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# REPORT OF THE MIRPS WORKING GROUP ON LABOR MARKET ACCESS AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

REPORT SUBMITTED BY THE WORKING GROUP LEAD  
COUNTRY - 2021



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**Comprehensive Regional  
Protection and Solutions Framework**



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Working Group on Labor Market Access and Vocational Training, integrated by Belize,<sup>1</sup> Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama, met on June 22, July 9, July 13 and July 15, 2021. The Working Group sessions were held during the term of the 2021 Pro-Tempore Presidency of the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS), held by the Republic of Guatemala.

The Working Group was supported by the Technical Secretariat of the MIRPS, made up of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Organization of American States (OAS), the panel of experts composed by representatives of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Republic of Costa Rica, as the lead country of the Working Group.

Four thematic sessions were held to address various topics such as legal frameworks, recognition of studies and educational trajectories, recognition of qualifications and competencies of job profiles, as well as entrepreneurship and social business development. The Working Group successfully completed its work in a constructive and efficient manner, making the best use of the time and technology available in the four virtual sessions, using the Zoom platform.

The Republic of Costa Rica, through the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, chaired each of the sessions as the lead country of this working group. This document is the report prepared by the lead country of the Working Group, addressed to the Pro Tempore Presidency of the MIRPS, and includes the main elements of the discussion, including the recommendations of the Working Group.

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<sup>1</sup> Belize participated as an Observer State



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## 2. THEMATIC SESSIONS

The Pro Tempore Presidency of the MIRPS outlined among the priorities for 2021 the strengthening of local integration of refugees, considering issues such as documentation, access to jobs, access to programs, skills certification, training, among others. In this context, the Working Group on Labor Market Access and Vocational Training aimed to share experiences and knowledge, identify joint solutions and develop practical recommendations to strengthen protection responses and solutions at the national level, through bilateral cooperation and cross-country peer to peer learning.

The Working Group held four thematic sessions between June and July. On June 22, 2021, the session addressed the administrative framework for the facilitation of labor integration and vocational training; on July 9, 2021, the session reviewed the recognition of studies, degrees, diplomas and prior knowledge and educational trajectories, transitions, flexibilization and strengthening of education; on July 13, 2021, the recognition of qualifications and competencies to create job profiles was analyzed; and on July 15, 2021, the options for the contribution of displaced populations to local development were reviewed, from an integral perspective that promotes the creation of livelihoods linked with the private sector and host communities. These four sessions lasted a total of almost 8 hours, with the participation of 195 people from the National Technical Teams.



### 3. COVID-19 CONTEXT

The work of the Working Group is framed within the regional context of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which initially involved the closing of borders and then a series of measures aimed at economic recovery and the recovery of daily life. During this time, the MIRPS countries adopted responses aimed at the forcibly displaced population, such as access to medical assistance, provision of communications and telephone support lines, extension of ID cards and work permits, use of technology for applications, certifications and travel documents, and the suspension of deadlines for filing appeals and incidents.

In addition to being a public health challenge, the COVID-19 represents a labor and social challenge insofar as forcibly displaced persons lost their jobs, their income, were victims of food insecurity and reported an increase in acts of xenophobia. This makes them more vulnerable to violence, abuse, discrimination and exacerbates the loss of opportunities to participate in local development.

In this context, the MIRPS faces the challenge of promoting a regional strategy to recover and generate jobs through practical mechanisms for job placement and vocational training to achieve the integration of forcibly displaced persons into the labor market and host communities.



## 4. THEMATIC SESSIONS ANALYSIS

In the thematic session of June 22, 2021, 59 people attended, and reviewed the legal frameworks for job placement and vocational training in the MIRPS. The representatives of the MIRPS countries presented the public policies that provide access to employment, entrepreneurship and vocational training. In almost all the countries of the region, joint actions are implemented between governments and the private sector for labor market insertion. This is the case of the "Programa Intégrate al Empleo" ("Integrate to work Program") in Costa Rica, the "Programa de Integración en México" ("Integration Program" in Mexico) and in Panama, the "Programa Talento sin Fronteras" ("Talent without borders program"). In Honduras, public-private partnerships provide employment and training opportunities, with special emphasis on technology. In Guatemala, the gender inclusion approach is being implemented in technical training services, with the aim of strengthening job skills to enhance the employability of people in vulnerable situations. Finally, El Salvador emphasized the continuity of education for boys and girls students and teachers who are forcibly displaced due to violence.

