

UNHCR Response and Strategy

North of Central America

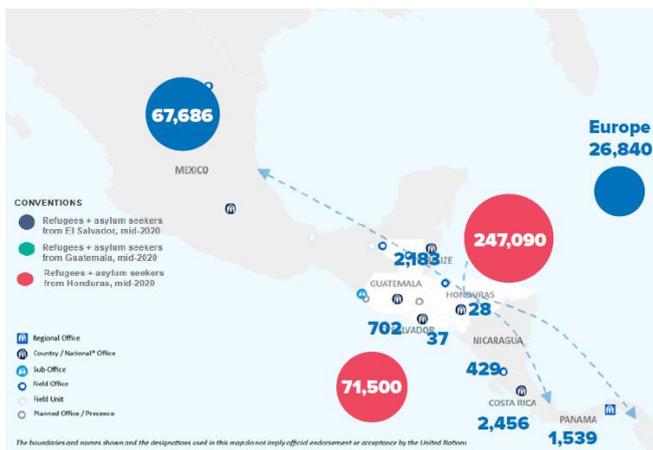
January 2021

Around **515,000** refugees and asylum-seekers from northern Central America and **318,600** internally displaced people in Honduras and El Salvador are considered people of concern to UNHCR.

Violence and crime in connection with food insecurity and lack of opportunities are the main drivers of displacement. UNHCR’s work in the region focuses on boosting the capacity of national asylum systems and promoting integration into refugee host communities, while addressing the needs of internally displaced persons.

Climate change is increasing the intensity of rain and droughts, particularly in the “dry corridor”, exacerbating the violence and economic hardship that are spurring increased displacement, both in large mixed movements and as a steady flow of individuals, families and unaccompanied children.

REGIONAL OVERVIEW OF POPULATION OF CONCERN FROM NCA COUNTRIES



Source: Data provided by governments to UNHCR, Data for mid-2020 is preliminary and can be subject to changes.

CONTEXT

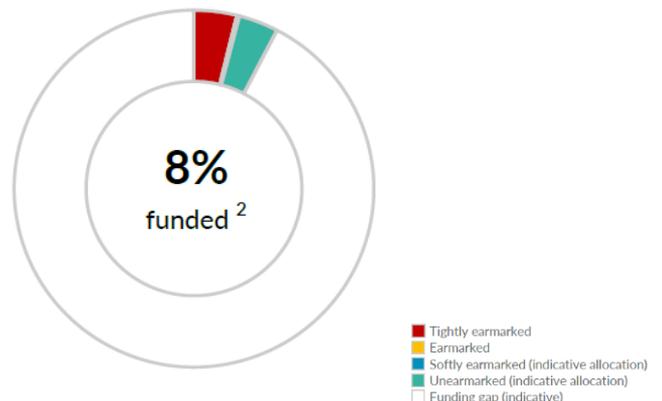
A complex inter-relation between gang violence and domestic abuse, food insecurity, increasing poverty, and the effects of climate change, are expected to continue to drive increased or forced displacement from NCA, already visible in the uptick of asylum claims in countries like Mexico, as well as record high numbers of people participating in the first so-called “caravan” in 2021.

UNHCR and UNICEF issued the key findings report *Families on the Run* which draws from survey responses and in-depth interviews, documenting interrelated and compelling reasons behind the shift in forced displacement trends in northern Central America, from individuals— notably children—to entire family units fleeing.

The socioeconomic impact of the pandemic continues affecting people of concern. The number of refugees and asylum seekers requesting assistance increased across the region, mainly to cover basic needs such as rent, food and medicine. In El Salvador, poverty levels rose from 31 to 41 per cent and in Guatemala, labour informality is rising from 70 to 75 per cent.

FUNDING (AS OF 12 JANUARY)
USD 170.9 M

requested for North of Central America situation in 2021



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



In Guatemala, UNHCR is providing support to the response to hurricanes Eta and Iota.

