaid workers.



Opportunities  
ahead and policy

# RECOMENDATION

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**187. A common framework for response emerges from regional and global experience on the combinations of policies that have allowed governments more easily to navigate the complex, multilevel and multisectoral response required by these situations.** While tailored to each situation, this framework has been focused on four main pillars:

- a) Adapting the institutional and legal frameworks;
- b) Enhancing absorption capacity of host communities through investments;
- c) Strengthening the social contract; and
- d) Mitigating vulnerabilities of migrants and refugees.

#### **a) Adapting the institutional and legal frameworks**

**188. A critical first step to capitalizing on the development opportunities is understanding these countries' institutional capacities, legal frameworks, and migration and asylum policies.** The Dominican Republic and Costa Rica have leveraged their existing migration institutions to improve operational capacity, though notable challenges remain. El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama are at earlier stages in adapting to new and simultaneous human mobility flows. International organizations support these efforts, while civil society is vital to expanding migrants' access to protection mechanisms and support for reintegration.

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**189. Among the major areas identified for substantial capacity-building efforts are:** (i) developing clear migration policy-making processes and integrated national strategies; (ii) professionalizing border and immigration enforcement efforts, with an emphasis on transparency and sensitivity to the circumstances of families, children, and other vulnerable migrants; (iii) investing in asylum systems, as well as protection mechanisms for people displaced within countries, and (iv) reintegration programs for returning migrants (MPI 2021).

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**190. Governments in the region still need to develop clear national policies, strategies, and decision-making processes to ensure long-term thinking around migration policy (World Bank 2021; MPI 2021).** The World Bank can provide technical expertise and institutional experience to support client countries in assessing these impacts across various sectors. Despite high fiscal costs in the short term, social and economic gains arising from the inflow of migrants outweigh those costs in the long term.

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**191. Significant efforts are still needed to professionalize border and immigration enforcement personnel.** In some countries, various agencies have overlapping responsibilities, such that it can be unclear which one has primary responsibility for migration policy; elsewhere, countries with a more clearly structured administrative apparatus could nevertheless benefit from creating transparent policies and functional protocols for the performance of duties. The Dominican Republic will launch its first regional master's degree in Migration and Development in 2023.

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**192. All countries in the region need to make additional investments in their asylum systems.** The UNCHR has played an essential role in professionalizing asylum systems across the region, directly with each government and through the MIRPS; additional efforts are still needed. Some regional governments have already invested in strengthening their asylum systems, with the Mexican and Costa Rican governments working to develop a robust capacity to handle greater flows of applicants.

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**193. Most countries in the region lack institutional, regulatory, and protection mechanisms to handle internal displacement and its links to international migration.** There are substantial opportunities to build synergies between emerging government efforts to protect displaced residents and those already developed by civil-society groups. Many people in need of humanitarian protection must first move within their own country before turning to international migration. Some innovative regional examples include UNHCR's Protection Transfer Arrangement and partnerships between the USA and asylum systems in Costa Rica, Panama, and Mexico.

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**194. National systems, visa, and migratory programs must be better suited to tackle climate-driven migration in countries of origin and destination; this is expected to increase dramatically by 2050.** The Global Compact for Migration recognizes climate as a determinant factor for international migration (and not exclusively linked to internal displacement). However, institutional and legal frameworks in countries of origin in Central America (and the Dominican Republic) are not designed to monitor, mitigate, and respond to climate-driven displacement. The design of actionable policy responses remains challenging, but local and indigenous knowledge is strong and can be built upon.

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**195. All countries in the region need to develop a greater capacity for managing regular labor migration.** The World Bank's Institutional Diagnostic of Labor Emigration in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala (Isik-Dikmelik et al. 2022, forthcoming) shows opportunities in six areas. Countries could benefit from having designated opportunities for resident workers who wish to engage in seasonal work abroad.

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**196. The governments in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico have substantial opportunities to invest further in return and reintegration programs (MPI 2021).** There is enormous demand for comprehensive services that help returned migrants get necessary forms of documentation and access employment and health care. Emphasis should be placed on deportees who have been displaced after extended stays in other countries and have no roots or social networks in their country.

