BRIEFING BOOK

NORTHERN TRIANGLE MIGRATION CHALLENGES: VIOLENCE, POVERTY, AND CORRUPTION

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Key Judgments: Drivers of Migration

The recent migration flows from the Northern Triangle are strictly related to three main challenges the region faces: violence, corruption, and poverty. These can be attributed to the following factors:

Legacy of Conflict and Fragile Institutions
Central America's bloody civil wars in the 1980s left a legacy of violence and fragility. Even in Honduras, which did not experience an insurgency, these wars contributed to the spread of weapons among the civilian population, the normalization of conflict and violence, and damaged social, political and economic institutions already weakened by decades of neglect.

Poor Governance
Historical state absence, especially in rural areas, deters people from relying on the government. State failure to protect citizens has left them vulnerable to criminal organizations that, in some areas, have replaced the state in official roles. Resulting insecurity and violence initially causes citizens to migrate internally or turn to self-defense groups for protection. State neglect puts municipalities at risk of corruption, low levels of development, and lack of economic opportunities, contributing to emigration. Paradoxically, emigration benefits the government and diminishes its willingness to intervene because an exodus of dissatisfied citizens decreases the burden on the state and increases local revenue through remittances.

Exclusionary Systems
Power relations based on post-colonial structures persist, continuing economic disparities between classes. Social, political and economic inequalities increase poverty disproportionately in border and provincial areas.

- **Limited Economic Opportunities**
  State neglect and absence of investment, especially within border and provincial areas, limit economic opportunities for communities. This is exacerbated by their lack of professional skills and resources, inability to start a business, and limited workforce development. A poor economic environment pushes job seekers to migrate and search for opportunity elsewhere.
- **Disproportionate Impact on Women**
  Women suffer higher rates of malnutrition and illiteracy than men. They also face greater limitations on access to health education, social programs, and economic opportunities, further promoting emigration. Poor education also leaves women vulnerable to gender-based violence as their knowledge of legal rights or service availability is limited. All of these factors can contribute to internal and external migration.
- **Limited Education**
  Low education levels contribute to poverty, crime, malnutrition, displacement, and reduced political participation. It leaves communities vulnerable to corruption and abuse by government actors, elites, and criminals. Furthermore, low education levels expand beyond the political realm, impacting vulnerable groups, such as women, and reducing their access to resources necessary for their development.

Poor Infrastructure
Central governments have neglected infrastructural investment in the Northern Triangle countries, particularly border and provincial areas. High levels of violence increase overall economic insecurity and further discourage investment. Weak infrastructure depresses economic activity, which in turn depresses investment and exacerbates violence and communities' sense of isolation. Low levels of commerce negatively affect infrastructure development, increase trade barriers, and prevent financial prosperity, forcing people to migrate.

Corruption and Impunity
The unwillingness of the state to prosecute corrupt government officials, many of whom are connected to criminal groups, increases crime and insecurity. Powerful elites actively obstruct anti-corruption efforts, at times even creating or amending legislation to grant themselves immunity. They contend infringement on sovereignty to obstruct investigations. Citizens' distrust of government institutions or actors makes them reluctant to report corruption and keep the government accountable.

- **Inconsistent International Response**
  International support for anti-corruption initiatives has lacked strong joint-leadership and strong objectives, remains uncoordinated, and is unable to target corruption at its source. Historically, a focus on security rather than good governance has failed to address accountability and transparency. As evidence of the lack of political will to combat corruption, U.S. foreign aid is still distributed in spite of democratic backsliding within the region. Wavering support from the international community to anti-corruption efforts like CICIG in Guatemala and MACCIH in Honduras weakens their mandate and structure and restricts their resources.

Lack of Identity and Community
Social and economic inequalities in the region, particularly in urban areas, result in poverty for thousands of children and teenagers. Limited opportunities push youth to join gangs for protection, to earn a living or to gain a sense of collective identity. The increase in gang membership strengthens their power, forcing those who do not want to join to migrate or face growing threats of violence.

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Normalization
The high femicide rates across the region are indicators that SGBV remains the norm. A pervasive *machista* culture, exacerbated by these countries' history of conflict, propagates violent treatment towards women in the home and in society. This masculinity revered in societies contributes to the manipulation of women for inter-gang conflicts. As a result, women and children are more vulnerable to extortion and violence which consequently forces them to flee in order to survive.

Centers for Violence Reduction: Addressing Urban Violence through the Prison System

Create a Center to provide legal counsel, education and training resources to improve the neglected prison system and thus reduce violence.

