

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The International Organization for Migration (IOM) conducted a study entitled “El involucramiento de las diásporas de América Central y México: oportunidades y desafíos” (Engaging Central American and Mexican Diasporas: Opportunities and Challenges) in 2020, with collaboration from a centre named “Laboratorio en Estudios Económicos y Sociales (LEES)”, with the objective of assessing the opportunities and challenges in engaging Central American and Mexican diasporas in their communities of origin.



1,014 diaspora organizations were mapped and 91 organizations were surveyed. In addition, 12 civil servants from the secretariats and ministries of foreign affairs of the different countries of concern were interviewed. To this end, quantitative and qualitative methods were used.



The majority of the field work was performed remotely, given the sanitary measures of social distancing and mobility restrictions due to the pandemic.

## TYPOLOGY OF THE DIASPORA ORGANIZATIONS

Of the 1,014 identified organizations:

### BY COMPOSITION



#### Hometown Clubs:

The same community, location, municipality or federative entity.



#### Migrants' Clubs:

Different communities or locations of origin.



#### Coalitions:

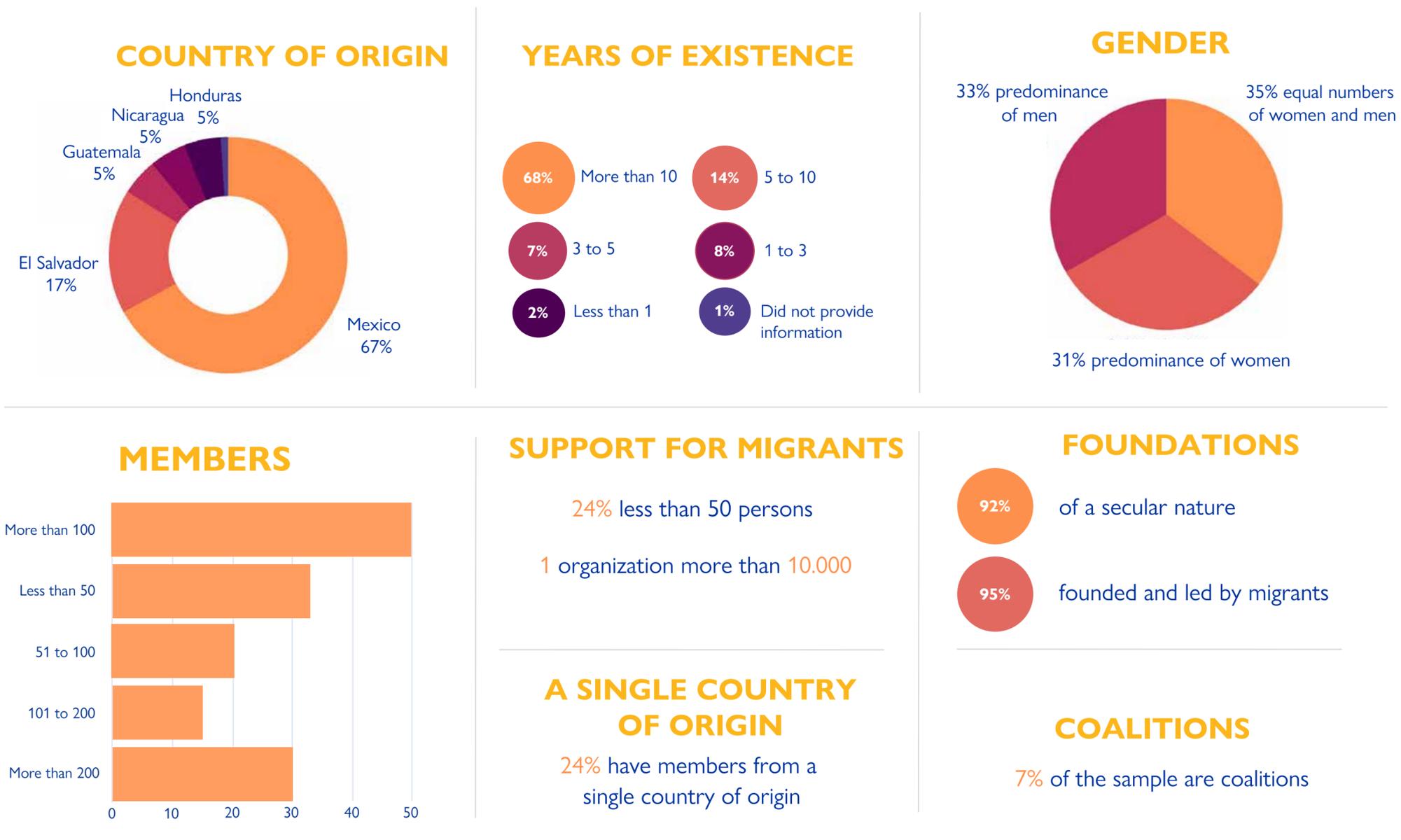
Multiple migrants' organizations or associations.