## **b) Enhancing absorption capacity of host communities**

**197. Investments in host communities can help alleviate tensions and pressures on critical services, whether migrants and refugees settle in lagging or urban areas.** Humanitarian and development investments must target both migrant populations and host communities. In the Dominican Republic, efforts are being made to improve budget and planning instruments that fail to consider circular migratory flows in border cities. When people on the move settle in lagging areas, vulnerabilities related to a pre-existing lack of adequate road, housing, health, and education infrastructure typically compound those of the displaced population.

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**198. Investing in displaced and host communities can help prevent social tensions and better align efforts.** This can help reduce inequalities in access to basic services and prevent host communities from forming negative attitudes about newly arriving displaced persons (World Bank working paper, 2022). Local authorities have a critical role as mayors increasingly face regional fiscal and social pressures related to human mobility flows.

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**199. Multisectoral investments paired with participatory decision-making among the displaced and host communities can ensure that investments address the highest priorities and promote social cohesion.** Approaches that bring displaced persons and hosts together to identify, implement, and oversee investments can deliver essential infrastructure and services and foster positive interactions. This participatory approach can help develop a sense of shared purpose, trust, and willingness to cooperate, which is connected to building positive narratives about the forcibly displaced population.

### c) Strengthening the social contract

**200. Community-driven development is another possible approach to deliver multisectoral investments using facilitated, participatory decision-making that involves both host community members and the displaced population.** Participatory approaches may be especially effective in building social cohesion between migrant and host communities. The report also shows evidence that trained facilitators can promote empathy among host residents and refugees through perspective-building exercises that enhance empathy for each other's situation (Kalla 2021).

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**201. Further, decision-makers can use this data to measure and monitor conversations, track emerging narratives, and shape policies when designing interventions to strengthen the social contract.** Monitoring social media platforms can offer a revealing picture of people's thoughts and feelings about migration. A better understanding of attitudes and behaviors related to migrants will help inform government strategies on how to address discrimination and potential xenophobic episodes effectively. Within the region, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic are initiating national efforts to tackle these issues.



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**202. Similarly, identifying some of the most inflexible and restrictive views and perceptions that inhibit the reintegration of returnees can help inform operational responses that are more effective.**

Youth development and crime and violence prevention programs should go beyond skills training and prioritize family-centered and behavioral interventions. For example, the Los Angeles Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) program's impact evaluations showed that family counseling interventions effectively reduced violence (Kraus et al. 2017). A similar program in Honduras addressed family dynamics in depth to reduce the number of risk factors that push youth into behavioral problems.

**d) Mitigating vulnerabilities of migrants and refugees**

**203. When addressing identified vulnerabilities of migrants and people on the move, policies and programs should be designed around risk and resilience factors.**

Identifying when and where youth is at risk of problem behavior can help improve the targeting and efficacy of interventions. Knowing that youths in a particular area or municipality appear to experience risk factors related to school problems could be an indication to intensify the focus in school settings.

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**204. International organizations can help provide common regional approaches to improve protection services for women and girls traveling along migration routes in Central America and the Dominican Republic.**

They can help adapt existing legal and institutional frameworks, enhance protocols and guidelines, and provide specialized training to local officials. This could help protect vulnerable migrants, including victims of human trafficking and children, from exploitation and abuse.

**Box 8.**

**Policy Actions for Human Trafficking Prevention**

1. Map GBV and specialized service providers, border crossing points, and transit routes.
2. Identify social media risks and online recruitment practices.
3. Establish local mechanisms and facilities along transit routes to prevent human trafficking, family separation, and exploitation of women and children, and provide assistance to victims, including support to close relatives (such as sons and daughters).
4. Focus prevention efforts on key recruitment points like border crossings, transportation hubs, and social media.
5. Support case management systems and ensure proper referrals and follow-up with victims to connect them with specialized service providers, professionals, and support networks.
6. Strengthen national strategies against internal and cross-border human trafficking, prevention and response protocols among local officials. Provide specialized training to local officials, first points of contact, and social media influencers.
7. Provide harmonized guidelines to service providers and first points of contacts, including the provision of humanitarian services to victims of human trafficking and migrant smuggling.
8. Offer peer-to-peer information exchange with other countries, data privacy and treatment of personal information, among other best international practices.
9. Work with competent authorities to investigate, punish, and dismantle (often cross-border) human trafficking schemes and organized crime.
10. Build a coalition with regional partners, IOM, UNHCR and specialized services and institutions in-country to provide context-sensitive approaches.

