

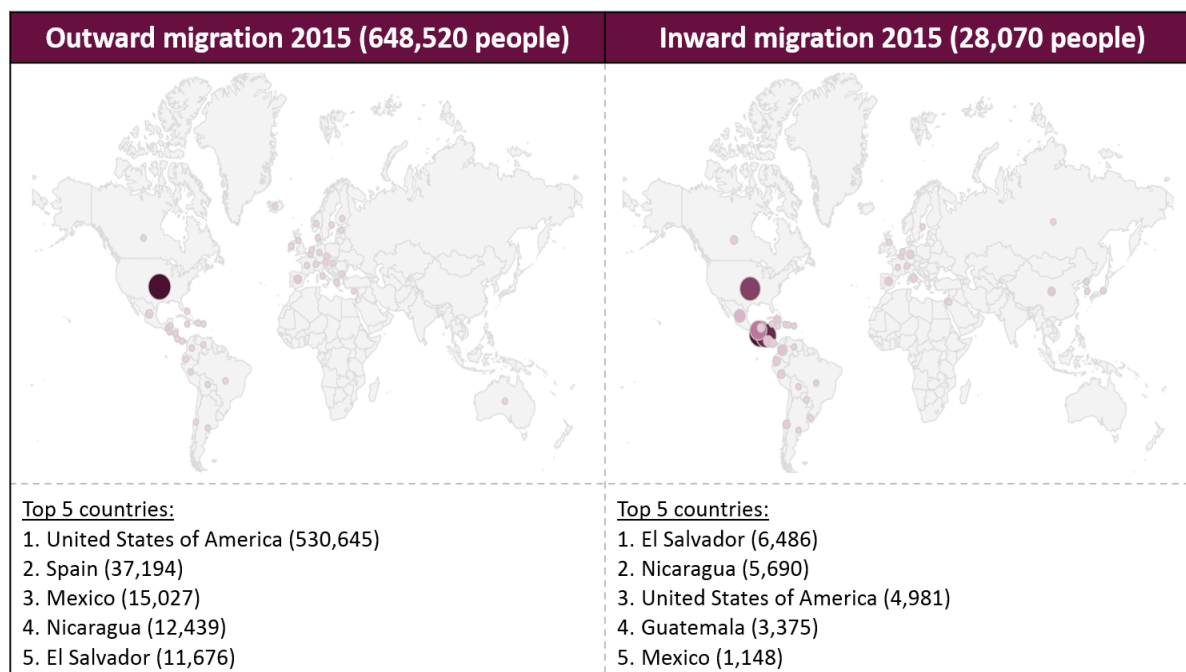
Smart practices that enhance resilience of migrants

Honduras

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Honduras is a point of origin, transit and destination for different categories of vulnerable migrants. Honduras has significant outward migration, as people attempt to migrate from the country in search of economic opportunities and improved living conditions.¹ In addition, Honduras lies on a strategic route for irregular migrants and acts as a transit corridor for those emigrating from the region or from other continents to the United States of America (US). On a smaller scale, Honduras is also a destination country for labour migrants from other countries.

Figure 1. Honduras - outward and inward migration in 2015.



Source: IOM

Outward migration

Honduras is heavily affected by outward labour migration to North America, mainly Mexico and the US, as well as to Spain, and neighbouring countries such as El Salvador and Nicaragua. As of 2006, approximately 1,050,000 Hondurans were estimated to be living abroad, representing over 15 per cent of the entire Honduran population.² Personal remittances from migrants to their families in Honduras represented over 17 per cent of the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2014.³ Each year, it is estimated that between 100,000 and 120,000 people⁴ attempt to emigrate from Honduras. Most migrants from Honduras aim to get to the US, but only around 10 per cent reach their destination. The remaining migrants are forced to return to Honduras.

¹ Cruz Roja Hondureña, *Estudio Documental de Honduras* (Estimates from FONAMIH) (2015).

² *First Public Policy on Human Rights and National Plan of Action on Human Rights* (2013), p.168. At: <https://issuu.com/danacruz/docs/sjdh - ppp y pnadh - tomo ii>.

³ World Bank Data, Indicator: Personal remittances, received (per cent of GDP) (2014). At: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TR.F.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS>.

