Report of the consultations to IDPs and persons at risk of displacement in Honduras

Inputs for the UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement

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1. Introduction

UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement was established in 2019 to identify concrete recommendations on how to better prevent, respond and achieve solutions to the global internal displacement crisis. To undertake its in-depth review and formulate its findings and recommendations for the UN's Secretary-General draft Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, UNCHR Honduras was invited to carry out consultations with IDPs and displacement affected communities in Honduras.

This report presents the main findings of 9 consultations carried out throughout March 2022 with women, children, young persons, persons with disabilities, **LGTBIQ+** persons, schoolteachers, sex workers and merchants. It highlights the risks, protection concerns and the context of durable solutions for IDPs and persons at risk of displacement in Honduras based on AGD criteria, as well as disproportionate risks that face non-traditional risk profiles.

2. Methodology

2.1 Methodological design

The **objective** of the consultations was to identify, through structured dialogues i.e., focus group discussions, perspectives of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and those at risk of displacement in urban settings on their take with regards to advancing solutions to IDPs, highlighting the intersectional impact of violence, and forced displacement.

The consultations also aimed at identifying protection risks that affect disproportionately non-traditional risk profiles, and to provide first-hand information of violence dynamics in the context of generalized violence.

UNHCR Honduras developed a data collecting tool based on **analytical categories** from the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons. Therefore, the scope of the consultation covers the eight (8) durable solutions criteria, adapted to the Honduran context. The criteria's description and specific objectives are summarized in the following table.

Durable solutions criteria	Description and focus according to the Honduran context
1. Safety and security	This criterion focuses on violence and forced displacement dynamics in Honduras, evidenced by threats and transgressions to life, safety, and basic freedoms. It addresses ordinary and disproportionate risks, self-protection mechanisms and triggers of displacement. UNHCR seeks to understand the impact of living in a context of generalized violence, and how it affects IDPs and those at risk when it comes to staying or fleeing their communities.
2. Participation in public affairs	Community engagement and participation in community-based organizations is a protection factor that signals integration and or exclusion of IDPs and persons at risk. It can also pose additional protection risks to those who oppose authority figures. The criterion also addresses the right to vote, to associate freely and to participate in community affairs. UNHCR Honduras aims to understand how IDPs and persons at risk participation is also a factor indicative of integration and social cohesion, and in turn, accounts for the possible marginalization of this population.
3. Adequate standards of living; and housing, land and property	The data collecting tool included questions regarding the desirable conditions (affordable, acceptable, sufficient and of quality) to access and enjoy water and sanitation, health care, education and housing for IDPs and persons at risk; as well as protection and restitution mechanisms for abandoned HLP. UNHCR Honduras seeks to better understand the links between humanitarian needs, social protection, development, and restitution of HLP.

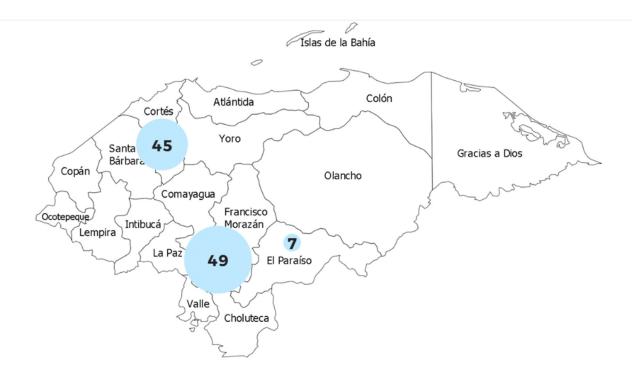|	
4. Access to livelihoods and employment	This criterion addresses information about the capacity of IDPs and persons at risk to meet their basic needs through sources of income, formal and informal employment, before and after displacement. And, if their support networks could eventually support them to afford basic expenses. UNHCR Honduras aims to understand how socioeconomic factors could impact the living conditions, and thus IDPs' capacity to remain in their actual residence.
5. Personal documentation	Availability of personal documentation, and other required documentation to access protection mechanisms.
6. Family reunification	Family separation due to forced displacement and possibilities of reunification.
7. Access to justice	Since IDPs and those at risk of displacement are victims of human rights violations, this criterion focuses on the access to justice, effectiveness of institutional mechanisms, trust in State authorities and how the institutional weaknesses can lead to further displacement, hinder reconciliation processes, deepen perceptions of injustice and limit the scope for durable solutions.

The **risk profiles** were selected based on UNCHR's engagement with IDPs and persons at risk through protection activities and case management, as well as secondary information available on the causes, impacts, and trends of internal displacement in Honduras. The data collecting tool was adapted according to the durable solutions criteria, as well as protection concerns of risk profiles, and intersectional factors of risk based on age, gender – including diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sexual characteristics (SOGIESC) – diversity, and occupation. The **scope** of the consultation process focused on urban settings due to the operational presence in and relationship of UNCHR with urban community groups affected by generalized violence and systematic human rights violations.

There are several primary and secondary sources of information that show the existence of rural displacement dynamic related to land dispossession and usurpation, gender violence, generated by drug trafficking and land conflicts. These in turn affect other population groups and profiles such as rural workers, indigenous and Afro-Honduran people, social leaders and land and environmental defenders. However, specific consultation with these specific profiles were not possible to conduct as part of this consultation process and should be addressed as part of upcoming consultation processes.

2.2 Implementing focal groups

El UNHCR carried out 9 focal groups discussions. A total of **101 persons**, both internally displaced and at risk of displacement were consulted in the following 3 cities of Honduras:

- **Tegucigalpa, department of Francisco Morazán:** 49 persons in total (16 men and 33 women); risk profiles included persons with disabilities, children and youth, schoolteachers, and sex workers.

- **San Pedro Sula, department of Cortés:** 45 persons in total (9 men, 34 women and 2 children); risk profiles included merchants, adult women and LGBTIQ+ persons.

- **Danlí, department of El Paraíso:** 7 persons in total (3 men and 4 women); risk profile was merchants.

Islas de la Bahía

Cortés

Atlántida

Colón

45

Santa
Bárbara

Yoro

Gracias a Dios

Copán

Comayagua

Olancho

Ocotepeque

Francisco
Morazán

Intibucá

Lempira

7

La Paz

49

El Paraíso

Valle

Choluteca

73 women and girls participated in the consultations, accounting for 72% of the participants in the consultative process; while, 28 men and boys, representing 28%. These figures include 4 transgender women and 1 transgender man. Most of the participants (82%) were adult persons, and 18% were children and adolescents under 18 years old.
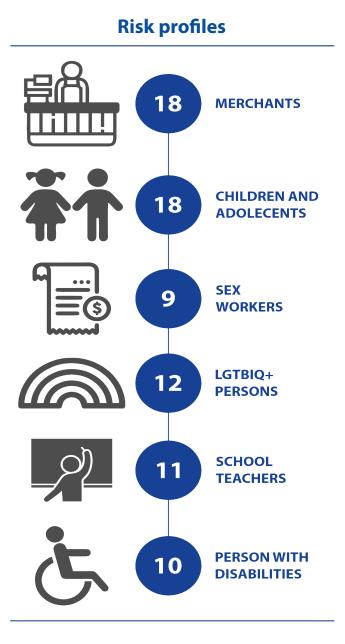
101 Persons consulted in Honduras

61
WOMEN

22
MEN

12
GIRLS

6
BOYS

The focus groups were organized based on risk profiles, intersectional factors, and its correlation to the known causes of internal displacement, as follows:

- Restrictions of mobility and freedom: all population groups.
- Extortion: merchants, schoolteachers, sex workers.
- Sexual and gender-based violence: women, LGBTIQ+ persons, schoolteachers.
- Forced recruitment and association: children, young persons and LGBTIQ+ persons.
- Dispossession of housing, land and property: all population groups.

