

SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION

Strategies to Support Migrants Returning to Mexico and Central America



By Ariel G. Ruiz Soto, Rodrigo Dominguez-Villegas,
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Executive Summary

Northward migration has long linked the countries of Central America to Mexico and the United States. In recent years, however, the composition of migration through the region has undergone significant changes. In fiscal year (FY) 2017, apprehensions of unauthorized migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras at the U.S.-Mexico border surpassed those of unauthorized migrants from Mexico for the third time since FY 2014. And early figures suggest that apprehensions of migrants from these three Northern Triangle countries again outnumbered those of Mexicans in FY 2018. In 2018, caravans of Central American migrants traveling across Mexico to the United States also drew substantial media coverage and political attention, giving rise to tensions among national governments about the best methods to manage these flows while providing humanitarian protection to those eligible for it.

As the origins of illegal migration to the United States have shifted from Mexico toward the Northern Triangle, so too have other characteristics. While in prior periods the overwhelming majority were single men, the picture is now more mixed: the shares of families traveling together and children traveling alone have been growing, and in October and November 2018, for the first time, these two groups comprised a majority of U.S.-Mexico border apprehensions. Recent arrivals have also included sizeable numbers of migrants seeking humanitarian protection, straining the U.S. and Mexican asylum systems and contributing to political pressure—particularly in the United States—to develop more forceful policies to deter future arrivals.

This confluence of factors has placed heightened pressure on Mexico and the Northern Triangle countries to improve their capacity to receive and reintegrate returning migrants.

In this context, the nature and scale of repatriations across the region are changing. Deportations¹ from the United States to Mexico continue at substantial levels, while those from both of these countries to the Northern Triangle rise. Between FY 2012 and FY 2018, the United States carried out approximately 1.8 million repatriations of Mexican migrants, and the United States and Mexico together carried out 1.4 million repatriations of migrants from the three Northern Triangle countries. The Trump administration's increase in arrests and removals of Mexican and Central American migrants, as compared to the final years of the Obama administration, and its decision to terminate Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for immigrants from El Salvador and Honduras have important implications for countries and communities across the region.

This confluence of factors has placed heightened pressure on Mexico and the Northern Triangle countries to improve their capacity to receive and reintegrate returning migrants. This study draws on Migration Policy Institute (MPI) fieldwork and interviews with government officials, researchers, representatives of civil-society and international organizations, and returning migrants to highlight promising strategies and pressing challenges.

Although with different levels of capacity and degrees of implementation, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras have since 2015 adopted three common elements in their reception and reintegration services: (1) differentiated services for migrants according to their needs and characteristics; (2) a whole-of-government approach in which multiple agencies coordinate efforts; and (3) municipal-level

¹ The term “returning migrants” refers to individuals who return either voluntarily or involuntarily to their countries of origin. “Repatriated,” “deported,” or “removed” refers specifically to migrants who are formally returned by the authorities of a country in which they are deemed not to have a right to stay.



reintegration services to expand the geographic coverage of such services. Key areas of development include:

- **Government-led reception services.** Progress in institutionalizing services and renovating government reception centers is most notable in Honduras and El Salvador. In Mexico, which has more experience serving returning migrants, the government has enhanced service coordination across institutions by consolidating existing reception services at 11 ports of entry along the U.S.-Mexico border and at the Mexico City airport. And the Guatemalan government, with the assistance of international organizations, has upgraded and renovated some of its reception centers, though coordination between the government and civil society on the provision of reception services is often lacking. Because of these significant investments, most migrants deported to these four countries receive basic reception services in a welcoming and safe environment where they are informed of follow-up services available in their destination communities. Notably, recent government efforts to identify the characteristics and circumstances of individual returnees at reception centers, or in some cases prior to repatriation, are enhancing capacity to target services according to migrants' needs.
- **Government-led reintegration services.** All four countries in this study have begun to channel reintegration services through one-stop centers that are often located inside municipal government offices, thereby increasing the visibility and accessibility of services to returning migrants. Reintegration strategies chiefly emphasize employment and entrepreneurial projects, usually providing access to small grants or microloans, skill certification, and education systems. Psychosocial services, though in demand among returning migrants, are often unavailable or only short term.
- **Civil-society support for reintegration.** Despite their often-limited capacity, civil-society organizations, including some led by networks of deportees, fill important service gaps unaddressed by government institutions. Civil-society groups often tailor their services to specific populations (e.g., migrants who are English proficient, those with criminal records, or those with physical disabilities). These organizations are increasingly connected with government institutions, allowing them to better assist migrants in navigating government processes and accessing educational and employment opportunities. Crucially, these nongovernmental groups often help form emotional support networks that can meet the psychosocial needs of returning migrants.

Even as the scope and reach of these reintegration services grow, policy analyses and fieldwork findings suggest migrants returning to Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras face five common challenges:

- **Lack of identification documents.** Obtaining official identification documents is the most immediate challenge for returning migrants because they are generally required to furnish such documents to access reintegration services and rights tied to citizenship.
- **Limited awareness of services among migrants and government officials, and uneven distribution of services across localities.** The provision of reintegration services at the municipal level to improve accessibility is becoming more common, but significant gaps remain. Lack of awareness of existing services among both migrants and government officials, coupled with the uneven geographic distribution of services, limits returning migrants' use of these services. Access to services is especially limited for those returning to rural and underdeveloped areas where government services more broadly are often absent.
- **Difficulties getting employment credentials recognized and matching skills with labor-market needs.** Employment in the formal sector usually requires skill certifications that many returning migrants have difficulty obtaining. Credential-validation services that might help them receive recognition for skills and training acquired abroad, such as those provided by the Salvadoran Institute for Professional Training, reach only a small share of the returning population in each of the studied countries.



- ***Social stigma and employment discrimination.*** Regardless of whether they returned voluntarily or involuntarily, many migrants in the region reported experiencing social stigmatization and employment discrimination in their countries of origin. This was especially common among those with minor criminal records (not necessarily convictions) or those perceived to be involved in gangs due to their appearance.
- ***The persistence of key push and pull factors that drive emigration.*** Although conditions vary from country to country, and even among localities within the same country, a lack of economic opportunities, high levels of insecurity and violence, and distrust in government institutions continue to push people to leave the region, including some returning migrants who opt to re-migrate. At the same time, family ties continue to pull migrants to the United States.

To more robustly address or mitigate these challenges, governments, international organizations, and civil society can collaborate to strengthen reception and reintegration services. Priority areas for collaboration include the following:

- ***Preparing migrants for reintegration prior to their return.*** Strengthening collaboration between U.S. and Mexican enforcement agencies responsible for repatriation on the one hand and the government institutions responsible for reception on the other can streamline and improve migrants' access to reintegration services. Establishing reintegration-focused consultations with migrants in removal proceedings, for instance, would allow consular officials to identify and collect information about their needs and skills prior to return, making it possible to connect them to appropriate services.
- ***Issuing primary identification documents from abroad or upon reception.*** Though it may require governments to amend existing laws, issuing official identification documents to migrants in removal proceedings not only increases their access to important reintegration services and information, it may also foster feelings of belonging to their origin countries. In the short term, issuing primary identification documents at reception centers—instead of providing temporary documents or making referrals to other institutions, as is commonly done—can begin to improve access to services.
- ***Implementing unified data systems for service provision and follow-up.*** Unified data systems that store migrants' sociodemographic and skill information for the purpose of enhancing how multiple government agencies provide reintegration services are in the early stages of development. The implementation of such systems, including efforts currently underway in Honduras, is a crucial investment that can streamline postreception services, including by reducing the burden on migrants to provide the same information repeatedly and by enabling service providers to follow up with individuals after they have left reception centers.
- ***Grounding reintegration services in migrants' cultural roots.*** Many migrants, and particularly those who have been abroad for years, report struggling to rebuild social and professional networks and to feel connected to the society. Reintegration services that tap into migrants' cultural roots, though currently limited in number and scale, can help foster a sense of belonging among migrants after their return. In Guatemala, for example, the migrant-led organization Grupo Cajolá operates egg and honey farms in indigenous communities, as well as a preschool program that supports local language, culture, and customs, with the aim of assisting returning migrants and supporting community development.
- ***Expanding interinstitutional communication and public information campaigns.*** Raising awareness about the needs and contributions of returning migrants—both within government and in the broader public—can improve service provision and reduce public stigmatization. In municipalities receiving smaller shares of returning migrants, where awareness is likely to be most limited, these campaigns could be crucial for increasing migrants' participation in available services and their long-term economic and social reintegration.



Improving reception and reintegration services is a valuable long-term investment for both destination and origin countries. Services that help returning migrants find their footing in local communities and obtain better livelihoods in the long run hold the potential to reduce repeat illegal migration, while enabling countries of origin to benefit from the skills and assets migrants have acquired abroad.

Improving reception and reintegration services is a valuable long-term investment for both destination and origin countries.

Among the many efforts undertaken by governments, international organizations, and civil society in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras in recent years, several particularly promising strategies stand out. These efforts operate under an integrated approach that tailors services to migrants' diverse needs, connecting services across institutions and coordinating between existing services at the local level. Ensuring that reintegration services are successful *and* sustainable in the long run will require strong cross-sector collaboration, shared responsibility across the region, consistent funding, and better monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

I. Introduction

Migration has long linked Mexico, the United States, and the countries of Central America. Yet in recent years, the composition of northward migration through the region has undergone significant changes. While for decades, Mexicans made up the lion's share of apprehensions of unauthorized migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border, this is no longer the case. Early data from fiscal year (FY) 2018 indicate that for the fourth time in the last five fiscal years, U.S. apprehensions of migrants from the Northern Triangle countries of Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) are likely to have outpaced those of Mexican migrants.² The composition of flows has also shifted away from predominantly single, male migrants and toward rising shares of families traveling together and children traveling alone.

Widely circulated images of Central American migrants traveling in caravans across Mexico to the United States have attracted substantial popular and political attention, and surfaced tensions among governments in the region about the best methods to manage these flows while providing humanitarian protection to those who qualify for it.³ At the same time, apprehensions of Northern Triangle migrants are also rising in Mexico, as are reports of Central American migrants—including more than 3,000 caravan members—seeking asylum there.⁴

Reflecting these changing migration patterns, the nature and scale of repatriations across the region are changing, with deportations from the United States to Mexico continuing at substantial levels, while

2 Migration Policy Institute (MPI) calculations of apprehension data for the first seven months in fiscal year (FY) 2018 indicate U.S. apprehensions of Northern Triangle migrants are likely to surpass those of Mexican migrants for the fourth time since FY 2014. See Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) "Border Patrol Arrests, CBP Data through April 2018," accessed October 12, 2018, <http://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/cbparrest/>.

3 BBC News, "Migrant Caravan Halted by Mexico Police on Guatemalan Border," BBC News, October 20, 2018, www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45920624; Agencia EFE, "Alcalde de Tijuana Declara Crisis Humanitaria por Arribo de Caravana Migrante," Agencia EFE, November 23, 2018, www.efe.com/efe/usa/mexico/alcalde-de-tijuana-declara-crisis-humanitaria-por-arribo-caravana-migrante/50000100-3821749.

4 Silvia E. Giorguli-Saucedo, Víctor M. García Guerrero, and Claudia Masferrer, *A Migration System in the Making* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2016), https://cedua.colmex.mx/images/_micrositios/amsitm/amsitm-policy-paper.pdf; Mexican Interior Ministry (SEGOB), "Tramita COMAR Más de Tres Mil Solicitudes de Refugio de Integrantes de Caravana," updated November 6, 2018, www.gob.mx/inm/prensa/tramita-comar-mas-de-tres-mil-solicitudes-de-refugio-de-integrantes-de-caravana-181507.



deportations from both of these countries to the Northern Triangle are on the rise. Between FY 2012 and FY 2018, the United States carried out approximately 1.8 million repatriations of Mexican migrants, and the United States and Mexico together carried out 1.4 million repatriations of migrants from the three Northern Triangle countries. Increases in immigration arrests and removals in both the United States and Mexico; the narrowing of opportunities to apply for asylum in the United States and limited capacity to process asylum claims in Mexico; and the Trump administration's termination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for immigrants from El Salvador and Honduras all have important implications for countries across the region as they grapple with how to implement or scale up reception and reintegration services.

In light of the heightened pressure policymakers in the region are facing to design systems and programs that support both returning migrants and the communities in which they settle, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) launched a year-long study of reception and reintegration services in Mexico and the Northern Triangle countries, with a focus on promising practices and ongoing challenges. Over the course of the study, MPI researchers met with officials from the U.S., Mexican, and Northern Triangle country governments; representatives of international organizations; regional migration experts; and civil-society leaders. Between February and May 2018, the authors conducted fieldwork in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, where they met with U.S. embassy and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) staff, national government officials, subject matter experts, and civil-society representatives. They also organized focus groups and interviews with repatriated and other returning migrants.⁵ Finally, in June 2018, MPI held a roundtable in Washington, DC at which representatives of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Department of State, and USAID; diplomats and government officials from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras; and experts and civil-society representatives from the United States and across the region discussed the fieldwork findings and potential short- and long-term policy recommendations.

Increases in immigration arrests and removals in both the United States and Mexico ... have important implications for countries across the region.

