



# Mexico and Central America

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FORDFOUNDATION

*Working with Visionaries on the  
Frontlines of Social Change Worldwide*

The *Ford Foundation* works with visionary leaders and organizations worldwide to change social structures and institutions so that all people have the opportunity to reach their full potential, contribute to society, have a voice in the decisions that affect them, and live and work in dignity.

This commitment to social justice is carried out through programs that strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation, and advance human knowledge, creativity and achievement.



*The year 2012 marks the 50th anniversary of the Ford Foundation's work in Latin America where we have offices in Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro and Santiago. Over the past half century, we have supported social change makers in Mexico and Central America who are working to promote social justice, build more inclusive societies and create opportunities. Today, we are working with visionary leaders in civil society to empower people throughout the region—especially those who are poor and marginalized—to have a voice in shaping the policies and institutions that affect their lives.*



*We envision a future in Mexico and Central America in which migration is an option, rather than an economic necessity, a future in which migrant workers are respected and rewarded for their contributions to the region's economies. The work of building that future has already begun.*



## INVESTING IN THE PEOPLE OF MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA

Meaningful social change occurs when people have the capacity and tools to improve their own lives and communities. By investing in the people of Mexico and Central America, strengthening organizations and providing local leaders with the support necessary to confront today's challenges, the Ford Foundation is inspiring social change.

Our grant making throughout the region focuses on migration and social exclusion—no other issues are more timely and important. Every year at least one million people embark on migration journeys that take them across national borders in Mexico and Central America; 400,000 crossings occur along Mexico's southern border alone. Most of these men, women and children are fleeing poverty and entrenched social conditions that exclude them from full participation in society. According to the UN, income inequality is still greater in Latin America than in any other part of the world.

## WHAT FORD IS DOING

The Ford Foundation is supporting a variety of organizations to meet the region's most pressing social challenges. We partner with grantees that are addressing the root causes of migration by developing innovative solutions to rural poverty and ensuring that indigenous populations can control and benefit from the natural resources in their communities. Others are working to create policies that prevent the abuse and exploitation of migrants. We also support organizations that are studying how migration exposes women to HIV/AIDS—and developing appropriate interventions that promote women's reproductive rights to reverse those trends.

An underlying goal in all of these activities is to expand opportunities for individuals to have a voice in shaping the policies and institutions that affect their lives. For this reason, we also fund exceptional arts facilities throughout the region as a way to encourage the free expression of ideas among groups whose voices have been ignored or silenced.

## A PROUD HISTORY IN THE REGION

Our work builds on a half century of innovation in Mexico and Central America. Since 1962, the foundation has opened doors to higher education for a new generation of leaders, including people from indigenous communities. We helped establish lasting institutions, such as FUNDAR, which was founded in 1999 and uses research to understand and address social challenges such as migration, and GIRE (Grupo de Información en Reproducción Elegida), a leading advocate for reproductive justice in Mexico. The foundation's work has strengthened civil society in the region, bolstering local organizations and giving people a say in decisions that shape their lives, making governments more accountable to the people they serve. Over the years, economic opportunity has also been a major priority. We provided early and ongoing support for microfinance, community-based rural development and financial services for low-income people.

