

# Central America

## Bi-weekly Operational Update

### Operations: **Regional context**

Hurricane and tropical storm Eta has caused considerable damage across Central America, affecting almost 3 million persons. Currently 120,600 people have had to evacuate their homes, mainly in Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala, but many communities remain affected in El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama, and Belize. Flooding, mudslides, and road damage has occurred in several parts of the region, reducing humanitarian access. Eta heavily impacted indigenous and ethnic communities in Nicaragua (especially Miskita, Sumo, Garífuna and Creoles) resulting in new displacements.

The COVID-19 pandemic further complicates the emergency response. Tens of thousands of people remain in shelters, where maintaining social distancing and proper hygiene practices is challenging. The main protection concerns reported include sexual violence and harassment, as well as criminal gang violence in affected areas around the shelters.

UNHCR and partners are providing information sessions on the prevention of SGBV and referral pathways, the identification of specific needs and information on the prevention of COVID-19. Due to an increase in humanitarian needs, UNHCR is also distributing NFI kits, personal protective equipment (PPE) and hygiene kits in shelters located in affected municipalities. UNHCR continues to provide assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers affected by

the storm, with food and water, while monitoring the situation in the host communities. [See more about UNHCR's response.](#)

Rising temperatures are changing rainfall patterns at the global level. In Central America, climate change is increasing the intensity of both rain and droughts, particularly across the region known as the “dry corridor”. Such phenomena can exacerbate conditions of insecurity which continue to drive people to flee their communities.

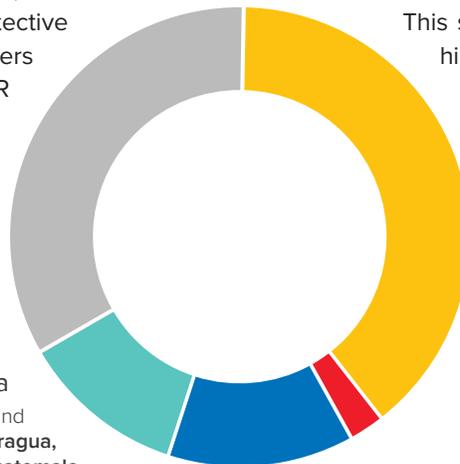
Generalised violence appears to be on the rise once again in the North of Central America. Following a recent decline in El Salvador, there was an increase in violent deaths during the month of October, with 154 violent deaths, 30 more than in the same period of 2019. In 2020, SGBV in Honduras has significantly increased since the onset of the COVID-19 movement restrictions which began in March. In September, 30 femicides, 55 cases of violence against women and 17 sexual assaults were reported, according to the Centre for Women’s Rights (CDM). In Guatemala, departments of Huehuetenango, Chiquimula, and Solola saw an increase in homicides according to a study carried out by the Centre of National Economic Investigations (CIEN).

This study also notes that Solola experienced the highest percentage of homicide, an increase by 89% compared to the same period in 2019.

#### Regional funding overview as of 10 November 2020

**127.1M**

financial requirements for Central America for 2020 including requirements for the operations and activities in **Panama, Belize, El Salvador, Cuba, Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Guatemala.**  
*For further details consult [reporting.unhcr.org](https://reporting.unhcr.org)*



**66% funded**

- Tightly earmarked
- Earmarked
- Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)
- Unearmarked (indicative allocation)
- Funding gap (indicative)

#### Don't miss



#### 16 Latin American artists join UNHCR in RefugiArte

RefugiArte is an initiative that seeks to raise awareness of the forced displacement crises affecting the Americas, through the works of artists from Latin America and the Caribbean.

The works were selected by a panel of judges from over 140 submissions from the entire region. See more on page 4.

# Update on country activities

## COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL PROTECTION AND SOLUTIONS FRAMEWORK (MIRPS)

- During the fourth meeting of the Working Group on Internal Displacement, participants from Honduras, El Salvador and Mexico, through the facilitation of an international panel of experts, discussed the operational challenges in achieving durable solutions. The consultations held this year, are informing the preparation of a series of policy recommendations to inform national planning and the operational response to internal displacement in the year ahead.

- Costa Rica and Guatemala took part in a bi-lateral exchange to share best practices in the delivery of labour skills certification programmes to support access economic inclusion and skills training for refugees and asylum seekers. The consultation is considered a forerunner to wider dialogue between MIRPS States to strengthen standards and practices in employment and labour marked access in line with national MIRPS commitments.

