


THE *MIRPS*: A REGIONAL INTEGRATIVE RESPONSE TO FORCED DISPLACEMENT

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 Mexico. Caravan of people fleeing gang violence reaches Mexican border © UNHCR/Julio Lopez



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1. An approach fit-for context

In line with the long tradition of regional cooperation in responding to protection challenges arising from forced displacement, six States of North and Central America – Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama – adopted the San Pedro Sula Declaration on October 26, 2017, agreeing to work together in the ongoing development and implementation of a Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS, for its Spanish acronym). The MIRPS is presented as a practical and detailed regional contribution to the development of the Global Compact on Refugees, as envisioned in Annex 1 to the New York Declaration.

Each country participating in the MIRPS developed a National Action Plan that identifies a series of specific and executable actions within the four pillars of the CRRF in the 2018 to 2020 period. Such action plans were developed through months of multi stakeholder national consultations, led by each Government. Relevant stakeholders included different State institutions (those concerned with matters of protection and socio-economic insertion), civil society, the United Nations System (led by the Resident Coordinators), the private sector, as well as asylum seekers, refugees, displaced and/or deported persons in need of international protection. In total, over 1,000 persons were consulted through over 60 meetings and workshops. The depth and breadth of these consultations ensured a buy-in from different stakeholders in working together to address the challenges of forced displacement.

The MIRPS goes beyond addressing the issue nationally, and presents a plan for a regional comprehensive displacement response, responsibility-sharing, solidarity and mutual accountability between countries of origin, countries of transit and countries of asylum and return. The goal of the MIRPS is to make existing commitments operational and to promote new initiatives to address situations of displacement from a comprehensive and regional approach and involving a wide range of relevant stakeholders on a national, regional, and international level. The MIRPS is understood as a dynamic and collaborative process rooted in a long tradition of regional solidarity around displacement crisis and on more recent initiatives to respond to the new situation in Central America which built up to the MIRPS (see the following section).

Participating countries in the MIRPS confirmed their intention to work together to strengthen regional cooperation and shared responsibility mechanisms. In order to strengthen this dynamic, various cross-border networks, regional and international organizations have joined this process. They have developed proposals to complement and support of the national plans as well as setting out regional initiatives that they will take forward.

The MIRPS aims at addressing displacement as a regional humanitarian-development challenge that requires above all a political momentum to build coherent responses to assist people in need of international protection along their displacement routes and cycles. These include not only refugees and asylum seekers but also internally displaced persons, returnees and deportees with protection needs, as well as individuals in need of protection because of specific circumstances (for instance, based on age, gender and diversity).

Displacement in North and Central America is complex, circular and multidimensional. The circular and sequential pattern of forced displacement strongly shapes how people experience protection risks and how a comprehensive response should be tailored. It is from this perspective that the MIRPS can be analysed as a relevant and effective whole-of-society response to a whole-of-society problem, looking at displacement as a turning point to addressing root causes promoting socio-economic change.

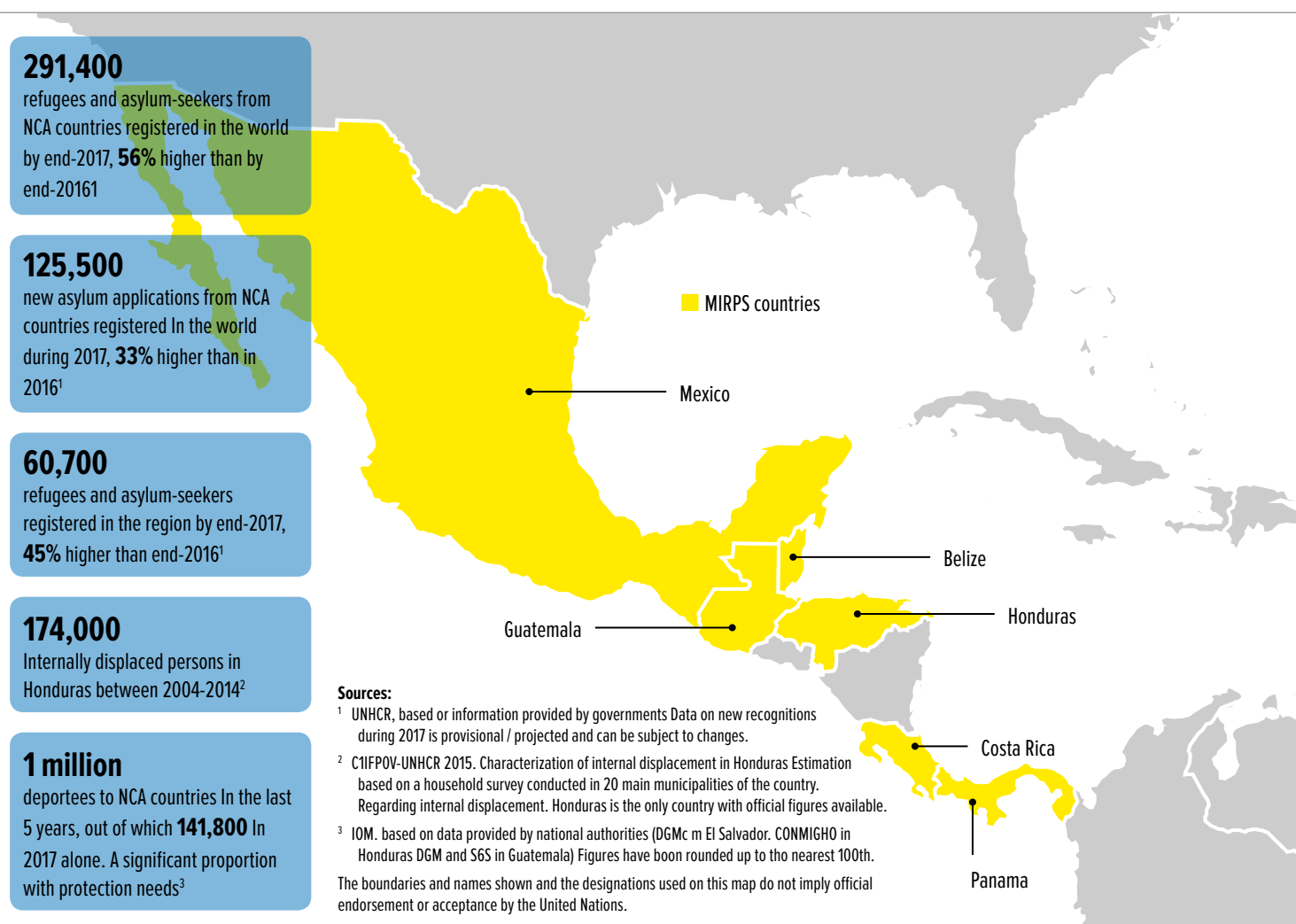
The MIRPS builds on regional cooperation to leverage front-end interventions at national and local level. This case study presents how the MIRPS is unfolding as the basis to appraise early achievements, emerging lessons, and way forward.