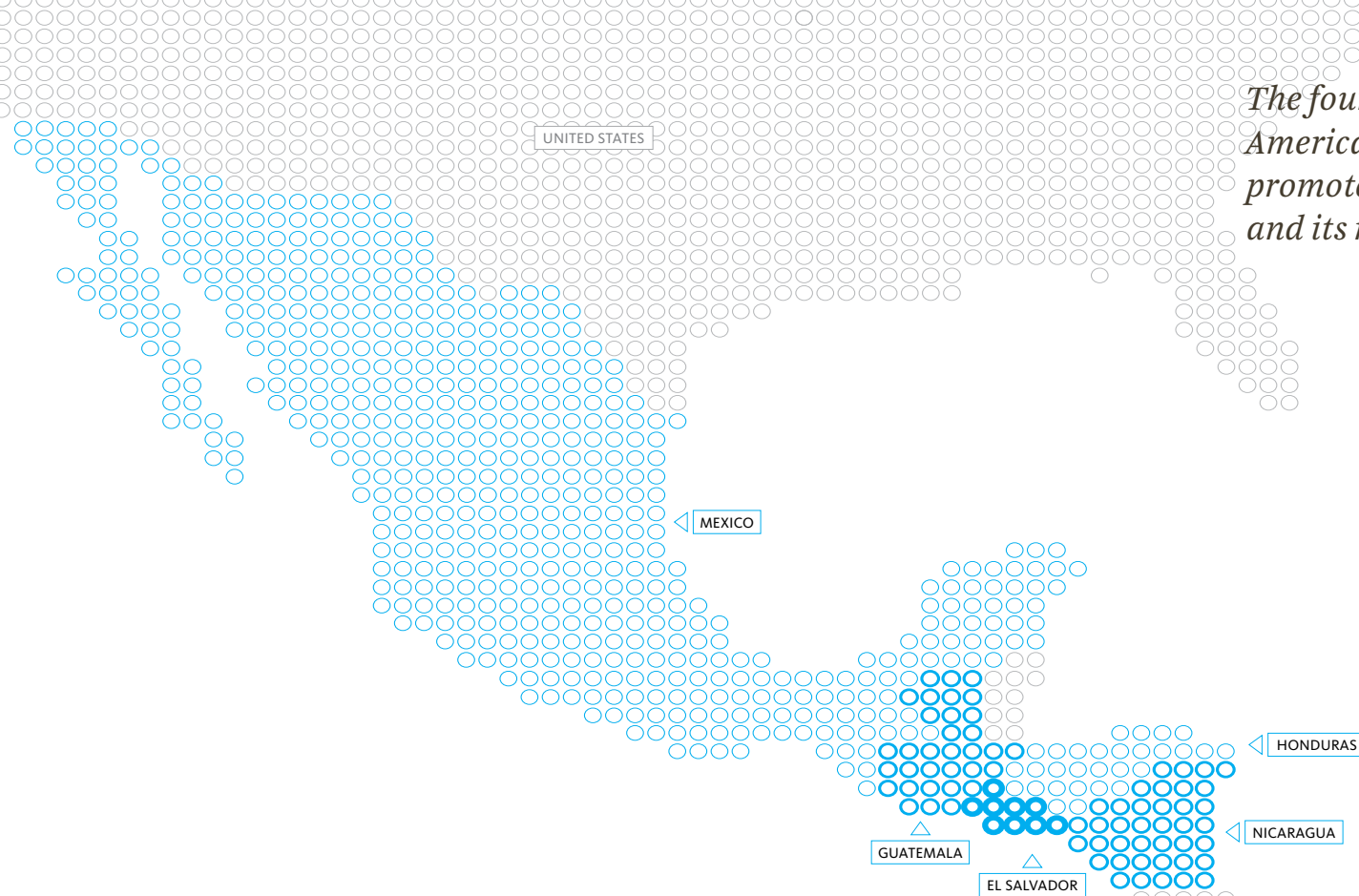
## THE FUTURE BEGINS TODAY

We envision a future in which migration is an option, rather than an economic necessity, a future in which migrants are respected and rewarded for their contributions to the region's economies, a future in which rural communities are thriving alongside urban centers.

The hard work of creating a better future has already begun. The leaders and organizations we support are using a variety of approaches to address migration and social exclusion—from research and policy analysis to advocacy and litigation, and testing new programs to building the capacity of existing ones.

Grantees are working across borders throughout Mexico and Central America to nurture strong regional alliances and are fostering collaborations among governments, academic institutions and civil society organizations. Their efforts have led to unprecedented partnerships between migrant rights advocates in Mexico and the United States, and have also improved livelihoods in rural areas of Mexico through programs that create international markets for local products.

SELECT STRATEGIES AND INVESTMENTS IN THE REGION



*The foundation's work in Mexico and Central America—a small sampling of which is offered here—promotes social inclusion and addresses migration and its many effects.*

HUMAN RIGHTS



MEXICO

Women and children are routinely abused and exploited in Mexico's southern-border detention centers.

