

PROGRAM FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS OF
VENEZUELAN INDIGENOUS MIGRANT WOMEN AND GIRLS IN COLOMBIA



PROGRAM FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS OF VENEZUELAN INDIGENOUS MIGRANT WOMEN AND GIRLS IN COLOMBIA

SUMMARY

The proposed program aims to address the environmental challenges faced by Venezuelan migrant indigenous women and girls in Colombia. It seeks to guarantee their environmental rights, promote their empowerment and preserve their cultural traditions. The program focuses on equitable access to natural resources, capacity building, environmental awareness, comprehensive protection, and inter-institutional cooperation. It will be implemented through strategic alliances and monitoring indicators will be established to assess its effectiveness. This programme represents an important step towards an inclusive and sustainable society.

The diagnosis reveals that the massive displacement of Venezuelans to Colombia has generated significant environmental impacts, which disproportionately affect indigenous women and girls. These communities face obstacles in accessing vital natural resources, such as clean water, food, adequate shelter and basic services. This not only jeopardizes their well-being, but also their ability to preserve their cultural traditions and ancestral knowledge.

KEY WORDS: women, indigenous, migrants, Venezuelans, natural resources, crisis, comprehensive protection.

INTRODUCTION

The mass migration of Venezuelan citizens to Colombia continues to be an ever-evolving phenomenon. According to updated data, as of the cut-off date in September 2021, more than 5.6 million Venezuelans have left their country in search of better opportunities and living conditions. Colombia has been one of the main receiving countries of this migration, facing the challenge of hosting a large number of people in a short period of time.

The migration of indigenous people can be motivated by a number of complex and multifaceted reasons. These factors can include armed conflict, violence, lack of economic opportunities, discrimination, and the search for better living conditions for themselves and their families. Indigenous people often face additional challenges due to historical marginalization, loss of land and resources, and lack of access to basic services such as education and healthcare.

In the case of Venezuela, the country has experienced a severe economic and political crisis in recent years. Hyperinflation, shortages of food and medicine, insecurity and lack of public services have created extremely difficult conditions for the general population, including indigenous

communities. These factors have led to a significant migratory flow from Venezuela to neighboring countries, including Colombia.

Colombia shares a long border with Venezuela and has been one of the top destinations for Venezuelan migrants, including indigenous ones. Geographical proximity, as well as cultural and linguistic similarities, have facilitated migration to Colombia.

The migration of indigenous people poses specific challenges in terms of protecting human rights and preserving cultural identity. It is essential that receiving countries implement inclusive policies that recognize and respect the rights of indigenous migrants, promoting their social and economic integration without compromising their cultural heritage.

Within this migratory flow, Venezuelan indigenous women and girls represent a particularly vulnerable group. These indigenous communities, with their own cultural traditions and ancestral knowledge, are often disadvantaged because of their gender and ethnicity. In addition, migration places them in a new and unfamiliar context, where they face additional barriers to



accessing basic resources and essential services.



One of the main concerns in relation to Venezuelan migration is the environmental impact it generates. Increased demand for natural resources and pressure on local ecosystems can have significant consequences in terms of deforestation, water pollution and biodiversity loss. These environmental impacts disproportionately affect indigenous communities, as they depend directly on natural resources for their subsistence and preservation of their culture.

In this context, the "Program for the Protection of the Environmental Rights of Venezuelan Indigenous Migrant Women and Girls in Colombia" has been developed as a comprehensive response to the specific environmental challenges faced by these communities. The program seeks to address the barriers that limit these women and girls' equitable access to vital natural resources,

such as clean water, food, and adequate land. It also focuses on strengthening their empowerment and promoting active participation in decision-making related to the environment.

In addition, the program focuses on environmental awareness and education, recognizing the importance of promoting collective awareness of the intersection between gender, migration and the environment. Through awareness-raising campaigns and educational programs, it seeks to involve civil society, the private sector and government institutions in the protection of the environmental rights of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls.

Protection and comprehensive care are also fundamental pillars of the program. It will seek to establish protection mechanisms that provide support to indigenous migrant women and girls who have been victims of environmental violence, guaranteeing their access to adequate health services, psychosocial support and specialized legal advice.