A displacement triggered by chronic violence

Forced displacement in the North of Central America (NCA) underlies an unprecedented humanitarian/protection crisis caused by high rates of violence in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala and by the escalating refugee crisis from Venezuela (where ongoing political and socio-economic developments have led to the outflow of over 1.5 million Venezuelans into neighboring countries and beyond).

Organized crime and drug cartels, urban gangs (known as maras) and limited services as well as poverty and exclusion contribute to epidemic or chronic violence affecting the region with important differences between NCA countries in root causes and context. Multi-causal violence has also multiple manifestations and plays-out as threats, intimidation and extortion, sexual and gender-based violence, forced disappearances, property-grabbing, forced recruitment, and assassinations¹.

During the 2010-2017 period, homicide rates in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala were between nine and thirteen times higher than the world average, with death tolls comparable to countries at war². Violence interrupts lives, separates families and destroys communities³ as people seek refuge in other regions and countries, mostly in the United States and Mexico and increasingly within the region in Costa Rica and Belize, and



¹ See UNDP 2013: Regional Human Development Report 2013-2014, *Citizen Security with a Human Face: Evidence and Proposals for Latin America* (executive summary in English available at <https://bit.ly/2z17JfL> and full report in Spanish available at <https://bit.ly/1e11LyA>).

² United Nations 2018: Executive Committee (February 2018), Briefing paper, *Violence in the North of Central America* (internal document).

³ UNDP 2013: *op.cit.*

Panama. The Government of Honduras identified through an IDP Profiling 174,000 persons displaced by violence between 2004 and 2014 in only 20 of 298 municipalities, equivalent to 4% of the entire population⁴. The capacity of *maras* to operate across national borders raises the protection risks of already vulnerable returnees, who find themselves internally displaced when returning to their original countries.

Regional responsibility-sharing: the road to the MIRPS

Prior to the MIRPS, the sharp increase in forced displacement led to the adoption of numerous commitments such as the 2014 Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action, adopted by 28 countries⁵ and 3 territories from Latin America and the Caribbean on the 30th anniversary of the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees. In July 2016, Costa Rica hosted the High-Level Round Table, organized in San José by UNHCR and the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS), with support from the Central American Integration System (SICA, for its Spanish acronym), aiming to build on Chapter 4 of the Brazil Plan of Action. The San José Action Statement represented regional solidarity and shared commitment to strengthen protection for those forcibly displaced in Central America.

These regional initiatives emphasized the importance of regional cooperation in addressing forced displacement, and laid the ground for the MIRPS.

Regionalising the NYD: the San Pedro Sula Declaration

In the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which was adopted unanimously on 19 September 2016, the General Assembly sets out the key elements of a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) that is designed to ease pressure on countries hosting large numbers of refugees, to enhance refugee self-reliance, to expand access to third-country solutions, and to support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity. The key elements of a comprehensive response include: a) rapid and well supported reception and admissions; b) support for immediate and on-going needs (such as protection, health and education); c) assistance for local and national institutions and communities receiving refugees; and d) expanded opportunities for durable solutions.

In October 2017, Belize Costa Rica Guatemala Honduras, Mexico and Panama adopted the San Pedro Sula Declaration and agreed to implement the MIRPS, presenting it as a regional application of the CRRF and a concrete contribution to the Global Compact on Refugees.

The implementation of the MIRPS, and each National Action Plan supposes a whole-of-government approach and invites the participation of a wide range of stakeholder, including development actors, which are key components of the CRRF. The MIRPS also engaged with a number of cooperating States who wanted to support the process through technical and financial assistance, as well as resettlement places for cases at high risk. Most of the Cooperating states which participated were from the region, and many from the South. Such South-South and regional cooperation is another key aspect of the CRRF, which is well reflected in the MIRPS.

⁴ Cf. CIPPDV (Inter-Agency Commission for the Protection of Persons Displaced by Violence) 2015: *Characterization of internal displacement in Honduras*, p.31. Available at <https://bit.ly/2NWYmfD>.

⁵ See <https://bit.ly/2OKZkAQ>.



Guatemala. *Hector (46), his wife *Camila (39) and their 3 children (15, 10 and 3) are refugees living in Guatemala. They were forced to flee El Salvador when they started to receive death threats from gang members. © UNHCR/Michael Muller

2. MIRPS early achievements

How to capture and systematize the MIRPS' results less than a year after the articulation of political commitments into action plans as agreed in San Pedro Sula? The assessment of early achievements focus on strategic gains and indications of progress towards intermediate outcomes, capturing the aggregated value of the MIRPS above and beyond the six national chapters, and considering strong foundational elements of ownership and relevance, though longer term impacts and sustained gains remain to be seen:

1 Strong ownership, leadership and relevance

The MIRPS' overall impact in the years ahead is to a great extent predicated in outcomes of development policies relevant to the humanitarian situation of persons in need of international protection. The political commitment behind the San Pedro Sula Declaration, showing strong leadership and ownership of participating States, means that refugees and displacement issues gained a centrality to development agendas in the region that did not exist before. Displacement issues are increasingly addressed by a broader set of stakeholders within national governments, beyond the departments and institutions traditionally concerned with refugees and asylum, local governments, Civil Society, Faith Based Organizations, Financial Institutions and partners in the UN system. Broader partnerships and higher political clout expand the space for more coherent interventions, either addressing immediate needs of persons in need of international protection or institutional fragilities, structural conditions of insecurity and inequality, and deep-seated causes of forced displacement.