Challenges
The prison system in the Northern Triangle has become an incubator for gangs known as *maras*. For instance, *Barrio 18* and *MS-13* are headquartered in prisons. The prison population has overwhelmingly increased due to the "iron fist" policies and similar crackdowns implemented by authorities, coupled with systematic neglect of the prison facilities and the ineffective legal system. On top of that, the rivalry between gangs has led the state to separate them in different facilities, creating further strongholds of power for them. Inmates, especially teenagers and young adults –whether they belonged to gangs or not– are obliged to align with gangs while in prison to remain safe. Thus, prisons have become recruiting centers for gangs. Alignment with gangs in prison makes it difficult for former inmates to integrate into the workforce and many continue to engage with the *maras*' criminal activities. This contributes to the cycle of violence in the Northern Triangle, which in turn increases migration.

Key Judgments
Legacy of Conflict and Fragile Institutions; Poor Governance; Corruption and Impunity; Lack of Identity and Community.

Neglected Criminal Justice System: Courts have been unable to try cases in a timely manner, and governments have neglected the safety and infrastructure of prisons. Consequently, prisons are overburdened and have become a key component of the criminal enterprise in the Northern Triangle.

Recommendation
Northern Triangle governments should create Centers for Violence Reduction (CVRs) under the Ministry of Justice in each country with the goals of reducing the prison population and effectively reintegrating former inmates into the workforce.

The duties of the CVRs include:

- To partner with legal service providers to offer quality legal services for speedy trials, fair arbitration and favorable probation sentences to pre-trial detainees who have committed non-violent crimes, especially teenagers.
- To provide training to inmates in areas such as: basic high school education or equivalent, vocational schooling or trade schooling, entrepreneurship, and mentoring services from former rehabilitated gang members and inmates.
- To create former inmate hiring programs at entry-level positions in partnership with the private sector.
- To raise funds through partnerships between the central government, urban municipalities and international development agencies such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.
- To track and monitor the progress of the initiatives being implemented through semi-annual reports to its funding partners.

Violence

- To plan annual forums to share best practices and challenges with the other CVRs.

Comments
- **Geographic implementation:** This project should initially be implemented in the urban municipalities with the highest rates of prison population and violence in the Northern Triangle. If successful, governments and funders should consider expanding it to the rural areas where gang presence is prominent.
- **Target population:** While this project is targeted at rehabilitating former gang members and preventing the youth from being recruited, it will benefit all current inmates, regardless of their affiliation with a gang.
- **Potential obstacles:** The objective of this project is to give former gang members a second opportunity while ensuring that they are rehabilitated. Citizens in Central America, however, fear gangs and will understandably be reluctant to trust former gang members even after a CVR has determined an inmate is ready for reintegration. Therefore, CVRs should also launch an awareness campaign about the potential positive results and success stories of this project. To avoid public backlash and ensure the safety of citizens, CVRs should only provide speedy trial services for pre-trial inmates who have not committed violent crimes. Another obstacle is guaranteeing permanence of former inmates into the workforce and preventing relapse to crime. CVRs should be strategic when engaging with potential employers to guarantee former inmates a sustainable lifestyle after they serve their sentences.
- **Actions necessary for success:** The engagement of funding partners to create a robust monitoring and evaluation plan is necessary for this project to succeed.

Outcomes
In a best-case scenario, the creation of CVRs in the Northern Triangle for a sustained period of time will gradually decrease the prison population in the region and directly address overcrowding from pre-trial inmates. Moreover, the creation of CVRs will effectively rehabilitate former gang members and progressively integrate them into the workforce. In the long-term, CVRs will weaken the gang networks existing in the current urban prisons in the region and thus, decrease crime and violence. With lower rates of violence and a large percentage of former inmates integrated into the workforce, this project will decrease citizens' incentives to migrate due to gang violence.
This project will not deliver immediate outcomes but is rather a long-term initiative that will progressively decrease violence. The challenges outlined above are significant and might slow down the progress of this project.

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Citizens for Citizens: Community Watch in Rural Areas

Recognize and regularize the role of existing community self-defense groups in non-urban areas.

Challenges
The Northern Triangle region experiences one of the highest rates of violence in the world. Weak institutions, lack of law enforcement, and state absence, especially in rural areas, strongly contribute to creating an environment of uncertainty and insecurity, which in turn encourages emigration. In addition, gangs and small criminal groups have recently expanded to provincial and semi-rural areas, increasing violence and insecurity in these territories. These factors, together with high rates of impunity, mistrust of the government, and easy availability of firearms, have pushed some citizens to create self-defense/self-justice groups, usually funded and managed by local powerful landlords (*patrones*). Due to the worsening situation, such groups cannot successfully be eliminated and, if not regulated, can foster further violence and emigration.

