

Central America

Bi-weekly Operational Update

Operations: Regional context

Exceptional measures during the emergency remain in all countries in the region and have been extended for several additional weeks, including in Nicaragua, where the government has launched a public campaign on prevention measures against COVID-19. In Panama and Belize, government programmes have included refugees and asylum seekers and periodically provide a basic food basket. In Costa Rica, with the help of UNHCR, vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers are progressively being provided with access to national health insurance. In the region, UNHCR has been expanding its humanitarian assistance and CBI programmes to address the basic needs of people of concern, including food and hygiene items, legal counselling on housing, the payment of rental fees and financial contributions for the purchase of food. In some countries, including in Panama,

all asylum seeker IDs expiring in March and April have been extended to mid-May.

Due to the increase in the homicide rate in El Salvador, the government announced stricter control measures against gang members held in custody. Consequently, UNHCR is monitoring security conditions in communities through community leaders, with the expectation that violence may escalate, resulting in forced displacement. In Guatemala, persons of concern have not been included within national social programmes. In Panama, 36 people from mixed movements have tested positive for COVID19. Due to concerns on access to health, three new doctors were appointed to the Migratory Station in Peñitas, Darien, among a wider inter-agency and government response.

Update on country activities

GUATEMALA

UNHCR and partners identified 53 PTA cases whose vulnerabilities and risks have increased due to the COVID19 crisis. UNHCR and partners developed a series of material (videos and print booklets) that will be included in a Psychosocial First Aid Kit. UNHCR and partners continue to provide humanitarian assistance to meet the needs of refugees and asylum-seekers.

BELIZE

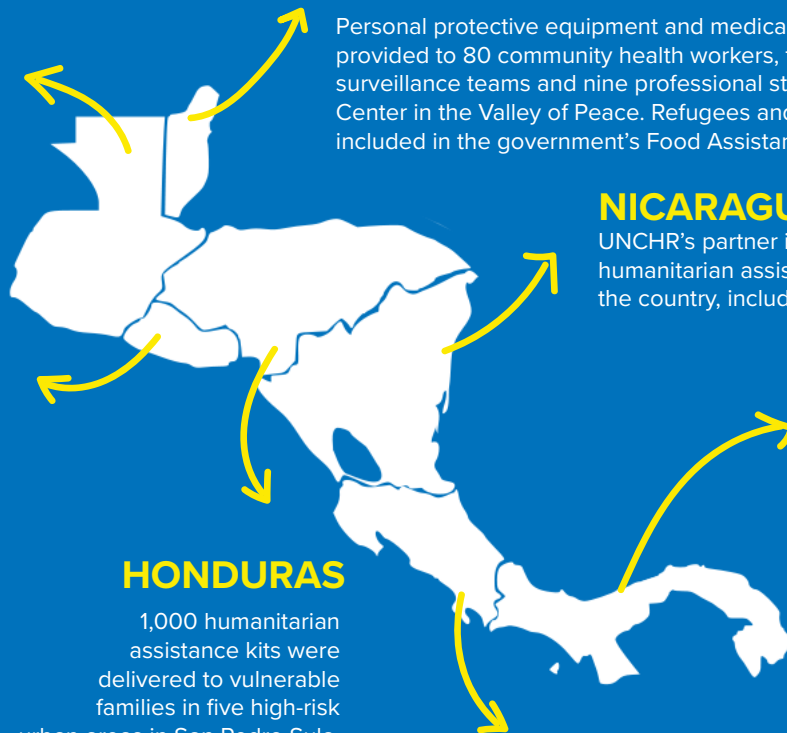
Personal protective equipment and medical supplies have been provided to 80 community health workers, five district health surveillance teams and nine professional staff of the Public Health Center in the Valley of Peace. Refugees and asylum seekers were included in the government's Food Assistance Programme.

NICARAGUA

UNHCR's partner in Nicaragua works to ensure humanitarian assistance to nearly 1,000 PoC in the country, including CBI when necessary.

PANAMA

563 persons benefited from CBI to cover their basic needs (food and medicine) during the last two weeks of April. UNHCR provided 600 facemasks to the Panamanian Red Cross, the main partner at the forefront assisting PoCs during the pandemic. In support of the government response in Darien, where more than 2,000 people are stranded, UNHCR donated food, disinfectant materials and protective gear, as part of an inter-agency effort.



EL SALVADOR

2,389 persons in 31 communities assisted by humanitarian organizations coordinated through the Protection Cluster, led by UNHCR, over the last two weeks. Psychosocial support is provided through social media mental health campaigns and online psychosocial care for deportees. Printed cards with UNHCR's emergency hotline are delivered to all deported persons.

