

REPUBLIC OF EL SALVADOR |
SECOND PROFILE 2023

MIGRATION
GOVERNANCE
INDICATORS



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This publication was prepared with the financial support of the Building Migration Partnerships programme, which is being executed by the United Nations Network on Migration in El Salvador and funded by the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA). The opinions expressed herein are entirely those of the authors and do not represent the official opinion of the DG INTPA.

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Required citation: International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2024. *Migration Governance Indicators Second Profile 2023 – Republic of El Salvador*. IOM, Geneva.

ISBN 978-92-9268-813-4 (PDF)

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MIGRATION GOVERNANCE INDICATORS



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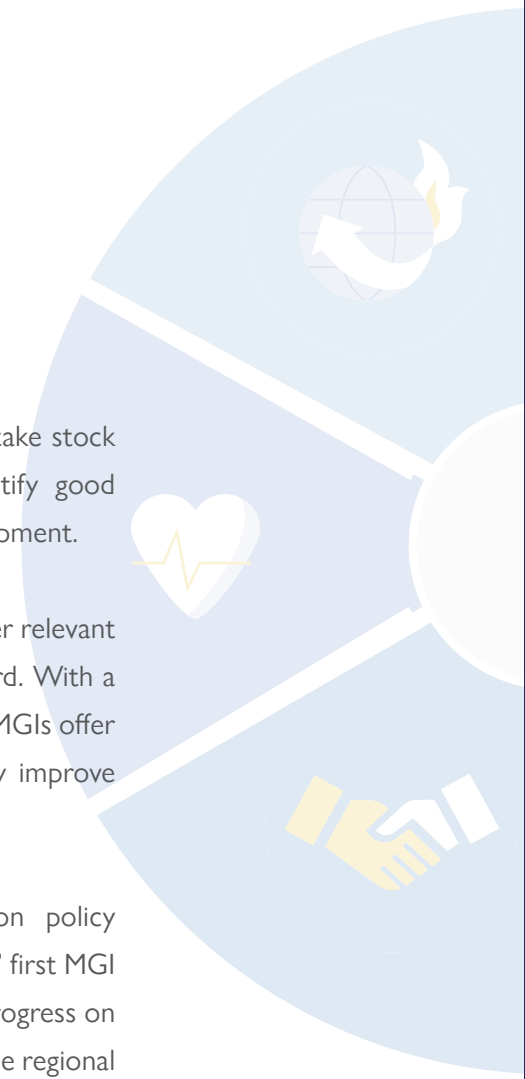
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OBJECTIVES

The MGIs aim to help governments, upon request, take stock of their migration policies and strategies to identify good practices and areas with potential for further development.

The MGIs open dialogues with governments and other relevant stakeholders to identify priorities on the way forward. With a focus on government ownership of the process, the MGIs offer support at the national and local levels to gradually improve migration management systems.

MGI follow-up assessments identify the migration policy developments that have occurred since the countries' first MGI assessments, thus helping governments track their progress on national priorities as well as commitments taken at the regional and international levels.



INTRODUCTION

“ Migration has been part of the human experience throughout history, and we recognize that it is a source of prosperity, innovation and sustainable development in our globalized world, and that these positive impacts can be optimized by improving migration governance.¹

The need to maximize the opportunities and to face the challenges that mobility brings has been recognized with the inclusion of migration in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and with the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The incorporation of target 10.7 into the 2030 Agenda created the need to define “planned and well-managed migration policies”. This is why, in 2015, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) developed the Migration Governance² Framework (MiGOF). This Framework³ offers a concise view of an ideal approach that allows a State to determine what it might need to govern migration well and in a way that suits its circumstances. That same year, IOM in collaboration with Economist Impact developed the Migration Governance Indicators (MGIs), a standard set of almost 100 indicators that help States assess the comprehensiveness of their migration governance structures.

The indicators constitute a starting point to engage governments in a consultative process that allows them to identify areas that are well developed and others that would benefit from further development, and most importantly priorities that are in line with the specific challenges and opportunities that a given country is facing.

The MGIs are characterized by three main fundamental attributes:

1. The MGI process is a **voluntary** exercise: The MGIs are conducted in countries that have requested to be part of the process.
2. The MGIs are **sensitive to national specificities**: The MGIs recognize the different challenges and opportunities of each context, and therefore, do not propose a one-size-fits-all solution, but rather aim to spark a discussion on what well-governed migration can mean.
3. The MGIs constitute a **process**: The MGI process is not a static tool to collect data on countries’ migration frameworks. It is rather the first step of a dynamic exercise that can enable governments to identify areas of their migration policy in need of further development, or that could benefit from capacity-building.

The MGIs recognize that all countries have different realities, challenges and opportunities in relation to migration. Therefore, the MGIs do not rank countries on the design or implementation of their migration policies.

Finally, the MGIs do not measure migration policy outcomes or institutional effectiveness. Instead, they take stock of the migration-related policies in place and operate as a benchmarking framework that provides insights on policy measures that countries can consider as they further progress towards good migration governance.

¹ United Nations, [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#) (A/RES/73/195 of 11 January 2019), paragraph 8.

² “Migration governance” refers to the system of institutions, legal frameworks, mechanisms, and practices aimed at regulating migration and protecting migrants. It is used almost synonymously with the term “migration management”, although the latter is also sometimes used to refer to the narrow act of regulating cross-border movement at the State level.

³ IOM Council, [Migration Governance Framework](#), 106th Session, C/106/40 (4 November 2015), page 1, footnote 1.

We thank the Government of the Republic of El Salvador, through the intermediary of the National Coordination Mechanism on Human Mobility, as well as the government agencies that participated in the preparation of this document, by providing relevant information in order to produce a comprehensive profile that accurately reflects migration governance at the national level. We also acknowledge the contribution of the United Nations Network on Migration and at the same time each agency, fund or programme that promotes safe, orderly and regular migration.

El Salvador's first national-level MGI profile was drawn up in 2018, while in 2022, the preparation of two local MGI profiles began in the municipalities of Ilobasco⁴ and La Palma,⁵ both of which complement this 2023 national profile of El Salvador.

MGI follow-up assessments aim to show the progress that countries have made in their migration governance policies since their first MGI assessment.⁶ This country profile presents a summary of the main changes and achievements that have taken place in the migration governance structures of the Republic of El Salvador (hereinafter referred to as El Salvador), since the first assessment in 2018, as well as the areas with potential for further development, as assessed by the MGIs.⁷

⁴ See the 2023 Migration Governance Indicators Local Profile of Ilobasco, Cabañas (El Salvador) (IOM, 2023a).

⁵ See the 2023 Migration Governance Indicators Local Profile of La Palma, Chalatenango (El Salvador) (IOM, 2023b).

⁶ See the 2018 Migration Governance Profile of the Republic of El Salvador (IOM, 2018).

⁷ The MGI initiative is a policy-benchmarking programme led by IOM and implemented with the support of Economist Impact. Funding is provided by IOM Member States.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

MiGOF

IOM's MiGOF sets out the essential elements to support planned and well-managed migration. It seeks to present, in a consolidated, coherent and comprehensive way, a set of three principles and three objectives which, if respected and fulfilled, would ensure that migration is humane and orderly, and benefits migrants and society.

At the basis of

PRINCIPLES

1. **Adhere** to international standards and fulfil migrants' rights.
2. **Formulate** policy using evidence and a whole-of-government approach.
3. **Engage** with partners to address migration and related issues.

OBJECTIVES

1. **Advance** the socioeconomic well-being of migrants and society.
2. **Effectively address** the mobility dimensions of crises.
3. **Ensure** that migration takes place in a safe, orderly and dignified manner.



