# MIGRATION DYNAMICS AND HUMANITARIAN GOVERNANCE: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER CRISIS

## DINÁMICA MIGRATORIA Y GOBERNANZA HUMANITARIA: UN ANÁLISIS INTEGRAL DE LA CRISIS FRONTERIZA ENTRE ESTADOS UNIDOS Y MÉXICO

## DINÂMICA MIGRATÓRIA E GOVERNANÇA HUMANITÁRIA: UMA ANÁLISE ABRANGENTE DA CRISE NA FRONTEIRA ENTRE OS ESTADOS UNIDOS E O MÉXICO

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**Abstract**

This article investigates the complex dynamics of migration and humanitarian governance at the U.S.-Mexico border, specifically at the northern Mexican cities of Tijuana, Nogales, Ciudad Juárez, and Piedras Negras. The study presents detailed data from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (USCBP), which include 6.83 million encounters with irregular migrants from January 2021 to October 2023. The article highlights the influence of recent U.S. migration policies, particularly under President Biden's administration, and the challenges faced by the American government in managing the surge in migration flows. Additionally, it analyses the critical role of civil society organizations, the limitations of shelters, and the need for coordinated efforts among governments, NGOs, and international agencies. By analyzing the obstacles related to humanitarian governance, including security concerns, limited resources, and cross-border cooperation, the study contributes to the broader discussion on migration, advocating for a balanced, humane approach that integrates human rights and security measures in border management strategies.

**Resumen**

Este artículo investiga las complejas dinámicas migratorias y la gobernanza humanitaria en la frontera entre Estados Unidos y México, específicamente en las ciudades de Tijuana, Nogales, Ciudad Juárez y Piedras Negras, en el norte de México. El estudio presenta datos detallados de la Oficina de Aduanas y Protección Fronteriza de los Estados Unidos (USCBP), que incluyen 6.83 millones de encuentros con migrantes irregulares entre enero de 2021 y octubre de 2023. Este artículo enfatiza la influencia de las políticas migratorias recientes de EE. UU., en particular durante la administración del presidente Biden, y los desafíos en la gestión del aumento en los flujos migratorios. También, examina el papel crítico de las organizaciones de la sociedad civil, las limitaciones de los albergues y la necesidad de esfuerzos coordinados entre gobiernos, ONG y agencias internacionales. Al analizar los obstáculos relacionados con la gobernanza humanitaria, incluyendo preocupaciones de seguridad, recursos limitados y cooperación transfronteriza, el estudio contribuye a la discusión más amplia sobre migración, abogando por un enfoque equilibrado y humano que integre derechos humanos y medidas de seguridad en las estrategias de gestión fronteriza.

**Palabras clave:** gobernanza humanitaria; dinámicas Migratorias; frontera Estados Unidos-México; políticas migratorias; cooperación transfronteriza; ciencias sociales.

**Resumo**

Neste artigo, investiga-se a complexa dinâmica migratória e a governança humanitária na fronteira entre os Estados Unidos e o México, especificamente nas cidades de Tijuana, Nogales, Ciudad Juárez e Piedras Negras, no norte do México. O estudo apresenta dados detalhados da Alfândega e Proteção de Fronteiras dos Estados Unidos, incluindo 6,83 milhões de encontros com migrantes irregulares entre janeiro de 2021 e outubro de 2023. Este artigo enfatiza a influência das recentes políticas de migração dos Estados Unidos, especialmente durante a administração do Presidente Biden, e os desafios no gerenciamento do aumento dos fluxos migratórios. Ele também examina o papel fundamental das organizações da sociedade civil, as limitações dos abrigos e a necessidade de esforços coordenados entre governos, ONGs e agências internacionais. Ao analisar os obstáculos relacionados à governança humanitária, incluindo preocupações com segurança, recursos limitados e cooperação transfronteiriça, o estudo contribui para a discussão mais ampla sobre migração, defendendo uma abordagem equilibrada e humana que integre direitos humanos e medidas de segurança às estratégias de gerenciamento de fronteiras.

**Palavras-chave:** governança humanitária; dinâmica migratória; fronteira Estados Unidos-México; políticas migratórias; cooperação transfronteiriça; ciências sociais.

## Introduction

The aim of this article is to analyze the function of humanitarian governance within the context of increasing human mobility at the U.S.-Mexico border between 2021 and 2023. This border region, the focal point of the study, is marked by complex migration flows, which produce a range of social, economic, and cultural consequences, as well as violence-induced vulnerabilities (Solano & Massey, 2022). Using a sociological lens to investigate social interactions and the underlying theoretical framework (Sassen, 2007), the article provides an

analytical approach to better comprehend and respond to the migration-related social dynamics occurring in this border region (Massey et al., 2000).

The migration dynamics along the U.S.-Mexico border exhibit both positive and negative elements (Solano & Massey, 2022). This research examines the specific challenges posed by human mobility between the city of Tijuana (Baja California, Mexico) and the city of San Diego (California, U.S.). This crossing, which records a significant number of apprehensions by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (USCBP), is essential for understanding the migratory patterns and dynamics in this area (USCBP, 2023a).

Irregular migration often places individuals in situations of heightened risk and vulnerability (Pincock et al., 2021). Within this framework, the functions of humanitarian governance become vital: prioritizing the protection of the immigrants' human rights, offering them suitable reception conditions, guaranteeing their access to essential services, and ensuring that migration policies are consistent with international human rights standards (Betts et al., 2017).

Humanitarian governance offers a structured approach to managing human mobility efficiently, emphasizing the critical role of coordinating and collaborating among governmental bodies, NGOs, and civil society organizations to holistically address humanitarian challenges (Betts, 2011). It centers on providing humanitarian aid, safeguarding vulnerable groups, and organizing efforts to minimize the effects of emergencies associated with human mobility. This approach is grounded in core principles such as humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and universality (Betts et al., 2017).

In the current global migration context, the U.S.-Mexico border is a focal point for both decisive challenges and opportunities in managing human mobility. This research uses humanitarian governance as a lens to dissect and comprehend the intricate migration dynamics within this distinctive setting. As global migration narratives converge with local realities, the border area between Tijuana (BC, Mexico) and San Diego (CA, USA) presents an exceptional environment for examining how migration policies, humanitarian interventions, and human rights obligations converge in a space marked by both obstacles and prospects. This paper offers a critical evaluation of humanitarian governance in practice, analyzing its effectiveness and efficiency in addressing the largest wave of human mobility in North America's history, focusing particularly on multidimensional strategies that integrate rights, vulnerability, security, and collaboration among various stakeholders.

