



MIGRANTS ON BOARD A TRUCK, TECUN UMAN, GUATEMALA © IOM 2023

SITUATION OVERVIEW

Close to 400,000 individuals have crossed the perilous Darien jungle from Colombia into Panama this year and more than 80,000 migrants braved this route in August alone, which is the highest monthly figure ever recorded (*Servicio Nacional de Migracion de Panama*). As a comparison, ten years ago, only 3,000 irregular migrants were registered crossing the Darien during the entirety of 2013. This phenomenon mirrors the migration trends observed in the Central American region and in Guatemala, with increasing numbers of nationals from Venezuela, Haiti, Cuba and Ecuador transiting through the country, heading primarily towards North America. Distressingly, a significant number of female-headed households traveling with children have been recorded, indicating substantial and heightened exposure to protection risks, particularly gender-based violence.

According to IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), predominant drivers of this irregular migration include economic hardship, high levels of insecurity and family reunification. Many of these triggers have been intensified by the socio-economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, recent extreme weather events and political unrest in countries of origin.

This unprecedented scale of movements is evident at country level, most especially in the main border towns of Esquipulas (entry point from Honduras) and Tecun Uman (exit point to Mexico). IOM and UNICEF data reveal a close to 200% increase in arrivals through Esquipulas, Guatemala, in the last two months, compared to the initial months of the year. Between April and September 2023, more than 100,000 migrants were recorded, with a worrying number of women and children in very vulnerable situations. Approximately 70% of the surveyed women are traveling with children, and nearly 40% reported experiences of violence and extortion during their migration journey (*IOM’s DTM, Guatemala, Round 3, July 2023*). The majority, lacking resources to continue, find themselves stranded in various transit locations, facing increased protection risks due, in part, to limited access to safe shelter options.

More than 100,000 migrants

RECORDED TRANSITING THROUGH GUATEMALA SINCE APRIL 2023

200% increase

COMPARED TO THE FIRST MONTHS OF THE YEAR

IOM APPEAL (USD)

(October 2023 - March 2024)

	DTM / INFORMATION MANAGEMENT	200,000
	SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS	500,000
	HEALTH	400,000
	WASH	500,000
	PROTECTION	500,000
	SAFE AND REGULAR PATHWAYS	400,000
TOTAL		2.5 M

In addition to temporary shelter needs, migrants in Esquipulas, Tecun Uman and other transit locations have emphasized limited access to other basic goods and services such as food, water, and non-food items, as well as access to health care, safe and clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities. Limited connectivity and the lack of reliable information on their rights and the services that are available to them increase their exposure to fraud, theft and other protection concerns.

There is an urgent need to restore the dignity and promote the rights, well-being, and safety of thousands stranded in Esquipulas and other locations, many of whom, especially female-headed households and children, require specialized protection services, mental health and psychosocial support, as well as safe water, dignity/hygiene kits with emphasis on menstrual health, medical and nutrition services. These humanitarian and protection needs will be further exacerbated by the current civil unrest stemming from the political transition. The various blockades (more than 130) that have been put up across the main roads of the country since the beginning of October 2023 are not only physically preventing individuals – including migrants – from moving from one place to another but are also impacting the economy as a whole. Prices of basic goods and commodities have doubled or tripled in less than two weeks and access to fuel is coming increasingly challenging.

Through this appeal, IOM seeks to mobilize USD 2.5 million to provide humanitarian assistance and protection services to approximately 40,000 individuals in the months ahead, whilst a comprehensive response plan is put in place.



STRANDED MIGRANTS IN ESQUIPULAS, GUATEMALA
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COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

As a member of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), IOM will continue to work closely with partner agencies to ensure coordination of the proposed activities, including with UN agencies, government counterparts, international and local organizations, as well as civil society organizations. IOM participates and actively engages in the OCHA-led coordination meetings held at the national level to strengthen joint efforts and avoid duplication in actions. In addition, IOM is taking a leading role in effectively coordinating UN engagement on these migration issues through the recently activated UN Network on Migration and through co-leading the UN level *Grupo Especializado de Migración* (GEMIG).

At the local levels, IOM works in close collaboration with the relevant municipalities and actively engages in the different coordination forums. In Esquipulas, the *Centro de Operaciones de Emergencia* (COE) as well as the *Mesa Técnica Municipal de Protección a Migrantes y Refugiados* are leading emergency interventions and coordination among the different actors supporting the response. Complementary to these coordination efforts, IOM is currently working in close collaboration with the *Casa del Migrante*, UNICEF and local organizations in order to provide humanitarian assistance and protection services to the most vulnerable migrants. Comprehensive assistance and protection services for migrants in vulnerable situations are also being provided at the seven *Centros de Atención para Personas Migrantes y Refugiadas* (CAPMiRS), managed by IOM and UNHCR, which are located in key locations across the country.



