



HAITI JULY 2021 - MAY 2022

PROMOTING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE IN THE
COVID-19 RESPONSE FOR MIGRANTS, REFUGEES AND
OTHER VULNERABLE POPULATIONS
IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



The COVID-19 pandemic has had serious consequences on the socioeconomic well-being and health of the population of the region (Caribbean and Latin America), especially among the most vulnerable including migrants, returnees, and internally displaced persons. This project aimed to supporting the Government of Haiti's efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. The overall objective of this effort is to promote integration and peaceful coexistence by improving COVID-19 awareness, community engagement, and the protective environment of affected communities.

ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES AND SOCIAL SAFETY

NETS FOR MIGRANTS, REFUGEES AND PERSONS

OF CONCERN

During the nine (9) months of the project implementation (March 1 to December 10, 2021):

- 35,322 people, including 19,058 women, 12,254 men, 2,261 girls and 1,749 boys, were sensitized on hygiene practices to be adopted for the prevention of COVID-19.
- 108 mass sensitization sessions, 35 Information, Education and Communication (IEC) sessions were conducted,
- 1,280 health kits or Personal Protective Equipment were distributed to 718 women, 532 men, 20 girls and 10 boys;



DISCUSSION ON ACCESS TO PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE FOR MIGRANTS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS IN THE CITY OF HINCHE

HAITI

PLACES OF INTERVENTION OF THE PROJECT



Thanks to the partnership with the Centre d'Animation Paysanne et d'Action Communautaire (CAPAC), between May and December 2021, numerous training sessions on Mental Health and Protection of Migrants were organized in different Haitian communes, namely, Ouanaminthe, Cap-Haitien, Port-de-Paix, Saint-Marc, Mirebalais and Hinche, Cornillon and Croix-des-Bouquets. During these activities, no less than 10,000 members of the communities of origin; 1,000 in each of the communities targeted by the project, participated.

These training series were well received, and the interest in participating was notable. Several participants expressed their desire to continue these trainings in order to sensitize many more actors operating in the border areas of Haiti.

Samuel, from Ouanaminthe, participated in a training in mental health and protection for migrants organized by IOM in collaboration with CAPAC. He affirmed having acquired precious skills that he can use daily in contact with migrant returnees repatriated from the Dominican Republic. Many displaced individuals and families who have been returned from DR have undergone significant trauma which requires psychosocial support. Finally, Samuel said having learned more on Covid-19 and preventive measures.

The various testimonies that were collected at the end of each training session are positive and show that each trade or activity of the participants left with concrete knowledge to apply in their activities. Also, bringing together these different actors from different backgrounds, but working with the same audiences and for the same causes, facilitated dialogue between them and cooperation. In particular, Vodou representatives and the LGBTQ+ rights activists expressed their gratitude for being invited to the training allowing their voices to be heard.

ENHANCING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND STRENGTHENING EFFORTS TOWARDS ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND XENOPHOBIA

"Before the schools were closed, even as a teacher, we didn't really know what the virus was. Based on everything we heard, we felt like nobody was really able to protect themselves."

In order to strengthen social cohesion between communities and contribute to a peaceful conflict resolution, a series of activities have been organized in each commune in coordination with youth, community leaders and Civil Society Organizations (CSO), based on the findings of the COVID-19 impact assessments conducted in the communities of origin.

240 LEADERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED

WOMEN

123

MEN

117

Received explanations and planned sensitization activities in the field.

95 COMMUNITY LEADERS

WOMEN

43

MEN

52

Religious leaders, relevant actors, voodoo priests, CSO members and committed youth were trained in conflict management/resolution and intercultural mediation at the four (4) official border points between Haiti and the Dominican Republic

At the same time, awareness campaigns on the preventive measures against COVID-19 but also on discrimination and stigmatization were conducted among 30,000 returnees and members of the community of origin, that is to say 3,000 in each of the 10 communes initially targeted by the project.

