

IOM's COVID-19 Response in Panama

Inter-Agency Coordination



INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

This document brings insights on IOM Panama's efforts in **inter-agency coordination** in the context of the humanitarian response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For further information on the topic, consult the [main knowledge product](#) covering IOM Panama's experience.

During 2020, as the government of Panama closed borders to curb the spread of COVID-19, many extra-regional and extra-continental migrants, transiting from Colombia to North America, became stranded. In this context, IOM Panama coordinated with other stakeholders to provide a comprehensive response to assist beneficiaries on the ground.



OVERVIEW OF GOOD PRACTICE

IOM Panama capitalized on an existing coordinating mechanism called Grupo de Movilidad Humana (Human Mobility Group) to finetune its response to the challenge's migrants were facing in the country and providing humanitarian assistance more efficiently while avoiding duplication. The group congregated IOM, WHO/PAHO, UNHCR, OCHA, UNDP, UNICEF, UNAIDS, and UNFPA. This inter-agency mechanism was managed in three layers: Chiefs of Mission, Technical Specialists, and Local Teams.



LESSONS LEARNED

- WHO's presence in the coordination mechanism proved to be fundamental in providing **technical support concerning the pandemic as well as in facilitating coordination with government authorities and members of the civil society.**
- The presence of multiple U.N agencies and bodies in the coordination mechanism allowed the group to **analyze field experiences that worked from each agency to better plan future interventions.**
- The WHO also facilitated decision making within the group to be **almost exclusively based on epidemiological inputs and evidence.**



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Any inter-agency coordination mechanism should also pursue actions **to optimize resource utilization**, particularly in the domain of procurement, by exploring synergies amongst participants. This strategy can potentially speed-up purchasing processes allowing for a quicker response time.