⁴ FONAMIH, *Migration flow data*.

The main drivers of outward migration are unemployment,⁵ poverty⁶ and violence in Honduras, and the pull of reuniting with family members who have already left. According to a study conducted by UNDP (2006), the main motivations for emigration are "unemployment and economic problems", "insecurity", "disappointment with the country", "the aspirations of a better living", and to "have the possibility to regroup with a family member who is already settled abroad". Another UNDP study (2010) confirmed that occupational factors are the main drivers behind Honduran emigration.

The migratory trail followed by most Hondurans migrants is to travel by land across Guatemala and Mexico. Most Honduran migrants are low-income travellers, who cannot enter the US as regular migrants. As a result, they try to enter the country as irregular migrants. In order to do so, they first cross the border to Guatemala. It normally takes them around one day to transit through Guatemala, which they do by bus or by getting lifts from people in the country. They then cross the border into Mexico and make their way north to the US. Depending on their financial resources, some migrants use smuggler services (coyotes) to cross the border into the United States.⁷

Most Honduran migrants in the US are irregular and vulnerable. It is estimated that around 60 per cent⁸ of the more than half a million Honduran citizens living in the US entered the country irregularly, or overstayed, and are at risk of being deported. Other factors also increase their vulnerability: only 40 per cent speak English fluently, and nearly half of migrants over 25 have not obtained a high school diploma.⁹

Transit Migration

Honduras serves as a transit route for migrants from Central and South America and, to a lesser extent, migrants from Africa to the US. Honduras lies at a strategic location on the migrant trails from the south for migrants traveling by road. In 2015, almost 20,000 people were recorded passing through Honduras, according to the National Migration Institute (INM). Around 90 per cent of transit migrants are estimated to be Cuban and the rest are migrants from South America, Africa and Asia.

Irregular transit migrants are vulnerable to violence, and run a high risk of being exploited, abused, kidnapped, or trafficked by intercontinental mafias. In 2014, 480 migrants died on their journey through North America, Central America or the Caribbean. Deaths are often caused by the harsh conditions of irregular cross-border transport. Migrants have been squashed in trucks, been dehydrated, suffered heart attacks, and been murdered by organized crime gangs.¹⁰

Inward Migration

Honduras is also a destination country, especially from neighbouring countries such as El Salvador and Nicaragua. In 2015, almost 30,000 people in Honduras were immigrants, 0.35 per cent of the population.¹¹ Immigrants to Honduras mainly come from El Salvador, Nicaragua, the US, Guatemala and Mexico.

⁵ Around 1.5 million Hondurans (nearly 20 per cent of the population) are currently un- or underemployed. The unemployment rate in Honduras in 2013 was 4.3 per cent. Youth are particularly hard-hit, as nearly half of the openly unemployed are under 25 years old. Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, *Encuesta Permanente de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples (EPHPM)* (2014).

⁶ The poverty rate in 2013 was 64 per cent (World Bank).

⁷ FONAMIH, *Migration flow data*.

⁸ At: www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/08/11/5-facts-about-honduras-and-immigration/.

⁹ Red Cross Honduras, *Estudio Documental de Honduras* (2015).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ International Organization for Migration.

Policy and regulatory framework

One of the main migration-related challenges for the Honduran government is the reception and reintegration of the thousands of migrants who return from Mexico and the United States. Given that only 10 per cent of the migrants who set out for the US make it to their destination, there is a significant group of forced or voluntarily returning migrants each year. In 2015, around 75,000 migrants returned to Honduras, of which 15 per cent were women and 20 per cent were underage.¹²

To address this challenge, the government has taken a leadership role in prioritizing migration. The government is supported by a network of civil society organizations and religious groups that seek to facilitate the reintegration of returnees into Honduran society. The key policy documents related to migration are: the Law on Protection of Migrants and their Families (2013), the Migration and Immigration Act of Honduras (2003 and 2005), the Foreign Service Law, and the new Law on Services and Consular Protection Acts (2012). Additionally, Honduras has ratified international instruments for the protection of migrants and their families.

Migration is becoming an increasingly key issue in the region as a whole. Two regional programmes have been put in place in Honduras and neighbouring countries to address outward migration. These two key programmes are the Southern Border Migration Policy Programme¹³ and the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle.