## U.S.-Mexico Border: Navigating Complex Migration Dynamics and Security Imperatives

Since the dawn of the 21st century, the U.S.-Mexico border has emerged as both a potent symbol and a tangible manifestation of the structural violence and containment strategies that characterize contemporary migration. This academic study delves into this region, where the intersection of human narratives, migration policies, and humanitarian

initiatives reveals a complex network of control and exclusion. By examining this border through the lens of humanitarian governance and theories such as necropolitics and biopower, the study investigates how these dynamics are implemented within the framework of migratory mobility (Castillo Ramírez & González Sánchez, 2023). The period from 2021 to 2023 is particularly significant, as this border area has not only witnessed an unprecedented surge in migration but has also transformed into a contested space where state sovereignty, power hierarchies, and inequalities are negotiated. This evolution makes it a critical site for analyzing the impact of contemporary migration policies and their management from a humanitarian perspective.

Migration at the U.S.-Mexico border is a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by the intersection of economic, political, and social forces (Bustamante, 1972). It serves as a "political device" (Betts, 2011) that not only divides nations but actively regulates and controls human mobility, prioritizing security and containment over humanitarian principles. This research explores how current migration policies, border militarization, and community dynamics on both sides of the border construct and constrain the migrant experience, converting mobility into a privilege accessible to few while exposing many to risks and vulnerabilities. It highlights the significant challenges in promoting effective governance within complex border regions like the U.S.-Mexico border (Solano & Massey, 2022). By addressing the structural violence and state practices that perpetuate cycles of exclusion and containment, the study underscores the need for reimagining borders as spaces that can guarantee mobility and uphold the rights of all individuals (Castillo & González, 2023).

The interaction between humanitarian governance and the social context at the U.S.-Mexico border is deeply intertwined with the complexities of managing migration, particularly in northern Mexican cities like Tijuana, which have become state mechanisms for migration control and containment. These cities, historically shaped by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the Treaty of La Mesilla, have evolved from economic and social hubs to critical nodes within the U.S. border enforcement strategies. This transition is evident in policies like the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) and Title 42, which have transformed Tijuana into a waiting center for asylum seekers under precarious conditions. The social dynamics of the border, including structural inequalities, identity diversity (Sassen, 2007), and the implementation of humanitarian interventions (Massey, 1987), are influenced by these restrictive migration policies, which often prioritize security over human rights, generating tensions and challenging the feasibility of advancing humanitarian governance (Gil-Everaert et al., 2023).

Although the Tijuana-San Diego border faces distinct challenges compared to the Texas border, where polarization is more severe (Solano & Massey, 2022), the enforcement of heightened security measures can significantly impede humanitarian efforts. The official discourse emphasizes protection, yet the reality is one of containment, as migrants encounter barriers to mobility, facing harsh living conditions in shelters that fall short of human rights standards (Trujillo, 2023). Security policies like mass deportations and militarization create obstacles for aid organizations attempting to assist vulnerable groups (Kainz & Betts, 2021). This environment raises critical questions about the balance between border security and

humanitarian values, as efforts to implement humanitarian strategies are often undermined by prioritizing national security. Nonetheless, as this paper proposes, these approaches do not need to be mutually exclusive. By fostering cross-border cooperation and rethinking containment policies to prioritize dignity and rights, there is potential for solutions that integrate security measures with humanitarian responses (U.S. Department of State, 2023; Trujillo, 2023).

Humanitarian governance offers a structured framework to manage the complexities of human mobility, particularly in the context of the U.S.-Mexico border, where policies such as the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) and Title 42 have shaped the landscape of migration control. By focusing on international collaboration, human rights, and sustainable solutions, humanitarian governance aims to reduce tensions and mitigate the harmful effects of restrictive policies (Pincock et al., 2021). The visibility of migrant caravans since 2018 and the subsequent political and media reactions have underscored the need for a balanced approach that integrates security concerns with humanitarian principles. Implementing a governance model that reconciles these priorities is not only achievable but also vital for addressing the intricate dynamics at the Tijuana-San Diego border, where public health measures have been used as pretexts for migration containment (Iwing, 2023)

The core challenge of humanitarian governance is its capacity to navigate the diverse dimensions and demands posed by migration, involving multiple stakeholders with often conflicting priorities (Geddes et al., 2019). For instance, while some actors prioritize security and border control, others emphasize human rights and the right to seek asylum, as seen in the debate surrounding the application of Title 42. This approach, justified as a public health response during the COVID-19 pandemic, has perpetuated exclusionary practices that restrict access to fair asylum processes (Irwing, 2023). Managing an agenda with multiple, sometimes contradictory interests, remains complex but crucial for reducing the vulnerabilities that migrants face throughout their journey—from origin to transit, destination, and return stages (Triandafyllidou & Palumbo, 2023). Addressing these issues demands a humanitarian model that not only facilitates cooperation but also challenges the current dynamics of containment and exclusion at the border.

The capacities embedded within humanitarian governance are closely tied to the principles of strategic management (Moore, 2011). The key elements include:

- *Inter-agency coordination:* Effective border management requires coordination among various agencies and organizations, both at the national and local levels, tasked with addressing humanitarian needs. A significant challenge lies in harmonizing the differing priorities of these actors across these levels (Gertler & Wolfe, 2004).
- *Comprehensive planning:* It is essential to implement planning that incorporates aspects like security, health, humanitarian aid, and development. A major challenge is balancing the long-term planning vision with immediate, short-term humanitarian needs (Ambrosini, 2022).

- *Resource management:* Efficient allocation of resources is critical to tackling humanitarian issues at the border. Such management ensures that financial, logistical, and human resources are used effectively, reaching those in greatest need (Gertler & Wolfe, 2004).

Collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders—including governments, NGOs, international organizations, and media outlets—is essential but presents significant challenges, especially concerning vulnerable groups like the migrants at the El Chaparral camp in Tijuana (Kainz & Betts, 2021). The media's role, as discussed by Del Monte Madrigal, demonstrates how narratives of "alterificación" and "desagenciamiento" complicate humanitarian efforts by shaping public perception in a way that dehumanizes migrants and legitimizes state control (Del Monte Madrigal, 2023). Effective coordination among stakeholders must counter these harmful portrayals to guarantee that displaced individuals are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their migration status. This coordination requires a multidimensional agenda that integrates rights, mobility, and regulatory considerations while challenging exclusionary narratives. It raises critical questions about who should lead these efforts: local, state, or federal governments, civil society organizations, international entities, or federal agencies in Mexico or the United States. Additionally, it is vital to evaluate whether these entities have the capabilities to manage a humanitarian agenda that adequately addresses the vulnerabilities amplified by these media portrayals and state policies.