Risk profiles

18 MERCHANTS

18 CHILDREN AND ADOLECENTS

9 SEX WORKERS

12 LGTBIQ+ PERSONS

11 SCHOOL TEACHERS

10 PERSON WITH DISABILITIES

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3. Context of Honduras

Honduras has a total population of 9.4 million inhabitants, of which 58.4% are in urban areas -mainly in the cities of Tegucigalpa (1.4 million) and San Pedro Sula (903,000)- and 41.6% in the rural areas. 51.3%, are women and 48.7% are men. The population is predominantly **young people**; 37.79% are people aged between 25 and 54 years old; 21.03% are people aged between 15 and 24 years old; and 30.2% are people under 14 years old (INE, 2022)

The context of violence in Honduras is characterized by the dynamics stemming from the presence and activities of four main forms of armed actors: criminal structures organized in street gangs, including those affiliated with the so-called "mara" and/or street gangs structures such as "Barrio 18", "Mara Salvatrucha" or "MS 13" and other smaller, less structured street gangs; drug trafficking structures; state security forces, in particular the police and armed forces; and private security forces (UNCHR, 2016). Criminal structures take advantage of institutional weakness, state corruption and impunity to consolidate their economic interests and exercise social and territorial control over the population, which translates into various manifestations of violence. The most visible expression of the increasing control, power and activities of criminal actors is evidenced through the country's homicide rate, which has remained among the highest in the world. Homicides are concentrated in some areas of the country such as San Pedro Sula, Choloma, El Progreso, La Ceiba and the Central District (Tegucigalpa and Comayagüela), suggesting that large cities represent specific hotspots of violence.

The impact of violence in Honduras is evidenced, in part, in the situation of forced displacement experienced by the population. The Internal Displacement Profiling study found that 247,090 people (2.7% of the population of Honduras) were affected by internal displacement between 2004 and 2018. This implies that, in approximately 58,500 households, at least one of its members was internally displaced due to violence. Of the total, 55% were women and 45% were men; and 43% were persons under 18 years of age **(Profiling study of forced displacement, 2019).**

Among the main triggers of displacement are threats (55%), murders (40%), restrictions to mobility (24%), injuries (16%), extortions (13%), sexual violence (10%), and dispossession of housing, land and properties (9%), forced recruitment (3%), among others. It is worth noting that male-headed households were more frequently affected by murder and extortion, while female-headed households suffered injuries, sexual violence, land dispossession and usurpation of housing in a proportion more than double that of displaced male-headed households (CIPPDV, 2019).

The impact on affected individuals and communities is multidimensional, limiting the effective enjoyment of their human rights. In terms of health, 41% of the people reported that their mental and physical health and the continuation of medical treatment were affected. Displacement affected 46% of displaced students, who had to interrupt or abandon their studies. On the other hand, 38% of people were affected in terms of their employment, who had to change or abandon their jobs or businesses. In this scenario, the main needs of people when moving were accommodation (74%); help with transportation (74%); food, clothing, and hygiene (62%); protection during movement (18%); and psychological assistance (17%), among others. Only 32% of IDPs who owned a house was able to keep it after the displacement, the rest was forced to either abandon it, had it usurped, destroyed, or were forced to sell.

In this context, Hondurans face extraordinary risks that explain the causes of forced displacement. **Extortion** has been identified as one of the main causes of forced displacement in Honduras, mainly associated with the street gangs. Since 2015, reports of extortion have been increasing every year,

particularly in the municipality of the Central District, San Pedro Sula, Choloma and La Lima. In 2019, two thousand extortion complaints were reported in the country (Red LAC, 2020). Extortion has an impact on different population groups. For inhabitants and **merchants** in gang-controlled territories, the extortion payment is widespread; places such as markets and small businesses are subject to systematic extortion. People delivering goods, micro-entrepreneurs and people working in the public sector and transportation are especially vulnerable; it is estimated that, in 2018, 54% of extortion victims in Honduras were businesses, with 20% corresponding to transportation networks. Those working in the public transportation sector have also been affected. In Honduras, in the last ten years, an estimated 3,000 public transport operators have been killed by criminal groups; in 2019 alone, 214 murders of transportation workers were recorded.

Forced recruitment, use, and association have a particular impact on children and youth, who are used to perform risky and menial tasks. Gangs consider them as key players since, due to their age, if they are captured, they are not prosecuted, but can be sent to children's rehabilitation centers for shorter periods of time. This reportedly led in 2015 to a dramatic increase in the number of children arrested for collecting extortion money; one-third of these children are girls. Children resisting recruitment have been killed, as have their family members.

Dispossession of housing, land and property is determined by urban and rural dynamics. In cities, violence generated by drug trafficking structures, street gangs, generates displacement and risk of housing dispossession. The people most affected are usually those without property titles in neighborhoods under the control of organized criminal groups, whose informal tenure makes their assets´ protection from forced abandonment more complex. In some cases, the homes or properties are used, destroyed or controlled by the same criminal groups. In rural contexts, drug trafficking structures and other armed actors displace families and indigenous groups in search of territorial control or economic interests for the exploitation of natural resources. The most vulnerable people have forms of

tenure without full dominion before the State, under varied forms of possession, tenure or occupation of land based on local practices of access to land; this makes the protection of their rights to land and/or housing even more precarious (ACNUR, 2017).

Sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls, and against LGTBIQ+ people has structural and social causes that have led to the cultural normalization of this type of violence, coupled with the lack of effective protection by the State as well as the high rates of impunity for acts of gender-based violence. Honduras has the second highest rate of violence against women in Central America (CDM, 2020), and since 2009, it has registered a total of 373 violent deaths of LGBTIQ+ people (Red Lésbica Cattrachas, 2021).

4. Results of the consultations

This section contains the main findings of the consultations carried out in Honduras, based on the durable solutions criteria. It highlights the common elements mentioned by the participants, as well as the differentiated impact according to age, gender, and diversity, and also often invisible profiles of victims of forced displacement like schoolteachers, **merchants** and sex workers. Conclusions about each section of durable solutions are at the end of each section.

4.1 Violence and forced displacement

4.1.1 *Perception of safety in neighborhoods and working places*

Restrictions of mobility and freedom due to the social and territorial control exerted by the criminal structures present particularly in urban areas is also one of the main causes of forced displacement in Honduras. These are often evidenced by the establishment of **invisible borders**, curfews, restrictions of certain styles of clothing or shoes, among others. By establishing invisible borders, these groups mark specific locations within the communities to delimit the presence of opposing criminal groups. In large cities, people cannot walk in certain areas after curfew within their neighborhoods nor trespass to other gangs' territory. In some sectors, police officers are not allowed entry. **Children, adolescents and young men** are disproportionately affected by invisible borders in their communities, whose risks often derive from crossfires and violent disputes between gang members; diminished access to education, health and social services; **as well as limited access to participation and recreational spaces.**

To exert this control, gangs use "flags" or watchmen, people located in strategic points in neighborhoods, who watch and inform the gang about who enters or leaves the neighborhood. Most of the time, these **"flags" are children and adolescents.**

> "There is a curfew at 8:00 pm in my community, we could not go out because "the boys" [gang members] were fighting among themselves. They came into my house looking for my brother; they came shooting, even when there were little kids playing on the floor. The police told my mom to hand my brother to them [to the gang] or she would have to let him go in a bag".
>
> – Girl testimony, Tegucigalpa

Merchants mentioned they avoid some sectors of gang-controlled neighborhoods where they know they cannot cross for fear of extortion, robberies, threats and/or homicides. Since they transit frequently through the communities due to their commercial activities, they are easily identifiable, which increases their risk.

