

North of Central America Situation

January-March 2017

The North of Central America suffers high levels of **violence** stemming from gangs and other organized criminal groups.

This insecurity is compelling an increasing number of persons – often entire families – to **flee** their homes, within their countries or to nearby countries.

Nine countries of the region are affected by these movements and a **regional response** is therefore of paramount importance.

KEY INDICATORS

190,000

Refugees and asylum-seekers from the NCA at the beginning of the year. A **tenfold increase** over the last five years.

174,000

Internally displaced persons in 20 municipalities of Honduras between 2004 and 2014 due to **violence and crime**.

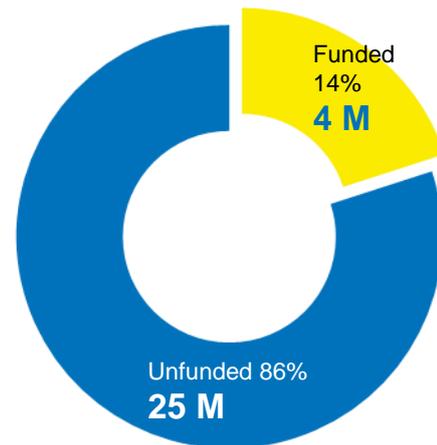
64,000

Number of **unaccompanied children apprehended** at the US border in 2016, attaining similar levels as those of the **humanitarian crisis** in 2014.

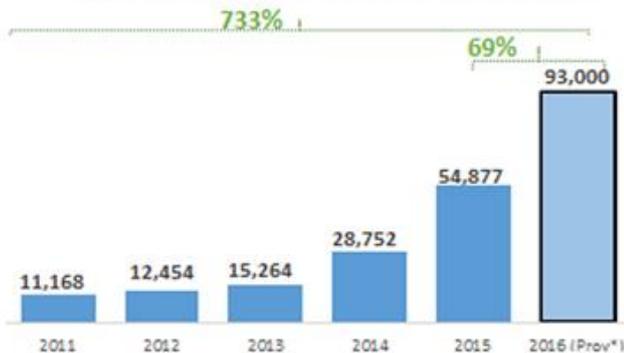
FUNDING

USD 29 M

requested for the NCA situation in 2017

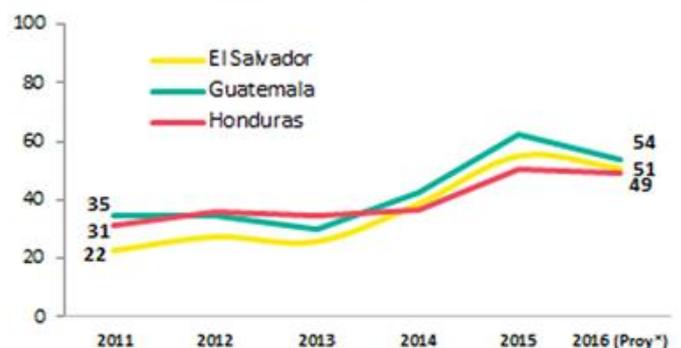


 Evolution of New Asylum Applications from NTCA Nationals in the Region: 2011 to 2016*



* Provisional data as of April 2017, might be subject to changes.

 Refugee Recognition Rate for NTCA Nationals in the Region: 2011 to 2016*



Update On Achievements

Context

Many people flee the NCA countries. Reasons for leaving are diverse and often complex. UNHCR considers that many of these persons are refugees. Traditionally, citizens from the NCA seeking international protection have requested refugee status in the United States and Canada. In recent years, however, other countries in the region have experienced a drastic increase in the number of asylum-seekers from the NCA, particularly Mexico, Costa Rica and Belize, but also, although to a lesser extent, Nicaragua and Panama.

In a spirit of shared responsibility, the San Jose Action statement, which was signed in July 2016, recognizes the need for stronger protection of asylum-seekers, refugees and internally displaced people in the region. Such cooperation is fully aligned with the New York Declaration of September 2016 and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) based on shared responsibilities between a wide range of stakeholders, such as local and national authorities, humanitarian and development actors, the private sector and civil society. In March 2017, the Government of Honduras has officially confirmed its interest in participating in the CRRF, providing a sound basis to develop a more comprehensive regional plan for protection and solutions in Central America. UNHCR is encouraging other countries of the sub-region to join Honduras in participating in the CRRF.

