

North of Central America Situation

September - October 2020

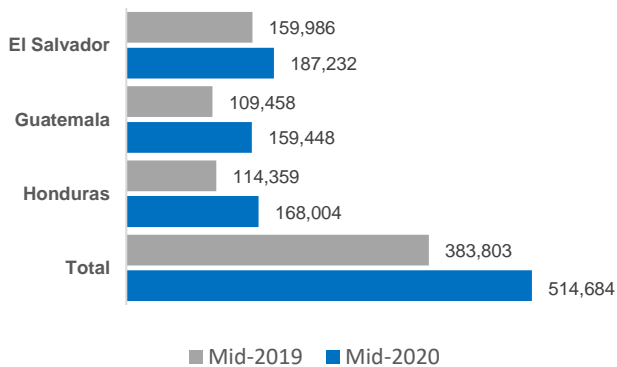
Around **514,700** refugees and asylum-seekers from the North of Central America in the world and **318,590** internally displaced people in Honduras and El Salvador.

The number of COVID-19 cases and deaths continues to rise, with the highest number of deaths recorded in Guatemala; more than 3,650 since the pandemic began. A progressive lifting of COVID-19 restrictions started across the region.

Violence against girls and adolescents has intensified during the pandemic, while other forms of violence and abuse continue in the region, including murders and femicides, kidnappings, extortion and threats against members of the LGBTI community.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

By country of origin

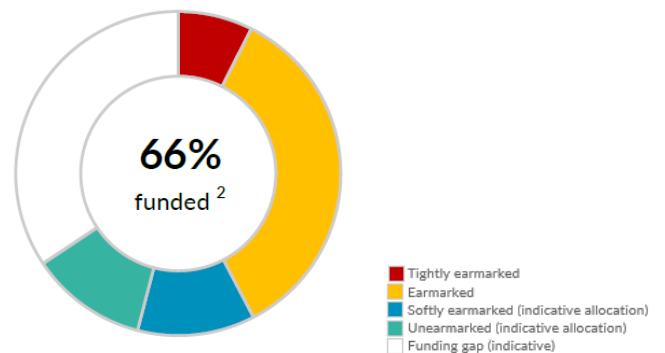


Source: Based on data provided by governments to UNHCR as of Mid-20.

FUNDING (AS OF 22 OCTOBER 2020)

US\$ 113.6 M

requested for the NCA situation¹



1. The financial requirements of the North of Central America Situation include requirements in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico.
2. \$39,048,551 gap in funding represents 34% of the financial requirements.

CONTEXT

Gang violence continues to affect young men and women across northern Central America, including through forced disappearances, sexual violence, insecurity and domestic violence. In Guatemala, Escuintla, Alta Verapaz, Huehuetenango, San Marcos and Guatemala City register the highest rates of cases of sexual crimes against children. In El Salvador, 434 of the 824 persons reported missing in the first semester of 2020 were between the ages of 12 and 30, according to the General Attorney. More than 6,800 girls and adolescents have become pregnant during the first 6 months of this year, including 258 girls between the ages of 10 and 14. In Honduras, records of the Ministry of Health state that an average of three girls and adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19 give birth every hour.

As COVID-19 measures are easing, large movements of people have started occurring. An estimated number of 5,000 persons departed in a large mixed movement from San Pedro Sula, Honduras, between 30 September and 1 October heading north. Over 3,700 people were returned to Honduras, and 35 have sought asylum in Guatemala.

UNHCR and partners continue to implement programmes in high risk communities and monitor situations of violence to respond forced displacement in the region.



In Guatemala, the National Association of Municipalities and the Municipalities of Esquipulas, Flores and San Benito formalized their participation in the MIRPS Cities of Solidarity Initiative. The authorities expressed their commitment to refugees and willingness to partner with UNHCR and civil society in the provision of humanitarian assistance and steps towards local integration.

UNHCR Response and Strategy

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 MIRPS is a pioneering application of the Global Compact on Refugees in Central America and Mexico. MIRPS States agreed to an alphabetical rotation of the annual Temporary Presidency and Guatemala will assume the role in 2021, following the conclusion of El Salvador's stewardship this year. MIRPS and CRM (Regional Migration Conference) defined areas of mutual collaboration in the context of mixed movements in the region.