Inter-institutional and international cooperation plays a crucial role in the program, as it seeks to foster collaboration



and exchange of good practices between government institutions, non-governmental organizations and other relevant actors. This includes the allocation of adequate and sustainable resources for the effective implementation of the program.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE:

The overall objective of the "Program for the Protection of the Environmental Rights of Venezuelan Indigenous Migrant Women and Girls in Colombia" is to ensure the full exercise of the environmental rights of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls, recognizing and addressing the intersections between gender, migration, ethnicity and the environment. The program seeks to promote equal access to natural resources, strengthen the empowerment of these communities, raise awareness of the importance of environmental protection, provide comprehensive protection, and foster cooperation between institutions and relevant actors to achieve an inclusive and sustainable society.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

Promote equitable access to natural resources: It will ensure that Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls have equal access to the natural resources necessary for their subsistence and well-

being. This involves working together with local authorities and community organizations to ensure the supply of clean water, the availability of suitable land for agriculture, and the protection of forests and other ecosystems that are critical to their livelihoods. Likewise, it will seek to implement strategies for the sustainable management of natural resources, promoting agricultural and conservation practices that are respectful of the environment and that allow the preservation of biodiversity.

Strengthening the Empowerment of Indigenous Migrant Women and Girls:

It will focus on strengthening the empowerment of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls, recognizing their crucial role in environment-related decision-making. This involves providing training and support for skills and leadership development, encouraging their active participation in the planning and execution of environmental projects. In addition, it will seek to promote gender equality and eradicate gender-based violence and discrimination, creating safe spaces and promoting equal participation in all aspects of community and environmental life.



Raising awareness of the importance of environmental protection: Both host communities and indigenous migrant women and girls themselves will be sensitized to the importance of protecting the environment. This involves developing awareness-raising campaigns that promote the conservation of natural resources, the reduction of pollution, and the encouragement of sustainable practices. These campaigns will be conducted through a variety of media outlets, including community workshops, educational materials, and outreach programs in schools and community centers. The aim is to create a collective awareness of the interrelationship between human beings and their natural environment, and to encourage the adoption of responsible and environmentally friendly behaviour.

Provide comprehensive protection to migrant indigenous women and girls: The comprehensive protection of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls will be promoted, especially with regard to environmental and gender-based violence. This involves establishing support and assistance mechanisms that provide adequate health services, psychosocial support, and specialized legal advice. The creation of support networks will be promoted and the

capacity of local institutions to deal effectively with cases of violence and discrimination will be strengthened. In addition, it will seek to raise awareness among host communities about the rights of indigenous migrant women and girls, promoting gender equality and the construction of safe and violence-free environments.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The program is based on the principles and rights enshrined in the Political Constitution of Colombia. Respect for human dignity, gender equality, protection of the rights of ethnic groups and the duty of the State to promote a healthy and sustainable environment are guaranteed. In particular, article 79 of the Constitution establishes the right of everyone to enjoy a healthy environment and the duty to protect natural resources.

The program is aligned with the Gender Equality Law, Law 1257 of 2008, which seeks to eliminate discrimination and promote equal opportunities between men and women. This law establishes measures to prevent, punish and eradicate gender-based violence, as well as to promote women's participation in all areas of social, political and economic life. The program ensures that



indigenous migrant women and girls have equal access to natural resources and promotes their active participation in environmental decision-making.

The program is based on the Law for the Protection of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Law 21 of 1991, which recognizes and protects the rights of indigenous peoples in Colombia. This law establishes principles such as the right to cultural identity, the right to ownership of land and territories, the right to prior consultation, the right to the preservation of culture, and the right to participation in the planning and management of natural resources. Within the framework of the program, respect for the ancestral knowledge of indigenous communities is guaranteed and collaboration with indigenous authorities in the implementation of environmental protection measures is promoted.

The program is part of the Environment and Natural Resources Law, Law 99 of 1993, which establishes the rules for the protection, conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in Colombia. This law seeks to guarantee the preservation of ecosystems, biodiversity and environmental services. The program promotes the sustainable

management of natural resources, the adoption of environmentally friendly agricultural and conservation practices, and the mitigation of environmental impacts generated by migration and increased demand for resources.

The program is based on the Law on the Prevention and Attention of Gender Violence, Law 1257 of 2008, which aims to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women in all its forms. This law establishes measures to ensure the comprehensive protection of women and girls, providing adequate health services, psychosocial support, specialized legal advice, and promoting awareness of gender-based violence. The program ensures the comprehensive protection of indigenous migrant women and girls, taking into account gender and ethnic factors that may increase their vulnerability.