## COORDINATION WITH LOCAL & NATIONAL GOVERNMENT/ STRENGTHENING CENTRAL & LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

- In **Costa Rica**, construction was finalized on a UNHCR supported project in Zones A and B of the Zones Protocol Programme, including residual water management and electrical infrastructure. 10 RHUs were donated to the Social Security Administration (CCSS) to support COVID-19 response.
- In **El Salvador**, 12 representatives from the Municipal Committee for the Prevention of Violence (CMPV) of the Municipality of San Vicente were sensitized on national legislation on internal displacement and protection mechanisms available to IDPs.

- In **Belize**, as numbers of COVID-19 cases have grown, health and hygiene information is being shared through Whatsapp communication trees and Community Based Protection Network volunteers are engaging PoCs without access to WhatsApp to share information and distribute face masks to help prevent the spread of the virus.

- In **Costa Rica**, a group of 50 volunteers (mostly refugees and asylum seekers from Nicaragua and the north of Central American) participated in a training on mental health, self-care, collective-care, psychological first aid, led by the Association of Psychologists (CPPCR), to provide the group with basic skills and create a network of persons of concern and community leaders that can provide community-level assistance to other refugees and asylum seekers and their host communities.

- In **El Salvador**, 16 families participated in the Familia Activa programme in the Municipality of San Miguel to strengthen skills and knowledge in communities on the rights of IDPs, child protection, and prevention of SGBV. UNHCR finalized a capacity building programme for 30 border agents and staff members of the General Directorate of Migration (DGME) covering the identification and referral of IDPs for assistance and protection. 12 representatives of different local institutions and LGBTI communities in the Municipality of Santa Ana approved the local assistance referral pathway for LGBTI persons.

- In **Guatemala**, the mobile Ombudsperson's Office, Procumóvil, disseminated information about their programme with authorities and the local population from the municipalities of San Juan Ermita, Santa Catarina Mita and the Catarina Fraternity Association. The Procumóvil also monitored routes in the area and held meetings with community members of Todos Santos Cuchumatán, La Mesilla, Jacaltenango and La Libertad. Partner, Tierra Nueva, is implementing a connectivity project to provide a free mobile charging stations for persons in mixed movements and locals at the central square of Tecun Uman. 66 community members and local authorities (neighbours, police, health staff, teachers, fire department) were trained on how to identify people in need of protection and the existing referral mechanisms.

- In **Panama**, 31 persons benefited from psychosocial assistance. Information, counselling and legal assistance was provided to 135 persons.

## PROTECTION

### (INCLUDING CBP & SGBV)

- In **El Salvador**, 34 children and adolescents participated in "Painting Realities", the drawing and painting initiative focused on forced displacement. The paintings have been used as advocacy tools with representatives from different local governments and institutions on the need to protect displaced persons.

- In **Guatemala**, trainings on international protection and international law have been carried out for teachers, school directors and educational supervisors in the communities of El Trapichito, Amatepeque, Las Pilas, Comapa, Pasaco, Atescatempa, and Asuncion Mita in the Department of Jutiapa. The aim was to train the community on how to identify and refer cases of persons with international protection needs.

- In **Honduras**, the Child Protection Sub-Cluster held an emergency meeting due to the impact of Storm Eta. Based on a rapid assessment of the capacities of each organization, the Sub-Cluster agreed to support shelters being utilized to improve child-friendly spaces and services.

## CHILD PROTECTION

## INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

- In **El Salvador**, UNHCR and OHCHR organized training sessions on international human rights standards for the protection of forcibly displaced persons. 47 officials participated in the programme, including staff from the Protection Cluster for the Directorate of Attention to Victims and Forced Migration (DNAVMF) and the Local Offices for the Attention of Victims (OLAVS).
- In **Honduras**, the Humanitarian Country Team initiated a rapid needs assessment, in coordination with partners, to respond to Storm Eta. The Protection Cluster developed a checklist to complement the needs assessment and ensure data collection on protection risks. The Protection Cluster developed a checklist to complement the needs assessment and ensure data collection on protection risks.
- In **Guatemala**, the Humanitarian Country Team is conducting a Multi-Sector Initial Rapid Needs Analysis (MIRNA) with CONRED targeting key affected areas to collect sectorial information (nutrition, health, protection, WASH, among others) to response to impact of Storm Eta.
- In **Panama**, UNHCR, UNFPA, HIAS, and NRC launched an awareness campaign on gender-based violence and its impact on refugee and displaced women and girls, in coordination with the Women's Office of the Municipality of Panama from November 3 to December 7. The campaign sensitizes the public on SGBV against asylum seekers, refugees, and migrant population and disseminates emergency contact numbers for GBV survivors.

