Isolation and Legal Exclusion: Barriers to Meeting Asylum Seekers’ Basic Needs

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Mexican Migration Field Research Program
Al Otro Lado Border Rights Project
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Executive Summary

This report explores the factors behind migrants' lack of access to basic services along the US-Mexico border. Basic services include things such as childcare, healthcare, education, food, housing, and financial security. We explore these questions through 326 surveys and interviews with asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border, conducted between January-March 2022.

We observe that there are four main factors making it hard for most migrants to access basic services: social isolation, legal exclusion, geographic isolation, and fear. It is important to note that the migrants we interviewed are already better connected to services than other migrants, given that they were recruited through NGO service providers. Thus, migrants may be even worse off than what is reported here.

Key Findings

Fear of violence inhibits migrants' ability to access services, in ways we detail throughout the report. In addition:

Migrants struggle to meet basic needs:

- Only 4% of participants earned enough money to meet the basic needs of themselves and their families.
- 44% of participants had income of any sort, though in most cases that was day labor or for items sold in the streets.
- 86% spent at least some time unemployed, for a median of 4 months.
- 32% lived in shelters, while 42% had to pay rent. Of those who paid rent, 81% were worried about their ability to make rent this month.
- 84% of migrants were worried they would not have enough food this month.
- Only 35% of those traveling with children had received some kind of schooling in their current location.
- 74% of parents lacked access to childcare.
- 42% had a medical or mental health condition, however, only 64% of those with such a condition had received medical attention in their current location.

Migrants with larger social networks have better access to services:

- 43% of migrants who reported having jobs stated they found those opportunities via friends or people they knew.
- Jobs found via friends or other people they knew had higher average working hours and salaries per week than jobs found through shelters or government programs.
- Friends and acquaintances often pointed migrants in the direction of additional resources, such as legal services from NGOs or housing from coworkers.
- However, building social networks was difficult for migrants. Participants had an average of 1 close friend and less than 1 family member at the border (other than spouses or children), though the vast majority had none.

Legal status influences migrants' ability to access stable housing and income:
• 53% respondents with legal status had access to income, as opposed to 31% of respondents without legal status.
• 33% of migrants who did not have work stated the reason for their unemployment was lack of required documents.
• Migrants who had some form of legal status had higher rates of access to stable housing: 55% of migrants with some form of legal status were currently renting a home, as opposed to only 25% of undocumented migrants.

Location affects migrants’ access to services:
• Migrants in Tijuana – where there were more services and NGOs - were able to access more resources than those in more remote and underserved border towns like Mexicali and Piedras Negras.
• Migrants living in shelters were able to access more resources than those who rented apartments.
• The top reasons migrants were unemployed varied by region. Those in Tijuana, for example, were more likely to be unemployed because they lacked documents, while those in Juarez named fear and insecurity as their top reason for being unemployed.

Recommendations:
• Promote social networks: NGOs and migrant shelters can host community-building events and networking opportunities. Participants could interact and work with one another, allowing community building among migrants.
• Facilitate documentation in Mexico: Though it would be best to give migrants legal status, this approach may not be politically viable. Providing undocumented migrants with identification and things like humanitarian visas can help them obtain jobs, housing, and access to other services such as bank accounts.
• Create additional support services in border towns, especially on the Eastern end of the border: the relatively high level of services in Tijuana can be used as an example for other border towns with large migrant populations, though Tijuana also has room to improve. There should be special focus placed on ensuring safety for migrant populations, especially along common routes taken for work.
Introduction

A migrant’s access to services is crucial throughout their journey. Without access to basic services throughout the entirety of their journey, a migrant’s overall health, wellbeing, and safety can be greatly affected. At the U.S.-Mexico border, organizations such as Refugee Health Alliance, Doctors Without Borders, Al Otro Lado, Grupo Beta, and Espacio Migrante provide crucial aid that enables migrants to obtain access to food, shelter, medical care, legal aid, and so on. Yet, this aid is unevenly distributed by location, and there is never enough. In this report, we look at the factors that help enable some asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border to access such aid and meet their basic needs.

In defining basic needs, we focus on the resources necessary for long-term mental and physical wellbeing. We look mainly at childcare, healthcare, education, food, housing, and financial security.