Young people are targeted by gangs, they often encounter a higher risk of experimenting direct threats. To avoid such risks, they are forced to transit through alternate or longer routes that often lead to higher transportation costs and more time to get to and from their communities to their jobs, schools and other activities. This restricts the population's access to school and health services, weaken the peaceful coexistence, and increase the possibility of deadly violence to those who fail to comply to the criminal groups' norms.

Women mentioned not feeling safe in their communities, not even to walk on the neighboring streets. Some mentioned that they always walk their children to schools because of the conflict and confrontation between gangs, since the schools are located, in some cases, at or near invisible borders.

Persons with disabilities expressed they are often subject to robberies when they are outside their communities, so they self-restrict their circulation through unknown parts of the city as well as avoiding the use of public transportation, for fear of been robbed or threatened.

Persons of Danlí, a city located in the eastern part of Honduras mentioned that since the establishment of a maximum-security prison nearby, they feel unsafe because many persons perceived to be relatives or linked to gangs have relocated to Danlí to continue their criminal activities and to be closer to the imprisoned gang leaders.

According to schoolteachers, **boys and girls** feel safe and protected within the boundaries of their classrooms. However, schools' bathrooms and courtyards are sometimes perceived as unsafe, since **sexual harassment**, drug-trafficking and forceful recruitment may occur in these places. Students are also aware that once they leave their schools, they are more vulnerable to other risks and do not know where to seek help.

> "A culture of fear has been installed to silence us, to punish us. Those actors we need to protect us, actually expose us and are against us".
>
> - Schoolteacher testimony, Tegucigalpa

Finally, bringing effective protection to inhabitants and workers in high-risk communities is not a priority for the authorities.

> "Us teachers are left without chalk, but the military are never left without the bullet".
>
> - Schoolteacher testimony, Tegucigalpa

4.1.2 *Threats to life and personal integrity*

Extortion is one of the main causes of forced displacement in Honduras, as it is a primary source of income for "maras" and gangs, predominantly in urban settings. Victims of extortion also experience threats, homicides and persecution. **Transportation drivers, merchants, small business owners and sex workers are targeted by gangs due to their occupation.** The constant threat of extortion and its impact causes the closure of businesses in high-risk communities.

> "I am here because I am afraid, my family wants us to close the business, but if we do that, what are we going to live on? We're at God's will".
>
> - Woman, Danlí

Restrictions of mobility and freedom can also cause direct threats over those who do not comply to the norms imposed by the criminal groups in high-risk areas. For instance, norms related to aesthetics (clothing, shoes, hairstyles) "delimit" membership in a particular gang and are used to identify the aesthetics of opposing groups. **Deaf persons** are also vulnerable to experience threats by gangs in high-risk communities due to the use of sign language, which can be interpreted as "gang language" by some criminal groups.

> "We know instinctively what to wear and where to walk".
>
> – Boy testimony, Tegucialpa

Political participation manifested through protests within the community is also perceived as a risk factor and trigger of threats and forced displacement. In this case, "political participation" is understood by community leaders as participating in community structures, protesting or opposing the "authority" imposed by gangs in communities and

not complying to their rules. Participants mentioned that when bus and taxi drivers refuse to pay extortion, or when **women** stand up for their individual and collective rights, they face risks and can even get them killed.

Forced recruitment was reported as a common problem in various neighborhoods of Tegucigalpa, that mostly affects **young men and boys** to serve as informants or deal with drugs. However, **girls and young women** have also been forcibly recruited and used to carry drugs and weapons with them, since the police are not allowed to check them.

Sexual and gender-based violence, accompanied with threats, were also mentioned as a cause of forced displacement. **LGTBIQ+** are not allowed to transit through some parts of their neighborhoods, and **women** from San Pedro Sula and Choloma generally feel unsafe in their communities because of the fear of experimenting **sexual harassment** from police authorities and gang members.

Women sex workers mentioned that security is the most pressing issue for them, since many have experienced various kinds of violence, including kidnappings and rapes. Some mentioned that police officers are often the ones who commit those assaults.

When **women** are unable to access institutional protection mechanisms, they seek support in community-based organizations, and also resort to **self-protection measures** to mitigate the risks of SGBV. **Young women** mentioned having self-protection protocols with their friends that include going out only during the day and in the company of someone else. **Women sex workers** exchange strategies such as not riding unfamiliar cars, not serving customers under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and filing complaints in police stations they trust to not disclose their information. Some mentioned that they know cases of sex workers that have gone missing or were killed after filing a complaint.

"My mom was threatened, they wanted pictures of me and my brother in underwear".

– Girl testimony, Tegucigalpa

Even though high-risk communities experience a constant state of fear and control exerted by gangs, usually **direct threats, homicides, extortion and sexual violence trigger forced displacements** of families. One teenager manifested his brother was shot 15 times by gang members, because he was dating the girlfriend of one of them. One woman in San Pedro Sula mentioned she internally displaced after gang members shot her 20-year-old son. The gang members found her again and killed her 16-year-old daughter. Due to the nationwide territorial control of the gangs, persons who have faced direct threats must forcibly displace more than once and are often left without internal relocation alternatives that can guarantee their safety and personal integrity within the territory. Therefore, they leave the country to seek international protection elsewhere.

Young people reported that persons in their communities have been victims of homicides and disappearances; and that violence has a disproportionate impact on **young** and elderly persons. Others mentioned that even though their lives have not been at risk, they have neighbors and relatives who have been forcibly displaced.

"I had to watch my brother been shot to death in my house, inside our business. He was shot 15 times, all in the head".

- Boy testimony, Tegucigalpa

Due to their leadership role within communities, **schoolteachers** face risks such as threats, intimidation, and homicides due to the social and territorial control exerted by the criminal groups present in the communities where they teach; as well as extortion, and sexual and gender-based violence. They also expressed that in many cases, the threats

also come from students' parents who are linked to gangs due to situations related to their children's academic performance.

Parents and students turn to teachers when their families are facing risks, either to inform them that they will be dropping out of school or to ask for support. This may increase the risks for teachers, as they are the ones who hold information about risks and forced displacements in the communities, or who act to protect families at risk.

> "We need security and protection protocols, and guidelines from the authorities. They know the reality and expect us to solve it".
>
> - Schoolteacher testimony, Tegucigalpa

Policemen are regarded as threatening actors at high-risk colonies, far from being considered protection agents. It's necessary to highlight that distrust in the police is an issue since interviewed persons reported being afraid to be disappeared by this institution. Young persons reported being more afraid of policemen than a "mara" member.

> "Several young people were on our way home, when policemen grabbed us and turned us upside down, they robbed us of everything, beat us, made us run without shoes, and told us that if they caught up with us, they would beat us".
>
> – Adolescent testimony, Tegucigalpa.

4.1.3 Conclusions

EIn contexts of generalized violence such as Honduras, **violence manifests itself in multiple forms such as massacres, torture, kidnappings, extortion, persecution, human rights violations, among others, that trigger forced displacement**. These acts of violence are perpetrated by criminal actors, armed actors and state agents who, taking advantage of the fractures in the rule of law, generate dynamics of control and violence over a large part of the population. In this situation, the level and scope of violence is such that the normal functioning of society is seriously impaired, and the population is unable to effectively enjoy their human rights.