Recent achievements at the regional level also include the following:

- On 6-7 April, the Central American Council of Human Rights institutions met in Panama with UNHCR's support. The main objective was to develop a common position to address the needs of vulnerable, refugees and displaced persons affected by violence and insecurity in the NCA. It was agreed that all participants (Ombudspersons from Central America and Mexico) would sign a Regional Commitment (*Carta de Compromiso*) and agree on a common work plan involving joint advocacy, support to State institutions in displacement issues, border monitoring and exchange of good practices in the protection/legal assistance to IDPs, refugees and migrants with special needs. It was also agreed that this *Carta de Compromiso* could form the basis for the Council's contribution to the regional Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).
- Given the complexity of the situation in the NCA and in line with the regional Situational Emergency Training (SET) exercise conducted in December 2016,

three workshops were conducted in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador during the first trimester of the year, in order to enhance emergency preparedness and response and strengthen technical capacities of agencies and entities' staff working with persons with protection needs in the region, including refugees and asylum seekers, internally displaced and deportees with protection needs. Participants in the country sessions included State entities, civil society, and United Nations agencies, including those agencies forming part of the Protection Working Groups in the region. During the workshops, facilitators presented tools, practices and principles that can be applied in emergencies and protection situations to improve and promote a coordinated response of protection activities for displaced populations and persons affected by violence. Workshop themes included coordination, the mainstreaming of protection, community protection, emergency shelter, security, and scenario building, addressing country-specific issues in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.

- A Regional Protection Network meeting was organized by civil society organizations working with migrants and refugees in the NCA and Mexico during the first trimester of 2017. Around 30 participants from 14 different organizations attended the event to discuss avenues to strengthen coordination, referrals, direct assistance and access to international protection along the main migration routes, from countries of origin to countries of asylum. As agreed next steps, participants will work on mapping organizations along the regional routes; developing common referral protocols and forms; creating a digital database with useful information on countries of origin and asylum; as well as organizing smaller and more focused meetings to discuss in detail how to make the referral mechanisms operational along the route and enhance the protection situation of high-risk cases. The second regional meeting will be convened around May-June, possibly in Guatemala. Beyond continuing to provide support to the regional protection network, UNHCR is equally exploring this opportunity to seek the civil society's views and engagement in the follow-up conference to the San Jose Action Statement to be organized later this year, as well as in the CRRF process at the regional level.

Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA) Situation: UNHCR Presence, as of April 2017



Achievements (January – March 2017)



EL SALVADOR

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR has continued to provide technical support to the Directorate for the Assistance of Victims of the Ministry of Justice and Public Security for the attention of victims of violence. The Office has also provided support to 5 Offices for Legal Attention to Victims (OLAVs) in the form of equipment.
- UNHCR has been strengthening the capacities of the National Ombudsman Office to provide legal assistance, orientation and psycho-social support. Support with the identification of victims and the establishment of protection mechanisms, particularly for cases of forcibly displaced people at heightened risk, have also been provided.

- As agreed with the Governance Secretary and the Minister of Security and Justice, UNHCR supported an IDP profiling exercise during 2016, for which the different phases of data collection activities were successfully completed. A total of 20 focus group discussions were held, 471 IDP households and 277 non-IDP households surveyed, and 47 in-depth interviews carried out. The data collection was implemented through partners FLACSO and DIGESTYC, and the exercise was led and coordinated by the Victims Assistance Directorate, to ensure ownership and validation of the results. The results, which will be analysed and reported in the course of the coming months, will hopefully be a useful baseline for different stakeholders to design and implement appropriate responses. It is also expected that the exercise and its results facilitate the discussion about the situation of internal displacement in the country with Government counterparts, who themselves were directly involved throughout the profiling.
- UNHCR in cooperation with partners provided physical protection to 2 cases of IDPs and 3 cases of deported persons with protection needs. The Office has provided technical assistance to the General Prosecutor's Office on conducting 2 Best Interest Determination processes to find a durable solution for unaccompanied refugee children.

GUATEMALA

Achievements and Impact

- By the end of 2016, Guatemala hosted a refugee population of 300 persons of nine different nationalities, mainly from El Salvador and Honduras. Eligibility rates remained high since the National Commission on Refugees (CONARE) was established, ranging from 70% to 100%, and reaching 91% in 2016. Considering that most of the nationalities who had their cases reviewed in their merits were from El Salvador and Honduras, it points to a good level of understanding of the context of violence in the NCA. CONARE has also reviewed more cases and became more efficient in the past years. Eligibility officers in 2016 also became more compliant with the deadlines established in the asylum regulations in relation to the scheduling of RSD interviews (5 days): while in 2015 asylum-seekers waited an average of 11 days to be interviewed, in 2016 this waiting period stood at 5 days.
- In the first quarter of 2017, the CONARE in Guatemala reviewed 11 asylum claims, out of which 91% resulted in recognition of refugee status – all of them from nationals of El Salvador, including one LGBTI. Furthermore, RSD procedures took on average 1 month to be completed (1st instance) and by the end of March there were 4 pending cases.