This report draws on the findings of this study to highlight promising reintegration strategies in Mexico and the Northern Triangle, how these strategies may affect migration pressures in the region, and key challenges and limitations. After reviewing how migration and return trends have changed in recent years, the report describes an integrated approach to understanding and addressing migrants' reception and reintegration needs, depending on their demographic characteristics, migration experiences, and whether they return voluntarily or involuntarily. It then provides a detailed look at existing reception and reintegration strategies as well as challenges in each of the four countries studied, followed by a discussion of broader reintegration challenges in the region and opportunities to address them. Finally, it explores the potential for reintegration services to reduce migration pressures from Central America to Mexico, and from Mexico and Central America to the United States.⁶

5 In total, the authors met with 50 key informants and 30 migrants in Guatemala, 35 key informants and 20 migrants in El Salvador, 30 key informants and 25 migrants in Mexico, and 21 key informants and 19 migrants in Honduras during this fieldwork.

6 In a forthcoming companion report, MPI will examine the potential effects of regional development initiatives on long-term migration flows to the United States, with a particular focus on the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America and the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity (AFP) of the Northern Triangle. See Ariel G. Ruiz Soto and Randy Capps, *Promising Practices and Challenges of Development Solutions to Migration Flows from the Northern Triangle* (Washington, DC: MPI, forthcoming).



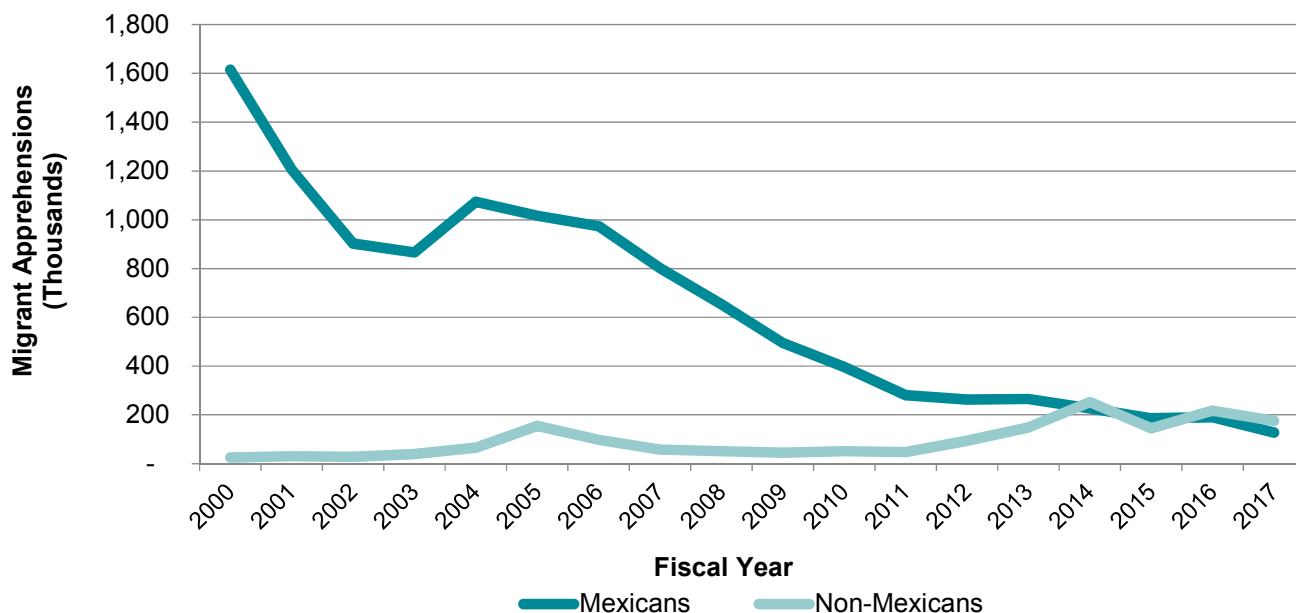
II. Shifting Migration Trends

For many years, Mexican nationals comprised the overwhelming majority of unauthorized migrants apprehended at the U.S.-Mexico border. But U.S. Border Patrol apprehensions of Mexican migrants have declined in recent years, and on three occasions since FY 2014 they have been surpassed by apprehensions of migrants of other nationalities, predominately those from Central America (see Figure 1).⁷ In FY 2017, for example, there were 163,000 apprehensions of migrants from the three Northern Triangle countries versus 128,000 apprehensions of Mexicans.⁸ This new pattern continued into a fourth year in FY 2018, amid rising recognition that large-scale mixed migration from the Northern Triangle countries has become an enduring phenomenon—a new norm that will continue to challenge DHS and other federal agencies for years to come, particularly when it comes to the already overburdened U.S. asylum system.⁹

Box 1. Types of Return

This report uses the term “returning migrants” to describe individuals who return to their countries of origin either voluntarily or involuntarily. It uses “repatriated,” “deported,” or “removed” to refer more narrowly to migrants who are formally returned by the authorities of a country in which they are deemed not to have a right to stay.

Figure 1. U.S. Apprehensions of Unauthorized Migrants from Mexico and Other Countries along the Southwest Border, FY 2000–17



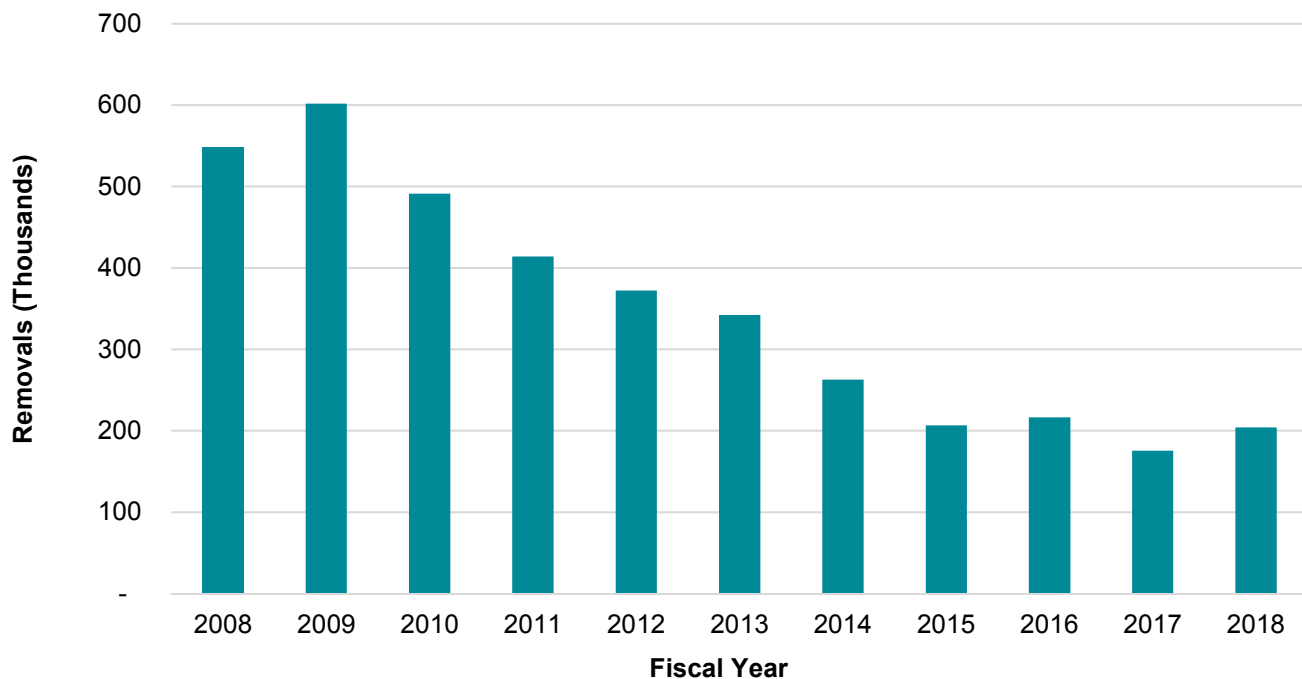
Source: U.S. Border Patrol, “United States Border Patrol: Total Illegal Alien Apprehensions by Fiscal Year” (data tables, U.S. Border Patrol, Washington, DC, December 2017), www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/assets/documents/2017-Dec/BP%20Total%20Apps%2C%20Mexico%2C%20OTM%20FY2000-FY2017.pdf.

- ⁷ For example, migrants from the Northern Triangle countries represented 89 percent of non-Mexican apprehensions in FY 2007, 94 percent in FY 2014, and 93 percent in FY 2017. See U.S. Border Patrol, “U.S. Border Patrol Nationwide Apprehensions by Citizenship and Sector, FY2007 - FY2017” (data tables, U.S. Border Patrol, Washington, DC, July 2018), www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/assets/documents/2018-Jul/usbp-nationwide-apps-sector-citizenship-fy07-fy17.pdf.
- ⁸ The other two recent years in which this was the case are FY 2014, when there were 238,000 Northern Triangle apprehensions and 227,000 Mexican apprehensions, and FY 2016, with 199,000 and 191,000 apprehensions, respectively. See *ibid*.
- ⁹ During the first seven months of FY 2018, there were 107,000 apprehensions of Northern Triangle migrants and 91,000 apprehensions of Mexicans. See TRAC, “Border Patrol Arrests, CBP Data through April 2018.”



Compared to the final years of the Obama administration, arrests and interior removals of migrants to Mexico and the Northern Triangle countries have increased under the Trump administration. Between FY 2008 and FY 2018, the United States carried out approximately 3.8 million repatriations of Mexican migrants, as reported in Mexican administrative data. Yet, mirroring the downward trend of Mexican apprehensions at the U.S.-Mexico border, removals of Mexican nationals have declined in recent years. Compared to a peak of 602,000 removals in FY 2009,¹⁰ U.S. immigration authorities carried out 175,000 repatriations of Mexican migrants in FY 2017 (see Figure 2). In FY 2018, U.S. removals of Mexican migrants reached 204,000, an uptick over the previous fiscal year but nonetheless well below the levels seen in previous years.

Figure 2. Total Removals of Mexican Migrants by U.S. Authorities, FY 2008–18

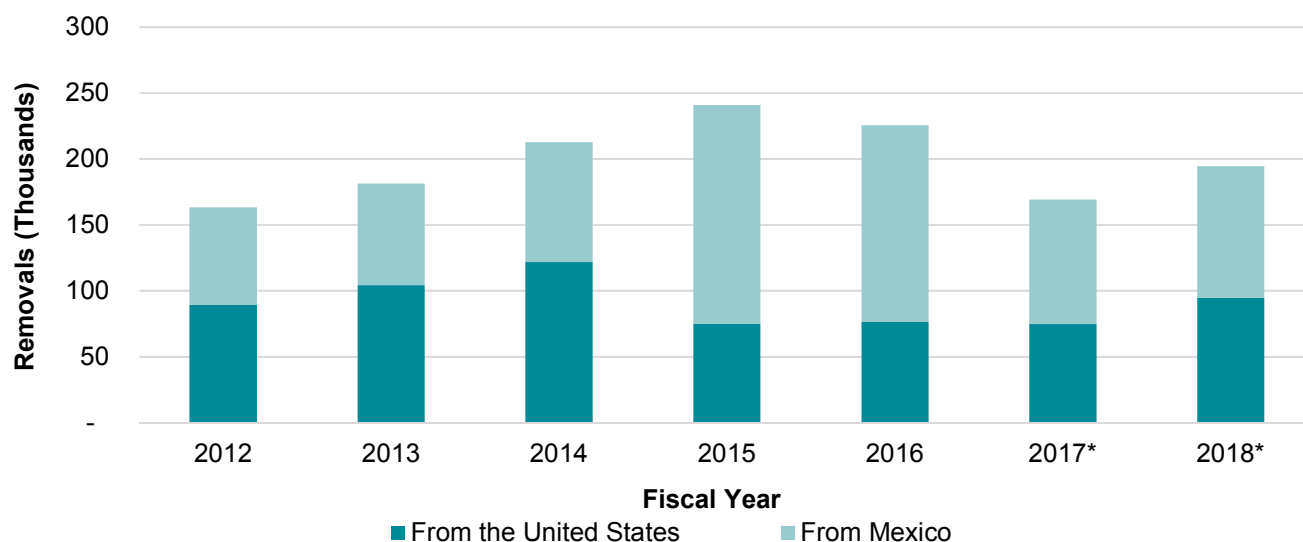


Notes: These data from the Mexican Interior Ministry (SEGOB) represent removal events and not unique individuals. Individuals may have been apprehended at the U.S.-Mexico border or arrested in the U.S. interior. To facilitate comparisons with U.S. data, the authors have translated SEGOB monthly removal data into U.S. fiscal years (October through September).

Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) calculations using data from SEGOB, “Boletín mensual de estadísticas migratorias, 2011–18,” accessed December 5, 2018, www.politicamigratoria.gob.mx/es/SEGOB/Boletines-Estadisticos.

Between FY 2012 and FY 2018, U.S. and Mexican authorities carried out a total of 1.4 million removals of migrants from the three Northern Triangle countries—a figure approaching the 1.8 repatriations of Mexicans from the United States during this period. Removals of Northern Triangle migrants peaked in FY 2015, when they numbered nearly 241,000, with the majority being returned from Mexico. In FY 2017, removals from the two countries to the Northern Triangle fell to approximately 170,000, before increasing to nearly 195,000 in FY 2018 (see Figure 3). And as these data show, Mexican authorities have conducted more removals of Northern Triangle migrants since FY 2015 than U.S. authorities.

¹⁰ Ryan Schultheis and Ariel G. Ruiz Soto, *A Revolving Door No More? A Statistical Profile of Mexican Adults Repatriated from the United States* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2017), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/revolving-door-no-more-statistical-profile-mexican-adults-repatriated-united-states.