To identify factors that may help migrants meet basic needs, we draw on a dataset of 326 one-on-one 30-minute WhatsApp surveys followed by brief qualitative interviews of roughly 20 to 30 minutes, conducted by the Mexican Migration Field Research Program at the University of California San Diego in 2022 (in partnership with Al Otro Lado).

In analyzing these data, we noticed were three major factors that played a role in helping migrants obtain services: social networks, legal status, and location – which shaped their sense of safety or fear. These factors were interconnected.

In this report, we trace how social networks, legal authorization, and location in Tijuana (where there are more service providers) facilitate a migrant’s access to services, while also highlighting that these factors do not guarantee access. We compare migrants’ responses based on one or more of these factors and consider why they differ.

Access to basic services and income in U.S.-Mexico border towns is extremely difficult, given the lack of information and discrimination by institutions that restrict migrants from accessing jobs and certain services, such as medical care. Migrants look for ways to provide for themselves and their families, but it becomes strenuous when documentation, place of residence, and fear cannot easily be overcome.

Methods

The report draws on 326 surveys and 304 qualitative interviews conducted by the Mexican Migration Field Research Program at the University of California, in collaboration with Al Otro Lado, from January-March 2022. The interview team consisted of 35 students trained by Dr. Abigail Andrews.

Interviewees were selected from a list of tens of thousands of asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border who had signed up on an online form to receive services from the legal services provider Al Otro Lado. We selected from this list at random and then called everyone whose name appeared. When participants answered, we offered them an opportunity to participate in a 30–60-minute phone interview over WhatsApp. First, we collected demographic and background (i.e., quantitative) information via a 30-minute survey. Then, if the migrant agreed, we followed up with 20-30 minutes of open-ended questions that elaborated on their survey responses. As compensation, we offered US$15 worth of phone call credits to their cell phones. In the service of anonymity, each participant was assigned a pseudonym.

Since a major aim of this report was to identify what leaves some migrants better off than
others in accessing services, it was crucial that we compare between groups of migrants. Therefore, we compared between participants with legal authorization in Mexico and those who were undocumented. We also compared those who resided in different locations, and those who had different support via their social networks.

In addition, we read through the 304 qualitative interviews, coding those that were relevant to accessing services and discussed things like education, healthcare, housing, and income. We selected quotes from interviews that illustrated the mechanisms that enabled migrants to learn about and obtain basic services, as well as some of the obstacles they faced in doing so.

It is important to note that we are analyzing data for migrants who responded to our surveys. The individuals surveyed were already at least somewhat connected to NGOs, since they had filled out a service request form for Al Otro Lado. Thus, it can be argued that these individuals already have better access to services than those who we could not contact. It is possible that those who were not included in this survey have even worse to networks that might offer support and serve as a link for basic services.

Findings

For migrants, border cities can be extremely dangerous, especially if they are fleeing cartel and gang violence in their place of origin and are pursued by allies of the same criminal organizations (as many are). As a result, migrants often did not want to leave their homes or shelters, for fear of violence or even death.

Fear made it hard for migrants to access services like education or childcare. For instance, Monica, a 25-year-old Mexican woman we interviewed in Tijuana, left Michoacán, Mexico, when her husband was killed by a criminal organization. Since then, she had been receiving death threats and voicemails from the cartel, saying they knew her location in Tijuana. Monica and her children were afraid to even go out to play. She emphasized that she felt:

Very afraid. Because we’re afraid of going out, or it’s terrifying going out to the streets. Because they [the cartels] told us that they know where we are, so right now we don’t know if they’re watching us or not. Or if they’ll stop us or - I question a lot, really. It does make us afraid of going out to the street. But it is ugly to live like this because my children are small, and, well, they want to go out sometimes because they get tired of just being locked up. In practice, we have ourselves locked up like prisoners here because we can’t leave.

Monica could not bring herself to risk going outside for anything, even if it meant that she cannot get basic services. Like Monica, many migrants feared leaving their shelters, because the cartels and gangs they were fleeing had eyes and ears all over Mexico. They were also afraid they might be attacked or robbed. The fear could be so paralyzing that migrants often chose not to go outside at all.

Similarly, Elvira, a 43-year-old woman, had fled violence in her hometown in Michoacán, Mexico. After Elvira’s brother-in-law was killed, she and her family were forced to flee. Elvira was warned that her husband’s killers were in Tijuana, and they could be looking for her and her family. She felt her primary job was to keep her family safe, even if that meant staying inside all day and night. Similarly, Jairo, a 33-year-old man from Honduras, encountered one of the gangsters who had threatened his family, even after arriving in Mexico. Now, his 11-year-old daughter insisted that he stay close to her, pleading
“Daddy, please don’t go to work.” While Jairo knew he needed to provide for his family, was terrified that going to work meant a risk of death.