Visibility and coherence are important to sustain momentum and credibility of a true whole-of-society approach and to achieve incremental but tangible gains even within a short period of time, as explained next.

2 Strengthen the protection space

From its onset the MIRPS has managed to strengthen the protection space for persons with protection needs in several phases of displacement in the sub-region. The common understanding and recognition of the protection challenges the MIRPS has generated constitutes an important milestone towards addressing them.

Among people on the move from Central America in recent years there are a growing number of individuals belonging to specific groups at heightened risk of persecution and aggression. These include victims of sexual and gender-based violence, women head of household, unaccompanied or separated children (UASC), persons with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities⁶, survivors of torture, trafficked persons, human rights

⁶ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Intersex (LGBTI).

defenders, journalists, teachers, transportists and others⁷. A coherent effort to broaden and strengthen the protection space, reducing and prevent risks and vulnerabilities along the displacement routes (also for IDPs), includes complementary action on several fronts:

- Providing immediate assistance during displacement to persons in need of international protection such as information and counseling on asylum regimes at international border posts and immigration offices as well as physical protection in shelters and safe spaces.
- Institutionalizing protection in assistance and responses to forced displacement: the MIRPS gave higher importance in the policy agenda and in the public perception to forced displacement and thus created an enhanced exposure and credibility of institutions providing international protection, including UNHCR.
- Triggering new strategic partnerships involving public, private and civil society stakeholders that extend the reach of protection mechanism complement to the work of protection networks across the region. For instance, legal aid clinics are being fostered and created through a regional academic network, and will provide free assistance and support to shelters in Mexico and Guatemala.
- Finding alternatives to detention of asylum seekers and reducing the risk of *refoulement*.
- Leveraging know-how, experience and social credibility of different organizations working in niches of protection to establish broader, coordinated and reliable protection mechanisms. An example is the consortium formed in Guatemala by three organizations to implement the PTA: El Refugio de la Niñez, the Fundación Sobrevivientes and UDEFEGUA (Unidad de Protección a Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos de Guatemala, the Guatemala human rights-defenders protection unit) formed an implementing partnership that leverages their experience, respectively, in assistance to children and youth, victims of SGBV, and protection of human rights-defenders in high-risk.
- Strengthening national protection mechanisms for victims of violence, including displaced persons and communities affected by insecurity, with special attention to the age, gender and diversity of the population with international protection needs.
- Strengthening national mechanisms to identify the differentiated protection needs of returnees, either during the reception phase, or during referrals, with cases being monitored in their communities of origin to ensure that they will not be again victimized.

As a further illustration of the new cooperative approach, more than 10 shelters in Mexico (mainly in Chiapas, Tabasco, Veracruz and Mexico City) , provide information and legal advice to potential asylum-seekers and host asylum-seeking families during at least the first few weeks of the asylum procedure. Parallel to this initiative UNHCR provides cash-based support once asylum-seekers leave the shelters. The asylum seekers can also access legal and psychosocial counseling and an increasing number are receiving vocational training and integration support.

Honduras – the country fitting more closely the category of primarily a territory of origin of mixed migration flows- is already witnessing some encouraging developments towards a protection-sensitive legal framework. During the first quarter of 2018, the Secretariat of Human Rights is expected to submit to the National Congress the draft law on forced displacement developed with UNHCR's technical support. It is hoped that the draft is approved by the end of 2018. The CIPPDV (the Inter-institutional Commission for the Protection of Persons Displaced by Violence) is playing a leading role in these advances on prevention and protection and has adopted a working definition on internal displacement and has developed in coordination with the judicial system the typification of the crime of forced displacement that has been included in the proposal for the Reform of the Penal Code, pending Congress approval.

⁷ Cf. GAM (Mutual Support Group, Guatemala) 2013: *Fatalities report, broken down by profession and occupation*; CONADEH (National Commission for Human Right, Honduras) 2014: *Deaths in the transport sector*.

In Guatemala, *Raíces de Amor*, an El Refugio de la Niñez programme, is the first specialized shelter programme for asylum-seeking and refugee children in transit and Guatemalan deported children with specific protection needs. In 2017, UNHCR signed MoUs with the Guatemalan Secretariat of Social Welfare (SBS) and the General Attorney's Office to enhance State responses to cases of UASC with international protection needs. Refugio de la Niñez with SBS has set up a network of foster families as an alternative care arrangement to shelters resulting in 88% increase in assistance to persons in need of protection in transit, asylum-seekers and refugees in 2017 compared to the previous year.

In Panama, a new Decree was adopted at the beginning of 2018, which makes significant progress in making the asylum system more efficient and agile, as well as instituting a user friendly on-line system for registration, which was developed in cooperation with UNDP.

③ Engage development actors in prevention, assistance and solutions to forced displacement

Bilateral and multilateral development agencies and organizations are contributing partners to the MIRPS, expanding areas for collaboration, support and exchange. The Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) is one of the strategic partners committed to the comprehensive response, and pledged support in addressing the structural causes of forced displacement. The bank has already appointed a liaison officer for the MIRPS with the purpose of building synergies in relevant areas with MIRPS work.

In this respect, there is ongoing cooperation on (i) facilitating the exchange of information between the IADB and UNHCR, (ii) identifying projects of mutual interest, (iii) supporting with quantifying the needs of the different line ministries in each Action Plan in the MIRPS. Given that key institutional counterparts to UNHCR at country level receive IADB funding, mapping of existing support mechanisms and its orientation will be further explored; such an exercise is already ongoing in Mexico.