At the Tijuana-San Diego border, humanitarian governance faces significant challenges in coordinating stakeholders and ensuring human rights are protected, a situation exacerbated by the influence of media narratives that reinforce exclusionary and control-oriented policies (Del Monte Madrigal, 2023). Despite efforts to integrate security and humanitarian considerations, migration management in this region remains complicated by inconsistent coordination and inadequate communication among government agencies, NGOs, and international organizations. These limitations are further reinforced by media representations that frame migrants as passive victims or threats, contributing to fragmented and often insufficient humanitarian responses. The prioritization of security over human rights in such a media environment creates tensions and justifies restrictive measures, even as the need for a balanced approach that harmonizes these competing priorities becomes increasingly evident. Addressing these issues requires not only effective collaboration but also a shift in media discourse to support humanitarian values and dignify migrant experiences.

The challenges at the Tijuana-San Diego border reflect the broader humanitarian crisis present in other northern Mexican border cities like Nogales, Ciudad Juárez, and Piedras Negras. These areas report similar conditions, worsened by high detention rates and pressing social demands. Additional issues, including housing shortages, food insecurity, healthcare access, and escalating violence, underscore the urgent need for effective and compassionate humanitarian governance across the entire border region.

## Navigating the Humanitarian Crisis: Challenges and Strategic Responses in Northern Mexican Border Cities

In the last three years, northern Mexican border cities like Tijuana, Nogales, Ciudad Juárez, and Piedras Negras have faced a deepening humanitarian crisis. The situation, intensified by the significant number of migrants detained by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, has led to substantial social challenges (USCBP, 2023). These include increased demands for housing, food, and healthcare services, as well as heightened vulnerabilities, rising violence, social exclusion, and incidents of human trafficking, among other critical issues.

In this context, humanitarian governance must address the challenge of reducing the vulnerabilities faced by migrant communities along the U.S.-Mexico border. The issues associated with this include:

- *Restrictive immigration policies:* such policies have led to an increase in the number of migrants, including families and unaccompanied minors, who are forced to take dangerous routes and rely on smugglers to cross the border, heightening their risk of exploitation and security threats (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 2023).
- *Violence and security:* drug trafficking and organized crime-related violence along the U.S.-Mexico border place migrant communities in high-risk situations, making them vulnerable to exploitation (Barrachina Lisón et al., 2023).
- *Lack of access to basic services:* migrant communities frequently encounter barriers when trying to access essential services. Such barriers increase their vulnerability and adversely impact their quality of life.
- *Challenges in humanitarian assistance:* logistical, legal, and political barriers hinder the provision of humanitarian aid, affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of support efforts (Betts, 2008).
- *Discrimination and stigmatization:* migrants, especially those from Central America and Africa, face discrimination and stigmatization, which obstructs their integration and access to services and opportunities (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2023).
- *Changing migration patterns:* the variability and unpredictability of migration flows, including those from Africa and China, make it challenging to plan and implement appropriate policies and programs (USCBP, 2023).
- *Binational cooperation:* effective migration management and humanitarian response require close cooperation between Mexico and the United States; however, this is often impeded by political and diplomatic obstacles (Solano & Massey, 2022).
- *Pressure on humanitarian organizations:* humanitarian organizations are under increasing pressure to aid a growing number of migrants and refugees, often exceeding their available resources and capacities.

To effectively address the challenges at the U.S.-Mexico border, humanitarian governance must promote collaboration among local, border, and cross-border stakeholders while being mindful of the fragmented and informal nature of migration practices, as highlighted by Sanchez (Izcara-Palacios, 2017). It is crucial to implement comprehensive migration management strategies that not only reinforce legal and policy frameworks to protect migrants' rights but also recognize the socio-economic realities driving individuals to engage in smuggling as a survival strategy. This approach requires a shift away from criminalizing migration and its facilitators, emphasizing instead the promotion of awareness and social inclusion within host communities (Betts, 2008). A holistic approach must address both the root causes and consequences of migration, prioritizing the protection of human rights for the most vulnerable populations, including those marginalized by restrictive and punitive migration policies.

The humanitarian crisis in Mexico's northern border cities—Tijuana, Nogales, Ciudad Juarez, and Piedras Negras—has significantly worsened in the past three years, amplified by the surge in migrants detained by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. This escalation has created complex social challenges, including increased demands for housing, food, and healthcare, alongside critical issues such as violence, exclusion, and human trafficking. In this context, humanitarian governance has a critical role in reducing the vulnerabilities faced by migrant communities. This includes addressing the restrictive immigration policies that not only push migrants into dangerous situations but also foster the fragmented smuggling networks described by Sanchez, which emerge in response to limited legal pathways. Effective governance must confront violence associated with organized crime and alleviate the lack of essential services, ensuring that those involved in migration, whether as migrants or facilitators, are treated with dignity and respect.

Addressing these challenges requires strong binational cooperation between Mexico and the United States, alongside effective coordination among local, border, and cross-border actors. Humanitarian governance must prioritize comprehensive migration management strategies that involve the strengthening of legal and policy frameworks to protect migrants' rights. Additionally, promoting social inclusion and awareness within receiving communities is vital to fostering integration and minimizing discrimination.

This humanitarian crisis in border cities is deeply intertwined with broader migration patterns and a culture of violence that permeates the U.S.-Mexico border. The substantial human mobility recorded during President Biden's administration, with millions of encounters involving irregular migrants, reveals not only the scale of migration challenges but also the precarious conditions that migrants face. As detailed by Kaczmarek (2018), the violent landscape, exacerbated by drug cartels and organized crime, adds another layer of complexity, transforming these border cities—particularly Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez—into dangerous zones where violence is both a deterrent and a tool for control. The surge in non-regional migrants from beyond Mexico and Central America, including Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Haiti, and even regions in Africa and Asia, underscores the evolving nature of these flows and the urgent need for policies that are not only effective but also adaptable to the realities of violence and migration governance.

Addressing these influxes requires a nuanced understanding of the geopolitical, economic, and social drivers behind these movements, as well as the impact of the violence normalized by criminal organizations and reinforced by state policies. The increase in migration from diverse regions demands a recalibration of existing policies that consider the threats migrants face, such as those posed by organized crime networks that control human smuggling routes and engage in violent rituals to maintain their power (Kaczmarek, 2018). It also necessitates enhanced coordination between U.S. and Mexican authorities to respond collaboratively to the shifting dynamics at the border. However, this cooperation must go beyond militarized strategies and instead address the shared responsibility in creating safer and legally viable pathways for migrants, while considering the socio-economic factors and structural violence that influence migration choices.

Developing and implementing such policies is crucial not only for managing immediate humanitarian needs but also for establishing long-term strategies that account for the future complexities of migration in the region. Understanding the root causes and regional implications of these flows will be essential for building a more resilient and humane response framework that can effectively address the evolving crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border.