As a result, migrants like Monica, Elvira, and Jairo struggle to access education, food, housing, medical, and psychological services. Among the 326 people we surveyed, only 4.3% earned enough money to meet their own and their families’ basic needs. About 44% had an income, though in most cases it was sporadic, such as payment for day labor or items sold on the streets. Most (86%) had been unemployed. Nearly all (85%) feared that they would not have enough food this month, and of those who paid rent, 81% were worried that they might not make rent this month. Only 35% of those traveling with children had received some kind of schooling in their current location, and three quarters had no access to childcare. Similarly, while 42% of respondents had a known medical or mental health condition, only 64% of those had received medical attention in their current location.

In what follows, we trace three key barriers to meeting basic needs – and with them three key possibilities for improving migrants’ access to services, even amidst profound fear. These factors are: lack of social networks, lack of legal authorization, and geographic isolation.

**Social Networks**

Connecting with other people (including with friends and family who have also migrated) could be an important path to building a support system. Among migrants at the border, social networks operated as a communication tool, helping spread material resources, news about border policy and enforcement (among other things), and awareness of the ins-and-outs of border cities.

In our survey, we asked participants how many relatives or close friends they had with them in Tijuana. Most were very isolated and traveling alone. While two thirds were traveling with their children, they reported an average of less than one adult relative traveling with them and an average of about one adult friend at the border.

Most respondents expressed deep fear and distrust of strangers, due to past experiences being defrauded, extorted, kidnapped, and assaulted in Mexico. For example, Monica, mentioned above, did not trust people at her shelter and refused to leave the shelter at all to seek work, food, schooling for her children, or medical care. While building relationships and getting work might have helped her mental health and that of her children, Monica’s fear kept her isolated from these things – veritably “imprisoned” in the shelter she lived in.

In another interview, Olga, a Guatemalan migrant who left her country fleeing gang threats, illustrated how in Tijuana she had no one to lean on. She reflected that at the border:

> Nothing is easy. Everything is difficult. There is no one to listen to you, there is nothing to do but cry. There is no one who can comfort you, who can help you. The situation with children is very difficult, especially if you don’t have help from family or from anyone. Nothing is easy here. Everything they say about it being easy to be here is a lie. No, if people don’t have to leave their homes, they should not do it.

As Olga’s description suggests, migrants often felt profoundly isolated and lacked any source of support at all, leading to deep depression and desperation.
While isolation was very common, when migrants were able to build friendships in border shelters or camps, those relationships helped them get jobs, find food, and get more information about new and evolving US border policies, among other benefits.

For instance, Marcos, from Honduras, explained that a close friend found him a place to live and helped him get day labor jobs. He explained, “He gives us the job, so that we can support him, and from there he also gives us money to buy things – like whatever [food] we might want. More than anything, he gives us a place to be, well to sleep and everything, where we can bathe and everything here.” For Marcos, that single friend was essential to a safe place to live, hygiene, work, and food.

Similarly, Camilo, a migrant from Guatemala, built a relationship with the owner of the “hotel” (paid shelter) where he was staying. On one hand, this man discouraged Camilo from trusting others, reinforcing the isolation of Camilo and his partner. Camilo explained:

They tell us that we shouldn’t trust people because sometimes there are some who look like good people, but they are bad. And we don’t talk to anyone to avoid all that, because they have told us that sometimes they grab people, they take them to other places, and they put them to work and for free. But yes, the boss that we work with has told us many things that have happened here.

On the other hand, the hotel owner gave Camilo day labor, a line of support that was critical to his survival.

Our survey data shows that migrants use a variety of social network sources to find jobs or other forms of income. The largest group of migrants found jobs via friends or people they knew (42%), followed by finding jobs on the streets (23%), other and/or unknown (22%), at hostels (10%), and finally, via government programs or NGOs (3%), as shown below.

Jobs found via friends and people migrants knew also had higher average working hours and salaries per week than jobs that migrants found on the streets or via hostels or government programs. This was especially true when the friend or acquaintance was someone who had lived in Tijuana a while, understood the city, and knew others there – such as the individuals described by Camilo and Marcos.