Key Judgments
Legacy of Conflict and Fragile Institutions; Poor Governance; Corruption and Impunity.

Recommendation
Rural municipalities should recognize and regularize the role of self-defense groups through a process of training and firearms registration. The purpose is to hold them accountable for their actions while giving citizens a sense of sovereignty, inclusion, and worth. The registration of these groups represents an opportunity for local governments to increase security in non-urban areas, decrease the risk of human rights violations, and diminish the current rates of emigration.

The main components of the program are the following:

- Participants should receive basic training and a sign of recognition (hat and badge). Ideally, the training should be organized within the municipality's territory to facilitate transportation.
- Citizens living in the area where a self-defense group operates should have the power to annually vote for the approval of the participants and, when needed, to dismiss members who act improperly.
- All the positions offered in the program should be voluntary to limit the risk of participation based on financial interest, while emphasizing willingness to help the community. Incentives for citizens to participate include gaining social status and actively contributing in increasing levels of security in the territory. Incentives for municipalities to support the program consist of rebuilding a relationship with their people, improving stability and increasing control over firearms.

Comments
- The program should be as inclusive as possible: meetings, documents, and classes should be held in local languages as well as in Spanish.
- To avoid misunderstandings and public backlash, the goal and format of the program should be clearly advertised through the flyers and local radio stations.

- To limit the risk of human rights violations, the program should be strictly regulated and based on strong conditions, such as a mandatory firearms registration and a provision of small cameras for those participating. In addition, short reports in the form of written texts or voice messages should be sent weekly to the municipality for local records and, when requested, these should be released to citizens.
- The registration of firearms should be with no sanctions for those owning illegal weapons, and eventually incentivized with a small amount of money (such as $10 per firearm registered).
- If funds allow, prize competitions could be organized to reward community groups who act in an outstanding manner, visibly increasing security in the area.
- Municipalities interested in the project "Citizens for Citizens" can implement it, even if there is not an existing self-defense group in their territory. In this case, the program should be first properly advertised and then assemblies should be organized to select the participants.

Outcomes

By implementing this recommendation, existing self-defense groups would be regulated and more inclusive, rather than merely tools of *patrones*. Furthermore, the program would give governments the possibility to increase their knowledge regarding firearms availability in non-urban territories. The level of security in remote areas is likely to increase, while also lowering the risk of human rights violations. In addition, the relationship between citizens and the state will benefit from the active cooperation between people and municipalities, decreasing the feeling of neglect and abandonment that many poor citizens currently experience in rural areas. Indeed, by establishing the program through local municipalities and by allowing people to protect their own communities, marginalized citizens should gain a sense of sovereignty, inclusion, and worth. Finally, with a general decrease in uncertainty and insecurity, emigration is likely to diminish.

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Violence

Promotoras Comunitarias: Reducing SGBV through Education

Collectively tackling SGBV through women's empowerment and community engagement.

Challenges
High rates of femicide and domestic violence in the Northern Triangle continue to push thousands of women and their children to flee seeking refuge to the north. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is pervasive in all communities for various reasons: women are deterred from reporting abuse due to fear, limited knowledge about their rights or limited service availability. If they are aware of their rights and report abuse, they are dismissed by state actors. Consequently, women face high levels of impunity and low levels of accountability. Furthermore, a legacy of civil wars in these countries continues to bolster men's reliance on violence to solve conflict, which directly affects the way they view and treat women. Therefore, women need comprehensive support that empowers them with the knowledge and resources needed to improve and make their communities safer. In order to enact community-wide change, men also need to be engaged and educated about the societal damage of SGBV.

Key Judgments
SGBV Normalization; Poor Governance; Legacy of Violence and Fragile Institutions; Limited Education; Disproportionate Impact on Women.

