

# Strengthening Government capacities to address human mobility of indigenous communities in contexts of climate change, environmental degradation and deforestation in Paraguay

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## IOM Paraguay



Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is a region highly exposed to climate-related hazards, such as droughts, floods, heatwaves and tropical cyclones. As these events increase in frequency and intensity, they have also ignited discussions on how to cope with their impacts on livelihoods, economies, the environment and the availability of natural resources.

Paraguay is no exception to this situation. According to the Vulnerability Index to Climate Change in the Latin American and Caribbean Region, Paraguay presents the highest vulnerability risks of all countries in South America. On top of this, Paraguay is home to 19 indigenous peoples belonging to five language groups with unique histories of indigenous migration. For decades, migrants have been moving into cities, creating an imbalance between rural and urban areas as a result. Migration towards urban areas appears a coping strategy to overcome a decline in income linked to reduced agricultural and livestock production.

These mobility patterns — and their evolution — are particularly important to address, as the impacts of climate change are expected to make indigenous communities even more vulnerable to environmental shocks and climate-induced migration.

According to the third National Census of Population and Housing for Indigenous Peoples in 2012, indigenous communities are particularly impacted by climate change, environmental degradation, and deforestation, which translates into the exposure of these communities to constant emergency situations.

In this framework, IOM Paraguay, in coordination with the Paraguayan Indigenous Institute (INDI in Spanish), generated a research and action proposal to contribute to the prevention of forced migration due to climate change, environmental degradation and deforestation, working with four Mbya Guaraní indigenous communities, from Repatriación (Pindo'i and Ka'atymi), in the department of Caaguazú, from Abai

(Ykua Porá), in the department of Caazapá and from Paso Yobai (Santa Teresita), in the department of Guairá.

## Description of the Initiative



An IOM Development Fund project is under implementation to support the Government of Paraguay, in particular the Paraguayan Indigenous Institute (INDI in Spanish), to prevent and address migration and displacement of indigenous communities due to climate change, environmental degradation, and deforestation.

One of the most important elements of the project is the implementation of a study to better understand the relationship between human mobility of indigenous peoples in the context of climate change, environmental degradation, and deforestation. This represents a key innovation approach as it entails a new perspective in the region to better understand mobilities of indigenous populations in exposed settings.

Since May 2022, the study has been directly engaging with four communities of the Mbya Guaraní, located in rural areas, to participate in this project, including Pindo'i (Repatriación, Caaguazú), Ka'atymi (Repatriación, Caaguazú), Ykua Porá (Abai, Caazapá) and Santa Teresita (Paso Yobái, Guairá).

The study takes a qualitative approach which involves directly engaging with the indigenous groups through community meetings, called "Aty Guasú" in Guaraní. The meetings involve community members and local authorities with the aim of publicizing the scope of the activities and listening to target populations about available services and existing needs. In these meetings, the communities discuss migration issues and their link to climate change, environmental degradation and deforestation, as well as possible alternatives to avoid climate change induced migration.



Moreover, a quantitative approach is also undertaken by using the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) tool to gain insight into the socio-economic situation of families and show to what extent climate change, environmental degradation and deforestation influence migration decisions.

Both approaches address human rights, gender and mainstream intercultural approaches. The community meetings and interviews with key informants, as well as the information collected via the DTM tool will inform the final document, which is expected to be validated by the indigenous communities in December 2022. So far, this is the first study of its kind, and the results will be critical for developing evidence-based policies.

IOM and INDI are also jointly working on the development of two manuals that will serve as an institutional guide to develop other similar social assessments and advocacy meetings with indigenous people. To support the sustainability of this effort, 80 civil servants will be trained on the manuals early next year.

Inputs from the assessment will also serve as a basis for the development and implementation of a pilot programme to support initiatives selected by each of the indigenous communities participating in the project. Though still in the planning process, the pilot will aim to reach families in each of the four Mbya Guarani indigenous communities and will prioritize proposals focusing on food security, care and protection of the environment and sustainability.

This project sets an important precedence in strengthening institutional capacities in relation to climate change-induced migration, in a participatory and coordinated manner with indigenous communities, and its goal is to replicate this innovative, pilot initiative in other communities in the future.

### Product Innovation



The project has been designed and is being implemented as an invention, based on emerging issues and needs raised by INDI, as the main counterpart of the project.

The project includes cooperation and partnerships with different institutions of the Paraguayan government, notably the INDI, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADES), Ministry of Childhood and Adolescence (MINNA), Ministry of Women. Partnerships have also been sought with other UN Agencies. The inputs of State agencies, notably INDI, has been crucial to the design of activities as the ultimate objective of the action is to facilitate INDI's engagement with indigenous communities to address the migration, environment and climate change nexus.

Internally, in terms of project management, the team has collaborated with the MECC RTS. Data and monitoring and evaluation experts have also contributed to strengthening the data and information management aspects of the project.

### Results

The innovative aspects of the project enable IOM and partners to have timely and updated evidence for better planning and response towards indigenous communities, on issues related to migration, climate change, environmental degradation and deforestation. The new approaches will give government entities tools to better engage with indigenous communities respecting principles of prior and informed consent, through the preparation of institutional manuals for the Government that allow standardizing criteria for the preparation of diagnoses and approaches with indigenous communities on the MECC themes.

The project is at the piloting stage. It is expected to enable transformation in the way that government authorities in Paraguay will be able to reach out to indigenous communities to address environmental drivers of forced migration. It will also ultimately raise awareness and facilitate discussions around the issue of migration and climate change at the local level, which could have a positive impact on strengthening of public policies based on evidence and good practices.

In terms of scalability potential, the innovation approach can be widely used to engage with indigenous communities, both within the same area of work and across new geographies. With new resources, it can also support engagement at the regional level with other indigenous communities and contribute to addressing the adverse drivers of forced migration in line with provisions of the Global Compact of Migration and IOM's Institutional Strategy on Migration, Environment and Climate Change.

### Scaling and Sustainability



Through direct articulation with the Government, the initiative entails that response capacities are strengthened via the generation of timely and updated evidence, the development of regulatory frameworks/diagnostic manuals and approaches with indigenous communities. These tools are expected to remain replicable and orient the Government's approaches to indigenous communities in a sustainable manner. Being an innovative initiative, it seeks to generate various spaces for dialogue and visibility of the experience, with different actors (Government, Academy, Civil Society, the general public).

For more information, please contact IOM Paraguay office.