The representatives of UNHCR and Manpower Group, as a member of the private sector, identified the benefits of the insertion of the population with international protection needs in the economy, especially in terms of labor stability in the company (low turnover) and the expenditure of their income in the national economy. The UNHCR expert suggested guidelines to achieve an effective labor insertion such as: the reduction of the time between the issuance of the work permit and the obtaining of a job, a rapprochement between governments and the private sector to address the hiring of refugees and to provide an information and counseling service in labor matters to the population in forced displacement.

In the second thematic session on July 9, 2021, 43 people participated in the discussion. UNESCO referred to the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Degrees and Diplomas in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (Buenos Aires, 2019). Regarding the certification of technical studies, it was highlighted that the large number and variety of programs in technical specialization and the use of terms hinder the respective recognition of these skills. Likewise, the need to define the profile of people in mobility for their proper placement among the different training programs. The need to systematize the information on the mechanisms for the recognition of degrees and diplomas of refugees and people in a situation human mobility in receiving countries was highlighted.

The representatives of the MIRPS States presented national practices in the recognition of degrees and diplomas as well as other complementary measures. Costa Rica announced that it has worked on the provision of alternative for proof and evidence and has registered 20 cases of recognition of degrees. In education, Circular DM-036-09-2017 promotes the

recognition of degrees or studies completed abroad. In Guatemala, public-private alliances that offer alternatives to develop technical skills through training and labor market insertion programs are promoted. The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare together with the Technical Institute of Training and Productivity INTECAP are implementing a program of Technical Training for Employment with a gender approach and aimed at populations in vulnerable situations to encourage formal employment as well as the Ministerial Agreement 1753- 2019, which creates the Regulation of Equalization and Equivalence of studies in the educational levels of Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Education and in the Subsystems of School and Out-of-School Education, which has the purpose of attending requests related to the equalization of studies carried out abroad. In Honduras, INFOP has entered into agreements with different actors to develop projects for displaced persons and returnees. Among those the CaPaz initiative, which targets people at risk of migrating, the design of curricula with the support of UNHCR and the carrying out of prospection studies related to areas prone to displacement in order to prioritize training services.

In Mexico, the elimination of requirements such as the apostille, the translation of an expert and an expedited deadline for the revalidation of studies are mentioned. Within the framework of complementary protection and asylum, the same conditions are offered in the virtual application process. In the case of Panama, INADEH offers opportunities for courses in different areas for refugees and has also implemented consultation processes among the population of interest in the construction of public policies. In El Salvador, diplomas and degrees are recognized through an equivalency mechanism. Also, within the framework of the special law on Attention and Integral Protection of Persons in Condition of Internal Forced Displacement, the scope of the right to education has been expanded to include displaced populations. In addition, alternatives for educational insertion are offered both in the regular system and in flexible education modalities. El Salvador highlighted the initiative of the Labor Market Information System (SIMEL) as a network of institutions involved in the production and storage of information on the labor market and the generation of public policies. Also, the certification of competencies for the labor insertion of the returning migrant population is being implemented in the country.

The third thematic session on July 13, 2021 was attended by 49 participants. The representatives of the MIRPS States presented national measures related to the recognition of qualifications or competencies. El Salvador outlined the SIMEL initiative as a network of institutions concerning the production and storage of labor market information and generating public policy. Guatemala noted that the national training system has 28 occupational families, and that measures have also been implemented in the identification, acquisition and evaluation of competencies. Honduras has provided psychological support, training and certification of previously acquired skills. The "Alternatives Program", which provides information and opportunities for returnees with job internships. In the case of Mexico, CONOCER regulates the national system of competencies, and it has a Network of Service Providers and a group of experts for the design of the competency standards that

reach 1500. The "Mexico recognizes your experience" program offers the opportunity to recognize 1,400 options that facilitate labor market insertion. In Panama, the agreement signed between the Government and INADEH offers courses in various areas for the recognition of knowledge in favor of refugees.

