


INTER-AGENCY RESPONSE

MIXED MOVEMENTS FROM THE NORTH OF CENTRAL AMERICA

28 February 2019

KEY POPULATION FIGURES OF LARGE MOVEMENTS FROM NCA (provided by governments as of 28 February 2019)

+15,000 
**HUMANITARIAN VISITOR
CARDS DELIVERED**

 **+3,000**
**CHILDREN IDENTIFIED
WITHIN THE GROUPS**

 **20-50**
**NUMBER OF PEOPLE
COMPRISING GROUPS
MOVING FROM THE NCA,
THROUGH GUATEMALA,
INTO MEXICO**

 **9,506**
**PEOPLE DEPORTED FROM
THE U.S.A., MEXICO &
CENTRAL AMERICA,
INCLUDING 1,421
HONDURAN CHILDREN**

PERSONS ASSISTED

(provided by IOM, UNHCR and UNICEF as of 28 February 2019)




IOM
UN MIGRATION



**UNHCR
ACNUR**
La Agencia de la ONU
para los Refugiados



 **1,168**
**PEOPLE ASSISTED TO RETURN
VOLUNTARILY.**
66% FROM MEXICO, 44%
FROM GUATEMALA


182 **PEOPLE ASSISTED IN THEIR
POST-ARRIVAL PROCEDURES, UPON
RETURN TO THEIR COUNTRIES OF
ORIGIN IN NCA. 83 WERE CHILDREN**

16,124  **PEOPLE
INFORMED ON
DIFFERENT IMMIGRATION PROCEDURES
IN MEXICO**

 **322** **PEOPLE
RELOCATED
THROUGH LOCAL
INTEGRATION
PROGRAMME IN
MEXICO**

+6,000  **PEOPLE INFORMED ON
ASYLUM PROCEDURES IN
MEXICO & GUATEMALA**

 **908**
**REFUGEES PROVIDED WITH
REMOTE LOCAL
INTEGRATION SUPPORT
THROUGH 491 PHONE
CALLS IN MEXICO**

332 
**CHILDREN SUPPORTED
THROUGH RECREATIONAL,
SPORTS AND ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES IN 6
SHELTERS IN TAPACHULA, PER WEEK**

606 **CHILDREN PROVIDED WITH
PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT IN
TIJUANA**

564 **ADOLESCENTS SUPPORTED
WITH PSYCHOSOCIAL & SPORTS
WORKSHOPS IN MEXICO CITY**

 **1,419**
**UNACCOMPANIED
CHILDREN RECEIVED
IMMEDIATE PROTECTION
& REINTEGRATION SERVICES
FROM DINAF IN HONDURAS**

BACKGROUND

While the number of people departing from the North of Central America (NCA) significantly decreased in the first two weeks of February, new rumours of additional groups departing from El Salvador and Honduras were spread. By the middle of the month, numbers of people moving across borders remained below the normal rate of around 300 every day.

Between 16 and 17 February, several groups from Honduras and El Salvador departed towards Guatemala, with over 500 people accumulated in Tecun Uman by the end of the weekend, and additional small groups continuing to arrive. At least half of the group was comprised of families with children, and adolescents without families, from Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua, and a few extra-continentals. By the end of February, over 13,200 people had crossed into Mexico, with no additional people in Tecun Uman.

Trends as of February 2019 indicate people are no longer moving in large numbers, with smaller groups of between 30 and 50 people being the preferred modality to enter Mexico. This has made it difficult to assess the magnitude of the movement and the needs until the smaller groups accumulate at the Guatemala-Mexico border, or cross irregularly into Mexico. This is creating significant operational challenges, as it becomes difficult to predict shelter, food, water and sanitation needs, while xenophobic attitudes continue to rise.

While some groups decided to stay within Mexico, and have been relocated to other cities across the country, small numbers continue to move onwards to Piedras Negras in the hopes of gaining access to the United States of America.

Between January and February 2019, over 15,000 humanitarian visitor cards had been delivered. To the end of February, 7,941 people had sought asylum. The Mexican government has informed people can request information on applications for Humanitarian Visitor Cards at the Mexican embassies in their countries of origin. Shelters at Tecun Uman (Guatemala) and El Palillo (Mexico) have now been dismantled.

In light of these mixed movements of asylum-seekers and migrants, the United Nations system and partners in the field have been deploying teams to the borders to support governments in the countries of origin, transit and destination in responding to the specific needs of these groups, according to the respective mandates.



Figure 1 ©UNHCR/Daniel Garcia - People from Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua hoping to cross into Mexico by mid-February 2019.