Within the UN system, this translates in the active engagement of the Resident Coordinators in the region in supporting and developing the MIRPS, and in ensuring a one-UN contribution. It is also visible in the engagement of the United Nations Development Group in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNDG-LAC), which has developed a Joint Initiative to address chronic violence in Central America.

The focus placed on root causes by the MIRPS process also engaged the attention of the Peacebuilding funding (PBF), which agreed to financing a project for each of the three countries of the North of Central America.

In addition, the PBF also agreed to fund, for the first time, a regional project including all three countries, aimed at strengthening national protection institutions, reintegrating deportees and improving inter-ministerial coordination, with a view to stabilizing the population in all three countries.

In Honduras, strategic linkages between the MIRPS and the Protection Working Group were established in the work plan for 2018, with support from the RC to protection mainstreaming to all existing coordination mechanisms. This involves as well coordination with the Secretary of Human Rights and the CIPPDV in developing a legal framework and public policies to support IDPs. In this respect, UNHCR in Honduras recently supported the Government with a quantification exercise to calculate costs for IDP emergency assistance in Honduras, as part of the public policy development and technical support provided (see section on follow-up mechanisms and sustainability under chapter IV).

As a contribution to keep the MIRPS' momentum, UNHCR developed thirty quick win projects that dovetail with the longer term operationalization of the three year national plans into joint programming and projects, engaging development partners and other key stakeholders. This is an initial investment which aims to reinforce and promote the underlining partnerships that form the foundation of the MIRPS. The portfolio includes regional projects, such as the establishment of a follow-up mechanism to the MIRPS commitments; capacity-building of communities and organizations to respond to high protection risks; and leveraging the voice of human rights institutions.

④ Strengthen responsibility-sharing mechanisms

Underlying the displacement crisis are challenges common to countries of origin, transit and asylum or/and return which give the MIRPS a strongly regional dimension, in which responsibility sharing and regional cooperation are key:

- Extending opportunities for resettlement in traditional countries of asylum (United States, and Canada) and exploring new partnerships for resettlement and humanitarian evacuation in the region or in the Americas (see further under PTA);
- Leveraging high-level engagement of regional and international fora and international partners (OAS and IADB) for coordination, resource mobilization and political support, including through a follow up mechanism located in the OAS which will create a forum to exchange best practices;
- Increased contributions in funds, technical support and human resources from bilateral partners;

Among key cooperating states to the MIRPS are Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Spain, Switzerland, the United States and Uruguay.

As an illustration of the breadth of these contributions of the cooperating states, Canada (with the US) is continuing its technical support to the asylum system in Mexico through the *Joint Plan for International Protection in North America* programme; Canada funds PRONINEZ programme for child protection and juvenile justice reform in Honduras; it gives financial support to CICIG in Guatemala, against impunity; keeps support to long-standing private sponsoring programmes while piloting new initiatives like the PTA; and supports prevention of irregular youth migration in five countries of Central and North America.

In parallel to the sharp increase in numbers of people on the move, changes in the pattern of displacement in recent years within the region have reshaped the roles of different countries and given new impetus to the discussion on responsibility sharing. Responsibility sharing is not only needed between cooperating States and MIRPS states, but also amongst MIRPS States themselves, and the MIRPS provides them with an effective forum to do this.

Guatemala, for instance, has had to strengthen its asylum system and with the surge of Hondurans and Salvadorans (who had an increase of 35% in the number of asylum claims submitted in 2017). A substantial decrease in the abandonment rates indicates that Guatemala is increasingly being considered by persons fleeing persecution as a country of final destination and asylum. In 2017, abandonment rates of asylum claims went down to 29%, in comparison to 2016, when 48% of cases abandoned their application. A similar trend has been registered in Mexico, where abandonment of asylum claims dropped from 36% in 2014 to 16.4% in 2017. Guatemala will be drawing many lessons learnt and best practices from Mexico's experience in this respect.

⑤ Prioritize prevention, protection and solutions in bilateral and multilateral cooperation agenda

Prevention cuts across the five different axis of the MIRPS (as described in the first chapter), primarily through community engagement in the short term and through mid- to long-term projects targeting the root causes of forced displacement. Prevention, protection and solutions provide arguably the grounds for some of the most innovative initiatives following from the MIRPS commitments (as analyzed in more detail in the following chapter), for instance monitoring risks at community level and collecting data on abandoned property in high-risk neighborhoods.

Efforts are also directed at strengthening existing response mechanisms at national level, including giving technical and financial support to child protection systems, social security institutions and ombudsmen offices beyond the traditional reception and admission mechanisms. Priority is being given to profiling and monitoring of population of concern in order to define the most adequate responses to protection risks. As an example,

Honduras initiated in 2017 a process for updating the IDPs Profiling conducted in 2014, offering a more comprehensive vision of the problem in terms of causes, magnitude, profiles and impact on the population concerned, and expanding the study to all municipalities in the country. Profiling studies have also just been launched in El Salvador, and are also being developed in Belize and Panama. These studies will be key to target interventions and to support national law and policy making.

Equally important is the ongoing effort to leverage new partnerships – and higher levels of political access to key stakeholders with the power of decision-making, influence and agenda-setting- to advocate for the inclusion of internal displacement in policy and normative frameworks consistent with international protection regimes. This is an important step to then design specific governance structures, assign responsibilities and mobilize budget allocations.

Lastly, new partnerships and a redefinition of what responsibility sharing looks like under the MIRPS expand opportunities for durable solutions, with a potential mid-term impact on the redefinition of internal geography of displacement – turning areas of transit in areas of asylum. This is happening already, for example, in some industrialized hubs of Northern Mexico, where refugees and other persons in need of protection have been finding employment opportunities with good prospects of local integration as a result of improved coordination between UNHCR, NGOs and COMAR (the Mexican Refugee Commission) and other federal programmes as well as strategic alliances with state and municipal governments and the private sector, including the health sector, and the possibility of identifying new cities of solidarity: “*Ciudades Solidarias*” focuses either on reception or integration.