Recommendation
Local NGOs should implement the program *Promotoras Comunitarias*, an adaptation of Brazil's *Promotoras Legais Populares* (PLP) in the Northern Triangle. PLP has been effective in its strategic discussion and campaign of women's rights, and in its emphasis on local participation. It has been replicated by 55 other organizations and since its inception in 1994, it has trained 5,000 legal women promoters in São Paulo alone. *Promotoras Comunitarias* will create women empowerment to collectively tackle SGBV at the local level, especially in areas where integrated women-focused services fail to reach. Similar models have been attempted by Villa Nueva Justice Center, Women's Justice Initiative, and *Ixmucané* in Guatemala; and the Women's Movement of the Neighborhood of *López Arellano* in Honduras. These are identifiable NGOs who can adopt and implement this program. In this adaptation, *Promotoras Comunitarias* has two primary components:

- **Legal education**: The program will invite women to a training by legal professionals. Training completion will certify *Promotoras* to return to their communities and teach other women about their basic rights, legal processes and mechanisms to confront SGBV. Monthly "Know Your Rights" workshops will be held in safe community spaces where the women will learn, engage in discussion about SGBV, and create solidarity groups that will offer support to women who need it. *Promotoras* will also connect women to available community resources and keep track of state-service delivery failures to guide *Promotoras'* community engagement work done with municipal actors.
- **Community engagement**: The program will hold monthly male-only discussion groups where men will be identified, invited, and trained to become *Promotores Comunitarios*. These *Promotores* will lead male solidarity groups that will build awareness within their communities through education classes and provide accompaniment services to women who require assistance in reporting crimes. In coordination with the local *Promotoras*,

> *Promotores* will hold informational exchanges with municipal actors to address service delivery issues based on observations made by the *Promotoras* network.

Comments

Promotoras Comunitarias may present the following advantages and disadvantages:

- Cultural taboos about SGBV may be prevalent in some areas and will require an alternative approach that emphasizes building solidarity and comradeship within members of the group first. Incentives in the form of food vouchers or a final cash prize can increase attendance in men's re-education classes.
- Women empowerment might represent a threat to male-dominated households and exacerbate violence against women. Therefore, male *Promotores* should be recognized community leaders willing to act as buffers and provide mediation services if female victims ask for additional support. Support systems in the form of shelters should also be created in partnership with local religious institutions.
- Classes lead by *Promotoras(es)* are to be given as part of the school curriculum in partnership with local high schools, with the possibility of recruitment of future *Promotoras(es) Comunitarias(os)* within those schools.

Outcomes for this initiative can be measured using the following indicators: the number of *Promotoras* who finish legal rights training; the number of men who attend re-education classes; the percentage increase in reports made to the local police department; the number of information exchanges held with local municipalities.

Initial funding can be provided by international development organizations. However, after establishment of quantifiable outcomes, a membership-based fee charged to men and women who are part of the network can be introduced to cover basic operating costs. An additional source of funding is a partnership with local diaspora groups.

Outcomes

Long-term commitment to this initiative will raise women's awareness of their rights and their ability to protect themselves. Community engagement that enhances collective education, responses and dialogue has a high probability of enacting the behavioral change needed to curb the high femicide and domestic violence incidence in the region. Furthermore, *Promotoras Comunitarias* has the potential to motivate young *Promotoras*, who will have a base knowledge of the law and are looking to further help women in their communities, to pursue a career in law enforcement, thus addressing the dire demand and shortage of women in the security forces. Rejection of this initiative will lead to the continuation of a high femicide rates, the continued normalization of SGBV, and increased female migration.

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Poverty

Enhance Partnerships for Community-Driven Infrastructure Projects

Improve local infrastructure projects by enhancing community-driven collaboration

Challenges
Poor infrastructure in the Northern Triangle, specifically in border and provincial areas, has prolonged poverty, perpetuated state absence, and deepened a sense of despair in rural communities. All of these factors have been key drivers of migration. Moreover, international organizations have restrained from starting new projects or expanding development initiatives, because of economic insecurity and violence. On one hand, corporations are not willing to invest in these unstable areas, due to a potential loss of profit, lowering investment and commerce in the region. On the other hand, international organizations working on infrastructure projects, such as Engineers Without Borders (EWB), often lack cultural awareness and do not offer linguistic or cultural training to staff prior to, during, or after working on infrastructure projects. There is a need to improve the current programming to increase cultural awareness and, in turn, secure investment. Furthermore, organizations like EWB are less effective by not having permanent staff in the respective countries.

Key Judgments
Poor Governance; Poor Infrastructure.

Recommendation
Create a partnership program, learning from the experience of EWB and others, that adds a cultural training component to collaboration in projects to improve coordination between local and international volunteer engineers and the communities they seek to assist. There would be an in-country office with local culturally competent liaison experts. They would collaborate with community-based development organizations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in border and provincial areas in the Northern Triangle. These liaisons would serve as a coordination mechanism, connecting engineers to train and work alongside local community members on building and maintaining local infrastructures. These liaison units would stay engaged in coordination for an agreed-upon period of time ensuring commitment even after project completion.