Figure 3. Total Removals of Northern Triangle Migrants by U.S. and Mexican Authorities, FY 2012–18*

* Figures for FY 2012 through FY 2016 do not include U.S. “returns” which are considered voluntary requests by migrants to be returned to their origin countries, as opposed to removals which result from compulsory orders by U.S. immigration authorities. U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) data on removals alone have not yet been released for FY 2017 and FY 2018; as a result, the authors have approximated removals for these two years using data from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) that include a small number of returns made by ICE and do not include a small number of removals by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Mexican removal figures do not include “assisted returns” by Mexican authorities, which (as in the U.S. context) are considered voluntary requests by migrants.

Note: To facilitate comparisons between U.S. and Mexican data, the authors have translated SEGOB monthly removal data into U.S. fiscal years (October through September).

Sources: MPI calculations using data from DHS, “Yearbook of Immigration Statistics 2016,” updated September 13, 2018, www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2016; ICE, *Fiscal Year 2017 ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations Report* (Washington, DC: ICE, 2017), www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Report/2017/iceEndOfYearFY2017.pdf; ICE, *Fiscal Year 2018 ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations Report* (Washington, DC: ICE, 2018), www.ice.gov/doclib/about/offices/ero/pdf/eroFY2018Report.pdf; SEGOB, “Boletín mensual de estadísticas migratorias, 2011–18.”

The decision by the Trump administration to terminate TPS for nationals of El Salvador and Honduras may contribute to future return migration to the region. Approximately 195,000 Salvadoran and 57,000 Honduran beneficiaries will lose their protection against removal and permission to work legally in the United States in September 2019 and January 2020, respectively.¹¹ While some may be able to acquire legal status through other immigration channels, many face a choice between remaining in the United States as unauthorized immigrants or returning to a country after nearly two decades away. These current and potential returns have increased pressure on countries in the region to improve their capacity to receive and reintegrate returning migrants.

Moreover, while migrant apprehensions at the U.S.-Mexico border reached historic lows in FY 2017, they increased 30 percent in FY 2018, indicating that many of the factors driving migration in the region remain robust.¹² For instance, homicide rates in the three Northern Triangle countries remain relatively high—at more than 25 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2017, compared to a global average of 5 per 100,000 in 2015¹³—despite significant declines in El Salvador and Honduras in recent years (see Figure 4).

11 Jill H. Wilson, *Temporary Protected Status: Overview and Current Issues* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2018), <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RS/RS20844>.

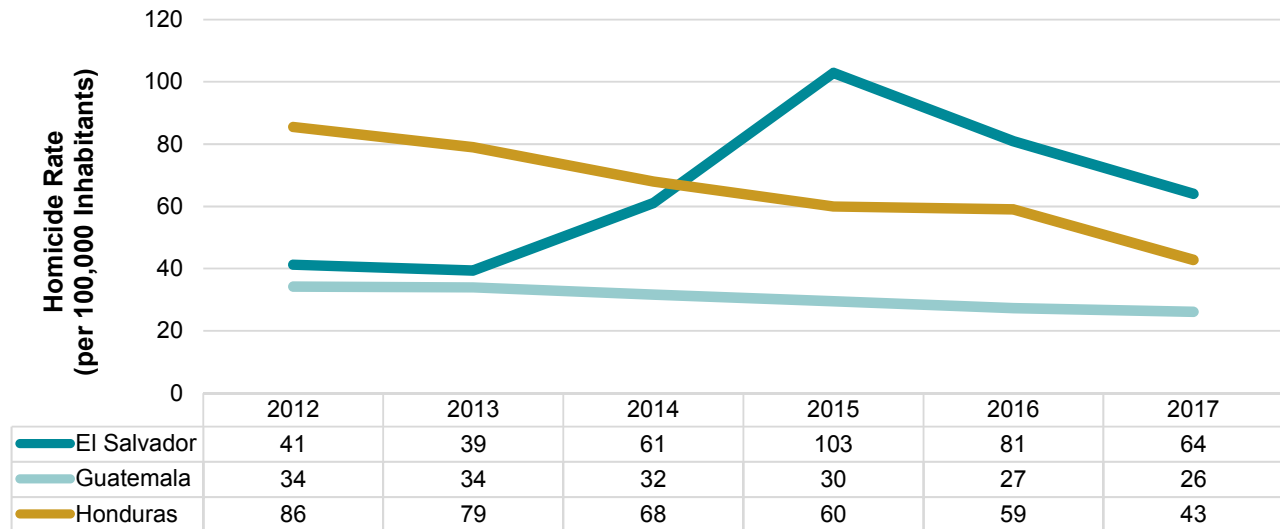
12 Compared to same period in FY 2017, migrant apprehensions between February and October 2018 more than doubled, increasing from approximately 136,000 to 287,000. See U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), “Southwest Border Migration FY 2018,” www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/sw-border-migration/fy-2018.

13 World Bank, “Intentional Homicides (per 100,000 People),” accessed December 5, 2018, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IHR.PSRC.P5>.



Economic hardship and an absence of economic opportunities, two other common drivers of migration, are reflected in persistently high poverty rates, which in 2017 stood at 29 percent in El Salvador, 59 percent in Guatemala, and 64 percent in Honduras.¹⁴ Other enduring push factors in the region include generalized gang violence and extortion, domestic violence, food insecurity, and political instability.¹⁵

Figure 4. Homicide Rates in the Northern Triangle Countries, Calendar Years 2012–17



Note: Rates have been rounded to the whole number.

Sources: Guatemalan National Institute of Statistics, *Reporte Estadístico* (Guatemala City: Technical Secretariat of the National Security Council, 2017), http://stcns.gob.gt/docs/2017/Reportes_DMC/reporteenero2017.pdf; National Autonomous University of Honduras, University Institute on Democracy, Peace, and Security, “Boletines Nacionales 2012-2017,” accessed October 12, 2018, <https://iudpas.unah.edu.hn/observatorio-de-la-violencia/boletines-del-observatorio-2/boletines-nacionales/>; David Gagne, “In-Sights Crime’s 2016 Homicide Round-Up,” updated January 16, 2017, www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/insight-crime-2016-homicide-round-up; *El Nuevo Diario*, “Guatemala Reporta 4.410 Homicidios en 2017 pero Mantiene Tendencia a la Baja,” *El Nuevo Diario*, January 8, 2018, www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/internacionales/centroamerica/451242-guatemala-reporta-4-410-homicidios-2017-mantiene-t/; Gabriel García and Edwin Segura, “El Salvador es el País con más Homicidios de Centroamérica,” *La Prensa Gráfica*, January 3, 2018, www.laprensagrafica.com/elsalvador/El-Salvador-es-el-pais-con-mas-homicidios-de-Centroamerica-20180102-0444.html; Agencia EFE, “Honduras Cierra 2017 con 3.791 Homicidios, un 26.4% Menos que 2016,” Agencia EFE, January 2, 2018, www.efe.com/efe/america/portada/honduras-cierra-2017-con-3-791-homicidios-un-26-4-menos-que-2016/20000064-3481741.

In addition to a shift in national origins, recent migrant flows are much more likely to include children and families than those in prior years, with rapidly increasing numbers of migrants seeking asylum in the United States. In FY 2018, family units (i.e., parents and minor children traveling together) and unaccompanied children comprised 40 percent of apprehensions at the U.S.-Mexico border, as compared to 10 percent in FY 2012.¹⁶ And in the first two months of FY 2019 (October and November 2018), they represented 57 percent of apprehensions.¹⁷ Many migrant families and children from the Northern Triangle countries aim to apply for asylum in the United States, though the Trump administration has

14 World Bank, “Tasa de Incidencia de la Pobreza, Sobre la Base de la Línea de Pobreza Nacional,” accessed December 5, 2018, <https://datos.bancomundial.org/indicador/SI.POV.NAHC?locations=SV-GT-HN>; Bank of Guatemala, *Guatemala en Cifras 2018* (Guatemala City: Bank of Guatemala, 2018), www.banguat.gob.gt/Publica/guatemala_en_cifras_2018.pdf.

15 Marc R. Rosenblum and Isabel Ball, *Trends in Unaccompanied Child and Family Migration from Central America* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2016), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/trends-unaccompanied-child-and-family-migration-central-america.

16 CBP, “Southwest Border Migration FY 2018”; CBP, “United States Border Patrol Southwest Family Unit Subject and Unaccompanied Alien Children Apprehensions Fiscal Year 2016,” updated October 18, 2016, www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-border-unaccompanied-children/fy-2016.

17 CBP, “Southwest Border Migration FY 2019,” updated December 10, 2018, www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/sw-border-migration.



taken a number of steps to narrow access to humanitarian protection.¹⁸ According to the latest available figures, which predate these policy changes, Northern Triangle migrants submitted approximately 40,000 asylum claims in U.S. immigration courts in FY 2016, nearly five times as many claims as those submitted in FY 2012.¹⁹

These mixed flows present new challenges for both U.S. and Mexican immigration authorities in undertaking core enforcement functions such as migrant processing, long-term detention, monitoring individuals released from detention, and safe and orderly repatriation. Understanding the factors driving emigration from the Northern Triangle countries, adopting long-term strategies to reduce illegal migration, and developing reintegration strategies to ensure safe and sustainable reintegration are thus of critical policy significance to governments across the region.

III. Understanding Reception and Reintegration Service Needs

Return migration from the United States and Mexico is a heterogeneous phenomenon. As migrants with different sociodemographic characteristics, labor-market backgrounds, and migration experiences return to their countries of origin for different reasons, many stand to benefit from reception and reintegration services (see Box 2).²⁰ Because of this diversity, reception and reintegration services are most effective when they target returning migrants' individual needs and circumstances and consider the barriers migrants face in readapting to daily life—including push factors that may have prompted them to migrate in the first place.²¹

Whether migrants return voluntarily or involuntarily fundamentally shapes their reception and reintegration needs. Those who return voluntarily may have the opportunity to plan in advance the steps they will take to readjust to their home country and re-establish their livelihoods there. Those who are deported, however, seldomly have the chance to plan or prepare for their return. Should reintegration into their countries of origin prove difficult, some may consider emigrating again. Additionally, those who return voluntarily after achieving some or all their migration goals (e.g., earning a certain amount of money or completing a period of temporary work) generally require less assistance than those who return involuntarily and abruptly without achieving their goals.²²

18 Among these are the July 2018 decision known as *Matter of A-B*—in which former Attorney General Jeff Sessions largely eliminated domestic and gang violence and grounds for asylum—conditions upon which Central American asylum seekers frequently base their claims. In December 2018, a federal district court in the District of Columbia issued a permanent injunction against the application of *Matter of A-B* to the preliminary, credible-fear interview for asylum. However, the case is still applied during the ultimate asylum adjudication. See *Grace v. Sessions*, No. 18-cv-01853 (U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, December 2018). For an in-depth discussion of the broader challenges facing the U.S. asylum system, see Doris Meissner, Faye Hipsman, and T. Alexander Aleinikoff, *The U.S. Asylum System in Crisis: Charting a Way Forward* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2018), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/us-asylum-system-crisis-charting-way-forward.

19 U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), “Asylum Statistics FY 2012 – 2016,” updated March 2017, www.justice.gov/eoir/file/asylum-statistics/download.

20 Victoria Rietig and Rodrigo Dominguez-Villegas, *Stopping the Revolving Door: Reception and Reintegration Services for Central American Deportees* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2015), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/stopping-revolving-door-reception-and-reintegration-services-central-american-deportees.

21 Alma Eunice Rendón Cárdenas and Luis Wertman Zaslav, *Reintegración Migrante: Un Modelo Social, Económico y Empático para el Retorno* (Mexico City: Agenda Migrante, 2018); IOM, “Enhancing Migrant Well-Being upon Return through an Integrated Approach to Reintegration” (Global Thematic Paper, IOM, 2017), www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/ODG/GCM/IOM-Thematic-Paper-Integrated-Approach-to-Reintegration.pdf.

22 Graziano Battistella, *Return Migration: A Conceptual and Policy Framework* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 2018), <http://cmsny.org/publications/2018smc-smc-return-migration/>.



Box 2. Reception and Reintegration Services

“Reception” broadly refers to short-term efforts, generally at government centers, to welcome returning migrants back to their country of origin. Reception services often include assistance with immediate medical needs, identity documents, legal orientation and counseling, food, hygiene kits, and emergency shelter. Because migrants who return voluntarily do not arrive at government-operated centers, they are less likely to access reception services.

By comparison, “reintegration” denotes longer-term efforts to anchor returning migrants in the societies and communities to which they return, including their reinsertion into local labor markets, education systems, and broader sociocultural contexts. Reintegration services can include skill and credential certification, vocational training, assistance finding employment or enrolling in school, loans to start small businesses, and psychosocial care. Most reintegration services provided by governments and civil society in these countries are open to all residents, with very few services exclusively for returning migrants.

Together, reception and reintegration services seek to foster a sense of belonging among returning migrants.

Similarly, characteristics such as age, gender, length of time abroad, criminal background, and physical disabilities or serious health issues can all influence the reception and reintegration needs of returning migrants (see Table 1). These characteristics intersect to create a wide range of needs across return migrant populations (e.g., young children with physical disabilities that may make it difficult to access mainstream education, or older adults who have spent long periods abroad and thus have few contacts in the local labor market). As a result, returning migrants often require a combination of services over a substantial period to facilitate successful reintegration.

