

North of Central America Situation

April 2020

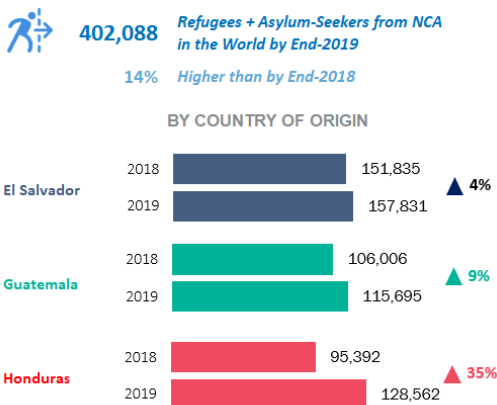
Around **402,088** refugees and asylum-seekers from the North of Central America in the world and **318,590** internally displaced people in Honduras and El Salvador have been forced to flee by violence.

In April, most countries in the region closed official borders to prevent the spread of COVID19. Despite the lockdown, people continue to be displaced internally within the countries and externally across international borders.

UNHCR and partners have focused on ensuring the provision of essential humanitarian aid to respond to the urgent needs of refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people, communities at risk, and deportees.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

By country of origin

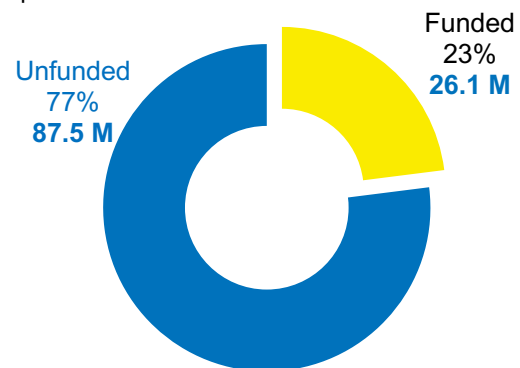


Source: Based on data provided by governments to UNHCR as of Dec-19. Figures for 2019 are partial and preliminary and can be subject to changes

FUNDING (AS OF 29 APRIL 2020)

US\$ 113.6 M

requested for the NCA situation



The financial requirements of the North of Central America Situation include requirements in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama RO.

Overview

Despite overall lockdowns to mitigate the spread of COVID19, violence continues to spread within entire communities in the North of Central America. In El Salvador, the government announced stricter control measures against gang members held in custody, as well as a shoot-to-kill policy likely to stoke tensions in high-risk communities. In Honduras, community leaders reported new forms of extortion and wider intimidation by gangs across communities under gang control. In Guatemala and Mexico, though at lower levels due to border closures, people continue to seek asylum.

UNHCR collaborates with national and municipal authorities to include people of concern as beneficiaries of social programmes. Related to persons not included in government's response, UNHCR and partners deliver humanitarian assistance to support access to basic needs, including food and hygiene items. Through secure phone lines, UNHCR has identified cases with protection needs, including victims of extortion, recruitment, women survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence, forced internal displacement, and transportation workers and small business owners at risk.

Apart from coordinating the response with local governments, UNHCR works with UN agencies and partners to deliver assistance and protection in NCA countries. In this respect, UNHCR leads Protection Groups or Clusters under the coordina-



In Honduras, UNHCR coordinates with the Municipality and community committees, the delivery of 1,000 assistance kits to population in situation of vulnerability during the pandemic, including internally displaced people and people at risk of violence. ©UNHCR

tion of UN Resident Coordinators for each country. In addition, UNHCR co leads with NRC the RedLac Protection Working Group which focuses on supporting the response in NCA countries.

UNHCR Response and Strategy

UNHCR works with over 70 partners in the region and supports states in the implementation of their national plans under the Regional Comprehensive Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS). The MIRPS is a pioneering application of the Global Compact on Refugees that seeks to bridge the gap between humanitarian and development actions to provide protection and solutions to those forced to flee, and to address the root causes of displacement. In April, the MIRPS Pro-tempore Presidency, OAS and UNHCR coordinated bilateral consultations with the seven states in the region to include a focus on priorities within the annual work plan that also respond to the needs of displaced persons and host communities in the context of COVID19.