The program is part of the international agreements and conventions ratified by Colombia in the areas of human rights, gender equality, protection of indigenous peoples and the environment. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the



International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Within the framework of the program, the implementation of the commitments assumed by Colombia in these international instruments, which include the protection of human rights, gender equality, environmental protection and sustainable development, is guaranteed. The integration of the principles and standards established in these agreements into policies, programs and actions related to the protection of the environmental rights of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls in Colombia is promoted.

PROBLEM DESCRIPTION

The issue addresses the difficult situation in which a group of Venezuelan indigenous migrants has been taken in by the Zenú indigenous community located in the department of Córdoba, in Colombia, specifically in the vicinity of a basin of the Sinú River. This situation has given rise to a number of environmental problems that require attention and adequate solutions to ensure the protection of the environment and the well-being of all communities involved.



One of the most pressing issues is deforestation. The arrival of large numbers of migrants has put severe pressure on the area's natural resources. The need to obtain land to live on and grow food has led to the indiscriminate felling of trees in forested areas near the Sinú River basin. This uncontrolled deforestation has a negative impact on the region's biodiversity, as well as the ecosystem's ability to provide important environmental services, such as climate regulation and soil conservation.

Another environmental problem stemming from this situation is water pollution. The concentration of migrants in the community has significantly increased the demand for safe drinking water and basic sanitation. To meet this demand, excessive water extraction from the Sinú River basin has been resorted to, which can deplete water resources and



affect the availability of water for the Zenú indigenous community and other users of the resource. In addition, the lack of adequate wastewater treatment infrastructure has led to the pollution of the river, which affects water quality and poses a risk to the health of people and aquatic life.

The massive influx of migrants has also had a significant impact on the biodiversity of the area. Deforestation and associated environmental degradation have led to the loss of natural habitats and a decline in species diversity in the Sinú River basin. This negatively affects the species of flora and fauna present in the region, as well as the ecosystem services they provide, such as pollination, climate regulation, and flood protection. In addition, disruption of the ecological balance can have long-term consequences for the sustainability and resilience of the ecosystem as a whole.



The practice of intensive and unsustainable agriculture by indigenous migrants has led to soil contamination in the area. The excessive use of agrochemicals and fertilizers in food production has led to an accumulation of toxic substances in the soil, which can have long-term negative effects on soil fertility, plant health, and the quality of food produced. This soil contamination poses a risk to human health and the food security of communities that depend on these agricultural resources.

Finally, the arrival of migrants has generated tensions and conflicts between the Zenú indigenous community and the migrants, mainly due to competition for limited natural resources, such as land, water, and food. These conflicts can generate social tensions and compromise peaceful coexistence between different groups. It is critical to address these issues from an environmental justice and equity perspective, promoting the active participation of all stakeholders and fostering sustainable solutions that benefit all communities.

JUSTIFICATION

The implementation of an action plan to address environmental issues stemming from the reception of Venezuelan indigenous



migrants by the Zenú indigenous community near the Sinú River basin is crucial for several reasons:

The Sinú River basin is a vital ecosystem that is home to a great diversity of species of flora and fauna. Deforestation, water pollution, and biodiversity loss threaten the integrity of this ecosystem and compromise its ability to provide essential environmental services, such as climate regulation, water purification, and soil conservation. Implementing a plan will help protect and preserve this valuable natural environment for future generations.



Environmental issues have a direct impact on the health and well-being of local communities, including both migrants and the Zenú indigenous community. Water and soil contamination can lead to disease and affect food security, putting people's health and livelihoods at risk. By addressing these

issues, we seek to ensure a healthy and safe environment for all involved.

It is important to address environmental issues fairly and equitably, taking into account the needs and concerns of all communities involved. The implementation of a plan will provide a platform for the active participation and collaboration of migrants, the Zenú indigenous community, local authorities and environmental organizations, ensuring that inclusive decisions are made and equity in access to natural resources and the benefits derived from them are promoted.

Taking steps to address environmental issues in a comprehensive and sustainable manner is critical to ensuring the long-term viability of the region. Deforestation, pollution, and biodiversity loss are processes that have long-term effects on ecosystems and the ability of communities to thrive. By implementing a plan, it seeks to promote sustainable practices, such as the proper management of natural resources, the promotion of agroecology and the conservation of ecosystems, which allow for sustainable and resilient development in the area.

The migration situation and associated environmental problems transcend national



borders. The implementation of an action plan will not only address local challenges, but also foster cooperation and exchange of experiences between different actors and countries in the region. This will make it possible to leverage available knowledge and resources to find more effective solutions and promote an integrated regional approach to environmental protection and the well-being of affected communities.