We support efforts to litigate these cases and use them to raise public awareness about the abuse of migrants and to create new laws and policies.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



MEXICO AND GUATEMALA

Rural communities that depend on forestry for their livelihoods face threats from developers and other powerful commercial enterprises.

We provide funding to 11 communities in Southern Oaxaca and communities in the Petén Department to help them sustainably manage their forests.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION



GUATEMALA

Indigenous people make up 40 percent of the Guatemalan population yet often lack a voice in shaping the public policies that affect their lives.

We fund programs that use the arts as a vehicle to empower Mayan women to become vocal and effective agents for social change.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



MEXICO

Changes in agricultural and trade policies have left much of the rural populace unable to make a living, which leads to migration.

We support the campaign, "Sin Maiz no hay Pais" (Without Corn There is No Country), which recognizes agriculture as essential to a strong Mexican economy.

HIV/AIDS



GUATEMALA, NICARAGUA, MEXICO

More than a third of migrant women are victims of sexual abuse, putting them at risk of contracting the HIV virus.

We fund programs that help women overcome the stigma of HIV/AIDS and seek testing and treatment.

COMMUNITY RIGHTS



HONDURAS

Tourism developers, ranchers and others threaten to displace the indigenous Garifuna people from their native lands.

We support efforts to persuade the Honduran government to formally recognize their rights to the land and its resources and to strengthen the community internally.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY



EL SALVADOR

More than one-third of households in rural areas depend on remittances from relatives working in other countries.

We support efforts to create jobs and to expand rural economies so that residents are not dependant on money from relatives for their livelihoods.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS



CENTRAL AMERICA

Too often access to sexual and reproductive health services and information depends on wealth and social connections.

We support innovative, wide-reaching media programs that educate and empower young people about their reproductive rights.



A man wearing a purple baseball cap and a grey long-sleeved shirt is shown from the chest up, focused on sorting coffee beans. He is using his hands to pick through a large pile of light-colored, unroasted coffee beans spread out on a wooden tray. The background features a lush green landscape with rolling hills and trees under a clear blue sky. The overall scene conveys a sense of manual labor in a rural agricultural setting.

WORKING ON THE FRONTLINES IN

# Mexico and Central America



## Protecting Immigrant and Migrant Rights

OUR GRANTEES ARE WORKING to promote more effective and humane migration policies that end the exploitation and abuse of migrants, both during their journeys and wherever they settle.

Border policies have failed to respond effectively to increased migration, creating dangerous conditions and often fatal outcomes for migrants. Along the U.S.-Mexico border for example, powerful organized syndicates have formed to smuggle human beings. According to the Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH: Mexican National Human Rights Commission), nearly 10,000 migrants were kidnapped between February 2008 and September 2009. The U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants reports that migrants held in detention centers along Mexico's southern border are often victims of extortion, assault, and sexual abuse and are denied access to consular representatives. Meanwhile, migrants who reach their destinations are vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous employers.

Policies in the United States and Mexico focus almost exclusively on border security, fostering circumstances in which human rights violations flourish. We support an array of organizations to address these rights violations and their root causes.

Our grantees concentrate on shaping public policies that recognize and reflect the value of migrants and their contributions to the economy and also protect their fundamental human rights. The success of these grantees is crucial. One of them is bringing to court—and to light—cases of abuse involving the most vulnerable migrants along Mexico's southern border: women and children. Another grantee is working to enhance migrant labor rights, in part by promoting an increase in authorized migration. Work by our grantees throughout the region is resulting in more informed public discussion about migration and galvanizing a broad-based movement for new policies that can secure borders and also protect migrants.