- During the reporting period, UNHCR also conducted training and capacity building activities benefiting civil society organizations and government counterparts working on reception of deportee children, public shelters and on assistance to victims of human trafficking, both in Guatemala City and the Department of San Marcos. UNHCR also conducted trainings on international protection and asylum mechanisms to Guatemalan consuls working in Mexico and the United States.
- The Government of Guatemala accepted the request of the UN Special Rapporteur on Internal Displacement to visit the country in 2019. In the meantime, the Government is preparing for its national census, in which questions to assess internal displacement will be included. The Presidential Commission on Human Rights confirmed its willingness to support UNHCR's study on violence and displacement in Guatemala, and already recognized, in a report shared with the Special Rapporteur, that Guatemala is directly affected by internal displacement, mainly due to natural disasters and violence perpetrated by criminal gangs.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- In Guatemala, the new Migration Code was approved by the Congress and promulgated by the President, but implementation is on hold pending decision on a judicial constitutional action filed at the Supreme Court in December 2016. As of March 2017, the Supreme Court had not yet issued its final decision and the enforcement of the Migration Code remained suspended.

HONDURAS

Achievements and Impact

- In order to improve the information available to assist with eligibility status procedures of Honduran asylum seekers, UNHCR organized a Country of Origin information mission for officials from Canada and Mexico. During the mission, focus groups and meetings have been carried out with people of concern and visits to high-risk areas both in San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa have been organized.
- UNHCR continued supporting local authorities in the development of guidelines for the identification of deported children with protection needs when transiting through the centers. In the first trimester, about 150 deported children have been identified as in need of protection and benefitted of special attention thanks to the guidelines developed with UNHCR's support.

- As part of the UNHCR strategy to strengthen the international protection system in Honduras and to promote the empowerment of people of concern (PoC), a Committee composed of refugees and asylum seekers has been established with the aim to follow up on the findings of the participatory assessment carried out with asylum seekers and refugees in 2016. The Committee and its work plan will be presented to the National Institute of Migration during the second trimester.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The protection needs identified are severe and remain undocumented. Communities and individuals forced to leave are not recognized by local authorities or provided with any kind of support, not even basic needs such as food, shelter or clothing.

BELIZE

Achievements and Impact

- Following the full transition of the national asylum system to the Government of Belize as of June 2016, a total of 2,431 asylum-seekers were registered with the Refugee Department at the beginning of 2017, in addition to an estimated 1,709 persons of concern who did not formally enter the Government's asylum system. Belize's Refugee Eligibility Committee continues meeting once per month, handling on average ten applications in each session. Most cases have been receiving positive recommendations.
- UNHCR's new Head of Office joined the operation in February 2017. Since then, the Office has invested significant efforts in relationship-building with many key Government, UN, and diplomatic actors in Belize.
- On February 4, UNHCR carried out a full-day training for the entire staff of the Refugees Department and UNHCR is preparing plans for a series of capacity-building efforts to begin in the second quarter of the year. These will include traveling to strategic regions of Belize to train Police, Immigration, and Defense officials responsible for monitoring the border; training case workers and other Human Development Ministry staff who may come into contact with children and youth who are unaccompanied or separated; and for members of the judiciary.
- During the first months of 2017, the Office also continued strengthening host communities' resilience and absorption capacities through community projects including one ongoing livelihoods initiative (greenhouse project).
- Through UNHCR's implementing partner, Help for Progress, asylum-seekers have been able to access limited material assistance and those whose cases are

