

INTER-AGENCY RESPONSE

MIXED MOVEMENTS FROM THE NORTH OF CENTRAL AMERICA (NCA)

15 October - 15 December 2018

KEY POPULATION FIGURES OF LARGE MOVEMENTS FROM NCA (provided by governments as of 15 December 2018)

+9,400
PERSONS
REPORTED TO
REMAIN IN
MEXICO



+3,700
ASYLUM CLAIMS
IN MEXICO.
125 IN
GUATEMALA



2,929 
HUMANITARIAN VISAS
REQUESTED IN MEXICO.
1,080 ALREADY PROVIDED

8,500
RETURNEES.
85% TO HONDURAS
15% TO EL SALVADOR




PERSONS ASSISTED

(provided by IOM, UNHCR and UNICEF as of 15 December 2018)

 **IOM**
UN MIGRATION

555
MIGRANTS
ASSISTED BY
IOM TO RETURN
TO HONDURAS
(58%), EL SALVADOR
(36%) AND
GUATEMALA (5%)



920 ADDITIONAL RETURNEES
PROVIDED WITH
ASSISTANCE KITS AT
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN



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

+4,500
PERSONS PROVIDED
WITH INFORMATION
ON MEXICAN ASYLUM
PROCEDURE (IN MEXICO)



2,500 ASYLUM-
SEEKERS
PROVIDED WITH
CASH
ASSISTANCE



unicef 

1,092
CHILDREN & FAMILIES
WITH ACCESS TO
WASH SERVICES IN 4
SHELTERS IN TAPACHULA.



+4,300 RETURNEE
CHILDREN
PROVIDED
WITH PSYCHOSOCIAL
SUPPORT & KITS IN
COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN.
747 ASSISTED IN MEXICO.



BACKGROUND

Since mid-October, large groups of people largely referred to as ‘caravans’ left the North of Central America – particularly from Honduras and El Salvador – heading northward with the hope of reaching Mexico and the United States of America. These groups are comprised of persons with international protection needs, as well as those seeking to improve their economic situation or hoping to reunite with family members abroad. By the end of November, the first large group reached Mexico’s northern border and concentrated in Tijuana where at present at least 4,000 persons remain. In addition, many others remained in Tapachula, in Mexico City or other key points along the way. Over 3,700 persons have sought asylum in Mexico and a smaller number in Guatemala. Over 8,500 persons have returned to Honduras and El Salvador.

During the first two weeks of December, these migration flows of persons from the North of Central America largely returned to regular movements (small groups and individuals).

In light of these mixed movements of asylum-seekers and migrants, the United Nations system and partners in the field have been supporting governments in the countries of origin, transit and destination to provide a response to the specific needs of this population, according to the respective mandates.

RESPONSE AT THE FIELD LEVEL

IOM, the UN International Organization for Migration, works at the regional, national and local levels to strengthen capacities on migration governance. IOM provides counselling and information to migrants, and supports shelters and NGOs in the delivery of assistance. IOM works alongside governments to carry out a Voluntary Assisted Return Programme, aiming at the safe and dignified return and reintegration of migrants who are unable or unwilling to remain in host or transit countries and voluntarily choose to return to their countries of origin.

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, basic services, and access to asylum procedures, 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 **Mexico**, given the mixed nature of the movements, the complexity of the situation and the prevalence of persons in need of international protection, government entities, other agencies inside and outside the UN system, civil society, faith-based organizations, the private sector and others, as relevant, continue to coordinate their responses.

This collaboration aims at a whole-of-government and whole-of-society response, achieved in line with the guidelines of the Global Compact on Migration (GCM) and the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS). Coordination of the humanitarian response in Tijuana and Mexicali is being led by the new federal Civil Protection and INM authorities.

ICRC, IOM, OCHA, UNHCR and UNICEF form part of a working group that is led by Civil Protection and which also includes at least 17 government bodies, including ministries of health, education, national security, social welfare, finance, the Army, the Navy, DIF, State Representation of Baja California as well as the Mexican Red Cross.

To strengthen the protection of unaccompanied children, IOM, UNHCR and UNICEF have supported the presence of child protection authorities (National System for the Integral Development of the Family, or DIF for its acronym in Spanish, and Federal Procurator for the Protection of Children and Adolescents) in Tapachula and Tijuana. Likewise, for children and adolescents, recreational areas have been equipped and psychosocial assistance provided by the UN Agencies. UNHCR has supported a referral pathway for the asylum procedures with COMAR.