MGIs

WHAT THEY ARE

-  A set of indicators that offers insights on policy levers that countries can use to strengthen their migration governance structures
-  A tool that identifies good practices and areas that could be further developed
-  A consultative process that advances dialogues on migration governance by clarifying what "well-governed migration" might look like in the context of SDG target 10.7 and the Global Compact for Migration implementation*

Which support the measurement of

WHAT THEY ARE NOT

-  Not a ranking of countries
-  Not an assessment of policy impacts
-  Not prescriptive



Note: "The Global Compact is framed in a way consistent with target 10.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in which Member States committed to cooperate internationally to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration."

The MGIs consist of almost 100 indicators grouped under the six different dimensions of migration governance that draw upon the MiGOF categories:



MIGRANTS'
RIGHTS
PAGE 19

Indicators in this domain look at the extent to which migrants have access to certain social services such as health, education and social security. They look at family reunification, access to work, and access to residency and citizenship. The international conventions signed and ratified are also included.



WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT
APPROACH
PAGE 22

Indicators in this area assess countries' institutional, legal and regulatory frameworks related to migration policies. This area also looks at the existence of national migration strategies that are in line with development objectives and overseas development efforts, as well as institutional transparency and coherence in relation to migration management.



PARTNERSHIPS
PAGE 24

This category focuses on countries' efforts to cooperate on migration-related issues with other States and relevant non-governmental actors, including civil society organizations and the private sector.



WELL-BEING
OF MIGRANTS
PAGE 26

Indicators in this area assess countries' policies on the recognition of migrants' educational and professional qualifications, provisions regulating student migration and the existence of bilateral labour agreements between countries. Aspects of diaspora engagement in the country of origin and migrant remittances are also under this domain.



MOBILITY DIMENSION
OF CRISES
PAGE 28

This category looks at the type and level of preparedness of countries when they are faced with mobility dimensions of crises. The questions look at the processes in place for nationals and non-nationals in relation to disasters and climate change, including if humanitarian assistance is equally available to migrants as it is to citizens.



SAFE, ORDERLY AND
REGULAR MIGRATION
PAGE 30

This area looks at countries' approach to migration management in terms of border control and enforcement policies, admission criteria for migrants, preparedness and resilience in the case of significant and unexpected migration flows, as well as the fight against trafficking in persons.



SUMMARY

SUMMARY OF UPDATES SINCE 2018

Migrants' rights

All migrants in El Salvador may access the services available within the National Public Health System, irrespective of their migration status. Similarly, the National Health Promotion Policy (2022) promotes non-discrimination by nationality, allowing migrants equal access to health services. Furthermore, the Law on Growing Together for the Comprehensive Protection of Early Childhood, Childhood and Adolescence (Decree No. 431 of 2022) encompasses the rights of all children and adolescents, regardless of nationality.

Further developing and applying the unified diaspora register and implementing agreements with other countries on the portability of social security rights are areas with potential for improvement.

Whole-of-government approach

In 2021, the Vice Ministry of Diaspora and Human Mobility replaced the Vice Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad as the competent body for devising, coordinating and interlinking programmes of care, humanitarian assistance, reintegration and development for Salvadorans in situations of human mobility, irrespective of their migration status, in places of origin, transit, destination and return. Likewise, the Special Law on Migration and Foreign Nationals (2019) updated and consolidated the earlier Law on Migration (1958) and Law on Foreign Nationals (1986). At the time of writing this report, the Legislative Assembly was preparing a new Law on Human Mobility. Additionally, in 2023, the Vice Ministry of Diaspora and Human Mobility created the Institutional Policy on Human Mobility, which aims to establish a framework of attention and protection for the Salvadoran diaspora, Salvadoran individuals in vulnerable conditions in transit abroad, and asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons in the country. The Policy also seeks to articulate the sustainable reintegration of returnees and contribute to the prevention of irregular migration under a human rights approach. The General Directorate of Migration and Foreign Nationals (DGME) is responsible for bringing forward the Comprehensive Policy on Migration and Foreign Nationals and for implementing its action plan.

The following areas are deemed to have potential for further development: creating a coordination mechanism for compiling and harmonizing migration data collected by the various government agencies; and expanding the coverage of embassies, consulates and permanent missions for assisting Salvadoran nationals resident abroad and aligning assistance services and humanitarian management.

Partnerships

El Salvador plays an active part in international agencies and forums, as well as in integration processes, promoting the awareness of issues regarding human mobility and migration. At the bilateral level, a new memorandum of understanding was signed in 2022 designed to ensure that Salvadorans in the United States, the principal host country, are protected against job discrimination. Similarly, the Vice Ministry of Diaspora and Human Mobility gets the diaspora involved in implementing development activities through programmes such as the Diaspora Affairs Attachés in Diplomatic and Consular Missions, the Mentoring Project and other projects implemented with strategic partners, such as the Realize Your Dreams (*Realiza tus sueños*) programme.

Taking the private sector on board for agenda-setting and implementing migration-related programmes and drawing up a regional agreement to promote labour mobility are areas with potential for further development.

Well-being of migrants

Since 2019, El Salvador has been implementing the Programme on Regular, Orderly and Safe Labour Migration, under which temporary work permits are issued for Salvadorans, mainly in the United States and Canada.

Furthermore, in 2022, El Salvador signed a memorandum of understanding with the United States to provide labour rights training for the Salvadoran diaspora.

As of 2022, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been working, in agreement with the National Register of Natural Persons, to promote respect for the rights of migrants abroad by means of service windows available at diplomatic missions to issue the Single Identity Document (*Documento Único de Identidad, DUI*) locally. Along this line, in 2023, the Government inaugurated seven diplomatic and consular representations (DCRs), which also offer on-site passport service. Additionally, the DCRs carry out birth registration abroad, allowing individuals to request birth certificates online. Likewise, the Government inaugurated 37 breastfeeding rooms in DCRs across 17 countries. Furthermore, since 2019, El Salvador has been facilitating the accreditation formalities for studies completed abroad for Salvadorans and foreigners by reforming the Special Regulations on Recruitment.

Mobility dimension of crises

The connection between migration and climate change now features more prominently in the main strategic thrusts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Central American Integration System, of which El Salvador is a member, renewed the Regional Climate Change Strategy (2019), to address internal migration relating to poverty, vulnerability, forced migration and cross-border immigration in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. In addition, in 2021, El Salvador launched the Panorama of Humanitarian Needs (*Panorama de Necesidades Humanitarias*) and the Humanitarian Response Plan (*Plan de Respuesta Humanitaria*) as recovery strategies in times of crisis. Both documents were updated in 2022 and published in 2023. Since 2021, the Government has been providing migration assistance to Salvadorans residing in Europe, Canada, Mexico and the United States through a virtual consulate.

Addressing human mobility in national environmental and climate change policies and promoting the lasting reintegration of migrants are considered as areas with potential for further development.

Safe, orderly and regular migration

The Migration School was set up in 2019 under the Special Law on Migration and Foreign Nationals to provide regular training for employees of the DGME. New returnee assistance programmes were also set up – for example, the project New Opportunities: Reintegration of Returning Migrants into the Production Sector (implemented as of 2018 and rolled over until 2024) and the Training and Business Ventures Project for Returning Migrant Women (2021).⁸

Similarly, El Salvador has had in place the Protocol on Assistance for Women Returnees since 2021, prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women (*Instituto Salvadoreño para el Desarrollo de la Mujer, ISDEMU*), and the Protocol on Assistance and Humanitarian Management for Salvadorans Abroad since 2023. Moreover, through the Special Law on Comprehensive Assistance and Protection for Persons Subject to Forced Internal Displacement (2020), the Directorate for Assistance to Victims began providing psychological, legal and social assistance throughout the country for victims of forced internal displacement.

The following are regarded as areas with potential for development: creating an integrated system for monitoring expired visas, updating the Special Law against Trafficking in Persons (2014) and the National Policy against Trafficking in Persons (2013), and implementing programmes to attract Salvadorans who have emigrated.