Table 1. Considerations for Reception and Reintegration Services Based on Migrant Characteristics

Characteristic	Considerations for Service Design and Provision
Length of time abroad	Migrants who spend a long time abroad may gain additional language or job skills that—given proper job linking and certification support—could make them marketable after their return; those who are only abroad for a short time often do not. Migrants deported before they have accomplished their migration goals may have smuggling debts that are difficult to repay, creating incentives for them to emigrate anew. At the same time, these migrants may have more up-to-date knowledge of services and stronger ties to their origin countries than those who have been absent for longer—factors that may facilitate their reintegration.
Girls and women	Some migrants return to contexts with high rates of gender-based violence, sexual harassment, and domestic violence—factors that may have originally motivated their decision to emigrate.
Youth	Young returning migrants may experience violence and exploitation by gangs, especially when targeted by gang recruiters. At the same time, youth who show signs of gang involvement, such as tattoos, are often rejected for formal-sector employment, since deportation is commonly conflated with criminal activity. Young returning migrants who have largely grown up abroad often need orientation services and language assistance to navigate life in a new country.
Older adults	Older migrants, particularly those who have been away for an extended period, may find it difficult to re-enter the labor market. Those who are less educated than younger workers who did not migrate (as in Mexico where educational attainment is rising rapidly) may find it difficult to secure formal employment, and may experience age discrimination. Older adults may also require additional medical services.

**Table 1. Considerations for Reception and Reintegration Services Based on Migrant Characteristics (cont.)**

Characteristic	Considerations for Service Design and Provision
Migrants with a criminal record	Returning migrants with criminal records may require additional services, depending on the severity of their crimes. Governments, communities of return, and the general population may even stigmatize those who have committed less serious, immigration-related crimes, at times conflating them with more violent criminals. Migrants who were incarcerated abroad for serious, non-immigration convictions often need broader interventions designed to reintegrate ex-offenders into society. The need to prosecute, sentence, and incarcerate those who have committed serious and outstanding crimes in their origin countries can also be a public-safety concern in countries with weak criminal justice systems.
Physical disabilities and serious health issues	Returning migrants with physical disabilities or serious health issues are at a disadvantage in the labor market and have more limited opportunities to support themselves economically. Those who need health services not available or easily accessible in their origin countries may attempt to emigrate again.

Viewing reintegration through the lens of intersecting migrant characteristics underscores the need for integrated services and supports that extend beyond help for individuals to include assisting receiving communities and addressing structural barriers. Reintegration efforts that assist the communities to which migrants return include those that attend to the needs of both migrant and nonmigrant populations and those that aim to foster acceptance of migrants and boost their feeling of belonging. At the structural level, these efforts address broader push factors that drive emigration from the country, including by increasing service and institutional capacities, creating livelihood opportunities, and safeguarding rights.²³

Viewing reintegration through the lens of intersecting migrant characteristics underscores the need for integrated services and supports.

An integrated approach to reception and reintegration involves offering services that increase the economic self-sufficiency of returning migrants while simultaneously addressing their other individualized needs, such as for education, health care, and psychosocial support. Such efforts require strong coordination between governments and international and civil-society organizations to comprehensively address challenges at the individual, community, and structural levels, and in doing so, to provide migrants with the social stability and psychosocial wellbeing to facilitate their long-term reintegration.

²³ IOM, “Enhancing Migrant Well-Being upon Return,” 4.



IV. Reception and Reintegration Services in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras

Efforts in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to receive returning migrants and assist them as they find their footing in society vary in terms of both capacity and degree of implementation. However, all four countries have since 2015 adopted three common elements in their reception and reintegration services: (1) differentiated services for migrants according to their needs and characteristics; (2) a whole-of-government approach in which multiple agencies coordinate efforts; and (3) municipal-level reintegration services, with the aim of expanding the geographic coverage of such services.²⁴ This section provides an overview of reception and reintegration services in each of these countries.

A. Mexico

Compared to other countries in the region, Mexico has more substantial resources and experience serving returning migrants.²⁵ Starting in 2014, the National Institute of Migration (Instituto Nacional de Migración, INM) has coordinated the country's reception and reintegration services through the We Are Mexican (Somos Mexicanos) strategy, an extension and expansion of INM's ongoing Repatriation Program (Programa de Repatriación).²⁶

At 11 INM reception centers along the U.S.-Mexico border, as well as the Mexico City airport,²⁷ We Are Mexican coordinates reception services provided by INM and eight government ministries.²⁸ These services include orientation, food, hygiene kits, medical attention, subsidized transportation assistance, referrals to local shelters, and certificates of repatriation (*constancia de repatriación*) that can be used as a temporary form of identification to access some public services. After INM registers migrants in a reception database, other government institutions provide them information about employment and educational opportunities.²⁹ Since 2017, repatriated migrants can also open a limited bank account

24 For a description of reception and reintegration services in the Northern Triangle countries prior to 2015, see Rietig and Dominguez-Villegas, *Stopping the Revolving Door*.

25 In 1989, Mexico established its first migrant reception program, the Paisano Program, to facilitate the safe transit of migrants returning temporarily from the United States during holiday seasons. The program has been updated and remains active today, providing information to Mexican nationals preparing to return for short periods of time. See Mexican National Institute of Migration (INM), "Programa Paisano del INM," updated September 28, 2018, www.gob.mx/inm/acciones-y-programas/programa-paisano-del-inm.

26 INM, "Estrategia Somos Mexicanos," updated January 3, 2018, www.gob.mx/inm/acciones-y-programas/estrategia-somos-mexicanos. See also INM, "Programa de Repatriación," updated May 1, 2017, www.gob.mx/inm/acciones-y-programas/programa-de-repatriacion-12469.

27 According to Mexican government reports, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) suspended repatriation flights to the Mexico City airport on May 29, 2018 and had not resumed them as of October 2018. See Rolando Herrera, "Suspende EU Repatriación Aérea Temporalmente," *Reforma*, June 15, 2018, www.reforma.com/aplicacioneslibre/preacceso/articulo/default.aspx?id=1420424&sc=672.

28 The eight Mexican ministries participating in We Are Mexican (Somos Mexicanos) are the Ministry of Employment (Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social), the Ministry of Health (Secretaría de Salud), the Ministry of Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública), the Ministry of Agriculture (Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentación), the Program of Sustainability of Natural Resources (Programa de Sustentabilidad de los Recursos Naturales), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores), the Ministry of Social Development (Secretaría de Desarrollo Social), and the Ministry of Economy (Secretaría de Economía). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) provides transportation support at the Mexico City airport. See INM, "Programa de Repatriación."

29 The primary purpose of the database is to document migrants' re-entry. While it may inform government service provision in the future, the reception database has not thus far been used to track migrants after reception or to provide case management. Author interview with We Are Mexican officer, March 2, 2018.



(Debicuenta Migrante) with the National Savings and Financial Services Bank (Banco del Ahorro Nacional y Servicios Financieros, BANSEFI) while at reception centers.³⁰

In addition to coordinating reception services, We Are Mexican seeks to make two fundamental contributions to Mexico's reintegration strategy.

- **Providing predeparture information.** By including the Mexican consular network in the United States in the reintegration process, the strategy aims to support migrants planning to return voluntarily to Mexico. Consular officers provide migrants with information about reintegration services and explain tax and customs regulations, should the migrants plan to return with home appliances, work equipment, or other assets.³¹
- **Connecting migrants to reintegration services.** After migrants have either returned voluntarily or been repatriated, the strategy seeks to connect them to a variety of reintegration supports by leveraging existing programs across federal, state, and local government institutions—as well as civil society. Most of these services are designed by social-service organizations for the broader public, not exclusively for migrants. Once at their destinations within Mexico, returning migrants can request information about reintegration assistance at an INM delegation in each of the 32 states.³² Despite improved coordination across government agencies, it is difficult to evaluate the impact of the We Are Mexican strategy on the livelihoods of returning migrants due to the lack of public data about service utilization.

Reintegration services in Mexico, as in the other study countries, prioritize equipping migrants to enter the labor market. The Migrant Support Fund (Fondo de Apoyo al Migrante, FAM), a federal fund administered to states according to the size of their repatriated migrant populations, provides migrants one-time seed grants of up to approximately USD 1,500 to start a new business.³³ Successful and sustainable employment projects often involve pooled funds and collaboration among returning migrants. This strategy has been used, for instance, to create a t-shirt printing business in Mexico City and an artisanal bakery in Morelia, Michoacán. Because the Mexican labor market is saturated³⁴ and often unfamiliar to returning migrants, especially those who have been abroad for an extended period, these entrepreneurial and self-employment opportunities offer a key path to economic reintegration.

30 These are debit accounts intended for basic transactions and to receive money from abroad. Migrants need a certificate of repatriation, but no minimum amount of funds, to open an account. For additional details and limitations, see Banco del Ahorro Nacional y Servicios Financieros (BANSEFI), “Debicuenta Migrante,” updated October 26, 2017, www.gob.mx/bansefi/acciones-y-programas/debicuenta-migrante; BANSEFI, “Instala Bansefi Módulo de Atención a Connacionales Repatriados de EUA en el AICM,” updated May 30, 2017, www.gob.mx/bansefi/articulos/instala-bansefi-modulo-de-atencion-a-connacionales-repatriados-de-eua-en-el-aicm?idiom=es.

31 To be eligible for some services, migrants must have resided outside of Mexico for at least six months; other restrictions may also apply. See Mexican Consulate, Miami, “¿Deseas regresar a México de manera definitiva y necesitas llevar tus bienes? Conoce estos beneficios temporales para mexicanos,” updated June 2, 2017, <https://consulmex.sre.gob.mx/miami/index.php/avisos/139-deseas-regresar-a-mexico-de-manera-definitiva-y-necesitas-llevar-tus-bienes-conoce-estos-beneficios-temporales-para-mexicanos>.

32 Migrants may also request information and services at municipal INM offices, which are located primarily in airports.

33 SEGOB, “Lineamientos de Operación del Fondo de Apoyo a Migrantes,” *Diario Oficial de la Federación* (March 21, 2018), www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5516826&fecha=21/03/2018.

34 The Mexican labor market is not producing enough formal sector jobs to meet population growth. Estimates of formal employment creation between 2005 and 2016 suggest that Mexico needed to create an *additional* 337,000 formal jobs each year to match the population aging into the labor force. According to government figures, as of September 2018, nearly 57 percent of the 56 million workers in the Mexican labor force were employed in informal jobs, lacking access to social and health benefits and labor protections. See Alejandro Gómez Tamez, “El Problema del Déficit del Empleo en México,” *El Financiero*, March 6, 2017, www.elfinanciero.com.mx/opinion/alejandro-gomez-tamez/el-problema-del-deficit-del-empleo-en-mexico; México ¿Cómo Vamos?, “Semáforo Nacional,” accessed December 8, 2018, <http://mexicocomovamos.mx/new/?s=seccion&id=98>; Mexican National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), “Resultados de la Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo: Cifras Durante el Tercer Trimestre de 2018,” updated November 14, 2018, www.beta.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/saladeprensa/boletines/2018/enoe_ie/enoe_ie2018_11.pdf.



Other crucial elements of promising employment-focused reintegration services are credential validation and vocational training. Such supports can help migrants with varying levels of educational attainment leverage credentials and professional experience earned abroad, and fill skill gaps, while searching for work in Mexico. Through the National Institute for Adult Education (Instituto Nacional de Educación de los Adultos, INEA), the federal government provides exams that returning migrants can take to receive certification for English proficiency, as required to work in call centers, and for skills required for other jobs. Similarly, state Institutes of Job Training (Institutos de Capacitación para el Trabajo, ICATs) run nationally recognized job-placement, skills-training, and certification programs that, which available to the general public, represent a significant resource for returning migrants. Outside the government, the nonprofit Hola Code holds immersive software engineering courses exclusively for returning migrants with flexible tuition options, allowing migrants to pay their fees after gaining employment.³⁵

In 2017, Mexico took an important step toward reintegrating returning migrants into its educational systems. By approving changes to the *General Law on Education*, the Mexican government lowered barriers that have hindered efforts by returning migrants, as well as citizens of other countries, to enroll in educational institutions. The new law instructs schools at all levels to enroll students who lack academic transcripts or who hold transcripts issued in the United States that have not been certified or translated to Spanish. To facilitate migrants' access to the labor market, the new law also seeks to simplify the validation of postsecondary or professional degrees.³⁶ But despite the new law, returning migrants report encountering serious bureaucratic hurdles when interacting with government officials who are unaware of legal changes or who have not received appropriate training to understand migrants' unique circumstances and validate their foreign educational credentials.³⁷

By approving changes to the General Law on Education, the Mexican government lowered barriers that have hindered efforts by returning migrants ... to enroll in educational institutions.

At the same time, access to government services—whether targeted to returning migrants or available to the general population—varies across states and municipalities, and many program operation guidelines and requirements effectively exclude returning migrants. The governments of some states with significant migrant populations abroad, for instance Michoacán, have established welcome and integration centers to ease migrants' access by consolidating state services and increasing local outreach.³⁸ And in 2015, the Mexico City government amended some of its social assistance programs, such as unemployment insurance, to waive or adjust the identification and residency requirements for temporary benefits. As a result, Mexico City now recognizes consular identification cards (matrículas consulares) issued in the United States in applications for some in public programs. Yet governments in most other states do not recognize consular cards or certificates of repatriation, complicating migrants' access to key services until they complete the process of applying for and receiving a voter identification card and other required documentation, such as proof of residence.