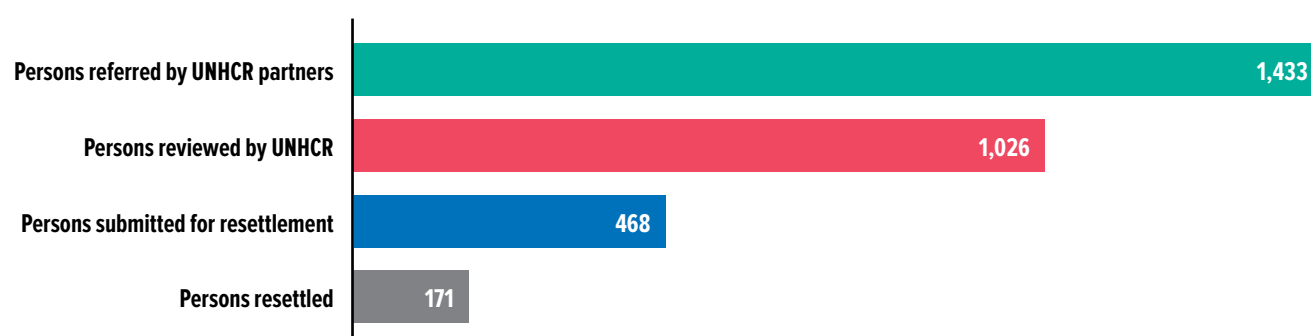
Innovations in protection

1 The Protection Transfer Arrangement (PTA)

As part of a comprehensive protection strategy for the NCA countries, UNHCR has been piloting a Protection Transfer Arrangement (PTA), which provides a safe and legal pathway for eligible high risk cases from the country of origin to a country of asylum, via a country of transit. This mechanism is an innovative and effective component of a larger protection response to the humanitarian situation in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala aimed at complementing national protection mechanisms. The programme provides an exceptional mechanism proposed in light of the extreme risk that some people face. Although it is different than the traditional resettlement programmes it does end in the resettlement of the person at risk, following detailed operating procedures that establish modalities for identification and referral.

Persons identified by implementing partners include journalists, human rights defenders, witnesses in transitional justice procedures and other criminal investigations, judicial and legal officials, including Public Defenders, Public Prosecutors, and lawyers, community leaders, environmentalists, children at risk, women at risk, and persons with

Key Figures (Apr/16 to Jan/18)



diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Once the case is identified, UNHCR does a protection interview and if validated, presents it to a country of resettlement for consideration.

The total PTA quota for 2018 is around 1000 high risk persons. Destination countries are USA, Canada, Australia, Brazil and Uruguay, with Argentina ready to also take part in the programme. Costa Rica is currently the country of transit in this innovative regional mechanism encompassing both protection and durable solutions.

② Safe spaces networks

Regional and national networks are expanding the reach of protection and assistance along main displacement routes and in high-risk environments and locations (as is the case with communities of origin for returnees). The importance of safe spaces becomes apparent in the context of circular patterns of mixed migration in the region, by which local initiatives, led by partners with presence in the territory, have a cumulative protection value for people on the move, with a high degree of responsiveness and incorporating a gender-sensitive approach.

The safe spaces are often the initiative of civil society, faith-based organisations and human rights networks with support from public institutions and development partners, including UN agencies (in Mexico and Guatemala, for instance, the networks are the initiative of UNHCR). Safe spaces enable better coordination of protection in border areas and remote locations along major displacement routes, as in Mexico Southern border region in Guatemala (in specific areas like Tenosique, Palenque, Tapachula). These networks also enhance coordination of SGBV prevention and response activities. The spaces typically provide shelter, food, WASH services, basic medical assistance and protection services (identification, referral, provision of information), legal and psychosocial assistance. Importantly, many of these safe spaces offer customized care for the most vulnerable cases

③ Community-based protection and protection/assistance networks

In Honduras, protection and assistance networks include identification of deportees with protection needs and persons at heightened risk, in coordination with 14 partners that guarantee national coverage, effective referrals and effective protection alternatives. UNHCR works closely with the DINAF (Child Protection Institution) in order to develop standard procedures enabling the identification of deported children at risk in the reception centre of El Belen. Throughout 2016 and 2017, an average of 11% of deported children have been identified as being at risk and were referred to relevant service providers. Overall, the organizations involved in the protection network provide response to different population groups (Children, Youth, SGBV victims, human rights defenders and community leaders) and offer complementary type of services and assistance.

In this context, innovative approaches are being piloted in Honduras with the reactivation of community-based protection spaces to guarantee: strengthening of social/community networks, improvement of technical capacity and community organizations and improvement of protection mechanisms and strategies. Through

