

ABOUT THE PROJECT

El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras consistently rank among the most violent countries in the world. High levels of insecurity, systemic corruption, and widespread impunity have undermined the capacity of governments in this region to develop the strong and accountable institutions needed to meet these challenges effectively.

This lack of an effective response has forced an alarming number of people to either become internally displaced or migrate to other countries in order to escape the violence in their neighborhoods, a lack of economic opportunities, the effects of climate change, and the fragile government institutions unable to protect them.

Over the past three years, the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Central American migrants—many of them unaccompanied minors—at the U.S.-Mexico border has brought renewed attention to the region and its challenges. At the same time, the United States and other bilateral and multilateral donors have provided important levels of assistance intended to address these challenges and help improve conditions on the ground.

Ensuring that the governments of Central America are advancing

needed reforms to improve security and strengthen governance will require systemic monitoring, as well as a more nuanced understanding of the precise areas where reforms are needed. This is why WOLA, in collaboration with a group of respected and experienced Central American NGO partners, has launched the **Central America Monitor**.

The **Central America Monitor** is a tool for tracking and monitoring international assistance programs in the region and for evaluating the policies and strategies currently being implemented in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to reduce insecurity and violence, strengthen the rule of law, improve transparency and accountability, protect human rights, and fight corruption. It is based on the premise that accurate, objective, and comparable data can pinpoint areas of opportunity and

challenges in reducing high levels of violence, insecurity, and impunity regionwide.

The extensive data compiled by the Monitor will allow analysis to move beyond abstract discussions of what broader reforms are needed in Central America to specific measures for change. It equips policymakers, civil society, and others with a tool for analyzing progress over time on key indicators, make comparisons across countries to underscore unique challenges faced by each individual nation, and explore security and rule of law dynamics at play at the subnational level. To do this, we have developed a comprehensive series of quantitative and qualitative indicators to systematically assess progress on the ground. WOLA and our partners developed these indicators in a months-long process that included review of international standards and consultation with experts in the field.

OUR GOAL

This instrument can help donors, policymakers, academics, and the public identify areas of progress and shortfalls in the policies and strategies being implemented in Central America to address deep-rooted challenges. What's more, it can contribute to the evaluation of trends over time both within Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras—as well as between them.

To find out more, visit: www.wola.org/CAM

EVALUATING PROGRESS

WOLA and our partners have developed a series of qualitative and quantitative indicators to assess progress in Central America in eight key areas. Data sources include official documents and statistics, surveys, interviews, and reviews of existing laws and regulations that will be systematically compiled.



STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF JUSTICE SYSTEMS

This area evaluates progress made in strengthening the effectiveness of justice institutions while ensuring their independence from internal and external pressures.

// Capacity of the Justice System

This indicator will cover the number of criminal justice officials, geographical coverage of the justice system, employee workload, levels of effectiveness, and levels of public trust.

// Internal Independence

The existence and implementation of a public, merit-based selection process free from external influence, a results-based evaluation system, and an effective disciplinary system.

// External Independence

The size of budget allocated for the justice system and establishment of national and international protection measures for justice officials.



COMBATTING CORRUPTION

This area evaluates progress made in implementing holistic anti-corruption efforts and public perceptions of anti-corruption efforts.

// Scope and Implementation of Legislation to Combat Corruption

The classification of new crimes in criminal codes and reforms to existing anti-corruption laws to adhere to international standards.

// Advancements in Criminal Investigations

The number of corruption cases filed, prosecuted, and resolved, as well as progress made in emblematic cases.

// Functioning of Oversight Bodies

The existence and capacity of external oversight bodies or agencies to combat corruption.

// Public Perception of Corruption

Perception of corruption and the level of public trust in state institutions involved in efforts to prevent, identify, investigate, and punish corruption.



COOPERATION WITH ANTI-IMPUNITY COMMISSIONS

This area evaluates the level of government cooperation and commitment with international anti-impunity mechanisms.

// Political Will and Level of Collaboration

The commitment of the state to collaborate and enable the work of international anti-impunity commissions, as demonstrated by the progress of emblematic cases, the approval of legislative and institutional reforms, and support from and for domestic counterparts working with these commissions.



