

Guatemala

May 2020

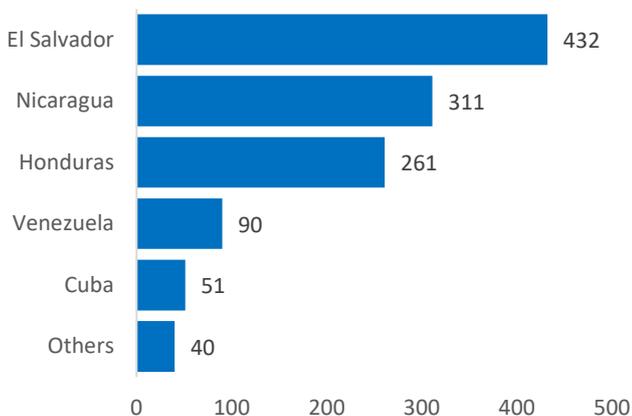
Guatemala is increasingly becoming a country of destination for people fleeing violence and persecution. **1,185** refugees and asylum seekers were registered in Guatemala by April 2020

The National Protection Network provided assistance to **13,500** people in 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created new challenges, with people in need of international protection more at risk of persecution, stigma, joblessness, gender-based violence.

POPULATION OF CONCERN IN GUATEMALA

By country of origin

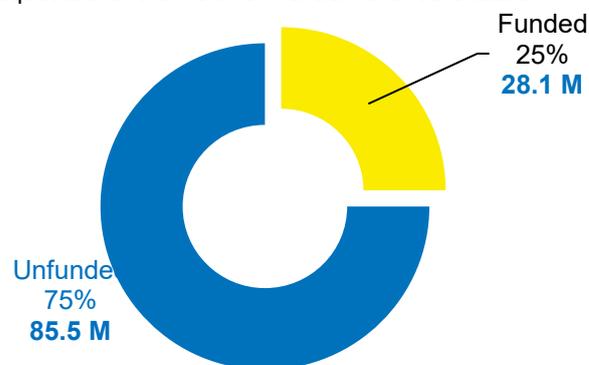


* Source: Guatemala Institute of Migration (April 2020)

FUNDING (AS OF 21 MAY 2020)

US\$ 113.6 M

requested for the North of Central America Situation



The financial requirements for the North of Central America Situation include requirements in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico.

Overview

Since mid-March 2020, the Government of Guatemala has imposed mobility restrictions and closed all its borders to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, except for Guatemalans and foreigners already residing in the country. Nevertheless, violence and persecution continue in Central America.

At the same time, discrimination and xenophobia is on the rise among local populations against people of other nationalities, especially those in transit and returnees (more than 22,000 arrived in Guatemala, from Mexico and the United States, between January and mid-May 2020).

In these challenging times, UNHCR and partners are strengthening their overall operations in Guatemala in support to refugees, asylum seekers and returnees with protection needs.

UNHCR is identifying the most vulnerable people to ensure that they receive adequate humanitarian assistance such as hygiene kits and food, as well as crucial information about the government's restrictions measures.

UNHCR and partners have adapted their operations to include social distancing measures to protect staff, the people of interest and host communities from COVID-19. Registration, counselling and life-saving protection and assistance activities are conducted limiting exposure and risks in the field or remotely, via WhatsApp, phone calls and text messages.



UNHCR and partners ensure the continuity of humanitarian and protection programmes to refugees during the COVID pandemic. (@UNHCR/Alexis Masciarelli)

UNHCR Response and Strategy

UNHCR works with 11 partners in Guatemala and supports the state in the implementation of its national plan under the Regional Comprehensive Protection and Solutions Framework (known by its Spanish acronym as MIRPS), which is a pioneering application of the Global Compact on Refugees, bridging the gap between humanitarian and development actions to provide protection and solutions to those forced to flee across borders, and to address the root causes of displacement in countries of origin. In the XI Virtual Meeting on the MIRPS, countries agreed to review the implementation of National Plans in the context of the global emergency and to adjust outcomes as part of the regional agenda.

Main Activities

Alongside host government, partner organizations, civil society, faith-based organizations, development actors and UN Agencies, UNHCR undertakes several activities, including:



Safe reception and admission

As a boost to the country's nascent asylum procedures, UNHCR is improving the operational capacity of the Guatemalan Institute of Migration (IGM) and its Office of International Migration Relations (ORMI). The rental of a new office and the purchase of computer equipment for ORMI will guarantee higher confidentiality of the asylum procedure, including the eligibility interviews and filing system. UNHCR is supporting the recruitment process and training of 24 new lawyers, social workers and psychologists, who will quadruple the current number of ORMI's staff. UNHCR is identifying people whose only durable solution is resettlement to a safe third country.

In addition to the Field Office in Petén, three new field units with permanent UNHCR staff presence opened in the departments of San Marcos, Izabal and Chiquimula. From there, monitoring missions are conducted at the borders with Mexico, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador to identify, on transit routes and key hotspots, people who had to flee their homes. UNHCR donated hygiene items and personal protective gears to municipalities and other institutions at border areas in support to the government's COVID-19 prevention efforts, following PAHO/WHO's guidance for people in situation of displacement.