### ON THE FRONTLINES

Many of our grantees use litigation and other types of advocacy to promote and protect the human rights of migrants. Projects include:

**Pursuing representative cases of abuse** and using legal action as a lever for reform.

GRANTEE: Strategic Human Rights Litigation (IDHEAS)

**Promoting policy changes** that would increase authorized migration and protect migrant labor rights.

GRANTEES: Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), jointly with the Central American University (UCA)

**Illuminating the vulnerabilities of migrant women** and recommending reforms to protect them.

GRANTEE: Project Counselling Service for Latin American Refugees (PCS)

**Strengthening relationships** between civil society leaders in Mexico and Central America and organized migrant communities in the United States.

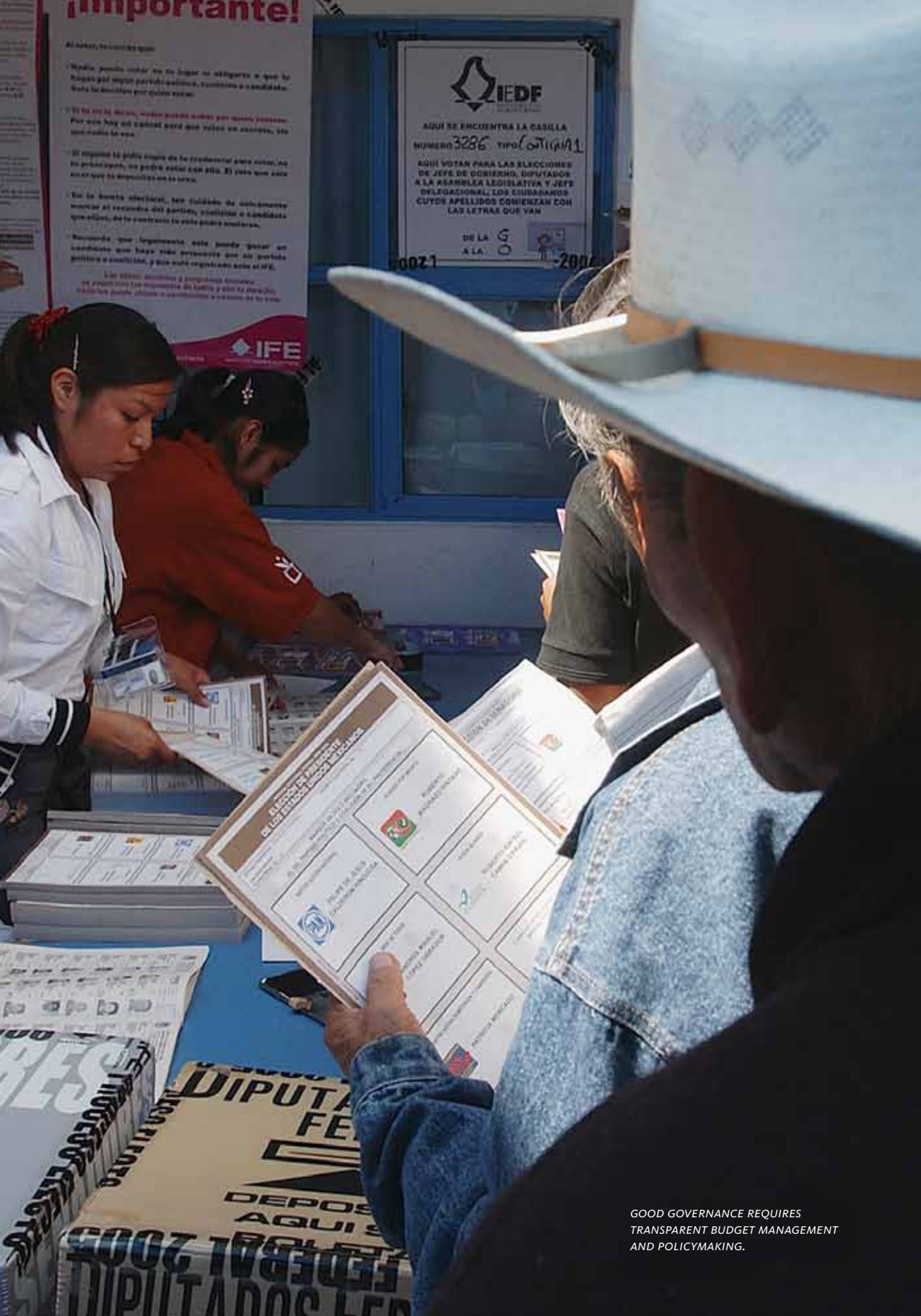
GRANTEE: National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities (NALACC)

For a full list of grantees, go to [www.fordfoundation.org](http://www.fordfoundation.org)

MIGRATION EXPOSES MIGRANTS TO VULNERABILITIES INCLUDING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES.