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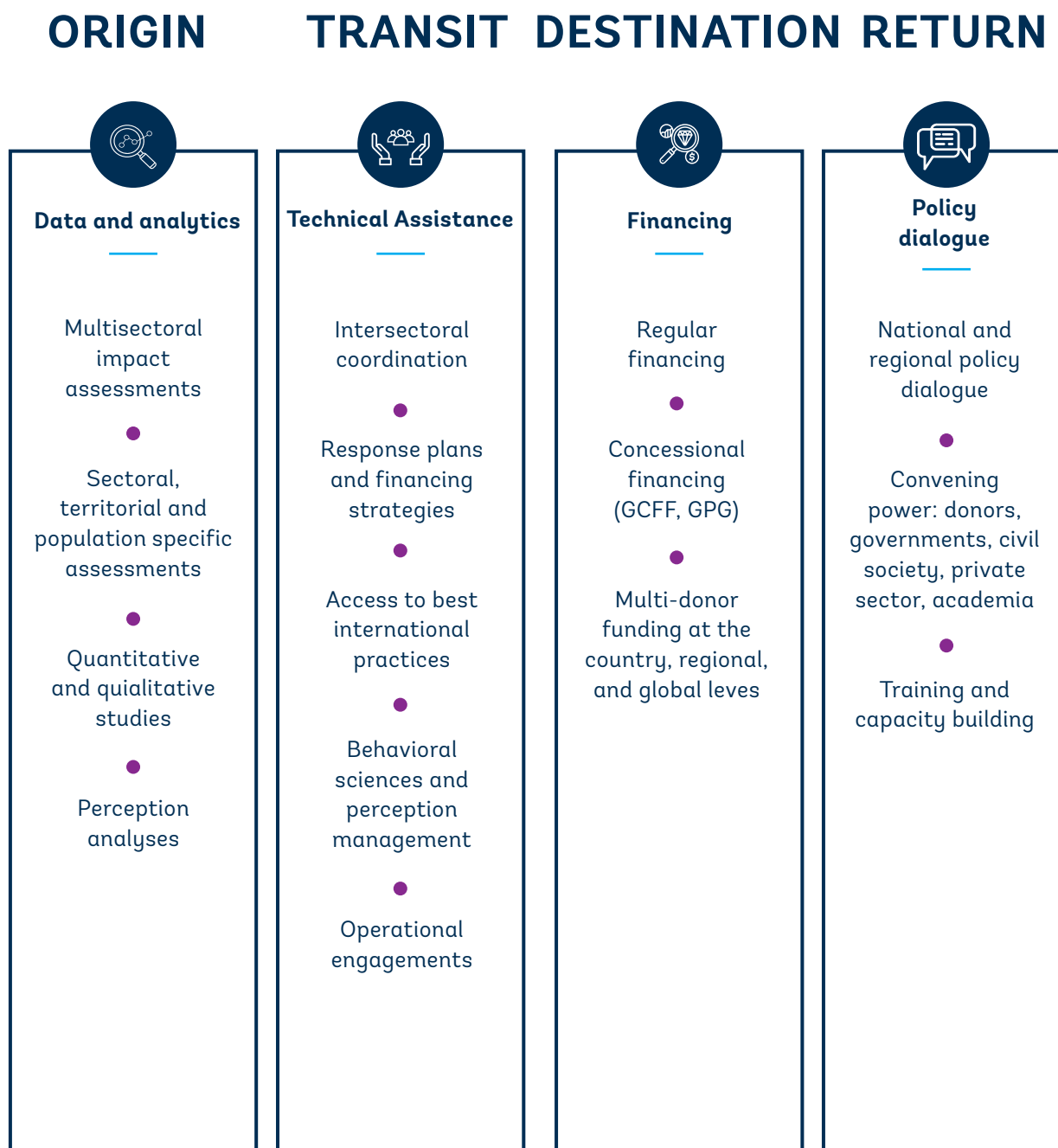
## The role of the World Bank in supporting and operationalizing policy responses

