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AMATITLÁN

Amatitlán Includes You: Reception, Management and Integration of Labour Migrants in the City

Implementing Partner: AVINA Foundation, in close coordination with the Municipality of Amatitlán and the Municipal Development Council (COMUDE)

Location: Amatitlán, Guatemala

Duration: November 2019 – November 2021

SUMMARY

Amatitlán Includes You: Reception, Management and Integration of Labour Migrants in the City took an innovative approach to integrating the management of labour migration into the city's plans for sustainable territorial development. The approach included: building the capacity of local authorities to capitalise on the opportunities of labour migration; developing municipal government mechanisms so that city stakeholders can build partnerships, engage in participatory dialogue, and establish a shared vision for their city; and producing analysis to help the city develop a labour integration strategy.



THE CITIES ALLIANCE GLOBAL PROGRAMME ON CITIES AND MIGRATION

The Amatitlán Includes You project is part of the Cities Alliance Global Programme on Cities and Migration, which focuses on migration management in secondary cities in low-income countries and is supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The project in Amatitlán is one of a global portfolio of nine cities that also includes San Marcos, Guatemala; Jendouba and Kairouan, Tunisia; Arua and Jinja, Uganda; Adama and Jigjiga, Ethiopia; and Kakuma-Kalobeyei in Kenya.

CONTEXT

Guatemala is one of the most unequal countries in Central America. According to data from the National Human Development Report, 67% of the country's total population lives in conditions of poverty and extreme poverty, and 46% of Guatemalans aged 0 to 5 face malnutrition and/or hunger. Only 24.4% of people have access to diversified studies, and 70% of the economically active population works in informal employment without guarantee of sufficient income or labour rights.

This national reality is closely reflected in Amatitlán, a fast-growing city located about 30 km southwest of Guatemala City and one of seven cities that make up the Mancomunidad Gran Ciudad del Sur (MGCS), or Commonwealth of the Great City of the South in English. These commonwealth associations are formal frameworks that allow cities within a common region to work together to formulate policies, plans, and programmes; execute works; and provide services.

Amatitlán is characterised by several factors:

- **Internal migration.** Rural-urban migration caused by the lack of employment opportunities have brought many people to the city.

- **Proximity to larger cities.** As a secondary city, Amatitlán's strategic geographic location translates into an economic dynamic that relies significantly on residents' daily commute to nearby cities including Villa Nueva and Guatemala City.
- **Returning migrants.** Tougher migration policies in neighbouring countries over the last few years have resulted in a wave of returning migrants to the city.

Due to these factors, Amatitlán has become an attractive place to settle and further develop economic opportunities arising from commerce, industry, tourism, construction and other services. The challenge is to find effective ways to provide suitable labour conditions for existing residents and newcomers, and to leverage migration to boost and capitalise on growth within the city. The Amatitlán municipal government is likely to take immediate action to address current demands and prepare for future opportunities and challenges. Potential actions include participatory governance strategies and institutionalising efforts for sustainability.

RESULTS

The project's activities were designed to encourage all stakeholders in Amatitlán – municipal authorities, residents, the private sector, civil society and other partners – to look at labour migration as an opportunity for economic development and social cohesion. They also promoted an inclusive and sustainable Amatitlán in line with the principles outlined in Agenda 2030, the New Urban Agenda, and the Migratory and Refugee Pacts. The activities prioritised vulnerable groups, especially women and youth.

Result 1: Greater institutional capacities of local authorities and key partners to capitalise on the opportunities labour migration can offer

The project:

- Worked actively with the city to mainstream migration in urban planning and provide technical assistance to the Municipal Office for Territorial and Urban Development.
- Provided training focused on designing strategies, mechanisms and instruments for addressing the reception, management and integration of labour migrants with an emphasis on institutionalising the strategies.
- Prepared a socio-urban diagnostic to support review of the Municipal Territorial Development Plan.
- Designed a training programme on territory management and incorporation of migration in urban planning in close coordination with – and for the direct benefit of – all seven municipal governments of the MGCS.
- Carried out a Diplomaed in Territorial Management with the participation of 25 technical staff from MGCS municipalities and San Marcos.
- Organised knowledge sharing events to disseminate experiences and foster discussion across Latin America on urban planning and housing.

Result 2: Municipal governance mechanisms to build a shared vision for managing and integrating labour migrants in the city

The project supported Amatitlán's local authority in establishing several mechanisms for managing migration by:

- Holding Municipal Development Forums to help residents build a shared vision for integrating labour migrants and social cohesion strategies, with a focus on rights and equity. The forums provided space for collaborative dialogue among decision makers, migrants, technicians, academics, and members of the media. They also laid the groundwork for long-lasting partnerships to undertake coordinated actions.

- Developing three participatory strategies on local economic development, access to housing, and prevention of violence. These strategies build on the project's socio-urban and environmental diagnosis report, the Diplomaed in Territorial Management curriculum, and the technical assistance provided to the municipality.
- Developing a Municipal Migration Strategy embedded in the Municipal Development Plan, with corresponding action plan, resources, and methodical approach for its implementation.
- Organising a campaign to address negative perceptions and stereotypes of migration. The campaign used social networks, local television, news vehicles and radio to counter these perceptions.

Result 3: Labour migration integrated into city development planning

The project produced socio-urban diagnostics of Amatitlán that clearly identified challenges and opportunities arising from labour migration, as well as a stakeholders' map that identifies actions, resources and specific roles. These deliverables provided the city with the information needed to develop a labour integration strategy and support further actions to integrate migrants into the labour market.

It also designed the OportuGuate platform to facilitate the registration of data on returning migrants and to visualise the institutional services available in the country, such as employment, skill certification, entrepreneurship, and access to credit. In 2021, the database recorded 400 entries and enabled 75 migrants (two-thirds of them women) to access an entrepreneurship programme on gastronomy offered by INTECAP. The sustainability of OportuGuate is ensured, and the project facilitated an agreement with the International Organization of Migration (IOM) to further enhance the platform in 2022. Migrants can create a job profile and browse for opportunities and job providers can screen candidates. The initiative is backed by the Guatemalan Migration Institute, which will receive training to eventually host the platform itself.

Finally, the project worked with the Municipal Directorate for Women to identify potential candidates for vocational training, allowing the Directorate to build new networks which led to the preparation and presentation of a proposal for a training site they could manage in Amatitlán for INTECAP.