Table 1. Main policies or regulations related to migration in Honduras (non-exhaustive).

Name	Legislation
National immigration legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law on Protection of Migrants and their Families (2013). • Migration and Immigration Act of Honduras (2003 and 2005). • Foreign Service Law and the new Law on Services and Consular Protection Acts (2012). • Law on Foreign Workers (1966).
National smuggling and trafficking legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law against Human Trafficking (2012). • Law on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (2008). • Constitution of the Republic of Honduras (1982). • Legal Code on Childhood and Adolescence (1996). • Criminal Code (1984) and its reform, and Criminal Procedure Code (2002).
Bilateral agreements and relevant initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Central American Visa Convention on the free movement of foreigners in the Republics of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua (CA-4 June 2006).
Regional plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southern Border Migration Policy Programme. • Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle.
International instruments for the protection of migrants and their families (ratified by Honduras)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Declaration of Human Rights. • ILO Convention C100 on Equal Remuneration (ratified on 9 August 1956). • Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (16 June 1965). • American Convention on Human Rights (ratified on 8 September 1977). • International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ratified on 17 February 1981). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Protocol of San Salvador, Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights, ratified on 10 November 2011).

¹² From *Observatorio Consular y Migratorio de Honduras 2015*.

¹³ *El Programa Frontera Sur y la política migratoria en la franja fronteriza*.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified on 10 August 1990). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (ratified on May 8, 2002). • Convention on the Status of Refugees (ratified on 23 March 1992). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (accession 23 March 1992). • International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ratified on 9 August 1995). • International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ratified on 25 August 1997). • ILO Convention C182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (ratified on 25 October 2001). • United Nations Convention against transnational organized crime (ratified on 2 December 2003). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. ○ Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children. • A Framework for Cooperation and Regional Solidarity to Strengthen the International Protection of Refugees, Displaced and Stateless Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action of 3 December 2014).
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Source: Red Cross Honduras, *Estudio Documental de Honduras*, 2015; Government of Honduras, *Public Policy and a National Action Plan in Human Rights* (2016).

The government of Honduras has furthermore created an Under-Secretary of State for Consular Affairs and Migration¹⁴ to centralize responsibility for migrants. He or she is responsible for all laws, policies and actions and other constitutional guarantees related to the human rights and protection of returning migrants, and leads the National Council for the Protection of Honduran Migrants (CONAPROHN), which is composed of government institutions, private sector actors, civil society organizations, churches and NGOs.

KEY NEEDS OF MIGRANTS

The large and complex population of migrants in Honduras – amounting to around 650,000 outward migrants and almost 30,000 inward migrants in 2015 – has a range of needs that require a nuanced response. This section focuses particularly on the needs of migrants who return to Honduras. They are the key group of migrants receiving support in the country, and are the migrant group about whom we were able to find the most information. In the past five years, the number of returning migrants has grown from almost 46,000 in 2010 to around 75,000 in 2015.

Table 2. Summary of dimensions of resilience of returned migrants in Honduras

Dimension of resilience	Summary of needs
<i>Governance/ regulatory systems</i>	• Honduras has regulations to protect migrants and their families, but particularly vulnerable groups need further protection.

¹⁴ Sub Secretaria de Estado de Asuntos Consulares y Migratorios.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migrants that left Honduras because of violence need to be protected against physical threats when they return. • There is a significant need to increase migrants' protection from human rights violations during the migration journey.
Financial capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returned migrants, especially those returning with physical disabilities, have difficulty finding employment. • Although some government programmes are in place (e.g., <i>Con chamba vivis mejor</i>), their scale is currently insufficient.
Physical capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many returning migrants face difficult conditions because they sold their property to migrate in the first place. • Providing physical healthcare is important, since many migrants return in poor health from their journey. • Mental health care is also needed to address the specific issues of returning migrants. • Migrants typically need help to pay for transport to their home town.
Human capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational or other education programmes can improve returning migrants' chances of gaining employment. • Minors need access to safe schools and to be protected from gangs that actively look for new people to recruit, and some need financial support to pursue their education. • Migrants need access to information about their rights and the services and support that are available to them when they return.
Social capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More needs to be done to improve social acceptance of returning migrants. • Social acceptance by host populations can also be an issue for migrants during their journey. • Returning migrants need support to reunite with their families and re-construct their lives.
Environmental capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not applicable.