RIVER CROSSING BETWEEN GUATEMALA AND MEXICO
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STRANDED MIGRANTS IN ESQUIPULAS, GUATEMALA
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IOM CAPACITY

IOM interventions build on its expertise in responding to migration and displacement crises at the global, regional and national levels. In Guatemala, IOM has an operational presence in key locations across the country (including in Esquipulas and Tecun Uman), supported by multi-thematic expertise at regional and headquarters level. [With offices in nine locations and more than 350 staff across the country](#), IOM has the capacity to quickly respond and scale-up operations.

Considering the scale, significance and impacts of migration in the country, IOM currently provides comprehensive support in a large programming portfolio, ranging from the provision of direct assistance and protection services to migrants in vulnerable situations, to addressing the root causes of migration, expanding access to regular migration pathways, and building institutional capacities to ensure effective migration governance at the national and local levels.

In response to the current situation, IOM is the leading agency providing reliable data on migration flows, profiles and needs of people on the move, participates in the different clusters as well as leads the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) cluster and co-leads the Gender-based Violence (GBV) sub-cluster. All planned interventions are in line with the first and second strategic objectives of the [Humanitarian Response Plan \(HRP\)](#) for Guatemala and will feed into the regular OCHA situation reports.



DTM / INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The systematic collection, analysis and dissemination of data on migration flows, profiles and priority needs of people on the move enables IOM, the Government and partners to have a better understanding of the mobility dynamics and contribute to more effective, evidence-based responses.

Funding required

\$ 200,000

Using IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), data will be collected through a significant and well-established network of community focal points and DTM enumerators, in line with IOM's Data Protection Principles. Currently, IOM has a network of enumerators established in four key transit locations across the country (in Tecun Uman, Esquipulas, Izabal and Peten), where information on migration flows, profiles, intentions and the different priority needs of women, men, boys and girls on the move are systematically being collected.

Several components of IOM's DTM will continue to be implemented in Guatemala, depending on the information needs of partners:

- Data on cross border and transit flows (flow monitoring) at key locations will be collected and will include information on the numbers, profiles, intentions, and observed/reported vulnerabilities of people on the move.
- Conduct context-specific surveys, studies and assessments (particularly on the situation of migrant children, women head of households etc) to provide a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of specific mobility dynamics, risks and capacities

Regular products and dashboards will be produced, shared with relevant partners, and published on IOM's Information Unit for Northern Central American countries' website (<https://infounitnca.iom.int/>).



SHELTER AND NON FOOD ITEMS

Access to safe and temporary shelter has systematically been cited as the priority need for migrants stranded in transit locations, including in Esquipulas, Guatemala City and Tecun Uman. According to the latest DTM data, 88% of migrants surveyed at the four key transit locations have expressed the limited availability of safe and accessible temporary shelter options.

Funding required

\$ 500,000

Target no. of individuals

5,000

IOM's actions will aim to preserve the immediate safety and well-being of migrants, with a specific focus on women and children. Different modalities will be used depending on the context, which will be done in line with the cluster standard approaches:



- Strengthen the collaboration with the Casa del Migrante in key locations (Esquipulas, Tecun Uman, Guatemala City, Peten) in order to increase their temporary shelter capacities. Support will be provided through rehabilitations, when possible and through the deployment of trained human resources (for the management of the center).
- Establish additional local partnerships for the provision of temporary shelter (including with local hotels / pensions, and shelters managed by CONRED or SOSEP etc.), focused especially on the provision of safe options for women and children.
- As a last resort option, IOM may work in collaboration with the different municipalities, as well as with CONRED (*Coordinadora Nacional para la Reduccion de Desastres*) and SOSEP (*Secretaria de Obras Sociales de la Esposa del Presidente de la Republica de Guatemala*), to assess the feasibility and necessity to establish temporary sites. Comprehensive multisectoral site feasibility and capacity assessments will be carried out to ensure adherence to standards and to reduce protection risks, as well as suitable and planned exit strategies. IOM Shelter & Settlement experts may support capacity building efforts on displacement settlement planning, and as the co-lead of the CCCM cluster, capacity-building on CCCM may be provided to relevant actors.
- Distribution of non-food items (NFI), such as clothes , to migrants stranded in key transit locations. The composition of each kit will be tailored to the specific needs and feedback received from different groups of migrants, whilst IOM will coordinate the purchase and distribution with actors in different locations (Casa del Migrante, IOM’s network of enumerators, local associations, mobile units, etc.) and will complement it with the provision of additional humanitarian assistance and protection services, when needed.



WASH

The impacts of large-scale cross-border population movements combined with the limited availability of WASH infrastructure in some of the key transit locations (including in Esquipulas and Tecun Uman) are diminishing people’s access to essential services. In Esquipulas, migrants who are stranded in the city currently have to pay in order to be able to use public showers and toilets.

Emphasis will thus be put on ensuring that people in key transit locations have access to free potable water in sufficient quantities as well as sustainable sanitation and hygiene infrastructure. The specific type of WASH interventions will depend on the context of each location, will integrate gender and protection considerations, and can include the following:

Funding required

\$500,000

Target no. of individuals

15,000

- Establishment of partnerships with service providers managing access to sanitary facilities (e.g. toilets and showers) in Esquipulas and implementation of a voucher system to provide free access to these facilities for migrants (especially the most vulnerable groups).
- Following contextualized assessments and where feasible, construction / rehabilitation of WASH infrastructure and facilities in key locations in coordination with pertinent stakeholders.
- Conduct of culturally appropriate safe hygiene messaging and on ways to mitigate risks of water-borne disease outbreaks.
- Distribution of hygiene kits in key locations, in collaboration with local partners.