The establishment of invisible borders, curfews, dress codes and restrictions on entry and stay in urban communities controlled by gangs limits the population's access to health services, education and recreational spaces. But it also imposes an "order of life" based on fear and silence. Streets, public transportation and schools are not always safe spaces. **Restrictions on freedom and mobility** are therefore broad in scope, as they affect entire communities where multiple people may be at risk of displacement.

Girls, boys, adolescents and young people are victims of **forced recruitment** to join "maras" and gangs as informants, "transporters" or drug sellers and other roles for criminal purposes. Girls and **women** also experience sexual and gender-based violence, as they are seen as a property or a territory to be conquered by these groups. Therefore, their risk is generally associated with the role that criminal groups expect them to play within the structure, depending on their interests in gaining or maintaining control over territory, power and the illicit activities that generate income for them.

Merchants, transportation drivers, sex workers and schoolteachers are victims of extortion due to their occupation, whether because of the availability of cash they handle, their frequent mobility within the communities or their leadership role. These elements can be risk factors as cash and information are valuable assets that criminal groups seek to control.

Women and girls experience **sexual and gender-based violence**, not only by gang members, but also by police officers and acquaintances. Overall, they feel unsafe to transit in their communities. Likewise, **LGTBIQ+ persons** and **sex workers** may also suffer sexual and gender-based violence associated with their role as transgressors of social norms, either

because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or occupation, that are culturally rejected by society.

The prolonged impact of violence on communities, the multiple risks that families may experience at the same time, coupled with the national extent that criminal structures may have in the country, generate a protection crisis that leaves families with very few alternatives to flee within the country. Therefore, IDPs and persons at risk of displacement have few protection spaces, thus facing the need to leave the country in search of international protection.

4.2 Participation in public affairs

4.2.1 Comrmunity engagement and participation

The main reason why persons are engaged in community organizations is to promote changes inside their communities, such as access to public services and promote the well-being for their neighbors and schools. **Women**, **persons with disabilities**, teachers, and young persons are engaged in their communities through networks of **women**, youth groups, medical dispensaries, churches, community boards, water boards, and local development boards, parents' associations. In addition, some **children** reported participating in cultural and sports activities because they feel accompanied by family and friends.

Schoolteachers are considered influential leaders that link schools with the surrounding communities. Thus, they are often invited by community members to participate in different local development boards. Their leadership role entails carrying out academic and social activities during and after school hours.

Other participants mentioned that their motivation relies upon local organizations that allow them to be informed about their communities and participate in decision-making. Organizations also are regarded as **platforms to promote, defend and advocate their fundamental rights** of **woman, youth, persons with disabilities and LGTBIQ+ persons**, as well as their families and communities. For instance, some **young** people stated that their participation in

political activities has promoted change inside their communities.

> Being unable to access institutional mechanisms, we seek support from community organizations.
>
> - Woman, Choloma

Also, participation in grass-roots organizations is aimed at preventing and responding to the effects of violence, especially **gender-based violence**. By participating in grassroots organizations, they can receive and provide psychosocial support, to assist victims of violence and forced displacement. However, **women** reported being stigmatized and insulted, particularly if they participate in activities to raise awareness of sexual and reproductive rights.

> "I support opening young people's minds. In the communities, there are still taboos and with my organization, we work to provide information on sexual and reproductive health. We have to sensitize not only women but also young men".
>
> - Young woman testimony, San Pedro Sula

Schoolteachers also mentioned that their participation is motivated by the wish to support their students since government authorities do not provide adequate support to the education sector. The other motivation is to raise their voice on the risks and protection issues schoolteachers face in both urban and rural communities, due to **extortion, restrictions of mobility and freedom**, and **gender-based violence**. This motivation resulted in the integration of the National Teacher's Committee in 2017, a group of volunteer teachers that advocate for the creation of protection measures for teachers at risk.

> "Students feel that they can be protected by their teachers. However, ¿who protects the teachers? We are protectors and remain unprotected at the same time".
>
> - Schoolteacher testimony, Tegucigalpa

> "My sister and I used to participate in many activities, but since we were little, we have been afraid to go out in the street for fear that they would say that these kids hang out with those kids".
>
> – Girl tetsimony, Tegucigalpa

Nonetheless, **discrimination and exclusion** affect some populations and limit their participation. For instance, **LGTBIQ+ persons** expressed being excluded from social and political associations and from decision-making processes within their communities. They prefer to maintain a low profile as a self-protection mechanism. A garífuna or **afro-descendant woman** from high-risk urban area, mentioned that their engagement in public affairs is limited due to a triple discrimination: being **women**, afro-descendant, and living in a stigmatized community.

> "I have participated in the elections of representatives for my neighborhood board, but presenting myself with my legal name, I have to live a double life to participate. I do not have the freedom to participate by expressing my gender identity, as LGBTIQ+ persons we are still excluded from participating in public affairs".
>
> - LGBTIQ+ person testimony, San Pedro Sula

Due the **territorial control and violence** perpetrated by "maras" and street gangs, communities' engagement is restricted. Some **children** said that they restricted their participation in social activities due to the risk of **forced recruitment, sexual violence** and stigmatization within their communities. Therefore, they no longer participate in cultural activities since their neighborhoods have become unsafe spaces. **Young persons** and **merchants** mentioned they are not free to participate in community activities such as neighborhood boards for fear of threats by street gangs.

4.2.2 Right to vote

IDPs and persons at risk mentioned that they could vote without any inconveniences in the last electoral process of November 2021, where there was massive participation of young persons. The participants expressed their satisfaction about how the process was held, true to the democratic values, and that "everything was in order".

However, **LGBTIQ+** organizations documented many incidents in which persons were denied their right to vote due to their sexual orientation or gender identity (108 complaints in just one voting center). Their perception is that trans women are disproportionately affected by this **discrimination** due to their gender expression. Moreover, they indicate that during the elections, many sought the assistance of the Ombudsman - National Human Rights Commissioner (CONADEH, Spanish acronym), but they consider that rather than finding support for their complaints, many were subjected to further victimization from CONADEH officials.

Persons with disabilities manifested they experienced various challenges in exercising their right to vote in the past election since there were no ballots in braille for blind persons and no interpreters available in voting centers to provide information and guidance to deaf persons. Overall, they expressed feeling uninformed throughout the process, from the early voting stages up to the publication of results, despite the National Electoral Council assured that adequate conditions were going to be set for **persons with disabilities**.

> "I had to go by myself, there were no assistants to help us in the voting centers and nobody wanted to help once we were there. Being blind, I had to vote in public, as the rest of the persons with disabilities... in the end, I didn't know if they marked my vote for the person I wanted".
>
> – Man with a visual disability testimony, Tegucigalpa

between the authorities and criminal gangs as well as drug traffickers.

> "The soap operas sometimes seem like a lie, but the narco soap operas are what we live in our country. The politician and the narco are the same".
>
> - Young woman testimony, San Pedro Sula

Participants reported that some gangs prohibited communities from voting for specific candidates in the previous elections. In some territories, the right to vote was hindered as a consequence of the social-territorial control that gangs and other criminal organizations impose on their communities. For instance, many voting centers were not safely accessible for the last year because they required crossing over invisible borders that delimit the territory of each gang.

However, some participants expressed that they hope newly elected authorities will work to defend their interests. Some of them expressed that national authorities and Congress representatives work closely with citizens and have hope to have fruitful work. **Schoolteachers** also mentioned that they expect the newly elected administration to strengthen the education sector since it has been established as a country's priority and they feel hopeful the issues faced by teachers, including those related to protection, are going to be addressed.