## Complex Migration Dynamics and Humanitarian Governance: Challenges and Strategies at the U.S.-Mexico Border

The migration dynamics at the U.S.-Mexico border have witnessed unprecedented levels of human mobility. Under President Biden's administration, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) reported 6,830,287 encounters with irregular migrants from January 2021 through October 2023 (USCBP, 2023a). This period reflects a significant surge, highlighting the ongoing challenges in managing migration flows and enforcing border policies effectively.

Between October 2021 and September 2022, immigration authorities apprehended 2,378,444 individuals (USCBP, 2022), reflecting a persistently high volume of migration attempts. The current fiscal year, spanning from October 2022 to September 2023, recorded 2,475,669 encounters along the southwest border (USCBP, 2023a). These figures mark fiscal year 2023 as having the highest volume of encounters on record, followed closely by 2022.

This trend underscores the complexity of migration patterns and the continuous influx of migrants from various regions, including non-regional countries. The need for effective, adaptable policies and coordinated humanitarian efforts remains crucial in managing these flows and ensuring a humane and sustainable response at the southwest border.

Within the current migratory flow, there has been a significant rise in non-regional migrants from countries such as Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Haiti. These groups accounted for 1,019,419 individuals, or 49.83% of the total in fiscal year 2023, surpassing the number of migrants from Mexico, which was 579,146 (28.31%), and those from the Northern Triangle countries (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador), totaling 447,273 (21.86%) (USCBP, 2023).
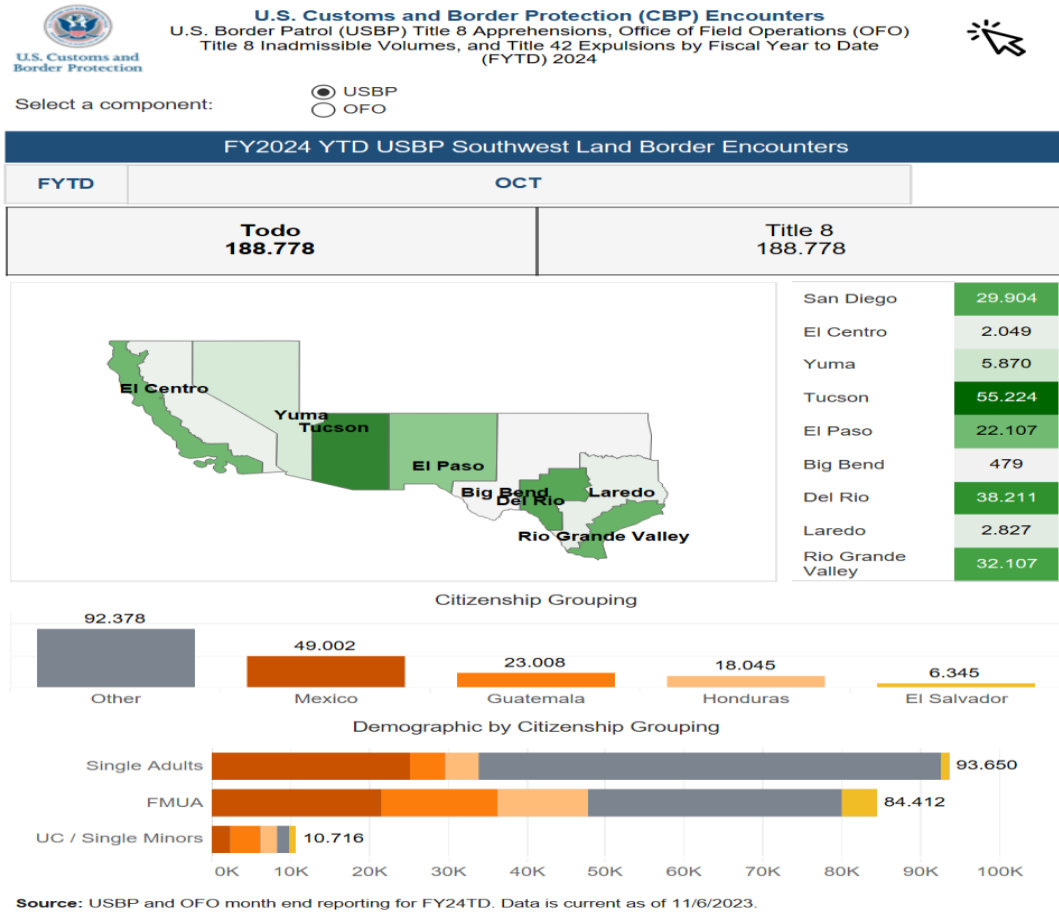
This shift reflects the increasing diversity and complexity of migration patterns and highlights the importance of understanding these broader dynamics that extend beyond traditional regional sources. The majority of these non-regional migrants cross Mexico's southern border with the intention of reaching the United States, illustrating the critical role Mexico plays as both a transit and containment country (Solano & Massey, 2022).

The growing presence of non-regional migrants underscores the need for flexible and comprehensive migration management policies that address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of these populations. It also demonstrates the interconnectedness of migration flows within the Americas and the need for coordinated efforts between the United States, Mexico, and the migrants' countries of origin to ensure an effective and humane response (Ramos García & Barrachina Lisón, 2023).

For an overall perspective, the image below is a visual report from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), encompassing both U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) and the Office of Field Operations (OFO). It provides data on apprehensions, inadmissible cases, and removals conducted under Title 8 and Title 42 for the fiscal year to date (FYTD) 2024. Specifically, the report indicates a total of 188,778 encounters under Title 8 for USBP in October.

The data is broken down in a map highlighting the Southwest land border sectors and an accompanying list that details the distribution of these encounters. Tucson sector recorded the highest number of encounters at 55,224, followed by the Rio Grande Valley with 32,107, and San Diego with 29,904. In contrast, sectors such as El Centro and Laredo reported the lowest figures, with 2,049 and 2,827 encounters, respectively.

This spatial and numerical distribution highlights the variability in migration pressures across different border sectors, underscoring the need for tailored policy responses and resource allocation to manage and mitigate the influx effectively. The concentration of encounters in specific regions like Tucson and the Rio Grande Valley suggests focal points of migration that require sustained attention and coordination among U.S. immigration authorities.