Governance/regulatory systems

Honduras has regulations to protect migrants and their families, but particularly vulnerable groups need further protection. The legal framework in Honduras could do more to protect minors and older persons, take a stronger gender approach, and address the needs of migrants returning with physical disabilities. Protecting vulnerable groups explicitly in law is seen as particularly important by agencies that work with migrants in Honduras. As one interviewee explained: "Public institutions only do what the law tells them to do, so if not explicit in the law, then they are not accountable for it and will focus their efforts on something else".¹⁵

Migrants that left Honduras because of violence need to be protected from physical threats when they return. A significant group of Honduran migrants left the country because their lives were in danger or they were going to be recruited by a gang. Between 2009 and 2013, requests for asylum increased by 165 per cent. In the first semester of 2014, Hondurans made 3,000 new asylum

¹⁵ Quote from an interview with UNHCR.

requests in other countries.¹⁶ Wilfredo Mendez from the Centre of Investigation and Promotion of Human Rights (CIPRODEH) stated that, while there are no precise numbers on how many people are displaced due to violence, “the fact is that displacement that has been forced by violence in Honduras has increased”.¹⁷ When they return, in most cases only a few months after they left, migrants often have no alternative to returning to their home town. There they are not only exposed to the situation that made them migrate in the first place but are typically in a more vulnerable situation than when they left, as they spent financial resources to migrate and may have suffered traumatic experiences.¹⁸

There is a significant need to increase migrants’ protection against human rights violations during the migration journey. Regulations on human rights violations exist in Honduras but only apply while migrants remain within Honduras’ borders. On the route to North America, migrants depend on the protection of the countries through which they transit. In many cases, their transit is irregular, meaning that they avoid contact with government institutions, and have few opportunities to access legal protection. In addition, when migrants return to Honduras, there are not enough resources to ensure that violations are reported and followed up.

Financial capital

Returning migrants, especially those returning with physical disabilities, have difficulty finding employment. Under- and unemployment are a major driver of migration in Honduras. Although most migrants have professional skills, there is a lack of employment opportunities. Returned migrants often feel that their situation is worse on return than when they left. This is in part because returning migrants are stigmatized. As one focus group participant said: “When you are deported, people think it’s because you are a criminal and they will close any option of employment to you”.¹⁹

Although some government programmes are in place, they are not yet large enough. The Honduran government has launched a number of initiatives to support returning migrants. For example, *Con chamba vivis mejor* is a programme that aims to create 100,000 new jobs by subsidizing half the minimum wage of new employees over the first months of employment. Although these initiatives are positive, their scale is not yet large enough to address the challenges that returning migrants face.²⁰

Physical capital

Many returning migrants face difficult conditions because they sold their property to migrate in the first place. In many cases, migrants sell what little they have to pay for their journey. On their return, many no longer have a home and lack the means to obtain shelter. This situation creates an additional incentive to try to migrate again.

Providing physical healthcare is important, since many migrants return in poor health from their journey. In some cases, migrants return with major injuries after they migrate. Major injuries (loss of limbs or spinal cord injuries) significantly affect their lives and future options.

¹⁶ At: <http://www.departamento19.hn/index.php/portada/69-actualidad/29529-paises-del-triangulo-norte-de-ca-analizan-en-honduras-el-desplazamiento-forzado-como-primer-paso-de-la-migracion.html>.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ CONAMIREDES, focus group with returned migrants.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ At: http://www.sep.gob.hn/sitio/transparencia/descargas/regulacion/PCM/2014/PCM-04-2014_CON_CAHAMBA_VIVIS_MEJOR.pdf.

Mental health care is needed to address the specific issues of returning migrants. One returned migrant explained: “When you come back you feel like you have failed (and that’s when you come back safe). Now, additionally, you come back without an arm, a leg, or both legs or sometimes worse, so you feel not only like you have failed but that now you can’t do anything with your life.”²¹

Migrants typically need help to pay for transport to their home town. Returned migrants are often left at the border with Honduras. From there, they need to find transport to return to their city of origin. The Government of Honduras currently meets part of this need by providing bus tickets to all returning migrants at the Returning Migrant Centre²² in Omoa.