denied access to asylum processes may be able to seek legal assistance for appeals.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- While the Government continues welcoming UNHCR's presence and demonstrated commitment to the national asylum system, a standstill at the Ministry of Immigration has prevented any refugees to have their status officially confirmed so far, including those having been positively recommended by the statutory Refugee Eligibility Committee.
- In the first quarter of 2017, the Government issued the first denial (based upon being over 14 days) of cases that had been reviewed by the Refugee Eligibility Committee and recommended for recognition as refugees. UNHCR is concerned about the use of an arbitrary deadline to bar many asylum-seekers from accessing Government protection, and will continue to work with the Belizean authorities to rectify the situation.
- As a consequence of restrictive measures, official registration of new asylum-seekers has ostensibly declined, while the perilous situation in the NCA continues unabated. The Office estimates that the actual number of persons of concern in the country is significantly higher and will soon undertake a joint mapping project with the participation of the Government and civil society actors in order to better understand the scope of the refugee situation in Belize.
- Asylum-seekers are still unable to access work authorization in Belize, making them vulnerable to exploitation and other risks. UNHCR continues to engage the Government in dialogue to advocate for the provision of work authorization to asylum-seekers, as this would allow greater self-sustainability and reduce the burden on UNHCR and the Government to provide humanitarian aid support.
- As to unaccompanied or separated children in Belize, UNHCR is working to create closer relationships with the Ministry of Human Development, and to strengthen staff working on these issues. Likewise, recent situations suggest the need for UNHCR to work closely with immigration and detention authorities to make sure persons who wish to apply for asylum are not detained and their right to apply from asylum is systematically respected, even from within detention.

COSTA RICA

Achievements and Impact

- Within the framework of the Quality Assurance Initiative, UNHCR will collaborate with the Administration implementing the Backlog Reduction Project, in order to

prevent that the positive outcomes of the project get reverted, given that the Refugee Unit finalized 2016 with no pending backlogs, and all cases before the Administrative Migration Tribunal were submitted with recommendations for the Judges to hand down their final decisions. This is particularly relevant considering that the increasing tendency of asylum claims continued on the rise, closing 2016 with 4,460 claims, a 102% increase when compared with 2015, and a 222% increase when compared with 2014.

- UNHCR received four cases (18 persons) from Honduras under the Office's ad-hoc humanitarian evacuation programme. The four families were received at the entry point of *Peñas Blancas*, ensuring their effective access to Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures and referrals to the Refugee Unit accordingly. Partner agencies ensured emergency accommodation at a shelter for SGBV survivors (CENDEROS) from the NCA countries, as well as legal assistance (HIAS).
- Together with the Office of the Vice-President, UNHCR successfully advocated to restrain a separation order that had been issued by the National Children's Protection Institute regarding a new-born baby against their asylum-seeker parents who recently arrived in Costa Rica. Also, in coordination with the local government of *Curridabat* and the Ombudsperson's Office, UNHCR successfully advocated to restrain a separation instruction from officials from the *Calderon Guardia* Hospital regarding a new-born baby against his mother (at risk of statelessness) who arrived in Costa Rica more than four years ago but lacks birth or nationality certification.
- UNHCR organised a training session with the Civil Registry Office's Naturalisation Department and partner agency Jesuits Migrants' Service to improve the capacity of the agency in their preparation and submission of refugee naturalisation procedures before the Civil Registry Office and to ensure the positive and expedited resolution of the cases, including simplified procedures in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that was signed with the Supreme Electoral Tribunal on the matter.
- Following UNHCR's advocacy efforts, and as per the Director of the Civil Registry Office's initiative, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal approved the amendment of the Civil Registry Office Internal Regulations to include a specific chapter regarding procedural matters relating to the naturalisation of stateless and refugee stateless persons upon their status determination. Naturalisation procedures can be filed before the Civil Registry Office after being granted stateless status by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and prove two years of residency in the country. The Internal

Regulations, which provide for simplified procedures, will enter into force following the publication in the Official Gazette.

- In a joint mission with the UN Resident Coordinator, UNHCR visited the *Upala* and *Los Chiles* Counties' Civil Registry Officers, in preparation to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal/UNHCR programme that will be implemented during the second half of 2017. As per the Tribunal's request, this programme will follow up on the mapping exercise that took place in late 2016 to better understand the sub-birth registration situation among transnational workers born in Costa Rica to parents of Nicaraguan origin who were not registered at birth and still face barriers to effective access to late-birth registration and birth certificate issuance procedures, and will assist in the filing of approximately 320 late-birth registration procedures.
- UNHCR conducted a monitoring mission to Peñas Blancas, Liberia and Las Cruces. A SGBV prevention and response and child protection workshop, including a refresher session on International Refugee Law and Statelessness were conducted for public officers from governmental and civil society institutions.
- UNHCR and a judge from the administrative tribunal on migration met with the Costa Rican Bar Association authorities to explore capacity-building activities and pro-bono work among their lawyer associates.
- Three cases were submitted through the Protection Transfer Agreement (PTA) to the Costa Rican Migration Authority, with positive outcomes. The Migration Authority authorised the transfer of the family and their staying in Costa Rica for a period of six months and instructed the Costa Rican Consulate in El Salvador for the issuance of relevant permits. Since February 2017, all cases have been sheltered in a full-board housing accommodation that was provided by partner University for Peace, and have been enrolled to the national health care insurance during their transit in Costa Rica. All participants have also been enrolled in an immersion English course with the University for Peace in preparation to their resettlement to the USA, and have been provided with psychological support.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- It is of concern that excessive delays continue to occur in the processing of asylum applications and issuance of relevant documentation. The high cost of renewing migration-related documentation and the fact that the issuance of identity documents is contingent on the obligation to become affiliated to and contribute to the Costa Rican Social Security Fund are an obstacle for refugees

