



MIGRANT VOICE
MIGRATION RESOURCE CENTER
PROGRAM IN GUATEMALA
JUNE 2022

RETURNING TO HONDURAS WITH IOM'S SUPPORT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF NEW OPPORTUNITIES

This story reflects the experiences of beneficiaries from the Migration Resource Center program in Guatemala that International Organization for Migration implements in coordination with the Guatemalan Government, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Children's Fund.

IOM's MRC project provides assistance, protection, and lawful migration avenues for the migrant population in Guatemala through the Center for Attention to Migrants and Refugees.

GUATEMALA CITY

Juan and Pedro¹ are two cousins who left Honduras in search of job opportunities and better incomes to open a new chapter in their young lives. Having left Francisco Morazán, home to the capital Tegucigalpa and one of the departments with the highest rates of internally displaced people, the pair's main goal was to reach southern Mexico to work and gain more money to enter the United States. However, like many migrants with dreams of crossing the United States border, a series of events in Guatemala prevented them from continuing their journey.

Juan, aged 22 years, is the more emotional of the pair and gets overwhelmed when he recalls the moment he said goodbye to his mother. Although Juan and his 19-year-old cousin carried identity documents, they crossed the Guatemalan border irregularly with the help of a person they met nearby and who guided them to Quetzaltenango, the second most economically important city in the country.



¹Not their real names.



By the time they reached Quetzaltenango, they had spent all their money (3,000 lempiras or around US \$150). They slept in a park for two nights and sold Pedro's cell phone for 40 quetzales (around US \$5) to buy something to eat. They were robbed a few hours later, an experience which also stole their desire to continue the trip. The cousins survived one more day on food given to them by a passerby and the advice of a homeless person who invited them to "periquear" (ask for money on street corners).

From this moment on, their migration journey was no longer important, only the desire to survive and return to Honduras. But, for this stranded vulnerable pair, there was no obvious pathway home. "We saw a patrol car and asked for help. The policemen took us to the Tierra Nueva organization because they knew it worked with migration issues", Juan mentioned. At this non-governmental organization, Juan and Pedro were referred to the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Center for Attention to Migrants and Refugees (CAPMiR).

“We didn’t know what to expect.”

“...we never searched for the route on the internet or were aware of the money we would need to get to Mexico. We didn't know there were centers for transit migrants or the dangers we would encounter,” Pedro confides during an interview with IOM.



Pedro

Juan

CAPMiR is one of IOM’s centers strategically located in Quetzaltenango that provides information, institutional referrals, psychological first aid and access to the Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) program, among other essential services. The center assists different profiles of migrants, including young foreign nationals with an irregular transiting status, such as Juan and Pedro.

IOM AVR Programs in the Western Hemisphere, funded by the U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, support the orderly and humane return of migrants who are unable or unwilling to remain in host or transit countries and wish to return voluntarily to their countries of origin.

The pair decided to join AVR to receive humanitarian assistance from IOM, which included medical check-ups, personal protection equipment, transportation, sanitation, and immigration procedures to regularize their migration status. Food and lodging were provided in collaboration with the non-government organization Casa del Migrante.

After the administrative, logistical and financial support provided by AVR Program in Guatemala, both cousins were safely returned to their community of origin in Honduras.



“After this experience, I returned to Honduras with a yearning to work for my daughter.”

“...I am an artist. My dream is to install my workshop to design and make tattoos,” Juan says. While Pedro is still keen to work in the United States, his main objective is to look for information on how to travel with proper documentation and through formal channels.

Juan and Pedro lived risks and experiences that were not expecting and prepared to face. Their dream ended leaving them acutely vulnerable, without any means to continue their journey or return to their country. The cousins’ desire to return to their community would not have been possible without the assistance of CAPMiR, the intervention of the AVR Program and IOM’s close collaboration with local organizations and authorities.