35 Hola Code, "The Program," accessed December 7, 2019, <https://holacode.com/the-program>.

36 SEGOB, "Decreto por el que se Reforman y Adicionan Diversas Disposiciones a la Ley General de Educación," *Diario Oficial de la Federación* (March, 22, 2017), www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5477211&fecha=22/03/2017. See also Mexican Senate, "Senado aprueba reforma a Ley de Educación que facilita revalidación de estudios a migrantes," updated February 28, 2017, <http://comunicacion.senado.gob.mx/index.php/informacion/boletines/34623-senado-aprueba-reforma-a-ley-de-educacion-que-facilita-revalidacion-de-estudios-a-migrantes.html>.

37 Participant comments at "Migrants Returning to Mexico and the Northern Triangle: Reintegration Services and Development Initiatives to Reduce Regional Migration Pressures" meeting, MPI, Washington, DC, June 11, 2018.

38 Notimex, "Diseñan Modelo de Atención Médica para Migrantes en Michoacán," Notimex, October 12, 2018, www.notimex.gob.mx/ntxnotaLibre/609136/dise%C3%B1an-modelo-de-atenci%C3%B3n-m%C3%A9dica-para-migrantes-en-michoac%C3%A1n.



Civil-society organizations serve an important role in this service ecosystem. Those led by return migrants, such as Otros Dreams en Acción (ODA), New Comienzos, Deportados Unidos en la Lucha (DUL), and the Institute for Women in Migration (Instituto para las Mujeres en la Migración, IMUMI), provide much needed emotional and legal support to newly arriving returnees. ODA, DUL, and New Comienzos have created mentoring systems to guide those who have recently arrived in Mexico as they navigate bureaucracy and society. IMUMI provides legal support for deportees with U.S.-citizen children as they work to obtain the official documentation required to access education, health, and other social services in Mexico. Though such services are much in demand, civil-society organizations in Mexico, as in the other study countries, are often unable to provide long-term services or scale up promising initiatives due to capacity constraints.

B. El Salvador

Launched in 1998 by the Catholic Relief Services, the Welcome Home (Bienvenido a Casa) program in El Salvador is the oldest reception program for repatriated migrants in the Northern Triangle.³⁹ The General Directorate of Migration and Foreign Affairs (DGME) of El Salvador has administered the program since 2007, and in 2017 consolidated the reception and processing of repatriated migrants within the Directorate of Migrant Care (Dirección de Atención al Migrante, DAMI) in San Salvador.⁴⁰ Through Welcome Home, DAMI officers conduct orientations for migrants and provide food, phone calls, internet access, hygiene kits, basic medical and psychological assistance, showers, small transportation subsidies, and referrals to emergency shelters.⁴¹ Unaccompanied children and families—two groups with unique vulnerabilities and needs—are given priority and receive more comprehensive treatment. Migrants also receive information about reintegration services available in the localities to which they plan to return.

Key to the coordination of services are Municipal Workstations for Returned Migrant Care ... that refer returning migrants to a wide range of both tailored and general services.

In October 2017, the government implemented El Salvador is Your Home (El Salvador es tu Casa), a system to coordinate and streamline services available to returning migrants and the general public across different government institutions.⁴² Key to the coordination of services are Municipal Workstations for Returned Migrant Care (Ventanillas de Atención a Personas Retornadas, VAPRs), located at the San Salvador airport and in five municipalities with high rates of emigration, that refer returning migrants to a wide range of both tailored and general services.

39 Salvadoran General Directorate of Migration and Foreign Affairs (DGME), “Programa de Atención a los Migrantes Salvadoreños Bienvenido a Casa El Salvador,” 5–6, accessed August 24, 2018, www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/microsites/IDM/workshops/return_migration_development_070708/pres_alvarez.pdf.

40 In February 2016, IOM renovated the DAMI in San Salvador in part with funds allocated by USAID. From FY 2014 through April 2018, IOM expended about USD 9.1 million in El Salvador via three contribution agreements with USAID; of this total, USD 4.2 million was allocated to postarrival and reception assistance programs. See U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Central America: USAID Assists Migrants Returning to Their Home Countries but Effectiveness of Reintegration Efforts Remains to Be Determined* (Washington, DC: GAO, 2018), www.gao.gov/assets/700/695298.pdf.

41 Carlos Eduardo Argueta et al., *Personas Migrantes Retornadas, Genero y Acceso a Servicios en El Salvador* (Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 2018), <https://webimages.iadb.org/publications/spanish/document/Personas-migrantes-retornadas-g%C3%A9nero-y-acceso-a-servicios-sociales-en-El-Salvador.pdf>.

42 Salvadoran Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRREE), “Gobierno Presenta Iniciativa ‘El Salvador es tu Casa’ Dirigida a Compatriotas Retornados,” updated October 2, 2017, <http://embajadasv.laprensagrafica.com/gobierno-presenta-iniciativa-salvador-casa-dirigida-compatriotas-retornados/>.



Migrant-specific services include the Returned Migrant Care Program (Programa de Atención a Personas Retornadas), the Program of Employment Creation for Migrants (Programa de Gestión Laboral para Personas Migrantes), and the Economic and Psychosocial Reintegration Project for Returnees (Proyecto de Reinserción Económica y Psicosocial para Personas Retornadas). These programs offer migrants access to local job-search databases, vocational training, skill accreditation, and seed grants of up to USD 3,500 for entrepreneurial projects.⁴³ Services for the general public, such as the National Employment System and the Social Investment Fund for Local Investment (Fondo de Inversión Social para el Desarrollo Local, FISDL), are also available to returning migrants and have some of the same features.⁴⁴

Government reintegration services with goals other than employment include those that target migrant women and youth. Established across six municipalities, Women City Centers (Centros Ciudad Mujer, CCM) provide specialized health services as well as violence-prevention and human-rights trainings that are open to all women.⁴⁵ To boost youth education attainment, the Don't Risk It! (¡No Te Arriesgues!) program at the Eastern University of El Salvador in San Miguel, a department with high emigration rates, provides college tours for youth in ten regional institutions and grants a limited number of scholarships to those who have been repatriated or are deemed likely to emigrate. Many such services have grown out of successful pilot projects, but their capacity to expand further and their ability to reach returning migrants across El Salvador's municipalities are often limited or uncertain.

These efforts to expand and coordinate return and reintegration services have been supported by rising interest among policymakers and by the leadership of the National Council for the Protection and Development of Migrants and their Families (Consejo Nacional para la Protección y Desarrollo de la Persona Migrante y su Familia, CONMIGRANTES). In perhaps the most significant development, the Salvadoran government adopted the National Policy for the Protection and Development of Migrants and their Families in July 2017.⁴⁶ In addition to bolstering protections for Salvadoran migrants abroad, this policy promotes the implementation of comprehensive reception and reintegration services for returning migrants as well as the creation of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to improve understanding of which service models work best.

Promising reintegration services are also offered by civil-society organizations in El Salvador, ranging from mental health services to business supports. These include a health clinic run by the Salvadoran Institute for Migrants (Instituto Salvadoreño del Migrante, INSAMI) that provides a 12-step counseling process and other psychosocial support for migrants and their families to address mental health issues such as depression and anxiety associated with migration-related trauma.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the National Network of Returned Entrepreneurs (Red Nacional de Emprendedores Retornados, RENACERES) offers counseling and seed capital to migrants who demonstrate potential to establish new businesses or projects. And with more than 300 participants since its inauguration in 2015, the Livelihoods Program run by the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) provides vocational training courses and job placement for repatriated youth, and encourages employers to hire program graduates by subsidizing

43 Entrepreneurial projects and seed funding in these programs are provided in collaboration with the National Commission for Micro and Small Business (Comisión Nacional de la Micro y Pequeña Empresa, CONAMYPE). See Argueta et al., *Personas Migrantes Retornadas, Género y Acceso a Servicios en El Salvador*; Office of the President of El Salvador, "Presidente Sánchez Cerén Entrega Capital Semilla a Iniciativas Empresariales de Personas Migrantes Retornadas," updated December 5, 2018, www.presidencia.gob.sv/presidente-sanchez-ceren-entrega-capital-semilla-a-iniciativas-empresariales-de-personas-migrantes-retornadas/.

44 Argueta et al., *Personas Migrantes Retornadas, Género y Acceso a Servicios en El Salvador*.

45 Ciudad Mujer, "¿Qué es Ciudad Mujer?," accessed December 9, 2018, www.ciudadmujer.gob.sv/que-es-ciudad-mujer/.

46 MRREE, *Política Nacional para la Protección y Desarrollo de la Persona Migrante Salvadoreña y su Familia* (San Salvador: MRREE, 2017), <https://rree.gob.sv/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Poli%CC%81tica-Nacional-para-la-Proteccio%CC%81n-y-Desarrollo-de-la-Persona-Migrante-Salvadoren%CC%83a-y-su-Familia.pdf>.

47 Cesar Ríos, *El Ciclo del Retorno: Un Documento que Abona al Diseño de Políticas, Estrategias y Proyectos para la Atención de la Realidad Migratoria* (San Salvador: Cpreativa, 2018). According to GAO, INSAMI received nearly USD 50,000 in U.S. funds between June 2014 and June 2016 through a grant by the Inter American Foundation (IAF), a nine-person board of directors appointed by the U.S. president and confirmed by the Senate. See GAO, *Central America: USAID Assists Migrants Returning to Their Home Countries*.



their salaries for three months.⁴⁸ So far, the program is available in three locations, and the Salvadoran Institute for Professional Training (Instituto Salvadoreño de Formación Profesional, INSAFORP) certifies the skill credentials of graduates.

C. Guatemala

Government reception services in Guatemala are limited but have begun to expand, especially those for returning unaccompanied children and families. At Guatemala City's Air Force terminal, the General Directorate of Migration (Dirección General de Migración, DGM) receives and processes adult migrants returning from the United States. Unaccompanied children and families returned by U.S. and Mexican authorities by air are processed in a welcome center at the Guatemala City airport that was designed in collaboration with USAID and International Organization for Migration (IOM). The welcome center, which opened in May 2017, aims to improve postarrival assistance by offering areas for psychological and social assistance and breastfeeding, as well as a play area for children.⁴⁹ Returning families and children are then escorted to protected shelters in Guatemala City operated by the Ministry of Social Welfare (Secretaría de Bienestar Social, SBS). Migrants returned from Mexico by land are processed by DGM at a reception center in the border city of Tecún Umán where Casa del Migrante, a civil-society organization, administers immediate reception services. Unaccompanied children returning from Mexico are transported to protected SBS shelters in Quetzaltenango or Guatemala City.⁵⁰

Services for children and families are more comprehensive and include medical screenings and psychological support.

Reception services for adult migrants, whether in Guatemala City or Tecún Umán, include orientation, food, local telephone calls, and limited transportation assistance provided by the Foreign Ministry (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, MINEX). Services for children and families are more comprehensive and include medical screenings and psychological support. Many returning migrants are from isolated, rural communities in the Western Highlands where economic opportunities are scarce. But except for a limited number of beds at Casa del Migrante, emergency shelter is generally unavailable for adults seeking to stay in Guatemala City, where employment, training, and entrepreneurial opportunities that support reintegration are better.

Since 2015, the Guatemalan government has undertaken several initiatives to improve and expand reintegration services for returning migrants. These initiatives are in varying stages of implementation.

In 2015, in partnership with the European Union and IOM, the government established a Stay (Quédate) Training Center in Santa María Visitación, a small community in the Western Highlands, with the objective of providing technical training and psychosocial support to returning migrant children and adolescents as well as youth deemed at risk of migrating. Instructors also provide training and support in nearby communities through agreements with local schools and municipalities, a localized and networked service model that has thus far demonstrated significant potential in meeting key returnee needs and adjusting to local conditions. To meet rising public demand and student enrollment, the government is seeking to build two additional centers in nearby departments.⁵¹

48 U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, "USCRI Central America Livelihoods Program Update," updated October 2017, <http://refugees.org/news/livelihoods-update/>; updated program information provided to the authors by USCRI staff on June 29, 2018.

49 From FY 2014 through April 2018, IOM expended about USD 2.7 million in Guatemala via three contribution agreements with USAID; of this total, USD 1.3 million was allocated to postarrival and reception assistance programs. See GAO, *Central America: USAID Assists Migrants Returning to Their Home Countries*.

50 Author interview with Casa del Migrante staff, February 17, 2018.

51 Author interview with IOM senior official, July 10, 2018.



In May 2017, the government established the National Strategy for Labor Reintegration for Returned Guatemalan Migrants (*Estrategia Nacional para la Reinserción Laboral de los Migrantes Guatemaltecos Retornados*) to collect returnees' sociodemographic and skill profiles, and to establish institutions and processes for facilitating skill certification.⁵² The strategy seeks to provide economic support and employment services for at least 10 percent of migrants repatriated to Guatemala each year.⁵³

As in the other countries studied, Guatemala has in recent years advanced initiatives to increase the geographic coverage of its reintegration services beyond reception centers by providing them at the municipal level. In April 2018, the Ministry of Labor and Social Readiness (Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social, MTPS) adapted existing services at one of its 17 Municipal Employment Workstations (*Ventanilla Única Municipal para el Empleo, VUMEs*) to provide returning migrants technical training and to refer them to skill-certification services and entrepreneurial opportunities. As the pilot for this model, the VUME in Guatemala City provides services for returning migrants who settle and seek employment opportunities there. Similar efforts at other VUMEs could significantly bolster access to reintegration services, especially in the country's remote areas.⁵⁴

Another important governmental actor—the National Council of Care for Guatemalan Migrants (*Consejo Nacional de Atención al Migrante de Guatemala, CONAMIGUA*)—is responsible for proposing policies and programs that protect Guatemalan migrants abroad, and for coordinating reintegration services upon their return. The council resumed some of its functions in April 2018 after a year-long leadership hiatus and, though it continues to face bureaucratic difficulties, may play a key role in improving and expanding reintegration services in the future.⁵⁵

Even though civil-society organizations lack the government's resources and capacity, they offer reintegration services that are reportedly more visible and accessible to returning migrants.⁵⁶ With established community ties, organizations such as the Association of Returned Guatemalans (*Asociación de Retornados de Guatemala, ARG*) advertise their services outside of reception centers and follow up with interested migrants.⁵⁷ And Casa del Migrante, in addition to providing initial reception services, also provides psychosocial counseling, job placement support, and referrals to health services.