Figure 1 UNHCR staff members provide guidance on the asylum system. **Photo: UNHCR**

In order to respond to the situation in a comprehensive manner, IOM has mobilized more than 40 staff members working in the different areas such as direct assistance, production of preventive information, production of statistical data, coordination with consulates and other government agencies, as well as with the academic and private sector, capacity building and improvement of infrastructures for the assistance of the different groups. These actions are conducted under the IOM Western Hemisphere Migration Capacity-Building Program.

Regarding the prevention and dissemination of information, IOM, has developed several specific materials and spread them among the members of mass movements,

but also through a network of more than 25 shelters and information hubs, including municipal governments, and through social networks and the mobile application for migrants, MigApp, used by 1,500 people in Mexico.

In addition to health care and psychosocial assistance provided to migrants, IOM has also enhanced reception facilities in Mexico and the delivery of more than 400 hygiene and food kits. Likewise, the greatest efforts have been destined to respond to the demand of a growing number of people who have requested their voluntary return to their country of origin. For this purpose, OIM opened a special Assisted Voluntary Return Program. From Mexico, to date, 448 migrants have been able to benefit from the Program, and after going through an interview process, identification of needs and selection, migrants have returned to Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua.

UNHCR has been continuously present in Tijuana and Mexicali since the first arrival of the groups with mobile teams. UNHCR continues to support the Mexican Refugee Commission (COMAR) in facilitating access to the Mexican asylum process and has deployed 43 contractors to COMAR to support registration, including in Tijuana and Mexicali. To date, around 24-28% of all people from the groups have sought asylum

in Mexico. The bulk of asylum claimants are in Tapachula, Chiapas, Oaxaca, Veracruz and Mexico City where UNHCR has delivered legal advice to over 4,500 persons in coordination with over 100 trained volunteers, psychological assistance through partners, as well as cash-based humanitarian assistance to over 2,500 persons. Furthermore, the Facebook help page “El Jaguar” that provides information on the Mexican asylum system, has been accessed over 1.5 million times over the last month.

To promote solutions for asylum-seekers right from the start, UNHCR continues to support the National Job Fair in Tijuana, where people can seek asylum or regularize their migration status, receive work permits and find one of over 20,000 jobs offers. The agency supports by providing transport shuttles for people from the emergency shelter to the Fair; supporting COMAR’s mobile team, providing information on the Mexican asylum-system, referring people with specific needs and closely collaborating with partners to facilitate access to shelters, healthcare, education and ultimately support the local integration of asylum-seekers.

UNICEF has prioritized: a) Persons stationed in Tapachula (mainly asylum-seekers); and b) Persons who have arrived at the northern border (Tijuana).

In Tapachula (Chiapas state), UNICEF provides technical assistance to the local Child Protection authorities in the identification of cases that require special protection, and provides psychosocial support for children in four shelters, reaching approximately 322 children between 28 November and 9 December. Nine water purification systems have been installed in transitory shelters in municipalities of Chiapas, benefiting over 1,092 people. Furthermore, UNICEF supported the construction of latrines at “El Buen Pastor” shelter, serving up to 300 people on a daily basis.

In Tijuana (Baja California state), the UNICEF-supported Child Services Pavilion installed at the main shelter continues providing specialized services for children, reaching over 174 children during the reporting period. Additionally, a breakfast service for under 5-year old children was set up, through which approximately 90 children have been receiving breakfast every day, since 7 December. UNICEF has installed latrines, handwashing points and safe water hydration points to ensure proper services at the shelter and 2,300 hygiene kits will be distributed aiming at reaching 2,551 people, including 251 children. Also, to 12 December, 128 children with ages between 0 and 6 were attended with early stimulation activities.

In **Guatemala**, IOM has installed an information and registration center in Tecún Umán, on the border with Mexico; in here, the staff of the Organization provides advice and assistance for voluntary returns. 107 migrants have benefited from the voluntary return program from Tecún Umán, 59% of them returned to El Salvador and 41% to Honduras. Additionally, 27 Guatemalan migrants have returned to their country from Mexico. In addition, in coordination with the government, IOM provided post-arrival assistance to 18 unaccompanied children and adolescents with the delivery of hygiene and food kits, and the reference to psychosocial care services; all this according to the needs of the different cases. Coordination with relatives of returned migrants and reception centers is a fundamental aspect to ensure a dignified return. Protocols established for family units, unaccompanied children and adolescents have been applied.