Friends and family members were critical to helping participants access housing, jobs, security, and support for their mental health (when they had access to those things at
all). Sometimes, migrants were able to build such relationships within migrant shelters, developing friendships where they could seek a bit of support. But these cases were often rare, with distrust and isolation more common, especially for women and parents.

Legal Status

In addition to social networks, legal authorization in Mexico also helped migrants get better access to resources, jobs, stable housing, and information. For instance, some migrants were Mexican citizens, while others had humanitarian visas, refugee status, or permanent residency in that country. This legal standing made it somewhat easier to access stable lodging, medical care, childcare, schooling, and work. In turn, migrants were able to find more secure places to live where they were more insulated from harassment and violence. By contrast, those without legal standing more often lived on the streets or in unstable housing. These sources of stability or instability also weighed heavily on participants’ mental health.

For instance, migrants with some form of legal status in Mexico had more access to stable housing. Among those with legal standing in Mexico, as illustrated in the chart below, 55% rented their own home, with 20% living in shelters and 18% on the street. By contrast, among those who were unauthorized in Mexico, only 25% rented their own home, while 44% lived in shelters and 24% on the street. With more than two thirds living in overcrowded migrant shelters or on the street, unauthorized migrants were more vulnerable to assault, discrimination, unfair conditions, lack of privacy, and lack of basic services such as potable water, electricity, and internet.

Similarly, rates of employment varied dramatically by legal status. Among migrants with legal status, 53% had access to income, compared with only 31% of those with no legal standing in Mexico. When we asked migrants why they were currently – or had previously – been unemployed, a third attributed the lack of work to not having proper documents within Mexico. In other words, legal status was key to stable housing and income.

Bernabe, for example, was a Honduran newscaster who fled to Mexico after receiving threats from local criminal groups in response to a report he made. In Mexico, he got job as a magazine editor until his supervisors checked his documents. He recalled:

‘I had adapted, I got my job, I put in my digital fingerprint and turned on my computer – I already knew what to do. The next month came, then another and
another, and that was when the contracts came in and that was where – where this happened to me all of a sudden. I never thought it would come to that. The truth is, I don’t know, I didn’t expect it. I just thought that with my little [fake] green card everything was fine, but no. I needed to start a bank account because they were paying me by check and I needed an account in a Mexican bank for payroll, and I needed my passport to submit the form, and I couldn’t submit the form due to lack of documentation.

Though Bernabe was more privileged than most migrants, he – like many others – faced the loss of his job due to legal status, leaving him unable to access a stable income, despite his high level of education.

It is important to note that while legal status helped migrants access housing, work, and resources, it did not guarantee their ability to meet basic needs. Migrants faced discrimination regardless of legal status, especially if they were from Central America or from indigenous communities within Mexico. For instance, migrants with legal authorization were more likely than the unauthorized to rent homes or have tried to rent homes. Yet, they faced discrimination from landlords at similar rates to unauthorized migrants who tried to rent. Among respondents with legal status who tried to rent a home at some point, 57% had been refused a rental by landlords, with more than half of those stating that their status as migrants had been the explicit or implicit reason for their denial. While a larger share of legally authorized migrants tried to rent homes than among the unauthorized, they faced similar rates of rejection based on their status as migrants.

For instance, Diego, a Honduran migrant, was trying to get back to the US after being deported a few years earlier. He had obtained legal authorization to transit through Mexico. When we spoke, he was in Piedras Negras, homeless, living with only a mattress. He described his attempts to rent a home in the border city:

I went to a place that’s called Mundo Nuevo, it’s a neighborhood. Then a woman came and asked, ‘Hey, so are you in the country legally?’ I said ‘yes.’ I showed her my papers. She says, ‘We can only rent to people who are Mexican.’ So, they didn’t rent to me. I looked for another place, and they said, ‘No. Its just that we don’t want any problems with the law. Because the law prohibits us from renting to those who are undocumented.’ And I told her ‘I’m not undocumented; they’ve given me migrant status.’

Diego’s case highlights the prevalence of discrimination as a barrier to stable housing. Indeed, Diego added that he also faced discrimination when attempting to apply for a job at OXXO (a convenience store), where managers told him that his documents were not valid to work there.

Likewise, when trying to access healthcare and education, respondents with citizenship or legal authorization in Mexico faced similar rates of rejection to the undocumented. For instance, 32% of migrants with legal status were able to access education for their children, compared to 24% of those without legal status.