> "I risked my life because I had to vote in a place where I cannot enter, (invisible borders) the registry of persons did not change my address".
>
> -- Woman testimony, San Pedro Sula

4.2.3. *Representativeness and trust in the authorities*

LThe participants expressed authorities (legislative and executive) at the national and local levels don't represent their interests since they are neither engaged in the main community issues nor acknowledge their main concerns. **Persons with disabilities** expressed they feel used by political candidates since they promise to support them, but then fail to deliver real support. Moreover, they consider that decision-makers are unaware or are not interested in knowing the reality that is lived in the neighborhoods and communities. They are present during the electoral campaigns, but, once the votes are won, they disappear. Persons perceived collusion

> "I voted with new expectations. Having a woman president is something that motivates me. As women sex workers, we are arranging to meet with the president to tell her our needs and to hand over the draft bill on autonomous sex work. We also approached the municipality, which has never happened before. We have never been invited to celebrate the International Women's Day because we are sex workers, this is the first time".
>
> - Woman sex worker testimony, Tegucigalpa

4.2.4 *Conclusions*

The management of personal and community needs is mediated by local forms of organization like the water boards and neighborhood boards that benefit whole communities, regardless of the level of involvement of the beneficiaries in these schemes of community-based organization. NGOs, grass-roots

organizations and associations also are regarded as instances that provide support and orientation to promote and defend human rights and to improve labor conditions of certain populations like youth, **women**, **LGTBIQ+ and schoolteachers.**

The relationships between IDPs and persons at risk with these organizations reveal a perception of closeness, of effectiveness to represent their interests and in some cases, to satisfy basic needs and support the enforcement of rights. Also, the involvement in activities promoted by NGOs, grass-roots organizations, and associations offers protective and safe spaces in a context of widespread violence within the neighborhoods where they live or the schools where they work.

On the contrary, the management of needs and enforcement of rights through authorities is mainly regarded as a suspicious and ineffective channel. The relationship with authorities seems distant and sporadic (when campaigning to be elected). Therefore, even if the general perception is there were no restrictions on the exercise of the right to vote, citizens do not actually feel well represented by the elected authorities. Nonetheless, some persons expressed hope and confidence in the newly elected authorities. It's important to note that the reasons for the lack of sense of representation are not directly linked to the condition of the vulnerability of IDPs. However, it does impact the channels and mechanism which they use to pursue the enforcement of fundamental rights and satisfy their basic needs.

Confidence on State´s authorities is seriously compromised. Corruption within public institutions and impunity have contributed to the citizen's lack of confidence in those who have the mission to guarantee their safety and security, and to investigate threats and violations against life, integrity, and freedoms. Persons participating in the consultative process has expressed their perception of the police as a corrupt and violent actor who abuses its powers, the Prosecutor's Office is perceived as an inefficient institution. Both institutions are considered part of the problem of insecurity.

Finally, widespread violence in territories controlled by "maras" and gangs in urban areas evidences the absence of the State in those communities. The control exerted by criminal groups over urban neighborhoods through control mechanisms such as invisible borders affect the enjoyment of basic freedoms like the freedom of movement in public spaces, self-restrictions of expression due to behavior, and look like codes, which seems to affect particularly youth and children.

4.3 Adequate standards of living

4.3.1 *Access to water and sanitation*

Limited **access and availability of potable water and sanitation infrastructure** is a widespread need across all the population groups that were consulted. In most cases, water distribution is limited to once every two weeks, and is often available for only 3 hours. Given this limitation, people resort to buying water from private suppliers who deliver it in tanker trucks to the communities. However, these suppliers cannot access some neighborhoods, either because the roads are in poor condition or due to the fear of entering communities controlled by gangs and maras, meaning that people in these communities must walk half-hour to access this service. Those who can buy water from private distribution trucks, pay from 20 to 400 lempiras (1 to 16 dollars) per 10 to 20 gallons. Some people mentioned that they only have water because they collected it during the rainy season, but it is not potable. **Persons with disabilities** expressed having difficulties when trying to buy water to private distribution trucks, since the operators ignore their requests.

Due to the limited access to drinking water services and the current challenges in terms of frequency, quality and costs, some communities organize themselves independently in water boards to manage the service. However not all the neighbors have the tools and resources to cover these needs, which results in shortages. Communities also lack adequate sanitation infrastructure, such as sewages. These difficulties not only affect the safe use of the water but can also cause the proliferation of vector-borne diseases and poor personal hygiene; or situations such as carrying water from other

communities and the construction of deep wells to extract water that may pose safety risks.

The impact of hurricanes Eta and Iota, which impacted the territory in November 2020, is still felt in many communities inthe northern part of the country. The southern communities of Chamelecón and Choloma still lack adequate and regular access to water services. This has led to an increase in regular household expenses that now have to pay additional money for water that they used to get for free.

Public schools are also affected by limited access to water, especially in urban and peri urban areas. Most lack adequate water and sanitation infrastructure, which poses a considerable challenge, especially when education authorities have issued the order to gradually return to face-to-face classes. Due to the pandemic, dropouts increased.

Some persons expressed that the limited access to water services is algo determined by sociopolitical factors such as corruption and clientelism for belonging to the ruling political party.

> "There are no neighborhood boards nor water boards in charge. No one has come to help, not during the pandemic of COVID-19, neither after Eta and Iota hurricanes; we lost everything".
>
> > - Merchant testimony, San Pedro Sula

> "Since we have no water and our toilets are broken, we have chosen to have classes from 8 am to 11 am; there is no recess and the children do not have a snack. When they have to go to the bathroom, we don't know what to do".
>
> > - Schoolteacher testimony, Tegucigalpa

4.3.2 *Healthcare services*

Even tough Honduras has a network of primary healthcare services and part of the population can access them at a reasonable distance outside their neighborhoods, some have difficulties due to **the territorial control exerted by maras and gangs and the establishment of invisible borders**. One young man mentioned that he witnessed a woman being shot after assisting to the healthcare center because she didn't live in that neighborhood.

The participants mentioned **low quality and high costs as others factors that limit the access to healthcare services**. Limited transportation services and poor road conditions difficult the access. When they need to go to second-level establishments (hospitals), since they are mostly available in large cities, the population must travel long distances to reach them, incurring in high travel costs (up to 800 lempiras, or 32 dollars).

When referring to the quality of care provided by medical staff, participants stated that cases are not prioritized according to the level of urgency, but rather based on personal favors. One person mentioned she had an emergency, and instead was given a doctor's appointment five months from her request. In some cases, they prioritize people with gang ties out of fear. Others mentioned that healthcare services lack sufficient staff, enough supplies and medicines to fulfill the population's needs, which generates additional expenses associated to laboratory tests and treatments.

Even though some young persons referred that **mental health services** are available at some centres, adult persons reported having little access to good-quality medical care and medication for physical and mental illnesses even when the impact of recent crises has exacerbated the need for psychosocial support. For instance, **merchants** mentioned that being unemployed is one of the situations that most affects men's mental health. Given the deficiencies of the public health system, people turn to private mental health services.

Sexual and reproductive health services for **women** are limited, and are usually provided by general doctors, rather than specialists.

The **impacts of hurricanes Eta and Iota are still a challenge for adequate healthcare infrastructure**. Some health centers have remained closed since 2020 due to structural damages that haven't been fixed by the local authorities; some affected local health services called "medical dispensaries" administered by NGOs and churches also remain closed. Some of the most affected communities, such as Rivera Hernández, Chamelecón and Choloma in the Cortés department report fewer available health centers, as well as an increased demand for healthcare. Fortunately, the population of San Pedro Sula can access the municipal health macro districts (municipal health services) which offer an adequate schedules and services that correspond to the needs of the communities.

