

APPLYING THE COMPREHENSIVE REFUGEE RESPONSE (CRRF) IN CENTRAL AMERICA & MEXICO

March - April 2019

Thousands of people have fled their countries in search of international protection. Thousands of them are boys and girls who must rebuild their lives in exile. © UNHCR/Diana Díaz

I. THE MIRPS

Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama adopted the **San Pedro Sula Declaration** in 2017, agreeing to work together in the implementation of a **Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework** (MIRPS in its acronym in Spanish). The MIRPS is a pioneering initiative in the application of the CRRF and a concrete contribution to the Global Compact on Refugees, which fosters regional cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination for greater responsibility sharing on prevention, protection and solutions. It also provides for an inclusive approach as it involves the constant participation of regional and international organizations, 10 cooperating States and entities, asylum-seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons, deportees with protection needs, as well as populations affected by violence and insecurity.



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348,690

REFUGEES & ASYLUM-SEEKERS
FROM NCA IN THE WORLD*

123,260

ASYLUM CLAIMS FROM NCA NATIONALS IN 2018*

245,500

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN NCA**



* Data provided by Governments to UNHCR as of May-19. Data for 2018 estimated based on completed figures for USA (affirmative decisions), Central America, Mexico and Europe, plus projections based on mid-year data.

** Estimates from profiling studies in Honduras (CIPPDV - UNHCR 2015) and El Salvador (MJSP-UNHCR 2018)

II. INDICATORS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL (end 2018)

83

SAFE SPACES SUPPORTED

70

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS ASSISTING DISPLACED PEOPLE

1,025

OFFICIALS TRAINED ON SGBV & CHILD PROTECTION, & THEIR RIGHTS

25,000

PEOPLE BENEFITTING FROM COMMUNITY INTERVENTIONS

94,000

PEOPLE WITH PROTECTION NEEDS SUPPORTED THROUGH SAFE SPACES (JAN-DEC 2018)

18,250

HOUSEHOLDS SUPPORTED WITH CASH - BASED INTERVENTIONS



319

PEOPLE RESETTLED THROUGH PTA

III. DEVELOPMENTS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

- In **Belize**, the profiling exercise focused on 37 previously identified host communities. The upcoming finalization of the last survey stage will allow for the identification of refugees and asylum-seekers, their areas of residence and needs shared with their hosts.
- In **Costa Rica**, the General Directorate for Migration and Foreign Affairs has achieved to regionalize its Refugee Unit through the opening of a permanent office in Upala for the reception of asylum claims, the documentation and interview of asylum-seekers. This office receives cases identified in the northern area. This effort contributes to the reduction of the backlog experienced in the central offices in San Jose, as well as it reduces the need for asylum-seekers to move long distances in order to access the refugee status determination procedure. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Labour and the Women Foundation, the first job fair of 2019 took place within the framework of the project Living Integration. 725 refugees and asylum-seekers participated in job interviews with 26 companies, and four technical education centres received applications to begin courses.
- In **Guatemala**, the Coordinating Committee for Agriculture, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Activities (CACIF) has joined the efforts to raise awareness within the private sector on the importance of local integration for refugees in the country. In coordination with UNHCR, CACIF will share information through its platforms to make it available to potential employers.
- In **Honduras**, the Interinstitutional Commission for the Protection of People Displaced by Violence (CIPPDV) handed over the [draft law](#) on the Prevention, Attention and Protection of IDPs to members of the National Congress, to be presented afore its plenary meeting to kick start the revision and approval. This handover constitutes a progress towards the establishment of the necessary measures to protect and address the needs of those who have been affected by violence, and to prevent forced displacement that has been caused by generalized violence and organized crime.
- In **Panama**, within the framework of the agreement with the National Institute for Human Development (INADEH) a programme which allows refugees to attend technical and professional courses offered by the Institute has begun. UNHCR provided training to the staff at INADEH offices in different locations (headquarters and those in close proximity to where refugees reside) to raise awareness on the situation faced by refugees in Panama.
- In **Mexico**, the federal government is currently formulating the new National Development Plan, a process that included the meeting of specialized roundtables on issues related to international protection. The state of Tabasco – southeast Mexico – also hosted specialized roundtables with the aim of developing policies in favour of displaced population within the state's development plan.

