

North of Central America Situation

January 2020

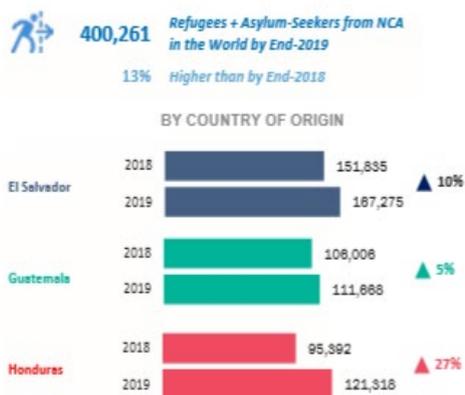
Around **400,261** refugees and asylum-seekers from the North of Central America (Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala) in the world as of the end of December 2019.

Between 2014 and 2019, the number of asylum claims **has grown by 632%**, with 321,900 estimated end of 2019, as compared to the 44,000 registered end of 2014.

The complex situation in the region is compounded by internal displacement in Honduras and El Salvador, where at least **247,090 and 71,500** respectively have been **forced to flee by violence within their own countries**.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

By country of origin

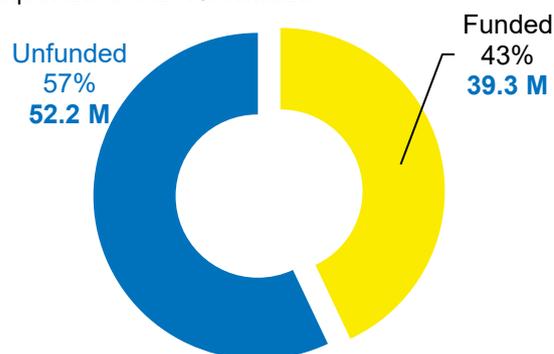


Source: Based on data provided by governments to UNHCR as of Dec-19. Figures for 2019 are partial and preliminary and can be subject to changes

FUNDING (AS OF 7 JANUARY 2020)

US\$ 91.5 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

In the North of Central America (NCA) tens of thousands of people have been forced into displacement by complex factors that have led to an escalating situation of chronic violence and insecurity. These factors range from the influence of organized crime such as drug cartels and urban gangs, to the limited national capacity of States to provide protection. People from NCA flee within mixed movements of refugees and migrants.

UNHCR has expanded its presence and operational capacity in recent years to strengthen protection alternatives and encourage solutions for those affected, promote mechanisms to prevent and address situations of forced displacement and, together with other UN agencies, assist States to address the root causes of flight and promote a secure environment free from persecution, in line with their Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) undertakings.

This has allowed UNHCR to increase the number of people of concern assisted in the region, which includes both refugees and asylum-seekers, and IDPs.



Esquipulas, border with Honduras. UNHCR staff provides information on asylum procedures in Guatemala to people with international protection needs. ©UNHCR/Alicia Alvarez

UNHCR Response and Strategy

UNHCR has joined efforts with seven countries, over 70 partners and 10 supporting states to implement the Regional Comprehensive Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS), which is a pioneering application of the Global Compact on Refugees, bridging the gap between humanitarian and development actions to provide protection and solutions to those forced to flee across borders, and to address the root causes of displacement at countries of origin.

Main Activities

Alongside host governments, partner organizations, civil society, faith-based organizations, development actors and UN Agencies, UNHCR undertakes protection and solutions activities in all countries. Below are some illustrative examples:



Safe reception and admission

UNHCR has stepped up its presence in border areas across the region to improve reception conditions and respond to the basic needs of refugees and migrants, provide legal aid and counselling on access to refugee status and alternative forms of stay; and give technical assistance to relevant authorities to develop an effective coordination and prepare local response plans. In 2019, a new office was opened at Costa Rica's Nicaragua border, and presence has been stepped at borders in Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico.



Law and Policy Development

In El Salvador and Honduras, the governments tabled draft bills addressing internal displacement, with technical support from UNHCR, aligned with the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and with other international standards that describe the rights of internally displaced persons, including the right to request and receive humanitarian assistance, protection of family unity, an adequate standard of living and durable solutions. In El Salvador, it has now been passed into law. A profiling exercise in Honduras was published providing a nationwide evidence base for a better understanding of internal displacement to address the phenomenon and informed the design of related public policies.



Providing safe spaces and shelter

Across the region, UNHCR works hand-in-hand with faith-based organizations and other partners to provide safe spaces, shelter and basic humanitarian assistance to persons in need of international protection. To date, more than 80 safe spaces and shelters are available to provide shelter and assistance to people on the move, and those with international protection needs. In Guatemala, UNHCR has supported the renovation or construction of shelters and primary schools along the routes, as well as in Petén, where new spaces for temporary shelters are being identified in case of large arrivals. In El Salvador, UNHCR and partner Caritas inaugurated two safe spaces to strengthen the identification and referral of IDPs and deported persons with protection needs. In Belize, the Benque Refugee Resource Center was inaugurated and it is providing information to asylum seekers and can also provide emergency shelter when needed.



Community-based protection interventions

Strengthening protection mechanisms in communities is key to ensuring refugees, asylum-seekers and displaced persons can find safety in the region. UNHCR and partners in Honduras and El Salvador are working with leaders and youth in high-risk communities to enhance their protection networks through trainings, workshops and working together to create safe spaces inside their communities.



Durable solutions and livelihoods

Livelihood opportunities for refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons allow them to support themselves and their families, while helping their host communities thrive. In Guatemala and Panama, the private sector is taking a step towards enabling refugees to improve their self-reliance through vocational and soft-skills trainings and internship programmes. Furthermore, in both Guatemala and Panama, work permits for asylum seekers have been approved. In Belize, refugees and asylum seekers' local integration is promoted through English language courses. In Honduras and El Salvador, UNHCR supports small-scale entrepreneurship initiatives to support, IDPs, deportees and their hosts in becoming self-reliant.



Campaigns against xenophobia

Discriminatory attitudes and social stigmatization of asylum seekers and refugees affects their access to rights, including work, education, health and housing; impeding local integration. In Costa Rica and Panama, UNHCR is implementing campaigns to tackle discrimination and promote peaceful coexistence. In Honduras, alongside partner ERIC-SJ, UNHCR is raising awareness on internal displacement through the Vidas Desplazadas campaign.



Working with partners

In the framework of the Global Compact on Refugees and its regional application known as MIRPS, UNHCR works in close coordination with the governments, civil society organizations, UN agencies, private sector and displaced, refugees and asylum-seeker communities. In July 2019, El Salvador formally adhered to the MIRPS and the second annual meeting of the MIRPS was held reinforcing the commitment to addressing forced displacement in the region.

Donors

In 2019, UNHCR operations in Central America received earmarked funding from the United States of America, Canada, the European Union, Spain, the UN Peacebuilding Fund, and various private donors.

In 2019, UNHCR received unearmarked funding from:

Sweden 90.4 million | **Norway** 44.5 million | **Netherlands** 37.5 million | **United Kingdom** 31.7 million | **Germany** 26.7 million | **Private donors** Spain 26.3 million | **Denmark** 24.4 million | **Switzerland** 15.1 million | **Private donors** **Republic of Korea** 10.4 million

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North of Central America (NCA) Situation:

UNHCR Presence