Access to comprehensive health services is limited due to stigma and discrimination. Care services for **LGTBIQ+** persons who experienced sexual violence, revictimize and disregard the differentiated needs of transgender people that are evidenced by the lack endocrinology services, which are necessary for their transition processes. Thus, many must rely on clandestine hormonal treatments they administer themselves without proper medical assistance.

Sex workers face discrimination to access public services, especially by the administrative personnel who discriminate them and justify the aggressions they suffer in the streets due to their occupation. Due to the lack of sign language interpreters in health facilities, **deaf or hearing-impaired persons** are unable to express their needs to the healthcare staff, thus limiting the access to adequate care and treatment. The use of facemasks makes it even harder to understand what the healthcare staff is communicating, since **deaf persons** are unable to "read" their lips.

"In South Chamelecón, the health centre cannot cope; there is a large population in the sector. There are private clinics, but they charge a lot. In North Chamelecón, we can't get to the health centre because we can't cross the [invisible] border".

- Woman testimony, San Pedro Sula

4.3.3 Education

Due to the **impact of the COVID-19 pandemic**, private and public schools of all levels have remained closed since March 2020. Due to the difficulties accessing internet services, the lack of mobile devices and internet access, and the difficulties of added expenses for connectivity, many students were forced to dropped out of schools all over the country. The impact has been greater in rural areas, where families can only afford the education expenses of one family member.

To address this, the Education Secretariat informed that face-to-face or a mixed online/face-to-face modality would be implemented in Honduras in 2022. Some participants informed that students from 1st to 6th grade will attend schools twice per week, and high school students will only receive online classes. However, many students and their families still face connectivity issues that limit their capacity to follow-up online classes, to fully comprehend the topics and to do their homework adequately. Many students and families expressed experimenting distress because of these challenges of learning through online modalities.

Parents feel that **returning to face-to-face classes is a challenge**, since school infrastructure does not comply to biosafety measures. Another obstacle for a safe return to classes is the limited availability of pediatric vaccines, and some parents expresses that the children's right to education is being violated if they are not vaccinated. However, schoolteachers manifested that even without the necessary infrastructure, sanitary and biosafety supplies, going

back to face-to-face modality will at least allow students to stay in school and restore the protection network they had prior to the pandemic.

Leaving protection environments such as schools may increase the risk of forceful recruitment of children and adolescents. A boy expressed that a friend quit school to help his family's expenses and was later recruited by a gang. Similarly, some parents were forced to disenroll their children since they had to transit across high-risk neighborhoods, and gangs threatened to recruit them, or because they sexually harass girls. In some cases, parents resort to enrolling their children in private schools to avoid recruitment or to prevent their engagement in drug use. Some pointed out that they do not trust public education due to its teaching methodology and even more so with the virtual learning system derived from the COVID 19 pandemic.

Some participants manifested that **education is not perceived as useful as earning an income**, therefore several **children** abandoned schools to enroll in the workforce; others mentioned migrating to the United Stated, or even getting involved in drug-trafficking, seems a more plausible possibility to have a better income.

Historically, **LGTBIQ+** have faced obstacles to access education due to discrimination of their sexual orientation, gender identities or expressions, from enrollment up to obtaining degrees, beginning at an early age. This discrimination feeds a cycle of exclusion that makes access to other rights such as access to housing, employment, health more difficult.

> "I have a sister who took my niece out of school because the gangs told her that she would be theirs by hook or by crook".
>
> - Woman merchant testimony, Danlí

4.3.4 *Housing, land and property*

Even though there is no official data on **formal and informal land tenure** in Honduras, a **2017 UNCHR**

study found that most of the housing and land in small and mid-size municipalities in Honduras were not under the official property registry system. Such was evidenced during the consultations: some participants owned properties and did hold a formal tenure over their houses and lands, but others pertaining to entire communities in high-risk urban areas like Chamelecón, Choloma and Rivera Hernández in the Cortés department, did not possess full ownership over their properties and are considered by municipal authorities as "illegal" dwellings. As a consequence, these communities have a limited access to basic services, and are often discriminated and stigmatized for their housing conditions and live with the potential risk of eviction or land disownment. When purchasing lands, **women** reported having been victims of scams by previous landowners that failed to provide the promised property deeds.

Renters, either of living or commercial properties, usually do not have a lease agreement and therefore, have no means to protect them in case of eviction. **Merchants** pointed out that they rely on the good faith of the parties or depending on the need to be able to verify the address of the person or to access a credit. However, they stated that to carry out some commercial procedures, it is necessary to formalize leases, especially as a prerequisite for obtaining a permit or license that allows them to operate.

LGBTIQ+ persons can rarely have access to homeownership. Due to the prohibition of same sex marriage and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity by landlords, banking institutions and government housing projects, most LGBTIQ+ persons do not have formal leases or documentation over their properties.

Housing, land and property dispossession is one of the main causes of internal displacement in Honduras. **IDP women** reported having no documentation over housing neither before nor after being forcibly displaced. A person with disabilities reported leaving their home after the murder of one of his sons without being able to recover the title deed of his property. He expressed concern over not knowing the current condition of his home, whether

it remains abandoned or if it has been usurped by the gang that forced his family to leave.

Some persons reported having sold or rented their house when they were forcibly displaced. In this last case, the woman who owned the property needed an intermediary, and renting was agreed upon without a formal contract.

> "I had the documentation of my house, but since I had to leave because of the violence and displacement I suffered, we left everything there. We had to flee because otherwise they would have killed us; they had already killed one of my sons".
>
> - Man with a disability testimony, Tegucigalpa

> "Access [to housing] is quite limited, the appearance and gender expression are a limitation, to the point of denial. It is stronger when it is a couple".
>
> - LGBTIQ+ person testimony, San Pedro Sula

4.3.5 Conclusions

Overall, the participants highlighted the institutional weakness and lack of state resources hinder the population's capacity to have adequate standards of living and to fulfill their basic needs in the communities where they live. In response, those who have the economic means rely on private services rather than public ones. They also identify favoritism in all areas, including access to essential services. Additionally, the social and territorial control exerted by gangs in urban neighborhoods imposes both physical and social barriers to people's effective access to health services, education and community spaces.

Due to the country's environmental vulnerability and limited institutional capacity, the impact of natural disasters can have a prolonged effect on the most vulnerable communities. This is the case of Rivera Hernández, Chamelecón and Choloma in the department of Cortés, communities affected by violence whose health and community infrastructure has not yet been able to recover after the passage of storms Eta and Iota in 2020.

The difficulties to **access water and sanitation** are a widespread problem highlighted by the people participating in the consultations. This means that the population must resort to buying water from private services, which are much more expensive than the public service and whose prices are not fixed. For those living in high-risk communities or with difficult access due to poor road infrastructure, access to drinking water is even more difficult, as they must walk long distances, while avoiding invisible borders. Additionally, the limited water supply and poor sanitation infrastructure in schools are considered a risk of COVID-19 contagion, especially in the face of the progressive return to face-to-face classes. Therefore, this lack of access increases the living costs of the population, the probability of suffering from contagious diseases and experiencing risks when circulating within these communities.

Participants highlighted that **healthcare services** are characterized by the lack of medicines, insufficient personnel and, in some cases, poor attention to the population. Access is often determined by favoritism and not by the level of need or urgency of the population. Mental health and sexual and reproductive health services are very limited, so the population resorts to private services. **Sex workers** have difficulties accessing healthcare services due to stigma and discrimination; and **LGBTQI+ persons** and **persons with disabilities** face difficulties in receiving differentiated treatment according to their specific needs.