- The local community, in collaboration with these liaison experts, would create focus groups to identify what infrastructure projects the community needs, considering that roads are not the only infrastructure that these communities will prioritize. Some other options would include digging water wells, repairing hand pumps, building bridges, and health/school centers. Community members, NGOs and liaison experts would fill out a comprehensive application to request an infrastructure project in their community. These liaison experts would screen communities before endorsing them for local projects, as a requirement for the application process.
- Once a community's application is accepted and the engineers know which country/community the engineers and the liaison team will be working with, the engineers would be required to attend cultural awareness and sensitivity trainings before, during and after implementing these projects. Once on-site, the engineers, along with cultural and language interpreters, would meet with the community to discuss the needs mentioned in the application and assess how the community can assist with the project.

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> The community will be required to provide a portion of the project cost in materials, labor or monetarily. Furthermore, the liaison teams will be available throughout the project design, development, and implementation as well as monitoring and evaluating.

- Similar to EWB, the program will secure funding through corporate partnerships from local and global organizations interested in promoting the welfare of vulnerable communities through philanthropy and charitable donations.

Comments
- A key component for this recommendation to work is the fact that it must be community driven throughout the process. The community itself would select its community leaders to help coordinate the various aspects of the project. The overall approach should be a Community-Driven Development program operating on the principles of transparency, participation, local empowerment, demand-responsiveness, greater downward accountability, and enhanced local capacity. Strong NGO partnerships and coordination, as well as cultural trainings help build trust and better address security and transparency concerns throughout the entire life of the project.
- The follow-up component would include maintenance training for the locals incorporated into the project plan to support project sustainability. As a result, community members would be able to take full ownership of the project, maintaining it long after the outside support is over, in order to have a longer-lasting sustainable impact.

Outcomes
Improving local infrastructure will deter migration, as it will increase economic opportunities and employment in border and provincial areas. Enhanced economic stability combined with community empowerment and participation in local projects could decrease crime, while improving the infrastructure of their own communities.

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Poverty

Helping At-Risk Mothers Educate the Next Generation

Promote adult education among the malnourished population in border and provincial areas in the Northern Triangle

Challenges
Many parents within the Northern Triangle have faced educational challenges from the earliest stages of their lives. Malnutrition and poor-quality education, particularly among at-risk mothers and their children, drive vulnerable groups to emigrate in search of better opportunities.

- The border and provincial areas in the Northern Triangle have limited resources. Educating parents and legal guardians, specifically mothers, has never been a priority for the municipalities. Malnutrition affects the cognitive skills of women, and their children are more at-risk of also suffering from food insecurity and limited educational opportunities.
- Due to chronic malnutrition, children are inhibited from reaching their potential, resulting in limited social and professional abilities. This stifles the process of obtaining an education from one generation to the other.

Key Judgments
Exclusionary Systems; Limited Education; Limited Economic Opportunities; Disproportionate Effect on Women.

Recommendation
Border and provincial municipalities should implement a community-based, special education program in Spanish and relevant indigenous languages that targets at-risk malnourished mothers. The *Yo También Me Educo* program will be an adaptation of *Asociación Cambiando Vidas* (ACAVI)'s education program, which provides a free education to malnourished communities. Since ACAVI is geographically limited and relies heavily on external funding and community engagement, *Yo También Me Educo* will provide weekly educational workshops on a larger scale. The program will have the following components:

- Weekly programming for at-risk mothers, running simultaneously with their children's academic calendar. These courses should tackle key topics, such as fitness and exercise, hygiene, budget-friendly meal planning, and mindful eating.
- A conditional monthly incentive to cover food and book costs to motivate the participants to engage.
- Community-based trainings, led by subject-matter experts within each country, to facilitate the workshops in their communities.

Comments
ACAVI is a nongovernmental, nonprofit and apolitical entity that been working on reducing malnutrition rates and increasing quality education opportunities in Pastores, Sacatepéquez, Guatemala. Similar to ACAVI's curriculum, the program will be offered in both Spanish and in relevant local indigenous languages, and it will cover nutrition and health topics, such as the topics mentioned above. *Yo También Me Educo* will be implemented as a pilot program throughout the Northern Triangle for border and provincial municipalities with assistance from

international donors. Lastly, the community-based program will provide the human capital to address the overwhelming number of at-risk mothers and increase social inclusion.