**205.** This work directly informs the World Bank’s regional strategy on Migration and Forced Displacement for Latin America and the Caribbean, “Harvesting Opportunities from Mixed-Migration Experiences (P177114)”. Lessons learned will be extracted and disseminated in areas such as the: (i) key drivers and migration trends; (ii) degree of accessibility to GBV services among migrant women along migration routes, with a focus on transit hubs; (iii) migration data, and migration policy and institutional framework for integration in the Dominican Republic; (iv) view and perceptions of specific population groups on returnees coming into their communities; (v) data on the conscious and unconscious bias which affects (or results in) discrimination and self-exclusion of migrant workers; (vi) network of external and internal experts working on the migration topic. The report and strategy will also be informed by the 2023 World Development Report on Migration and Forced Displacement.

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**206.** The results in this synthesis report provide important insights regarding policy and programming in which the World Bank can support client countries. The following proposed actions are intended to alleviate fiscal, social, and economic pressures in client countries affected by human mobility flows in Central America and the Dominican Republic through four distinct yet interrelated types of instruments:

**Figuer 13.**  
**World bank suite of products and services**



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**207. The World Bank can provide support to strengthen statistical and administrative systems and provide technical assistance to support systematic cost-benefit assessments.** At the country level, the Bank and other international and national development partners can mobilize investments to measure human mobility flows. For example, the cases of Colombia, Ecuador and Peru show positive returns of up to twice the return on investment in the medium term over short-term fiscal costs incurred to manage these migratory flows (World Bank 2018; World Bank 2019; World Bank 2020).

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**208. On Technical Assistance, the World Bank can play a critical role in supporting long-term multisectoral national strategies and strengthening institutional capacities.** The Bank can continue supporting and enhancing policy dialogue and preparing a national strategy to manage human mobility. Institutional efforts should also consider efforts to improve the social fabric and help policy makers reach evidence-based decisions about migration.

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**209. The Bank can redouble efforts to mobilize blended financing as countries move to more sustainable solutions in the medium term. In a short time, resource mobilization efforts should include blended financing for origin and transit countries and concessional funding for destination countries.** However, as countries successfully integrate these mobile populations into national systems, the overall effects on the aggregate demand, demographic dividend, taxes, and productivity of migrants and refugees can in themselves prove sufficient to support sustainable and durable solutions.

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**Box 9.****World Bank Trust Funds for Financing Responses to Migration and Mass Displacement**

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The following Trust Funds could serve as good vehicles for operationalizing investments and technical assistance proposed in this report:

**The Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF)**

Is a partnership sponsored by the WBG, the UN, and the Islamic Development Bank Group. The GCFF aims to mobilize the international community to address the financing needs of middle-income countries hosting large numbers of refugees. Costa Rica is expected to become an eligible benefitting country to the GCFF in December 2022, setting a precedent for other destination countries in the Central America and Caribbean region.

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**The State and Peacebuilding Fund (SPF)**

Is the WBG's largest global trust fund supporting interventions on fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV). The SPF started a new phase on Jan 10, 2022, with active fundraising totaling USD 5.4 million for Central America and the Dominican Republic. It can respond rapidly to emerging needs flexibly across all countries and territories.

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**The IBRD Fund for Innovative Global Public Goods Solutions (GPG)**

Has been established to incentivize innovative solutions for delivering public goods by using concessional financing to support IBRD operations that generate global or regional benefits. Its initial focus area of support is the spillover effects of FCV. This Trust Fund is undergoing a review and is expected to be replenished starting in December 2022.

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**Other funds**

Including the Spanish Trust Fund for Latin America and the Caribbean (SFLAC), USAID's contribution to the World Bank's Multi-donor Trust Fund, the KNOMAD-Migration Umbrella, the Social Sustainability Initiative for All (SSI4ALL) Umbrella Program, the Human Rights, Inclusion and Empowerment Umbrella, among another 44 potential trust funds.

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**210. On Policy Dialogue, the World Bank should strengthen regional partnerships to tackle issues on a regional scale.** These include climate-driven migration and internal displacement, gender-based violence, and human mobility situations driven by fragility, conflict, and violence. These are situations where no country can respond alone, whether at origin, transit, upon destination or return.