In short, while visas, Mexican citizenship, and refugee status could help migrants rent and find work in Mexico (indeed, were critical to this process), they were not sufficient in the face of widespread employer, landlord, and service provider discrimination.

Location
Finally, migrants’ location along the border weighed heavily on their ability to access
services. At the time of our survey, respondents were living in border cities including Piedras Negras, Tijuana, Mexicali, Juarez, Matamoros, Reynoso, Sonora, and Nuevo Laredo. We found that those in Tijuana had a clear advantage in accessing services. Tijuana has a long history as a migrant gateway into the United States and is close to a major U.S. population center – San Diego. As a result, it has developed a comparatively strong infrastructure of NGO and government services for migrants, including more than 30 migrant shelters, as well as numerous providers of medical care, food, and legal aid.

Indeed, since our research team was based in San Diego and had experience working in Tijuana, we ourselves were able to provide migrants in that city a long list of resources they could access. In Tijuana, a significant number of respondents had received support with housing, clothing, food, and legal aid than those in border towns like Piedras Negras, Mexicali, Acuña, and Matamoros. By contrast, cities like Piedras Negras and Mexicali had far fewer resources (and even fewer that we were familiar with). Our partner organizations explained that the resources in these border towns were extremely limited due to the lack of funding and government and NGO support. The influx of migrants in such towns (thanks to U.S. policies forcing migrants to wait in Mexico) had overrun the few services available.

In addition, cartels and threats of violence were more widespread in some cities than others. For instance, migrants in Juarez and Mexican cities on the eastern end of the U.S.-Mexico border were more immobilized by fear than those in Tijuana (where criminal violence was also rampant, but arguably more stable and less acute). This difference is illustrated in the reasons migrants said they could not find work. In Tijuana, the primary reason cited for not having work was that migrants lacked the proper documentation. While respondents in Tijuana also cited fear or insecurity, they were much more likely to mention other barriers, including discrimination, lack of childcare, being unable to find a job, and being denied work (presumably due to migration status). By contrast, among respondents in Juarez, fear and insecurity were the primary barrier cited to finding work (as well as to accessing services).

Both the city where migrants were waiting and their location within that city played roles in their access to services. For example, Iker, a trans woman from Honduras, had been in Mexicali since December 2021. In 2019, prior to this migration attempt, Iker had entered the United States and opened an asylum case. But she waited four months in U.S. immigration detention and grew isolated and depressed, ultimately agreeing to her own deportation. Iker returned to Honduras and resumed work as a sex worker. Soon, criminal groups started to rape her and force her to sell drugs. In 2021, Iker decided to try to seek asylum again. Upon arrival in Mexicali, she lived on the streets for a while, worked as a sex worker, and endured violence and further rapes. Then a friend took her in, but the friend’s apartment was far from the city center and public services. When we spoke, Iker was afraid to go out in public and in desperate need of clothing, food, and legal aid. Yet she could find very little in Mexicali, especially living far from the city center. She did not know of any organization that offered such aid.

Migrants near the urban core of border cities often had more access to services than those renting apartments, which tended to be most affordable in the periphery of cities like Tijuana and Matamoros. Migrants also tended to get access to services through migrant shelters, where medical, legal, and nutrition resources were made available. At migrant shelters, NGOs and government agencies often came in to offer services on a weekly basis. By contrast, those in private apartments had more privacy and sometimes
greater security, but they lacked such access to services and often did not know they exited.

For instance, Zoe, a mother of two boys ages 10 and 13, fled from Michoacan, Mexico after receiving threats from a criminal group. These individuals often went into Zoe’s place of work, a store that sold sandals, and stole merchandise. When Zoe and her coworkers finally confronted them, they attacked her and threatened her, saying that the next time they would go after her children. Zoe quickly packed up her life and got on a flight to Tijuana. Since arriving, Zoe and her sons had lived in three different shelters. She said that the third one, funded by the state government, was the best, because it always had food, medical visits, and job opportunities coming in. Indeed, Zoe found an income through the shelter providing childcare and washing other migrants’ clothes. She also had an opportunity – via the shelter – to go out to work in factories while other residents of the shelter looked out for her children. In addition, the government sent teachers to the shelter, from whom her children got in-person classes.