to gain effective access to their economic, social and cultural rights, in particular the right to an adequate standard of living.

MEXICO

Achievements and Impact

- Mexico received 8,781 new asylum applications in 2016, a spike of 156.4 per cent compared to 2015. Preliminary information gathered at the field level in the first quarter of 2017 indicated that this upward trend was continuing.
- From the 1st of January to the 31st of March, 277 persons (175 cases) were released from detention centres and transferred to shelters with the support of UNHCR, in coordination with COMAR (Refugee Commission), INM (National Migration Institute) and partner shelters. Overall, since Mexico's commitments in San Jose in July 2016 to promote alternatives to detention for asylum-seekers, 910 asylum-seekers have benefitted from alternatives to detention. UNHCR expects this initial pilot programme to become a permanent public policy.
- UNHCR Mexico has set up a working group on SGBV with Mexico City shelters and local civil society organisations, which has met already three times in 2017 to discuss the most pressing needs in terms of responding to SGBV and to coordinate capacity building on specific issues. A coordination mechanism for the response to SGBV cases is also being created.
- In the first quarter of 2017, more than 260 persons have received legal assistance either through individualized legal assistance or legal representation. From the total number of cases legally represented (203), 23 have been recognized as refugees while 24 have been denied. The rest of the cases remain pending.
- In March, UNHCR, IOM, UNFPA and UNODC under the coordination of UNIC, launched the UN joint campaign "Together" (#Juntos) to raise awareness on the plight of refugees and migrants in Mexico. The campaign is being disseminated in subway stations in Mexico City, and it also includes digital content on social media. UNHCR, IOM and UNIC will be leading the call to action proposals for the second stage of the "Together" campaign.
- UNHCR has developed a workshop with the ICRC and the IOM for shelters across the country to increase knowledge on the right to international protection and of the migratory dynamics in Mexico, to strengthen capabilities to identify persons with international protection needs and to assist survivors of SGBV. Two workshops have already been carried out for more than 40 shelter staff in Central

and North-eastern Mexico, the first in Mexico City in December 2016 and the second in Monterrey in March 2017. The next training will take place in Tijuana in July 2017, to train shelter staff in the North-western Mexico.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Six participatory assessments on SGBV have been carried out in Mexico thus far in 2017, with participants describing harrowing episodes of SGBV when entering Mexico. The participants expressed a need for awareness-raising campaigns amongst shelter staff and asylum-seekers and migrants, as well as families and communities, in terms of rights and needs of SGBV survivors. These assessments served to confirm the urgent need to design and disseminate information across shelters in Mexico, with a comprehensive map of services to prevent and treat cases of SGBV, as well as to organise awareness raising activities on SGBV.

PANAMA

Achievements and Impact

- In the framework of the Quality Assurance Initiative (QAI), UNHCR and its governmental partner ONPAR carried out a revision of the more than 70 recommendations resulting from the four phases of the QAI in order to update the implementation status and to establish priorities for 2017.
- Four lawyers recently hired by ONPAR will focus on the drafting of resolution proposals seeking to diminish the waiting time for asylum applicants.
- UNHCR facilitated a four-day workshop on refugee status determination targeting ONPAR lawyers and legal assistants.
- UNHCR worked with ONPAR to adapt its registration material to the specific needs of children. UNHCR also facilitated a training session for ONPAR staff on interviewing techniques with children and adolescents.
- A total of 59 individuals benefitted from the assistance of UNHCR's partner *Pastoral de Movilidad Humana*, 60 per cent of which presented protection needs.

