

COLLECTIVE RESISTANCE

This is an adapted story of a family group traveling together from an FGD held in Cali.



Fictional picture.

‘The main challenge we face in accessing financial services is our constant movement, which has limited our transactions to cash only.’

Carmen (fictional name) explains their group journey from Venezuela to Peru.

We have been on the road for two weeks since leaving Venezuela and are currently in Colombia, but Peru is our final destination. Traveling as a group has helped lower the risk of robbery, and fortunately, since we have been together, no cases of robbery have occurred. However, one person did experience a robbery before joining the group.

For self-defence, we carry knives, and all the group’s money is managed by me (the mother). As we move from one place to another, we engage in small informal jobs to earn money, and if necessary, we resort to begging. The main challenge we face in accessing financial services is our constant movement, which has limited our transactions to cash only.

So far, we have not been able to access any kind of financial services. Throughout our journey, we made several stops and travelled at a slower pace due to my leg injury that happened while crossing the river; plus, my age [is an issue], I am 68 years old.

One of our major frustrations is with the bureaucratic process required to obtain a valid ID in Colombia and the difficulties in entering the job market. In Bogotá, we received money from individuals on the street rather than from humanitarian organizations. People helped pay for our bus tickets from Bogotá to Cali. Currently, we are attempting to obtain bus tickets to Peru through humanitarian organizations.

We have made efforts to apply for humanitarian assistance during our journey but there are long wait times. Also, priority was given to women and individuals with identification, but women managed to access humanitarian assistance more easily. However, the primary source of assistance for all of us has been individuals on the street rather than NGOs.

We think the best form of humanitarian aid is providing travel tickets to help us reach our final destination and food for the journey. Most of our money is spent on these two essential needs, although we do not allocate as much for food and often rely on begging to fulfil that requirement.

One group member’s prior experience traveling to Peru influenced our chosen route. We followed the same route, considering it the easiest, fastest, and with more organizations offering assistance. As we progress on

the journey, we gather more information about the route and strive to reach places where NGOs provide humanitarian assistance.

We have noticed that NGOs are typically present in larger cities, while smaller towns along the route have limited services.

We think banks could help us by offering credit cards through aid organizations. For instance, one single organization or bank could be dedicated to solely assisting migrants along the route, regardless of our nationality. Also, that organization could provide crucial information about the availability of accommodations in small towns, or the risks associated with specific routes. We are very concerned about the dangers of certain routes, as people often go missing during the journey.

Because I have a valid ID, I have received cash transfers, and I am very grateful to the United Nations because they have provided us with food and support. But, when we no longer have enough funds to continue our journey, we just have to beg and wait for the kindness of people who would help us.