METHODS

Awareness-raising and training:

- Conduct awareness-raising workshops on environmental and gender rights, adapted to the culture and language of indigenous migrant women and girls. These workshops should address topics such as the importance of environmental conservation, equitable access to natural resources, and the promotion of sustainable practices.
- Provide training in environmental management, including sustainable practices for the use of natural resources and conservation of the environment. These trainings could cover topics such as waste management, efficient water use, agroecology and the protection of local ecosystems.

Community Involvement:

Establish spaces for dialogue and active participation of indigenous migrant women and girls in decision-making related to environmental management and the use of natural resources. This could include the creation of assemblies or working groups where solutions to local environmental challenges are discussed and proposed.

- Encourage the creation of committees of indigenous migrant women for the protection of the environment, promoting their leadership and empowerment. These committees could be spaces for articulation and action to promote initiatives for the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

Access to sustainable resources:

Facilitate access to sustainable technologies, such as water purification systems and efficient cookstoves, that reduce pressure on local natural resources. This could involve the distribution of eco-friendly water filters and stoves, as well as training in their use and maintenance.

Promote sustainable agricultural practices and diversification of income sources through organic agriculture projects and eco-friendly handicrafts. This could include implementing home gardens, promoting environmentally



friendly farming techniques, and supporting migrant indigenous women's entrepreneurship focused on sustainable production.

Inter-agency partnerships:

- Establish partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations and international agencies to strengthen program implementation and ensure access to resources and technical support. These partnerships could make it easier to secure funding, provide technical assistance, and coordinate efforts to maximize the impact of the program.
- Collaborate with local entities for the development of basic sanitation and waste management infrastructures, contributing to the protection of the Sinú river basin. This could involve implementing wastewater treatment systems, promoting good waste disposal practices, and restoring degraded areas in the basin.

Monitoring and evaluation:

- Implement monitoring systems to evaluate the impact of the program on the protection of the environmental rights of indigenous migrant women and girls, as well as on the conservation of the environment. This could include indicators related to access to sustainable resources, community

participation in environmental management, and improving the quality of life of beneficiaries.

Conduct periodic evaluations to adjust strategies based on the needs and challenges identified during implementation. These evaluations could serve to provide feedback to program design, identify good practices and lessons learned, and ensure adaptation to changing contexts.

EXPECTED RESULTS

1. **In the short term:**

Strengthening the capacities of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls to defend their environmental rights:

Indicators:

- ✓ Number of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls who have participated in training workshops on environmental rights.
- ✓ Level of knowledge about their environmental rights before and after the trainings.
- ✓ Number of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls who have participated in environmental decision-making processes.
- ✓ Number of cases of defence of their environmental rights before the competent authorities.



- ✓ Development of skills for participation in environmental decision-making, such as:
 - Public policy analysis.
 - Formulation of proposals.
 - Negotiation.
 - Political advocacy.
- ✓ Strengthening leadership capacities, such as:
 - Self-confidence.
 - Effective communication.
 - Motivation.
 - Decision-making.

Goals:

- ✓ Train at least 1,000 Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls in environmental rights in the first year of the program.
- ✓ Achieve a 50% increase in knowledge about their environmental rights among Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls participating in the trainings.
- ✓ Increase the participation of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls in environmental decision-making processes by 25%.
- ✓ Reduce cases of environmental violence against Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls by 10%.

Promoting the Participation of Venezuelan Indigenous Migrant Women and Girls in Environmental Decision-Making:

Indicators:

- ✓ Number of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls who have been elected to positions on local environmental councils.
- ✓ Number of environmental proposals submitted by Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls.
- ✓ Number of public policies that have been influenced by the proposals of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls.

Goals:

- ✓ Ensure that at least 20% of local environmental council positions are filled by Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls in the second year of the program.
- ✓ Submit at least 10 environmental proposals by Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls per year.
- ✓ Ensure that at least 2 public policies are influenced by the proposals of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls in the third year of the program.

Prevention and reduction of environmental violence against Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls:

Indicators:

- ✓ Number of reported cases of environmental violence.
- ✓ Number of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls who have received support and legal assistance.



- ✓ Number of protection measures implemented for victims of environmental violence.

