

Central America and Mexico

Operational Update | May 2021

Regional context

In **Central America**, hundreds of thousands of people live under the threat of criminal gangs, and entire families are pushed to flee their homes due to violence and persecution, compounded by extreme poverty, climate phenomena and the COVID-19 pandemic. In **El Salvador**, a labour market study commissioned by UNHCR across six IDP reception cities show that LGBTQI+ population and persons with disabilities are increasingly exposed to discrimination and harassment when seeking employment.

Between January and May 2021, the National Protection Authority for Children in **Honduras** reported receiving 2,595 deported children, most of whom received attention in reception centres and psychosocial support. In **Guatemala**, according to the Social Welfare Secretariat, 1,983 unaccompanied children were returned from Mexico and the United States between January and May 2021. At least half of them were indigenous (54%) and 85% were on average between 14 to 17 years old.

According to the NGO Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, A.C., in the first five months of the year, 3,546 people were internally displaced due to violence in **Mexico**. In May, two massive events of internal displacement were recorded by this NGO impacting 954 people.

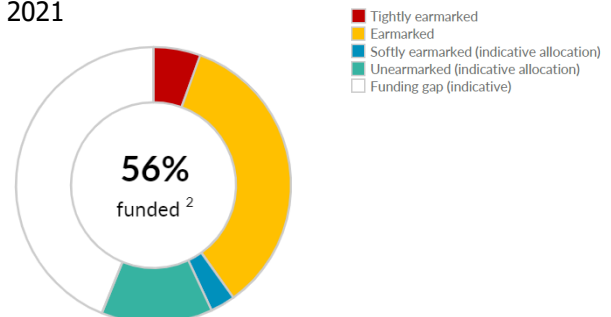
UNHCR supports the formal termination of the MPP ("Remain in Mexico") programme. Since 19 February to the end of May, UNHCR jointly with IOM and UNICEF have assisted 11,393 persons to continue their asylum case in the US.

Authorities recorded 5,818 people in mixed movements crossing into **Panama** from Colombia in April, up 577% from January. Most of the people are from Haiti and Cuba, but many also travel from as far away as Bangladesh and Uzbekistan, trying to eventually reach the United States.

FUNDING (as of 16 June)

USD 173.5 M

requested for **North of Central America** situation in 2021



DON'T MISS...



The international community reaffirmed its solidarity with forcibly displaced people in **Central America and Mexico** and with the seven countries that make up the **Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS)** in the region, during the Solidarity Event for Forcibly Displaced Persons and Host Communities in Central America and Mexico held in Costa Rica on 10 June. Organized by the governments of Spain, Costa Rica and Guatemala, with the support of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and the OAS, during the Event new commitments were presented at both the humanitarian and development levels with substantive contributions totalling US\$110 million.

- [READ](#) the joint press release: [International community mobilizes to find solutions to the forced displacement that affects Central America and Mexico.](#)

Updates from the field

(MIRPS) COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL PROTECTION AND SOLUTIONS FRAMEWORK

- **Round Tables of Experts of MIRPS on Strengthening asylum systems** were held the last two weeks of May, topics discussed included shelter management, management of large groups of refugees, international protection needs, case management and biometric registration, and differentiated modalities of case processing.
- During the second meeting of the **MIRPS Working Group on Forced Internal Displacement**, participants shared good practices on data management and the use of statistics on internally displaced persons, including the importance of confidentiality in the process.

COORDINATION WITH LOCAL & NATIONAL GOVERNMENT / STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

- In **Costa Rica**, the Inter-institutional Liaison Commission on Statelessness, an entity attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has been established to serve as a space for coordination of actions by institutions to prevent, identify and protect stateless persons.
- In **Guatemala**, the Municipal Library of Quetzaltenango "Alberto Velásquez" was inaugurated with the support of UNHCR after the improvement and expansion of safe learning spaces and strengthening of alliances with local educational institutions for asylum seekers, refugees, and local population.
- In the context of the recently signed Cities of Solidarity agreement in Izabal, **Guatemala**, UNHCR worked with the municipality in Puerto Barrios to advance in the planning for the construction of a Centre for Integral Attention to Women co-funded by UNHCR and the local government.
- In **El Salvador**, after coordination with UNHCR, San Vicente Municipality is up to become the first local government with a referral system to assist internally displaced people.
- In **Honduras**, equipment was donated to strengthen the reception and processing capacity in registration and RSD procedures in the National Migration Institute, Centres for Reception of Irregular Migrants (CAMIS), and 10 border offices.

