



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



EXPANDING
OPERATIONS IN
CENTRAL AMERICA
2019

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1. Overview

 396,300

Persons of Concern
in Central America
by end of 2018

 539,500

Projected Persons
of Concern in
Central America by
end of 2019

 Six

UNHCR operations
covered by this appeal

In the North of Central America (NCA) tens of thousands of people have been forced into displacement by a confluence of factors that have led to an escalating situation of chronic violence and insecurity. These factors range from the influence of organized crime such as drug cartels and urban gangs, to the limited national capacity—compounded by corruption, poverty and exclusion—of States to provide protection.

By mid-2018, there were 312,000 refugees and asylum-seekers from the NCA region, around five

more than at the end of 2014. Internal displacement has increased with official estimates of around 245,500 internally displaced people (IDPs) in Honduras and El Salvador in the last ten years. In addition, an average of 200,000 people per year have been deported to NCA countries over the last five years, many of whom fear returning to their communities of origin because the violence they fled is still present, if not worse. All countries in the region have been affected—as countries of origin, transit, asylum and or return—and sometimes all of these at the same time.

312,000 Refugees and asylum-seekers from NCA worldwide
As of June 2018

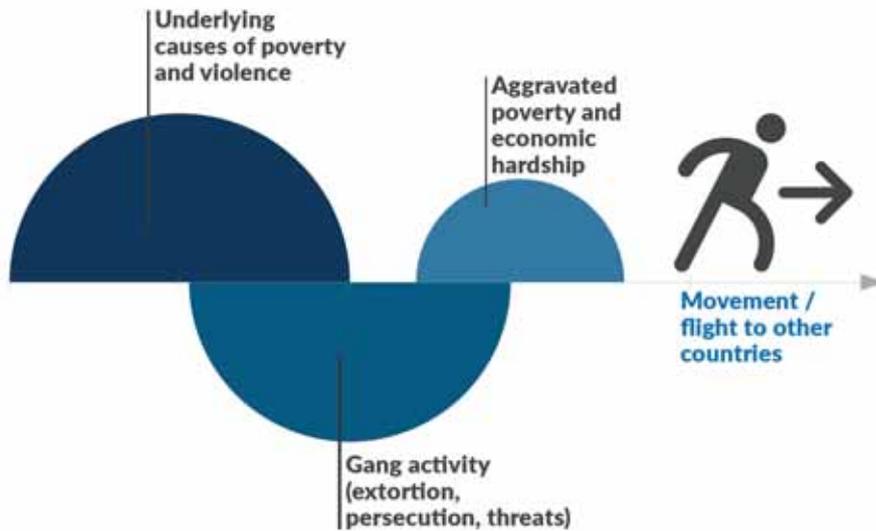


Source: Data provided by Governments to UNHCR.

In response to this increase in forced displacement in the region, UNHCR has expanded its presence and operational capacity in recent years to strengthen protection alternatives and encourage solutions for those affected, promote mechanisms to prevent and address situations of forced displacement and, together with other UN agencies, assist States to address the root causes of flight and promote a secure environment free from persecution, in line with their Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) undertakings. This has allowed UNHCR to increase the number of people of concern assisted in the region, moving from 13,200

people assisted in 2015 to a projected figure of up to 140,000 people assisted in 2018. This has included refugees and asylum-seekers, IDPs, and people in transit with protection needs.

The significant increase in 2018 in asylum applications was largely due to Nicaraguans seeking protection in neighbouring countries, mainly in Costa Rica and Panama. There were over 25,900 asylum claims registered in the two countries during 2018, and approximately 9,000 more waiting to be registered, which would bring the total to over 24,000 in Costa Rica.



Countries in the region work under the regional application of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (the MIRPS, to use its Spanish acronym) which was launched following the 2017 San Pedro Sula Declaration.

The MIRPS is a concrete contribution to the **Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)** and seeks to bridge the humanitarian-development divide by integrating country of origin work to address root causes and reduce violence, with a focus on addressing **SDG 16** in a holistic and comprehensive way.