Outcomes
The program will ideally decrease emigration by combating malnutrition in border and provincial areas. Children will benefit because parents will be involved in their education, which will encourage them to stay in school. The community will profit from broader citizen engagement and expert-led capacity building. It will also be valuable to the next generation, because parent involvement will improve their children's wellbeing. If fully implemented, parental workshop attendance and activity engagement will demonstrate gains within the program's first months.

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Poverty

Community Entrepreneurship Centers

Establish community centers to promote workforce development, increase entrepreneurship, and prepare for future investment in border and provincial areas.

Challenges

The poor and uneducated make up the bulk of the migrant population fleeing the Northern Triangle. The geographic and demographic characteristics of border and provincial areas impede economic development. Slow economic growth, state neglect, and a lack of investment pushes job seekers to emigrate. Moreover, poor education hinders individuals' abilities to integrate productively into society. Citizens are unprepared to enter the workforce because schools are costly, teachers are poorly trained and often do not speak local languages, and the distances from home to school are great. Finally, a lack of understanding of challenging business creation processes, make it difficult for individuals to join the formal economy. While large portions of the population seek entrepreneurial opportunities, they lack the financial support and fundamental technical skills to formalize and sustain businesses.

Key Judgments

Exclusionary Systems; Limited Economic Opportunities; Limited Education.

Recommendation

Municipal leadership in border and provincial areas within the Northern Triangle, alongside international donor organizations and relevant non-governmental organizations (NGO's), should establish community entrepreneurship centers. These centers should be organized in existing spaces such as schools, churches or government buildings within targeted municipalities exhibiting the highest rates of migration.

The objective of these centers is twofold. First, they would serve as a resource hub to provide a foundation in workforce development and vocational skills in both Spanish and relevant local indigenous languages. Second, they would educate members on the legal and operational aspects of formal business management and entrepreneurship. The trainings should cover business development, financial planning, and risk management to support economic growth in the region. The centers should rely on local expertise and leadership to facilitate training.

Targeted outreach will specifically focus on incorporating marginalized groups, such as women, youth, and indigenous peoples within the centers to address the growing youth bulge and combat historically-generated income disparities. Members should be encouraged and taught to think innovatively and to create businesses of their own that will provide increased job opportunities for their communities. Too often, programs promoting workforce development are too prescriptive and lead to communities with an oversupply of one career path or skillset. Emphasis should be placed on the innovative aspects of entrepreneurial thinking so that members are capable of assessing the relevant to the needs of their communities while promoting emerging (e.g., technological) and existing (e.g., agricultural) industries.

Comments

The poor have few productive assets beyond their own labor; thus, their earnings can only be increased by raising their business capacity in the informal, but especially the formal economy.

Increasing employment and income generation, especially within the formal sector, will demonstrate programmatic success as families will have greater disposable income and the financial means to access better nutrition, better healthcare, and better education.

To ensure long-term success, business development and economic growth will also require financial investment, which is stalled by a lack of access to capital. If the early training and encouragement works, and people try to start small businesses, the center could establish ties with financial organizations and the private sector to help their members gain access to potential sources of capital. Start-up capital or loans could take the form of private sector angel investment programs; donor-backed loan support safety nets similar to USAID's Development Credit Authority; or promoting programs that improve upon the skills of loan recipients, like internships or apprenticeships, making them less risky borrowers. While remittances may provide a source of capital for investment for those with relatives who've already departed, targeted efforts should focus on deterring 1st generation migrants because family reunification is often a stronger driver of emigration than economics.

Outcomes
The centers will improve vocational skills, increasing citizens' ability to enter the workforce. Contributing to the economic development of border and provincial areas will create empowered entrepreneurs who will be better equipped to start businesses and provide opportunities in areas that traditionally lack them. It is also plausible that increased income generation may initially result in increased attempts to migrate if other drivers are not simultaneously addressed; however, over time, increased investment and economic development in border and provincial communities are likely to reduce the incentive to migrate. While these programs will take time to implement and produce tangible results, they are likely to promote lasting change.

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Bringing Corruption to Light

Develop mechanisms for citizens to report corruption.

Challenges
Corruption through under-the-table payments, favoritism, extortion, bribes and money-laundering all cause citizens to lose trust in local municipalities and authorities. Involvement with corrupt government officials, business professionals, and public servants is extremely dangerous as criminal networks are often closely linked to corruption. Citizens do not have the ability to bring these issues to light without fear of reprisals, and they lack confidence that any action will be taken. Citizens lose trust in their government. Poor governance and loss of trust in the state are also causes of migration as citizens look elsewhere to find a more stable living situation.