UNHCR works with over 70 partners in the region and supports States to implement their national plans under the Regional Comprehensive Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS), the regional framework implementing the Global Compact on Refugees in Central America and Mexico. Guatemala will hold the Pro-tempore presidency for 2021 after the [third annual MIRPS meeting in December](#), during which the countries adopted the [San Salvador Declaration](#).

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

In El Salvador, UNHCR supports local institutions with setting up referral pathways for victims of forced displacement and to increase skills and knowledge on national legislation on internal displacement and protection mechanisms available to IDPs. In Honduras, UNHCR held training sessions on refugee status determination analysis and assessments with human rights officers of the National Migration Institute and members of the Refugee Commission. UNHCR participated at the Mesoamerican CONARE workshop to share good practices in determining refugee status of asylum seekers.



Health

The impact of the Eta and Iota storms continues to affect the protection situation of impacted communities including persons of interest to UNHCR, with the main concerns being access to basic services such as health and water, as well as safety and security. Persons with specific needs face heightened risks especially in areas directly impacted by the natural disaster, including persons with disabilities, the elderly, unaccompanied minors and women at risk.



Providing safe spaces and shelter

As part of the Regional Safe Spaces Network, temporary and permanent shelters, information spaces and safe houses allow persons of concern to access case management and specialized services. Services at the shelters include GBV/child protection case management; mental health and psychosocial support; health services, including sexual and reproductive health services and clinical management of rape; and legal assistance and representation. In Mexico, a new shelter with the capacity for 300 persons and exclusively to assist refugees and asylum-seekers, was opened in Tapachula. This is part of broader efforts to increase response capacity in light of the increase in the asylum-seekers in the south as well as the changing dynamics along the northern border.



Community-based protection interventions

UNHCR is giving priority to work with local communities to ease the burden, mitigate possible xenophobia, strengthen integration and expand alliances and protection networks. In Costa Rica, 50 volunteers (mostly refugees and asylum seekers) participated in a training on mental health, self-care, collective-care, and psychological first aid, to create a network that can provide community-level assistance. 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. In Honduras, equipment was provided to the Youth Community Centre of La Central neighbourhood in San Pedro Sula where 80 youth will benefit from the trainings.



Durable solutions and livelihoods

The devastating impact the pandemic has had on the economies in the region has made UNHCR's focus on solutions and integration even more urgent and important. In El Salvador, 30 entrepreneurship initiatives were selected as part of a joint livelihoods project for displaced persons and those at risk. In Belize, 652 individuals received CBI assistance to meet basic needs of food, rent, medicine, education, identity documentation, and/or psychosocial assistance. In Panama, around 189 families received CBI during the reporting period and 436 families have been enrolled in Guatemala in the CBI programme since its start in May. UNHCR in Mexico has covered a total of 18,968 beneficiaries through CBI programmes since the beginning of the COVID emergency. In Costa Rica, 37 refugee and asylum seeker community organizations and leaders participated in a workshop on leadership and assertive communication.