The ILO invites participants to think about the future by considering changes in the labor market, which has an impact on migration movements. The ILO emphasizes the green transition, digital and new forms of learning. The ILO indicates that in Latin America there is a very wide variety of recognition and certification mechanisms focused on technical, operational and middle management competencies, qualification frameworks, homologation of criteria in Central America and MERCOSUR. In the Quito Process, a common process of certification of competencies for migrants and refugees is being carried out.

In the section on the exchange of experiences in the region, Chile, Colombia and Costa Rica shared their practices in the recognition of competencies of migrants. Chile presented the most significant advances of Chile Valora and the generation of data on migrants who receive certification, the flexibilization of requirements and awareness-raising with different sectors on the migratory phenomenon that have facilitated the recognition of labor competencies, regardless of the way in which the knowledge has been acquired. In Colombia, the arrival of migration movements in 2017 promoted knowledge of the migrant, inter-institutional coordination, reduced evaluation and certification times, more flexible requirements (reduction of minimum time of experience, expedited work experience to a known person, identification document) and the application of the virtual modality for the certification process. In Costa Rica, INA provides the service of certification of competencies in the country. Within the framework of COVID-19, virtual tools such as Zoom or Teams have been considered for the certification process. Among the main limitations faced by the migrant population is the lack of economic resources and a job to take the test was mentioned. Currently, the certification offer has 220 tests, of which 22 tests are designed by qualification standards according to the National Qualifications Framework for Technical Vocational Education and Training of Costa Rica.

During the July 15, 2021 session 44 people participated. Costa Rica notes that the country offers entrepreneurship opportunities through IMAS, the Ministry of Economy and the "PRONAMYPE" program of the Ministry of Labor. However, the greatest weakness is the generation of data and profiles of the refugee population in these programs. In El Salvador, the youth labor insertion project entitled "My First Job" is currently being implemented, which benefits forcibly displaced youth, asylum seekers, deportees in need of protection and refugees that seeks to benefit approximately 324 forcibly displaced young people with no work experience have access to their first formal job. The bi-national program "Jóvenes

construyendo el futuro" (Mexico-El Salvador), which is implemented in municipalities to provide job opportunities for young people, is discussed. In Guatemala, the "TUR-ITENGRA" Program is based on a public-private partnership that provides opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to strengthen employability through local integration, making use of virtual resources to develop skills. The results achieved include 18 ventures developed in 2020 and 1 venture in 2021. Honduras presents the initiative "I undertake in my land", which has promoted 100 productive initiatives among returnees. Also, assistance and protection initiatives have supported a total of 44 business plan initiatives. In Panama, the "Talent without Borders" program offers job placement through training and tools to improve the employability of nationals and refugees.

The UNDP panel of experts suggests addressing the socioeconomic integration of displaced persons and refugees from a long-term perspective and with a focus on social cohesion. It recommends considering an integration strategy with actors such as national governments, local governments, the private sector, civil society and international cooperation. Integration has two pillars: a) employability, which includes labor intermediation, recognition and certification, and decent work; and b) entrepreneurship, with elements such as access to the financial system, public-private partnerships, coordination with civil society and local economic development. In addition, UNDP presents the "INTÉGRATE" initiative, which provides support to asylum seekers, returnees, international migrants, diasporas and internally displaced persons, among others. The strategy has a digital platform that allows the generation of indexes, indicators and the necessary accompaniment. It is supported by a network of local actors, international actors, local governments, civil society and the private sector.



## 5. FINDINGS

In the work entrusted to the Working Group on Labor Market Access and Vocational Training it was possible to identify the following findings:

- The region does not have a regional labor market insertion strategy that encourages or promotes forcibly displaced persons to be promoters of their own livelihoods and promotes their inclusion in the host communities.
- No MIRPS State has ratified the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Degrees and Diplomas in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, Buenos Aires, 2019.
- There is a variety of regulatory frameworks for the recognition of degrees, diplomas, knowledge and educational trajectory that are not adjusted to the needs and particularities of the displaced population.
- Variety of public and public-private mechanisms for the recognition of qualifications and certification of competencies that are generally aimed at migrants.
- The COVID-19 pandemic promoted the use of Information and Communication Technologies in the processes of recognition of qualifications and certification of competencies for migrants and forcibly displaced persons.

