

HIGHLIGHTS

30

Number of strategic partnerships signed by UNHCR with operational partners in the region in 2016, compared to 13 in 2015.

400

Number of additional lodging capacity in 6 shelters constructed/rehabilitated with UNHCR's support in Mexico and Guatemala.

1,900

Asylum-seekers and refugees provided with cash-based assistance in Mexico in the States of Tabasco, Chiapas and Mexico City.

4

New locations in Mexico and Guatemala where UNHCR's presence has been established to reach out to people of concern.

4,000

Number of children and adolescents with protection needs reached through the Education in Emergencies project.

285%

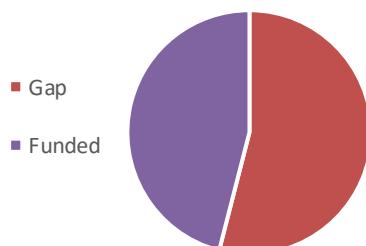
Increase in asylum applications in Mexico, Belize, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama from NTCA citizens in 2016 compared to the same period in 2015.

CONTEXT

- Following the recent increase in displacement numbers, a supplementary appeal was issued in June 2016, outlining UNHCR's protection and solutions interventions planned until the end of the year to respond to the most urgent needs of refugees, asylum seekers, returnees and internally displaced persons from the NTCA in countries of origin, transit and asylum. It includes Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama.
- As of end August, 49,400 new applications from NTCA citizens had been submitted in North and Central America countries since the beginning of the year. In the same period, 134,700 NTCA citizens were deported from the US and Mexico.
- On 4 August, UNHCR welcomed the release of the San José Action Statement in which nine countries from North and Central America vowed to work together to strengthen the protection of refugees fleeing Central America. This followed the high-level roundtable on the plight of people fleeing growing violence in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras held in San José, Costa Rica, on 6-7 July, which concluded with a series of comprehensive recommendations and commitments to address all dimensions of the situation.

FUNDING

USD 18.1 million
requested for the NTCA situation



MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

- With the additional support received from donors, UNHCR offices have entered in strategic agreements with new partners and have reinforced the capacity of the existing ones. The agreements will have crucial impact in the areas of child protection, community-based protection, protection networks and border monitoring, strengthening of reception centres, protection responses for cases at heightened risks, as well as the reinforcement of national human rights entities (ombudsperson offices) in the three NTCA countries.
- The Protection Transfer Arrangement (PTA), an innovative emergency resettlement mechanism for up to 200 individuals at heightened risk, is undergoing its initial pilot phase. An agreement between UNHCR and Costa Rica – as the transit country – has been signed. First beneficiaries come from El Salvador and are being relocated to the United States. Discussions are underway with potential additional transit and destination countries.
- Field offices have been established in Petén, Guatemala, and in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, in order to reinforce border monitoring, legal orientation and protection networks. Additional staff has also been recruited.
- In Mexico, UNHCR's presence was established in Saltillo, Coahuila State, to promote local integration through access to the dynamic labour market there, and in Acayucan, Veracruz State, to focus on the dissemination of information on access to asylum and on the improvement of reception conditions.
- In Costa Rica, UNHCR is conducting efforts to ensure the early integration of refugees coming from the NTCA. An agreement was concluded with the Ministry of the Presidency and the Migration Authority to guarantee the access of refugees to the national development and poverty reduction programmes. With the support of the private sector and development actors, refugees' self-reliance is promoted from the moment they arrive to the asylum country. A shelter for SGBV survivor women and their children from the NTCA and Nicaragua has also been established.
- In Guatemala and Mexico, UNHCR provided support to local protection monitoring networks at the borders and built their capacities in terms of legal advice and orientation, as well as regarding the identification of persons with specific needs.
- National authorities in all countries have been targeted for training in various fields related to refugee protection, as well as on IDP Law and Policy. In El Salvador, in addition to the reinforcement of the institutional framework, an IDP profiling exercise is currently led by the Government with technical and financial support from UNHCR. In Honduras, UNHCR is providing technical support to strengthen the institutional response to displacement, including promotions of policies and allocation of resources for IDPs.
- In Belize, UNHCR and UNDP provided material assistance to refugees and host communities victims of Hurricane Earl. The settlements of Armenia, Valley of Peace and in the suburbs of Belize City were targeted.

CHALLENGES

- In spite of advocacy efforts, forced displacement remains a very sensitive issue in the region. Data collection and profiling are key to better understand displacement patterns and promote protection-related interventions.
- The lack of legal and institutional frameworks on internal displacement constitutes a major challenge for the effective protection of IDPs and persons at risk of displacement. It also hampers the development of specific policies and programmes, as well as the allocation of resources by States.
- Data collection and identification of deportees with protection needs requires to be enhanced in NTCA countries, as well as the development of effective referral mechanisms for individuals with protection needs.
- In countries of asylum, the capacity of refugee bodies needs to be further strengthened, particularly in border areas.
- The establishment of a significant number of new partnerships requires intensive capacity-building efforts, which in turn slow down the implementation of projects and activities.



WORKING WITH PARTNERS

- In the three NTCA countries, as well as at the regional level (United Nations Development Group in Latin America and the Caribbean), interagency protection working groups have been set up or reinforced to enhance coordination and response mechanisms. There have been two interagency missions to the Guatemala-Mexico border.

Contacts:

Catia Lopes, UNHCR External Relations Officer, LOPES@unhcr.org, Tel: +41 (0)2 27397204 Website: www.unhcr.org