Goals:

- ✓ Reduce by 10% the number of cases of environmental violence against Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls in the first year of the program.
- ✓ Provide support and legal assistance to 100% of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls who report cases of environmental violence.
- ✓ Implement protection measures for 100% of victims of environmental violence.

Raising awareness in Colombian society about the importance of protecting the environmental rights of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls:

Indicators:

- ✓ Level of knowledge of the Colombian population about the problem.
- ✓ Attitudes and behaviors towards Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls.
- ✓ Level of support for the defense of their environmental rights.

Goals:

- ✓ Ensure that at least 50% of the Colombian population has adequate knowledge about the problem in the second year of the program.

- ✓ Generate positive change in attitudes and behaviors towards Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls.

- ✓ Increase support for the defense of their environmental rights by 20%.

2. In the medium term:

Implementation of public policies that protect the environmental rights of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls:

Indicators:

- ✓ Number of laws and decrees passed that recognize and protect their environmental rights.
- ✓ Financial resources allocated for the implementation of these policies.
- ✓ Strengthening of the institutions responsible for environmental protection.

Goals:

- ✓ Achieve the approval of at least 3 laws that recognize and protect their environmental rights in the third year of the program.
- ✓ Ensure the allocation of financial resources

CONCLUSIONS

- The plan should recognize the cultural and linguistic diversity of Venezuelan indigenous



migrant women and girls and adapt its strategies to the particularities of each group.

- It is essential to promote intercultural dialogue between Venezuelan indigenous migrant communities and Colombian communities in order to build relationships of respect and collaboration.
- It is necessary to strengthen research on the environmental situation of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls in Colombia in order to generate accurate and up-to-date information that serves as a basis for decision-making.
- The production of knowledge should be promoted from an intercultural perspective that values the traditional knowledge of indigenous communities.
- The implementation of the plan requires the allocation of sufficient financial and technical resources by the government, international organizations, and bilateral cooperation.
- It is essential to ensure transparency and accountability in the management of resources allocated to the protection of the environmental rights of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls.
- International cooperation is essential to strengthen national capacities to protect the environmental rights of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls.

It is necessary to promote coordination and collaboration between the different actors at the international level in order to share experiences and good practices.

Protecting the environmental rights of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls is a long-term commitment that requires a sustained effort by all actors involved.

It is critical to maintain political and financial support for the implementation of the plan in the long term.

The successful implementation of the plan will contribute to the construction of a more just, equitable and inclusive society where the environmental rights of all people, regardless of their origin or condition, are recognized and protected.

Protecting the environmental rights of Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls is a critical step towards achieving environmental and social justice in Colombia.

This plan is an essential tool to ensure that Venezuelan indigenous migrant women and girls in Colombia can live in an environmentally healthy environment and fully enjoy their environmental rights.

BIBLIOGRAPHY



- UNHCR.** (2023). Response Plan for Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants in Colombia 2023.
- Amnesty International.** (2022). Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Venezuelan Indigenous Migrant Women in Colombia.
- IACHR.** (2021). Human Rights Situation of Venezuelan Migrants and Refugees in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Colombia.
- CODECHOCÓ.** (2022). Socio-environmental diagnosis of the Bajo Atrato.
1. **Ombudsman's Office.** (2023). Early Warning 006-2023: Risk of human rights violations of Embera and Wounaan indigenous communities of Bajo Atrato, Chocó.
2. **IDEAM.** (2020). Report on the State of the Environment and Natural Resources in Colombia 2019-2020. [\[\[invalid URL removed\]\]](#) [\[\[invalid URL removed\]\]](#)
1. **Arango, R.** (2022). Venezuelan Indigenous Migration and Environmental Crisis in Colombia: The Case of Bajo Atrato. *Journal of Social Studies*, 70(70), 14-31.
2. **Bohórquez, M. C., & Valencia, L. M.** (2021). Venezuelan Indigenous Migrant Women in Colombia: Between Survival and Hope. *Colombian Journal of Anthropology*, 57(2), 437-465.
- Fajardo, M. C., & Palacio, J. F.** (2022). The Environmental Crisis in Bajo Atrato: Between Illegal Mining and the Defense of the Territory. *Political Analysis*, 30(92), 109-130.
- Garcia, N. P.** (2020). Indigenous Women's Environmental Rights: An Analysis from a Gender Perspective. *International Journal of Human Rights*, 18(35), 41-62.
- Walsh, C.** (2010). Interculturality and Coloniality of Power: A Thought and Positioning from Difference. *Journal of Social Studies*, 32(32), 5-24.