PROTECTION (INCL. CBP AND SGBV)

- In **Costa Rica**, the Help Webpage has been completely converted to audio, enabling people with visual impairments access to relevant and reliable information offered on cash support, help assistance and prevention of exploitation, sexual abuse and gender violence.
- In **Guatemala**, the capacity to identify cases of survivors of gender-based violence in high-risk communities will be expanded and six new mobile units will be shortly deployed as an innovative model that will reach Guatemalans at risk, refugees, people in transit and others of concern.
- Some 80 older adults from rural and indigenous areas in Nahuizalco municipality (Sonsonate, **El Salvador**) received medical assistance thanks to a health care campaign organized with UNHCR support.
- To reduce the current backlog generated by the spike in new arrivals to **Mexico** in March and April 2021, 14 additional registration assistants were deployed to Tapachula, with the waiting period for a new appointment having been halved and the backlog expected to be absorbed within a month. The Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR) registered 41,197 asylum seekers from January to May 2021, including 9,339 in May alone.
 - **READ** the report [A claim to dignity: Aging on the move.](#)

CHILD PROTECTION

- In **El Salvador**, four public schools in three departments were renovated to ensure that they are compliant with COVID-19 bio protection guidelines. The renovations will facilitate education for 1,500 children in host communities, IDPs and persons at risk of displacement.
- A Child Protection Campaign "Pinta mi Mundo de Colores" (Paint my world with colours) was launched in **Honduras** to raise awareness on protection needs for children and to promote a broader understanding of risks associated with forced displacement.
- In **Mexico**, UNHCR supports the government to improve reception conditions and ensure the timely intervention of child protection authorities, through the provision of temporary staffing and by strengthening the capacity of government and civil society shelters for unaccompanied children and children with their families.

INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

- UNHCR, IOM and UN-Habitat seeks in **Panama** to promote activities for socio-economic inclusion in urban environments with participation of host communities and Venezuelan refugees and migrants.
- In **Guatemala** UNHCR, IOM and UNICEF have signed a letter of understanding with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Guatemala Migration Institute to strengthen response and coordination capacities.
 - [READ a joint statement by the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence sub-working group including UNHCR and IOM regarding LGBTI+ in forced displacement in Mexico](#)

DELIVERY OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE & CASH

- During May, assistance in cash was provided in **Costa Rica** to 700 individuals and in **Guatemala** to 742 beneficiaries.
- In **Belize**, UNHCR assisted 84 cases with food, rent, medical assistance, psychosocial support, and legal counselling.
- In **El Salvador**, 39 families who were forced to flee their homes in Panchimalco (San Salvador) received emergency assistance.
- In **Panama**, UNHCR, with the support of the Ombudsman Office in Darien, visited two indigenous communities hosting refugees, and delivered 240 food kits to be distributed to refugees and local communities.
 - [READ the Americas regional update, May 2021](#)

DURABLE SOLUTIONS & LIVELIHOODS

- In **Belize**, a livelihood training was conducted for refugee and asylum seeker women within Grupo de Mujeres Unidas Refugiadas (GMUR) as part of a programme to build capacity and to help women become self-reliant by executing a business idea.
- In **Costa Rica**, the COSVIC Institute (technological education) donated 65 scholarships for refugees and asylum seekers in Customer Service and Business Start-up Management.
- In **Guatemala**, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, National Association of Municipalities, Grupos Gestores, AGEXPORT, ManPower Group, FUNDAECO and UNHCR established a roundtable to design livelihoods and economic inclusion promotion activities for approximately 2,500 refugees, asylum seekers, returnees and Guatemalans at risk of displacement.
- In **El Salvador**, as of 30 April, 550 people of concern are receiving livelihoods support from UNHCR.
- In **Panama**, the first generation of the Talent without Borders (Talento sin Fronteras) programme has finished its first phase with 33 refugees, asylum seekers, and members of the host community, who received online workshop on job-seeking and employability skills.
- An [innovative integration program](#) led by UNHCR has helped more than 10,000 refugees relocate within **Mexico**. UNHCR supports program participants with temporary housing, cultural orientation, vocational training, school enrolment and job placement.

The importance of flexible funding for UNHCR's situations

Flexible financial support allows UNHCR to place funds anywhere within a given situation, in line with the office's priorities, from where people in need are forced to flee, to where they find refuge. Flexible funding needs to be timely for UNHCR to plan in the most efficient manner, allocating to priorities first.

UNHCR's humanitarian response in **Central America and Mexico** is made possible thanks to the generous support of major donors who have contributed unrestricted funding to UNHCR's global operations, and to donors who have generously contributed directly to **UNHCR Americas operations**.

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CENTRAL AMERICA and MEXICO
PERSONS OF CONCERN as of Mid Year Statistics