195 RELEVANT ACTORS

WOMEN

59

MEN

136

Committed youth, community leaders and members of CSOs, actively participated in discussion forums for social cohesion on conflict resolution and hostilities related to COVID-19 in the ten (10) target communes of the project.





During socio-cultural events in each of the project's target communes, IOM in collaboration with the partners organized theater performances on themes of conflict resolution, social cohesion, discrimination and stigmatization, COVID-19 to sensitize the population.

9,820 REACHED

WOMEN

5,036

MEN

2,677

GIRLS

1,189

BOYS

918

Through the reading of texts, dissemination of messages, theatre plays and information kiosks.

Danielle and her classmates was one of the groups of classes that participated in a special class organized by CAPAC, on social inclusion aiming at promoting the integration of students returned from the Dominican Republic into her class. The goal of this session was to promote acceptance, reduce stigma towards those students, and avoid social tensions. Danielle said that these activities helped her to understand that all children are equal, and that people cannot be discriminated based on their experience in DR.

175 PEOPLE MET WITH CAPAC COORDINATION

WOMEN

80

MEN

95

From different local organizations in Croix-des-Bouquets, Port-au-Prince, Mirebalais, Saint-Marc, Hinche, Cornillon/Grand Bois, Cap-Haitien, Ouanaminthe, Fonds-Verrettes and Port-de-Paix.

This allowed IOM to invite them to forums and to encourage them to adopt preventive measure against COVID-19 and in the resolution of community conflicts. The participants were all community leaders, NGO representatives, journalists and local authorities. They were identified in each locality with the support of the local authorities.

TO UNDERSTANDING PERCEPTIONS OF RECEPTION

TOWARDS RETURN MIGRANTS

“The upsurge of COVID-19 and the inadequacy of responses exacerbated existing inequalities and increased the risk of violence in communities. Intense tensions between different groups deepen with physical distancing and the tendency to accuse the other of spreading the virus”.
Testimony of a participant in one of the focus group discussions, in Port- de-Paix.

Collecting data on perceptions of migrants represented an important challenge for the interviewers because it appears that most of the Haitian population does not give enough importance to the risks of the COVID-19 given other health challenges that the Haitian population must face living in precarious conditions and given the poor health services. For those majority, COVID-19 in Haiti is perceived more as a political issue - it is in this difficult context that the study was conducted.