Violence against children

2,448

Victims of homicides in
NCA countries during 2016
were 0 to 19 years old

6/10

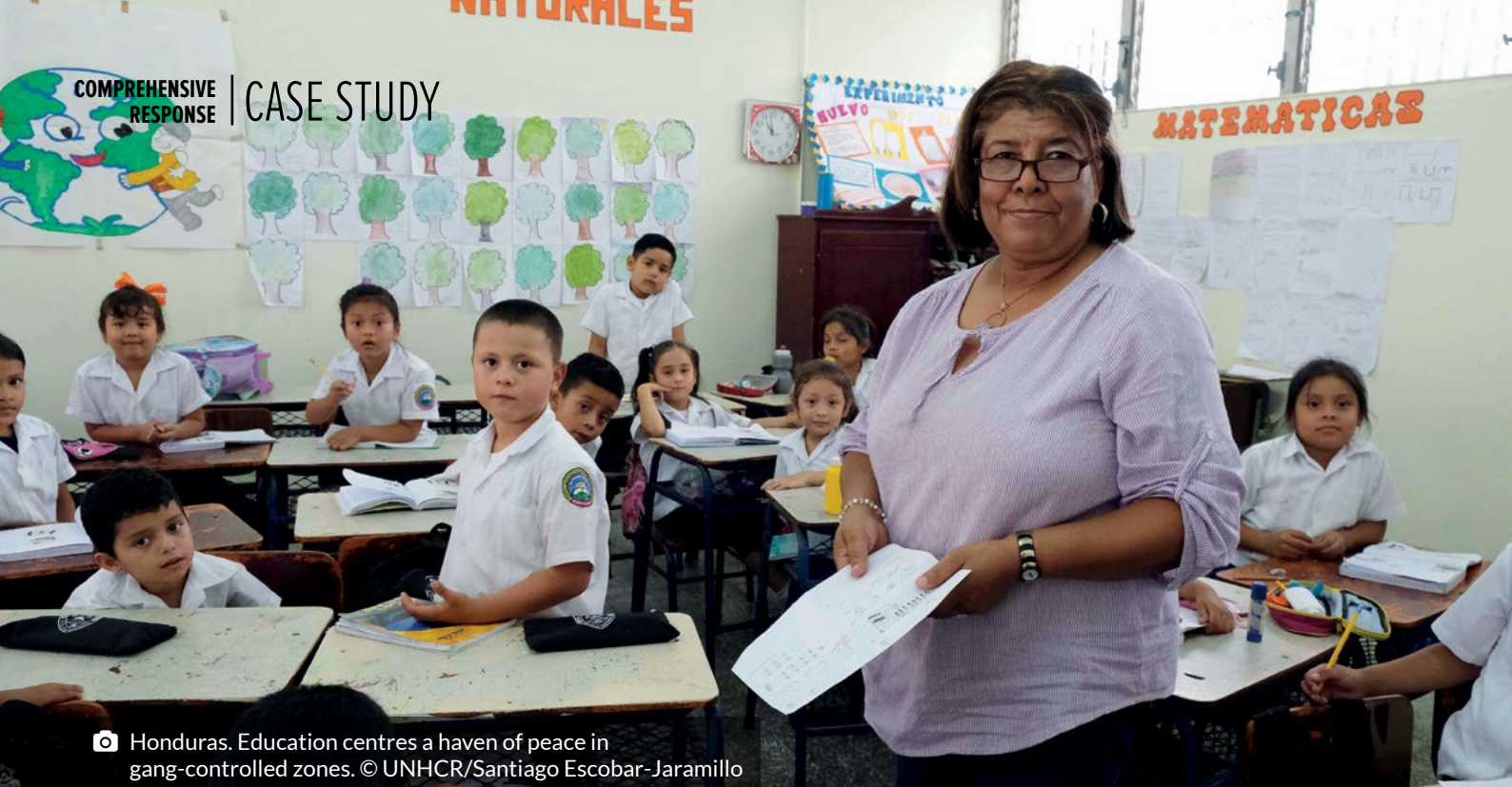
Victims of disappearances
in NCA btw. 2010-16 were
children

58%

Surveyed children from NCA countries
in the US reported that they had to
flee their country due to violence

38,833

Children in El Salvador abandoned
school between 2014 and 2016 due to
violence (11% of total abandonment)



📷 Honduras. Education centres a haven of peace in gang-controlled zones. © UNHCR/Santiago Escobar-Jaramillo

community engagement, protection risks are mitigated and persons of concern can be assisted and monitored. Communities' projects bring a new approach to durable solutions, adding a central component of social cohesion and peacebuilding into humanitarian work.

A parallel ongoing effort focuses on high-risk communities in relation to protection of land and housing. Specific tools were developed for the identification of abandoned land and housing, often the first tangible sign of a forced displacement from violence. The project involves Caritas and 23 prioritized parishes and will have national reach during 2018. In another innovative initiative, the identification/protection process benefited from a twinning mission to Colombia, an initial and complementary step to build a registration system of abandoned property in Honduras. Twinning missions have taken place between property related entities from Honduras and the Land restitution Unit in Colombia related to the design of a registration system for abandoned land/housing in Honduras.

④ Conflict prevention and peaceful coexistence

Following up from the San Pedro Sula Declaration, the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) approved a *trinacional* programme for NCA specifically intended as a contribution to the implementation of the comprehensive response in the region. The support from PBF is also explicitly sustaining the case for UN's engagement on prevention, with an emphasis on issues related with returnees, youth, women rights and reintegration. The programme, involving UNDP, IOM, and UNHCR, will also help to leverage additional resources and scale-up interventions in the region, including the Spotlight initiative aimed at reducing violence against women in the region. It is the first time that PBF is supporting three countries in a cross-regional initiative by a supporting joint programmes focused on socio-economic reintegration of returnees, protection and prevention mechanisms, complementing citizen security with actions fostering social inclusion. Going forward, the PBF programme can serve as a springboard to raise the profile of the MIRPS sub-region to the Peacebuilding Commission to mobilize Member States support to a cross-pillar and regional approach.

In parallel with the PBF programme, and under the undg-lac Joint Initiative, has developed a multidimensional index to measure a reduction in violence, considering diverse factors of chronic violence (crime, humanitarian vulnerability, refugee and asylum applications from NCA persons, gender equality, good governance and rule of law, and socio-economic growth and equity). This index will be used to support Governments in implementing a strategy to significantly reduce violence, as a main cause of displacement, by 2030.

5 Leveraging faith-based mechanisms regionally

Faith-based institutions and networks have played a crucial role in peacebuilding, development and humanitarian areas in Central America, including during civil wars and democratic transitions in the region. The MIRPS has drawn on such networks, as illustrated by the enhanced role and heightened visibility of prevention and protection responses from the Catholic Church in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

The MIRPS makes full use of faith based networks like the Catholic Latin American Network for Migration, Displacement, Refuge and Human Traffic (CLAMOR), which is a cooperating actor to the MIRPS, and coalesces different Catholic humanitarian and human rights organizations in the region are active participants in protection of persons of concern, especially through the safe space network. For instance, the Human Rights Office of the Archbishop of Guatemala is one of the institutions referring cases of interest to UNHCR under the PTA.

6 Quantification for sustainability

One strategic priority going forward is the *quantification* of the resources needed to implement the national action plans, so that national resources can be identified to the extent possible, and any shortfall met through international cooperation. This exercise started in early 2018 with support from UNHCR. The exercise is looking at the different components of the national action plans: basic assistance, protection (safe houses, property rights, documentation), social inclusion (health, education, seed money, housing subsidies, access to social subsidies), and institutional requirements (information, resource mobilization, strengthening of institutions).

