

▶ BASELINE RESULTS OF THE HAITIAN MIGRATION CAMPAIGN IN PANAMA



CONTEXT

The objective of this communication process is to raise awareness about the risks of irregular migration, especially when crossing the Darien forest in Panama, bordering Colombia. The campaign is addressed to potential migrants in Haiti and Haitian migrants that are located in South American transit countries.



TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION¹



Surveys and in-depth interviews

The information gathered for this baseline was obtained through 238 face-to-face interviews at the temporary Migrant Reception Stations (MRS) in Darien, in-depth virtual interviews with representatives of IOM missions in Haiti, Brazil, Chile, Peru and Guyana, as well as interviews with public institutions and civil organizations in transit countries.



LIMITATIONS

The language barrier affected in such a way that only migrants who spoke Spanish, English or French participated in the collection of information even when all questions were written in creole too.

The participation of women was limited, as it was common for them to be accompanied by their peers, and their participation depended on their "permission".

¹Data collection and processing was carried out during May 2021. These data allowed to inform the design and implementation of a campaign on the risks of irregular migration in 2021.



MAIN RESULTS

MIGRANTS TRANSITING THROUGH THE DARIEN FOREST

- ▶ Migration along this route is characterized by being mostly masculine, both in terms of the number of incoming migrants, but also with regard to certain attitudes of the migrat population: Of those surveyed, 63% are men. Women do not usually speak a second language because of their limited interaction with people who speak a different language than their own.
- ▶ Migrants crossing through Darien forest are usually of a younger age (81% of men and 77% of women are under 35), 55% are single and more than half state to have people who economically depend on them. Most of them mention their parents (60.5%) and/or children (55.03%).
- ▶ 63.9% of respondents have an academic level of secondary education.

- ▶ The last countries of residence of this population are:



- ▶ 52.9% of respondents said they had formal jobs and 60.9% said they had a regular status in the countries where they previously resided.
- ▶ Only 33% indicated the United States as final destination and 5% Canada, while 57% said that Mexico was their destination. However, in interviews with civil organizations in transit countries, it was mentioned that the Haitian population is very secretive in terms of revealing information about their migratory intentions, mainly regarding their destination.



● Canada ● United States ● Mexico

- ▶ Although there are many people coming from South America who speak Spanish, language is a barrier when it comes to assisting this population.
- ▶ The main motivation for migrating is the search for better opportunities, mainly job opportunities (88%).
- ▶ Family plays an important role in the decision to migrate, because one of the main motivations mentioned is reunification with relatives who "had already made it" (41.6%).



MAIN RESULTS

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

- ▶ The most trusted source of information is their peers, that is, friends or family who have already migrated (75.2%). "They trust more in the words of their compatriots than in us," mentions a civil organization in Chile.
- ▶ WhatsApp is the most trusted and used media application (54%) followed by news on the internet (42%). In this regard, IOM informants in Peru and Brazil said that the news that reaches them by WhatsApp are often perceived as very credible by these people, which is a challenge when it comes to fake news.



● WhatsApp is the most trusted and used media application ● News on the internet are the trusted and used media application

- ▶ Traditional media such as radio and television show slightly lower levels of reliability (31.5% and 38.2% respectively).
- ▶ Cell phones are their main means of communication. 57% consider them as "very valuable" throughout the route.

THE ROUTE

- ▶ 72% of respondents said they had family or friends who guided them along the way. And it is these family members who give them directions on where to go and who to talk to.
- ▶ Although they claim to have an idea of what they would face in their passage through the Darien Forest, 64.3% said that what they found in the forest was not what they had expected.
- ▶ Although their friends or family provided them with information, 70.6% said they lacked sufficient information about the route.
- ▶ 89% of people said they did not know any other way to migrate than to cross the Darien forest.
- ▶ 77% said they would not follow this route again.



CONCLUSIONS

- ▶ This route is promoted by those who have already traveled and survived it. Family and friends already living in Mexico, the United States and Canada share corresponding data and reference groups with their relatives in transit countries.
- ▶ The main barrier is the lack of trust in messages coming from governments, agencies, or NGOs.
- ▶ Given the limited access to internet or cell phone data, it is recommended to produce content that is small in size and therefore easy to share and download.
- ▶ The lack of knowledge on migration tendencies of the Haitian population in the region is evident, mainly among IOM missions in the region. Therefore, it is recommended to carry out outreach and awareness-raising activities on the subject and add the missions as a campaign audience.
- ▶ The missions in the transit countries in South America state that they do not have resources or programs to assist this population.
- ▶ There is a common factor among the civil organizations that have better information on Haitian migrants. They tend to have Haitian staff that function as the first line of attention for that population.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Conduct frequent flow monitoring exercises to track the mobility of Haitian migrants in transit and destination countries to better understand the migration dynamics.
- ▶ As a priority, it is recommended to work together with NGOs and foundations with Haitian staff. This ensures direct contact with the population and can help eliminate many barriers, both for the production and implementation of the future campaign.

The Western Hemisphere Program is implemented by the International Organization for Migration and financed by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration.



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