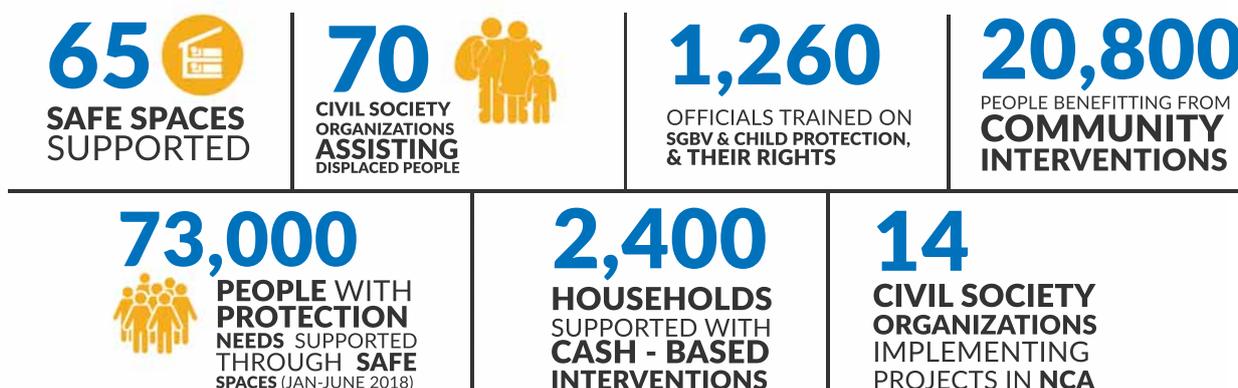
Since October 2017, Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama have implemented their national MIRPS action plans, and used this framework as a regional coordination mechanism, incorporating a whole-of-society approach, and convening a wide range of stakeholders, including development actors, cooperating States, regional and international organizations, among others.

This comprehensive response focuses on four priority sectors: (i) improving mechanisms for reception and admission; (ii) responding to immediate and persistent humanitarian and protection needs; (iii) supporting host countries and communities; and (iv) enhancing opportunities for durable solutions.

One year into its implementation, MIRPS countries have paved the way toward providing protection and assistance to the forcibly displaced and in so doing, have made a significant contribution to the advancement of the Global Compact for Refugees. Progress has been made in the creation or

strengthening of laws, public policies, operational guidelines, regulations and protocols on the asylum process and the assistance and protection to forcibly displaced populations; the establishment of safe spaces, such as reception and community centers, for refugees and asylum-seekers, internally displaced people, people on the move and deportees with protection needs; the establishment of measures to address the access to education and security in schools; better identification of the needs of host communities; an analysis of the socioeconomic condition of refugees and asylum-seekers; the promotion of access to work permits and job opportunities, micro-credit and seed capital.

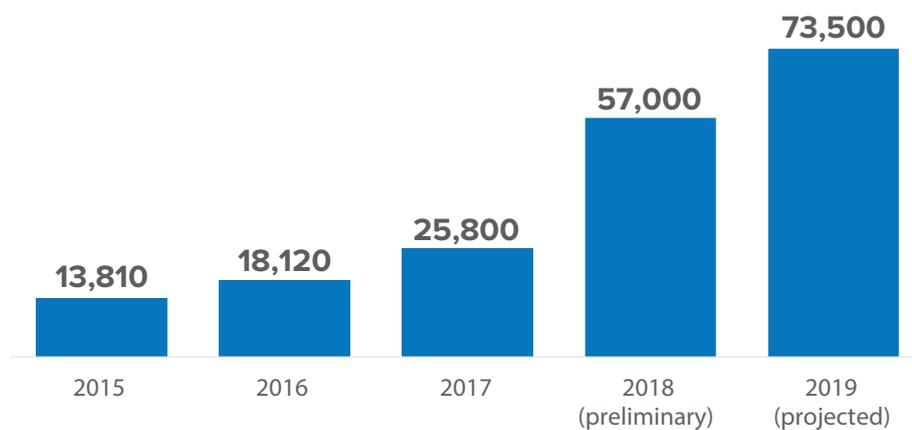
Key MIRPS achievements to date include:



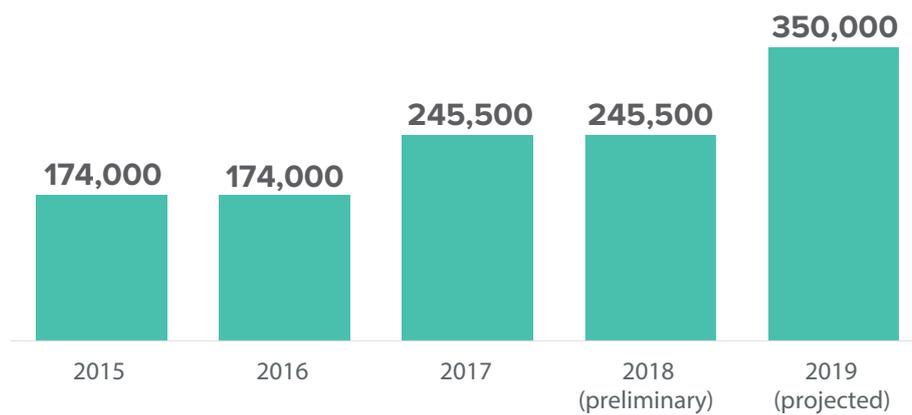
UNHCR PRESENCE AND KEY POPULATION FIGURES IN CENTRAL AMERICA



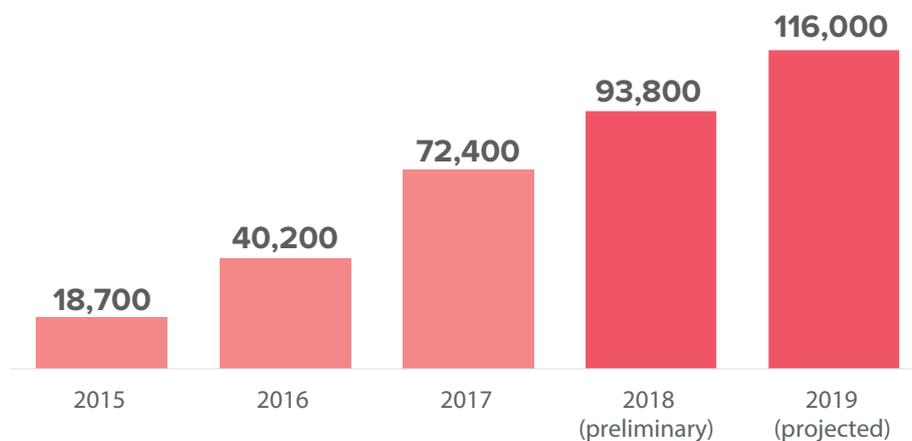
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used in this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.



Source : Data provided by Governments to UNHCR. Figures for 2018 are preliminary and can be subject to changes. Figures for 2019 are projections by UNHCR.



Source : Government -led profiling exercises supported by UNHCR in Honduras (IDPs between 2004 -2014) and El Salvador (IDPs between 2006 -2016). Figure for 2019 is a UNHCR projection .



1 Includes people on the move and deportees from NCA with possible protection needs, as well as other people in need of international protection in Belize.
Source : UNHCR estimations

2. Planning assumptions and population data

Given the volatile situation in the region and upcoming administration changes in many Central American countries, which may have an impact on the political and operational landscape, this supplementary appeal is based on the following assumptions:

Responses will continue to be framed around the MIRPS, including the implementation of the MIRPS' national chapters for Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama.

Considering that chronic violence continues to affect NCA countries (especially El Salvador and Honduras), the number of asylum claims from NCA is likely to increase, though at a slower pace compared to recent years. About 10% will continue to be registered in neighbouring countries, mainly Costa Rica, Panama and Belize.

A new phenomenon of large groups travelling together in mixed movements of refugees and migrants is likely to continue, thus exerting pressure

The number of asylum-seekers from The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela arriving into Central America is likely to increase at the same pace as 2018, mainly to Costa Rica and Panama. The planning figure is estimated at 10,000 new asylum claims in 2019.

Based on increasing trends in the deportations of NCA nationals during 2018 (41% increase between January-November compared to same period in 2017) and taking into consideration the possible lifting of Temporary Protection Status (TPS) in the United States of America (USA) for El Salvador and

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