A quantification exercise to identify existing gaps and offer to assist IDPs was conducted in 2016 in Honduras under the leadership of the Inter-institutional Commission for the Protection of IDPs with UNHCR technical support. This new exercise will build on these foundations. In Guatemala, governmental institutions involved in responding to forced displacement conducted, with technical support from UNHCR, an assessment of the activities and budgeting needed to implement their national chapter, updated in January 2018, which resulted in a more nuanced and granular quantification of gaps and resources for the MIRPS. These exercises in both countries involved several line ministries. In Mexico, a similar effort is being discussed in collaboration with UNHCR and UNDP to identify, from public state budgets (at federal or local levels) as well as bilateral cooperation whether resources can be allocated or prioritized to MIRPS activities. The other MIRPS countries are developing similar exercises to be finalised in the coming months.



Costa Rica. The Ángel Velásquez family show off their bread at the family's bakery in San José, Costa Rica. They have built a successful business here since fleeing Colombia. © UNHCR/Santiago Escobar-Jaramillo

3. The MIRPS emerging good practice

1 The MIRPS enhances mutual accountability among countries of origin, transit and asylum

The nature of displacement and migration flows from Central America binds the affected countries together in a common humanitarian-development challenge. In such a context, the MIRPS provides both an adequate level of political dialogue among States and the opportunity for positive incentives to acknowledge the problem and tackling it through common efforts. The incentives can be political, reputational, economic, or of a more practical nature but the comprehensive response is inherently collaborative and participatory in the way that sovereign self-interest is best served by dialogue and coordination.

Changes in the displacement landscape of Central America create a more conducive environment for mutual accountability for migration and refugee regimes. Today, the distinction between countries of origin, transit and destination of people on the move is more complex and nuanced, which in practice reduces the space for unilateralism. To give an example, Mexico is increasingly becoming also a country of asylum: there were 14,596 new asylum seekers in 2017, an increase of 66% over 2016 and of more than 1800% since the new refugee law was passed in 2011. Mexico is also a country of transit. Guatemala is a country of transit and asylum for the MIRPS, but for the PTA it is also a country of origin. Honduras is a country of origin (and with significant internal displacement). And Guatemala and Honduras are all countries of return to their own nationals. The reality is therefore that the MIRPS geography is composed of States that have a common interest on sharing the responsibility for the long-term solution, starting by accepting a share of the current problem and follow with constructive action. The engagement of inter-governmental stakeholders and the commitment of OAS provide the right spaces to advance on such peer-to-peer dialogue, strategic alignment, exchange of best practice and programmatic coherence.

② Broader partnerships build stronger coherence of action

Prior to the San Pedro Sula Declaration, and informing commitments made under each national chapter of the MIRPS, assessments and consultations with broad participation in all six countries provided an extensive exercise identifying gaps in intervention, coordination, resources and capacity for prevention and solutions. The overall quality and detail of the protection needs assessments was complemented by a substantial mapping of potential contributions – and pledges- from the two dozen partners to the comprehensive response. Regional coordination and cooperation have a strong basis to build upon in terms of synergizing activities, maximizing resources and acting in complementarity.

From the perspective of people on the move, the significance of the MIRPS partnerships is already producing results: availability of information, assistance, prevention and/or solutions along the displacement routes, literally connecting the dots on the ground with a continuum of protection tangibles. To put it in a different way, as seen from the field: it is becoming less likely that a person of concern moves from country of origin until country of asylum without coming into contact with some initiative translating the comprehensive response.

③ Regional good practice to the Global Compact on Refugees

The participating States showed leadership in finding cooperative solutions to the protection challenges arising out of displacement through the agreement of the MIRPS in San Pedro Sula, and in developing a concrete application of the CRRF regionally. The experience of the national consultations and the high-level political dialogue that accompanied them is a valuable experience in the context of the consultations for the Global Compact on Refugees. The follow up mechanism in the OAS is a clear example of a regional forum to address a displacement crisis, as foreseen in the GCR.

The implementation of the MIRPS involves also a continued effort to understand the multiple and complex causes for forced displacement in the region. The rich learning process emerging from the comprehensive approach is an important contribution to the GCR, as was highlighted in the San Pedro Sula Declaration (see Chapter IV).

4. The MIRPS as an evolving initiative

① Challenges to institutionalization

a) Visibility and resource mobilization

The high-level political engagement that gathered momentum before and up to the San Pedro Sula Declaration has been maintained and an overview of the follow-up work at regional and national level confirms that refugee issues and forced displacement have moved up in the agenda and took a more central stage in public attention. This is crucial to move politically sensitive issues ahead – including new legislation or revision of frameworks according to international protection standards- but not enough to sustain momentum and take action on the pledges made by States and partners. If the MIRPS is to fulfill its promises (and honor a consistent regional agenda of solidarity and responsibility sharing that goes back three decades), broader awareness and endorsement beyond the contributing actors is needed to gain traction for implementation on the ground and as a conduit for resource mobilization. For the MIRPS, the challenge to meet any existing resource gaps through resource mobilization is aggravated by the fact that MIRPS States are middle-income countries (and, in the case of Mexico, an OECD member), which seems to narrow the perceived options for contributions from development partners and international financial institutions. As such, and in order to ensure that mainly national resources are used to finance the MIRPS, the quantification exercises will be key, and will assist to look for ways to redeploy national resources in support of the MIRPS. Only on the basis of these exercise, and when all due diligence has been exercised in identifying real gaps, will the international community be engaged through a resource mobilization exercise.

b) Ensuring political commitment across political cycles

The MIRPS is imbued with political commitment and is the translation of top-level political will. This is arguably its most important strength in the immediate term but also exposes the comprehensive approach to changes in political leadership at national level – especially when statements and pledges have to be actioned and budgeted. Considering that the MIRPS ecosystem consists of democratic countries with strong participatory mechanisms, the comprehensive approach also faces potential risks arising from political volatility and changes in public perception which may result in less sensitivity to forced displacement issues.

