



Opening of the Exhibit on migration in the Americas Migratory routes and motivations of people on the move

Side event on the margins of the annual session of the Executive Board
Red Café Foyer – Wednesday, 22 June 2022 – 09.00-09.30

You are kindly invited to the opening of the exhibit led by the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology – Civic Data Design Lab.

Context

The Latin America and the Caribbean region is characterized by a high level of human mobility, in particular intra-regional migration, and continues to host a growing number of migrants and refugees. Recent trends show not only that intra-regional mobility has increased, exacerbated by factors such as poverty, inequality, violence and insecurity, climate change, and environmental degradation, but also that the continent has become a destination for migrants and refugees from the Caribbean and other parts of the world. Record numbers of people on the move are being reported across the Americas.

Between 90,000 to 150,000 people have been reported crossing irregularly through the Darién gap (near the border between Colombia and Panama) only in 2021. The majority of those involved in mixed and onward movements from South America to the North are Haitian nationals, as this country is particularly affected by instability, rising violence and poverty, as well as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and a recent earthquake that have further impacted Haiti's economic and social growth.

Their path to reach the United States usually starts in Brazil, passing through the Andean region, Panama, Central America, Mexico, and finally to the United States. One of the main reasons for choosing this path is that in 2010, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador and Peru did not require a visa for Haitian nationals to enter their respective countries. This migratory crisis is affecting the Mesoamerican region and is evolving into a crisis that is attracting the interest not only of governments in the region but is also increasingly involving United Nations agencies, including WFP, through their participation in platforms such as the issue-based coalition on human mobility.

In addition to this, in the past five years, there has been an increase in migration from Central America towards the United States. The United States border patrol recorded approximately 1.8 million encounters of migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras at the United States-Mexico border between the fiscal years of 2017 and 2021, and in four of the last five fiscal years encounters of migrants from these three countries surpassed those involving Mexican migrants. Since 2018, the region has also witnessed larger and more frequent mass movements, including those composed of significant shares of families and unaccompanied children, primarily bound for the United States and motivated by a mix of employment opportunities, family reunification, and humanitarian protection needs.

To inform strategic discussions on how best to address and understand the root causes of migration (with a specific focus on food and nutrition security) and to mitigate Central American migration, WFP – through a collaboration between the Migration Policy Institute and the Civic Data Design Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology – implemented a study that explored the factors driving people in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras to consider and decide to migrate irregularly or regularly, as well as the costs and economic implications of migration for households and communities throughout the region.

Objective

The objective of the exhibition is to raise awareness of the migratory movements in Mesoamerica with a specific focus on Central America migration. This event will support the discussion around the new country strategic plans that will be presented to the Board (in particular El Salvador in June 2022 and Honduras in November 2022).

Agenda

There will be an opening of the exhibition which will be left on display for people to see whenever possible during the annual session of the Executive Board (20–24 June).

Opening of the exhibition: at 9:00

Introductory remarks: Mr David Beasley, Executive Director, WFP (TBC), accompanied by Ms Lola Castro, Regional Director for the Latin America and the Caribbean region

Remarks: List C Convenor

Technical introduction: Sarah Williams, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Other guests: Government Representatives from Panama and El Salvador attending the Executive Board

Description of the exhibition

The installation will be interactive as it:

- Allows visitors to touch screens and get information. Interaction is both tactical (touching/moving physical objects) and digital.
- Explores a range of scales with a map of the world, countries, and cities.
- Personalizes the data with narratives and items of migrants and the choices they make.
- Fits nicely in a 3x3 meter space, in the Red Café Foyer.
- Designed so that it can be moved to other locations.
- Expresses the urgency of policies/problems that WFP needs to address now.

The exhibition content will include images developed by the Civic Data Design Lab research team from WFP's data analysis and photographs. It will also feature the interactive data visualizations developed as part of previous research conducted by WFP and the Civic Data Design Lab. Data visualizations that were developed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology – Civic Data Design Lab students in the Fall 2021 Big Data Visualization and Society Class (11.454) will be used with the students' permission.

Examples