### BY OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS



# MAIN CHARACTERISTICS

The survey was conducted with a non-representative sample of 91 organizations. Therefore, the information that was gathered should not be generalized, and erroneous and biased interpretations and affirmations should not be made. Based on the results from the survey, the following characteristics of the diaspora organizations can be highlighted:



## ORIGIN AND GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF THE ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to collecting information on 91 organizations, the characteristics of the 1,014 identified diaspora organizations were mapped. The numbers of identified organizations, by country of origin and geographic distribution, are included below:



## ORIGIN OF THE ORGANIZATIONS

In order to understand the relationship between the diaspora organizations and their countries of origin, an analysis was performed of the reasons why the organizations had been established.



### MEXICO

In the case of Mexico, these groups were established with the objective of seeking a better environment for their families, or simply based on a feeling of rootedness and nostalgia, as well as the establishment of co-investment projects aimed at helping their communities of origin.



### EL SALVADOR

Salvadorans abroad established organizations that sent collective remittances to finance improvements in their communities of origin. Eighty-two percent of the Salvadoran organizations identified themselves as Migrants' Clubs; that is, they are composed of individuals from different communities of origin.



### GUATEMALA AND HONDURAS

The groups were mainly established in the 1980s. In the case of the Guatemalan diaspora, the high numbers of refugees and displaced persons during this period led to the establishment of organizations, while for Honduras, the main driver was the natural disaster caused by Hurricane Mitch in 1998.



### NICARAGUA



The Nicaraguan diaspora began in the US in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as a result of the migration due to the internal conflict experienced in Nicaragua during that period.

## CONNECTION WITH AND SUPPORT FROM GOVERNMENTS

Consular services and embassies are the institutional links between national governments and the diasporas of their countries. It was identified that national governments have established stronger links with their diasporas through the following:



Consular offices are the main means of national governments to provide protection and support to their diasporas.



The governments of Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico have taken an important step through the establishment of a specific unit focused on maintaining the links with their respective diasporas.



The establishment of a regulatory framework for diasporas is very important, in order to ensure the human rights and political participation of the diasporas.

## INVOLVEMENT MECHANISMS

The sending of remittances is the main indirect contribution mechanism of diaspora organizations in the Mesoamerican region. Remittances are very important in the economies of these countries. The possibility to promote the use of collective remittances is an opportunity for local and national governments to implement co-investment programmes aimed at the development of the communities of origin.

### MEXICO



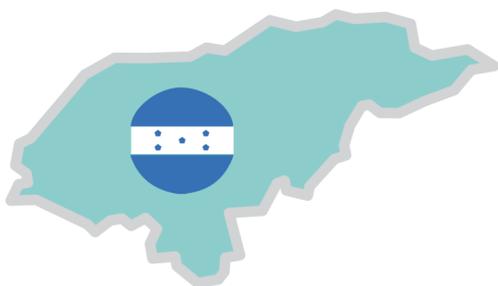
After the learning process of the organizations that took place from the 1960s to the 1990s in regard to actions aimed at implementing basic infrastructure projects in their communities of origin, the Federal Government institutionalized this co-investment strategy for development in 2002 through the establishment of the 3x1 Programme for Migrants, implemented by the Secretariat of Social Development. The programme grew and was executed during a period of 17 years; however, in 2020 it disappeared. In the first two years, the amounts budgeted by the Federal Government were relatively low, although from the first year of the programme's existence the number of projects executed was significant: 924 projects. In 2008, the number of projects had increased to 2,457. However, this number decreased to 1,058 in 2018.