Schools are perceived as protection environments within communities, because of the support network schoolteachers provide and because classrooms are seen as safe spaces. However, school environments are not always free from risks. **Children and adolescents** experiment forced recruitment and gender-based violence by "maras" and gangs, and are often forcibly displaced along their families as

a self-protection measure. The access to quality education has been one of the greatest challenges since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, not only because of the increase in school desertion due to the technological gap, but also due to the protection void generated after the closure of the schools. According to schoolteachers, even without the adequate biosafety conditions, the progressive return to face-to-face learning will contribute to restore the protection space schools have provided in communities.

The predominantly informal land tenure in Honduras hinders the population's access to basic public services and increases the risk of evictions. However, for **internally displaced persons**, the lack of property deeds makes the restitution of their **housing, lands and properties** impossible after suffering dispossession, usurpation or destruction due to violence. Unfortunately, there is still a legal gap that adds to the difficulty of requesting restitution of dispossessed HLP for internally displaced persons, which is expected to be addressed once the IDP protection bill is adopted.

The Honduran population faces great challenges every day to meet its basic needs and, due to institutional fragility, the State does not have sufficient capacity to respond in an adequate, timely and comprehensive manner. Therefore, the current social protection schemes are insufficient to meet the population's needs. However, difficulties in accessing basic services are aggravated in contexts of violence, where protection risks have a disproportionate impact on internally displaced persons and those at risk of displacement.

4.4 Access to livelihoods and employment cceso a medios de vida y empleo

4.4.1 Income

Unemployment, informal employment, and self-employment were mentioned across all populations consulted. At least one of the members of the families of most of the persons interviewed are unemployed.

On average, in families of 5 persons, 1 or 2 of them contribute to the income of their households. One of the issues that affect most of the persons who live in high-risk colonies is the stigmatization they face searching for a job due to the location where they reside.

Self-employment at small food services businesses is the most popular job among people consulted when talking about the source of employment. Often, to operate the business, family members work even if they don't earn a salary or compensation. **Merchants'** income is irregular, and they don't have a fixed basis. Therefore, they depend on other members of the family to have a regular income to afford basic expenses like remittances.

Other vulnerable persons like **sex workers** mentioned that they work in **informal** economies (cleaning or cooking) to survive. Sometimes they can't afford basic expenses like food, then, they don't eat that day.

Even though persons employed in formal sectors, like **schoolteachers**, earn wages that barely cover the living expenses of their families since they often must cover school expenses such as materials, photocopies, facemasks, alcohol, and sometimes, snacks for students who come from the poorest families. Some also manifested that they have experienced **sexual harassment** and extortion in their workplace, but they have managed to mitigate their risks due to the fear of leaving their jobs and not being able to find another one somewhere safer.

Regarding **informality**, owners of small businesses mentioned that they have not received orientation on how formalization contributes to improving their conditions. Besides, consulted merchants stated that formalization of their business implicates several bureaucratic procedures, costs, and taxes. Thus, as mentioned by **merchants** consulted, one of the issues that formalized owners of business highlighted is the unfair competition conditions imposed by informal entrepreneurship.

> "When I was informed about all the required documents to formalize my business, I was shocked. That is not reachable to the poor. That's why the young ones choose to rob and transport drugs".
>
> - Merchant testimony, Danlí.

Women face significant challenges in access to income sources. On the one hand, because of the caregivers' roles inside their families and no support services like affordable childcare services. On the other hand, the labor market presents limitations for pregnant and elderly **women.**

LGBTIQ+ persons expressed they **limit themselves to expressing their gender and sexual orientation** to don't affect their participation in the labor market or affect the chances to improve their position. Moreover, for transgender people possibilities seem to be limited to sex work, paid or unpaid care work, and services inside **LGTBIQ+** organizations.

4.4.2 *Employment in hosting communities*

Persons who were displaced due to violence lost their jobs and other sources of income. In some cases, they haven't found jobs at hosting communities even if they have the knowledge and abilities to carry them out. For some **women**, the support from local NGOs that are part of the National Protection Group allowed them to set up micro-businesses, such as the sale of food and beverages. Other IDPs mentioned had been supported by networks of **women** through productive initiatives such as handicrafts and decoration for events.

Also, IDPs resettled face new risks linked to the **extortion** from "Maras" to owners of small businesses. In addition, those **merchants** that didn't experience the risks to be displaced nowadays mentioned that if their business didn't flourish, they would seek another place to live.

> "The best thing about living in El Salvador was the education. It is better than here. I came because of the" war tax" [extortion] that the MS13 gang charged me, but now a few days ago I received threats by phone; I cannot work like this".
>
> - Merchant testimony, Danlí.

4.4.3 *Basic expenses and public services*

Relatives help families to afford basic expenses like food and public services. **Remittances** from family members in other countries were a common element among different populations consulted. Also, personal loans are a resource used to pay debts since it's difficult to obtain formal financial credits.

People mentioned that when it's not possible to have other sources to pay their debts, they have had to turn to informal moneylenders since formal lenders usually deny loans to them due to the prejudices and discrimination based on the communities where they live. Moneylenders impose high interest and to collect their money they work with organized crime groups to collect back the money. **Merchants** face specific difficulties related to the difficulty of obtaining financial credits that hinder the sustainability of their businesses.

> "Access to money from informal lenders is easy, but interests are high. Some persons would rather commit suicide due to pression and threats when they are delayed in the payments".
>
> - Merchant Testimony, San Pedro Sula

4.4.4 *Conclusions*

Households' income in Honduras is affected by generalized **unemployment** and systematic **extortion** perpetrated by criminal groups. According to the National Institute of Statistics, by October of 2021 (**INE, 2021**): (i) on average,

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each occupied person has to maintain 2.6 persons (dependency ratio 1: 2,6); (ii) the **unemployment rate was 9.8%** in urban areas (445.561 persons of 3.843.563), but Central District and San Pedro Sula have the highest rates of unemployment, 10.1% and 9.5%, respectively; (iii) unemployment affects mostly young persons since 45.7% of unemployed persons have less than 25 years; (iv) 30 of every 100 Hondurans were self-employed; (v) 15 of every 100 Hondurans have non-remunerated jobs; (vi) **sub employment** rate in urban areas is: (a) 35.7% for sub employment due lack of hours of work (persons who worked less than 40 hours per week and want to work more), and (b) 27.8% for subemployment due lack of income (persons who worked more than 40 hours per week and have incomes belove minimum wage.) This means that **only 36.5% of employed people have adequate labor conditions**.

Furthermore, INE estimates that in July 2021, the **poverty rate** was **50.5%** and the extreme poverty rate was 21.7% in urban households in Honduras (**INE, 2021**). In this context, IDPs and persons at risk must maintain their income sources in a generalized scenario of unemployment, sub employment, and self-employment with deficient labor conditions and high rates of poverty.

Overall, this scenario reveals that household income is insufficient to afford basic expenses. Moreover, many interviewed persons reported relying on remittances provided by relatives to complete their revenues to be able to pay for food and public services. Therefore, when they must diminish their income, not only their patrimony rights are affected. Due to the fragility of livelihood sources, their basic standards of living decreased and basic needs like food or health could be unmet. Therefore, systematic **extortion** in Honduras represents a serious threat to the fundamental rights of vulnerable households and is considered one of the main causes of forced displacement.

Extortion imminent and real risk to the life and integrity of the victim and their family members. Consequently, victims have only three alternatives: (i) pay the fees of extortion; (ii) abandon their jobs or business and become forced displaced persons to be forced to give the money requested or to abandon the place where they reside or work; or (iii) face the consequences to disobey gangs like being murdered. Both alternatives affect their source of income. However, the second scenario also implies permanently or temporarily abandoning the usual source of income.

