

North of Central America Situation

July 2020

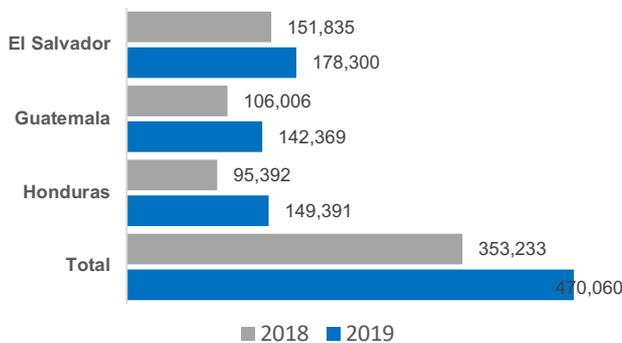
Around **470,000** refugees and asylum-seekers from the North of Central America in the world and **318,590** internally displaced people in Honduras and El Salvador.

The number of daily COVID-19 infections and mortality rates increased considerably, prompting countries in the region to extend lockdowns, and delay economic recovery plans.

Due to a strong increase in cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) registered during the quarantine period, UNHCR and partners reinforced coordination and protection interventions to assist persons of concern.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

By country of origin



Source: Based on data provided by governments to UNHCR as of Dec-19. Figures for 2019 are partial and preliminary and can be subject to changes

CONTEXT

In NCA, displaced people and community leaders report criminal groups are using confinement to strengthen their control over neighbourhoods, intensifying extortion, drug trafficking, and sexual and gender-based violence.

In Honduras, 1,225 homicides have been registered from March to end of July 2020, only 175 deaths short of those caused by COVID-19 according to data from the National Secretary of Security. The rates of domestic violence, femicide, and sexual and gender-based violence are increasing during lockdown in the region, notably in El Salvador, where 1,158 women were assisted by ISDEMU, the majority between the ages of 26 and 59. In Guatemala, five municipalities are under siege to counter the violence of criminal groups – notably drug trafficking, harassment and people smuggling –, including in areas of UNHCR presence. The violent murder of a transgender asylum seeker in Guatemala highlights the urgent need for states to guarantee effective protection of all LGBTI people in the region.

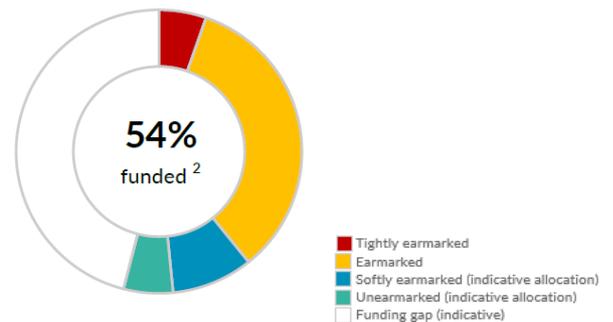
Of 90 shelters in Mexico, 37 are receiving new persons. Despite this, the decreasing trend of people hosted in shelters persists. Shelter staff report a more visible number of persons in the streets or economically impacted who arrive asking for food or specific assistance.

UNHCR continues to work with local authorities to mobilize responses that guarantee the effective protection of internally displaced people, deportees with protection needs, refugees and asylum seekers from the NCA.

FUNDING (AS OF 4 AUGUST 2020)

US\$ 113.6 M

requested for the NCA situation¹



- The financial requirements of the North of Central America Situation include requirements in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico.
- \$52,269,548 gap in funding represents 46% of the financial requirements.



Workers assemble Refugee Housing Units donated by UNHCR to the Guatemala Government to provide safe and dignified spaces to undertake medical screenings in quarantine centres and identify people in need of protection. ©UNHCR

A regional consultation took place between UNHCR, NRC and civil society representatives from regional States, as part of a commitment to strengthen the role of non-governmental organizations in the **MIRPS process**.