**U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Encounters**
U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) Title 8 Apprehensions, Office of Field Operations (OFO)
Title 8 Inadmissible Volumes, and Title 42 Expulsions by Fiscal Year to Date
(FYTD) 2024

Select a component:   ● USBP   ○ OFO

| FY2024 YTD USBP Southwest Land Border Encounters | | |
|---|---|---|
| **FYTD** | **OCT** | |
| **Todo** **188.778** | **Title 8** **188.778** | |

| | |
|---|---|
| San Diego | 29.904 |
| El Centro | 2.049 |
| Yuma | 5.870 |
| Tucson | 55.224 |
| El Paso | 22.107 |
| Big Bend | 479 |
| Del Rio | 38.211 |
| Laredo | 2.827 |
| Rio Grande Valley | 32.107 |

**Citizenship Grouping**

| Other | Mexico | Guatemala | Honduras | El Salvador |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 92.378 | 49.002 | 23.008 | 18.045 | 6.345 |

**Demographic by Citizenship Grouping**

| | |
|---|---|
| Single Adults | 93.650 |
| FMUA | 84.412 |
| UC / Single Minors | 10.716 |

**Source:** USBP and OFO month end reporting for FY24TD. Data is current as of 11/6/2023.

The chart further breaks down encounters by citizenship categories, revealing that the 'Other' citizenship group has the highest count with 92,378 encounters, closely followed by Mexican nationals, who account for 49,002. Citizens from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador also represent significant portions of the encounters, with 23,008, 18,045, and 6,345 respectively. This data is instrumental in identifying migration trends and nationality-based patterns, which play a critical role in shaping CBP's policy and operational strategies.

For example, understanding which nationalities are most prevalent allows CBP to allocate resources effectively, deploy specialized personnel for language and cultural mediation, and adjust processing protocols to accommodate the specific needs of different migrant groups. Moreover, these insights help inform broader policy adjustments, such as the implementation of targeted deterrence programs or diplomatic engagements with origin countries aimed at reducing push factors. In essence, by analyzing the citizenship breakdown, CBP can refine its response mechanisms and operational planning to manage the diversity and scale of migration flows at the U.S.-Mexico border more efficiently.

At the bottom of the chart, a demographic breakdown by citizenship group is displayed, revealing that Single Adults (SA) constitute the largest group with 93,650 encounters. This is followed by Family Units (FMUA) with 84,412 encounters and Unaccompanied/Unmarried Children (UC) with 10,716. This demographic distribution offers a detailed view of the profiles

of individuals arriving at the border, which has significant implications for CBP's resource allocation, including processing and housing capacities. Additionally, these figures inform the development of immigration policies and the design of humanitarian strategies, as different groups require tailored approaches; for instance, single adults may be subject to expedited removal processes, whereas families and unaccompanied minors often need access to specialized services and shelter facilities.

Understanding the demographics also aids in predicting future needs and potential bottlenecks in the system. For instance, the high volume of families suggests a pressing need for family-friendly processing centers and shelters, while the number of unaccompanied minors highlights the importance of child protection protocols and long-term integration strategies. The data, sourced from the USBP and OFO month-end report for the fiscal year to date, provides a foundational basis for assessing the efficiency and preparedness of border operations. The cutoff date for this information is November 1, 2023, ensuring that the statistics reflect the most current trends in migration at the U.S.-Mexico border.

In recent decades, and particularly during the last three years under President Joe Biden's administration, the U.S.-Mexico border has experienced a humanitarian governance crisis. This crisis is evident in the heightened vulnerability of families, unaccompanied minors, and women with children, who face insecurity, human rights violations, and concentration in Mexican border communities (Gil-Everaert et al., 2023). The border's record-breaking mobility—nearly seven million encounters—represents the highest in North America's border history (Gramlich, 2024).

Such unprecedented migration flows necessitate a multidimensional, multi-actor, and multi-level approach to humanitarian governance, capable of addressing both irregular and documented forms of human mobility. The complexity of the situation calls for coordinated efforts that involve local, state, and federal authorities, as well as international organizations and NGOs, to ensure that migrant populations receive adequate protection, shelter, and assistance while their cases are processed.

Effectively managing these challenges requires policies and practices that are not only reactive but also preventative, aiming to reduce vulnerabilities before they escalate into crises. This involves creating infrastructure and support systems that cater specifically to the needs of diverse migrant groups, ensuring access to safe housing, healthcare, and legal support. Additionally, fostering cross-border cooperation is essential to develop comprehensive strategies that transcend national policies and address the humanitarian aspects of migration holistically.

The Tijuana-San Diego border is a critical hub for both irregular and documented migration, which raises questions about how to manage these flows effectively within a humanitarian governance framework. Irregular migration, in particular, poses significant challenges at border checkpoints, which can disrupt commercial traffic, the movement of individuals, and trade. On an average day, approximately 60,000 people cross in both directions at this border point (USCBP, 2023a). Such high volumes necessitate the strategic

allocation of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) personnel, not only for border enforcement but also for processing immigration applications. This dual role can impact the efficiency of legal border crossings, slowing down the flow of goods and people.

To address these challenges, coordinated binational efforts between Mexico and the United States are essential. Collaborative strategies must focus on managing migration flows effectively through shared responsibilities, pooling resources, and enhancing international cooperation. Such approaches would enable both nations to balance security concerns with humanitarian needs, ensuring that those seeking asylum or safe passage are processed efficiently and humanely.

Moreover, integrating humanitarian governance within this collaboration would mean developing infrastructure and support systems that accommodate the needs of migrants while maintaining the flow of legal cross-border traffic. Policies that streamline immigration processing while ensuring that commercial and legal travel remains uninterrupted are key to balancing security, economic interests, and human rights obligations at this major international border.

Effectively managing both irregular and documented migration at the Tijuana-San Diego border within a humanitarian governance framework requires a careful balance between security measures and humanitarian obligations. Ensuring that documented migrants have unimpeded access to legal processes and essential services is crucial, while simultaneously addressing the complexities of irregular migration in a manner that upholds human rights principles (Solano & Massey, 2022). This approach involves not only protecting migrants but also creating systems that respect their dignity and rights, regardless of their status.

A sensitive and well-coordinated strategy, which includes cooperation between governmental and non-governmental actors, is essential for implementing a humane and efficient migration management system in the region. Such a strategy should integrate the needs of various migrant groups, including families, unaccompanied minors, and individuals seeking asylum. By prioritizing human rights and ensuring equitable treatment, humanitarian governance can foster more sustainable solutions that address both immediate and long-term needs of migrant communities.

Ultimately, developing a balanced approach that integrates security and humanity is critical for effective migration management at the Tijuana-San Diego border. This involves not only enhancing border security operations but also investing in infrastructure and resources that facilitate legal migration pathways. A comprehensive policy framework, supported by international cooperation and local community engagement, is necessary to create a border management system that is both secure and responsive to the humanitarian challenges present in this region.

Migrants arriving at the Tijuana-San Diego border encounter significant challenges in accessing policies framed within a humanitarian governance approach. Key obstacles include restricted access to protection and asylum services, often stemming from the complexity of

legal processes, stringent migration policies, or inadequate information regarding their rights. These barriers not only complicate their journey but also place them at risk of exploitation and further marginalization.