A number of civil-society organizations focus on labor-market reintegration services. Te Conecta builds and maintains close working relationships with potential employers—most commonly, call centers—and provides migrants with practical employment services such as work orientation, computer training, and English language instruction. For migrants who are proficient in English and have at least a high school diploma, call-center employment generally provides competitive salaries relative to other formal-sector jobs. Other promising services, including Grupo Cajolá and La Red Kat, create incentives for migrants to stay by fostering pride in their cultural roots through education workshops, while also providing local employment opportunities. However, except for Grupo Cajolá, which operates in the Western Highlands, these services are concentrated in Guatemala City and less accessible to vulnerable populations in the less developed, rural areas of the country that are top sources of emigration.

52 Guatemalan Ministry of Employment (MINTRAB), *Estrategia Nacional para la Reinserción Laboral de los Migrantes Guatemaltecos Retornados* (Guatemala City: General Directorate of Employment, 2017), <http://empleojuvenil.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/ESTRATEGIA-REINSESION-LABORAL-MIGRANTES-RETORNADOS-MAY17.pdf>.

53 Results from a government survey suggest that 44 percent of Guatemalan migrants wish to stay the country after being repatriated, while 56 percent intend to migrate again. Ibid.

54 Javier Pérez, "Ventanillas Únicas Municipales para Generar Empleo," *Diario de Centro América*, May 1, 2018, <https://dca.gob.gt/noticias-guatemala-diario-centro-america/ventanillas-unicas-municipales-para-generar-empleo/>.

55 Author interview with former government employee, December 10, 2018.

56 Participant comments during an MPI focus group with returning Guatemalan migrants, February 17, 2018.

57 The Association of Returned Guatemalans (ARG) received nearly USD 34,000 in U.S. funds between September 2015 and December 2016 through a grant by the IAF. See GAO, *Central America: USAID Assists Migrants Returning to Their Home Countries*.



D. Honduras

Since the creation of the General Directorate for the Protection of Honduran Migrants (Dirección General de Protección al Hondureño Migrante, DGPHM) in 2015, Honduras has significantly improved conditions in its reception centers, enhanced initial reception services, and begun developing sustainable, longer-term reintegration services.

With funding from the USAID through the IOM, the DGPHM renovated three Centers for Returned Migrant Care (Centro de Atención al Migrante Retornado, CAMR) to improve their safety, hygiene, and comfort.⁵⁸ Each center serves a different returning population: CAMR-Omoa is for migrants returned from Mexico by land; CAMR-San Pedro Sula for those returned from the United States by air; and the Center for Adolescent and Family Migrants (Centro de Atención para la Niñez y Familias Migrantes, CANFM) in Belén for unaccompanied children and families returned primarily by Mexican authorities. Although DGPHM funds and supervises these centers, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Scalibrini Mission conduct day-to-day operations at CAMR-Omoa and CAMR-San Pedro Sula, respectively. The Directorate for Children, Adolescents, and Family (Dirección de Niñez, Adolescencia y Familia, DINAF) operates CANFM-Belén with administrative support from IOM.

In addition to physical renovations, the Honduran government and its partner organizations are implementing technical improvements and new reception protocols to enhance service provision. During the intake process, government officials collect repatriated migrants' sociodemographic and skills information and enter it into a sophisticated national registry system used to administer reception and reintegration services. Officials are instructed to use these data to tailor reception services (e.g., orientation, food, basic medical assistance, hygiene supplies, and limited transportation subsidies) in accordance with migrants' age, gender, and form of return (i.e., via land or air).

The Honduran government and its partner organizations are implementing technical improvements and new reception protocols to enhance service provision.

Government reintegration services primarily consist of referrals to support services available to all Hondurans, with only a few services specifically designed for returning migrants. As in Mexico and the in other Northern Triangle countries, these services largely focus on helping adults and adolescents re-enter the labor market. Programs commonly include vocational training; microloans (as offered, for instance, by the Solidarity Credit Program) to establish small businesses; and entrepreneurial projects, often in the informal sector.⁵⁹ Educational and mental health services are less frequently available.

In 2017, the Honduran government began to establish a network of 16 Municipal Units for Returnee Care (Unidades Municipales de Atención al Migrante Retornado, UMARs) to expand the reach of reintegration services, prioritizing localities with a high concentration of returning migrants. With 12 of the 16 UMARs active as of September 2018,⁶⁰ DGPHM has coordinated with local governments to expand service access beyond the small number of CAMR reception centers. UMAR officers evaluate migrants' needs and match

58 From FY 2014 through April 2018, IOM expended about USD 5.4 million in Honduras via three contribution agreements with USAID; of this total, USD 2.1 million was allocated to postarrival and reception assistance programs. See GAO, *Central America: USAID Assists Migrants Returning to Their Home Countries*.

59 Crédito Solidario, "De Migrantes Retornados a Empresarios Exitosos," updated July 19, 2018, www.creditosolidario.hn/csfrontend/csweb/noticia.php?noticiald=2.

60 *La Tribuna*, "No Permitiremos que Vulneren Derechos de Mujeres, Niñas y Adolescentes que Migran a EE UU," *La Tribuna*, September 25, 2018, www.latribuna.hn/2018/09/25/no-permitiremos-que-vulneren-derechos-de-mujeres-ninas-y-adolescentes-que-migran-a-ee-uu/.



them to a broad list of services provided by government and civil-society organizations. In addition to traditional reintegration services, officers provide counseling sessions and are required to follow up with migrants to ensure they are able to access services.⁶¹

Among the UMARs' most innovative practices is the use of national registry data collected at reception centers to assist migrants locally. Drawing on this resource, UMAR officers can confirm whether a migrant has been deported, identify potential candidates for job opportunities based on records of migrants' skills and education, track other reintegration service needs, and match migrants to relevant services as they become available.⁶² This data system has the potential to streamline how returning migrants are connected to jobs and services, but its efficacy depends on the accuracy of their responses to intake questions at reception centers.

While civil-society organizations have less reach and capacity than the Honduran government, they provide important reintegration services tailored to migrants with specific needs and to voluntary migrants who, unlike deportees, do not have their information recorded in government reception records. For example, the Social Mennonite Action Commission (Comisión de Acción Social Menonita, CASM) provides vocational training, small seed grants, and counseling, and facilitates migrant support networks open to both voluntary and involuntary returnees. Another organization, Casa Alianza, runs a small reintegration program for two specific groups of returning migrant children: those in single-parent households and those in households affected by domestic violence. Since its creation in 2015, the program has provided counseling, tutoring, medical check-ups, dental services, family therapy, and group recreation sessions. Finally, the National Commission for the Support of Returned Migrants with Disabilities (Comisión Nacional de Apoyo a Migrantes Retornados con Discapacidad, CONAMIREDIS) assists those with physical disabilities, often resulting from injuries sustained while in transit to the United States (for example, by falling off trains in Mexico).⁶³ As needed, CONAMIREDIS obtains prosthetic limbs, coordinates rehabilitation services, and provides seed grants for small or family businesses.

V. Common Challenges Facing Returning Migrants and Policy Opportunities to Better Serve Them

Notwithstanding the progress made in recent years to expand and improve reception and reintegration services, migrants in all four study countries face a number of persistent challenges upon their return. Understanding these common issues, how they intersect, and what opportunities exist to remedy them will be crucial for governments and their partners as they adapt to future return migration.

A. Common Challenges

Across Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, returning migrants face five common challenges, outlined in the subsections that follow. Each poses a barrier to long-term reintegration and should be considered as part of a comprehensive approach to sustainable return.

61 Participant comments at “Migrants Returning to Mexico and the Northern Triangle” meeting.

62 Author interview with Honduran government official, May 4, 2018.

63 Most migrants seeking services at the National Commission for the Support of Returned Migrants with Disabilities (CONAMIREDIS) reported that their disabilities were the result of train accidents. A small share reported being shot by smugglers, police, military officers, or private security guards. Author interview with CONAMIREDIS program director, May 4, 2018.



1. Lack of Identification Documents Required to Access Services

Obtaining official identification documents is the most immediate challenge for returning migrants because a lack of such documents can hinder access to basic rights and services. Repatriated migrants may lack key documents (e.g., a passport, birth certificate, and health or school records) if they were not in the migrants' possession when they were detained by immigration authorities. In some cases, migrants returning voluntarily may also lack these documents if, for example, they did not obtain them before emigrating or they lost them while abroad. Should returning migrants find it difficult to obtain these documents and face additional marginalization as a result, they may be motivated to emigrate anew.

In Mexico, returning migrants report that certificates of repatriation issued at reception centers are widely rejected by federal, financial, and educational institutions, leaving many without other forms of identification barred from accessing such services. This complicates migrants' ability to perform common activities, such as submitting job applications or entering government buildings, especially outside of Mexico City. Obtaining a voter identification card—the primary identification document in Mexico—is difficult for returning migrants who lack a permanent address and those who return during an election cycle, when new voter cards cannot be issued.

Other countries in the region do not issue certificates of repatriation that can temporarily act as a stand-in for official identity documents. In Guatemala, for example, a Personal Document of Identification (Documento Personal de Identificación, DPI) is required for all civil, legal, and administrative transactions and requests.⁶⁴ The process of obtaining the DPI, however, may take up to six months in some cases, and fees may hinder migrants from applying.

2. Limited Awareness of Existing Services among Migrants and Government Officials, and Uneven Distribution of Services

While efforts to provide reintegration services at the municipal level are expanding, limited awareness of them among both returning migrants and government officials, coupled with uneven access to services across localities, limits their use. Repatriated migrants' first and often only exposure to reintegration services is at reception centers. However, the involuntary nature of their return and their exhausting and often traumatic experiences during detention and deportation inhibit most migrants' willingness to interact with service providers, as many prefer to leave the reception center as quickly as possible.⁶⁵

Migrants who have lived abroad for extended periods are often unfamiliar with government agencies and processes.

Despite information campaigns to improve the visibility of reintegration services, most migrants do not seek assistance in their local communities. Migrants who have lived abroad for extended periods are often unfamiliar with government agencies and processes, even when they need services. Others may doubt the efficacy of the services or not trust the government. Furthermore, migrants report that government officials' knowledge of available services and of the policies regarding returnees' access to them is inconsistent at best, resulting in unnecessary bureaucratic barriers and convincing some migrants that it is not worthwhile to seek assistance.⁶⁶

64 Guatemalan National Population Registry (RENAP), "Requisitos para Solicitud de DPI," accessed July 28, 2018, www.renap.gob.gt/servicios/requisitos-para-solicitud-de-dpi.

65 Participant comments at "Migrants Returning to Mexico and the Northern Triangle" meeting.

66 Participant comments during MPI focus group with Mexican migrants on February 26, 2018 and with Salvadoran migrants on May 3, 2018.



Because their information is not captured in government systems at reception centers, most migrants who return voluntarily are not aware of and do not receive reintegration services. In part to address this gap, the We Are Mexican strategy was implemented at Mexican consulates in the United States to assist migrants who plan to return to Mexico voluntarily. However, the effectiveness of this strategy will still depend to a certain extent on returning migrants' awareness of and engagement with these services. Similar planning for reintegration-focused predeparture outreach for migrants returning from the other countries, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, was not evident.

Lastly, government and civil-society reintegration services are highly concentrated in major metropolitan centers, while many migrants are from smaller cities and rural areas. Transportation among and within cities in the region is often unsafe. In El Salvador and Honduras, some returning migrants reported that territorial disputes between gangs and governments had dissuaded them from seeking services in certain locations.⁶⁷ High transportation costs from rural to urban areas where service centers are located form another significant barrier to access, particularly in Guatemala. Migrants with disabilities, older adults, and families face additional challenges to accessing services not available in their immediate locality.

3. Difficulties Validating Credentials and Matching Skills with Labor-Market Needs

All four study countries prioritize the economic reintegration of returning migrants, yet middle- and high-skilled migrants who return are often underemployed. The formal sectors in these labor markets are saturated and competitive, often crowding out returning migrants, many of whom consequently find employment in the informal sector (i.e., precarious jobs working as, for example, public vendors, maids, or personal drivers, which are not recognized by the government or covered by labor standards). Formal-sector employers generally require skill certifications that many returning migrants have difficulty obtaining, as credential-validation services reach only a small share of returnees in each country. Without credential validation, skill certification, or additional vocational training, migrants who have been abroad for an extended period are at a competitive disadvantage compared to the general population. This is especially the case for younger workers and migrants returning to Mexico, where educational attainment and job skills are rising rapidly.

Because English skills are highly valued by employers, government and civil-society efforts to validate the English proficiency of returning migrants are relatively common and frequently effective. The number of call-center jobs has been growing rapidly, and in Mexico City and Guatemala City, networks of returning migrants and civil-society organizations train returnees and help connect them to these positions.⁶⁸ But such jobs often offer little opportunity for skills development or upward mobility. Additionally, increasing automation in the customer-service field may reduce employer demand for call-center workers over the long term.