- There is limited information on the occupational profile of the displaced population disaggregated by sex, diversity, age, ethnicity, nationality and disability, degrees, diplomas and knowledge.
- Forcibly displaced persons, especially asylum seekers, do not usually carry documentation on the degrees they have acquired.
- There is no data or occupational profile of forcibly displaced persons that would allow adequate attention to public employment services and vocational training.
- Except in the case of Mexico, there are no hiring guides that offer the private sector guidelines for employing forcibly displaced persons to orient the private sector.
- Existence of partnerships with the private sector that allow the placement of the forcibly displaced person in an internship or formal employment.





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## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are practical recommendations derived from the exchange of experiences during the four working sessions. The Working Group on Labor Market Access and Vocational Training endorse the following practical recommendations aimed at the labor market insertion and vocational training of forcibly displaced persons in the MIRPS region.

### To be implemented in the short term (2021):

1. Promote and advocate for progress on commitments related to labor market access and vocational training within the MIRPS national action plans.
2. Make visible the challenges related to labor market access and vocational training in the different MIRPS documents and policy spaces.
3. Promote the mapping of public employment services and entities responsible for the recognition of qualifications and certification of competencies.
4. Promotion of the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Degrees and Diplomas in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, Buenos Aires, 2019.
5. Compilation of good practices in the adaptation of mechanisms for access to employment, recognition of degrees, recognition of qualifications and certification of competencies (to be incorporated as part of the MIRPS 2021 Annual Report).
6. Creation of a virtual folder with reference documentation and as a space for knowledge generation for the members of the Group.

### Medium-term implementation (2022-2023):

1. Promote the development of a regional MIRPS strategy for socioeconomic integration for people in forced displacement.
2. Promote a common process of certification of competencies in partnership with the private sector, workers unions and other actors that make use of Information and Communication Technologies.
3. Promote the compilation of the educational and occupational profile of the person in forced displacement from the presentation of the application to be considered in the public employment systems of each country.
4. Promote the revision and simplification of procedures, requirements and costs, especially in the context of events such as pandemics or massive movements of forced displacement.
5. Promote the revision of the requirements of the refugee population in public or private institutions that offer recognition of qualifications or certification of competencies.
6. Promote the development of a Recruitment guide to hire forcibly displaced persons in each MIRPS Member State.
7. Promote partnerships with the private sector to expand the labor market insertion of forcibly displaced persons.
8. Promote awareness campaigns in organizations of employers and workers regarding the rights and working conditions of persons in forced displacement.
9. Promote before the International Labor Organization (ILO) the provision that the Decent Work Programs consider actions and measures for decent work in favor of forcibly displaced persons.
10. Articulation with the MIRPS Working Group on Local Governance to:
  - a. Promote local government programs for labor insertion at the local level, according to the needs of the population to be integrated.
  - b. Promote the capacities of local governments in the implementation of activities that they develop in the social, economic and cultural areas.

## 7. LIST OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MIRPS STATES

The four thematic sessions held by the Working Group on Labor Market Access and Vocational Training were attended by representatives of public institutions from the MIRPS States, in the following order:

### Belize

Ms. Deshawn Ellis, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.  
Ms. Orla Kantun Coleman, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.  
Ms. Maria Marin, Department of Immigration and Nationality.  
Dr. Gomez, Ministry of Education.  
Mr. Gilroy Middleton, Ministry of Immigration.

### Republic of Costa Rica

Mr. Edgar Cascante, Ministry of Labor and Social Security.  
Ms. Fraya Corrales Gómez, Ministry of Economy, Industry and Commerce.  
Mr. Esteban Villalobos González, Ministry of Economy, Industry and Commerce.  
Ms. Carmen González Chaverri, National Learning Institute.  
Mr. Daniel González Vargas, National Apprenticeship Institute.  
Ms. María de los Ángeles Rodríguez, National Apprenticeship Institute.  
Ms. Elenieth Alfaro Castro: National Apprenticeship Institute.  
Ms. Meribeth Soto Arguedas: National Employment Agency.  
Ms. Nuria Méndez Garita, Ministry of Public Education.  
Mr. Pablo Mena Castillo, Ministry of Education.  
Mr. Carlos Oviedo Bogantes, Ministry of Education.  
Ms. María de los Ángeles Hernández Ross, National Council of Rectors.  
Ms. Ana Beatriz Arias, National Council of Rectors.  
Ms. Rocío Ruiz, Ministry of Labor and Social Security.  
Mr. Edrei Cabezas, Ministry of Labor and Social Security.  
Ms. Marielos Rodríguez Salas, National Learning Institute.

