

AMBULANTES

Overview

Ambulantes is a program that provides information about migration and COVID-19 to internal agricultural migrant workers and their families. The program also aims to support local organizations, specifically in Oaxaca and Veracruz, to build stronger networks and capacity to support workers. This will better position agricultural workers to have safer migration journeys and be less vulnerable to labor exploitation. Ambulantes also aims to capture shifts in labor migration trends and available services, yielding actionable insights that can inform future interventions.



Ambulantes is IREX's first project in Mexico. In adapting to this new context, IREX is building on its previous and current work promoting safer migration through the Walmart Foundation funded Navigator project in Myanmar and Nepal.

Project Objectives

In collaboration with local and national CSO partners, Ambulantes aims to achieve four main objectives:

Objective 1

Migrant workers are better able to protect themselves and their families from COVID-19.

Objective 2

Migrants and their families access and use information about workers' rights and support services.

Objective 3

Build capacity of local organizations and institutions to improve services for migrant workers.

Objective 4

Learning at the community level informs longer term approaches to promote safer migration and reduce risk for workers in export-oriented agriculture in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Key Issues

Throughout the assessment phase, and in speaking with key stakeholders and local organizations, Ambulantes identified the following areas in which internal agricultural migrants face significant obstacles and additional support is needed.

'Informal' Recruitment

83% of internal agricultural labor is conducted without a contract and recruiters and employers typically maintain no official association. Both working hours and wages can vary from agreed upon terms, and living conditions for workers are often extremely poor. Migrants lack information to help avoid and seek redress for these labor violations.

Public Policy

The federal government recently discontinued a large-scale program aimed at supporting internal agricultural migrants. There has been little political will to replace it. Additionally, workplaces lack oversight by health and labor authorities, or efforts to ensure internal agricultural migrants can access health services or social security.

COVID-19 Vaccination

The national vaccination campaign is currently only visiting municipal capitals and large towns. Internal agricultural migrants living far from these areas often lack the economic or physical ability to receive their doses. A strategy is needed both to improve worker's access to the COVID vaccine, and to combat the skepticism that accompanies it among migrant worker communities.

Program Activities



Gap Analysis

To better understand the challenges faced by internal agricultural migrants and the organizations supporting them, IREX conducted desk research and interviewed key stakeholders in organizations operating in Oaxaca, Veracruz and nationally.

IREX also engaged Centro Latinoamericano para el Desarrollo Rural (RIMISP), to conduct a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Analysis, and offer ongoing support to better enable the project team to integrate the perspectives of marginalized communities in project design, project implementation and evaluation.

Because of the lack of information surrounding internal agricultural migrants, the gap analysis will be ongoing. Partner organizations will work with migrants to identify migration patterns and adapt to areas of need.



Information Campaign

Because recruiting is conducted informally and most internal agricultural workers do not have contracts, there are many incidences of labor exploitation.

Ambulantes and its partners are conducting an information campaign, consisting of radio outreach, print and digital resources, and workshops to spread awareness of labor rights and options for legal redress in cases of exploitation.

Because many internal agricultural migrants come from indigenous communities and are not native Spanish-speakers, language barriers can increase potential for exploitation. IREX is working to ensure that all resources are available to harder to reach communities and in indigenous languages as necessary.



COVID-19 Prevention

Internal agricultural migrants have been largely unprotected during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a lack of information on COVID-19 preventative measures among this population, and recruiters and employers do not comply with official health protocols.

Migrants continue to be transported to worksites in crowded buses without PPE and tend to live in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions at worksites.

In the COVID-19 context, these migrants can be stigmatized since they are frequently 'new arrivals' either to worksites or upon return to their communities of origin.

Donor & Partners

We work hand-in-hand with Mexican partners, and with the generous support of Walmart Foundation.

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About IREX

IREX is a global development and education organization. We strive for a more just, prosperous, and inclusive world—where individuals reach their full potential, governments serve their people, and communities thrive. With an annual portfolio of \$100 million and 500 staff worldwide, we work with partners in more than 100 countries in four areas essential to progress: cultivating leaders, empowering youth, strengthening institutions, and increasing access to quality education and information.