Key Judgments
Corruption and Impunity; Poor Governance; Limited Education.

Recommendation(s)
Local, well-respected non-governmental organizations in the Northern Triangle should further develop mechanisms to report corruption, seek legal advice, and increase community awareness. Some NGOs currently involved in this type of work include *Asociación para una Sociedad Más Justa* (ASJ), *Fundación Nacional para el Desarrollo* (FUNDE), and *Acción Ciudadana*. NGO's can then bring these issues to light and promote transparency and good governance while providing a safe and secure means to citizens to report corruption without experiencing reprisals.

- Such groups should further develop mechanisms for citizens to report corruption via SMS, Whatsapp, applications (*Dilo Aquî*), direct office contact, social media, or through a hotline – all with the option of remaining anonymous.
- NGOs can create databases to identify key trends in corruption based on periodic reports. They can bring corruption to light via annual reports and studies on corruption, through local informational flyers and "how to report corruption" guides translated to be made accessible to all readers.
- Expansion of NGO efforts will allow for the creation of events to educate citizens on good governance while promoting political activeness. They can bring awareness of the mechanisms and anti-corruption efforts to communities via radio, field trips to local municipalities, pamphlets, news articles, and television commercials.
- NGO's should further develop legal support services to better protect citizens from false allegations and threats when denouncing corruption.

Comments
More than 80 percent of citizens in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador have cell phones, making the denouncement of corruption via cellular devices more feasible. Overall low access to internet implies that television, radio, printed media, and field trips by these NGO's to rural areas would be key to spreading awareness about these tools to report corruption, especially considering high levels of accessibility to these media.

Corruption

Certain efforts to denounce corruption have been successful. For example, *Asociación para una Sociedad Más Justa* (ASJ) in Honduras is an organization devoted to transparency, fighting corruption, receiving corruption inquiries and providing legal advice. ASJ has had success in fielding reports of corruption and bringing incidents to court.

Given that institutions where citizens can pursue corruption-related complaints already exist, it is feasible to further develop anti-corruption mechanisms through affiliating with an organization already involved in this field of work.

Outcomes
The creation of this mechanism would allow communities to report corruption and crime more confidently than in the past. Citizens will promote good governance by attempting to hold government officials and public servants accountable. In the long term, these efforts would bring corruption to light, making information available to community members and governments, increasing transparency and good governance. Good governance and citizen participation can possibly reduce migration caused by lack of trust in the state and fear of reprisals from corrupt public servants.

This recommendation will not fully eradicate corruption but will provide a means by which citizens can report corruption with some level of confidence.

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Northern Triangle Anti-Corruption Commitment Tracker

Monitor the progress of anti-corruption initiatives to improve current operations

Challenges
The negative impact of corruption on economic growth and human development has increased migration patterns in the Northern Triangle. Consequently, international actors supported coalitions consisting of international governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector aimed at decreasing corruption. Information on whether these coalitions are helping are either inconsistent or unavailable. As a result, it's uncertain whether the international response is helping to increase faith in institutions, which is needed to significantly reduce migration.

Key Judgments
Weak International Response, Impunity, Poor Governance

Recommendation
An organization, such as Transparency International's local chapters in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, should adapt Transparency International U.K.'s commitment pledge tracker to monitor each country's commitment to anti-corruption efforts.

- An international non-profit, non-governmental organization that focuses on stopping corruption, Transparency International should have its local chapters in each Northern Triangle country manage and conduct the research of the Northern Triangle Anti-Corruption Commitment Tracker for their respective country.
- The commitment tracker should include information on what commitments each country has undertaken, who is involved, and whether commitments are being fulfilled, at what rate, and how well. If a commitment is found to be underperforming, an explanation should be provided as to why.
- This information should be published on a public online database that is easy to use.
- Annual reports should be released that details successes, gaps, and opportunities to improve current operations based on the information gathered.

Comments
For the tracker to work, representatives from anti-corruption coalitions within the Alliance for Prosperity Plan, the Open Government Partnership, and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative must provide information on their progress and setbacks. If representatives from these coalitions don't cooperate with the local chapters, the United States Government Accountability Office, which has reviewed the Alliance for Prosperity Plan despite unreliable data, can provide guidance to the Northern Triangle chapters on how to assess performance.