Human capital

Vocational or other education programmes can improve returning migrants’ chances of gaining employment. Returning migrants often face difficulties in accessing training or vocational education, according to focus groups with returning migrants. In addition, vocational programmes are not always sufficiently linked to labour market needs. One of the returning migrants interviewed mentioned that his two sons both have professional degrees but were unable to find jobs related to their education for over three years.

Children need access to safe schools, and to be protected from gangs looking for new people to recruit. Gangs start recruiting schoolchildren to do simple tasks for them from nine years of age. In return, they offer money and promise not to kill their families.²³ The violence present in many areas pushes families with children to leave their towns and sometimes to seek better living conditions and education for their children abroad. When these migrants return to their home towns, they are left in a vulnerable position with very limited options.

Although information is disseminated about the rights, services and support that are available to migrants, more can be done. The government and other organizations are starting to play a more active role in communicating information about the rights, programmes and options available for returned migrants. Nevertheless, in many cases people are still not aware of the support they can get, or are unsure about how they can benefit from it. In addition, more support is required to protect certain rights. For example, although legal action can be taken when migrants’ rights have been violated during their journey, little support is available to assist migrants to launch or pursue legal action.

Social capital

More needs to be done to improve the social acceptance of returning migrants. Returning migrants often feel that they are perceived as criminals, and that as returnees they face social stigma.²⁴ This perception limits their opportunities to find employment, training or education.

Social acceptance by host populations can also be an issue during their journey. Returned migrants explained that “on the route you find good people and bad people. In some towns they will help

²¹ CONAMIREDES, quote from focus group with returned migrants.

²² CAMR, *Centro de Atención al Migrante Retornado*.

²³ If children are successfully recruited by gangs and engage in illegal activities, they become criminals in law. This worsens their situation and future perspectives. There is a need to deepen the analysis of such cases, because such minors should often be treated as victims rather than criminals.

²⁴ Quote from focus group with returned migrants from CIPRODEH and FONAMIH.

you, and give you food and short-term employment to get some money to keep going. In other [towns], people will close their doors in your face and call the police and try to get you deported.”²⁵

Returning migrants need support to reunite with their families and re-construct their lives. Returning migrants do not always know where their families are or if they are still alive. Finding family can be an important reason for staying in the country and families can help their relatives to re-construct a new life. More support should be made available to help find lost family members.²⁶

MAIN RESPONSES

This section focuses on the main responses to assist migrants who have returned to Honduras. Returning migrants are the key group of migrants in the country who receive support. Overall, reception centres are available and provide a wide range of services. However, resources are limited and almost all services are funded by the government, with limited support from international donors. Most services provide immediate assistance to returning migrants. There are few long-term services that help migrants to reintegrate in society, or reduce their need to emigrate again.

Table 3. Summary of services provided to returned migrants in Honduras (non-exhaustive)

	Implementer
Governance/regulatory systems (right to leave/transit/stay)	<p>The Honduran Ministry of Foreign Affairs plays an important role in setting policy and legislation with regard to migrants. In 2013, the government passed a law on protection of migrants and their families.</p> <p>The National Human Rights Commission (CONADEH)²⁷ enables returning migrants to report human rights violations during their migration journey.</p> <p>The Centre for Research and Promotion of Human Rights (CIPRODEH)²⁸ encourages decision makers to adopt policies, strategies, laws and resolutions that contribute to the wellbeing of migrants and their families. CIPRODEH is also developing a diploma on migration and human trafficking for NGOs, CSOs and public officials.^{29,30}</p> <p>The Ministry of Foreign Affairs helps to register every migrant who returns to the country and update data on returning migrants.</p> <p>UNHCR provides technical support on policy issues and training to improve the capacity of other institutions.</p>

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos.

²⁸ Centro de Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos.

²⁹ Public officials include the police, armed forces, National Directorate of Youth and Family, the Secretary of Health, Education, the Chamber of Tourism, the National Migration Institute, the National Forum for Migration in Honduras (FONAMIH), the Ministry of Social Protection, the Quality of Life Association, IOM, the Ministry of Human Mobility, and the Interagency Commission Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Honduras (CICESCT).

