

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Review of Regional Coordination Mechanisms in Response to Mixed Movements in the LAC Region

Presentation

The increasing complexity of mixed movements in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has led to implementation of various initiatives to improve the response through coordination. This study, under the joint initiative of DG-ECHO, AECID, and IOM, along with UNHCR and OCHA, and supported by the LAC RMD Coalition, IFRC, and UNDCO, examines the interagency coordination mechanisms to respond to mixed movements in the region. The objective is to identify their strengths, gaps, duplications, and complementarities and, based on the findings and results, formulate concrete and realistic recommendations to improve their effectiveness, address gaps, and strengthen aspects recognized as good practices or strengths of existing coordination mechanisms, particularly the Regional Group on Risks, Emergencies, and Disasters for Latin America and the Caribbean (REDLAC), the Regional Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V), and the Issue-Based Coalition on Human Mobility (IBC-HM), to ensure an effective response that adapts to the changing dynamics of mixed movements in the region.

The review encompasses the mapping and the analysis of regional interagency coordination mechanisms involved in the response to mixed movements in LAC. That includes an in-depth analysis of the implementation of the structure of regional coordination mechanisms in terms of coordination, needs assessment, strategic planning, advocacy, fundraising strategies, information management, and monitoring of the response and its outcomes.

From a methodological perspective, a mixed approach was adopted, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to collect, analyze, and interpret data to ensure the robustness of the results, minimize biases, and increase the reliability of conclusions, lessons learned, good practices, and final recommendations. This research took place between February and June in five stages: i) Preliminary analysis and preparatory report, ii) Detailed document review, iii) Mapping of coordination mechanisms, iv) Data collection, and v) Analysis and synthesis phase. Over 430 people from various institutions participated in the different phases and tools of the study.

The context of coordination in response to mixed movements

In recent decades, **no region in the world has experienced a higher relative increase in international mixed movements than LAC.** It should be noted that a significant portion of these movements has occurred between countries within the region. That represents a shift from just a few years ago when the flows were headed towards the United States, Canada, or Europe.

Although this outward flow continues, in recent decades, LAC has become a region characterized by intraregional mixed movements and returns in some countries. Mixed movements in LAC became the focus of global attention between 2017 and 2018 when the number of migrants and refugees from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela increased drastically, reaching virtually all countries in the region. At the same time, South America, Central America, and North America continue to experience mixed movements of people from the region fleeing violence or seeking to improve their situation, as well as people moving from Caribbean countries like Haiti or from African and Asian countries, also motivated by various factors, including the search for better opportunities, but also fleeing armed conflicts, other situations of violence, and persecution.

The reality of human mobility is present in intergovernmental forums in the region and has led to numerous declarations and proposals of various scopes, giving rise to an evolving architecture for managing mixed mobility that includes new instruments at the regional and national levels in different countries. Additionally, new coordination mechanisms have emerged, alongside existing ones, to respond to needs for assistance, humanitarian protection and integration in the region.

The countries of LAC have a long history of cooperation in migration and protection through regional mechanisms. These mechanisms facilitate information exchange, sharing of the best practices, and coordinated responses. Since the beginning of the century, the region has developed new migration governance mechanisms that many consider unique because, in contrast to trends in the Global North, the region has emphasized the rights of migrants and refugees, relatively open border control measures, multilateral efforts to facilitate mobility and coordinate policies, and the non-criminalization of irregular migration. From the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees to the more recent Los Angeles and Palenque Declarations on migration and protection, the region is at the forefront of international initiatives in this field.

The array of these coordination systems for population movements in LAC is highly relevant due to its diversity and scope. These mechanisms include structures led both by states and the international community, with a fundamental role played by the United Nations system and the participation of civil society entities. They also include joint governance structures. The R4V Platform, created in 2018 and co-led by IOM and UNHCR, coordinates response efforts in 17 LAC countries, focusing on regional strategies and specific support at the national and subregional levels. Meanwhile, REDLAC, established in 2003 under the leadership of OCHA ROLAC, acts as a regional coordination platform for disaster and humanitarian crisis preparedness and response. The IBC-HM, an Issue-Based Coalition on Human Mobility created in 2020 with a secretariat shared by IOM, UNHCR, and ECLAC, is part of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean (RCP LAC). This platform brings together all United Nations entities working jointly within the framework of the 2030 Agenda and potentially a broader group of stakeholders, supporting Resident Coordinators (RCs) and UN Country Teams (UNCTs) in responding to situations involving refugees, migrants, host communities, and returnee communities in the LAC region. These and other regional, subregional, national, and subnational coordination mechanisms and initiatives play an important role in coordinating responses and managing information on the migration situation and its evolution in the region.

