



**GOBIERNO DE
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Working Group on Border Management

Discussion on good practices about migration control in emergency contexts (Covid-19 Pandemic)

Concept Note

November 4, 2021



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Virtual Modality (Zoom Platform)

BACKGROUND

Because of the increase in the number of Covid-19 infections worldwide, in March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the new coronavirus a pandemic.

With this declaration, at least 93 countries closed their borders to the international transit of people (Pedroza, 2020), in order to prevent the spread of this disease. In many countries, measures were implemented to limit the international movement of people, which implied the strengthening of border management and highlighted the challenges in this area and the co-responsible management of countries.

The Covid-19 pandemic is framed in a complex migratory scenario with increasing intra-regional mobility. It is estimated that more than 40 million people have migrated within the region and, above all, this increase is characterized by an increase in Venezuelan migration. In addition, a new migration pattern from Haiti to South and North America has been detected, besides the vulnerabilities associated with the route between Central America and the United States¹.

The mobility restrictions implemented and the measures to control transmission, such as quarantines, tests or vaccination certificates, have not been able to stop regional migration flows, and on the contrary, have encouraged the organization of groups and caravans (Torre-Cantalapiedra, 2021) and with this, a gradual increase in the flows. Therefore, the pandemic highlighted challenges in the governance of regional migration in the management of:

1. **Returns:** Border closures and mobility restriction measures hindered the return of migrants, leaving many people stranded and unable to return to their countries. These processes increase the exposure to different risks for people living temporarily in migration stations or shelters, those waiting outside the consulates of the respective countries or those at the border, waiting to return to their countries.

¹ https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/publication/files/46353/S2000618_es.pdf



2. **Protection of people in mobility:** the volume and complexity of flows in a context of health risks makes it difficult to provide the necessary protections and services to migrants. As a result, a range of situations have not been resolved for migrants. In addition to the humanitarian, social and economic areas, and factors that significantly affect women, these situations also relate to health and habitability issues. Although the pandemic cannot and should not be attributed to the migration or mobility context (Banulescu-Bogdan et al., 2020), evidence has shown that countries are implementing more restrictive migration policies for sanitary and public health reasons (Adamski, 2021; Sanchez and Achilli. 2020).
3. **Management in emergency contexts:** the lack of information and mechanisms to anticipate the management of diseases such as Covid-19 meant that some public services ceased to operate or, in some cases, were managed at the minimum of their operational capacities. Although these difficulties were experienced by the entire population, migrants suffered greater difficulties in accessing virtual or alternative service management mechanisms (Banulescu-Bogdan, et al. 2021).
4. **Humanitarian assistance:** the increase in infections implied challenges in the humanitarian assistance of migrants, some shelters closed their doors due to outbreaks of Covid-19 inside them and some others had to limit their assistance and implemented emerging mechanisms to contain infections (Ramírez-Meda, et al. 2021).

JUSTIFICATION

In view of the continuous migration flows from all latitudes of the continent, as well as the measures implemented by the States to contain the arrival of migrants and control Covid-19 infection rates, it is necessary to evaluate the actions and results that have been obtained. It is also necessary to compile information on the actions taken by each country, and the challenges that border management of migratory flows has entailed, in order to strengthen preparedness and assistance mechanisms.

In the current migratory context, there are massive and organized flows, which are highly exposed to the risk of Covid-19 contagion, which for some States has become an even greater challenge to guarantee the order, security and regularity of the flows.

In this regard, it is essential to build a regional coordination model for migration assistance in emergency situations that allows for the exchange and consolidation of common practices, information flow and inter-institutional coordination.



OBJECTIVES

To establish the bases of the discussion so that from the exchange of experiences and good practices, the management of migratory flows in emergency contexts is strengthened, especially health emergencies, in such a way that a model based on cooperation and co-responsibility between countries can be developed.

To strengthen the management of migratory flows in the current context, the development and consolidation of a regional coordination model for emergency situations with three specific objectives is required:

- To exchange information to identify states of emergency and start with specific action mechanisms. Likewise, the involvement and strengthening of migration control institutions and consular protection networks.
- To disseminate official, assertive, and timely information on the emergency and the specific risks of migration in an emergency context to favor the containment and management of the emergency from the countries of origin.
- To coordinate inter-institutional mechanisms that allow the comprehensive care of migrants in emergency contexts, which implies the participation of specialized and specific government agencies in the assistance to migrant population in such a way that routes can be established for the organization, management and reception of social protections and humanitarian aid between countries, government orders and organized society.

The creation of a coordinated regional model will facilitate the management of flows, as well as the tasks of humanitarian assistance, international protection, and assisted return, as well as solving key public health issues such as: tests for the detection of Covid-19, forms of prevention, and access to vaccination.

METHODOLOGY

Dialogue in virtual format to allow the exchange of good practices and challenges of RCM Member Countries, to facilitate the identification of agreement and common tasks to be developed.

It is intended to be a dialogue with a maximum duration of two and a half hours.



PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

The participation of the following is expected:

- Member Countries:
 - RCM Focal Points
 - Members of the RCM Working Group on Border Management
 - Officials or heads of Covid-19 service areas, areas of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs related to migration, Ministries of the Interior, National Migration Institutes/Directorates, protection and refugee bodies, and any public servant in charge of implementing migration policies, and of providing humanitarian assistance to migratory flows.

RCM Observer Organizations and the Regional Network of Civil Society Organizations for Migration (RNCOM) are welcome.

| AGENDA | | |
|--|--|---------------------------|
| (Virtual Format) | | |
| Time (Mexico Time, GMT-6) | Activity | Facilitator |
| 9:30-9:45 | Welcoming words <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCM Presidency Pro-Tempore • IOM Representative • PAHO Representative | RCM Executive Secretariat |
| 9:45-10:10 | Health systems in the face of Covid-19 in a context of human mobility PAHO-WHO Expert Participation of the Secretary of Health of Mexico Proposal: Challenges against Covid-19 in a context of human mobility | IOM |
| 10:10-10:30 | Challenges of migration governance and border management in the context of Covid-19 IOM Expert | PPT-CRM |
| 10:30-10:50 | Other experiences of humanitarian assistance in the context of Covid-19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RNCOM | IOM |



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|-------------|--|---------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAFAMI | |
| 10:50-11:50 | <p>Exchange of good practices in the processes of humanitarian assistance, international protection, and assisted return in the face of Covid-19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation of Member Countries | IOM |
| 11:50-12:00 | Closing of the workshop | RCM PPT |

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