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 Honduras, the draft law on Prevention and Protection of Internally Displaced People was officially presented to the National Congress thanks to the advocacy strategy of Jóvenes Contra la Violencia-Honduras. In Guatemala, National Civil Police officials in the border communities of Izabal are reinforcing their capacity to identify people with protection needs. In Mexico, the Chamber of Deputies approved by unanimity a reform to the Refugees and Migration Law, to harmonize these laws with the General Law on Rights of Children.



Health

In Costa Rica, 68 refugees and asylum seekers with illnesses requiring urgent assistance are receiving medical care under the agreement with the Costa Rican Social Security. In Honduras, two mobile handwashing stations, hygiene supplies, informative material and information sessions on proper handwashing were delivered in one school and one community centre within the framework of Blueprint for Joint Action with Unicef. In El Salvador, UNHCR and the Ministry of Culture distributed 1,030 biosafety and hygiene kits to indigenous people from nine Nahuizalco communities in the department of Sonsonate. In Guatemala, the Health Department in Quetzaltenango distributed WASH items and protective equipment donated by UNHCR in Tecun Uman. In Belize, psychosocial support is being provided through radio programmes both in English and Spanish on how to help children cope with COVID-19. In Mexico, cleaning products were distributed in 71 shelters and over 110 refugee health professionals were identified to enter the public health system.



Providing safe spaces and shelter

In Guatemala, four refugee housing units were installed near the borders for COVID-19 testing within the community and for persons in transit. A new shelter for refugees and people in mixed movements was opened in Guatemala City. In El Salvador, 30 public schools are being remodelled in coordination with the Ministry of Education. In Mexico, 120 shelters received materials on prevention and hygiene measures, available in 5 languages. In a joint effort with IOM and Unicef, a multimedia library was activated and more than 34 shelters are already broadcasting the content.



Community-based protection interventions

In Belize, UNHCR in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Local Government, and Rural Development are piloting a model for community based participation in local development planning in Bella Vista. In Guatemala, the Procumovil continues to tour different municipalities, and coordinates with relevant authorities the identification and referral of persons in need of international protection. In El Salvador, key institutions from the municipalities of Quelepa and San Miguel are developing an early warning system to identify protection-related incidents in communities, and develop referral pathways for internally displaced persons using a protection sensitive approach when working with survivors of gender-based violence and victims of recruitment.



Durable solutions and livelihoods

In Honduras, 15 teachers and community leaders from high-risk neighborhoods were trained on soft and vocational skills at the Youth Community Centre. In Panama, courses on digital literacy are being provided to strengthen the technical skills of refugees and asylum seekers and to promote entrepreneurship. 700 tablets were delivered to UNHCR partners to be distributed among refugee and asylum seeker families with school-age children to ensure access to online education. In Mexico, under a new pilot programme, two groups of refugees were relocated from Tapachula (24 persons) and Tenosique (23 persons) to Querétaro and Aguascalientes. 80,000 school packages were donated to families in Chiapas, Tabasco, Oaxaca, Veracruz and Baja California.