HEALTH

Health has been identified as a key priority area by all actors, including access to lifesaving primary and secondary health care services, and mental health and psychosocial support services. Ensuring the availability and accessibility to the basic package of health services as well as emergency health care remains essential for migrants in vulnerable situations, who are often not aware of their rights, nor of the health services that are available to them. The following interventions will be prioritized:

Funding required

\$400,000

Target no. of individuals

10,000



- Deploy mobile medical teams (including nurses and MHPSS staff) in collaboration with local actors (health centres, National Red Cross, NGOs, etc) in order to provide a comprehensive range of primary health services, and referrals to specialized health care facilities if needed.
- Based on contextualized technical assessments, expand health interventions specifically in border areas including increased disease surveillance capacity in line with the International Health Regulations (IHR).
- Work in collaboration with the local health structures (in Esquipulas, Tecun Uman) to reinforce their capacity to provide health services to migrants. This may include the procurement and distribution of critical medical equipment, medical supplies, training of health staff, improvement, expansion and rehabilitation of health structures.
- Provision of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services for vulnerable migrants and affected communities, including the deployment of trained and supervised psychosocial mobile teams. Emphasis will be put on reinforcing self-care routines of migrants to develop positive coping mechanisms, providing Psychological First Aid (PFA) and focused services such as counseling and support groups, and referral to specialized mental health care. Capacity-building on MHPSS topics will also be provided to service providers



In a context marked by a high number of people on the move, stranded in key transit locations and without access to safe and reliable information, several individuals are exposed to significant risks of trafficking, exploitation, abuse and violence. In particular, women travelling alone, female heads of households, children, and people with specific needs experience an exacerbation of their vulnerabilities by the lack of services available. IOM intends to contribute to improve the overall protection response in Esquipulas and Tecun Uman, among other key locations, through the following actions:

- Strengthened protection monitoring (assessment, surveys, focus group discussions) to identify trends, vulnerabilities and emerging needs amongst the people on the move in order to inform response
- In coordination with UNICEF and other partners, provide migrants in transit with reliable information through its community mobilizers and the establishment of “information kiosks” in key locations (including in Esquipulas). The information provided will include available humanitarian assistance and protection services in transit points, referrals to local actors and governmental institutions, risks of irregular migration (e.g. trafficking) and regular migration pathways (including for asylum).
- Strengthen the provision of specialized protection services. IOM, in collaboration with its partners, will work to establish functional identification and referral mechanisms for migrants in vulnerable situations and victims of trafficking, exploitation, abuse and violence; undertake GBV risk mitigation and response; establish women and girls’ safe spaces; and implement specialized protection services targeting children.
- To support survivors of GBV, IOM and its partners will establish and preposition supplies for specialized GBV services including emergency medical care and psychosocial support.
- To prevent and counter trafficking in persons, IOM plan to support key stakeholders involved in counter-trafficking, such as the Secretariat contra la Violencia Sexual, Explotación y Trata de Personas (SVET), in the implementation of an awareness-raising campaign to prevent smuggling and trafficking, as well as train local authorities. IOM will also strengthen referral and response mechanisms in case of identification of potential victims of trafficking as well as victims of exploitation, abuse and violence and ensure the provision of direct assistance to the victims.
- Enhance partners’ protection knowledge and skills, including on protection mainstreaming, Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), psychological first aid, GBV, child protection, and counter-trafficking.

Funding required

\$500,000

Target no. of individuals

5,000



In addition to addressing the immediate humanitarian and protection needs of migrants in vulnerable situations, IOM recognizes the need to strengthen access to safe and regular migration pathways which are guaranteed by rights-based policies and procedures. The following interventions will need to be scaled-up in the next few months.

Funding required

\$400,000

Target no. of individuals

5,000

- Provide Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) services for migrants who wish to return to their countries of origin in a safe and dignified manner.
- Conduct tailored counselling sessions regarding safe and regular migration pathways, provide tailored information on the pathways that are available (including support on the application process) and/or refer individuals to other entities and services.
- Provide referral services to specialized institutions, including UNCHR, for individuals who would require an international protection screening.
- Conduct assessments of national Humanitarian Border Management (HBM) capacities to identify priority areas of intervention, including the drafting of Standard Operating Procedures for emergency situations, the establishment of referral mechanisms to assist migrants.
- Building on the Integrated Border Management principles, ensure effective coordination among relevant border authorities, including public health authorities. This will include the development of SOPs, the procurement and installation of equipment to support effective operations to border posts and other relevant facilities, comprehensive training and related capacity-building initiatives to ensure sustainable, safe as well as rights-based and inclusive cross-border mobility.



BENEFICIARIES AT THE CAPMIR IN TECUN UMAN, GUATEMALA
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