GOOD GOVERNANCE REQUIRES  
TRANSPARENT BUDGET MANAGEMENT  
AND POLICYMAKING.

## DEMOCRATIC AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT

### *Promoting Transparent, Effective and Accountable Government*

HELPING CITIZENS INTERACT with public institutions and encouraging open debate so that governments can be held accountable are essential components of democracy.

Although Mexico has some of the most advanced right-to-know laws in Latin America, a culture of secrecy within government still persists. This, coupled with well-documented corruption, impedes public scrutiny of government policies and their implementation, as well as efforts by civil society to hold government accountable. To address these issues, grantees use on-site monitoring, investigative measures, budget analysis and other approaches to reveal the costs and outcomes of current laws and to advocate for more humane and effective public policies.

We invest in organizations that are working to inform citizens about how governments are responding to migration and attempting to secure national borders. Much of these efforts focus on Mexico and the United States, nations where many migration-related government documents are designated as classified. So far neither the federal nor state governments in Mexico have been successful at punishing and preventing human rights violations against migrants—acts that include illegal detention and expulsion, denial of due process, sexual abuse and exploitative labor practices.

One grantee, for example, is training migrant rights organizations how to investigate and use U.S. and Mexican freedom of information laws to uncover human rights violations. Another is interviewing government officials and civil society experts, reviewing documents and visiting detention centers in an effort both to map Mexico's migration and security policies and recommend reforms. Projects such as these have the potential to usher in a new era of transparency and accountability in this crucial realm of public policy.

#### ON THE FRONTLINES

Our grantees take a variety of approaches to reveal and improve government policies. Projects include:

**Building the capacity of civil society organizations** and academic institutions to use budget review and other strategies to analyze the costs and outcomes of migration policies and recommend cost-effective alternatives.

GRANTEE: FUNDAR Center for Research and Analysis

**Facilitating dialogue among advocates** to build common understanding of the problems and a broad constituency for reform.

GRANTEE: Institute for Study and Dissemination on Migration (INEDIM)

**Using research methods** to map Mexico's migration and security policies

GRANTEE: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF)

**Training** migrant rights organizations on how to use freedom of information laws and investigative techniques.

GRANTEE: National Security Archive Fund

For a full list of grantees, go to [www.fordfoundation.org](http://www.fordfoundation.org)



## *Expanding Livelihood Opportunities for Poor Households*

INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES can invigorate rural economies and begin to reduce persistent poverty.

The region's economic growth over the past 20 years has not lifted rural communities out of poverty. In fact, changes in agricultural and trade policies, shifts in patterns of consumption and a focus on urban markets have left many rural residents unable to make a living. Poverty often compels people to leave the countryside, and this population drain only exacerbates problems locally. Indigenous and Afro-descendant groups have been particularly excluded from economic opportunities.

In El Salvador, for example, three decades of steady emigration has diminished the population by 20 percent, and more than a third of households in rural areas depend on remittances from relatives working in other countries. Conditions worsened in 2009 when flooding and mudslides severely damaged several rural areas of the country. The organizations we support use a range of development strategies to enable individuals to lead full and productive lives in their communities of origin instead of fleeing for survival.

A grantee in El Salvador, for example, is supporting small businesses and engaging local youth in job creation since they are the segment of the population most likely to leave the country in search of work elsewhere.

Two grantees in Mexico are helping indigenous women who are artisans to export and market their textiles, furniture, jewelry and other crafts to the United States.

These organizations have already increased the artists' sales, and a new Web-based marketing strategy promises to build on those gains. Such efforts and others are focused on creating lasting opportunities for the region's poorest citizens.