Summary of findings and conclusions

The study's **findings** have been addressed considering the **key issues, criteria, and questions** included in the **Inception Report**. These findings are based on quantitative and qualitative evidence derived from the tools used in the research. To facilitate understanding, they have been grouped into the following thematic blocks:

CONTEXT

- F1 There is a collective acknowledgment of the high complexity of the reality of mixed movements in Latin America and the Caribbean, due to significant changes in the dynamics of the flows and other situations.
- F2 This reality will remain complex for a long time, generating situations of human suffering and threats to the rights of affected populations.
- F3 Elements of the international geopolitical reality can pose a threat to the future, potentially exacerbating these challenges.

KNOWLEDGE, PRESENCE, AND TYPOLOGY

- F4 There are several coordination mechanisms in the region with very different objectives and scopes. Knowledge of these coordination mechanisms related to mixed population movements is uneven and partial among the study participants.
- F5 The presence and implementation of mechanisms with a regional focus are uneven, both territorially and in their importance concerning mixed movements
- F6 At the national level, coordination spaces related to mixed movements are wide variety but no single model. The role of different agencies involved in national coordination also varies widely.
- F7 The current reality shows that the coordination carried out by these mechanisms spans various levels (strategic and operational; regional and national; sectoral diversity; humanitarian – integration and development; with emphasis on the Venezuelan population or general), but no single mechanism addresses all these aspects comprehensively.

RELEVANCE

- F8 There is unanimous agreement on the need for coordination mechanisms in the region and in the importance of addressing a joint response. In principle, there is widespread consensus that, from their inception, the three mechanisms are relevant.
- F9 Changes in the situation and the practices of the mechanisms have led to de facto adaptations in their response and approaches. That affects the target population of the mechanisms' work, the complementarity of actions—which must include humanitarian, integration, and development components—and the regional dimension. There is general agreement on the need to deepen these elements.
- F10 Changes in mobility patterns in the region confirm the relevance of adopting a route-based approach, with a broader global vision that considers the causes at the origin, transit, destination, and possible return.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- F11 Each mechanism has a series of strengths and weaknesses derived from both its mandate and its implementation.
- F12 Significant progress has been made at both general and sectoral levels, but there has been some duplication that has affected achievements, creating inefficient workflows.
- F13 Achievements in terms of impact on public policies have been significant and have contributed to government decisions and measures that facilitate migrant and refugee populations' access to public services and resources.
- F14 Data management is among the most problematic elements: there are multiple information sources and multiple mechanisms to consolidate it.
- F15 The definition of the concept of gender and its focus on the different coordination mechanisms has been limited. That has resulted in the limited visibility of people with different sexual orientations and gender identities (SOGI), their migratory and displacement experiences, and consequently, the response to their specific needs beyond protection from violence based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
- F16 There has been scarce integration of the "triple nexus" approach and the inclusion of elements in favor of peace, fighting against discrimination and xenophobia, and localization.
- F17 There is a lack of clear evaluation and accountability systems in the mechanisms coordination, affecting transparency and the ability to adapt to changing needs.

INCLUSIVENESS

- F18 There are various approaches, perspectives, and perceptions regarding inclusiveness in the main coordination mechanisms at the regional level.
- F19 There are relevant actors, particularly those linked to development, who have not been sufficiently incorporated into the coordination mechanisms.
- F20 There is an interest in increasing the involvement of governments in the coordination mechanisms at both regional and national levels.

GOVERNANCE

- F21 The governance system of R4V has enabled joint and synergistic work between UNHCR and IOM but has made it difficult for other agencies to be incorporated.
- F22 There is a demand from other United Nations agencies and NGOs for more balanced governance within R4V.
- F23 The role of RCs has not been as significant in R4V, although their involvement has been decisive in some countries.