⁸ Read more on the project [New Opportunities: Reintegration of Returning Migrants into the Production Sector](#) and the [Training and Business Ventures Project for Returning Migrant Women](#).



CONTEXT

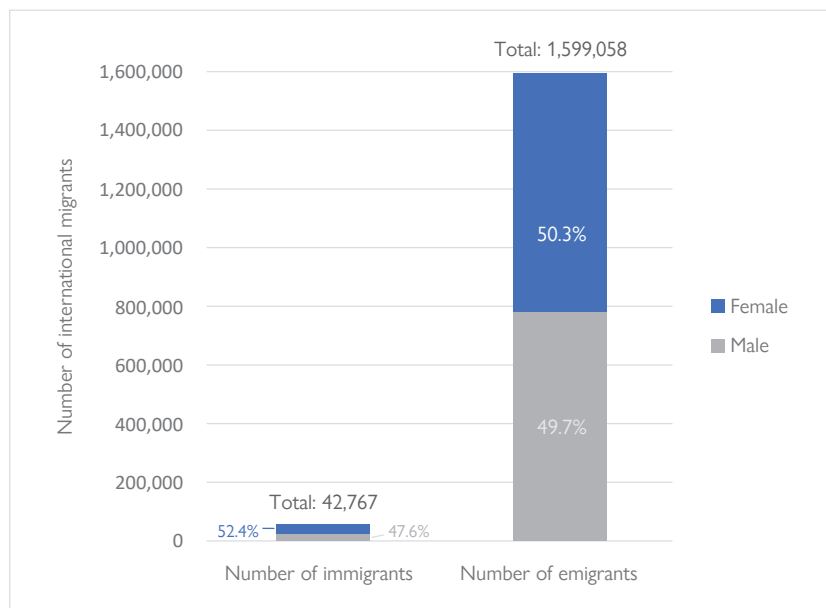
According to estimates by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), emigration in El Salvador totalled 1.5 million people, or about 25 per cent of its population (6.5 million). Estimates from the Pew Research Center nonetheless show that the Salvadoran origin population in the United States of America reached a total of 2.5 million in 2021.⁹ In the same year, there were 1.4 million Salvadoran-born persons residing in the United States, half of whom lacked regular migration status (IOM and BCR, 2022).

Between January and December 2022, return migration was up 70.2 per cent compared to 2021 (USAID and IOM, 2022).¹⁰ At the close of 2022, the number of encounters¹¹ of Salvadorans at the south-eastern border of the United States was down 27 per cent compared to 2021.¹²

In addition, World Bank data show that in 2022, remittances received in El Salvador represented 23.3 per cent of its GDP, a figure very close to the 24.1 per cent of GDP identified by the Central Reserve Bank of El Salvador (Banco Central de Reserva, BCR). Similarly, IOM reports that between January and December 2022, remittances amounted to USD 7,751.1 million, representing an increase of 3.3 per cent, or USD 245.7 million more than in the same period in the prior year.¹³

Meanwhile, immigration as a percentage of the total population has remained below 1 per cent over the past two decades. At mid-2020, DESA data showed that there were 42,767 international migrants (Figure 1) living in El Salvador, representing 0.7 per cent of the country’s overall population. Data broken down by gender show that the proportion of immigrant (52.4%) and emigrant (50.3%) women is slightly higher than the proportion of men. Figure 2 shows that most immigrants in El Salvador are between the ages of 20 and 64 years (78.4%).

Figure 1. International migration to and from El Salvador (at mid-2020), by sex



Source: DESA, *International Migrant Stock 2020* (2020).

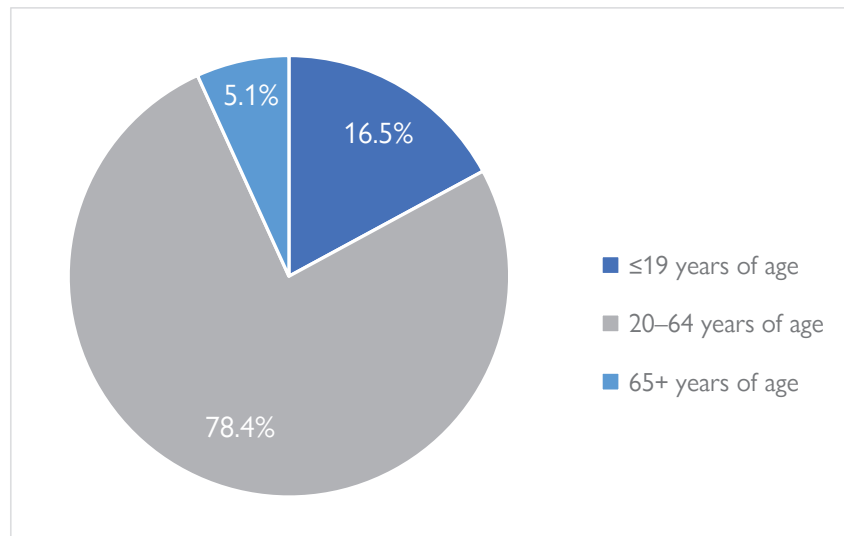
⁹ To know more, read this 2021 article on [facts on Hispanics of Salvadoran origin in the United States](#) on the website of Pew Research Center.

¹⁰ The termination of Title 42 and the implementation of Title 8 entail an immediate expulsion process.

¹¹ The term “border encounters” is used to describe the number of people who come into contact with the United States Customs and Border Protection at the border. One and the same person could therefore have repeat contact in the same month.

¹² To know more, see IOM’s data on [apprehensions at the United States Southwest Land Border](#).

¹³ To know more, see IOM’s data on [remittances in North Central America](#).

Figure 2. Distribution of immigrants by age group in 2020

Source: Migration Data Portal, 2020 data from DESA (2020).



KEY

FINDINGS



1

ADHERE TO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND FULFIL MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

1.1. Migration governance: examples of well-developed areas

Article 33 of El Salvador's Health Code (1988) stipulates that health professionals must “[p]rovide the best possible care to all persons requesting their professional services, being always mindful of their humanity regardless of nationality, religion, race, political creed or social class”.

In 2022, the Ministry of Health (Ministerio de Salud, MINSAL) published the National Health Promotion Policy (Agreement No. 1847), which, while not explicitly mentioning migrants, incorporates the principles of equity, equality and universality, ruling out discrimination on grounds of nationality. Likewise, the Unit for the Right to Health, set up in 2009 and attached to MINSAL, has a Migrant Care Office, which manages, coordinates and facilitates migrant health-care strategies, including the coordination of the institutional network for the care and monitoring of migrant health needs.¹⁴ In addition, Decree No. 38 of 2017 took effect in 2018, creating the Special Health Scheme for Common Risks and Maternity for Salvadorans Living Abroad and Their Beneficiaries, known as the Safe Salvadoran (*Salvadoreño Seguro*) programme. This is one of the 45 services being promoted under the El Salvador+ Services Programme, set up in 2022 and involving 23 government bodies that look after the diaspora in matters such as the safeguarding of rights, health, finance, investment, education and culture, housing, and the obtaining of documents.

The country has legal frameworks that protect women and prohibit all forms of discrimination based on gender, ethnic origin, and nationality and other forms of violence against women – namely, the Special Comprehensive Law for a Life Free of Violence for Women (Decree No. 520 of 2011) and the Law on Equality, Equity and the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (Decree No. 645 of 2011). The following services are now in place to assist migrant women: (a) the Shelter for Returning Migrant Women (Casa de Acogida para Mujeres Migrantes Retornadas),¹⁵ run by the Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women, which has been offering comprehensive and specialized care since 2021, including the provision of food and the handling of cases, for returned migrant women on the move and facing violence, their daughters through all stages of their lives, and their sons up to 11 years of age; and (b) services for returning migrants at the Migrant Care Centre (Gerencia de Atención al Migrante), which provides psychological care for women survivors of gender-based violence, coordinates with other institutions to monitor persons who have been assisted and identifies women in need of protection.