RESPONSE AT THE FIELD LEVEL

IOM, the International Organization for Migration, is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As the leading international organization for migration, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to assist in meeting the growing operational challenges of migration management, advance understanding of migration issues, encourage social and economic development through migration and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, supports States in providing international protection to asylum-seekers and refugees, those who have fled their countries of origin because their lives are at risk. UNHCR holds periodic discussions with governments, other UN agencies and NGOs at the field level with the aim of facilitating a coordinated response in terms of shelter, humanitarian assistance and basic services, as well as on finding durable solutions to the plight of asylum-seekers and refugees.

UNICEF works with local and national governments and civil society to protect the rights of refugee and migrant children, through addressing the root causes of forced and irregular migration and ensuring the integral protection of the rights of children in transit and destination. UNICEF works in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador where it provides immediate support to children and families in the context of migration and displacement, while also strengthening institutional capacities of different sectors working with this population.

In **Honduras**, **IOM** has provided humanitarian assistance in the process of receiving 92 voluntarily returned migrants. 57 of these were children (7 unaccompanied, 44 accompanied). The assistance included supplies for basic needs such as hygiene kits differentiated for women, men, and children. These included shampoo, bar soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, wet wipes, sanitary pads for women, and razors for men. The aid also included refreshment kits and food for the preparation of hot meals for returning migrants who enter the CANFM Belén and CAMR Omoa, lodging in CANFM Belén, psychosocial assistance, medical assistance (including basic medication), clothes and shoes, and local and international calls for contact with relatives and transportation to their community of origin.

Additionally, IOM continues to strengthen the reintegration mechanisms, promotion and offer of services to facilitate the reintegration of returnees in their communities. The IOM in Honduras attends cases of returned migrants identified or referred by partner institutions and organizations; through: i) Food vouchers, for a period of up to three months; ii) School kits for reintegration; iii) Basic home supplies; iv) the creation of ideas and business plans to promote the development of small and growing businesses for returned migrants and their families; v) Seed capital for economic reintegration through ventures; vi) psychosocial accompaniment through support groups trained in communities of origin; and vii) training for the private sector to facilitate labor reintegration.

As the lead of the Protection Working Group in the country, **UNHCR** has been coordinating the response from UN Agencies and NGOs, in close collaboration with the government institutions. UNHCR has been in contact with key partners, has deployed staff to the border points to assess the situation and needs, and has ensured direct and secondary monitoring at key locations so to activate contingency plans as required.

In addition, the UN Refugee Agency has been providing support through its partners to unaccompanied children who are in dedicated shelters, and to people at the borders. This support includes the deployment of UNHCR and partner staff to key locations to provide psychological care and humanitarian assistance. UNHCR keeps coordinating with UNHCHR in order to provide close follow-up to the human rights situation in the country that is compelling people to move abroad.

UNICEF continues supporting the National Child Protection Authority (DINAF) efforts with seven dedicated DINAF Child Protection Officers deployed to border crossing sites for case management and nine officers working on reintegration of unaccompanied detained/returnee children. Through UNICEF-supported actions, 1,421 unaccompanied children received immediate protection services from DINAF Officers and are currently receiving reintegration services by case management workers.

UNICEF Honduras has launched with the government of Honduras a case management program to facilitate the community-based reintegration efforts. Nine dedicated DINAF case workers are now on the grounds carrying-out initial needs assessment for 81 returned migrant children, including coordinating school scholarships with the Municipal Government of San Pedro Sula, one of the concentration points for returned migration children. This process will be scaled up over the next 3 months to attend 500 returned children and their families. Services include mental health and counselling, relocation services for children who cannot return to their home communities, victims of violence, scholarships and academic levelling to facilitate school reintegration, access to decent housing, skills development and employment opportunities for the caretakers.

In **El Salvador**, [IOM](#), has provided humanitarian assistance in the process of receiving 80 voluntarily returned migrants. 22 of these were accompanied children. The assistance included supplies for basic needs such as hygiene kits, differentiated for women, men, and children (same as detailed in Honduras section); refreshment kits, differentiated for adults and children; playing kits for children; clothes and shoes; psychosocial assistance; medical assistance (including basic medication); telephone calls abroad for contact with family members (local calls are provided by DGME) and transportation to the community of origin.

IOM recently supported the DGME in the preparation of the first Protocol for the Reception of Salvadoran Adult Returned Population within the framework of the Welcome Home Program; for establishing institutional procedures that ensure the immediate reception and attention of the returned Salvadoran adult population with a human rights focus.

The reinforcement of the reintegration mechanisms, promotion and services offered to facilitate the reintegration of returnees in their communities are maintained, and there are cases of returnee migrants identified or referred by institutions and allied organizations through: i) The creation of ideas and business plans to promote the development of small and growing businesses for returned migrants and their families; ii) seed capital for economic reintegration through ventures; iii) psychosocial accompaniment through support groups trained in communities of origin; iv) emergency accommodation, acquisition of personal documentation, clothing and footwear, food assistance for three months, and economic support for transport for migrants returned without roots; and v) cultural and employment orientation for migrants returned without roots.