### Republic of El Salvador

Ms. Julia María Somoza, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.  
Mr. Lisandro Alberto Landaverde De La Cruz, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.  
Ms. Lourdes Hernández, Ministry of Labor and Social Security.  
Ms. Lesly Cervellón, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.  
Ms. Ileana Ochoa, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.  
Ms. Alba Evelyn Cortez Alegría, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.  
Ms. Yudice Abigail Sánchez, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

### Republic of Guatemala

Ms. Julia Arabela Woolfolk, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.  
 Ms. Alida Poz, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.  
 Ms. Karla Ramirez, Guatemalan Institute of Migration.  
 Ms. Anaeli Torres, Social Welfare Secretariat.  
 Ms. Alejandra Mazariegos, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.  
 Ms. Hellen Barrera, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.  
 Ms. Gabriela Aguilar.

### Republic of Honduras

Ms. Marcela Carranza, National Institute of Migration.  
 Ms. Claudia Quiróz, National Institute of Migration.  
 Ms. Isiss Saucedo, Human Rights Secretariat.  
 Ms. Roberto López, Human Rights Secretariat.  
 Ms. Hansi Guerrero, National Institute of Vocational Training.  
 Ms. Melissa Santos, National Vocational Training Institute.  
 Ms. Claudia Avila, Secretariat of Labor and Social Security.  
 Ms. Rosa Espinoza, Secretary of Education.  
 Ms. Glenda Maradiaga, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

### United Mexican States

Mr. Andrés Ramírez Silva, Mexican Refugee Commission.  
 Ms. Adina Tejadilla, Mexican Refugee Commission.  
 Ms. Michell Constantino, Mexican Refugee Commission.  
 Ms. Paula Rodríguez, Mexican Refugee Commission.  
 Mr. Germán Gutiérrez Gómez, Mexican Refugee Commission.  
 Ms. Norma Díaz Godínez, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.  
 Mr. Dante López Arredondo, Deputy Director General for International Human Rights Policy.  
 Ms. Liliana González Miler, Directorate of Accreditation, Incorporation and Revalidation.  
 Mr. Yonathan León, National Council for Standardization and Certification of Labor Competencies.  
 Mr. José Guillermo Ricardo Caballero, National Council for Standardization and Certification of Labor Competencies.  
 Ms. María Alejandra Ortiz, Director of Support to the Operation of the General Directorate of Information Centers, Ministry of Public Education.  
 Mr. Donaciano Domínguez, Deputy General Coordinator of the National Employment Service, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.  
 Mr. Ángel Ávila Martínez, Technical Director, General Directorate of Training Centers for Labor, Ministry of Public Education.

### Republic of Panama

Ms. Maite Cisneros, National Office for the Attention of Refugees.

Mr. Hussein Pitty, National Office for the Attention of Refugees.

Ms. Katherine del Mar, Ministry of Government.

Mr. Eleazar Bonilla, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## 8. INTEGRATION OF THE ADVISORY PANEL

The work of the Working Group on Labor Market Access and Vocational Training included a panel of experts from United Nations agencies, including the following:

**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, (UNHCR).**

Mr. Fabio Siani.

**United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).**

Ms. Johanna Sáenz.

Mr. Erick Hernandez.

Mr. Diego Morales.

**International Labor Organization (ILO)**

Ms. Nina Billorou.

Mr. Álvaro Ramírez Bogantes.

Ms. Noortje Denkers.

Ms. Vanessa Pocasangre.

Mr. Juan Ignacio Castillo.

**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).**

Ms. Paula Klenner Cortes.

Mr. José Quintero Goris.

Mr. Ramón Iriarte.

Ms. Romina Kasman.



## 9. LIST OF SPECIAL GUESTS

The Working Group on Labor Market Access and Vocational Training was attended by the following special guests; namely:

### Manpower Group

Mr. Ignacio Casillas.

### Chile Valora, Republic of Chile

Mr. Igor Dedic.

### National Apprenticeship Service, Republic of Colombia

Mr. Mario Javier Rincón Triana.

### National Learning Institute, Republic of Costa Rica

Mrs. María de los Ángeles Rodríguez.







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