Campaigns against xenophobia

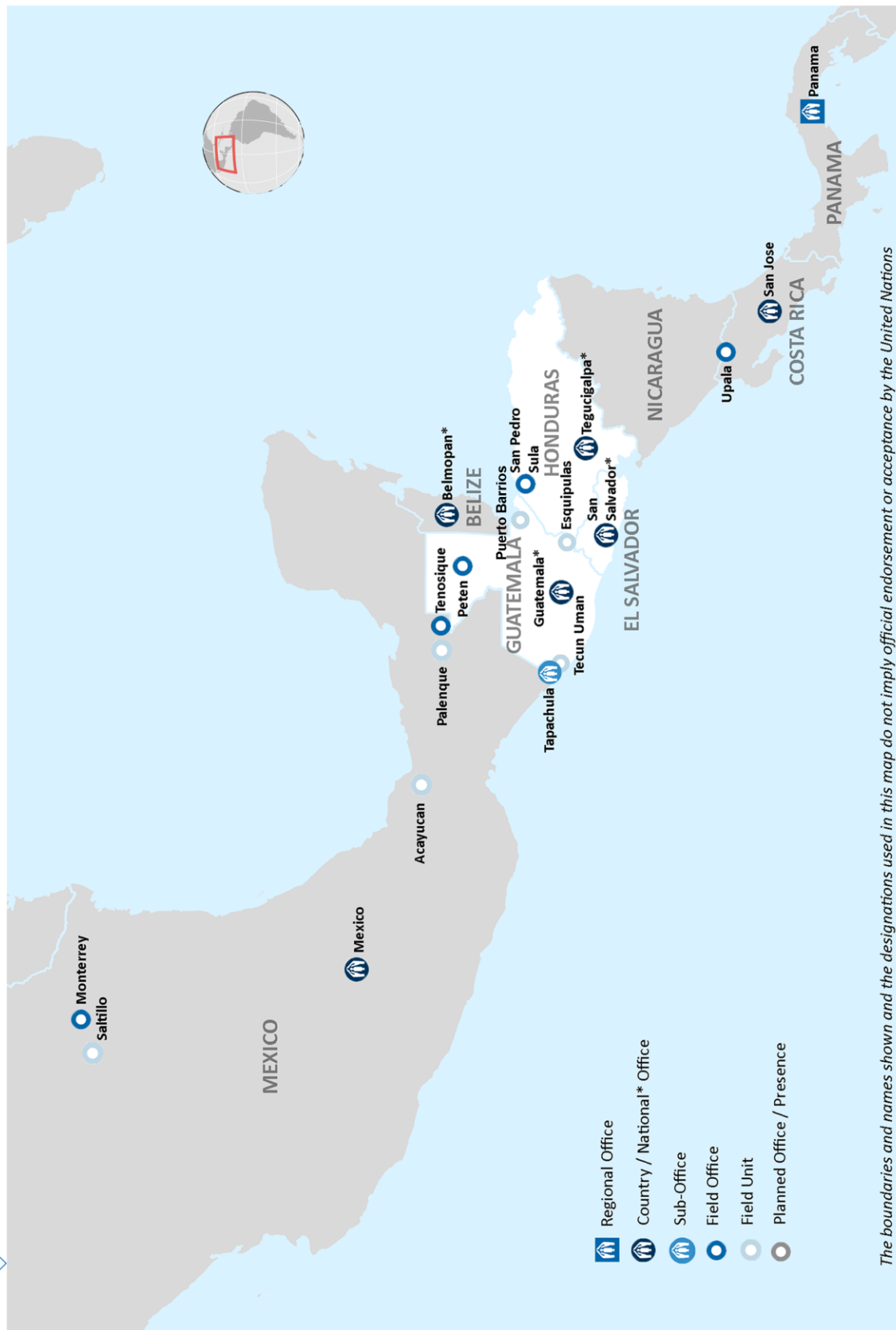
In El Salvador, the University of Central America produced a stop-motion short film to showcase the human drama of internal forced displacement. In Honduras, as part of the project "Network of Community Youth Communicators", UNHCR launched a virtual learning programme for 18 youth from three community-based organizations. In Panama, UNHCR and OIM launched a **new song** as part of the joint antixenophobia campaign Somos lo Mismo. In Costa Rica, UNHCR launched the first round of PeaceLab, an initiative that will gather 30 innovators to generate ideas and responses to xenophobia and disinformation. [Mexico's help site](#) now includes audio capsules to ensure access to information for persons with reading and visual impairments.

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 | Italy | Netherlands | Norway | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | United States of America

And to our private donors: Australia | Italy | Japan | Korea, Republic of | Lebanon | Spain | Unilever (UK) | USA for UNHCR

For more information: [Giovanni Bassu](#), Regional Representative, bassu@unhcr.org; [Diana Diaz](#), Associate Regional CRR Officer (Comms), diazdi@unhcr.org

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



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