UNHCR continues to lead the protection working group, within which a contingency plan has been developed. This plan will allow the protection group and the government to respond in a timely manner in the event of a massive influx. On the other hand, and given the stabilization of the inflow of persons, UNHCR and partners continue to monitor the situation in all borders, while information on the right to seek asylum and on the procedures to do so in Guatemala continues to be available along the main migration routes. UNHCR is finalizing a demographic study on the profiles and needs of persons who had moved across Guatemala.

UNICEF has prioritized actions to ensure the protection of children, adolescents and their families in transit through Guatemala, with focus in supporting the Casa del Migrante centres, including installation of toilets, showers and portable sinks in Tecún Umán. Over 4,500 people, including 1,035 boys and girls have been reached by UNICEF-supported actions, including psychosocial services. With the aim of strengthening the capacity of local authorities, UNICEF’s ongoing support includes contracting five individual experts to



Figure 2. WASH infrastructure in shelters in Tijuana. ©UNICEF Mexico

provide psychosocial support in Guatemala City (3 staff) and Tecún Umán (2 staff). These experts have provided support until 15 December. Support for the Ombudsman for Children and Adolescents of the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office through one additional staff, continues in Guatemala City until 31 December.

In **Honduras**, IOM has assisted 323 Honduran migrants to return voluntarily, which represents 58% of all migrants assisted. In addition, in coordination with the government, IOM has provided post-arrival assistance to 448 migrants with the delivery of hygiene and food kits, coordination of transportation to their communities, and reference to reintegration programs; all this according to the needs of the different cases. Coordination with relatives of returned migrants and reception centers is a fundamental aspect to ensure a dignified return. Protocols established for family units, unaccompanied children and adolescents have been applied.

UNHCR continues to support the identification on international protection needs among returnees registered at the La Lima Reception Centre – where UNHCR provides food assistance – and in other reception centres across the country. UNHCR coordinates extensively with local authorities to continue monitoring the situation and support the identification of solutions for persons whose protection needs require it. According to the latest official figures (3 December), some 7,200 Hondurans have returned home.

UNICEF supports the recruitment and training eight Child Protection Officers deployed to the western borders. These Child Protection Officers approach the buses and/or meet returnees at terminals to provide information and guidance to returned children and their families, carry-out initial screening for protection needs and convey the information to protection authorities (DINAF). They also provide immediate care such as hygiene kits, diapers, food and water. UNICEF also funds the mobilization of surge personnel from DINAF regional offices to the border areas. With UNICEF support, DINAF has provided assistance to over 3,080 repatriated children, including 1,702 children returned from Guatemala and Mexico by land borders.



Figure 3 As of November 4, hundreds of migrants who were part of the caravans, requested and obtained IOM support to return to their countries of origin or residence. **Photo: IOM/Alexis Moreno**

In **El Salvador**, IOM has assisted 182 Salvadoran migrants for their voluntary return (36% of all migrants assisted by IOM). In addition, in coordination with the government, IOM provided post-arrival assistance to 456 migrant persons with the delivery of hygiene and food kits, coordination of transportation to their communities, and reference to reintegration programs; all this according to the needs of the different cases. Coordination with relatives of returned migrants and reception centers is a fundamental aspect to ensure a dignified return. Protocols established for family units, unaccompanied children and adolescents have been applied. Finally, IOM applied its DTM (Displacement Tracking Matrix) methodology to monitor in real time the last caravan that left the country.

UNHCR continues to coordinate actions within the protection working group in order to monitor movements and facilitate access to information on family tracing and assistance kits. Similarly, UNHCR working closely with the government in order to strengthen the State's capacity to attend to the

protection needs of its citizens abroad and those who have returned voluntarily. According to the latest official figures (mid-December), 1,300 Salvadorians have returned home.

UNICEF has distributed more than 54,000 child-friendly leaflets with messaging on protection of children in transit, through authorities and partners. In addition, 223 kits for children, particularly returned children, have been distributed to date. An additional 1,100 kits have been handed over to the General Directorate of Migration and Foreign Affairs, for further distribution to returnees as required. Radio spots on key

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