SUSTAINABILITY

- F24 The coordination mechanisms have contributed to increasing the response to mixed movements in the region, although not in a sustained manner over time. That supports the need for a permanent forum to develop, implement, and monitor the long-term strategy to respond to mixed movements in the region and the role of coordination in driving it.
- F25 The lack of specific funding for coordination is evident. Only in the case of R4V can it be considered that part of the funding from IOM and UNHCR is allocated to coordination tasks. However, even in this case, there was no specific funding for the coordination of sectors or working groups.
- F26 There is little ownership of the coordination mechanisms by local actors in affected countries, both by governments and other civil society actors.

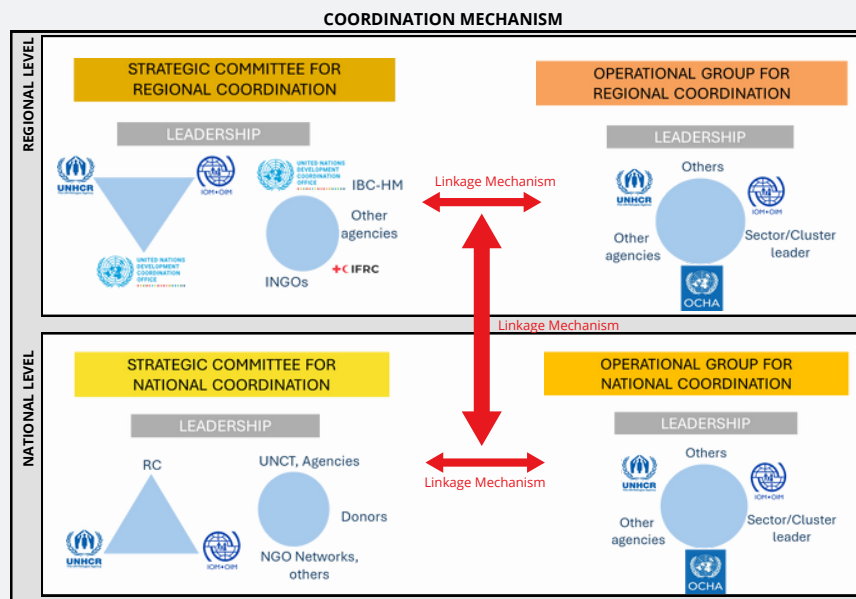
The **conclusions** are organized following the line of reasoning of the findings that respond to the evaluation criteria, the issues to be reviewed, and the key questions. Each conclusion groups and integrates issues contained in various findings.

- C1** The situation of mixed movements in the LAC region is highly complex. Beyond circumstantial aspects, some trends and dynamics affecting the entire region seem to be consolidating and persisting over time.
- C2** The current coordination mechanisms are insufficient to cover the entire population in mobility situations. The emergence of these mechanisms to address various issues has resulted in inconsistencies, duplications, and gaps.
- C3** The coordination mechanisms have not incorporated a planning logic with clear and common objectives and outcomes. There has been no approach that provided coherence between the humanitarian dimension and that of integration or development, following a nexus logic.
- C4** In the last five years, the reality of human mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean has changed significantly. However, these changes have not been reflected in the adaptation of the coordination mechanisms. While there have been some adjustments in certain mechanisms, they have not been formalized to address the situations at origin, transit, and destination or return, with a route-based approach, encompassing a regional, hemispheric dimension, also reflected at the national level.
- C5** Globally analyzed, the coordination mechanisms have added value to the overall response and contributed to achieving positive results, albeit in a limited way.
- C6** The lack of harmonization of different information management systems, which includes differences in data consolidation, standards, and periodicity, generates redundancies, discrepancies, and duplication of efforts. The absence of clear monitoring systems and a certain culture of evaluation makes it difficult to assess their impacts.
- C7** There are no clear accountability systems for the affected communities, the general population, agencies and organizations, states, or donors. This deficiency is reflected in the lack of standardized and structured mechanisms to evaluate the impact of actions and ensure transparency in the use of resources.
- C8** The emphasis on sectoral or thematic aspects has had positive results, providing specialized approaches and content that contribute to improvement. They have brought notable innovations in some sectors or themes like humanitarian transport or PTM. However, these advances have been uneven across coordination mechanisms and countries, creating duplications and gaps that have undermined achievements.
- C9** The lack of homogeneity between countries, the relationship with development institutions, even those within the UN system (UNDP, UNICEF, ILO...), as well as the relationship with other more political coordination mechanisms and with governments, complicates the relationship between the various mechanisms and their complementarity, although this homogeneity can also pose challenges in terms of autonomy.
- C10** The articulation between the regional or subregional dimension of the coordination mechanisms and their application within each country, even at the local level, presents a huge disparity and a lack of homogeneity.
- C11** The disparity of governance systems of each mechanism makes it difficult to establish comparisons, but it allows lessons to be drawn on the desirability of greater inclusion and participation of different types of organizations, in particular civil society, including local organizations, and of establishing clearer, more inclusive and community-oriented governance models, with common objectives and results.
- C12** The relationship with governmental mechanisms has been diverse, with some good results in integration and insertion into social protection mechanisms. However, this relationship has been uneven, varying significantly between countries and contexts.
- C13** In general, the inclusion of the gender perspective has been modest. References to dominant masculine forms in Spanish can be exclusive of women in general and their specific needs, risks, and vulnerabilities. Similarly, the still restricted view of sex and gender as rigid and binary categories, which in turn excludes people with different sexual orientations and gender identities (SOGI), is evident in the lack of a formal and consistent space for the participation of LGBTIQ+ organizations and support networks in the coordination mechanisms, hindering the recognition and adequate attention to these individuals.
- C14** The participation of local organizations is scarce, distancing processes from the commitment to localization, limiting the relevance and sustainability of interventions, and affecting the pertinence and durability of implemented actions.
- C15** Funding difficulties condition the future sustainability of the coordination mechanisms. At the same time, the study highlights the need for specific resources for coordination, understanding that this can contribute to improving effectiveness and efficiency.