Meanwhile, the remote service line 126 – Your Guide without Borders (*línea 126 Te Orienta sin fronteras*) has been providing guidance, counselling, psychological care and legal advice via a secure and confidential chat facility since 2021. It targets women who are in transit to their country of destination or women who are established in another country and in need of support. Similarly, in 2022, the National Council for Early Childhood, Childhood and Adolescence, in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, set up offices at consulates in the city of Monterrey in Mexico and in McAllen, Texas (United States). The staff assigned to these offices provide specialized attention at the consulates through psychological interventions, case management, counselling and assistance in various areas of coordination relating to early childhood, childhood, adolescence and the family groups concerned.

¹⁴ The network comprises various health-related bodies, such as those concerned with primary care, hospital coordination, mental health, women, children and adolescents, health surveillance, and the like. This institutional network coordinates technical and operational actions in the field of health care for migrants. Details are available in this [article](#) from the Ministry of Health.

¹⁵ The Shelter comprises a multidisciplinary team of lawyers, psychologists, social workers, carers, educators and doctors.

Article 53 of El Salvador's Constitution (1983) states that education and culture are rights inherent to the human person. In addition, Article 56 states that all residents are entitled to free kindergarten, primary and secondary education. All migrants, irrespective of migration status, are therefore entitled to education. The Ministry of Education is charged with maintaining, promoting and generally providing comprehensive education, along with planning the various activities of the national education system.¹⁶

In 2021, and in concert with various institutions and civil society organizations, the Open Arms Comprehensive Plan for the Care and Protection of Returning Migrant Children and Adolescents and Their Families 2021–2023 (*Plan de Atención y Protección Integral a Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes Migrantes Retornados y sus Familias 2021–2023: Brazos Abiertos*) was elaborated and introduced to promote the beneficiaries' lasting reintegration, ensure their safety and afford them priority attention in the form of medical assessment services, psychological first aid, legal representation, immediate protection services, the identification of vulnerability factors and, when their rights are violated, referral to the Protection Boards set up throughout the country.

In 2022, El Salvador enacted Decree No. 431, the Law on Growing Together for the Comprehensive Protection of Early Childhood, Childhood and Adolescence, which aims to ensure the exercise and full enjoyment of the rights of all children and adolescents, including universal access to education, and to facilitate the fulfilment of their duties, without regard to their nationality (Article 1). It further prescribes that the lack of filiation or identity documents on the part of a child or adolescent shall in no case hamper their enrolment, continued education and completion of their studies (Article 49).

El Salvador facilitates access to social protection for permanent residents¹⁷ and some categories of residents with temporary work permits. The Special Law on Migration and Foreign Nationals (2019) stipulates that foreigners living in the country are entitled to access the Salvadoran social security and social assistance system (Article 20) and that they are liable for the payment of tax or social security charges (Article 21). Likewise, El Salvador's Constitution states that social security is a mandatory public service (Article 50), whereas the Social Security Law (1953), while making no mention of migrants, applies to all persons in formal employment who pay contributions to the Salvadoran Social Security Institute. Coverage also includes risks to which workers are exposed by reason of illness, non-occupational accidents, occupational accidents, occupational disease, maternity, disability, old age, death and involuntary unemployment (Article 2).

Permanent residents and applicants for refugee or stateless status enjoy the same entitlement to employment as nationals. Article 11 of the 1972 Labour Code reads, "Foreign nationals shall enjoy the same freedom to work as Salvadorans, with no limitations other than those prescribed by law." According to the Special Law on Migration and Foreign Nationals, all permanent residents may engage in lawful, remunerated or lucrative activities on the same basis as Salvadorans (Articles 151 and 152), while persons applying for refugee or stateless status are issued a provisional identity card free of charge, which enables them to undertake remunerated work on their own account or in an employment relationship (Article 128).

¹⁶ See Council of Ministers Decree No. 24 of 18 April 1989 (Article 38).

¹⁷ According to Article 151 of the Special Law on Migration and Foreign Nationals (2019): "For migration purposes, foreigners who, having fulfilled all the requirements established by law, acquire the right to remain indefinitely in the country and to engage in any lawful activity on an equal footing with Salvadorans, without prejudice to the limitations prescribed in the Constitution of the Republic and other laws."

1.2. Areas with potential for further development

One area with potential for development is the implementation of agreements with other countries on the portability of social security entitlements and acquired benefits, including old-age pensions. In 2008, El Salvador ratified the Ibero-American Multilateral Agreement on Social Security (CMISS), an interregional agreement that allows for the portability of social security between member countries.¹⁸ However, the CMISS is a framework agreement that does not apply automatically to all ratifying States.

Further developing and implementing the unified diaspora register is an area where more progress is possible. Under the Electoral Code (2013), the Supreme Electoral Tribunal must prepare the electoral register containing the particulars of all Salvadoran citizens eligible to vote, including Salvadorans living abroad (Articles 5 and 14). Meanwhile, in 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs set up the Human Mobility Information and Research Department, which, at the time of writing this report, was developing the System of Registration for the Salvadoran Diaspora Worldwide. The system provides for the voluntary online registration of Salvadorans, using their Single Identity Document (DUI), passport or photo ID.

In October 2022, the Legislative Assembly approved the Special Law on the Exercise of the Right to Vote Abroad, which will govern all electoral events from 2024 onward, including presidential elections and elections of deputies to the Legislative Assembly. The Law creates an electronic voting system that will enable Salvadorans with a DUI and an official address abroad to vote electronically, while those with a DUI, passport and official address in El Salvador will be able to vote electronically at a polling station. The Law is designed to guarantee the exercise of the right of Salvadorans abroad to vote and to stand for elections from anywhere in the world (Article 1). Articles 72 and 73 of El Salvador's Constitution lay down the right to vote for Salvadorans over 18 years of age. Article 9 of the Electoral Code incorporates the constitutional provision and prescribes that only Salvadoran citizens may exercise the right to vote, including in local elections.

¹⁸ They include Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Spain, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.



2

FORMULATE POLICY USING EVIDENCE AND WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH

2.1. Migration governance: examples of well-developed areas

The General Directorate of Migration and Foreign Nationals (Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería, DGME) is the body tasked with bringing forward the Comprehensive Policy on Migration and Foreign Nationals¹⁹ and for implementing its action plan. It is also responsible for controlling the entry and exit of nationals and foreigners, issuing travel documents, registering the presence of foreigners in the national territory, and receiving and assisting returning nationals, in coordination with public and private institutions, among other functions.²⁰ Furthermore, the DGME chairs and coordinates the Advisory Council on Migration and Foreign Nationals, set up in 2019, as an advisory body to the Presidency of the Republic for the creation, enactment and implementation of the aforementioned policy, as well as for its subsequent monitoring and follow-up.²¹

In 2019, the Law on Migration (1958) and the Law on Foreign Nationals (1986) were updated and consolidated, giving effect to the Special Law on Migration and Foreign Nationals (2019), which regulates the transit through and stay of foreigners on the national territory. At the time of writing this report, the DGME was spearheading the design of the Comprehensive Policy on Migration and Foreign Nationals envisaged under the Special Law, while the Legislative Assembly was elaborating a new Human Mobility Law.

As of 2021, the Vice Ministry of Diaspora and Human Mobility has been the institution responsible for information and research on human mobility, consular affairs, managing and assisting people in situations of human mobility, and diaspora and development, along with issuing mobility policy regarding the dimensions of the migration cycle of Salvadorans. Similarly, in keeping with the Cuscatlán Plan (2019),²² the Ministry of Culture, jointly with the Salvadoran Diplomatic Corps, develops activities for educational, cultural and artistic advancement in order to promote the cultural identity of Salvadorans abroad.