[UNHCR](#) leads the protection working group where information on the response is regularly shared. The UN Refugee Agency is working on a protocol to establish standard operating procedures in response to large movements. Moreover, the UN Refugee Agency coordinating with the Resident Coordinator and UN Agencies in order to provide support to the Directorate for Migration, who is leading the overall response to people on the move. UNHCR maintained presence at key locations in San Salvador in order to monitor the situation, and to support the Directorate in the identification of people with international protection needs. Further coordination structures have been established with additional government institutions, the Red Cross and NGOs.

In **Guatemala**, [IOM](#) assisted 227 people in their voluntary return, most of them men of Honduran nationality. The returns were coordinated with the offices of the Organization in Honduras and El Salvador, Foreign Ministries of both countries (Consulates accredited in Guatemala), Migration and National Police of Guatemala. Colleagues of IOM's Mesoamerica Program continue to have a presence at the border, to continue monitoring and supporting voluntary returns. IOM also provided humanitarian assistance in the process of receiving 10 migrants returned voluntarily. 10 of these were unaccompanied children. This assistance consisted of supplies for basic needs such as hygiene kits, differentiated for women, men, and children (same as detailed in Honduras section); maternity kits; refreshment kits, differentiated for adults and children and teenagers (NNA); play kits for children; clothes and shoes; psychosocial assistance; medical assistance (including basic medication), phone calls abroad for contact with family members (local calls are provided by DGME) and transportation to the community of origin.

IOM continues to strengthen reintegration mechanisms, promotion and services offered to facilitate the reintegration of returnees in their communities. In Guatemala, there are cases of returned migrants identified or referred by partner institutions and organizations; through: i) psychosocial support based on a diagnosis with a focus on restitution of rights that must be addressed in the host community. The diagnosis must contain the following information: profile of hard skills for access to job opportunities, continuity of medical care, mental health care, links to formal and technical education opportunities, among others; ii) vocational courses for returned teenagers (scholarships, materials, transportation to training centers, food vouchers); and iii) certification of skills for adult returnees in conjunction with INTECAP and acquisition of official documentation.



Figure 2 ©UNHCR/Daniel Garcia - UNHCR staff providing information on asylum procedures in Guatemala.

As lead of the Protection Working Group, [UNHCR](#) has been coordinating the response across the country thanks to the Early Warning and Response Plan developed among partners. At the leadership of religious organizations and partners, as well as the protection and safe spaces network, UNHCR has been providing shelter, food, water and sanitation. In order to support the identification of people with protection needs and those intending to seek asylum, UNHCR maintained presence at the borders with El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico.

Information about the asylum procedure in Guatemala and Mexico was provided to over 500 people, most of whom expressed having international protection needs. Moreover, UNHCR Guatemala and Mexico work closely to identify and refer cases of people with heightened protection needs for follow-up after they cross the border.

[UNICEF](#), continues to participate in the protection cluster and has initiated the process for purchasing supplies to have stock for potential upcoming caravans. An agreement was signed with

OXFAM to provide assistance on Nutrition, Hygiene and Protection.

On 12 February, a meeting was held with child special protection agency, the Attorney General's Office-PGN, Social Welfare Secretariat-SBS, Ministry of Foreign Affairs-MINEX and Social Work Secretariat of the President's Wife-SOSEP. Internal intergovernmental coordination meetings were agreed to establish actions in cases of massive migrant flows with emphasis on children and adolescents, which was later assumed institutionally.

In **Mexico**, [IOM](#) provided humanitarian assistance and guidance on migration regularization options, as well as monitoring the conditions of the migrant population in the context of mobility in Mexico City (January 31, 2019), Piedras Negras (February 8, 2019) and Tapachula. IOM coordinates its actions in these locations with the federal and local government bodies, as well as with civil society organizations. On the findings obtained in the Flow Monitoring Survey near the border crossing between Tecún Umán (Guatemala) and Suchiate (Mexico), 800 migrants were interviewed using the DTM methodology, which revealed that of the approximately 5,000 Central American migrants waiting at the border crossing that received the humanitarian visit card from the Mexican government, only 51.6% left their country as part of one of the so-called "migrant caravans".

In relation to the creation of work inclusive initiatives for the migrant population, IOM collaborated with the municipal government and authorities on employment issues in the city of Tijuana with the "2nd Municipal Employment Fair for people in the context of migration" (February 27-28, 2019). In the fair, 746 vacancies were offered in various business sectors to link the job profiles of people with available vacancies. Finally, the IOM delivered 762 food rations as humanitarian support for migrants.