Nevertheless, Zoe’s description represents a best-case scenario. In other cases, migrants faced discrimination and violence in shelters and received few or no services.

For example, at the time of our interview, Felix, a 31-year-old man from Honduras, was renting a room in Tijuana with his wife and 10-year-old son. Felix had migrated for the first time in 2012 fleeing threats and unemployment in Honduras. He migrated a second time in 2021, fearing for the safety of his son. On the way, the family was kidnapped. When they arrived in Tijuana, at first, the family lived in a shelter. But they feared for their safety and faced ongoing discrimination. He explained that even though they lived in a shelter, they had no idea there were free food and clothing available to migrants there. Rather, he explained, the Mexican migrants in the shelter got to eat first and received priority access to any donations. By contrast, workers at the shelter held it over him each time he ate. While the breakfast, lunch and dinner were free, the shelter and other residents blamed Felipe and his family for using those resources. After a few months, Felipe and his family decided to leave.

In sum, the comparative lack of resources in some border towns, migrants’ distance and isolation from city centers, and the variable access to resources in shelters also played important roles in their ability to access any donations or services. In unfamiliar cities, migrants were often unaware of services or wary of traveling too far for donations. In other cases, excluded by legal status or place of origin, they found it difficult to access even the services right in front of them.

Conclusion

With the ongoing influx of migrants leaving their home countries in search of safety from persecution, gangs, and gender violence, and the intensification of U.S. policies forcing migrants to wait on the Mexican side, the U.S.-Mexico border has become a site of acute vulnerability. In such contexts, migrants feel intense fear of further violence and persecution and – as a result – face profound isolation and deprivation.

Policies like Title 42, the CBP One App, and the “Migrant Protection Protocols” have forced migrants to remain on the Mexican side of the border for long periods of time, where they must find ways to get services and meet basic needs. Often, when they do, they face discrimination and even abuse from landlords, employers, service providers, and Mexican authorities.
Nevertheless, this report shows that a few key factors can shape migrants’ access to work, stable housing, and social services, making a critical difference in migrants’ ability to meet the needs of themselves and their families while they are stuck at the border. Specifically, social networks help migrants learn about service providers, employment opportunities, and housing. Meanwhile, legal status makes it easier for migrants to get work and rent apartments, even though anti-migrant discrimination continues to play a role in their access to such amenities. Finally, location matters, as migrants in cities with larger levels of services and less intense violence are more able to meet basic needs. Likewise, those in shelters and central locations have better access to service provision than those pushed into substandard housing on the urban periphery.

Based on these findings, we have a few key recommendations about how government agencies and service providers can help migrants meet their basic needs. First, facilitate social networking. For instance, shelters and other service providers might host events and community groups to build relationships and friendships among migrants, and between migrants and local residents, and thus facilitate access to work, food, housing, and education. Second, enable access to identification and legal authorization, which are key to migrants’ ability to rent and find work. Third, expand service provision in underserved cities, especially on the eastern end of the U.S.-Mexico border and in remote areas of cities like Tijuana.

Indeed, migrants’ own words capture some of these points even more effectively than we could ourselves. Here, we offer three quotes in which migrants told us what they would suggest, to better support them along the border:

1. Felix: “Support more than anything, having support when one arrives to be able to get ahead ... at least at the beginning to have support, to be able to get to a place, look for a job and settle down. When one establishes oneself and the little help they give one, well, it will be very useful, really.”

2. Lillian: “Well, I think that having some place where one can feel calm or, or well, some program where, where one is guided, where there is advice, where there are moments to share and all that, it would be nice.”

3. Marcos: “I would like to have some sort of immigration agency – right now that [agency] helps Mexico detain people – but to have some organization like that, but to help immigrants, to support them. To give [us] more help to go to school, maybe a support center you could go to and trust, where you would not be denied access.”

Though these statements only represent a fraction of our respondents, and a sliver of all migrants currently stuck at the border, they speak to the significance a better support system could have for migrants. Organizations that advocate for migrants, bring awareness to the issues and violence they face at the border, and provide them with resources to help them meet their basic needs, and guidance in applying for legal status in Mexico. Cities and nonprofits could work together to expand such a support system, making information about services such as education widely available, giving migrants greater confidence in seeking out these services, and giving them greater opportunity to get legal status and the advantages that can come with it. Thus, local organizations might expand the reach of resources donated to NGOs and shelters, and better equip such groups to provide for migrants.