Compounded by bureaucratic hurdles, many migrants struggle to navigate the asylum system, which often lacks the resources or infrastructure needed to process their claims efficiently. The restrictive policies, such as those limiting eligibility for asylum based on transit through third countries or rapid deportation protocols like Title 42, exacerbate these difficulties, leaving migrants with few viable legal options. This environment creates a sense of uncertainty and insecurity, deterring many from seeking the protections they are entitled to under international law.

Furthermore, a lack of accessible information and legal aid significantly hinders migrants' ability to understand and exercise their rights. In many cases, language barriers, misinformation, and insufficient outreach efforts from both U.S. and Mexican authorities contribute to this problem. A more comprehensive and rights-based approach is needed to ensure that migrants have the necessary support and resources to access protection mechanisms effectively. Strengthening collaboration between international agencies, NGOs, and local governments is essential to bridge these gaps and create an environment where migrants can pursue their rights with dignity and security.

The complex dynamics of migration at the U.S.-Mexico border, which necessitates balancing security and humanitarian considerations, are compounded by multiple challenges faced by migrants during their journey and while residing in border regions. These difficulties not only underscore the inherent obstacles of irregular migration but also reveal deficiencies in current humanitarian governance policies and practices. The most pressing issues include:

- *Limited Access to Protection and Asylum:* migrants encounter significant barriers in accessing asylum and protection services due to the complexity of the procedures, restrictive migration policies, or a lack of information regarding their rights. These constraints prevent many from obtaining the protection they need and are entitled to[1].
- *Unsafe Conditions and Health Risks:* migrants face substantial health risks and precarious conditions during their journey and while awaiting the resolution of their cases, particularly in shelters or makeshift camps. The lack of adequate medical care can worsen existing health issues or contribute to the development of new illnesses (Washington Office on Latin America, 2020). Additionally, vulnerable groups such as women, children, and individuals in precarious situations are at elevated risk of violence, abuse, exploitation, and trafficking (Solano & Massey, 2022). Even some shelter environments may pose further dangers.

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[1] Enrique Lucero, Municipal Director of Attention to Migrants, addressing the Tijuana City Hall during the workshop *Vision, Challenges and Proposals for the Cali-Baja Cross-Border Region*, by the Strategic Working Group for the Cali-Baja Region, November 23, 2023.

- *Detention and Family Separation:* migration policies frequently result in the detention of migrants, including minors, which often leads to family separations. Such practices cause severe emotional and psychological distress among affected families[2].
- *Linguistic and Cultural Barriers:* migrants often struggle with language barriers and cultural misunderstandings that inhibit their access to services and resources. The lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate support further complicates their integration and ability to navigate available assistance[3].
- *Vulnerability to Labor Exploitation:* due to their unstable migration status, many migrants are susceptible to labor exploitation, as employers take advantage of their precarious situation, disregarding labor rights and protections (Solano & Massey, 2022).
- *Limitations on Mobility and Access to Legal Remedies:* mobility restrictions, coupled with inadequate access to legal advice or means to appeal unfavorable decisions, severely limit migrants' capacity to seek protection or defend their rights (Gil-Everaert et al., 2023).

The current situation at the U.S.-Mexico border reveals a considerable gap between the core tenets of humanitarian governance —such as humanity, impartiality, and the respect for human rights— and their application in migration policies. Ideally, the implementation of these principles should ensure the comprehensive protection of migrants, regardless of their legal status, and should also address the underlying causes driving migration (Betts et al., 2017). However, applying these humanitarian principles uniformly across the migration network has proven challenging.

Migrants often face violence and exploitation from human smugglers and other illicit actors throughout their journey, especially as they move towards or through Mexico and the United States. These criminal networks take advantage of the migrants' vulnerable positions, subjecting them to extortion, abuse, and even human trafficking. Such dangers present a formidable obstacle for humanitarian governance efforts in the region, as they complicate the protection and assistance processes that should ideally accompany migrants (Solano & Massey, 2022).

The lack of an effective, coordinated response to curb these criminal activities further complicates the application of humanitarian policies. Despite efforts to establish safe and legal pathways for migration, the enduring presence and influence of these illicit actors demonstrate the gaps in current governance structures. To bridge this divide, a more proactive and integrated approach is needed—one that involves not only local governments but also international organizations and civil society actors. This collaborative effort must aim to

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[2] David Pérez-Tejada, Commissioner of the Migration Institute in the state of Baja California, during the workshop *Vision, Challenges and Proposals for the Cali-Baja Cross-Border Region,* by the Strategic Working Group for the Cali-Baja Region, November 23, 2023.

[3] Enrique Lucero, Municipal Director of Attention to Migrants, addressing the Tijuana City Hall during the workshop *Vision, Challenges and Proposals for the Cali-Baja Cross-Border Region,* by Strategic Working Group for the Cali-Baja Region, November 23, 2023.

dismantle human smuggling networks while ensuring the provision of support and protection for migrants throughout their journey.

The analysis further indicates that the southwest border sector, particularly the cities of El Paso, San Diego, Yuma, Tucson, and Calexico, has seen the highest concentration of deportations. This trend can be attributed to the geographical proximity and the logistical operations of USCBP, which prioritize these areas due to their strategic importance and the volume of crossings. Furthermore, the southwestern sector operates under policies that, while aiming to control irregular migration, also face challenges in balancing enforcement with humanitarian assistance, often resulting in higher deportation numbers in these zones compared to other border sectors.

The article further emphasizes that the concentration of deportations in the southwestern border cities is influenced by the unique geopolitical and economic dynamics of these areas. These cities are critical points of entry and processing for migrants due to their proximity to major migration routes and their established infrastructure for handling high volumes of crossings. The relatively less restrictive immigration policies in these areas, compared to the eastern border, reflect strategic prioritization, balancing border security with humanitarian considerations to manage the flow of migrants more effectively.

The considerable human mobility and fluctuations in migration patterns have intensified the humanitarian crisis affecting northern Mexican border cities like Tijuana, Nogales, Ciudad Juárez, and Piedras Negras. This situation has led to significant demands for housing, food, and healthcare, while simultaneously heightening vulnerabilities related to violence, exclusion, and human trafficking. Addressing these challenges necessitates effective management of humanitarian governance that encompasses both irregular and documented human mobility at the border, placing a strong emphasis on the comprehensive protection of migrants and tackling the root causes driving migration.

## Humanitarian Governance and Migration Dynamics: The Complexities and Coordination Challenges at the U.S.-Mexico Border

The migration patterns along the U.S.-Mexico border have been marked by significant human movement, with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) reporting 6.83 million encounters with irregular migrants during President Biden's administration, from January 2021 to October 2023. Approximately 60% of these deportations occurred in the southwestern region of the U.S.-Mexico border, particularly in cities like El Paso, San Diego, Yuma, Tucson, and Calexico (USCBP, 2023a). This concentration is attributed to relatively more lenient immigration policies compared to the eastern U.S. border, which is subject to stricter controls advocated by individuals such as Texas Governor Greg Abbott.