Over 5,400 persons have been informed by [UNHCR](#) face-to-face about the Mexican asylum procedure. According to COMAR figures, 3,942 people asked for asylum in January and additional 3,999 issued an asylum-claim in February. The total asylum-applications in 2019 amount to 7,941 individuals. This corresponds to 171 applications/working day in January 2019 and 210 applications/working day for February 2019. In 2018, figures stood at 51 applications/working day in January 2018 and 79 applications/working day in February 2018. This represents an increase of 193%.

To counter the limitation on freedom of movement of asylum-seekers that might enhance the formation of new groups, UNHCR scaled up its internal relocation and local integration programme with new cities with strong local integration prospects, including access to education, health services and job opportunities. From January 1 to 23 February 2019, 322 people have been relocated. So far in 2019, more than 90% of



Figure 3 © OIM 2019 / Cesia Chavarria-A Migrant receives information from IOM at the 2nd Municipal Job Fair for people in the context of migration.

relocations have departed from Tapachula and for the first time also from northern border cities. Local integration programmes were also launched in Aguascalientes and Monterrey, with one staff member on the ground in each location.

UNHCR deployed a mobile team in the temporary shelter in “Palillo” Stadium in Mexico City. The Mexico City government was in charge of the management of the temporary shelter facilities. According to government figures, 6,901 people from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua were hosted in the stadium in total. The services offered at the shelter included: tents, food (served by the army), health services, psychological assistance, dental services, haircuts, activities for children and legal assistance (offered by the Mexico City government), free phone calls to country of origins (offered by the Red Cross), support to file a criminal complaint (offered by both the Mexico City Government and the Human Rights Commission of Mexico City), consular services (which were however not constantly provided nor in predictable time slots), access to the asylum procedure during the first two weeks that COMAR was present and access to Humanitarian Visitor’s Cards.

In Tapachula, [UNICEF](#) has continued working on three main issues: i) the continuation of psychosocial support activities for children in shelters; ii) the improvement of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) conditions in civil society shelters; iii) the strengthening of the capacities of the key actors for the protection of migrant children and adolescents (Welfare Agency, Child Protection Authorities and Civil Society). In coordination with UNHCR and IOM, UNICEF has been working on the procedures and advocacy for open-door shelters and in coordination with civil society in monitoring the non-detention of children on the move.

During the period of 4-25 February, UNICEF, through implementing partner RET, offered recreational, sports and artistic activities to an average of 332 children per week in 6 shelters. During February, two workshops on the determination of the best interest of the child took place, with the participation of 44 Child Protection Migration Officers and 45 staff members from the Welfare Agency (DIF) and the Municipal Child Protection Authority. A WASH needs assessment was undertaken in the civil society shelters, with significant needs being identified. An average of 62 children and 981 adults per week benefited from 3,439 liters of water, as part of the activities implemented by UNICEF with Caritas, between 5-26 February. Additionally, 1,000 hygiene kits have been delivered.

In Tijuana, UNICEF and implementing partners (Aldeas SOS and Fútbol Más) ensured migrant and refugee children and adolescents had access to art and sports based psychosocial support activities. These activities are offered weekly in 6 private shelters. From 1 to 24 February, psychosocial support services were provided to 361 girls and 245 boys. UNICEF carried out the first training for Child Protection authorities on special protection and psychosocial support to children. This is the first training of a series of capacity building activities that will be conducted in 2019 aiming to improve coordination, case management, legal and psychosocial services for children and adolescents on the move and children affected by violence and exploitation.

In “El Palillo” shelter, the local Social Welfare Authority with the Human Rights Commission opened a pavilion of services for children and adolescents, following the model and recommendations provided by UNICEF. With implementing partner “Fútbol Más” activities for adolescents were reinforced, offering sports and psychosocial workshops for adolescents, reaching 564 adolescents (189 girls and 375 boys) during February. During the period, the shelter remained opened (until 24 February), UNICEF supported authorities to ensure a child-centered response, including the operation of the Child Services Pavilion, as well as the installation of 10 toilets and handwashing facilities.



Figure 4 ©UNICEF Mexico/2019/Bindra. Teenagers create art with spray paint representing their journey from Central America at a shelter for unaccompanied migrant adolescents in Tijuana, Mexico.

For more information contact

Jorge Gallo, IOM Regional Communications Officer for Central America, North America and the Caribbean, jgallo@iom.int

Giovanni Bassu, UNHCR Regional Representative, bassu@unhcr.org

Diana Diaz Rodríguez, UNHCR Regional Associate CRR Officer (Communications), diazdi@unhcr.org

Monica Darer, UNICEF Child Protection Specialist, mdarer@unicef.org