In 2023, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched the Digital Observatory on Human Mobility, which provides information on the different phases of the migration cycle. Additionally, the Observatory presents data of interest to the Salvadoran diaspora, including information on consular services and programmes offered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs both inside and outside the country.

In 2023, the Vice Ministry of Diaspora and Human Mobility created the Institutional Policy on Human Mobility, which aims to establish a framework for attention and protection for the Salvadoran diaspora, Salvadoran individuals in vulnerable conditions in transit abroad, and asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons in the country. The Policy also seeks to articulate the sustainable reintegration of returnees and contribute to the prevention of irregular migration under a human rights approach. Its pillars are based on consular diplomacy, human mobility support, knowledge management to support decisions, sustainable development and positioning the country's approach to the world. Additionally, it is based on 10 principles and 9 approaches, structured into 13 lines and 31 strategic actions.

¹⁹ The document is under preparation as of September 2023.

²⁰ See the Special Law on Migration and Foreign Nationals (2019).

²¹ The Advisory Council on Migration and Foreign Nationals is the advisory and consultative body to the Office of the President of the Republic and is responsible for the register of foreign nationals.

²² See Culture Sector, Point 4: Culture open to the world.

2.2. Areas with potential for further development

Areas with potential for further development include increasing the number of diplomatic and consular missions²³ so as to continue expanding the assistance given to the diaspora, as well as creating a permanent coordination system to compile and harmonize migration data collected by the various government agencies.²⁴

Moreover, at the time of writing this report, the Vice Ministry of Diaspora and Human Mobility was spearheading the creation of the National Coordination Mechanism on Human Mobility, comprising some 45 government bodies. This mechanism will be tasked with coordinating migration-related initiatives and will undertake the follow-up, monitoring and evaluation of international commitments entered into and of the National Implementation Plan for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The Plan is being drawn up with the support of the United Nations Network on Migration.

²³ El Salvador has 95 diplomatic and consular missions around the world.

²⁴ The Directorate for Human Mobility Analysis and Alliances is developing the information management system, with a view to collecting and harmonizing information on human mobility.



3

ENGAGE WITH PARTNERS TO ADDRESS MIGRATION AND RELATED ISSUES

3.1. Migration governance: examples of well-developed areas

El Salvador is a member of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) or the Puebla Process (1996),²⁵ the Central American Commission of Migration Directors (OCAM) (1990)²⁶ and the Ibero-American Network of Migration Authorities (Red Iberoamericana de Autoridades Migratorias, RIAM) (2012).²⁷ It has also formed part of the Committee on Migration Issues of the Organization of American States since its creation in 2012. Furthermore, the country has been a founding member of the Central American Integration System (Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana, SICA)²⁸ since 1991. SICA meets regularly, at least every two years, to discuss migration issues and regional projects for migrants. El Salvador held the pro tempore presidency for the second half of 2023.

Moreover, since 2020, El Salvador has been part of the Champion countries initiative for the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration. This initiative offers Member States the opportunity to share best practices in pursuit of the goals of the Global Compact.²⁹

El Salvador also participates in negotiations and formal talks on migration with countries of origin or destination, mainly on labour issues with the United States. In 2022, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador, working through its embassy and consulates in the United States, signed a memorandum of understanding with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission of the United States to ensure that Salvadoran citizens are protected against job discrimination in the host country.

Through the intermediary of its embassy in Washington, the Government signed memorandums of understanding with several branches of the United States Department of Labor in 2022. These were the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Wage and Hour Division, and the Workers' Compensation Insurance, as well as with the United States National Labor Relations Board. There is also the agreement between the United States and El Salvador on agricultural and non-agricultural worker programmes (H-2A and H-2B visas), signed in 2020.³⁰

Since 2022, the Vice Ministry of Diaspora and Human Mobility has launched various programmes for the formal involvement of members of the Salvadoran diaspora in agenda-setting and development policy implementation. One example is the Diaspora Affairs Attachés in Diplomatic and Consular Missions project, which aims to identify the needs of the diaspora in order to improve their circumstances. As of September 2023, 18 attachés had been appointed worldwide.³¹ Through the Mentoring Project, entrepreneurs abroad provide virtual advisory services to entrepreneurs in El Salvador.³² The Realize Your Dreams project, being promoted by the Ministry of Education and the United Nations Population Fund jointly with the Salvadoran community abroad, operates a scholarship programme for Salvadoran children and adolescents in vulnerable situations.³³

²⁵ The participants are Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the United States. The RCM addresses several thematic areas, including migration legislation, human rights, regional and extraregional migration flows, return, financial remittances and integration.

²⁶ Formerly known as the Central American Organization for Migration, OCAM focuses on migration legislation, the fight against human trafficking and smuggling, repatriation, labour migration and the training of border personnel, among other things.

²⁷ RIAM is an interregional consultative process covering the Americas and Europe and comprises 18 member countries and regions and 1 observer. The Network strives to strengthen technical cooperation in relation to migration, information-sharing mechanisms and the training of its officers.

²⁸ SICA was established on 13 December 1991 and became formally operational on 1 February 1993. The organization is headquartered in El Salvador.

²⁹ The United Nations Network on Migration, in turn, provides beneficiary Member States with technical assistance and capacity-building tools.

³⁰ The agreement is not available online. For more information, see this [article on the signing of the agreement](#), from the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.

³¹ For more information, see this [article on the launch of the initiative](#), from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

³² For more information, see this [article on the Government of El Salvador promoting the development of MSMEs with the support of the diaspora](#), from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

³³ For more information, see this [article on the Government of El Salvador promoting the initiative](#), from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

3.2. Areas with potential for further development

Getting the private sector involved in agenda-setting and implementing migration-related programmes is an area with potential for further development. The private sector is expected to participate in the National Coordination Mechanism on Human Mobility, which was being set up at the time of drafting this report, through specific consultations or working parties. As mentioned above, this mechanism will serve to coordinate migration efforts, and it comprises some 45 government agencies, including the Public Prosecutor's Office.

Participation in regional agreements promoting labour mobility is an area with potential for development. In 2021, El Salvador signed the Framework Agreement for Promoting the Circulation of Talent in the Ibero-American Area, the aim of which is to promote work placements and internships with companies in order to expand job training opportunities.³⁴ There are as yet no specific agreements to facilitate such mobility however. Similarly, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua signed the Agreement for the Creation of a Single Central American Visa for the Free Movement of Foreigners (2005). While the Agreement does not lay out measures to facilitate labour mobility, it does facilitate movement between countries in the region.

³⁴ The agreement aims to facilitate the mobility of managers and workers, as well as professionals, researchers, investors and entrepreneurs between companies. It states that in order to "formalize" the working relationship, a working agreement must be signed with each company or stakeholder that is part of the programme.



4

ADVANCE THE SOCIOECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF MIGRANTS AND SOCIETY

4.1. Migration governance: examples of well-developed areas

El Salvador has in place formal criteria for the recognition of studies undertaken abroad. The Special Regulations on Recruitment (Decree No. 26 of 1998) regulates the process for recognizing and validating higher education studies done abroad. In 2019, these regulations were reformed (Decree No. 19 of 2019) to simplify the recognition process, allowing for the acceptance of apostilled and certified qualifications instead of the overall certification of grades. The candidate must complete the application form, at no cost, for the recognition of an academic qualification, which must then be submitted to the National Directorate of Higher Education, itself part of the Ministry of Education. In addition, since 1995, El Salvador has had an agreement with Spain for mutually recognizing the validity of academic degrees, and this enables citizens to practice their professions in both signatory countries.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security are tasked with managing and monitoring programmes on employability abroad. Since 2019, El Salvador has been implementing the Programme on Regular, Orderly and Safe Labour Migration (Labour Mobility Programme), the purpose of which is to coordinate the management of temporary job opportunities for Salvadorans abroad, while also protecting their labour rights, principally in Canada and the United States.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinates with various government agencies to identify companies abroad, invite Salvadorans to submit applications for temporary employment, facilitate the recruitment and selection of candidates, monitor and accompany temporary workers in the country of destination, and also link these workers to reintegration programmes. At the time of writing this report, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security was negotiating new labour migration programmes with Czechia, Italy and Spain.