For returning migrants who are unable to validate their credentials or certify their skills, entrepreneurial seed funding provides a valuable opportunity to enter the labor market and earn an income. However, because funds are generally one-time grants or loans, and most programs do not include follow-up mechanisms, migrants' entrepreneurial projects are often unsuccessful or unsustainable.⁶⁹ Seed funding, without additional assistance or follow up, promotes self-employment in the informal sector often as a survival strategy, not a means to longer term self-sufficiency.

67 Participant comments during MPI focus group with Honduran migrants on May 2, 2018 and with Salvadoran migrants on May 3, 2018.

68 Seth Freed Wessler, "Call Centers: Returning to Mexico but Sounding American," Aljazeera America, March 16, 2014, <http://america.aljazeera.com/features/2014/3/mexico-s-call-centers.html>; Berta Abrego, "Industria de Centros de Llamadas Ofrecerá 2 Mil Empleos," *Diario de Centro América*, November 12, 2018, <https://dca.gob.gt/noticias-guatemala-diario-centro-america/industria-de-centros-de-llamadas-ofrecera-2-mil-empleos/>; Guadalupe Hernández, "El Sector de 'Call Centers' Invirtió \$100 Millones en Nuestro País," *El Diario de Hoy*, February 5, 2018, www.elsalvador.com/noticias/negocios/446778/el-sector-de-call-centers-invirtio-100-millones-en-15-anos-en-nuestro-pais/.

69 Participant comments at "Migrants Returning to Mexico and the Northern Triangle" meeting.



4. Social Stigma and Employment Discrimination

Deportees in all four countries described experiencing social stigmatization and/or employment discrimination. Especially in El Salvador, the perception that a returning migrant was a criminal or gang member, at times because of tattoos or piercings, significantly reduced the likelihood of obtaining employment in the formal sector. In some cases where migrants had minor or old criminal charges (not necessarily convictions), civil-society service providers coached them to avoid discussing these charges during interviews, if possible.⁷⁰

Migrants also reported, particularly in Mexico, that being older was viewed as a disadvantage that could restrict employment options. Other factors that could result in stigmatization were not speaking Spanish well and lacking up-to-date cultural knowledge, both of which can hinder the social reintegration of migrants who have spent a long time in the United States. Resentment of migrants in the general population also led to social stigmatization.⁷¹

The perception that a returning migrant was a criminal or gang member, at times because of tattoos or piercings, significantly reduced the likelihood of obtaining employment.

The Trump administration's decision to terminate TPS designations for migrants from El Salvador and Honduras has the potential to exacerbate some of these existing social tensions.⁷² Beginning in September 2019 and January 2020, Salvadoran and Honduran migrants, respectively, will lose the humanitarian status they have held in the United States for almost two decades, and return flows to both countries may increase. TPS holders are likely to be older and have longer U.S. experience than most returning migrants, a significant proportion of whom are youth and more likely to be publicly associated with gangs and violence. TPS holders are also likely to have different reception and reintegration needs than returning migrants with less U.S. experience, and if deported in sufficient numbers, their return may strain already limited return and reintegration services. Social stigmatization of U.S.-citizen children who return with their parents could also pose added educational and emotional challenges for these children and their families.

5. Key Push and Pull Factors Continue to Drive Emigration

Many of the same push and pull factors that have long motivated people to emigrate from the region remain widespread, hindering the willingness of returnees to stay. Lack of economic opportunities, high levels of insecurity and violence, and distrust of government institutions continue to push migration from the region, while family ties continue to pull many migrants to the United States.

Although Mexico's economy has grown considerably in recent years, generating more formal-sector employment opportunities than were available in past decades, these jobs may still be viewed as less appealing than those in the United States, including because wages remain much lower.⁷³ With a rising

⁷⁰ Author interview with employment coach, October 21, 2017.

⁷¹ Participant comments during MPI focus group with Honduran migrants, May 2, 2018.

⁷² As of December 2018, a federal district court in California had temporarily enjoined the administration's terminations of TPS for El Salvador, Honduras, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Sudan while court proceedings are ongoing in a lawsuit arguing those terminations were unlawful and unconstitutional. See *Crista Ramos v. Kirstjen Nielsen*, No. 18-cv-01554-EMC (U.S. District Court, Northern District of California, preliminary injunction granted on October 3, 2018), www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Laws/ramos-v-nielsen-order-granting-preliminary-injunction-case-18-cv-01554-emc.pdf.

⁷³ Participant comments at "Migrants Returning to Mexico and the Northern Triangle" meeting.



homicide rate since 2016, safety is another enduring consideration for many migrants returning to Mexico.⁷⁴ Insecurity and violence plague some parts of the country more than others, and returning migrants from these regions may instead opt to settle in relatively safe and prosperous places such as Mexico City. Yet many have found Mexico City expensive and socially isolating, and it is not clear whether the relatively strong economy there will offer enough opportunities to support a substantial number of returnees over the long run.

Migrants returning to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras face greater insecurity, violence, political instability, and economic challenges than those returning to Mexico. Though homicide rates are falling in all three countries, they remain very high relative to most other countries in the world. Migrants report feeling unsafe upon return, and some move from their home communities to areas perceived to be safer.⁷⁵ Internal displacement resulting from violence, gang extortion, and insecurity in El Salvador and Honduras appears to be substantial, though estimates of the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) in each vary considerably, particularly between government and civil-society figures.⁷⁶ Violence may force some returning migrants to leave areas where reintegration services are provided, and fear of violence may more generally impede their access to services. Children are sometimes forced to abandon their education because their schools or transit routes are unsafe, or because their families are internally displaced. Furthermore, ongoing investigations into corruption and turnover in government challenge overall political stability and make it more difficult to design and implement services, including those for returning migrants. This is particularly the case in Guatemala, where turnover in CONAMIGUA—the government agency responsible for coordinating reintegration services—left this key actor without leadership for nearly a year.

Internal displacement resulting from violence, gang extortion, and insecurity in El Salvador and Honduras appears to be substantial.

Economic drivers of migration also remain prevalent in the Northern Triangle. Approximately 30 percent of Salvadorans and more than half of Guatemalans and Hondurans are poor.⁷⁷ And all three countries have weak labor markets and low wages relative to the United States and Mexico, though some formal-sector opportunities such as call-center jobs are expanding.⁷⁸

74 Agencia EFE, “La Tasa de Homicidios en México Alcanza su Mayor Nivel en una Década,” Agencia EFE, July 30, 2018, www.efe.com/efe/america/mexico/la-tasa-de-homicidios-en-mexico-alcanza-su-mayor-nivel-una-decada/50000545-3706122.

75 Participant comments at “Migrants Returning to Mexico and the Northern Triangle” meeting.

76 The government of El Salvador acknowledges internal displacement in the country but contests the magnitude of displacement as reported by civil-society and international organizations. Estimates range from 466 families with at least one internally displaced person (IDP) to 296,000 IDPs in El Salvador. See Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2018* (Geneva: IDMC, 2018), www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2018/; Salvadoran Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2018, *Caracterización de la Movilidad Interna a Causa de la Violencia en El Salvador: Informe Final* (San Salvador: Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2018), www.refworld.org/es/docid/Sab96d624.html; UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons on Her Visit to El Salvador* (New York: United Nations, 2018), <https://reliefweb.int/report/el-salvador/report-special-rapporteur-human-rights-internally-displaced-persons-her-visit-el>. Estimates of the number of IDPs in Honduras range from 129 to 190,000. See IDMC, “Honduras: Country Information,” accessed August 29, 2018, www.internal-displacement.org/countries/honduras; Honduran National Commission of Human Rights (CONADEH), “Boletín Estadístico Sobre el Desplazamiento Forzado Interno: Identificación de Casos en los Registros de Quejas en Cinco Oficinas del CONADEH,” updated June 1, 2017, <http://app.conadeh.hn/descargas/Boletin%20Estad%20C3%ADstico%20UDFI-CONADEH.pdf>.

77 World Bank, “Tasa de Incidencia de la Pobreza, Sobre la Base de la Línea de Pobreza Nacional”; Bank of Guatemala, *Guatemala en Cifras 2018*.

78 Wessler, “Call Centers: Returning to Mexico but Sounding American”; Abrego, “Industria de Centros de Llamadas Ofrecerá 2 Mil Empleos”; Hernandez, “El Sector de ‘Call Centers’ Invirtió \$100 Millones en Nuestro País.”



Family reunification with relatives living in the United States continues to be a major pull factor for would-be migrants across the region, and separation from family can hinder long-term reintegration. Those who have been deported from the United States often leave spouses and children behind, including many children who are U.S. citizens.⁷⁹ Many repatriated migrants attempt return trips to the United States, while others choose to settle along the U.S.-Mexico border to be closer to relatives, though the latter is less of an option for migrants who are not from Mexico.⁸⁰

B. Policy Opportunities

In view of these challenges, there are several key areas where governments, international organizations, and civil society can collaborate to strengthen reception and reintegration services. By improving the opportunities awaiting migrants upon their return and easing their social and cultural re-adaptation, such efforts can make return more sustainable in the long run.

I. Preparing Migrants for Reintegration Prior to Departure

Reintegration assistance offered prior to repatriation can help migrants prepare for the transition back to their home countries, foresee reintegration challenges, and improve their access to needed services. Predeparture assistance requires collaboration between origin- and destination-country governments. Better communication between the U.S. and Mexican enforcement agencies responsible for repatriation—ICE and INM, respectively—and origin-country government institutions can streamline the reception process, improve migrants’ access to reintegration services, and consequently increase their likelihood of staying in the country.

Conducting reintegration-focused consultations with migrants in removal proceedings would allow consular officials to collect information about their needs and skills prior to return. Repatriated migrants at government reception centers in all four study countries reported feeling overwhelmed and distracted, and failing to retain information provided to them about existing services. By collecting information prior to repatriation, reception centers could significantly reduce the time it takes to process migrants upon arrival and tailor reintegration services to migrants’ specific needs.

In addition, consular representatives could provide migrants with information about available services in their home communities and how to access them early in the return process. The We Are Mexican strategy, for instance, includes consular networks in the reception and reintegration process, with the consulates providing orientations and referrals to migrants planning on returning voluntarily. Efforts to build on this program might include extending similar predeparture supports to deportees. The consular networks of the Northern Triangle countries could, in coordination with the United States and Mexico, develop similar reintegration-planning strategies.

However, for all four countries, consular notification is voluntary, and many migrants in removal proceedings are unaware of consular services, do not feel comfortable accessing them, or do not believe they are effective.⁸¹ Consulates thus have limited reach to provide reintegration-planning services because many returning migrants do not contact them—a challenge that affects even initiatives that are more built out, such as We Are Mexicans. Efforts to establish and strengthen predeparture services should thus include a strong outreach component to increase familiarity and trust among migrant communities.

79 The United States has deported substantial numbers of parents of U.S.-citizen children in recent years. During the second half of 2017, for example, ICE reporting deporting almost 15,000 parents of U.S.-citizen children. See ICE, *Deportation of Aliens Claiming U.S.-Born Children: Second Half, Calendar Year 2017* (Washington, DC: ICE, 2018), www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ICE%20-%20Deportation%20of%20Aliens%20Claiming%20U.S.%20-Born%20Children%20-%20Second%20Half%2C%20CY%202017.pdf. Similar reports are available for some other recent periods.

80 Schultheis and Ruiz Soto, *A Revolving Door No More?*

81 Participant comments at “Migrants Returning to Mexico and the Northern Triangle” meeting. For a discussion of the perceptions of Mexican migrants, see Schultheis and Ruiz Soto, *A Revolving Door No More?*



2. Issuing Primary Identification Documents to Migrants Abroad or upon Reception

To improve migrants' access to reintegration and other public services, origin-country governments could consider issuing primary identification documents to migrants abroad who will soon be returning or shortly after their arrival. For some of the study countries, allowing consular networks to issue primary identification documents other than passports to citizens abroad would require amending laws. Alternatively, it may be more feasible to issue primary identification documents at reception centers, instead of providing temporary documents or making referrals to other institutions, as is current practice.

In Mexico, government agencies could raise awareness of the certificates of repatriation issued to migrants at reception centers in the country, especially given that repatriated Mexican migrants consulted during this study expressed particular concerns about their lack of proper identification. Additionally, Mexican legislators could enact policies to ensure that service providers uniformly recognize consular identification cards (or a similar document issued in the United States) for the purposes of accessing day-to-day services.

In the case of Guatemala, whose consular network in the United States already issues DPIs to nationals in Houston, Los Angeles, and New York City, the question is more one of timing and reach.⁸² Efforts to expedite the often lengthy process of acquiring a DPI abroad, and to issue these identification cards at reception centers, could ensure that returning migrants have timely access to reintegration services.

3. Implementing Unified Data Systems for Service Provision and Follow-Up

Integrated data systems that track returning migrants' characteristics and service needs, as recorded either prior to repatriation or during reception, would facilitate longer-term and follow-up reintegration supports. Each of the three Northern Triangle governments utilizes a single questionnaire, designed in collaboration with IOM, to consolidate questions from multiple institutions; doing so helps ensure that migrants are not overburdened by repeated questions and that all involved government actors have the data needed to inform future services and programs.⁸³ The Mexican government also collects similar data at reception centers, though it is unclear whether they use a single questionnaire. The countries' data-storage systems vary widely.