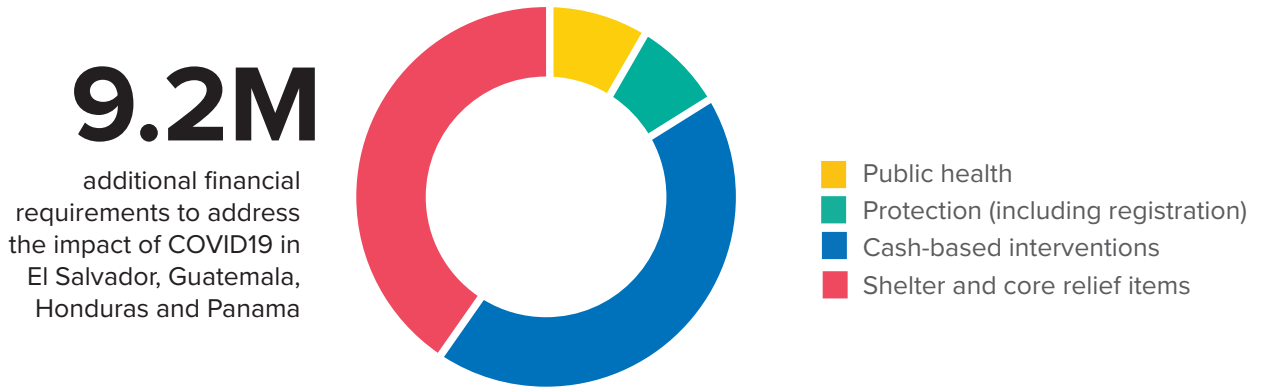
HONDURAS

1,000 humanitarian assistance kits were delivered to vulnerable families in five high-risk urban areas in San Pedro Sula. Emergency food and hygiene kits were provided to 200 people, mainly from Haiti, stranded in Choluteca. Individual and group counselling, and guidance on protection alternatives in Temporary Isolation Centers for deportees have continued.

COSTA RICA

The existing CBI programme has been adapted due to the strict preventative measures in place, to ensure the continuity of assistance. Over 6,000 persons of concern were assisted between 23 March and 27 April. UNHCR has been registering PoC remotely.

COVID19 Additional Funding Requirements



Overview and highlights

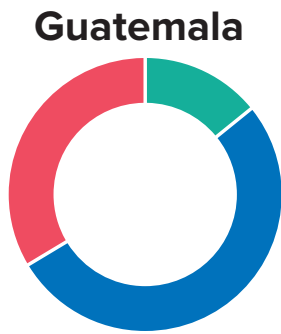
COVID-19 has increased the vulnerability of persons of concern in Central America, where hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to flee violence and persecution. With the virus spreading across the Americas, through March and April, countries in the region adopted mobility restrictions, with most official borders closed to prevent the spread of the virus. At the same time, people continue to be displaced internally within their own countries and externally across international borders, with very limited means of supporting themselves.

While UNHCR operations in Central America, and those of its partners, have struggled to ensure the full provision of essential humanitarian entitlements to hundreds of thousands of forcibly displaced people due to funding constraints, additional critical needs and operational resource gaps have been identified in the context of COVID-19. The following operations have identified the following additional resource requirements to respond to the urgent needs of refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people, communities at risk, and deportees.



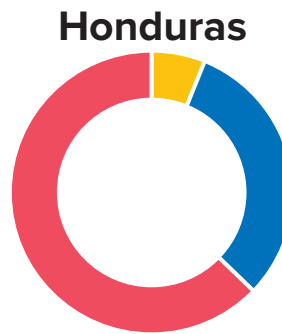
1.7M

Additional financial requirements for COVID19 response in 2020 to meet the needs of internally displaced people, deportees with protection needs, asylum seekers and refugees.



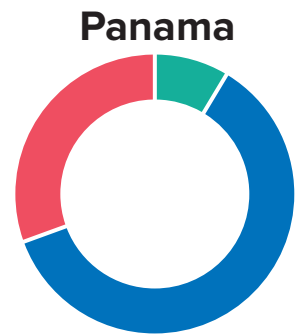
2.3M

Additional financial requirements for COVID19 response in 2020 to meet the needs of deportees with protection needs, asylum seekers and refugees.



3.2M

Additional financial requirements for COVID19 response in 2020 to meet the needs of internally displaced people, deportees with protection needs, asylum seekers and refugees.



1.9M

Additional financial requirements for COVID19 response in 2020 to meet the needs of asylum seekers and refugees, and others of concern among mixed movements.

Major events and updates



A new isolation centre was inaugurated in **Honduras** on 1 May, following a symbolic ceremony with the Minister of the Committee for Contingencies held on the day before. The First lady of Honduras and the Vice minister of Foreign Affairs had visited the construction of a 150-bed isolation centre, built with UNHCR’s financial support, and in coordination with IOM and NRC.

The Collective Centre serves as a temporary solution to support the implementation of strict quarantine measures for deportees, preventing the spread of COVID19. The centre has a capacity for 150 deportees while they undergo 14 days of isolation. It also has a care room to provide differentiated attention for those deportees who may have protection needs, mental health and psychosocial support.



In the next issue, a focus on the North of Central America, and specific needs in UNHCR operations

We thank the contributions of our donors

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UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have provided generous and timely support to the Coronavirus Emergency Situation globally, and countries in Central America, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked funding.



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