### EL SALVADOR



After the damage caused by Hurricane Mitch in 1998, several organizations took actions to help the affected population. In this context, the Salvadoran Government identified an area of opportunity to implement co-investment strategies aimed at local development. After the establishment of the General Office for Assistance to Communities Abroad, under the Vice-Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Salvadorans Abroad and the Social Investment Fund for Local Development of El Salvador, a programme named "Unidos por la Solidaridad" (United for Solidarity) was established in 2002. The programme was based on a competitive funding scheme. Until June 2004, a total number of 45 projects had been executed under the programme, for an amount of US\$11,45 million. Of these funds, US\$2,13 million were contributions from organizations of Salvadorans abroad.

### HONDURAS



The "Remesas Solidarias y Productivas" (Supportive and Productive Remittances) programme was established in 2010, with the objective of attracting funds from associations of Hondurans in the US for co-investment projects aimed at improving the conditions in their communities of origin. Until 2017, 17 community projects had been executed. Honduran diaspora organizations contributed more than US\$100,000 to these projects.

## NEEDS OF THE DIASPORAS

•The main needs and opportunities for improvement of the diaspora organizations include the following, among others:



### EMPLOYMENT AND APPROPRIATE INCOME:

- Limited interest in becoming members of the organizations when the priorities are seeking employment and generating income.



### GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS AND PUBLIC POLICIES:

- Improving the capacity for advocacy aimed at the agenda of the countries of destination.
- Strategies to adjust to changes in migration legislation and policies.



### INTEGRATION AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS:

- Cohesion and trust among diaspora communities;
- The need to include a gender perspective into the work of the organizations;
- Recognition in countries of origin and destination;
- Expressions of xenophobia and lack of knowledge of the language of the host country could affect the work of the organizations.



### ORGANIZATIONAL NEEDS:

- Having more dedicated staff to do the work of the organization;
- Developing fund-raising strategies to secure the resources required for the operations of the organization;
- Expanding the membership of the organizations;
- Strategies for adaptation in the context of the pandemic.

## RETOS DE LA DIÁSPORA

Significant challenges were identified through the mapping of Central American diasporas, which need to be faced by governments in the region in seeking to strengthen the links with their respective diasporas. The challenges include the following:



- 1) Recognizing the contributions of the diasporas and addressing their needs.



- 2) Incorporating the diasporas in the country of destination;



- 3) Identifying the diasporas;



- 4) Sustainable public policies for development.



- 5) Strengthening the organizations and addressing their needs.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations seek to provide an overview of the actions that governments in the region can undertake to leverage the benefits of migration. Each action is part of one of the three pillars of IOM's Strategic Approach: Enable, Engage and Empower.

### Pillar I: Enabling diasporas as agents for development

#### **1) Recognizing the contributions of the diasporas**

It is recommended that the Mesoamerican governments facilitate or provide spaces for participation of diasporas, with the aim of identifying their needs and enabling them to inform the population of the country of origin about the various activities they carry out.

#### **2) Integrating diasporas in the country of destination**

Governments in the region are responsible not only for thinking of those who leave but also of those who arrive. The migration process has intensified, and this will probably be the trend. In this regard, Costa Rica is a model to examine. Costa Rica has worked toward incorporating migrant populations into the economic activities of the country.

---

### Pillar II: Engaging diasporas as agents for development

#### **1) Identifying diasporas**

In order to promote the engagement of diasporas, first they need to be specifically identified. To this end, it is recommended that governments in the region develop a directory where migrants' organizations can register.

#### **2) Developing sustainable public policies for development**

Governments can develop policies in a coordinated manner, aimed at the participation of diasporas. This is not only a responsibility of the secretariats or ministries of foreign affairs. The potential of diasporas should be leveraged in all government areas. Therefore, they could be incorporated into national development plans, with cross-cutting public policies.

---

### Pillar III: Empowering diasporas as agents for development

#### **1) Strengthening diaspora organizations and addressing their needs**

Consulates, as the first point of contact of migrant populations with their countries of origin, should provide the best possible assistance and should be places where migrants feel at home. Through consulates, the relevant authorities should provide various services, focusing not only on documentation and protection but addressing all the issues, in the same manner as the services that are available for nationals in the country of origin.