³⁰ These activities fall under the Rights of Migrants in Action framework.

Financial	Income generation	<p>The Government of Honduras runs <i>Con chamba vivis mejor</i>, a programme that promotes employment opportunities for all Hondurans.</p> <p>The Vocational Training Institute (INFOP) and the Chamber of Commerce of Tegucigalpa (CCIT) manage ‘A Second Chance for Returned Migrants’, a programme that supports micro-business ventures.</p>
	Safety net	Not applicable.
Physical	Shelter	<p>The Hermanas Scalabrinianas provide lodging, food and basic immediate assistance to migrants who are returning or on the road.</p> <p>The Government of Honduras, IOM, Honduran Red Cross and ICRC have set up three reception centres at Omoa, San Pedro Sula and Comayagua for returned migrants, and a special centre for underage returned migrants at Belen. They offer a broad range of services:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Reception of migrants. (2) Migration registration. (3) Food (water and hot nutritious meals) during their stay (typically one day, but may be longer if needed). (4) Medical services. (5) Transportation to the bus terminal of San Pedro Sula and a ticket to take a bus to his or her hometown. (6) A church or place to pray or meditate. (7) A phone call. (8) Toilets and sanitation facilities. (9) Clothing and footwear. (10) Lodging. (The reception centre in Omoa can accommodate around 100 people, but so far this service has not been needed.) <p>Casa Alianza assists underage returning migrants to reintegrate in school and provides psychological support and counselling.</p> <p>The National Migration Institute provides three reception centres for irregular migrants in San Pedro Sula, Choluteca and Tegucigalpa. Their services are similar to those of other reception centres, but they also try to respect cultural food preferences (e.g., vegetarian diets).</p> <p>The Honduran Red Cross works with local governments, hospitals, hotels and private sector entities that are close to reception centre, to ensure they provide services to migrants, such as health care, lodging and food.</p> <p>Several actors provide support to protect vulnerable returning migrant children, including Save the Children, Plan International, Vision Mundial and UNICEF.</p>
	Food	
	Health	
	WASH	
	Mental health	
Human	Education and vocational training	<p>The National Commission to Support Disabled Returned Migrants (CONAMIREDIS)³¹ provides vocational education to returned migrants who become members of the organization, on how to generate ideas, make a business plan, finance and other subjects.</p> <p>Through the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government of Honduras offers online secondary education to migrants who live outside Honduras. (It is available in all countries with a Honduran embassy.)</p>

³¹ Comisión Nacional de Apoyo al Migrante Retornado con Discapacidad.

	Information on rights	<p>The Government of Honduras and the Honduran Red Cross provide information on migrants' rights.</p> <p>The Government of Honduras, through its embassies, has a call centre (Alho Voz) that provides information on migrants' rights and other services in countries of transit and destination.</p> <p>The National Forum for Migration (FONAMIH) supports institutional strengthening and raises awareness on human rights through its branches and members.</p> <p>CIPRODEH supports irregular migrants in transit from Honduras and provides advice. With financial support from the IFRC,³² CIPRODEH also builds awareness and capacity on human trafficking among students in the cities of La Ceiba, Tela and Roatan. These cities have high rates of human trafficking.³³</p>
	Practical information	The Honduran Red Cross and the ICRC have issued a 'self-care guide' that provides useful information for migrants starting their journey.
Social	Family	The ICRC and the Honduran Red Cross offer national and international phone calls to returning migrants who need to call home. Churches also offer phone calls.
	Society	<p>The Honduran Red Cross raises awareness and promotes acceptance of returned migrants among communities that live near reception centres.</p> <p>The Government of Honduras, through a task force led by the First Lady, has made migration a national priority. To bolster awareness and acceptance of returning migrants across the country, the task force provides news and information about migration.</p>
Environmental		Not applicable.

The key challenge for service providers that support returned migrants in Honduras is the lack of resources to expand their services beyond immediate assistance. Lack of funds limits their ability to address the root causes of migration.

SMART PRACTICES IN HONDURAS

Please refer to the main report.

³² Through the Rights of Migrants in Action project.

³³ These activities falls under the Rights of Migrants in Action framework.