



Human Rights

Data at a Glance

- It is estimated that 151,233 people in Mexico were killed between December 2006 and August 2015. According to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, at least 26,000 persons have gone missing since 2007, many as a result of forced disappearances.
- The United Nations' and the Organization of American States' human rights protection bodies have repeatedly cited the high prevalence of impunity for human rights violations in Mexico.
- Mexico is considered one of the most dangerous countries in the world to be a journalist. Since 2000, 88 journalists have been killed.

Overview

It is widely-known that significant human rights violations persist in Mexico. They include police and military involvement in serious abuses, such as unlawful killings, torture, disappearances, and physical abuse, as well as the inability of the state to effectively address the high levels of kidnapping and violence by organized criminal groups. Civil society organizations (CSOs), the United Nations, Inter-American Human Rights System and the country's National Human Rights Commission also highlighted additional human rights challenges in Mexico, including poor prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; and threats and violence against human rights defenders and journalists. Impunity for human rights abuses remains a problem throughout the country, with extremely low rates of prosecution for all forms of crime. While the Government of Mexico (GOM) has taken many positive steps, such as promulgating the constitutional reform that elevates Mexico's obligations under international treaties to the level of its Constitution and establishing a National Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists ("the Protection Mechanism"), challenges still remain. CSOs recognize a need in particular for an improved legislative framework at both federal and state levels, effective implementation of public policy, and access to justice.

Objective: Enabling Environment to Protect Human Rights and Prevent Abuses Improved

Under USAID/Mexico's Country Development Cooperation Strategy, for Fiscal Years 2014-2018, USAID's programming works to advance the protection of human rights and prevent abuses by supporting GOM and civil society efforts on protection, outreach, and awareness. USAID promotes the incorporation of human rights-based approaches into federal- and state-level policies, and facilitates dialogue and engagement between the GOM and civil society on human rights issues. USAID's human rights programming has been in place since August 2009. USAID is dedicating \$25 million for the 2014 to 2018 period to address human rights in Mexico. In addition to the activities described below, USAID's support to criminal justice sector reform also builds GOM capacity to assist victims of human rights abuses and train criminal justice sector operators on human rights protection.

Key Achievements

- USAID played a key role in supporting the GOM to in standing up its Protection Mechanism, which currently, provides protection measures to more than 400 human rights defenders and journalists.
- 2008 USAID human rights-related activities reached beneficiaries in 22 states and trained over 1,100 journalists on self-protection and digital security to help them safely conduct their work.
- Local CSOs, supported by USAID, played an indispensable role in squarely placing the issue of torture by security forces on the public policy agenda.
- USAID's support to more than 30 local CSOs, nearly half of them outside of Mexico City, contributed to the growing strength of civil society in Mexico, to address human rights violations.
- USAID supported the GOM's development of its action-oriented National Human Rights Plan, 2014-2018, through targeted technical assistance.

USAID Human Rights Activities

Human Rights Public Policy Activity, Implementer: Chemonics

This activity supports the implementation of the GOM's National Human Rights Plan, 2014-2018, with special attention to urgent and priority issues. The activity provides support in four areas: (a) strengthening the existing mechanisms and inter-agency coordination to prevent human rights violations (Early Warning System Alert); (b) supporting the implementation of measures to address national and international recommendations to address gross human rights violations; (c) strengthening the institutional capacity to design and implement public policies with a human rights approach with special emphasis on civil society participation; and (d) designing and supporting implementation of impact evaluation mechanisms to measure the human rights situation and advances on implementation of human rights public policies. The activity emphasizes gender considerations and inclusion of marginalized populations.

Protection of Human Rights and Freedom of Expression, Implementer: Freedom House

This activity seeks to improve state and civil society actions to protect journalists and human rights defenders under attack or at risk for their work. The activity aims to provide technical assistance to the GOM to continue strengthening the Protection Mechanism, advocate for increased protection, and apply lessons learned from international best practices in protecting freedom of expression.

Protection from Torture and Enforced Disappearances Together PROTECT, Implementer: *Instituto para la Seguridad y la Democracia (INSYDE)*

This activity will build institutional and human capacity of the GOM and CSOs to address cases of torture and enforced disappearances in line with human rights standards. Specifically, it will support USAID's efforts to improve access to justice and the well-being of victims of torture and enforced disappearances building on previous USAID-funded efforts in preventing torture. The activity is focused on developing a comprehensive model to strengthen judicial investigations with a focus on a care model for victims during the criminal proceedings and enhancing CSOs' ability to effectively engage with government officials to promote effective investigations and prosecutions.

Dialogue on Journalist's Protection, Implementer: Article 19/Mexico

This two-year activity aims to promote protection for journalists by facilitating a safer environment for the exercise of freedom of expression in Mexico. The activity promotes freedom of expression and protection of rights of journalists through: a) monitoring and documenting cases of aggressions against journalists; b) capacity-building and outreach to journalist and CSO networks throughout the country and international actors; and c) increased engagement with the GOM on a solution-focused approach. In addition, the activity looks to increase availability of self-protection tools and support networks for those journalists at risk. This activity tailors its approach to take into account issues of gender.

Communications for Human Rights Awareness, Implementer: *Centro Nacional de Comunicacion Social (Cencos)*

The activity will build the capacity of human rights and media civil society organizations to address and advocate on human rights issues, to improve their communication strategies and support greater exchange between journalists and CSOs. The proposed activities utilize a trainer-of-trainer approach and incorporate gender considerations.