

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

January 2019

Sara* fled Honduras fearing for her life. Today she rebuilds her life in Belize, where her child can go to school without fear and her husband has found a job. © 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.

312,000
REFUGEES & ASYLUM-SEEKERS
FROM NCA IN THE WORLD

62,700
REFUGEES & ASYLUM-SEEKERS IN
MIRPS COUNTRIES

245,500
INTERNALLY DISPLACED
PERSONS IN NCA



Figures to mid 2018. Based on data from governments, UNHCR, IOM and/or CIIPDV. Honduras is the only country with official internal displacement figures.

II. INDICATORS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

65 
SAFE SPACES
SUPPORTED

70 
CIVIL SOCIETY
ORGANIZATIONS
ASSISTING
DISPLACED PEOPLE

1,260
OFFICIALS TRAINED ON
SGBV & CHILD PROTECTION,
& THEIR RIGHTS

20,800
PEOPLE BENEFITTING FROM
COMMUNITY
INTERVENTIONS

73,000

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

2,400
HOUSEHOLDS
SUPPORTED WITH
CASH - BASED
INTERVENTIONS

14
CIVIL SOCIETY
ORGANIZATIONS
IMPLEMENTING
PROJECTS IN NCA

III. DEVELOPMENTS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

- In **Belize**, a profiling exercise with some 6,000 people with international protection needs alongside their 60 host communities will allow the better identification of their common needs.
- In **Costa Rica**, the General Directorate for Migration and Foreign Affairs signed an MoU with UNHCR with the aim of enhancing the Refugee Unit's response capacity to address the exponential increase of asylum requests. The MoU provides for the Refugee Unit to have a new office building and with additional staff. En complying with its MIRPS commitments, the Refugee Unit provides provisional documentation to asylum-seekers to guarantee effective access to the government's social welfare programmes.
- In **Guatemala**, the private sector and government institutions are working together through the Turi-Integra project, allowing refugees and asylum-seekers to access professional training, internship and job opportunities in private tourism companies in the Peten Department.
- In **Honduras**, given the particular impact violence has within schools and for teachers, the formulation of a prevention and protection strategy was finalized, while an intention letter was signed between the government of Honduras and international organizations to formulate a national response plan. Within the framework of the response to large mixed movements, the government's contingency plan was improved, while the mobile Returnee Attention Centres (CAMR) were functional. Regarding the registration of abandoned properties, a pilot of the registration module 'SURE' (Unique Registry System) will be piloted with the support from the Property Institute staff at the national and local levels.
- In **Panama**, the government issued the Executive Decree No. 10 of 16 January 2019, regulating Law No. 28 of 30 March 2011, and establishing a procedure for the recognition of the stateless status in the country. The Decree recognizes the basic rights to housing, education and health of applicants for the status as well as those recognized as stateless.
- In **Mexico**, as a result of a series of meetings held within the framework of the Inter-institutional Roundtable on Refugees and Complementary Protection, as of 20 June 2018 the government provides asylum-seekers with a temporary Unique Population Registry Key (CURP). In Mexico, 29,600 people sought asylum in 2018; having the CURP provides them access to formal work and public services.

IV. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

- As part of the commitments made by the **Organization of American States (OAS)** in providing a follow-up mechanism for the MIRPS, the first annual follow-up meeting was held on 8 November 2018 at their headquarters in Washington to exchange best practices among participating states. As a result, MIRPS states have endorsed their first [annual report](#), thus establishing their priorities for 2019 and formally recognizing the Friends of the MIRPS as their Support Platform, as envisaged by the Global Compact.
- As agreed during the first annual follow-up meeting, the **first online meeting among MIRPS countries** took place at the end of January 2019. During the meeting, the presidency term was discussed to select the first country assuming the role for the year to allow MIRPS countries to develop programmes that foster regional cooperation and generate support for the implementation of regional plans. **Mexico** was then elected as the first MIRPS president for 2019.
- 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 the SICA, the refugee commissions from Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic and Panama [met](#) to exchange experiences and concerns on issues around asylum and displacement across the region. In addition, the SICA leads a pilot project to [assist and protect persons displaced by violence in Ocotepeque](#) (Honduras), with the aim to consolidating peace, liberty, democracy and development in the region in light of the respect of human rights.
- The **Central American Council of Ombudspersons** held its [second field mission](#) of the year along the southern migration route (Costa Rica and Panama) to monitor and learn of the protection challenges faced by hundreds of refugees and migrants on the move. Based on key findings from both missions, the CCPDH (for its acronym in Spanish) agreed upon a [Resolution](#) that highlights key recommendations to states in support of their protection efforts along migration routes. Among key recommendations, the CCPDH highlighted the need to create or revise

comprehensive state policies for the protection of refugees with specific vulnerabilities – e.g. children, adolescents, women, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and LGBTI persons.

- The **UN Development System (UNSDG-LAC)** further developed the Joint Initiative endorsed by the UNSG in order to provide key recommendations that inform humanitarian and development-oriented interventions. To this end, the UNSDG-LAC has developed compound indicators to measure violence as the root cause of displacement. This joint initiative has allowed Resident Coordinators to map existing UN initiatives across the region that seek to reduce violence. A total of 75 initiatives have been identified and the UNSDG-LAC continues to work on adjusting interventions to avoid overlaps, maximize the resources and prioritize adjustments within the framework of UNDAFs and Country Programme Documents.
- The regional protection working group **RED LAC**, led by NRC and UNHCR, is currently taking the lead in the analysis of violence and protection risks across the North of Central America. Having published their [first report](#) and with two more underway, the RED LAC, as part of their MIRPS commitments, seeks 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 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 the [end of October](#), 899 individual cases have been submitted, of whom 288 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. To date, 65 [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 FEBRUARY 2019

- **Regional:** Developing an agreed work programme with the first MIRPS Presidency Term.
- **Honduras:** Implementation of an Advocacy Plan for the Law on Forced Displacement, which is expected to be presented for the Congress' approval in the coming months.
- Identification of sources of funding for the implementation of the law on forced displacement.
- **Costa Rica:** Continue to strengthen border monitoring efforts in Upala, so to guarantee effective access to asylum procedures and the relevant documentation, as well as the early identification and referral of people with specific needs, including UASC and women at risk.
- Advance on the regionalization process of the Refugee Unit, including through providing physical space in UNHCR's new office in Upala, and the hiring of additional support staff for registration, documentation and interviews.
- **Panama:** Socialization of the new statelessness resource and continue to strengthen ONPAR's capacity so to reduce the backlog in eligibility decisions.
- Continuity to 'Talento Sin Fronteras', which provides professional training opportunities and support for labour insertion for refugees. This includes the development of a work plan with the private sector for the inclusion of refugees in the job market, counting with the expertise and support from Manpower Group.
- **Mexico:** The Chamber of Deputies began analysing the proposal to amend the Law on Refugees, Complementary Protection and Political Asylum.
- The COMAR is in the process of improving access to the asylum procedure, including access to territory. On the one hand, the COMAR is undertaking missions to register and interview asylum-seekers, and on the other a strategy is being prepared to open new offices.