El Salvador has developed mechanisms to safeguard the rights of its citizens working abroad. A number of initiatives have been launched as part of implementing the Labour Mobility Programme, including the Power Up strategy, created in 2023 and comprising (a) the service window for matters relating to the Labour Mobility Programme; (b) the guidance and training initiative for temporary workers; (c) the fraud and scam prevention campaign; (d) the labour monitoring and liaison system: integration, protection and return; (e) Always Close (*Siempre Cerca*): care and psychosocial support for families of temporary workers (children and partners); and (f) productive investments and remittances.

Since 2022, and in agreement with the National Registry of Natural Persons, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has operated service windows at diplomatic and consular representations (DCRs) for issuing the Single Identity Document locally, in order to identify Salvadorans living abroad and help ensure that their rights are respected. Accordingly, in 2023, the Government opened seven DCRs, which offer on-site passport service. The DCRs also carry out birth registrations abroad through the Family Registration and Vital Statistics System (Sistema de Registros de Estados Vitales y Familiares, REVFA), administered by the National Registry of Natural Persons. REVFA conducts registrations electronically and forwards them directly to the Mayor's Office of San Salvador for registration, allowing individuals to request birth certificates through the [simple.sv](https://simple.gub.ve) platform.³⁵ Additionally, as part of the strategy to assist the Salvadoran diaspora, 37 breastfeeding rooms have been inaugurated in the following DCRs: Argentina, Australia, Belize, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, the Holy See, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Portugal, Spain, the United States and Uruguay. Furthermore, the memorandum of understanding signed in 2022

³⁵ Visit the [simple.sv](https://simple.gub.ve) platform to know more.

between El Salvador's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission stipulates that both countries will work to provide information, guidance, education and training to Salvadorans in the United States regarding the exercise of their labour rights.

The country plays an active part in promoting and creating formal remittance systems, and it promotes the financial inclusion of migrants and their families. The Transfer365 system³⁶ was created in June 2021 and enables Salvadorans abroad to conduct banking transactions in any of the country's banks via an application. El Salvador passed the Bitcoin Law (Decree No. 57 of 2021), opening the way for remittances to be received from abroad via the Chivo Wallet,³⁷ created by the Salvadoran Government.

4.2. Areas with potential for further development

El Salvador is not yet participating in any international schemes with qualification frameworks. The country has bilateral agreements for the recognition of studies – for example, with the Dominican Republic, Mexico and the United States – and is currently negotiating agreements with the Russian Federation and Czechia. Expanding recognition agreements is also deemed an area with potential for further development.

Developing formal measures to promote the ethical recruitment of migrant workers is an area with potential for improvement. Some related measures have been implemented in recent years – for example, the participation in July 2020 of officers from the National Employment Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security in virtual workshops to identify the general features of the International Recruitment Integrity System, a global IOM initiative designed to promote the ethical recruitment of migrants.

Reinforcing the Labour Mobility Programme and the Consular Network to provide timely responses to the challenges posed by migration is another area with potential for development.

Uganda does not have any programmes in place to promote the financial inclusion of migrants and their families. The National Financial Inclusion Strategy 2017–2022 (2017), developed by the Bank of Uganda and the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, aims to promote financial inclusion for all Ugandans. However, there is no coverage of migrants, nor is there evidence of migrants accessing the programmes envisaged in the Strategy. Nonetheless, refugees are able to open bank accounts.

³⁶ Read more on the [Transfer365](#) system.

³⁷ According to the Survey of the Salvadoran Population in the United States published by IOM and the Central Reserve Bank (2022), among the means of sending family remittances, most people (78.3%) use international remittance companies such as MoneyGram, Ria Money Transfer and TransNetwork; 15.8 per cent use banks; 9.5 per cent use digital channels such as Remitly, PayPal, Kash and Wise; and 1.9 per cent use the Chivo Wallet.



5

EFFECTIVELY ADDRESS THE MOBILITY DIMENSIONS OF CRISES

5.1. Migration governance: examples of well-developed areas

El Salvador has a national disaster risk reduction strategy. The Law on Civil Protection and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (2005) created the National System for Civil Protection and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, an interrelated set of public and private institutions responsible for formulating and implementing the respective workplans for civil protection, disaster prevention, disaster risk management and impact mitigation.

The National Commission for Civil Protection and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (Comisión Nacional de Protección Civil, Prevención y Mitigación de Desastres, CNPC) is chaired by the Minister of the Interior and Territorial Development and tasked with, among other things, drawing up the 2017–2023 National Policy for Civil Protection and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (2017), overseeing its implementation and prescribing appropriate measures in the event of disasters and national emergencies.

The General Directorate of Civil Protection and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, which reports hierarchically and functionally to the Ministry of the Interior and Territorial Development, is charged with preparing national contingency plans and submitting them to CNPC for approval. The National Policy for Civil Protection and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation is based on comprehensive disaster risk management and inspired by the Sendai Framework and the Central American Policy on Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management.

El Salvador participates in regional frameworks containing specific provisions on internal or cross-border movements caused by climate change, environmental degradation and disasters. Since 1991, El Salvador has been a member of the Central American Integration System (SICA), of which the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (Comisión Centroamericana de Ambiente y Desarrollo, CCAD) is a part.³⁸ In 2019, SICA and CCAD published the updated Regional Climate Change Strategy (ERCC) and its 2018–2022 Action Plan, which address internal migration linked to poverty and vulnerability, along with cross-border migration in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

In the near term, the ERCC aims to streamline and coordinate migration controls and sets the following specific task: “Diagnose and analyse, at the regional level, the linkages between climate variability and change and migration within and outside the region, including socioeconomic and environmental impacts.” Similarly, El Salvador signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1995, and in 2022, the United Nations Climate and Clean Air Coalition and CCAD took part in discussions to move forward with programmes on climate change, air quality and health.

The Consular Network provides assistance in crisis situations to Salvadorans abroad, including services for persons deprived of their liberty (legal assistance), the handling of support claims, locating Salvadorans, repatriating mortal remains, repatriating persons in vulnerable situations and managing the issuance of passports for children.

In 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs set up a virtual consulate to provide assistance, guidance and information remotely to Salvadorans living in Canada, Mexico and the United States via dedicated telephone lines and a WhatsApp service. At the time of writing this report, the virtual consulate is also available

³⁸ SICA and CCAD member countries are Belize, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

in some European countries, including France, Germany and Spain. In parallel, Salvadoran consulates in the United States used social networks to carry out promotional work to facilitate and encourage access to the COVID-19 vaccine for Salvadorans.

In 2023, the Humanitarian Country Team³⁹ led by the General Directorate of Civil Protection and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, together with the United Nations System in El Salvador, updated and published the Panorama of Humanitarian Needs and the Humanitarian Response Plan (both initially launched in 2021). They identify the parts of the country with people in vulnerable situations so as to protect their lives, enhance their resilience and coordinate the response to emergencies by national institutions and organizations with a humanitarian mandate.

The Panorama of Humanitarian Needs recognizes the vulnerability of children, adolescents, women (especially migrants and refugees), persons with disabilities, Indigenous people, persons at risk of exclusion and people in situations of human mobility (internally displaced persons, asylum-seekers, refugees and returnees). Its response focuses on comprehensive care for displaced persons on the move, including migrants in transit requiring international protection, as well as returnees.