Outcomes
A commitment tracker will provide justification for future anti-corruption initiatives because it will identify areas where improvement is still needed. It provides insight on which approaches work best, helping donors learn which target areas are cost-effective. It identifies flaws in programs, which allows for coalitions to adapt their initiatives, improve their operations, and

increase their chances of mitigating corruption and strengthening institutions so that citizens have fewer incentives to migrate.

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Revitalize CICIG and MACCIH

Rebrand and refocus the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) and the Mission in Support of the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH) to target municipal corruption

Challenges
CICIG and MACCIH are hybrid international-national organizations that have been established by the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS) respectively to reduce corruption in Guatemala and Honduras. These organizations hold an international mandate but are designed to work with existing national institutions. The investigative work of CICIG and MACCIH has led to the prosecution of high-profile political and business leaders. Because of these successes, elites have used their leverage to escape investigation, increase their impunity and obstruct investigations. The ensuing legal battles have hindered anti-corruption efforts. The United States and the United Nations' reluctance to continue substantial support to both organizations have also weakened their mandates. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) constantly vie for grants due to their short solicitation cycles, making collaborative work nearly impossible. The constant need to solicit for funds pushes CSOs to advocate exclusively for their missions and creates a fractured movement. A lack of coordination with and among CSOs results in an incoherent communications strategy that further undermines CICIG and MACCIH's mandate. If CICIG and MACCIH are unable to continue their work, corruption will continue to thrive, making living conditions for people inhospitable and pushing them towards migration.

Key Judgments
Corruption and Impunity; Inconsistent International Response; Poor governance.

Recommendations
CICIG and MACCIH should target municipal level corruption cases where they will receive less resistance from elites. They should work with international actors and CSOs to strengthen their mandate and create a concerted communications strategy. These recommendations would only require a reallocation of resources and would be implemented by CICIG and MACCIH's sponsor organizations, the UN and the OAS respectively.

- CICIG and MACCIH should rebrand themselves to indicate a shift in their approach to mitigating corruption in their host countries. This can be accomplished by changing the organizations' names and by promoting their new approach to the public. This rebranding would also disassociate these organizations from the political turmoil they are currently facing and will allow them to have a fresh start.
- These organizations should refocus their investigations and prosecutions to prioritize cases at the municipal level by creating a "bottom-up" approach to mitigating corruption. This new approach will mitigate corruption where it is most prevalent in terms of quantity and impact on day-to-day lives. It will also reduce tensions between these organizations and national level elites, allowing them to operate with less opposition at the national level.
- The United States, the UN, and other international actors should coordinate with each other in support to these organizations to enhance their new mandates. The UN should provide more support to OAS-led MACCIH to show that that it has international standing

equal to that of CICIG. The U.S. should recommit to supporting CICIG and MACCIH both in rhetoric and in continuing aid. International actors should meet with CICIG and MACCIH representatives to identify where to allocate political, financial, and logistical support to have the most significant impact.

- CSOs should work together to develop a strong communications strategy to manage citizens' and governments' expectations. International actors should support increasing CSOs solicitation cycles by financially contributing towards long-term grants. This would reduce competition for grants and the amount of time spent applying for them. Grants should require CSOs to collaborate with each other. This will allow CSOs to focus on working together and overcoming their own shortcomings. As a result, grantee CSOs will be able to develop a concerted communications strategy to inform the public of what to expect from all actors involved and manage expectations.

Comments

Prioritizing the prosecution of municipal corruption cases will significantly slow the prosecution of higher-level corruption cases, which might frustrate citizens who want the anti-corruption focus to remain on the national level. This issue is addressed by launching a media campaign as part of the communications strategy. Municipal cases should be publicized over higher-level cases during their litigation process because the rate of prosecution will be higher, thereby increasing citizen support. High-level cases would be revealed when institutions and evidence are strong enough to prosecute. This prevents elites from interfering during investigations and thwarting indictments against them. Further challenges may arise if municipal-level corruption is directly linked to individuals at the national level. Encouraging international actors to work together will also be a challenge since they often prefer to allocate financial contributions according to their own interests.

Outcomes

Rebranding and refocusing CICIG and MACCIH to prioritize a "bottom-up" approach will:

- Highlight the progress of institution-building efforts.
- Provide the citizenry with results where daily lives are most directly affected.
- Give corrupt national level elites time to "divest" from their corrupt dealings.
- Give institutions the time to become strong enough to bring corrupt officials to justice.

Such results will increase stakeholders' support. Pushback from elites is likely to occur, but at a reduced intensity. International backing will encourage CSOs to improve collaboration. Curbing corruption will increase public trust in government institutions and will help lower the propensity towards migration.

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