

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

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Family fled gang violence and seeks protection in Mexico. "I hope we get asylum so that our children can go to school again and start to learn"

I. THE MIRPS

In line with the long tradition of regional cooperation in responding to protection challenges, six States of the region - **Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama**- adopted the **San Pedro Sula Declaration** on October 26, 2017, agreeing to work together in the ongoing development and implementation of a **Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework** (MIRPS in its Spanish acronym). The MIRPS is a pioneering initiative in the application of the CRRF and a concrete contribution of the region in the development of the Global Compact on Refugees.

II. MIRPS COMMITMENTS

RECEPTION AND ADMISSION

- Strengthen the capacity to receive, identify, document and refer persons of concern
- Provide alternatives to the detention of asylum-seekers, and ensure no penalty for irregular entry

IMMEDIATE NEEDS

- Humanitarian assistance and income generation projects for refugees and asylum-seekers
- Reintegration projects for returnees and legal guidance to people with protection needs in transit

SUPPORT TO HOST COUNTRIES AND COMMUNITIES

- Support host communities and strengthen response and coordination with local actors, including civil society and the private sector
- Prioritize communities affected by violence in national development plans

EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Include refugees, returnees and displaced populations in existing programmes and promote specific public policies, including for self-sufficiency projects

RESPONSIBILITY SHARING

- Regional cooperation is fostered between countries of origin, transit and destination for greater responsibility sharing on prevention, protection and solutions.
- Regional and international organizations and 10 cooperating States and entities also made commitments

INCLUSIVE APPROACH

The Regional response includes asylum-seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons, deportees with protection needs, as well as the populations affected by violence and insecurity.

294,000

refugees and asylum-seekers from NCA countries in the world by end-2017 ⁽¹⁾

44,600

refugees and asylum-seekers registered in MIRPS countries by end-2017 ⁽²⁾

174,000

Internally displaced persons in Honduras between 2004-2014 ⁽³⁾

> 1 million

deportees to NCA countries in the last 5 years, a significant proportion with protection needs ⁽⁴⁾



(1) UNHCR, based on information provided by governments. Includes refugees and asylum-seekers from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

(2) UNHCR, based on information provided by governments. Includes refugees and asylum-seekers in Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panamá.

(3) Comisión Inter-Institucional para la Protección de Personas Desplazadas por la Violencia (CIIPDV) and UNHCR 2015. Honduras is the only country with official figures on internal displacement.

(4) IOM, based on data provided by national authorities. Includes deportees to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

III. MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

In a whole-of-society approach to comprehensive responses, the MIRPS was developed through government-led consultations with persons of concern, UN country teams, civil society, the private sector and academia. Regional networks and organizations complement countries' national action plans and foster regional and global responsibility-sharing mechanisms. As a **direct result** of the MIRPS:

- **Belize** has undertaken a profiling exercise of people with protection needs which will provide important baseline data for project development.
- In **Costa Rica**, refugees living in vulnerable circumstances now enjoy access to government-led welfare programmes and to initiatives such as the *Graduation Approach* and the *Living Integration* program, which promote access to the labour market and to livelihood projects. A shelter was established on the southern border to attend to the needs of people on the move.
- **Guatemala** has adopted a new Migration Code, including provisions for refugees, and is setting up a new Migration authority with increased focus on Human Rights. A new "Migrant House" was recently established in El Ceibo to provide safe access to shelter, health, water and sanitation services for persons on the move.
- **Honduras** created a dedicated Directorate for the protection and attention of IDPs within the new Human Rights Ministry. A project for the protection of abandoned land was launched and a draft Law on IDPs is being considered by the National Congress. As part of a quantification exercise, the MIRPS Task Force is identifying existing resources to fulfill the 18 commitments made by Honduras.
- **Mexico** has taken steps to guarantee access to training, employment programmes and financial services to refugees. Important steps were also taken to improve access to education for asylum-seekers and refugees.
- **Panama** adopted a new Decree strengthening the asylum system and specific protocols are being finalised to improve inter-institutional collaboration for the identification and referral of persons with international protection needs, including unaccompanied children.

IV. WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

- In June 2018, the **Organization of American States (OAS)** General Assembly adopted a resolution making specific reference to the MIRPS as a regional cooperation model. In the resolution, the OAS instructs the Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs to organise annual follow-up meetings to monitor the MIRPS.
- The cooperation agreement between UNHCR and the **Central American Integration System** was renewed through the design of a work plan that prioritises capacity-building of national institutions, support for regional policies and greater operational cooperation.
- The **Inter-American Development Bank** is providing technical assistance towards the quantification of MIRPS National Action Plans and their inclusion in national budgets.
- The **Central American Council of Ombudspersons** agreed on a concrete programme of action to support the MIRPS for 2018-2020, including joint border monitoring and advocacy campaigns for forcibly displaced persons.
- The **UN Development System (UNSDG-LAC)** has continued to address the violence as the root cause of forced displacement in the North of Central America, through a comprehensive Joint Initiative endorsed by the UNSG as an innovative application of the New Way of Working. The United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) is supporting this approach through joint programmes targeting the three North of Central America countries.
- Australia, Canada and Uruguay have recently joined the United States in resettling high risk cases through the **Protection Transfer Agreement (PTA)**.
- A **portfolio of 30 priority projects** that dovetail with the longer term operationalization of the three year national plans into joint programming and projects, engaging development partners and other key stakeholders has been developed.

V. NEXT STEPS

- The **quantification of national priorities** and review of national budgets is underway to ensure national ownership of this initiative and will be followed by the identification of international cooperation's needs.
- As instructed by Member States, an annual follow up meeting will be organised at the OAS to exchange experiences and best practices in implementing regional protection and solutions frameworks, including the MIRPS.