It's important to note that extortion affects formal and informal employees but those who work in conflictive areas experience a higher risk to be victims of extortion like merchants, teachers, and transporters. In a context of high rates of unemployment, many persons are exposed to permanent threats against their safety and integrity in order to maintain their jobs. Persons reported witnessed homicides to the ones who revealed against "maras" and gangs extortion and being direct victims of **sexual harassment** in their workplaces (female teachers). Therefore, it's a complex context where the source of their income in many families, like owners of small businesses and informal employees, constitutes at the same time risk to be forcibly displaced.

4.5 Personal and other documentation

4.5.1 *Personal identification documents*

Most persons have their national identification documents ("DNI" acronym in Spanish for documentos nacionales de identificación). Few of them mentioned that even they have passports in case they have to leave the country. Nonetheless, two kinds of problems with DNI were mentioned: (i) the identification of gender identity and disabilities condition, and (ii) invisible borders which affect real access to those documents.

First, access to ID is considered a challenge for **LGTBIQ+** persons, especially for trans people. The processes for obtaining personal identification documents are complicated in terms of respecting their gender identity or expression, especially if they are not supported by organizations of the LGBTIQ community. Therefore, the lack of documentation limits their participation in representation spaces, the right to vote, as well as access to basic goods and services.

Persons with disabilities feel stigmatized by the National Registry's decision to include a logo on the DNI that identifies them as **persons with disabilities** since they were not consulted if they agreed to such a measure.

On the other hand, in regard to the violent context, one young IDP in Tegucigalpa reported that **invisible borders** impede having an ID since the place where he must claim it is at a high-risk area. In this case, the person said that he would have to pay someone else to claim it. Also, in San Pedro Sula and Choloma **women** identified many people that aren't legally registered in the National Registry of Persons. Interviewed persons consider that this is a problem that affects **high-risk urban communities**. This situation was exacerbated by last year's nationwide transition process toward a new DNI. They explain that several people were unable to enroll and acquire their new identification documents and were thus unable to exercise their voting rights.

4.5.2. *Other documentation relevant for the context*

Another issue identified, is the procedures that impose on teachers to document threats and violence suffered in schools' environments, due to gangs and "Maras" who controlled colonies where schools are located. This documentation is necessary to be considered able to be transferred to another school. The Education Secretariat has a transfer protocol in place for **schoolteachers** who request transfers due to situations related to safety, family matters or health. However, those who are facing risks are required to present evidence such as filed complaints or records of being **sexually harassed** to study their request to be transferred. This request can only be filed during August, and if admitted, can only be effective until April of the next year. Schoolteachers manifested the urgency to change this protocol in emergency life-threatening situations.

4.5.3 *Conclusions*

Invisible borders due to the controlled territories by "maras" and street gangs was the main problem identified to real access to DNI. The several restrictions on freedom of circulation in high-risk areas, represent an obstacle for citizens to be registered and have an ID is affected. This goes beyond the institutional process to have access to documentation but impacts the real access to identification, Therefore, becomes also a public problem that must be attended to by authorities.

Persons with disabilities and LGTBIQ+ expressed feel discriminated against due the procedures to identify personal conditions like gender identity or expression are not reflected in their documentation or disabilities as conditions that are labeled in their ID.

Finally, documentation demanded to accredit risks and real threatening's against safety, like sexual harassment, it's a disproportionate burden for teachers that work in schools located in high-risk areas.

In conclusion, procedures and protocols related to personal and other documentation need to adjust to the widespread violence context, especially for those ones who live and work in conflictive areas, since implicates a real limitation to access to documentation that allows the exercise of other rights like vote and work in a safe environment.

4.6 Family reunification

4.6.1 *Family separation and transgressions after forced displacement*

Some persons at risk reported that invisible frontiers in urban territories impede families to be reunited since they are not allowed to trespass the borders of certain colonies controlled by gangs and "maras".

Not much information was reported about the separation of families forcibly displaced. However, one **IDP girl** mentioned that during the displacement her family members were separated. During this process, one of her family members suffered aggressions to her sexual integrity. Also, one of the **women merchants** consulted in San Pedro Sula expressed that before being forcibly displaced, she owned a business inside her community and had to pay "extortion fees" to be able to operate. After a

while, she received more threats and had no other option than flee to another area along with three (3) members of her family. However, a large part of the family stayed because they feared losing all their belongings. However, since threats increased, they also had to abandon the community.

> "When they started threatening my mom (…) and we went to my grandmother's. My sister was raped (…)".
>
> – Girl testimony, Tegucigalpa

4.6.2. Conclusions

Family separation for IDPs was a sensible topic. Nonetheless, two testimonies of IDPs reveal that forced displacement and separation of families involve significant transgressions against life, integrity, and patrimony. After withstanding threats and transgressions, families must abandon their home or business as the last source to protect life and personal integrity. Nonetheless, after being displaced, they face other risks and violations of fundamental rights and basic liberties in new contexts and unknown environments.

4.7 Access to justice

4.7.1 Access to institutional procedures to enforce rights

Distrust in public institutions is generalized due to the lack of effective response from authorities. No single public institution was identified as one which provides celery and effective response to crimes and violations of human rights. **Judicial mechanisms to protect fundamental rights are inefficient** (tardiness of effective responses). It is normal in Honduras for families to "do justice by their own means" due to the lack of an effective institutional response. Furthermore, it's perceived that people with limited resources have less chance of accessing justice.

Also, different groups reported being afraid of the **filtration of information** denounced by the policemen to criminal organizations, therefore, to the reprisals by the gangs present in the communities.

> "There are places where the police are allies of criminals"
>
> Merchant testimony, San Pedro Sula

Persons with disabilities highlighted the lack of institutional capacities to communicate and assist them. The institutions lack staff that understands and can communicate in sign language, thus making it more difficult for deaf persons to express their protection risks, file complaints, and request assistance.

In addition, some persons mentioned **lack of information and orientation about judicial procedures to enforce their rights** and which kind of transgressions are allowed to report to the Public Ministry. Despite this gap in the information on judicial remedies, the risks of retaliation overcome the benefits of seeking judicial protection and disincentive filing complaints with the authorities.

> "If you ask for advice on how to report, they tell you: think about it, think about your family".
>
> -Young woman testimony, San Pedro Sula.

4.7.2 Conclusions

Access to judicial remedies it's not recognized as an effective source to enforce rights due the lack of efficient strategies to protect citizens, risks of retaliation and impunity for the crimes committed by the organized crime groups. Therefore, access to judicial mechanisms must be analyzed in a context of violence widespread and controlled territories by "Maras" and gangs, and lack of confidence in their authorities, especially in the policeman, as presented above (section 4.1. and sections 4.2.).

These findings are aligned to the Profiling Study of forced displacement 2004-2018 (Profiling Study, 2019). In this study, IDPs informed that only 22% reported transgressions to the authorities due fear of retaliation (47%) reprisals (47%), prior warnings and threats not to report (5%), and the perception of the low effectiveness of the justice system (33%). (**Profiling study of forced displacement, 2019**).

Consequently, the silence from victims and the lack of accountability of authorities, since there are no reports of crimes to authorities that reflect the magnitude of the forced displacement, indicates that the Judicial system is disconnected from the reality of systematic violations of human rights in the main urban areas. Injustice is reflected in the generalized impunity of crimes that precedes forced displacement and the lack of prosecution of forced displacement as a crime itself. The lack of effective access to judicial remedies contributes to the perpetration of threats and violations that families suffer when they are at risk of being forcibly displaced or the hopelessness for those to have to flee from their homes, while aggressors remain in their neighborhoods without fear being investigated and sanctioned due their crimes.