Specifically, the Tijuana-San Diego border crossing saw 29,904 apprehensions in October 2023, making it the fourth highest in terms of apprehension numbers along the U.S.-Mexico border, following the Rio Grande Valley, TX; Del Rio, TX; and Tucson, AZ (USCBP,

2023). This figure represents a 67.3% rise compared to October 2022, marking the second-largest increase in apprehensions, with Tucson, AZ, leading at a 140% surge (USCBP, 2023).

The U.S. federal government's visa programs, such as those for humanitarian aid, work, asylum, refugee status, and family reunification, significantly influence migration flows within Latin America and the broader region. However, Vogt's analysis highlights how these initiatives, while framed as compassionate and organized efforts, often fail to address the structural violence and commodification faced by migrants in transit. For example, while the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program for Venezuelans grants deportation relief and work authorization to over 472,000 individuals, it does not alleviate the dangers faced by those traveling through Central America and Mexico (USCBP, 2023a). These programs, despite their humanitarian veneer, coexist with restrictive and militarized border enforcement measures, creating a contradictory environment where migration is managed but not genuinely protected (Vogt, 2013). The current strategy under Biden's administration contrasts with that of Trump's but still perpetuates conditions that make migration a hazardous and commodified journey, influenced by both state and non-state actors (USCBP, 2023a).

Addressing the humanitarian crisis at the Tijuana-San Diego border involves navigating the complexities highlighted by Vogt, particularly the commodification of migrant bodies and the vulnerabilities created by militarized border policies. One of the primary difficulties is the limited capacity and resources available to support the high influx of migrants and asylum seekers. Shelters, which Vogt describes as nodes of both support and exploitation, struggle with insufficient capacity, inadequate medical services, and shortages of essential resources, creating an environment where violence and exploitation can thrive. These constraints complicate efforts to provide dignified living conditions for those waiting for their claims to be processed. In this context, civil society organizations play a crucial role, often stepping in to fill the gaps left by inadequate state resources. Despite their efforts, these organizations face operational limitations and must navigate a complex landscape shaped by both local and global economic interests tied to migration (Vogt, 2013; Cota, 2022). Their relatively cooperative relationship with local and state authorities in Tijuana allows for some coordination, but systemic challenges persist. (See Table 1).

**Table 1.** Aspects of humanitarian governance in Tijuana, BC.

| GOVERNANCE | TREND |
|---|---|
| **Inter-institutional cooperation** | Median |
| **Multiactor Coordination** | Median |
| **Cross-border collaboration** | High |
| **Multilevel agenda** | Median |
| **Support (food, clothing)** | High |
| **Support for shelters** | High |
| **Legal advice** | Median |
| **Health care** | Download |

| Rights agenda | Median |
|---|---|
| **Communication support** | High |
| **Innovation initiatives** | Download |
| **Adaptability of environments** | Median |

Prepared by the authors based on Betts, 2011.

Effective coordination among humanitarian actors, including government bodies, NGOs, and international agencies, is essential for managing the migration crisis. Nevertheless, logistical, bureaucratic, and communication obstacles frequently impede this coordination, making it difficult to achieve a cohesive and swift humanitarian response (Solano & Massey, 2022). The lack of a clear leadership structure within social organizations results in fragmented efforts and limited collaboration between institutions. While the local government of Tijuana engages in some cooperative initiatives, it has not taken a central leadership role, largely due to insufficient financial resources and the fact that migration is primarily a federal responsibility, coupled with the influence of organized crime in migration control.

Vulnerable groups, including women, children, and individuals with special medical needs, are disproportionately affected by the migration crisis and face significant structural barriers to integration. Such groups are often relegated to the informal labor market, where they encounter discrimination, exploitation, and limited access to social services. In the border context of Tijuana, these vulnerabilities are further exacerbated by inadequate conditions in reception centers and heightened risks of exploitation, including human trafficking. Migrants lacking legal documentation are especially vulnerable, frequently resorting to precarious work due to barriers in accessing formal employment (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018; Navarrete-Suárez, 2024). In this environment, both local and U.S.-based social organizations play a crucial role, offering essential support to these populations. However, such efforts remain insufficient without systemic changes to address legal barriers and ensure equitable access to services.

Psychosocial assistance and mental health services are essential for many migrants who have experienced trauma throughout their journeys, particularly those from Central America who may carry the legacy of violence and economic disparity from their countries of origin. Yet, as Vogt notes, the fragmented support system at the border often fails to provide the necessary care, leaving these groups without adequate resources. The pandemic further aggravated this situation, diverting attention and resources away from psychosocial services, as emergency response efforts prioritized immediate physical needs. This lack of comprehensive care significantly impacts the emotional and mental well-being of migrants, especially for those who continue to face structural vulnerabilities and barriers to integration (Rauhut & Laine, 2023; Navarrete-Suárez, 2024). Addressing these issues requires not only expanding service capacity but also ensuring that legal and social frameworks are in place to support these vulnerable groups, facilitating their access to essential services and reducing the risks of exploitation and trauma.

Migration policies and political discourse significantly influence the humanitarian response, often exacerbating vulnerabilities and barriers for migrants. Shifts in migration regulations, ambiguity in asylum procedures, and uncertainty in government actions contribute to the complexity of managing migration flows effectively (Pincock et al., 2021). For instance, policies like Title 42 and the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) have redefined how asylum seekers navigate the U.S.-Mexico border, creating bottlenecks and pushing individuals into precarious situations. The deployment of technological tools such as the CBPOne mobile application represents an effort to streamline the asylum process, facilitating the passage of over 70,000 individuals since January 2023. However, such digital solutions, while innovative, also raise concerns about accessibility and exclusion, particularly for migrants lacking digital literacy or resources. The impact of these policies and tools highlights the need for clarity and consistency in asylum procedures to ensure that humanitarian principles are upheld.

Addressing cross-border challenges and fostering international cooperation remain crucial for an efficient and effective humanitarian response. The discrepancies between U.S. and Mexican policies, compounded by the influence of organized crime networks that capitalize on migrants' vulnerabilities, often impede collaboration (Faret et al., 2021). Morales Vargas (2023) analysis further emphasizes how these dynamics can commodify migrant lives, making them susceptible to exploitation by both state and non-state actors. Despite these obstacles, the involvement of social organizations from San Diego in humanitarian efforts exemplifies successful cross-border cooperation, offering support networks and resources that aid in bridging the gap left by governmental inadequacies. For such initiatives to be sustainable, however, policies must address the structural and systemic barriers that perpetuate exploitation and human rights violations, ensuring that cooperative efforts prioritize the safety and dignity of migrants.