### ON THE FRONTLINES

Our grantees are pursuing innovative solutions to rural poverty. Their efforts include:

**Boosting crop production**, supporting small businesses, and creating other economic opportunities in rural areas of El Salvador.

GRANTEE: Foundation for National Development (FUNDE)

**Mounting the campaign**, "Sin Maíz No hay País" (Without Corn There is No Country), which recognizes agriculture as essential to a strong Mexican economy.

GRANTEE: National Association of Campesino Marketing Organizations (ANEC)

**Helping small farmers** in Mexico increase crop production and access U.S. and Mexican markets; and demonstrating more productive use of remittances in poor rural communities where migration is common.

GRANTEE: Binational Indigenous Integral Development (DBII)

**Strengthening a network** of indigenous women who are artisans, and marketing their crafts in the United States.

GRANTEES: Centro del Obrero Fronterizo (La Mujer Obrera)

For a full list of grantees, go to [www.fordfoundation.org](http://www.fordfoundation.org)



POVERTY OFTEN COMPELS PEOPLE TO LEAVE THE COUNTRYSIDE, AND THIS POPULATION DRAIN EXACERBATES PROBLEMS LOCALLY.





RAPID OUT-MIGRATION POSES  
SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES TO LOCAL  
INSTITUTIONS, LAND TENURE AND  
LAND USE.

## *Expanding Community Rights Over Natural Resources*

WE ARE COMMITTED TO HELPING people living in rural communities use the land and natural resources in ways that improve their livelihoods and also protect the environment.

In rural communities across the region, working-age adults, particularly men, are leaving to find better paying jobs elsewhere. These departures cause worker shortfalls. Without a stronger labor force, it is impossible for communities to sustain traditional revenue-generating activities such as forestry, hillside agriculture and handicrafts. At the same time, outsiders are vying for the land and its resources.

The organizations we support are helping indigenous and Afro-descendent leaders, in particular, retain control over their native lands and make the best use of its natural resources. In Mexico, for example, a grantee is studying the effects of population loss due to migration in Oaxaca and Guerrero, where communities have traditionally managed local forests and watersheds. The lessons learned are being used to adapt production mechanisms to reflect smaller local populations, developing strategies to encourage young people to remain in their home communities and to tap the skills, contacts and financial resources of those who have already left.

In northern Honduras, tourism developers, ranchers, drug traffickers and others threaten to displace the Garifuna peoples from their native lands or curtail the farming, fishing, and hunting on which their livelihoods depend. One of our grantees is defending their rights using approaches that range from negotiating with the Honduran government to formally recognize the Garifunas' land rights to strengthening the community radio stations that have proven to be a powerful tool for informing and uniting people.

In yet other areas of the region, the challenge is to craft more productive—and environmentally sound—land use strategies working in partnership with local communities. We support efforts, for example, to evaluate and influence a new approach to community forestry in Mexico that has the potential to generate more revenue for local communities while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

### ON THE FRONTLINES

Our grantees take a range of approaches to help communities benefit from the land and natural resources where they live. Projects include:

**Training indigenous and Afro-descendant groups** to pursue their legal rights to land and natural resources.

GRANTEE: Community Forestry Indigenous-Campesino Coordinating Association (ACICAFOC)

**Securing the territorial rights** of the Garifuna peoples in northern Honduras.

GRANTEE: Honduran Black Fraternity Organization (OFRANEH)

**Shaping new approaches to community forestry** that increase local revenue and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

GRANTEE: Mexican Council for Sustainable Forestry (CCMSS)

**Challenging powerful mining and petroleum companies** that are vying to control land and resources.

GRANTEE: International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN)

**Studying and responding** to the effects of population loss due to migration in Oaxaca and Guerrero, Mexico.

GRANTEE: Autonomous Group for Environmental Research (GAIA)

For a full list of grantees, go to [www.fordfoundation.org](http://www.fordfoundation.org)



## Supporting Diverse Arts Spaces

WE PROVIDE SUPPORT TO ARTS GROUPS to build spaces and networks that help create more diverse, tolerant and vibrant societies.

