



Human Identification in Mexico (IDH)

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The current government acknowledges that Mexico is experiencing a forensic crisis. It is marked by significant challenges in organization, coordination, information exchange, and judicial oversight at both federal and state levels. Public perceptions of security are low.¹

According to the National Registry of Missing and Unlocated Persons² of the National Search Commission of the Ministry of the Interior in Mexico, there are over 110,000 people officially missing. Thousands of graves have not yet been exhumed, and there are more than 52,000 unidentified human remains. We can assume that these include many of those who have disappeared.

Forensic institutions have a growing backlog of cases for identification. In 2022, according to the National Institute of Statistics (INEGI), Mexican Forensic Services received 130,470 bodies and/or human remains.³ Of these, 37.6% remained unidentified and 0.4% were pending identification. Many of the nearly 90 daily homicide victims remain unidentified.

Meanwhile, families and those searching for loved ones cannot be certain what has happened to them. Not knowing, keeping hope alive and being unable to grieve puts huge strain on relatives. Every individual has a right to identity, both in life and in death.

With regard to the DVI recommendations and primary and secondary identifiers, Mexico faces the following technical challenges:

- Establishing a central DNA database;
- Implementing mechanisms to match deceased persons' fingerprints with official records (e.g., IDs from the National Electoral Institute (INE), driver's licenses, or police clearance certificates);
- Creating comprehensive databases of ante mortem data for the disappeared and post mortem data for the unknown deceased;

¹ <https://www.inegi.org.mx/temas/percepcion/>

² <https://versionpublicarnpdno.segob.gob.mx/Dashboard/Index>

³ <https://www.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/saladeprensa/boletines/2023/SPySMF/SPySMF2023.pdf>



The IDH Program focuses on implementing technical measures that support the efforts of the Mexican government to identify unknown bodies and address the forensic crisis, especially by matching fingerprints. Implementing a system for matching fingerprints has been one of the main recommendations for Mexico by the UN Committee against Enforced Disappearances (CED), body of independent experts which monitors the implementation of the Convention for the Protection of all Persons against Enforced Disappearance by the States parties.

Based on the international DVI standards of human identification defined by Interpol, IDH has four strategic areas of intervention.⁴

1. National implementation of a system for taking and matching fingerprints;
2. Strengthening the capacities for the analysis of genetic samples;
3. Academic and technical cooperation with Mexico (cooperation has been established with the Forensic Institutes of the Universities of Hamburg (Prof. Dr. Ondruschka) and Frankfurt (Prof. Dr. Verhoff));
4. Collaboration with Civil Society and families.

The IDH Program and state prosecutors' offices, under the leadership and in collaboration with the National Search Commission, the National Human Identification Center, and the Attorney General's Office, digitized and matched over 6,000 fingerprint records of unidentified deceased, resulting in more than 2,000 verified identities during the last 10 months.

As part of the support from the Norwegian Government, the IDH program is currently working on a cooperation mechanism to share the fingerprint records that did not match the Mexican national registry with neighboring countries, such as Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, to identify potential migrants in Mexico.

The program is seeking more international support to strengthen cooperation and foster the progress made by the Mexican government.

Contact:

Maximilian Murck, Coordinator IDH, UNFPA Mexico, murck@unfpa.org, +52 55 6475 3730

⁴ <https://www.interpol.int/How-we-work/Forensics/Disaster-Victim-Identification-DVI>