TACKLING VIOLENCE AND ORGANIZED CRIME

This area evaluates progress made in reducing violence and organized crime by strengthening the capacity of judicial and public security institutions.

// Capacity Building

The existence and functioning of specialized anti-organized crime units, the application of scientific and technical investigative methods, and functioning of judges or tribunals dedicated to the prosecution of organized crime.

// Advances in Criminal Investigations

The number of organized crime-related cases filed, prosecuted, and resolved, as well as the progress made in emblematic cases.

// Crime Reduction

Convictions for homicides, extortion, and against criminal networks, as well as a reduction in serious and violent crimes.



STRENGTHENING OF CIVILIAN POLICE FORCES

This area evaluates progress in building accountable, professional, and trustworthy civilian police forces.

// Functioning of Police Career Systems

The existence and effectiveness of police recruitment and promotion mechanisms, training processes, and disciplinary systems, as well as the structure of police bodies.

// Capacity, Allocation and Use of Budgetary Resources

The size of the budget allocated to civilian police forces, the percentage of funds designated for the wellbeing of members of the civilian police forces, and the structure of police bodies.

// Community Relations

Relations with indigenous authorities, public trust in the police, and police-community relations.



LIMITING THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN PUBLIC SECURITY

This area evaluates progress made in withdrawing the military from policing activities and enforce proper conduct within those forces.

// Development and Implementation of a Concrete Public Security Plan

The design and implementation of a publicly accessible and verifiable plan with goals, timelines, activities, and clearly established indicators; repeal of legal norms authorizing participation of the armed forces in public security, and access to information regarding payroll and assigned resources.

// Conduct of Military Forces

Complaints, accusations, and sentences regarding human rights violations perpetrated by members of the armed forces and the level of public trust in the armed forces.



PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS

This area evaluates the institutional capacity to sanction human rights violations and protect human rights defenders.

// Investigation and Conviction of Human Rights Violations

The existence and functioning of specialized investigative units; number of complaints, prosecutions, and convictions; handling of emblematic cases; and degree of security forces' collaboration with investigations.

// Protection Mechanisms

The structure and functioning of domestic protection mechanisms and implementation of international protection measures for human rights defenders who have been victims of attacks or threats.

// Hate Speech

Analysis of attacks and smear or defamation campaigns against human rights defenders.



IMPROVING TRANSPARENCY

This area evaluates the state's commitment to improving transparency and guaranteeing access to information for its citizenry.

// Budget and Spending Transparency

Access to public information on budget allocations and spending on security, justice, and defense.

// Scope and Implementation of Access to Information laws

Type of information categorized as restricted or of limited access, period of classification, availability and quality of statistics related to security and justice, information requests granted and denied, and related fees.

// Disclosure of Public Officials' Statement of Assets

The level of official compliance with disclosure norms and the degree to which such statements are made available to the public.

WOLA is a leading research and advocacy organization advancing human rights in the Americas. We envision a future where public policies protect human rights and recognize human dignity, and where justice overcomes violence.

OUR PARTNERS

// MYRNA MACK FOUNDATION

The Myrna Mack Foundation (*Fundación Myrna Mack*) is a Guatemalan non-governmental organization that develops and produces research and policy proposals aimed at furthering the fight against impunity, strengthening the rule of law, and consolidating peace and democracy in Guatemala.

// UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC OPINION

The University Institute of Public Opinion (*Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública, IUDOP*) is a research center based at the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas (UCA) in El Salvador. In collaboration with other areas of the university, the IUDOP seeks to systematically and scientifically monitor the social, political, economic, and cultural situation of the country.

// UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE ON DEMOCRACY, PEACE, AND SECURITY

The University Institute on Democracy, Peace, and Security (*Instituto Universitario en Democracia, Paz y Seguridad, IUDPAS*), based at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras, monitors violence trends and provides data and analysis to government institutions, NGOs, and the public in order to promote transparent public policies to combat violence.



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#CentralAmericaMonitor

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