5.2. Areas with potential for further development

Taking human mobility into account in national environmental and climate change policies is an area with potential for further development. The National Climate Change Plan (2015) identifies displacement or forced migration of communities and human settlements as a possible consequence of climate change phenomena. Appropriate measures include formulating and implementing urban development criteria in compact city planning to reduce land use change and displacement times. The Plan offers no details as to the implementation however.

Under the National Policy for Civil Protection, the National Plan for Civil Protection and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (2018) has so far still not addressed migration or post-disaster recovery. Work was proceeding on the latter topic at the time of writing this report.

The Special Law on Migration and Foreign Nationals (2019) makes no mention of a post-crisis recovery plan or strategies for lasting reintegration. The General Directorate of Civil Protection and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation nonetheless coordinates with community leaders, the National Civil Police, the Armed Forces and the Corps of Metropolitan Agents to protect property and provide economic support to people who have been displaced by disaster.

³⁹ The Humanitarian Country Team comprises United Nations agencies, Salvadoran non-governmental organizations, international cooperation agencies, the Red Cross Movement and Salvadoran government institutions.



6

ENSURE THAT MIGRATION TAKES PLACE IN A SAFE, ORDERLY AND REGULAR MANNER

6.1. Migration governance: examples of well-developed areas

The General Directorate of Migration and Foreign Nationals (DGME), which reports to the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, is the body tasked with, among other things, carrying out migration control within the national territory; effectively controlling entries and exits of nationals to and from the country; permitting or denying the entry, transit, stay or departure of foreign nationals; effecting immigration checks on means of transport, supported by the National Civil Police, in order to verify the immigration status of passengers; and adopting and implementing the necessary measures to combat irregular migration, among other functions (see Special Law on Migration and Foreign Nationals (2019), Article 13).

DGME staff receive specific and regular training in migration through the Migration School, created under Article 319 of the Special Law on Migration and Foreign Nationals. The Migration School provides inductions for new employees and continuous training for all staff. The training not only focuses on reinforcing knowledge of migration laws and regulations but also includes multidisciplinary topics such as caring for women at risk and children.

Similarly, in 2021, the Vice Ministry of Diaspora and Human Mobility and the Specialized Institute of Higher Education for Diplomatic Training launched a diploma course meant for El Salvador's Consular Network in Mexico and the United States, and also for the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' virtual consulate, to improve skills and capacities for the care and protection of Salvadorans resident in or transiting Mexico and the United States.

El Salvador has government programmes to facilitate the reintegration of migrants. Through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government of El Salvador has set as one of its strategic priorities for the period 2019–2024 the provision of assistance for returning migrants and their reintegration, in accordance with the Cuscatlán Plan (2019).⁴⁰

Working through the Migrant Care Centre,⁴¹ the DGME is the agency responsible for coordinating with different institutions the process of receiving and assisting returning Salvadorans under the Welcome Home Programme (*Programa Bienvenido a Casa*) introduced in 1998. The Programme focuses on repatriating and receiving returnees, and it covers things like the cost of transport, food and basic hygiene items, primary health care and emergency psychological care, refreshments, and telephone calls.

In addition, reintegration programmes have been implemented, such as El Salvador Is Your Home (*El Salvador es tu Casa*), which was initially launched in 2017, then renamed the Transforming Lives (*Transformando Vidas*) programme in 2021. It operates 13 service windows for assisting returning migrants (*ventanillas de atención a personas migrantes retornadas*), of which 6 provide specialized services for women. These service windows provide psychosocial assistance as well as academic, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

⁴⁰ The foreign policy aspect of the Cuscatlán Plan is designed to improve the capacity and quality of assistance afforded to Salvadoran migrants, pursuant to its migration policies, including programmes for specialized attention to vulnerable groups, LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons), Indigenous people and people of African origin.

⁴¹ In addition to the services provided by the Centre, returning Salvadoran migrants are able to access various forms of assistance, such as the inter-agency referral and attention pathway (*ruta de derivación y atención interinstitucional*) – comprised of the Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women, which provides psychological and crisis care for women; the Ministry of Health (medical attention); the system for the protection of children and adolescents (the Salvadoran Institute for the Comprehensive Development of Children and Adolescents and the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic); the Offices for Assistance to Victims (services for victims of violence and crime); the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (labour integration opportunities); the National Register of Natural Persons (obtaining or renewing the Single Identity Document); the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (linking programmes and services with training and employment); and the National Civil Police (security and guidance for the filing of complaints).

The Training and Business Ventures Project for Returning Migrant Women (2021) provides training to promote tourism-related business ventures,⁴² while the project New Opportunities: Reintegration of Returning Migrants into the Production Sector (*Nuevas Oportunidades: Reintegración productiva de migrantes retornados*), launched in 2018 and rolled over until 2024, promotes opportunities for re-entry into the job market.⁴³

El Salvador also has the Protocol on Assistance for Women Returnees (2021); the Protocol on Detection, Assistance and Referrals of Salvadoran and Foreign Women Victims of Gender-based Violence (2022); the Protocol on Protection and Assistance for Salvadoran Migrant Children and Adolescents (2017); and the Protocol on Assistance and Humanitarian Management for Salvadorans Abroad (2023). The first was created “to boost services and assistance to Salvadoran women returnees, providing specialized assistance with trained personnel, guided by the principles of gender sensitivity, human rights and inclusion”.⁴⁴ The second provides a pathway for intervening and delivering services to users, while ensuring that such actions take place from a gender and human rights perspective. The third has been implemented since 2018 by the National Council for Early Childhood, Childhood and Adolescence, and it lays down inter-agency procedures for receiving, protecting and assisting migrant children and adolescents in the process of returning home, or foreign nationals in situations of vulnerability. At the time of drafting this report, and pursuant to the commitments made under the Open Arms Comprehensive Plan (2021), this Protocol was being updated so as to recognize and ratify the competences and responsibilities of each of the agencies involved in the return process. Finally, the fourth protocol includes three actions related to assistance: improving the capacity and quality of assistance in diplomatic and consular offices; ensuring political, economic, social and cultural inclusion; and creating the conditions to address current and future demand.

In addition, the Centre for Child, Adolescent and Family Care is implementing the Plan for the Comprehensive Care of Children and Adolescents Returned to their Home Environment, from a Perspective of Human Rights, Gender Sensitivity and Inclusion (2016). The following projects are offshoots of it: putting the families of returned migrant children and adolescents in touch with wage-earning opportunities (2023)⁴⁵ and the monitoring of returned migrant children and adolescents and greater efforts to reintegrate their families on a lasting basis (Republic of El Salvador, 2023a). The aim is to ensure that returning migrant children and adolescents and their families have options for earning a livelihood, which will aid their reintegration. Another aim is to prevent irregular migration by attending to and monitoring each case in a timely manner so that rights are protected.

In line with the above programmes, El Salvador has policies and procedures to identify migrants in vulnerable situations and provide assistance and protection services. The Directorate for Assistance to Victims (DAV),⁴⁶ which forms part of the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, coordinates with various institutions to help persons who have been victims of crime, including migrants. The Special Law on Comprehensive Assistance and Protection for Persons Subject to Forced Internal Displacement (2020) empowers the DAV in matters of assistance for victims of forced displacement.

In 2018, the Government published the Roadmap for Inter-agency Coordination for Comprehensive Assistance and Protection for Victims of Internal Displacement Caused by Violence, which includes procedures for identifying and assisting victims of human trafficking, who, once identified, are afforded care and protection and given the option of residing temporarily in El Salvador under the Special Law on Migration and Foreign Nationals.

⁴² The Training and Business Ventures Project aims to train Salvadoran women returnees in the field of tourism and in the repair and manufacture of surfboards.

⁴³ The programme is an initiative supported by the Green Leaves Education Foundation and is part of Swisscontact, co-funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

⁴⁴ Read more on the Government of El Salvador presenting a protocol and service windows for returned migrant women in this [article](#) from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁴⁵ Read more on the signing of an agreement for a project for returned children and adolescents in this [article](#) from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁴⁶ The Directorate for Assistance to Victims was created in 2011 to support victims of violence. Since 2020, it has been empowered to look after victims of forced displacement and provides psychological, legal and social assistance throughout the country. Its offices are located in national hospitals and some municipalities.