UNITED STATES

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR, together with civil society experts, conducted webinars on presenting asylum claims made by children and by women, intended for attorneys representing asylum-seekers in the United States. The webinar was part of a larger series of trainings to build awareness and capacity among the U.S. legal

community of the UNHCR legal protection framework, with a particular focus on claims made by those fleeing NCA countries. More than 200 attorneys participated in the women's webinar and 116 attended the children's webinar. Additional webinars are planned, including on claims made by the LGBTI community in the NCA.

- In the first three months of 2017, UNHCR provided information on access to international protection in the United States to 186 persons of concern from the NCA, 140 of which were new cases. The majority of these persons of concern contacted UNHCR from immigration detention centers around the country.
- UNHCR visited various sites in the U.S. to conduct fact-finding on the situation of asylum-seekers and the communities receiving them. These visits included meetings with a range of stakeholders, including U.S. government officials, civil society partners, consulates and persons of concern, to gather information to better understand the needs and challenges facing asylum-seekers and stakeholders receiving and supporting them. This panorama will help identify inform UNHCR's protection work moving forward to support communities supporting refugees.
- UNHCR provided funding to support case management training for attorneys in two U.S. jurisdictions with extremely limited legal capacity for asylum work. These efforts expanded access to counsel for adult asylum-seekers from the NCA in underserved communities and detention centers, thereby improving their access to asylum in the United States. A total of 64 attorneys received training and provided counsel to 34 asylum cases.



SHELTER AND NFIS

GUATEMALA

Achievements and Impact

- During 2016, UNHCR made significant progress in strengthening the Protection Network to ensure the safe and dignified transit of thousands of persons with international protection needs who travel to and through Guatemala. Through its new Field Office in Petén and with the support of the National Protection Network, UNHCR and partners monitor border regions and identify, register and refer cases of persons with international protection needs that transit through the country. In 2017, a total of 5 shelters (including one specifically for unaccompanied children) and other transit spaces in strategic border points are

being supported by UNHCR, most of which include child friendly spaces and are managed by staff trained on protection approaches sensitive to age, gender and diversity.

- The roll out of innovative data collection tools (Kobo) and development of standard operating procedures to consolidate referral mechanisms within the Network's focal points led to improvements in the identification, assistance and analysis of profiles and trends.
- In the first quarter of 2017, the National Protection Network assisted approximately 900 persons, amongst which 89% were male. Children in transit travelling with their families or unaccompanied represented 10% of the population assisted - only 10 were identified as unaccompanied children. Moreover, six LGBTI persons were also identified. The main nationality remained Hondurans (89% of persons assisted), followed by Guatemalans (10%) and Salvadorans (4%). Other assisted nationalities included Nicaraguans and Mexicans. In relation to their country of destination, 38% declared the U.S. and 34% mentioned Mexico. Some 13% of persons in transit were identified as persons who fled their countries of origin due to violence and persecution.

HONDURAS

Achievements and Impact

- In the first months of 2017, UNHCR further strengthened the municipal office for women in San Pedro Sula, where protection, legal, social and psychological assistance was provided to more than 60 families in 2016, offering shelter, food, medical assistance and training in order to encourage the self-reliance of women victims of violence. In the shelter, women find an opportunity to recover from mistreatment suffered; they learn a trade and have the possibility to become entrepreneurs able to support their families. It is expected that the support provided will strengthen the municipality's response to women and children victims of violence, displacement and at risk of displacement.
- UNHCR also strengthened the Felipe Zelaya's Health Center in Rivera Hernandez (San Pedro Sula) as part of its protection strategy. Thanks to the in-kind support provided since the beginning of the year, quality medical health services have been provided to members of the community, including vulnerable woman affected by violence and displacement.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Due to the lack of an emergency response provided by government institutions, the reinforcement of the protection network and the provision of shelter and non-food items to persons of concern remains a priority.

MEXICO

Achievements and Impact

- In the first quarter of 2017, 122,538 USD was delivered in cash assistance to at least 1,700 people, an increase of 164 per cent compared to the same period in 2016. Also, 621 people were accommodated in shelters that are financially supported by UNHCR.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- With an increasing number of people reaching Mexico, the funding will fall short to cover the basic needs of new arrivals. UNHCR estimates that the number of asylum-seekers in Mexico could reach 20,000 in 2017, meaning that at least 4,500 households would be in need of cash-based assistance.