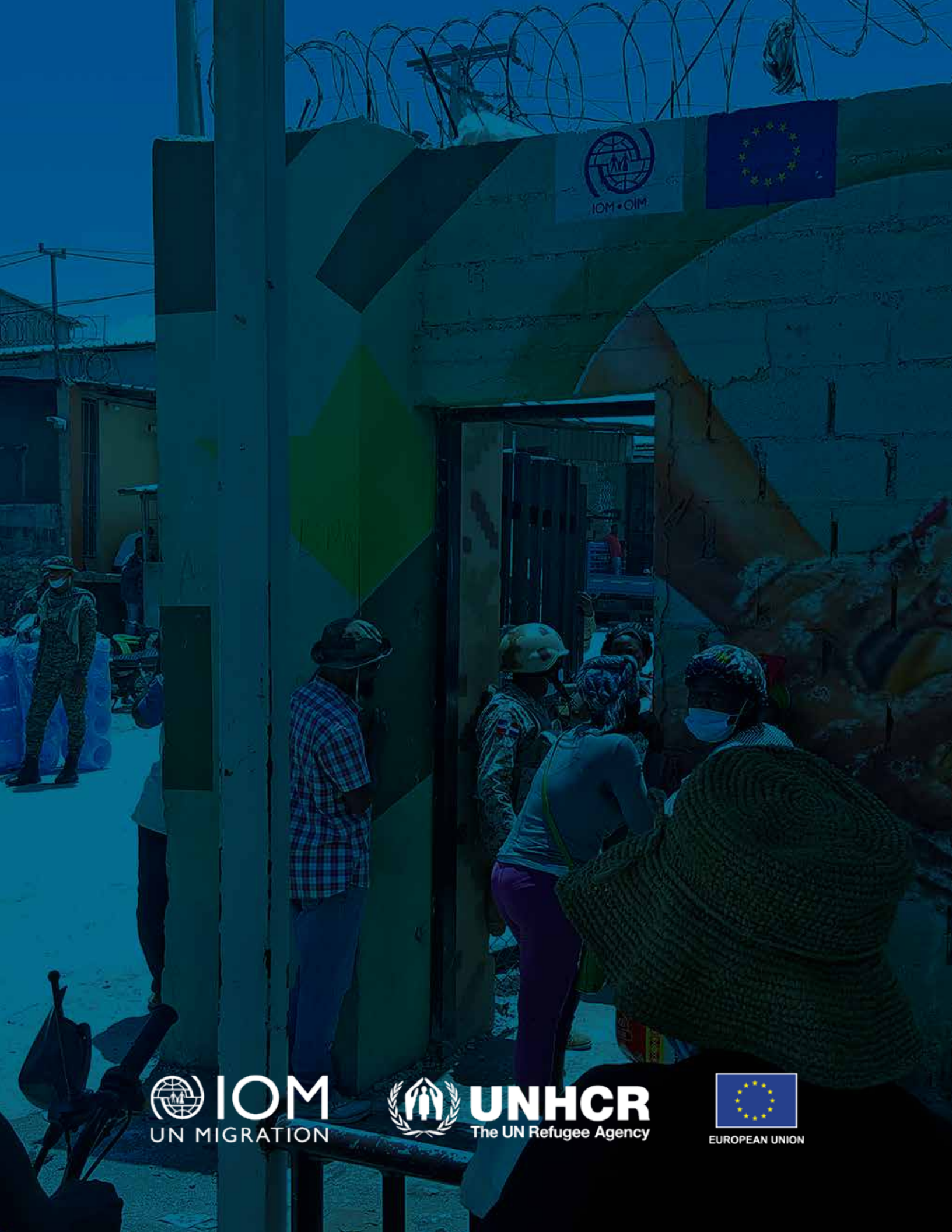
Thus, after the survey, it appears that 15% of the respondents consider that COVID-19 is a disease of white people/foreigners, 10% consider that it is a disease of rich people, 7% consider that the disease does not exist and finally 4% argue that COVID-19 is a disease invented by the Government to get money from the population.

In contrast to these initial findings, it appears that COVID-19 has largely contributed to the hindrance of migrant mobility in the border areas between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, as the largest proportion of migrants interviewed at the borders said that smugglers avoided to approach them because « [afraid, the community] often flee from our smugglers [...] smugglers don't receive us in their families for fear of being infected ».

Indeed, most respondents believe that COVID-19 disease generates stigma against specific individuals (38% of migrants and 62% of other non-migrant community members). While migrants are considered the most stigmatized, over 70% of respondents believe that relations between migrants and the host community are good.

The health and economic consequences of COVID-19 are considered profoundly serious by the vast majority (75%) of respondents. COVID-19 and its consequences as well as the proliferation of gang activities are the issues of greatest concern for 32% of respondents. Thus, the health, political, economic, and social context created by COVID-19 has contributed to exacerbating the feeling among the population of a lack of state action, and therefore leading to violence. About 60% of the respondents believe that violence is likely to increase in response to the rising cost of living caused by COVID-19, 55% believe that internal conflicts will increase in response to the loss of income, and 44% believe that armed gang groups will take advantage of the pandemic to justify the intensification of violent actions.

Thus, data analysis showed that respondents considered that COVID-19 will de facto increase social inequalities, which will lead to an increase in urban violence. It should be noted that the probability of answering that COVID-19 will encourage attacks between armed gangs, violence during demonstrations or political meetings, and violence between residents is not influenced by the age of the respondents, their religion, or their degree of confidence in the central authorities.



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UN MIGRATION

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