The interaction between humanitarian governance and migrant shelters at the border is multifaceted, involving ethical, legal, and humanitarian dimensions (Betts, 2011). Shelters encounter various challenges, such as capacity limitations, living conditions, health and safety concerns, and the need to uphold human rights. In Baja California, the level of cooperation between the government and shelters is inconsistent, with civil society organizations often taking the lead in managing these facilities, though they receive minimal governmental support. This dynamic is particularly evident in Tijuana, where some criminal organizations exert control over human movement (San Diego Union Tribune, 2023).

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNICEF, and the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) are essential actors in advancing humanitarian governance in migration. These agencies not only offer direct support to migrants but also work to enhance policies and advocate for human rights. They face the ongoing challenge of incorporating their initiatives into a cohesive and effective model of humanitarian governance (Betts et al., 2017).

This part of the article underscores the high level of human movement along the U.S.-Mexico border, particularly in the Tijuana-San Diego area, where 6.83 million encounters with irregular migrants have been documented during President Biden's administration. This surge in migration, characterized by a notable rise in apprehensions, illustrates the complexities and

challenges faced in humanitarian governance within the region. Biden's immigration strategy, which emphasizes humanitarian visas and asylum programs, stands in contrast to the policies of the previous administration and has had a considerable impact on migration patterns both regionally and across Latin America.

The challenges of humanitarian governance involve handling a crisis characterized by inadequate reception capacity and limited resources, with civil society organizations taking on a pivotal role, particularly in Tijuana. Despite their efforts, obstacles such as insufficient coordination among various actors and differing views on issues and strategies persist. These difficulties emphasize the importance of developing a cohesive and responsive humanitarian approach that ensures the protection of human rights while balancing border security and fostering effective international and cross-border collaboration.

The examination of migration patterns at the U.S.-Mexico border highlights the increasing movement of people and the associated humanitarian challenges, especially in the Tijuana-San Diego area. The high number of detentions underscores the need for effective humanitarian governance that can coordinate the efforts of various stakeholders managing irregular migration, while overcoming communication barriers and building trust between governmental and non-governmental organizations.

In summary, effective humanitarian governance is crucial for managing migration at the U.S.-Mexico border in a way that upholds the rights and dignity of migrants, while addressing the complexities of migration at every stage.

## Final considerations

This study, centered on the Cali-Baja border region, with a specific focus on the migration dynamics between Tijuana and San Diego, has highlighted critical aspects of humanitarian governance in the migration context. With nearly seven million apprehensions reported by U.S. immigration authorities over the past three years, this area has become a hotspot for intense human mobility and related humanitarian issues. President Biden's immigration strategy, which includes initiatives like humanitarian visas and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Venezuelan migrants, represents a marked departure from the previous administration and has significantly impacted migration patterns. However, this policy shift has also brought challenges related to the effective coordination of various actors engaged in humanitarian governance, emphasizing the need for cohesive, multilevel approaches to managing irregular migration flows.

This study further reveals that humanitarian governance at the Tijuana-San Diego border encounters additional obstacles due to the complexities of migration and U.S. immigration policies. These challenges include insufficient shelter capacity and inconsistent coordination among various actors, impacting the overall humanitarian response. Although there is cooperation between social organizations and local and state governments, significant difficulties remain in safeguarding human rights and providing dignified living conditions for

migrants and asylum seekers. Additionally, the region faces uncertainties regarding which entity should take the lead in coordinating and planning humanitarian efforts.

The role of humanitarian governance at the U.S.-Mexico border, particularly in the Tijuana-San Diego area, has been analyzed due to the rising levels of human mobility and the ensuing humanitarian challenges. Migration dynamics in this region are among the most intense along the border shared by the two countries, with nearly seven million apprehensions recorded by U.S. immigration authorities over the past three years. This influx has been significantly shaped by the initiatives introduced by President Biden's administration since January 2023, including humanitarian, labor, asylum, refugee, family reunification programs, and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Venezuelan migrants, marking a departure from the policies of the Trump administration.

Humanitarian governance emphasizes the importance of effective collaboration among various stakeholders, including governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and humanitarian agencies, to address irregular migration. However, achieving consistent and effective coordination across multiple levels and among diverse actors remains challenging. Communication barriers and differing views on issues and strategies have hindered the efficiency of humanitarian responses. Moreover, the lack of trust between governmental and non-governmental entities can pose a significant obstacle to developing a unified humanitarian agenda.

Humanitarian governance at the Tijuana-San Diego border encounters further complications due to the intricate nature of migration and U.S. immigration policies. Key issues include insufficient shelter capacity and inconsistent coordination among various actors, which can fluctuate and impact the effectiveness of humanitarian responses. Social organizations frequently demonstrate significant collaboration and a reasonable degree of cooperation with local and state government bodies. Ensuring the protection of human rights and maintaining dignified living conditions for migrants and asylum seekers are fundamental aspects of humanitarian governance, alongside the active involvement of the community.

There are uncertainties at the Tijuana-San Diego border concerning which entity should assume leadership in coordinating and planning humanitarian governance efforts. Civil society organizations like Espacio Migrante have taken on a significant role, working in partnership with the local government amid rising migration flows and the growing influence of criminal organizations in managing migration control.

The lack of a unified rights agenda among those involved in humanitarian governance at the border arises from various factors, including insufficient coordination and differing views on human rights. As a result, implementing a humanitarian governance approach to manage migration at this border is crucial—not only to tackle logistical and security issues but also to uphold the dignity and fundamental rights of migrants. International collaboration, transparency, and the protection of human rights are essential pillars for a more humane and sustainable approach to migration management.

In summary, this study highlights the vital role of effective humanitarian governance at the U.S.-Mexico border, particularly in managing migration within the Tijuana-San Diego area. The lack of a unified rights agenda and coordination challenges underscore the need for a holistic approach that balances human dignity with security concerns. Future research should explore strategies to enhance cross-border collaboration and improve the efficiency of humanitarian crisis responses. Additionally, further studies could examine the effects of migration policies on the region's social and economic dynamics, as well as how varying interpretations of human rights shape governance practices.

It is also essential to explore how civil society organizations, such as Espacio Migrante, can enhance their collaboration with governments and other agencies to reinforce the humanitarian response and safeguard migrants. An important area for study would be the evaluation of humanitarian governance models that successfully align the needs of migrants with national security measures. Additionally, investigating the long-term impacts of current migration policies on the social and economic fabric of border communities, as well as on the quality of life for migrants and asylum seekers, is necessary. Lastly, examining ways to promote a more unified and cohesive human rights agenda among all stakeholders in humanitarian governance is crucial. These studies will not only add to academic understanding but also offer practical insights for developing fairer and more humane migration policies.

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