

Smartphone app for migrants gets trial in Central America, Mexico

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Many migrants—such as these men pictured in Sonora state, Mexico, in January—rely on mobile phones during their journeys

A smartphone app designed to help migrants safely move through countries is being tested in Central America and Mexico from this week, ahead of a wider roll-out elsewhere in the world, the UN Migration Agency said Friday.

"MigrantApp" offers information in English, Spanish and French on safety, health, accommodation and organizations offering assistance.

Its launch comes at a time when the United States is making undocumented immigration far more difficult, while ending programs that had eased the entry and residence of certain migrants.

Much of the US attention is directed at Mexicans and Central Americans who make up the largest number of undocumented migrants who have entered America.

Central America is also a major corridor for other migrants from Latin America—particularly Venezuelans right now—and from countries on other continents seeking to get to the US.

The UN Migration Agency, also called the International Organization for Migration (IOM), stressed that its new app was not a tool to help migrants try to circumvent government controls on immigration.

Instead it provides "clear and reliable information on their legal options" so they are less likely to opt for riskier, irregular crossings that often expose them to exploitation and fraud, said Roeland de Wilde, country chief of IOM in Costa Rica.

His office developed the app with funding from the US State Department.

The path through Central America and Mexico "is the biggest migration corridor in the world," he noted, adding it made sense to provide migrants with information on a mobile platform given that most of them relied on phones throughout their journeys.

Data from migrants using the app will be kept confidential. Initially

available only on Android phones, it will be released for Apple's iOS devices later.

The pilot app is being released two weeks after the IOM's deputy director general, Laura Thompson, told a conference in Costa Rica that [migration](#) flows in the Americas were overwhelmingly from south to north—with 94 percent of [migrants](#) aiming for the US and Canada.

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