UNHCR Response and Strategy

UNHCR works with over 70 partners in the region and supports states in the implementation of their national plans under the Regional Comprehensive Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS). The MIRPS is a pioneering application of the Global Compact on Refugees in Central America and Mexico. [See more information.](#)

Main Activities

Alongside governments, partner organizations, civil society, faith-based organizations, development actors and UN Agencies, UNHCR undertakes protection and solutions activities, including:



Advocacy and Coordination

UNHCR offices in El Salvador, Honduras Guatemala, as well as the regional office, participated in the Global Protection Cluster's regional meeting on COVID-19, where challenges related to hospital attention, quarantine centers, child protection and psychological care were addressed. In Honduras, a comparative analysis of the Emergency Law for the Protection of Girls, Teenagers and Women, recently passed by the National Congress, and the draft version of the law was presented during the SGBV sub-cluster meeting. The analysis will identify priority areas in the establishment of an advocacy plan by the sub-cluster.



Health

UNHCR in Central America has received a donation of 230,000 bars of soap from Unilever, to be distributed in the region. In Guatemala, 45 frontline workers were trained on the mental health and psychosocial needs of people on the move during COVID-19 to strengthen identification and referral to available services. In El Salvador, 500 hygiene kits were delivered to Plan Trifinio and 700 hygiene kits to the Ministry of Culture. In Honduras, 492 humanitarian assistance kits, delivered to the San Pedro Sula Municipality, will benefit 1,132 persons with physical and chronic health conditions from high-risk urban areas. 300 families from the Garifuna community in Tornabe received humanitarian assistance, medical consultations, as well as mental health and psychosocial support. In Belize, 10 persons receive psychosocial counselling. In Panama, 89 refugees and asylum seekers received psychosocial assistance. In Costa Rica, UNHCR reached its health insurance beneficiary target, including 262 persons from NCA. In Mexico, UNHCR has delivered 8,000 face shields, 9,100 lenses, 5,800 surgical gowns, 18,500 surgical masks, 10,400 FFP2 masks (equivalent to N95), 6,400 liters of alcohol gel and 129,900 nitrile gloves.



Providing safe spaces and shelter

In Honduras, a new psychologist was hired for the centre for children and family units. In Guatemala, 12 RHUs were installed by the Jacaltenango Municipality, two more were installed in the government shelter Ramiro de Leon Carpio (Guatemala City), and three additional RHUs were dispatched to Ixcán Municipality (Department of Quiché) to support local responses to the returnee arrivals. In Mexico, a multimedia library has been made available to 34 shelters to provide entertainment, information and emotional support to people sheltered. In Costa Rica, UNHCR secured shelter for one Salvadoran transgender woman to undergo the mandatory isolation period at the northern border and provided her with CBI assistance.



Community-based protection interventions

In Belize, the Community Based Protection Network Volunteers in Bella Vista are distributing information about the asylum process and distributing facemasks. In Honduras, 200 individual kits were delivered to LGBTI community-based organizations to mitigate the disproportionate impact suffered by the LGBTI population in accessing basic goods and services due to COVID-19 movement restrictions. An awareness-raising campaign led by UNHCR and the Guatemalan Ministry of Health to share protection and COVID-19 prevention messages was launched in 20 neighbourhoods and villages in border areas between Guatemala and Honduras. In Mexico, 27,921 consultations were carried out through the help desk at the national level. Facebook El Jaguar reached over 1.5M users, out of which 20,000 engaged in conversation in the last month, an increase of 77% over June.



Durable solutions and livelihoods

In Costa Rica, under the partnership with the Chamber of Industries, 20 scholarships were allocated to entrepreneur refugees and asylum seekers to participate in an Innovation Congress. Through partner Fundación Mujer, UNHCR supported virtual trainings to increase employability of persons of concern, including 34 from NCA. In Belize, English as a Second Language have resumed. In El Salvador, 60 families were trained on developing livelihoods and employment skills through partnerships with entrepreneurs. In Guatemala, UNHCR distributed 91 CBI cards among refugees and asylum seekers. In Mexico, the State Institute of Adult Education in Puebla agreed to include people of concern in its services related to alphabetization and primary and secondary education. UNHCR is now gradually transiting back from financial support to job placement in the local integration projects.



