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PROTECTION OF VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS AND UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN PROJECT

Dates of project: February 2022 – February 2025

Budget: \$5,000,000

The project strengthens national capacities to provide protection services for victims of trafficking in persons and unaccompanied migrant children, while preventing human trafficking and irregular migration in Guatemala. The project implements a comprehensive protection model for trafficking in persons victims at a specialized protection center: Amor sin Fronteras (Love without Boundaries). At the center, underage girls receive holistic protection services, including medical, psychosocial, educational, lodging, recreation, and legal assistance. The model is based on a victim-centered approach designed to address trauma and restore victims' human rights.

In addition, the project supports the reception, protection, and family reunification of unaccompanied migrant children who return to the country. Through a family and community-based approach, the project facilitates psychosocial services and linkages to education and livelihood opportunities for returned youth to support their sustainable reintegration. The implementation of 'life projects' seeks to prevent repeat irregular migration among youth. The project also strengthens national institutions, including the Social Welfare Secretariat (SBS), the Solicitor General's Office (PGN), and the Secretariat against Human Trafficking and Sexual Violence (SVET) through the transfer of models that ensure quality protection services for trafficking in persons victims and unaccompanied migrant children.

Finally, the project implements preventive actions to identify cases of human trafficking and irregular migration at the community level through education and awareness. These efforts seek to identify possible victims and ensure their protection through the promotion of local leadership and participation.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC APPROACH

The project has nationwide coverage through specialized services for victims of trafficking in persons. The protection center *Amor sin Fronteras* serves girls and adolescents from all over the country and when necessary, foreign nationals who have become victims in Guatemala. Prevention actions are carried out in 45 rural communities with the largest indigenous populations in five departments with high rates of poverty and irregular migration: Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz, Huehuetenango, Quetzaltenango, and San Marcos.

The project facilitates reception and family reunification support for returned unaccompanied migrant youth at official government shelters administered by the Social Welfare Secretariat (SBS), located in Guatemala City and Quetzaltenango. Follow up services for returnees who have been reunited with their families take place in the departments with the highest incidence of youth migration: Quetzaltenango, Huehuetenango, San Marcos, Alta Verapaz, Sololá, and El Quiché.

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

The State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report recognizes that Guatemala does not meet the minimum requirements to eliminate human trafficking. The criminal prosecution of trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling is a serious challenge given the levels of corruption, judicial inefficiency, and weaknesses in the justice system. To address these challenges, the project provides direct legal assistance to victims as part of their comprehensive protection processes. In a typical year, more than 50% of all convictions against human traffickers in the country are achieved thanks to the project's specialized legal assistance to victims.

APPROACH AND RESULTS

The approach focuses on restoring the human rights of vulnerable youth in the context of human mobility. Key results include:

- Provide specialized protection services for girls and adolescents victims of human trafficking
- Reintegrate unaccompanied migrant children with their families and communities through education, health, psychosocial support, and livelihood opportunities
- Train key populations to prevent human trafficking and irregular migration
- Strengthen capacities at the national and municipal level to enhance protection services for trafficking in persons victims and migrant youth
- Strengthen the internal capacities of *El Refugio de la Niñez*.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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