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SELF RELIANCE

HONDURAS

Achievements and Impact

- With the opening of the new Field Office in San Pedro Sula in 2016, UNHCR has started the elaboration of a community strategy to reinforce dialogue between communities affected by forced displacement and local authorities, improve the protection by presence and the identification of protection mechanisms in high-risk areas, as well as the identification and promotion of community protection strategies to mitigate the impact of violence and risk of displacement. So far, several meetings with community leaders have been carried out in order to deepen the understanding of the protection needs and evaluate the potential responses.
- UNHCR's implementing partner Save the Children reinforced its presence in communities highly affected by violence in Tegucigalpa. In the 6 concerned communities, Save the children is working at the school level to train teachers in psychosocial support and in the identification of children at risk. Children at risk are benefitting from individual and group support. In addition, Save the Children is also contributing to the establishment of youth community centers in order to facilitate their empowerment and participation. UNHCR has been accompanying

this procedure and will complement it by replicating a community-based child protection workshop at Tegucigalpa level.

- Aiming at strengthening the national child protection system and reinforcing coordination mechanism between institutions at central and local levels, UNHCR organized a workshop on community-based child protection mechanisms along with the governmental child protection agency (DINAF) in San Pedro Sula. The workshop was destined to organizations and actors with field presence in high-risk communities of San Pedro Sula in order to facilitate their coordination with the central and local authorities, as well as to map their presence and upgrade their capacities in the area of community-based child protection.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- In the absence of a legal framework and adequate public policies and programmes, there is no institutional response at the local and community levels.
- Communities face constant pressure to participate in illegal activities, which limits their participation in social life and access to social services.
- UNHCR needs to reinforce its presence in high-risk areas in order to find adequate solutions and alternatives for protection and assistance mechanisms.

MEXICO

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR is in the process of developing a solutions strategy with a strong livelihoods component in Mexico. In order to ensure that initiatives aimed at self-reliance are sustainable and impactful, the operation is working with the ILO to conduct a market analysis in Mexico City and Chiapas. The preliminary results of the study were shared in early 2017, revealing high potential for refugee employment in the transportation (logistics), tourism and cleaning services sectors. The operation is currently working with consultants to conduct a socio-economic assessment of the refugee population, which will provide a profile of refugee needs, capacities and poverty and integration levels.
- Concurrently, UNHCR and partners are working to link refugees to existing formal employment opportunities. UNHCR partner *Programa Casa Refugiados* has actively engaged with the private sector to this end. One example of positive private-sector collaboration is Uber: 16 persons of concern have been included on the Uber Drive platform and six are working for Uber EATS.

- UNHCR is working closely with the Ministry of Labour to include refugees in existing programmes and services in Mexico City. In December 2016, UNHCR and ILO worked alongside the Ministry to modify the Operational Rules of their social programmes, incorporating the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in programmes enabling access to training for employment, job placement and unemployment insurance. *Programa Casa Refugiados* submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Labour for the inclusion of 30 refugees in a programme that will provide them grants while they participate in capacity building programmes, preparing them for the labour market.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Market analysis is required in other states throughout Mexico where refugees may have opportunities for integration and employment. The relationship with the Ministry of Labour of Mexico City is an initiative that must be replicated in other regions, in order to guarantee refugee access to programmes and services supporting their self-reliance. Currently, permanent residency documents are not recognized as official forms of identification by banks, limiting refugee access to financial services.



DURABLE SOLUTIONS

EL SALVADOR

Achievements and Impact

- The Protection Transfer Agreement (PTA) was launched in El Salvador in 2016, as one part of a broader response for persons from the North of Central America in need of protection, in order to offer a safe, legal and permanent protection solution for a limited number of vulnerable individuals at heightened risk and in need of international protection. Until January 20th, 191 persons had been referred to the PTA.

HONDURAS

Achievements and Impact

- Following the findings and recommendations of a consultancy carried out during the second semester of 2016 to identify main gaps within the national legal framework to protect abandoned, occupied and/or grabbed land and housing in forced displacement-related situations, UNHCR and the Honduran Association for municipalities started a dialogue to sign a letter of understanding in order to:
 - include forced displacement in the current registration form for land and housing;

- conduct a pilot in 2-3 municipalities regarding registration of abandoned land and housing;
 - provide technical assistance for the identification of typologies regarding land and housing grabbing and protection mechanisms;
 - promote expert exchanges with the land restitution unit from Colombia.
- A technical committee on land and housing will be activated within the Interinstitutional Commission for the protection of IDPs and provide solutions.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Main gaps still remain related to absence of legal and institutional protection mechanisms. Taking this into account, UNHCR is working in the development of registration systems of property and the inclusion of the variables of violence and displacement in land registration forms and tools in order to promote rights restitution.