In the same context, the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic set up the Internal Forced Displacement Unit in 2020 to provide comprehensive attention to Salvadorans and foreign nationals in situations of mobility. The service is multidisciplinary in nature and takes a humanitarian and psychosocial approach. Its aim is to find lasting solutions for the population, to be managed jointly by government agencies, civil society and the United Nations.

The Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women (ISDEMU) has programmes that support and assist returning migrant women. Since 2021, the ISDEMU Shelter (Casa de Acogida) has been helping migrant women who are unable to return to their communities owing to the risk involved, together with their children up to 11 years of age. Moreover, the specialized care centres of Ciudad Mujer⁴⁷ guarantee comprehensive care for women returnees, including sexual and reproductive health care, economic autonomy, attention in cases of gender-based violence and care of their children. Likewise, the service known as line 126 – Your Guide without Borders has been operating since 2022. It is an IT tool that provides counselling, psychological support and legal advice via a secure and confidential chat facility. The target demographic are women who are in transit to their country of destination or women who have settled in another country and are in need of support.

6.2. Areas with potential for further development

El Salvador has a formal mixed system of application for certain types of visas (consulted visa or special entry permit) before arrival in the country. The applicant may do so in person at the DGME, through the mediation of a legal representative in El Salvador, or online, by submitting certified or apostilled and translated documents. Citizens of visa-exempt countries arriving by air or sea must obtain a tourist card (*Tarjeta Migratoria de Ingreso*).⁴⁸

The validity of visas is checked at border posts (air, sea and land), and it is therefore thought that designing an integrated system for the monitoring of expired visas is an area with potential for development. Article 55 of the Special Law on Migration and Foreign Nationals requires the DGME to keep a record of restrictions on entries, exits or the issuance of passports, which must be updated by the judicial or administrative authorities. Expired residencies incur fines ranging from 20 per cent of the minimum monthly wage to four minimum monthly wages.

Although El Salvador has a strategy to combat human trafficking through the Special Law against Trafficking in Persons (2014) and the National Policy against Trafficking in Persons (2013), the updating of these frameworks is an area with potential for improvement. The Special Law against Trafficking in Persons established the National Council against Trafficking in Persons, an inter-agency body responsible for formulating, monitoring, coordinating and evaluating the National Policy against Trafficking in Persons.⁴⁹ This Law also created the National Information System on Trafficking in Persons, which is an instrument for “collecting, processing and analysing statistical and scientific information on the features and scale of internal and external trafficking in El Salvador, its causes and effects”. However, the data in the system are not up to date, and the latest addition dates back to 2015. Furthermore, El Salvador is still lacking a national action plan for executing the aforementioned Policy.

Implementing a formal government programme designed to attract Salvadorans back to the country is an area with potential for development. The country offers some tax benefits to returning Salvadorans. Under Article 31 of the Law on Incoming Travellers’ Luggage (1993), household and personal effects worth up to

⁴⁷ There are currently six specialized care centres of Ciudad Mujer in operation (Lourdes Colón, Morazán, San Martín, San Miguel, Santa Ana and Usulután).

⁴⁸ At the time of drafting this report, the Government was planning to abolish this requirement.

⁴⁹ The National Council against Trafficking in Persons is chaired by the head of the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and includes representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Public Prosecutor’s Office, the Office of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Social Inclusion, the Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women and the National Council for Children and Adolescents.

USD 15,000 are exempt from duties and taxes for Salvadorans who have lived abroad for at least three years and are returning home permanently. In 2023, the Legislative Assembly approved the Special Transitory Law of Incentives and Preferential Treatments Aimed at Favouring the Repatriation of Salvadorans. This Law establishes the temporary benefits granted to Salvadoran citizens residing abroad who wish to return to the country, regardless of the time spent abroad, their migratory status or the destination community in which they have resided.

After the MGI assessment

IOM would like to thank the Government of El Salvador for its engagement in this process. IOM hopes that the results of this assessment can feed into the Government's strengthening of its migration governance. After an MGI assessment, the following are recommended:



The MGI report can be used to inform policy work with the support of IOM (if desired).



The findings can feed into capacity-building activities, which may connect to other IOM initiatives.



A follow-up assessment can be conducted after three years to verify progress.



Governments can exchange best practices and innovative solutions with other governments that have conducted the MGI process.



ANNEX

The MGI process



1

Launch of the MGI process

The first step of the process is to explain what the MGIs entail to key government officials, in order to ensure full understanding of the project and complete buy-in.



2

Data collection

The second step of the process is to start the collection and analysis of data, based on about 100 indicators grounded in the six dimensions of the MiGOF. A migration governance profile based on the analysis of the findings is then drafted and shared with the government counterparts.



3

Interministerial consultation

The third step of the process is to convene an interministerial consultation where all relevant ministries and other stakeholders discuss the good practices and main areas that could be developed further as identified in the draft migration governance profile, as well as priorities on the way forward. It is also an opportunity for them to comment and provide suggestions on the draft profile.



4

Publication of the report on the Global Migration Data Portal

After the migration governance profiles are finalized and vetted by government counterparts, they are published on the [Migration Data Portal](#) and the [IOM Publications Platform](#).



KEY

SOURCES*

* All hyperlinks were working at the time of writing this report.

Central American Integration System (Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana, SICA)

- 2005 [Convenio de creación de la visa única centroamericana para la libre movilidad de extranjeros entre las Repúblicas de El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras y Nicaragua](#) (Agreement for the Creation of a Single Central American Visa for the Free Movement of Foreigners between the Republics of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua).
- 2014 [Estatuto constitutivo del Comité Consultivo del Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana](#) (Constitutive statute of the Consultative Committee of the Central American Integration System).
- 2019 [Estrategia Regional de Cambio Climático Actualizada: Plan de Acción 2018–2022](#) (Updated Regional Climate Change Strategy: Action Plan).
- n.d. [Convenio Centroamericano de libre movilidad \(CA-4\)](#) (Central American agreement on free mobility).

Central Reserve Bank of El Salvador (Banco Central de Reserva, BCR)

- 2018 [Encuesta Nacional de acceso a servicios financieros en El Salvador 2016](#) (National Survey of Access and Use of Financial Products and Services in El Salvador).
- 2019 [NRP-19: normas técnicas para el registro, obligaciones y funcionamiento de entidades que realizan operaciones de envío o recepción de dinero a través de subagentes o administradores de subagentes](#) (Technical standards for the registration, obligations and operation of entities that carry out operations of sending or receiving money through subagents or administrators of subagents).
- 2021 [Política Nacional de Inclusión Financiera para El Salvador \(PNIF-SLV\)](#) (National Financial Inclusion Policy).
- 2022a [Gobierno de El Salvador realiza lanzamiento de la Estrategia Nacional de Educación Financiera](#) (Government of El Salvador launches the National Financial Education Strategy). 24 November.
- 2022b [NASF-11: normas técnicas para realizar operaciones y prestar servicios por medio de corresponsales financieros físicos, digitales y móviles, y de administradores de corresponsales financieros](#) (Technical standards for conducting operations and providing services through physical, digital and mobile financial correspondents, and financial correspondent administrators).

General Directorate of Civil Protection and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (Dirección General de Protección Civil, Prevención y Mitigación de Desastres, DGPC)

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- 2012 [Acuerdo No. 1889: Política Nacional de Participación Social en Salud](#) (National Policy for Social Participation in Health).
- 2018 [Acuerdo No. 1644: Política Nacional de Salud Mental](#) (National Mental Health Policy).
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- 1996 [Decreto No. 917: Ley General de Educación](#) (General Education Law).
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