



# Heartland Alliance International in Latin America and the Caribbean

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**NO HEALING WITHOUT JUSTICE  
NO JUSTICE WITHOUT HEALING**

**HEARTLAND  
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# HAI is Planning for 2020

Heartland Alliance International is following an ambitious five-year strategic plan to expand its efforts to bring healing and justice to those whose human rights have been violated and to individuals who are vulnerable to rights violations. Grounding our work in more than 125 years of domestic experience, we are eager to build on our current programming in Latin America and the Caribbean and secure the human rights of the most marginalized populations.

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# Latin America and the Caribbean

As human rights workers, we strive to ensure that people we serve enjoy the full expression of their rights, and have access to justice and healing.

Organized crime, drug and gang-related violence, government corruption, and legacies of armed conflict contribute to pervasive violence and instability throughout Latin America and the Caribbean; over one third of global homicides occur in this region.

With programming in Mexico, Colombia and the Dominican Republic, HAI leverages its decades of experience to address local needs through a human rights framework. We form strong local partnerships, use evidence-based methods and perform regular evaluations to ensure our programs reach the people who need them most — and change their lives for the better.

Over the next five years, HAI will deepen and expand its programming in Latin America and the Caribbean to:

-  Protect and empower women, LGBT individuals, and youth who are at the highest risk of human rights violations and violence
-  Strengthen cross-country collaboration to effect social change at the regional level
-  Develop programming in Central America and apply Heartland's expertise on protections and services for migrant youth



# Mexico

HAI's work in Mexico prioritizes populations most vulnerable to the current realities of crime and violence in the country, particularly women and youth.

HAI has developed innovative program models to create new educational and recreational opportunities for youth and teenagers, providing alternatives to gang recruitment and criminal activity.

We also promote the labor rights of vulnerable communities, and are currently working with the Ministry of Labor to prevent harassment based on sexual orientation, gender, and pregnancy status.

Recognizing the alarming rate of human rights abuses and enforced disappearances in Mexico, HAI will continue exploring opportunities to build the capacity of civil society in providing comprehensive support to survivors and their families.

*"It's not enough to provide access to services and protect human rights. It requires systemic change so vulnerable populations are able to live and breathe these rights as human beings."*

— Karla Alvarez, Heartland Alliance International, Mexico



# Colombia

The decades-long conflict in Colombia is considered the largest in the Western Hemisphere. Extreme forms of violence have made survivors of an entire country. Amidst this trauma and despair, we have seen extraordinary hope and resilience.

Our staff in Colombia, many of whom are survivors themselves, equip other community leaders with the skills they need to provide access to trauma-informed mental health care. HAI has also tailored its services to meet the specific needs of Afro-Colombians and indigenous communities.

Our services in Colombia are many people's first touch of healing after decades of violence and hopelessness. We focus on the intersection between justice and wellbeing, because we recognize that access to mental health care is itself a human right, and that survivors of human rights abuses must have opportunities to heal and recover before they reintegrate and work for social change.

"I feel more confident in myself. I realize I am not the only one who suffered during the conflict. I can walk on the streets again and talk to other people, even look them in the eyes. I am rebuilding my life and moving on."

— Alejandra, an HAI participant and a survivor of rape





# Dominican Republic

Tens of thousands of Dominicans of Haitian descent are vulnerable to statelessness after national laws stripped members of this population of their citizenship.

These individuals must now navigate a complicated and bureaucratic process to regularize their documents and restore their Dominican nationality.

Since 2013, HAI's team in the Dominican Republic has provided legal support to Haitian immigrants and Dominicans of Haitian origin to ensure their access to nationality and the rights to which they are entitled.

In addition to providing comprehensive legal services, HAI has the capacity to serve vulnerable populations with unique barriers to access, including women, LGBT and HIV+ individuals, youth, and trafficking victims.





# Central America

HAI will harness the experience and expertise of its colleagues to develop initiatives in Central America that combat the violence, poverty, and inequity fueling this humanitarian and migration crisis.

Heartland Alliance's programs in the United States provide legal and social services to migrant youth fleeing violence, many of them from the Northern Triangle countries, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Central America sees crisis levels of domestic violence and femicide. Lesbians, bisexual and transgender women, and sex workers are at even greater risk of violence and exploitation because of compounded discrimination and limited social support. Youth are also particularly vulnerable to gang activity and violence; a recent report published by HAI found that prolonged exposure to daily violence among Central American youth has adverse consequences on their mental health and development.

In response to the extraordinary levels of violence inflicted on communities in Central America, HAI is adapting its juvenile justice, gender justice, and trauma-informed mental health programming to address the root causes of human rights abuses in this region.

Heartland Alliance International (HAI) is the youngest and fastest growing part of Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights, a family of organizations that has been leading anti-poverty and social justice work in Chicago for more than 125 years. HAI is comprised of nearly a dozen country offices implementing programs on a broad range of human rights issues globally, as well as the Chicago-based Marjorie Kovler Center for the Treatment of Survivors of Torture, which serves individuals from more than 50 countries. HAI has significant expertise in the fields of trauma-informed mental health care and access to justice for survivors of rights abuses. It is also an industry leader in access to high-quality and stigma-free health care. Across all of its programs, HAI promotes progressive, innovative approaches to human rights protections and gender equality.

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