Main Activities

Alongside local governments, partner organizations, civil society, faith-based organizations, development actors and UN Agencies, UNHCR undertakes the following activities, among others:



Safe reception and admission

The number of asylum claims registered has drastically dropped. UNHCR in Guatemala is collaborating with health authorities to develop an early warning system concerning the reception of persons irregularly crossing into Guatemala, in order to provide information on the right to asylum and to identify protection needs. In Panama, all asylum seeker ID expiring in April have been extended to mid-May. In addition to asylum seekers ID cards, Costa Rica has also extended the validity to mid-July of work permits that expired after the March 16 declaration of national emergency. In Mexico, UNHCR launched online training sessions for eligibility officers to support COMAR's remote interviewing during the contingency.



Law and Policy Development

In Honduras, the 2004-2018 internal displaced people profiling study was presented to 15 organizations in line with the government's work plan to ensure their needs during the ongoing COVID-19 emergency. UNHCR advocates with government authorities to formalize an identification and referral mechanism for returnees with protection needs that are in the quarantine centres in El Salvador. In El Salvador, UNHCR is holding ongoing discussions with the government on supporting the implementation of the IDP law passed in early 2020.



Providing safe spaces and shelter

In Honduras, UNHCR supported the construction of a new isolation centre with capacity for 150 deportees to prevent the spread of COVID19. UNHCR participated in multi-partner monitoring missions to temporary shelters to identify protection needs of the population and provide counselling and guidance on protection alternatives. UNHCR supported the Government of Guatemala with shelter items (foldable beds, mattresses, diapers, etc.) for two reception centres. In Mexico, UNHCR supports 90 shelters that remain open with information materials on COVID-19, supply of hygiene and personal protection products, installation of hand-washing stations, and identifies alternative accommodation in hotels where shelter isolation capacities are insufficient.



Community-based protection interventions

In El Salvador, UNHCR is monitoring security conditions in communities through community leaders in the event of forced displacement. In Honduras, UNHCR trained community leaders involved the food distribution in protection mainstreaming and most-at-risk group targeting, and other distribution measures adapted to the COVID-19 emergency. In Belize, UNHCR has provided personal protective equipment items and medical supplies for rural front-line health workers.



Durable solutions and livelihoods

In Guatemala, the Virtual Learning Programme, focused on adult literacy courses and technical skills, will expand to additional municipalities and allow refugees and asylum seekers to enrol. Refugees and asylum seekers in Guatemala who have lost their livelihoods due to the COVID19 emergency will be prioritized in the "Empleos Verdes" initiative and trained in agriculture and ecology. In Mexico, a coordination mechanism was set up with the National Institute of Immigration to deliver cash cards to people of concern in need of assistance.



Campaigns against xenophobia

UNHCR in Honduras, El Salvador, Panama, Mexico, Costa Rica and Guatemala disseminated key messages to mitigate discrimination against foreigners, returnees, persons affected by COVID19, and people on the move.



Working with partners

UNHCR and partners provided humanitarian assistance, basic needs, and hygiene kits to families with children who have increased vulnerabilities as a result of COVID-19 and the preventive measures to curb the spread of the virus across the region. In Guatemala, a UNHCR partner has created videos and booklets to support mental health of children during the pandemic. In Honduras, UNHCR and World Vision developed a tool to register families that will be provided with humanitarian assistance due to the COVID19 emergency in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula. In Costa Rica, UNHCR's partner Fundación Mujer provided online training for people of concern in business English, business retail administration and other related areas to increase their employability. In Nicaragua, UNHCR's partner adapted CBI to COVID19 situation and implemented multi-month payments for humanitarian assistance.

Donors

In 2020, UNHCR operations in Central America received earmarked funding from Canada, European Union, Spain, Switzerland, United States of America, and various private donors.

In 2020, UNHCR received unearmarked funding from:

Sweden 76.4 million | **Norway** 41.4 million | **Netherlands** 36.1 million | **Denmark** 34.6 million | **United Kingdom** 31.7 million | **Germany** 25.9 million | **Private donors Spain** 20 million | **Switzerland** 16.4 million | **Private donors Republic of Korea** 10.5 million

For more information: **Gavin David White**, Senior CRR Officer, whiteg@unhcr.org; **Diana Diaz**, Regional Communications Officer, diazdi@unhcr.org

For more information visit: [Global CRRF Portal](#)

North of Central America Situation (NCA): UNHCR Presence, 2020