Law and Policy Development

Over the past year, 400 government officials were trained to identify and interview people who were forced to flee their homes because of violence or persecution, as well as the State's obligations towards them. UNHCR provides guidance to judges on protection mechanisms for unaccompanied and separated children with international protection needs. Additionally, UNHCR participated in the creation of referral mechanisms for survivors of SGBV in Petén, Guatemala and Chiquimula.



Providing safe spaces and shelter

UNHCR collaborates with migration and health authorities to develop an early warning system, to provide asylum information and identify protection needs among returnees or people on the move. UNHCR supports the National Protection Network, which has assisted 13,500 people since January with information on asylum procedures and assistance. The Network has set up safe spaces and shelter across the country, including for unaccompanied children and people from the LGBTI community. Given the reduced number of people in transit, most of these shelters host a limited number of people, but often for longer than usual periods, as a mitigation measure to prevent the spread of the virus.

As part of the UN Country Team support to the Government, UNHCR is supplying shelter and hygiene items (foldable beds, mattresses and diapers) and 96 Refugees Housing Units to boost reception centres for Guatemalan deportees and returnees. This will allow the Government of Guatemala to undertake medical screening in safe and dignified conditions, and to enhance identification capacity of persons in need of protection. Existing shelters supported by UNHCR are adapting reception mechanisms and infrastructure as defined by ICRC and UNHCR guidelines on preventive measures during the COVID-19 pandemic for people on the move.



Durable solutions and livelihoods

In May 2020, UNHCR started the remote registration of all refugees and asylum-seekers, as part of the specific COVID-19 Response Plan, to assess their vulnerability levels and better define the humanitarian, legal and psychosocial support that can be provided to them. This registration coincides with the launch of a new cash-based intervention (CBI) to help families cover their basic needs for a minimum period of three months. UNHCR works with partners to reactivate livelihoods and economic inclusion opportunities as many persons of interest have lost their regular income due to the COVID-19 emergency. In Izabal and Petén, refugees and asylum-seekers are prioritized in the "Empleos Verdes" (*Green Jobs*) initiative to be trained on environmental conservation and ecology and, eventually, employed as forest rangers. UNHCR partners support asylum-seekers and refugees, including a medical doctor and a food engineer, for the recognition in Guatemala of university diplomas obtained abroad.



Health

Between March and May 2020, UNHCR and partners distributed over 800 emergency sanitary supplies to refugees and asylum-seekers to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since December 2019, UNHCR improved the infrastructure and provided equipment to four health clinics in border areas. The clinics assist more than 40,000 persons, including local community members, refugees, persons with protection needs, and persons in mixed movements.



Food Security and Nutrition

Between March and May 2020, UNHCR and partners increased the humanitarian assistance provided to refugees and asylum-seekers by distributing 400 food baskets. The support will continue through CBI assistance while the emergency continues.



Community-based protection interventions

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, UNHCR established a new communication channel via WhatsApp and SMS to reach over 350 refugees and asylum-seekers and provide information about UNHCR and partners services, prevention measures, and government regulations during this time. In Izabal, UNHCR works with local health authorities to disseminate messages of prevention and of international protection for local communities, refugees and asylum-seekers through loudspeakers.



Education

UNHCR supports children and teenagers to enter the State school system. At the start of the 2020 school year, UNHCR and partners distributed school kits to asylum-seeking children across the country. The infrastructure of two public schools was improved in Quetzaltenango in an effort to promote the integration of children from refugee families into their new communities.



Working with partners

Partners continue to assist refugees and asylum-seekers, ensuring critical life-saving activities are undertaken despite mobility restrictions. UNHCR and partners are distributing prevention kits to persons of concern, including face masks, sanitary items and information produced by PAHO/WHO. A partner has created videos and booklets to support children's mental health during the pandemic. As part of the Peacebuilding Fund, UNHCR and other UN agencies (UNDP, UNODC, and IOM) provided workshops for authorities and civil society organizations from Guatemala and Honduras in the department of Chiquimula, Petén, Izabal on forced displacement, international protection, gender, migration, and other issues related to human mobility.

Donors

In 2020, the UNHCR operations part of the North of Central America Situation received earmarked funding from the Canada, European Union, Germany, Switzerland, United States of America, private donors Australia, Morocco, and various private donors.

In 2020, UNHCR received unearmarked funding from:

Sweden 76.4 million | **Norway** 41.4 million | **Netherlands** 36.1 million | **Denmark** 34.6 million | **United Kingdom** 31.7 million | **Private donors Spain** 26.6 million | **Germany** 25.9 million | **Switzerland** 16.4 million | **Private donors Republic of Korea** 10.5 million
 Australia | Belgium | Bulgaria | Costa Rica | Estonia | Finland | Iceland | Indonesia | Ireland | Kuwait | Liechtenstein | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Monaco | Montenegro | New Zealand | Peru | Portugal | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Saudi Arabia | Serbia | Singapore | South Africa | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Private donors

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For more information visit: [Central America and Mexico data portal](#)