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**211. The World Bank's response to migration and forced displacement is part of a broader regional effort.** This work is closely aligned with the IOM's Handbook on Protection and Assistance to Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation, and Abuse and UNHCR's Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern. It builds and benefits from high-level regional dialogue condensed in the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection (June 10, 2022).

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**212. The World Bank can play a role in convening various stakeholders through building and supporting regional partnerships along common objectives and leveraging institutional comparative advantages.** The following are some of the regional partnerships that were strengthened in the past 18 months and that could serve to mobilize collective international efforts related to migration and forced displacement in Central America:

#### **Partnership with IOM**

Between 2020 and 2022, the World Bank strengthened its partnership and collaboration with IOM's regional response to migration in Central America and the Dominican Republic. Country-level engagements have underpinned information exchanges for analytical services, technical assistance, and operational engagements. The joint WB-IOM Xenophobia Cero project addresses negative sentiment against migrants in Spanish-speaking countries in the region.

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#### **Partnership with UNHCR**

The first WB-UNHCR Deep Dive Americas will be held in Washington, DC, on March 30, 2022. The partnership has evolved around concrete areas aligned with the two organizations' respective mandates and comparative advantages.

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### **MIRPS Support Platform**

The World Bank has joined the Regional Protection and Solutions Framework for Central America and Mexico (MIRPS, *Marco Integral Regional para la Protección y Soluciones*). MIRPS serves as the regionalization of the Global Compact on Refugees and provides a space for coordinated action on protection and refuge. It follows commitments made during the Los Angeles Declaration on June 10, 2022.

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### **Partnership with other Multilateral Development Institutions**

The World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) have strengthened regional and country-level partnerships to support Central American countries, particularly Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic.

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### **Partnerships with academia**

The World Bank has strengthened relationships and collaboration around information exchange and building a community of practice in the region. International partner institutions include the MPI, Pew Research Center, Georgetown University, NYU Migration, Oxford University, and the Center for Global Development. Local partners include the Dominican Republic National Institute of Migration (INM) and the Honduras Consular and Migratory Observatory (CONMIGO).



**Volume 1**

Migration in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras: A Stocktaking Exercise to Inform World Bank Group Engagement.

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**Volume 2**

Background Notes:

**Background Note No. 01**

Social Vulnerability to Climate Change in Honduras, by Ana Aguilera and Liang Cai.

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**Background Note No. 02**

Drivers of Youths' Intention to Migrate in Honduras: A Decomposition Analysis, by Erik Alda.

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**Background Note No. 03**

First Victims, Then Migrants: The Impacts of Violence on The Intention to Migrate in Honduras, by Carlos Muñoz Burgos.

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**Background Note No. 04**

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Needs Assessment: Views and Perceptions for Returnees' Integration in Honduras, by Erika Padron, Elnor Crespín Elías, and Ricardo Herrera.

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**Background Note No. 05**

Let's Talk About Migration: Lessons Learned from an Audience Analysis of the Xenophobia Cero Initiative in Central America and the Dominican Republic, by Paola Guerra, Alejandro López, and Mario López.

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**Background Note No. 06**

Understanding the Intersection between Migratory Routes and Gender-based Violence Service Providers in Central America: A Rapid Geospatial Accessibility-To-Services Analysis and Joint Validation Exercise with OIM and UNHCR, by Ana Aguilera, Carlos Muñoz Burgos, and Min Jaegal.

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### **Background Note No. 07**

Situational Analysis of Migration and Refuge in Costa Rica: Rapid Assessment of Challenges and Opportunities for Institutions, Communities, and People On The Move, by Ana Aguilera, María Elena García Mora, and Carlos Muñoz Burgos.

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## **Summary Notes**

### **Summary Note 1**

Knowledge Sharing On Temporary Worker Programs and Pilot.

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### **Summary Note 2**

Intercambio de Conocimientos entre República Dominicana y Migración Colombia.

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### **Summary Note 3**

Knowledge Exchange on the “Master’s Degree on Migration Policies, Development and Human Rights in the Caribbean” in the Dominican Republic and the “Master’s Degree on International Migration and Refugees” at Georgetown University.

## **Volume 3**

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