COSTA RICA

Achievements and Impact

- During the reporting period, 376 PoC from the NCA have received assistance from the case workers through the partner agencies, which allows to have a complete evaluation of vulnerability for these families. This evaluations allowed the partner to make 30 references to health services and 13 references to the livelihoods programme. In high vulnerability cases, 82 families (276 beneficiaries) received economic assistance to cover their basic needs, 359 families received food items and 42 PoC received cash grants to get their refugee identification or to renew it. 14 SGBV cases were identified and received counselling. Also, these families receive counselling regarding Costa Rican public institutions, their rights and duties and references to psychosocial support, when necessary.
- Concerning the graduation approach, that gives counselling to the most vulnerable families, 125 PoC received cash grants, 18 PoC were referred to job positions, out of which 4 were employed, and 14 validated their primary or secondary diplomas. In this period, 22 graduation approach beneficiaries achieved the graduation from the process and 75 are still ongoing.
- One market study was developed by the livelihoods partner agency. The findings allow to choose the better options of training for the PoC. A total of 31 PoC have had the livelihoods assessment, a tool that identifies the strengths, capacities and knowledge of each person in order to establish whether the person should receive self-employment or technical training for wage-employment. The objective of the market assessment and the evaluation is to identify the livelihood

areas with more possibilities of allowing economic stability for the families. To favour the access to employment, one job fair was held in March with the participation of 12 enterprises and the attendance of 90 PoC who completed the Food Safety Education & Training, approved 9th grade of high school and had a valid work permit prior to be selected (data not still disaggregated by nationality).

- The partner agency responsible for the legal integration programme reported that 5 PoC asked for information about the naturalization process, 2 presented their case to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal in order to start the naturalization, 2 enrolled in the course for the naturalization exam and 1 PoC started the process in order to change the status to permanent residence.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The families from the NCA tend to travel with several family members, including small children and elderly people. These conditions make the search for an adequate home and a regular income for the family more urgent. Among the main needs for the population are: stable work, decent housing, access to public health services and technical training.
- To close the gap for the access to these goods and services, UNHCR is working with the Social Welfare Institute (IMAS) to sign a MoU that would allow the persons of concern to be integrated into the public social assistance system. UNHCR is developing a MoU with the Ministry of Labour to streamline access to the job opportunities programme. The current MoU with the Ministry of Education is being strengthened thanks to the positive results obtained so far in the validation of diplomas and access to primary and secondary education.

MEXICO

Achievements and Impact

- In 2016, the Mexico operation launched an integration programme in Saltillo, an industrial city of Northern Mexico. The programme is now entering its third phase, and, in early 2017, fifteen refugees have been selected to be relocated from Tenosique and Tapachula to Saltillo, where they will benefit from housing, education, health and employment opportunities. The programme thus far has yielded positive results for the thirty six participants in previous phases. Twenty two of the twenty three working-age adults were presented with at least one job opportunity (1 pursuing education instead). Every employed refugee has access to a bank account. Seventeen refugees (12 children and five adults) were provided with educational opportunities. All participants have access to healthcare.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- While the Southern Border states of Mexico host large numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers, these regions do not have many economic opportunities and therefore do not offer good prospects for local integration. Using lessons learned from Saltillo, the operation is mapping regions across Mexico where there are more possibilities for socio-cultural and economic integration. This requires strengthening links with different government actors, as well as civil society and the private sector.
- Naturalization remains a challenge for persons of concern in Mexico, due to the high cost and time requirements. Refugees must process their naturalization in Mexico City, which limits the number of potential beneficiaries.

PANAMA

Achievements and Impact

- As regards local integration, UNHCR's partner the Panamanian Red Cross organized three workshops focused on women empowerment and the prevention of violence. Also, 23 people of concern have started vocational training aiming at facilitating their integration into the national labour market.

Financial Information

Agencies are very grateful for the financial support provided by donors who have contributed to their activities with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds as well as for those who have contributed directly to the NCA Situation.

Donors who have contributed to the operation:

- | | |
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| ■ United States
USD 1,069,926 | ■ Private Donors Canada
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USD 1,590,248 |
| ■ Spain
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USD 994 |

Funding (in million USD)

A total of **USD 4 million** has been funded.
The funding gap amounts to **USD 25 million**.

External / Donors Relations

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2017

United States (95 M) | Sweden (76 M) | Netherlands (52 M) | Norway (41 M) | Priv Donors Spain (24 M) | Denmark (23 M) | Australia (19 M) | Canada (16 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | France (14 M) | Germany (12 M) | Priv Donors Republic of Korea (12 M)

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