The MIRPS needs to leverage peer-to-peer high-level political incentives to keep commitments on track and be able to steer through the volatility of electoral cycles. There will be a support from regional forums, such as the OAS, which can buttress the MIRPS, through peer support.. A key element to track going forward is whether the credibility and legitimacy of the MIRPS -sourced from bottom-up consultations- will help to keep the initiative resilient to changes and shocks from national and local political dynamics. Furthermore, continuing to build on the participatory nature of the MIRPS, for instance in following up on the consultations with stakeholders, will help harness continued support.

② A volatile regional displacement context

The regional displacement context underlying the MIRPS, even as recently as the time of the San Pedro Sula Declaration, continues to rapidly evolve. Mixed flows from El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala whilst maintaining a circular pattern, has nuanced the traditional roles and nature of countries of origin, transit and asylum, and the perceptions associated with each. Moreover, forced displacement from those three countries is now compounded by new displacement crisis, with a refugee crisis from Venezuela worsening and its effects in persons of concern from Colombia returning to their country, while circular migration and returns from North America keep exposing persons to multiple risks. Dramatic changes have taken place in the last year, as shown by

the breakdown of asylum seekers' nationalities in Mexico (see below). Moreover, relevant policy changes following political dynamics in the US (and in Mexico as well) can have a direct impact in Central America.

The MIRPS will thus take shape within a volatile displacement context, on which a major humanitarian crisis can overshadow the attention and investment put on addressing root causes of forced displacement throughout the region.

③ The MIRPS and the complementarity of the Global Compacts (Refugees/Migration)

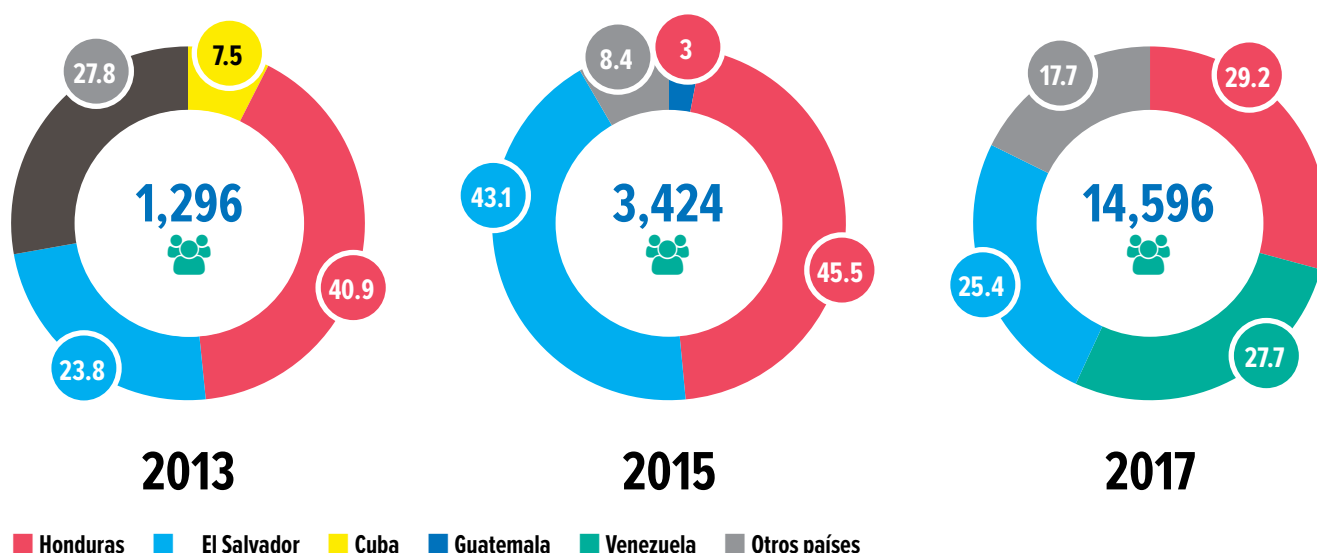
The consultations for the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Migration highlighted the crucial role of regional specific mechanisms to achieve more equitable and predictable burden- and responsibility-sharing with host countries and communities, and support the search for solutions, including through assistance to countries of origin where appropriate. The experience of the MIRPS is valuable in the context of both global compacts.

To a great extent, the MIRPS sought for the first time to advance mechanisms for responsibility-sharing based on funding, a multi-stakeholder approach, better data and evidence (which has been a continued focus of responses to forced displacement in the Americas), including “mapping” of the cost and impact of hosting refugees.

The MIRPS also illustrates another element central to the GCR and GCM: national ownership and leadership, and regional cooperation and responsibility sharing.

Lastly, the MIRPS agenda on addressing multi-causal forced displacement has relevant lessons in terms of extending comprehensive responses to a broader spectrum of populations of concern, in support of refugees and those countries particularly affected by a large movement, a protracted situation, or other context as may be appropriate.

Violence against children



Sources: Mexican Refugee Commission (COMAR)

④ Reporting and follow-up mechanisms

The San Pedro Sula Declaration agreed that a mechanism was needed to ensure a follow-up to the MIRPS, and placed such a mechanism within the OAS. The forum will provide essential to document the lessons learned and share good practices of this process. A OAS General Assembly Resolution on Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (4 June 2018) invited “member states, taking into consideration the experience of the MIRPS or similar initiatives, to develop or update their own frameworks for prevention, protection, and solutions”. The General Assembly resolved moreover to “instruct the Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs (...) to report thereon on an annual basis, encouraging the exchange of experiences and best practices that have been implemented by member states, with support and technical assistance from the OAS General Secretariat and the UNHCR.” The OAS is currently developing the institutional anchor to this mechanism, which UNHCR will provide technical support to. The aim is to convene the first MIRPS annual review by the end of 2018. Progress of the MIRPS is therefore captured at two levels, with annual national reports from the six participating countries compiled and complemented by the review mechanism within the OAS.