Summary of recommendations

These **recommendations** aim to be feasible and practical in achieving the gradual adaptation of existing mechanisms in the process towards a single coordination mechanism for the response to mixed movements in the LAC region.

- R1** **Adapt the work of coordination mechanisms**, especially R4V and IBC-HM, to the new reality of human mobility in LAC. Establish a **Working Group** to set the timeline, address the implementation of the recommendations, and monitor their compliance or application.
- R2** In terms of coverage, **the study recommends expanding the mandate of mixed movements coordination with a needs and vulnerabilities-based approach, beyond nationality and place of origin**. Decisively adopt a route-based approach as a comprehensive strategy to address the needs and protect the rights of migrants and refugees at each stage of their journey.
- R3** Develop a **"Response Strategy for Mixed Movements in LAC"** that defines in detail the expected outcomes of coordination mechanisms. The Strategy should specify themes, approaches, monitoring mechanisms, funding strategies, etc., and could be presented at an International Conference to highlight the issue of mixed migration in LAC.
- R4** Regarding the structure of the mechanism, **the study advocates for the reconfiguration of R4V to improve its articulation with the other mechanisms and clarify the various levels of coordination and the synergies that may arise between them**. The study proposes two levels of coordination: one political-strategic and another operational, recognizing that both types of actions should be complementary and mutually reinforcing. It should be reflected in both the regional geographic plane and the national scale. It is not about having two different structures, but rather a single regional structure and a single national structure per country. This proposal could be outlined as follows:



- R5** **Regarding sectoral or thematic groups, steps should be taken to harmonize the existing ones in each area**, avoid duplications, and, in the medium term, unify them at both the regional and country levels. In this unification of sectors and thematic groups, it is recommended to follow the IASC criteria and the cluster system.
- R6** **Regarding the various information management systems, it is recommended to move towards a unified system that includes aspects of flow prediction and prevention**. It would be necessary to unify, on the one hand, a situation and flow analysis system and, on the other hand, a response monitoring system.
- R7** Regarding governance and inclusion, **it is proposed to expand the presence and participation of organizations** in the coordination mechanism, specifying the roles of other UN agencies, Resident Coordinators (RCs), NGOs, CSOs, etc.
- R8** **The leadership of the resulting coordination mechanism** should be expanded at both the regional and national levels, **enhancing the presence of other agencies related to development, integration, and durable solutions**.
- R9** Regarding sustainability, **it is necessary to allocate specific resources for coordination**. At the same time, efforts should be made to ensure that states take ownership of the response by strengthening their institutions and capacities, as well as those of civil society organizations in the field.

Linking findings, conclusions and recommendations