More than 60 languages and countless dialects are spoken in Mexico and Central America, a sign of the region's ethnic and cultural diversity. Yet many of these cultures and their considerable assets are languishing at the margins of society. In Guatemala, for example, indigenous people make up 40 percent of the population but live in deplorable conditions of poverty, often without access to schools, hospitals and other basic public services. Afro-descendant groups throughout the region are ignored to the point of being invisible and lack strong organizations to advocate for their rights and interests. Women are further disadvantaged.

We support a range of efforts to eradicate poverty. Underlying all of these efforts is our belief that individuals without economic advantage deserve a voice in decisions that affect their lives. We believe the arts are a powerful way of developing and expressing those voices. For this reason, we fund the creation and growth of arts facilities and networks that connect artists and resources, with a focus on indigenous and Afro-descendant groups.

Two grantees, for example, use theater, dance and other art forms to build self-esteem among Mayan women and strengthen their ability to be powerful agents for social change. Soon a network will unite these and other organizations of indigenous women throughout Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras and Nicaragua. The power of the arts is also evident among the Miskito people, an indigenous group divided by borders in Honduras and Nicaragua. A grantee is leading community art activities to revive a once forgotten ritual; these activities unite indigenous participants and thereby strengthen the whole cross-border community.

### ON THE FRONTLINES

Our grantees use the arts strategically to empower indigenous people in the region. Projects include:

**Opening new arts spaces** for Mayan women in Guatemala and building a network to connect indigenous women throughout the region.

GRANTEE: Association of Mayan Women's Group Kaq'la

**Strengthening the organizational capacity** of Mayan women in Chiapas, Mexico, through plays, arts workshops and exhibitions.

GRANTEE: Mexican Association for Women's Rights in support of the Strength of the Mayan Women (FOMMA)

**Using the arts to unite** the Miskito people and elevate the role of the community's women.

GRANTEE: University of the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua (URACCAN)

**Using documentary film to spark discussion** of social issues among indigenous women in Chiapas, Mexico, and give voice to their views and ideas through video production workshops.

GRANTEE: Documental Ambulante

For a full list of grantees, go to [www.fordfoundation.org](http://www.fordfoundation.org)



ARTS PROGRAMS CAN EMPOWER MARGINALIZED GROUPS AND EXPAND DIVERSE CULTURAL PRACTICES.





MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF  
THOSE INFECTED, AFFECTED AND  
VULNERABLE TO HIV/AIDS IN  
POLICYMAKING IS ESSENTIAL.

## ○ HUMAN RIGHTS

### *Reducing HIV/AIDS Discrimination and Exclusion*

OUR GRANTEES PROMOTE public policies that assert the rights of HIV-positive individuals and undo the stigma and discrimination that stand in the way of effective interventions.

The organizations we support are among the vanguard, responding to the conditions and dynamics—in particular, migration—that are influencing the spread of HIV/AIDS today. Migration is one of the main forces underlying the growing rates of HIV infection in rural communities and the increasing number of women affected by the pandemic. Migrant men who contract the virus while traveling or working in distant cities carry it back to their rural communities of origin, placing their wives and partners at great risk of infection. Additionally, women now constitute nearly half the migrant population, increasing their risk of HIV infection—often as a result of sexual abuse.

According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 70 percent of migrant women experience violence and more than half are victims of sexual violence. These problems are exacerbated by the persistent stigma of HIV/AIDS and widespread discrimination which discourage individuals from seeking testing and treatment.

These emerging trends demand new solutions, such as the interventions we support on the Mexico-Guatemala border, the border between Nicaragua and Costa Rica, and along a network of Jesuit shelters en route to the United States. In these key locales, women learn how the HIV virus is transmitted and can access preventive healthcare. Organized by Mexico's National Institute of Public Health—a pioneer in developing healthcare interventions for migrants—the project involves organizations of HIV-positive women, including the Central American Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS. It builds on the foundation's legacy, a commitment to strengthen the organizational and leadership capacity of HIV-positive women throughout the region so they can take an active part in shaping the public policies and interventions that concern them.