## REINFORCING SHELTERS & SAFE SPACE NETWORKS

- In **Guatemala**, UNHCR will support with the installation of four refugee housing units (RHUs) to support the response to Eta in Puerto Barrios, Izabal department. These RHUs are part of UNHCR donation early this year to the Secretary of Social Works of the President's Wife (SOSEP).

## DELIVERY OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE & CASH-BASED INTERVENTIONS (CBI)

- In **Belize**, 160 persons of concern including Honduran, Salvadorian and Nicaraguan nationals, received assistance to cover basic needs related to food, rent, medicine, education, and/or identity documentation.
- In **Costa Rica**, 1,131 refugees and asylum seekers received prepaid CBI cards in October. 98 persons with an emergency health conditions will be included in the CCSS insurance scheme (69% Nicaraguans).
- In **El Salvador**, UNHCR and the Ministry of Culture finalized the distribution of 1,030 biosafety and hygiene kits to nine Nahuizalco communities in the department of Sonsonate, mainly benefiting indigenous communities. UNHCR launched the usage of multipurpose grants as part of the national CBI strategy, and 96 cases (293 individuals) have had access to financial assistance, receiving a monthly grant for 3 months. UNHCR distributed NFIs to the Directorate of Civil Protection, including thermal blankets, mosquito nets, synthetic mats, solar lamps and kitchen sets to support immediate needs as a result of Eta.
- In **Guatemala**, 20 individuals have been newly registered, and 34 CBI eligibility interviews have been conducted. A total of 370 families have been enrolled in the CBI programme since May. UNHCR delivered WASH supplies including: ecofilters, hand washing stations, soap, surgical masks and KN9 masks 5, and thermometers to several municipalities in Esquipulas. Additionally, in host and border communities of Peten, UNHCR is helping prevent the spread of COVID-19 by installing hand-washing stations, providing hygiene supplies, and donating filters to clean water. [See more](#). To respond humanitarian needs caused by Storm Eta, UNHCR is coordinating the donation of NFIs, including kitchenware, mosquito nets, 10L jerry cans, solar lamps and plastic tarpaulins to authorities.
- In **Honduras**, 880 family NFI kits (mosquito repellents, towels, buckets, and mattresses), 48,450 medical masks, 10,800 soap bars, 10,500 individual hygiene kits, 1,224 family food kits, and 150 RHUs are being distributed to the communities affected by Eta in the area of San Pedro Sula. Partner, FUNDHARSE, is promoting the engagement of the private sector to support in the Eta response, through the donation of additional humanitarian assistance provided by companies in San Pedro Sula.

## DURABLE SOLUTIONS & LIVELIHOODS

- In **El Salvador**, 30 entrepreneurship initiatives were selected as part of a joint project to support the livelihoods of displaced persons and those at risk. The recipients will receive seed capital to carry out small-scale businesses, as well as skills training on customer service, quality assurance and pricing of their products and services.
- In **Honduras**, equipment for vocational trainings was provided to the Youth Community Centre of La Central neighbourhood in San Pedro Sula where 80 youth will benefit from the trainings.

In **Panama**, around 140 families, representing 400 persons, received CBI to cover basic needs related to rental support, food, health and medicine. The Association of Municipalities of Panama received 15,000 soap bars as a contribution to COVID-19 prevention projects in difficult to reach localities. SENNIAF (the child welfare institute) also received a donation of 5,000 (Unilever) bars of soap to be used in children's homes and shelters across the country.

# STORIES FROM THE FIELD

## RefugiArte: The Refugee Crisis illustrated by Latin American artists



RefugiArte 2020-2021 is an initiative from UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency that seeks to raise awareness and disseminate, through art, the protection needs of people forced to flee their communities or countries.

In the last years, the American continent has experienced complex dynamics and growing forced displacement, particularly with the rise in the number of people who flee from the North of Central America, Nicaragua and Venezuela, and others who have been internally displaced in Honduras, El Salvador and Colombia. Millions of people in the region have been forced to abandon their homes and try to rebuild their lives in exile. This new edition, with 16 art pieces, reflects just that.

The Project began to be developed in 2015 within the framework of the 50th anniversary of UNHCR's Regional Office for Southern Latin America. At the end of 2018, more than 50 artists from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay joined in the initiative through a piece that reflects the reality of refugees worldwide.



To learn more about RefugiArte, visit [our site](#).

## We thank the contributions of our donors

updated to 10 November 2020

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.



UN COVID-19 MPTF

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