

## PILLAR 2: IMMEDIATE AND PERSISTENT NEEDS

# Protection networks and safe spaces

2018

those with international protection needs. Services provided include:

- Identification and referral of persons with protection needs;
- information and legal counselling on asylum processes;
- physical protection (temporary shelter) and humanitarian assistance;
- access to child protection and SGBV case management;
- psychosocial support and first aid.

The Protection Networks and Safe Spaces initiative is implemented by civil society and faith-based organisations and human rights networks, with support from UNHCR, other UN agencies, public institutions and development partners.

The protection network operates through safe spaces (including temporary shelters, mobile information spaces, safe houses) along the main migration routes and provide immediate assistance to persons on the move, including



**UNHCR  
ACNUR**

La Agencia de la ONU  
para los Refugiados

**83<sup>1</sup>**

Number of safe spaces supported in MIRPS countries

**94,000**

Number of persons on the move assisted through the protection networks and safe spaces (Jan. - Dec. 2018)

**70**

Number of civil society organizations providing protection services to persons on the move

<sup>1</sup> Includes transit / reception shelters, information and assistance spaces and safe houses for persons at high-risk.

# Major highlights and achievements

In the region, a total of 83 safe spaces are in place and established along the main migration routes. Also, mobile services in special border areas are supported to ensure persons in need of international protection have access to information.

In **Guatemala**, the National Safe Spaces Network (NSSN) is now comprised of 7 partners, 13 shelters, including one for unaccompanied children (UAC) and one for LGBTI people, 1 safe house and 10 information and assistance spaces located at strategic areas. The NSSN provides vital humanitarian assistance and information on protection mechanisms for persons in need of international protection. A total of 44,000 persons have been assisted in 2018. Border monitoring and protection by presence was strengthened in the departments of Petén and Izabal through joint missions of the Migration and Protection Working Group.

The Secretariat for Social Welfare in Guatemala and UNHCR have formally established a referral system for identification and assistance of persons in need of protection (including children, victims of violence, adolescents, etc.). This includes referrals for psychological support, education and career tutoring.

A new Migrant House in El Ceibo, Petén, one of the main border crossings to Mexico, was opened. This infrastructure provides safe access to shelter and WASH services for migrants and persons in need of international protection who are in transit and towards to the Mexican border. Also, a local health post was established to benefit both persons on the move as well as the host community.

In **Honduras**, the protection and assistance network includes 9 civil society organizations, 15

## Main challenges

Limited physical space in the shelters and safe spaces, as well as financial resources affect the provision of comprehensive responses to the needs of those seeking protection. Differentiated responses in the safe spaces for family units, LGBTI persons, children and adolescents, survivors of SGBV and persons with disabilities, will still need to be further enhanced.

shelters, 1 safe house and 1 integral assistance center, located in different municipalities of the country. The network provides protection and humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons, returnees and other persons with protection needs. During 2018 a total of 6,500 persons were assisted with legal and psychosocial support, education and/or shelter.

The Episcopal Conference and UNHCR have agreed to expand protection networks for persons of concern, prioritizing six dioceses (San Pedro Sula, Trujillo, Ceiba, Tegucigalpa and Choluteca). Actions will include: protection and assistance, identification of abandoned land and housing, strengthening of social/community spaces, improvement of technical capacity and identification of shelters.

During 2018, CARITAS inaugurated a new shelter for the protection of people displaced by violence in the Parish of Colonia Los Pinos in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

In **Mexico**, civil society shelters play an important role in identifying and referring asylum seekers to the asylum procedure, provide psychosocial support and basic medical services. The deployment of paralegals contributed to improve legal support in the shelters. During 2018, over 50,000 persons on the move (including asylum-seekers) were assisted in 28 different UNHCR-supported shelters along the migratory route, where they benefited from accommodation, food, legal and psychosocial support.

In order to increase the acceptance of shelters in host communities, several initiatives were launched in cooperation with municipalities, including the construction of a playground in Palenque, Chiapas.

Given that the number of people on the move has recently increased, partly as a consequence of the so-called caravans, the need to expand the number of safe spaces has been identified, as well as the increased need to provide comprehensive services (including humanitarian assistance) to the most vulnerable people of concern.

## Protection / Safe Spaces Network in Mexico and North of Central America



## Sustainability through shared responsibility

Regional and international organizations are getting involved in the protection network initiative to ensure that the response provided is comprehensive. The Catholic Latin American Network for Migration, Displacement, Refuge and Human Traffic (CLAMOR), has committed within the MIRPS to further strengthen and support the Protection Network.

The Specialized Regional Group of Academics Who Support the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (GREAT MIRPS) has committed to support with legal clinics to further strengthen protection response within the existing Shelter Network.

In Guatemala, the UNCT, including UNDP, UNWOMEN, FAO, WHO/OPS, ILO, UNICEF, OHCHR and UNODC, equally committed to

support the reinforcement of the Shelters and Safe Spaces Network in the country. FAO provided agricultural support, seeds and inputs for fish farming project for the main shelter in Flores, Petén. These projects support the community kitchen of the shelter and enables longer term sustainability.

The innovative approach piloted by the Guatemalan Red Cross with UNHCR funds, consisting of a mobile team to assist migrants and refugees in Izabal was considered successful and highly valuable. More than 1,216 persons were assisted with information, primary health care and restoration of family links services and referral for protection needs through their mobile assistance units.

# Next steps

Continue to build upon the Protection and Regional Safe Spaces Networks to reinforce assistance to persons on the move with international protection needs, including access to child protection and SGBV case management,

legal aid, health care, psychological support, safety, shelter and basic needs.

Promote lessons learned and exchange of good practices between shelters in the region.

## RELATED MIRPS PROJECT PROFILES

**PROJECT 3:** Safe Spaces for SGBV survivors in Costa Rica.

**PROJECT 22:** Strengthening legal aid networks to support persons with protection needs in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, United States.

**PROJECT 29:** Regional and National Protection Networks and Safe Spaces in Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras, Belize and Costa Rica.



For more information visit: [www.globalcrff.org](http://www.globalcrff.org). Or contact Hugues Van Brabandt, Regional External Relations Officer, Panama, [vanbraba@unhcr.org](mailto:vanbraba@unhcr.org)

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