#### ON THE FRONTLINES

Our grantees, many of which are organizations composed of people living with HIV/AIDS, are working to slow the spread of HIV/AIDS and advocating for the rights of HIV-positive individuals. Projects include:

**Engaging policymakers** in the creation of more progressive laws and programs and consolidating the newly formed network of HIV-positive girls and adolescents.

GRANTEE: ICW Latina International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS

**Tapping the potential of a regional network** of grassroots women's organizations to reduce HIV transmission among women who migrate and those who remain in their communities of origin.

GRANTEE: Formación y Capacitación A.C. (FOCA)

**Providing migrant women with access** to medical care and tools for pregnancy prevention and protection against HIV.

GRANTEE: National Institute of Public Health (INSP)

For a full list of grantees, go to [www.fordfoundation.org](http://www.fordfoundation.org)



## *Promoting Reproductive Rights and the Right to Sexual Health*

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS and the right to physical safety are essential for women to assert control over their own lives. Our grant making focuses on groups for whom these basic rights remain out of reach: poor, migrant and indigenous women.

The organizations we support are shifting views, laws and policies in a region of the world where access to sexual and reproductive health services can depend on wealth and social connections, where illegal abortions kill thousands of poor women annually and where violent crimes against women occur with impunity.

One grantee played a pivotal role in expanding reproductive rights in Mexico City. Now that organization is leading a network of lawyers to promote reproductive rights beyond the capital city, in states where these rights are most at risk. The organization also reaches beyond Mexico to share successful advocacy strategies with civil society groups in Central America.

We're also building on previous efforts to reduce femicide. In this extreme form of gender-based violence, victims often are raped and tortured before they are killed. An organization we support established the Mexican Citizen's Observatory on Femicide, which registers murders and monitors the implementation of policies to protect women. This grantee now leads a regional alliance joining advocates in Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador to address the culture of violence that continues to claim women's lives and undermine their autonomy. As a result of these and other efforts, Guatemala passed a law that identifies—and prohibits—this type of murder and other countries are expected to follow suit. The stakes are rising: As growing numbers of women travel to distant cities and cross national borders in search of work, they are more vulnerable to sexual abuse, unwanted pregnancy and murder. The many organizations we support are working to protect their rights and their lives.

### ON THE FRONTLINES

Our grantees take a variety of approaches to expanding reproductive and sexual rights. Projects include:

**Defending the reproductive rights of women** in Mexico through a national network of lawyers and sharing successful strategies with advocates throughout the region.

GRANTEE: Informational Group on Reproductive Choice (GIRE)

**Using the media** to promote the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people in Central America.

GRANTEE: Foundation Points of Encounter for Changes in Daily Life (PUNTOS)

**Reducing femicide**—gender-based violent murders—through the creation of a regional alliance that connects advocates in Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador.

GRANTEE: Catholics for the Right to Decide (CDD)

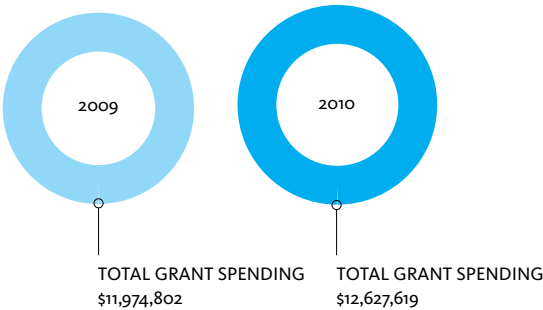
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BASIC REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS REMAIN OUT OF REACH FOR MANY WOMEN, PARTICULARLY MIGRANTS.



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TO APPLY FOR A GRANT, visit [www.fordfoundation.org/grants/grant-inquiry/mexico-and-central-america](http://www.fordfoundation.org/grants/grant-inquiry/mexico-and-central-america) where you will find a Grant Application Guide that describes our process and an online form you may use to submit a grant inquiry.

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