

Rights Live in All Languages: Promoting Indigenous Rights in Mexico

Linguistic rights and access to information are essential for the full exercise of human rights



Credit: USAID's RED-DH Activity

Indigenous Peoples remain among the world's most marginalized populations and often face systematic exclusion from their nation's social, economic, and political systems. **According to Mexico's 2020 census, more than 7.3 million people aged three years and older speak one of the country's 68 indigenous languages, representing six percent of the total population.** More than 25 million people self-identify as indigenous.

Members of Mexico's indigenous communities face acts of racism and discrimination and greater obstacles in protecting their rights and accessing justice. Official statistics often contribute to the invisibility of groups, failing to disaggregate crimes by the ethnicity of victims. Despite their increased vulnerability, authorities currently do not know how many indigenous persons are included in the approximately 100,000 people currently registered as missing or disappeared. Likewise, authorities lack a national registry for torture victims and are unable to state with certainty how many victims belong to indigenous communities.

Under the USAID-funded human rights program RED-DH, **Chemonics has partnered with CSOs to increase engagement with indigenous communities to improve awareness and mechanisms of protections for their human rights.** RED-DH, for example, awarded a grant to local CSO CEPIADET to translate and broadcast vital human rights information on torture and forced disappearance to indigenous communities through local radio stations. **On February 28, CEPIADET launched the campaign "Don't Hurt Me... Rights Live in All Languages," a series of eight audio segments in six indigenous languages broadcast on four public radio stations (XECTZ, XEZON, XEPUR, XEJMN) until April 15.** The audio recordings can also be found on [Spotify](#), iVox, and Soundcloud.

In close coordination with RED-DH, CEPIADET also translated Mexico's General Laws on Disappearances and Torture representing **the first time ever that these legal frameworks have been made available in indigenous languages.** The initiative covers six different linguistic variants in the states of Jalisco (Wixrarika from the east and Purepecha), Puebla (Nahuatl from the northwestern highlands and central Totonac from the north), and Veracruz (Nahuatl from the Huasteca and Totonac from the coast). These languages and their dialects were selected for the broadest coverage of indigenous audiences in the three states.

Radio represents a cost-effective and efficient way of reaching indigenous communities in Mexico, where a significant percentage of indigenous language speakers do not read or write. The radio campaign explores information related to Mexico's laws on torture and disappearance, the institutions responsible for safeguarding citizens' rights, and an outline of measures of legal redress in cases of human rights violations.

In line with USAID's recognition that **[ensuring the rights of indigenous peoples is a practical and a moral imperative in promoting peaceful, inclusive, and democratic societies](#)**, through RED-DH, Chemonics' efforts are helping ensure that Mexico's vibrant democracy is inclusive of all its citizens and celebrates its distinct multicultural heritage.

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