

A quick overview of IOM's Western Hemisphere Program (WHP) progress and key activities from January 1st to March 31, 2024.

Migration Management

Bringing Guatemala's National Migration Policy into action



After the approval of Guatemala's National Migration Policy in October 2023, WHP continues providing the support to the Government in the development of the Implementation and Outreach Plan, which was officially launched in March 2024. The Plan provides guidance on how the Guatemalan government along with public, private, and civil society actors will be able to transfer the Policy into concrete actions.

To this end, IOM will foster intersectorial dialogue and will provide technical assistance to the Guatemalan Migration Institute for the operationalization of the plan so future actions facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people¹.

Communications

Think Twice campaign in El Salvador promotes regular labor migration pathways



In partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador and under the Think Twice campaign, IOM launched a guide for H-2 visa applicants.

The campaign includes orientations on safety measures in a new work environment, labor rights and expectations, and the cultural background of the destination country.

This initiative is an example of the potential that C4D campaigns have in promoting regular pathways. Additionally, the recently completed C4D evaluation highlights that the target audience, in particular young people, is willing to invest time and money to access regular migration pathways.



Partnerships

IOM and UNODC analyze migrant smuggling *modus operandi* in Central America

A new joint regional study explores the costs, profiles, and operational modes of those facilitating this crime in the region and their capacity to change and adapt rapidly and grow over time.

As part of further actions, both UN agencies will work at the national level to guide strategic actions to counter migrant smuggling. IOM will provide support through a victim protection approach, while UNODC will give guidance on the prosecution of criminal networks.

The findings of the study provide updated evidence to inform decision-making related to the transnational response to smuggling of migrants².

[Find the study here](#) (in Spanish only)

Crises & Climate Change

Bilateral agreement between IOM and FOPREL enables progress on migration legislation linked to climate change



In March, IOM and the Forum of Presidents of Legislative Authorities of Central America and the Caribbean (FOPREL) signed a Memorandum of Understanding. The MoU reaffirms the commitment of both institutions to outline common lines of work on migration-related matters and to systematize the actions for the future on legislative issues in each member country.

WHP provided support during the FOPREL meeting where the presidency was transferred from the Dominican Republic to Costa Rica. IOM's active involvement allowed to set three key priorities of FOPREL: the fight against organized crime, migration, and climate change, which are central topics of our work.

[Read more](#)

SITLAM continues to consolidate in the region

In response to its commitment to facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions, which ensure decent work for foreigners³ and fulfilment of their rights, WHP continues to reinforce the Labor Migration Traceability System (SITLAM) in Central America.

Since 2020, approximately **39,000** migrant workers from Nicaragua and Panama have obtained an official identity document and work permit before arriving to Costa Rica. This document can be used to access public services like health and banking. Additionally, other social services for migrants will be available soon.

Inspired by the successful SITLAM implementation for foreign workers within the agricultural sector in Costa Rica, the following actions are in process:



Binational Guide for Circular Migration

Panama and Costa Rica developed this first guide to facilitate regular pathways of migrant workers between the two countries and to strengthen the respect and protection of their rights. WHP will continue to provide technical support for its implementation in both countries.



More labor migration agreements

Costa Rica formed binational technical committees with El Salvador and Guatemala to explore possibilities of setting a bilateral agreement like SITLAM for regular movements of migrant workers. WHP brings technical know-how in the committee's sessions.



A new potential country of destination for SITLAM

Honduras is conducting a feasibility analysis to implement a SITLAM-like system for receiving workers from neighboring countries to be employed in the coffee production sector. WHP will facilitate capacity building for staff of relevant institutions.

The SITLAM scope expands: The new bilateral actions involving Costa Rica aim to expand the application of SITLAM to new economic sectors such as transportation and construction. This contributes to the implementation of national policies and programs related to international labour mobility⁴.

Notes: ³ Objective 6 of GMC / ⁴ Objective 6 of the Global Compact for Migration

Capacity Building activities:

From January to March, **3,875** people were trained under the WHP:



1,615 MEN



2,260 WOMEN

Latest Publications



As part of the strategy to strengthen the functionality and sustainability of the SICA regional migration information platform, IOM has published the [Compendium of Migratory Terms](#), which was developed within the OCAM Working Group. The Compendium presents definitions and key statistical terms related to migration and administrative data used in Central America and the Dominican Republic.



Work in progress



- WHP is updating the Information Hub Manual to strengthen the assistance mechanisms, which could be provided by the Hubs to reduce vulnerabilities throughout the migration journey.
- An ongoing study on prevention and identification of false documents and to identity theft will help to improve the national authority's capacity to prevent crimes.

A glance of capacity building in the frontline:

The Bahamas immigration authorities strengthen knowledge and skills in border management and migrant protection with IOM support



41 Bahamian immigration officers successfully completed a series of trainings provided under WHP on standards for identifying and dealing with vulnerable migrants and human trafficking victims.

“While conducting their border control duties, the officials will have the knowledge to identify those people, who have vulnerabilities and are suspected victims of crimes, hence the officials will be able to identify and refer them to tailored assistance.

Montello Gibso, Chief Immigration Officer

This capacity building is in line with the priorities identified by the Government in the ongoing Migration Governance Indicators assessment in The Bahamas. The State expressed the willingness to explore how to develop a national migration policy with a human rights approach.

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