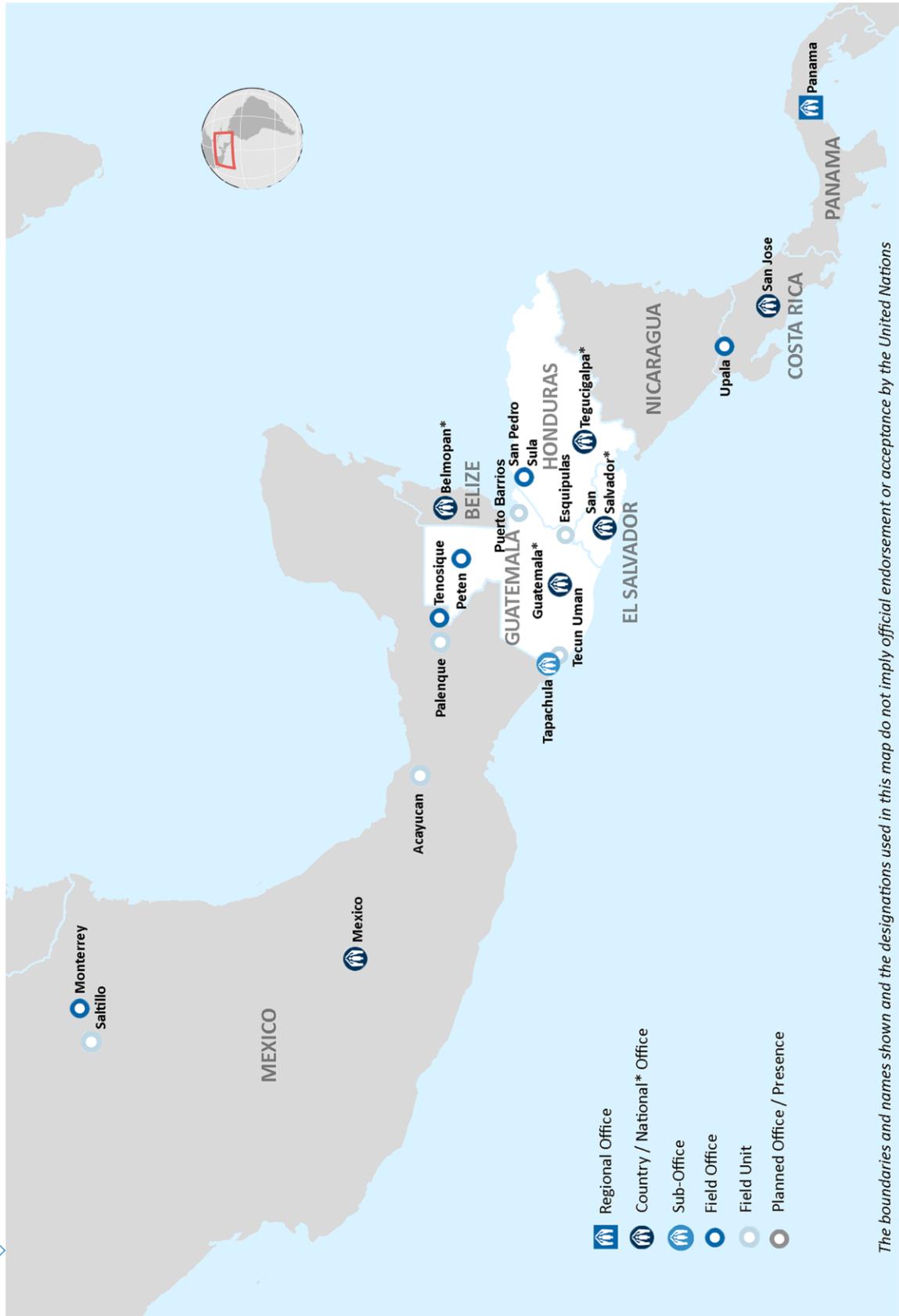
Campaigns and working with partners

UNHCR's *My face, their stories* campaign invites people of influence and the general public to lend their face for those forced to flee Central America who cannot show their without being in further danger. In El Salvador, the University of Central America is ready to launch a stop-motion short film showcasing the human drama of forced displacement. In Mexico, 5,000 issues of a fanzine for asylum-seekers and refugees on the prevention and response to sexual abuse were distributed by UNHCR field offices. In Panama, representatives of national authorities and implementing partners, participated in a virtual panel which presented to 66 asylum seekers and refugees the services and programmes available to prevent and respond SGBV.

Thanks to donors in 2020: Canada | Denmark | European Union | France | Germany | Ireland | Italy | Japan | Netherlands | Norway | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | United States of America. Pooled fund: COVID-19 MTF and to our private donors: Unilever, USA for UNHCR and private donors Australia – Germany – Italy – Japan – Lebanon – Mexico – Republic of Korea – Spain – Sweden – United Kingdom – United States of America

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



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