IV. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

- As part of the Mexico Pro Tempore Presidency of the MIRPS, the six participating countries are advancing on three main processes, ahead of the MIRPS Solidarity Conference and the Global Refugee Forum: i. compilation of good practices; ii. Update of national plans/commitments; and iii. Quantification of costs of hosting and assisting refugees and other populations of concern.
- The six national technical teams shared and discussed good practices under pillar 1 of the MIRPS (Reception and Admission), while the quantification exercise started with the recruitment of the expert team (national consultants and one coordinator). Discussions on methodology are taking place in line with the ongoing intergovernmental process under the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees. The MIRPS countries began reviewing and updating the commitments made in 2017, for the period 2020-2021.
- The involvement of the **Central American Integration System (SICA)** has been key in the capacity-building of national institutions, support for regional policies and greater operational cooperation. In this regard, and under the leadership of SICA's Secretary General (SG SICA), progress has been made in the formulation of a work plan for the Regional Migration Policy, being developed with the support from UNHCR and IOM. The draft policy is comprised of 12 pillars, one of which is particularly related to the protection of refugees. In this regard, a baseline study conducted through interinstitutional workshops in SICA countries has been carried out with the aim of gathering the necessary elements to formulate the plan.
- The **Central American Council of Ombudspersons** finalized and published the report on findings and recommendations made to states following the two field missions carried out in 2018 to assess the situation along the main route. The report includes specific recommendations to support the states' efforts to deliver protection

that will be used by national human rights institutions within their advocacy activities in Central America and Mexico.

- The **UN Development System (UNSDG-LAC)** further developed the Joint Initiative endorsed by the UNSG in order to support Central American states in reducing chronic violence. Following the exercise to map the UN-led initiatives that contribute to the reduction of violence, UN Resident Coordinators in the region have invited the UNRC in Mexico to join the initiative and work towards a comprehensive approach to reducing violence within these countries. Moreover, the UNSDG-LAC is developing a mechanism to ensure complementarity between the MIRPS, the Comprehensive Development Plan and the joint initiative, in striving to reduce violence.
- The regional protection working group **RED LAC**, co-led by NRC and UNHCR, has published its [second](#) and [third](#) report on humanitarian access in the NCA, and on lessons learned regarding the humanitarian response to large mixed movements, commonly referred to as 'Caravans'. RED LAC, as part of their MIRPS commitments, aims to give visibility to the situation in the sub-region, coordinate better responses at the regional and sub-regional levels and to provide a tool to analyse the protection situation in NCA and monitor the level of violence as a root cause of forced displacement.
- In the past month, Brazil and Argentina have confirmed their interest in supporting the **Protection Transfer Agreement** (PTA), joining Australia, Canada, the United States of America and Uruguay. To [December 2019](#), 1,006 individual cases have been submitted, of whom 319 have already been resettled through the PTA.
- The **CLAMOR Network**, a group of parishes with presence from Honduras to Mexico, has been essential in facilitating immediate assistance to persons in need of protection through its shelters along the region. Several shelters in Guatemala have been supported, particularly in Esquipulas and Ciudad de Guatemala. To date, over 80 [safe spaces](#) across the region have been supported through the MIRPS, while plans are underway to enhance the number of shelters available to refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants on the move.

V. PRIORITIES FOR APRIL - MAY 2019

- **Regional:** Implementing the work plan agreed upon by all MIRPS countries. The MIRPS countries, through their national technical teams, held the first of four dedicated virtual meetings to present and compile good practice in regards to reducing the backlog and labour integration (under MIRPS pillar 1, Reception and Admission; and pillar 4, Durable Solutions). The compilation of good practices under MIRPS four pillars will also be included in the annual MIRPS report for 2019.
- The Mexico Presidency Pro Tempore will have a session at the OAS in Washington DC/USA to present the Solidarity Conference and discuss the engagement of the Group of Friends of MIRPS as a support platform which can potentially take forward some of the results of the Conference.
- **Belize:** The technical team will begin updating its national plan and will hire the consultant for the quantification exercise. The generic design of the community integration programme will begin in the major refugee-hosting areas.
- **Costa Rica:** The MINARE team will include within its calendar the activities proposed by the Pro Tempore President with the aim of ensuring the country's participation in all events. The technical team will move towards analysing the current implementation rate of its national plan and to prioritize its commitments for 2019 ahead of the Solidarity Conference.
- **Guatemala:** The technical team will begin updating its national plan and will hire the consultant for the quantification exercise.
- **Honduras:** The technical team is working on the identification and collection of best practices on the MIRPS pillar one – reception and admission. Similarly, the team is working on the quantification of its commitments and in updating the national plan.
- **Mexico:** Resume and focus the interinstitutional coordination between the COMAR and other government institutions with the aim of making progress in the implementation of its national commitments.
- **Panama:** The technical team will begin updating its national plan and to hire the consultant for the quantification exercise.