Working with partners

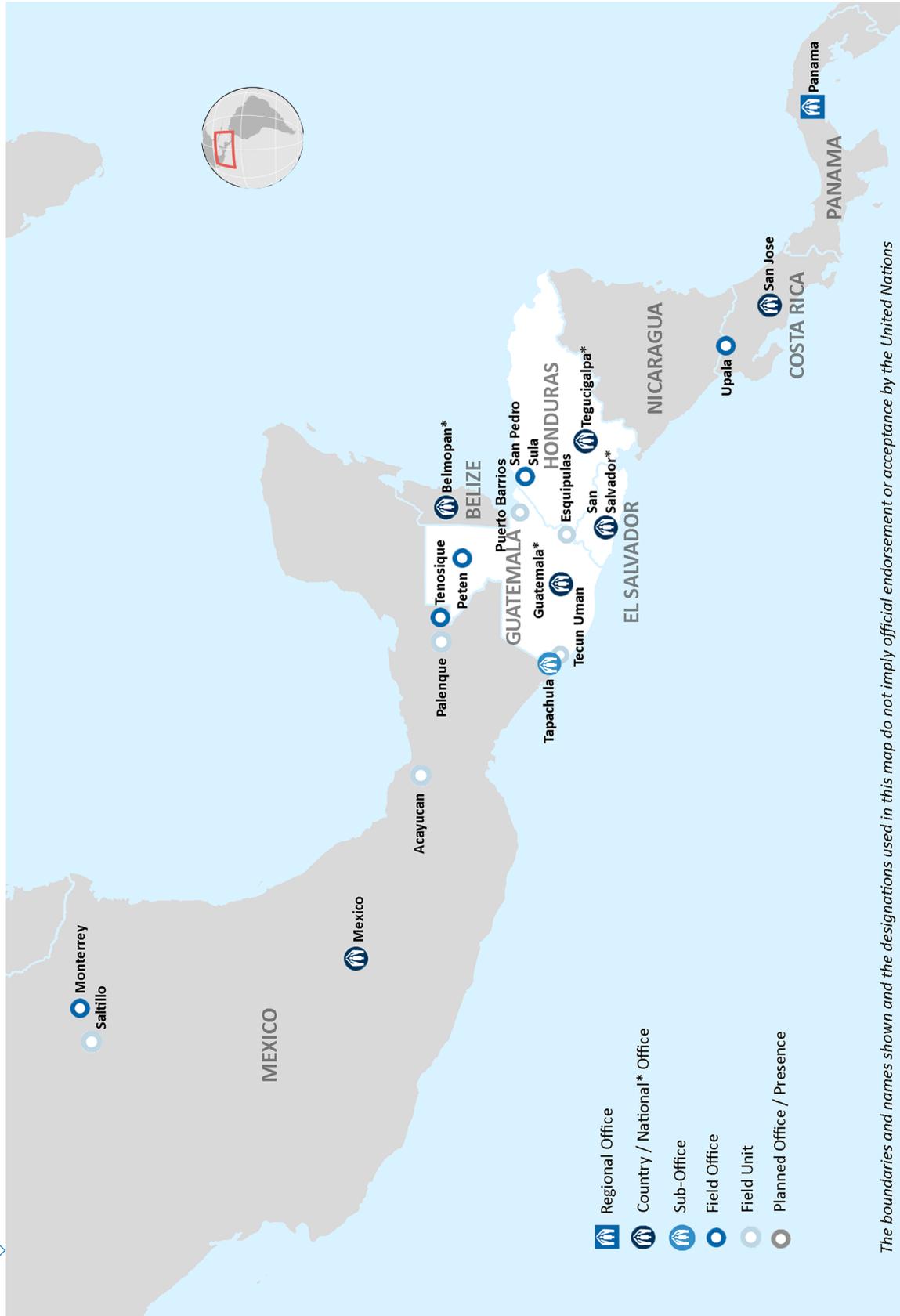
In Honduras, UNHCR and World Vision are adapting the Early Warning System to better gather information on protection and prevention of forced displacement in prioritized communities. A first meeting with the National Association for Deaf People was carried out to strengthen UNHCR's response to persons with hearing impairments and ensure the organization's accessibility by all persons of concern. In Panama, UNHCR and partners provided information, orientation and legal assistance to 1,000 people, rent payment benefiting 303 persons, and CBI to 236 families. In Costa Rica, UNHCR and an LGBTI NGO undertook a training to strengthen the capacity of six partner agencies in assisting gender-related persecution cases.

Thanks to donors in 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: Canada | Denmark | European Union | France | Germany | Netherlands | Norway | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | United States of America

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North of Central America Situation (NCA): UNHCR Presence, 2020



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