Policies to upgrade these systems and improve inter-agency data sharing hold promise. For instance, with IOM support, the three Northern Triangle countries are integrating their data systems across government institutions. Advances in Honduras' national registry system allow the different agencies that provide reintegration services to search for individual repatriated migrants, obtain the information needed to tailor services to their needs, and monitor their progress and need for follow-up services.⁸⁴ These efforts are not without challenges, including the need to protect migrants' privacy, but the potential of these systems to improve how governments connect migrants with reintegration services and track their progress is groundbreaking.⁸⁵

4. Grounding Reintegration Services in Migrants' Cultural Roots

While small in scale and limited in reach, reintegration services that tap into migrants' cultural roots have the potential to foster their sense of belonging, anchoring them to origin communities after their return.

Networks of returning migrants in rural Guatemala have experimented with local and cooperative development strategies that go beyond providing job opportunities in formal-sector industries. For example, Grupo Cajolá operates egg and honey farms and a preschool program in indigenous communities, all with the aim of supporting local language, culture, and customs. Similarly, before closing

⁸² As of the time of this publication, the Guatemalan consular network in the United States was expanding its ability to issue Personal Documents of Identification (Documentos Personal de Identificación, DPIs) at all consulates.

⁸³ GAO, *Central America: USAID Assists Migrants Returning to Their Home Countries*.

⁸⁴ Author interview with Honduran government official, May 4, 2018.

⁸⁵ Participant comments at "Migrants Returning to Mexico and the Northern Triangle" meeting.



in 2017, La Red Kat trained returning migrants in Guatemalan culinary arts and opened a seasonal restaurant for tourists, raising cultural awareness and highlighting livelihood opportunities. And Social Lab, an incubator for social businesses, organized what it has termed a “chicken revolution” in Guatemala and in a Guatemalan community in Minnesota that involves the ecological raising of free-range chickens and their distribution to homes and restaurants.⁸⁶

This type of localized development strategies may be able to provide economic support and strengthen community ties for migrants returning to rural and/or indigenous communities, thereby reducing incentives for repeat migration. However, such strategies are more difficult to implement in larger, more competitive urban economies, and analogous examples were not found outside Guatemala.

5. Expanding Interinstitutional Communications and Public Information Campaigns

Efforts to improve understanding of the needs of returning migrants and the assets they bring their home countries should be targeted both to government officials and to the general public. By incorporating modules on return migration into training for public officials at all levels, governments can raise awareness of the specific needs of this growing population and explain legal and procedural changes in the provision of government services. Better and more uniform implementation of existing government services across localities could increase migrants’ participation and improve their livelihoods, especially in municipalities with less experience receiving returning migrants.

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In addition, governments and international and civil-society organizations can use public information campaigns to highlight the social and economic contributions of returning migrants, address their feelings of isolation, and push back against stigmatization. Expanding such campaigns could improve social reintegration, lower employment barriers, and reduce tension between returnees and other members of the public.

In some countries in the region, media campaigns have been used to challenge public perceptions of returning migrants as strangers, criminals, or gang members. For example, with the support of IOM and other organizations, El Salvador and Mexico have implemented campaigns to present positive stories and profiles of returning migrants. In El Salvador, the I Don’t Discriminate campaign (#YoNoDiscrimino) seeks to change the negative stereotype of returning migrants as criminals.⁸⁷ And in Mexico City, the I Am A Returning Migrant campaign (Soy Migrante de Retorno) aims to foster public appreciation of migrants and lower discrimination by sharing short personal stories online and on posters across the city.⁸⁸

Organizations founded by returning migrants also conduct public campaigns and hold social awareness events to elevate migrants’ concerns, while also acting as important support networks for returnees. These organizations include RENACERES in El Salvador; ARG in Guatemala; CONAMIREDIS in Honduras;

86 Rachel Kastner, “Regeneration Guatemala Seeks to Transform Rural Guatemala Agriculture,” Regeneration International, June 19, 2018, <https://regenerationinternational.org/2018/06/19/regeneration-guatemala-seeks-transform-rural-guatemala-agriculture/>.

87 MRREE, “Cancillería Apoya Campaña a Favor de No Discriminación de Personas Retornadas,” updated August 15, 2018, <https://rreee.gob.sv/cancilleria-apoya-campana-a-favor-de-no-discriminacion-de-personas-retornadas/>.

88 Mexican National Commission of Human Rights (CNDH), “Campaña – Soy Migrante Retorno,” accessed August 28, 2018, www.cndh.org.mx/migrante-retorno; UN Information Center, “OIM México lanza la campaña ‘Soy migrante de retorno,’” accessed August 28, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1AnWA6Rk6Q.



and *Deportados Unidos en la Lucha*, *New Comienzos*, and *Otros Dreams en Acción* in Mexico. Civil-society organizations in Mexico are increasingly connected with each other and with the government, cooperation that might be used to boost the reach of reintegration efforts.⁸⁹ But despite recent attempts at collaboration, such campaigns and events more often remain relatively independent of one another.

To date, little research exists on what types of information campaigns or other efforts are most likely to succeed in swaying public perceptions about returning migrants, opening economic opportunities for them, and reducing their social isolation. Such campaigns, informed by improved evidence of what elements are most effective, would merit substantial investments from governments across the region, given that combatting discrimination against returnees and fostering their sense of belonging could potentially reduce their incentives for repeat migration.

VI. Conclusion

While their capacity varies, reception and reintegration services in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras share a set of common elements and face similar challenges. The services and facilities migrants encounter upon reception have generally improved since MPI conducted an earlier round of fieldwork in 2015,⁹⁰ becoming more secure and attentive to vulnerable populations.

Progress in institutionalizing reception services is most notable in Honduras and El Salvador, and has resulted in better coordination of support and quality care for groups such as families and children. In Mexico, government institutions have consolidated their efforts since 2014 as reception has become more complex, with nationals being repatriated through 11 ports of entry at the U.S.-Mexico border in addition to the Mexico City airport.⁹¹ With the assistance of international organizations, the Guatemalan government has upgraded and renovated some of its reception centers, though coordination between the government and civil-society organizations on reception services is often lacking.⁹² As a result of these recent developments, most repatriated migrants in all four countries receive basic reception services in a welcoming and safe atmosphere while being informed of follow-up services available in their destination communities.

Recent government efforts to identify the characteristics and circumstances of individual returnees at reception centers, or prior to repatriation, are enhancing their ability to provide targeted services that better meet migrants' needs. And although they are at different stages in the implementation process, all four countries have started to channel reintegration services through one-stop centers often located inside municipal government offices, thereby increasing the geographic reach and visibility of these supports. Most of these services emphasize employment and entrepreneurial projects, usually providing access to small grants or microloans, skill accreditation, and education. Those that offer mental health supports or social support networks are less prevalent and more often provided by civil-society or community-based organizations.

It has been more difficult to extend services to people who return voluntarily. With the exception of Mexican returnees, who may receive an orientation to services through the Mexican consular network in the United States, migrants who return voluntarily do not receive reception services and are not linked

89 Abraham Nava, "Dreamers Piden Ser Teachers en México; Quieren Participar en el Cambio," *Excelsior*, July 25, 2018, www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/dreamers-piden-ser-teachers-en-mexico-quieren-participar-en-el-cambio/1254468.

90 Rietig and Dominguez-Villegas, *Stopping the Revolving Door*.

91 As noted above, the Mexican government reports that ICE suspended repatriation flights to Mexico City airport on May 29, 2018. See Herrera, "Suspende EU Repatriación Aérea Temporalmente."

92 As of July 2018, renovations by IOM and the Guatemalan government of a new reception area for repatriated adult migrants arriving at the Air Force terminal were on hold pending government approval. Author interview with IOM senior official, July 10, 2018.



in any way with government agencies that provide reintegration support. Little is known about this population and their labor-market, social, and other reintegration circumstances. While civil-society organizations and informal networks of returnees often provide broader and more flexible services than the governments, they do not generally have the capacity to identify, reach, and serve large numbers of returning migrants.

The challenges governments and civil society face in delivering reintegration services are difficult to overcome. Public services tend to be highly concentrated in large cities, in part as a reflection of where migrants resettle, limiting their accessibility to those who return to communities in rural and less developed areas in each country. A lack of national reintegration policies, or their inconsistent implementation across states and localities, compounds this unevenness.

Governments and civil-society organizations collaborate in providing some reception services, but their coordination on reintegration services is far more limited. And many of these reintegration supports have a visibility problem, with few returning migrants aware of their existence or how to access them. Meanwhile, civil-society initiatives, such as Guatemala's small-scale development projects in rural areas, are often difficult to scale up, and some have proven unsustainable in the long term. As long as reintegration programs serve only a fraction of the returning migrant population, those who fall through the cracks and struggle to access economic opportunities in their origin communities may consider setting out for the United States or Mexico once more.

The most promising practices in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras are those that operate under an integrated framework.

Despite the obstacles, improving reception and reintegration services is a valuable long-term investment—both for destination countries seeking to reduce repeat illegal migration and for countries of origin, which stand to gain from the potential contributions of returning migrants. For migrants and the communities in which they settle, these services are crucial to securing better livelihoods and rebuilding social bonds.

The most promising practices in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras are those that operate under an integrated framework that tailors services to migrants' needs, coordinates services across institutions, and leverages existing services at the local level. Ensuring that these services are successful *and* sustainable will require collaboration across sectors, regional shared responsibility, consistent funding, and better monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.



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About the Authors



Ariel G. Ruiz Soto is an Associate Policy Analyst at the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), where he analyzes migration policies in the United States, Mexico, and Central America and provides quantitative research support for the U.S. Immigration Program. He also manages MPI's internship program.

His research focuses on the impact of U.S. immigration policies on immigrants' experiences of socioeconomic integration across varying geographical and political contexts. More recently, Mr. Ruiz Soto has analyzed methodological approaches to estimate sociodemographic trends of the unauthorized immigrant population in the United States. His research has been published in *Latino Studies* and in *Crossing the United States-Mexico Border: Policies, Dynamics, and Consequences of Mexican Migration to the United States* (University of Texas Press).

Mr. Ruiz Soto holds a master's degree from the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration with an emphasis on immigration policy and service provision, and a bachelor's degree in sociology from Whitman College.



Rodrigo Dominguez-Villegas is an independent consultant for MPI. His research areas include international migration in North and Central America, return migration, and Mexico's migration policy.

He is a quantitative methods consultant at the Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR) at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, where he provides consultations on research design, spatial statistics, multiple regression methods, and on the STATA, ArcGIS, and GeoDa software programs. He is also a research assistant for grant development at ISSR and supports social scientists in finding and securing funding for research across the social sciences.

Previously, Mr. Dominguez-Villegas worked with the Mariposa Foundation in the Dominican Republic, where he conducted socioeconomic and demographic research in four rural communities and designed a model English program currently used at the Mariposa Girls Leadership Program. He also interned at the Australian Trade Commission in Madrid, providing market advice to Australian companies entering the Spanish market.

Mr. Dominguez-Villegas is a doctoral candidate in sociology at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. His dissertation work focuses on the effects of stigma on socioeconomic outcomes of return migrants in Mexico. He holds a B.A. in economics and geography from Middlebury College and an M.A. in sociology from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.



Luis Argueta is a Guatemalan American director and producer. His film *The Silence of Neto* (1994)—a coming-of-age story set in Cold War-era Guatemala—is Guatemala's first internationally recognized and awarded film. He has also made a number of immigration-focused films, including *abUSed: The Postville Raid* (2010), *ABRAZOS* (2014), and *The U Turn* (2017).

In addition to his film work, Mr. Argueta has spent more than two decades producing and directing television ads. In 2016, he served as a consultant for Elevation Advertising in the research and development of the television campaign "Nuestra Patria, Nuestro Futuro" ("Our Country, Our Future") for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Customs and Border Patrol. This campaign, which



aims to reduce the migration of unaccompanied minors from the Northern Triangle of Central America, was produced and directed by Argueta and has been airing in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador since 2017.

In August of 2015, Luis Argueta was awarded the Order of Quetzal in the degree of Grand Officer, the highest honor given by Guatemala. He has also been listed by *The Guardian* as one of Guatemala's National Living Icons.



Randy Capps is Director of Research for U.S. Programs at MPI. His areas of expertise include immigration trends, the unauthorized population, immigrants in the U.S. labor force, the children of immigrants and their well-being, and immigrant health-care and public benefits access and use.

Dr. Capps, a demographer, has published widely on immigrant integration at the state and local level, including profiles of immigrant populations in Arkansas, Connecticut, and Maryland, as well as Los Angeles, Washington, DC, Louisville, KY, and Napa County, CA. He also has examined the impact of the detention and deportation of immigrant parents on children.

Prior to joining MPI, Dr. Capps was a researcher in the Immigration Studies Program at the Urban Institute (1993-96, and 2000-08).

He received his PhD in sociology from the University of Texas in 1999 and his master of public affairs degree, also from the University of Texas, in 1992.



The Migration Policy Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank dedicated to the study of the movement of people worldwide. MPI provides analysis, development, and evaluation of migration and refugee policies at the local, national, and international levels. It aims to meet the rising demand for pragmatic and thoughtful responses to the challenges and opportunities that large-scale migration, whether voluntary or forced, presents to communities and institutions in an increasingly integrated world.

www.migrationpolicy.org

1400 16th Street NW
Suite 300
Washington, DC 20036

Tel: 001 202-266-1940
Fax: 001 202-266-1900

