

# INTER-AGENCY RESPONSE

## MIXED MOVEMENTS FROM THE NORTH OF CENTRAL AMERICA

1 – 31 January 2019


### KEY POPULATION FIGURES OF LARGE MOVEMENTS FROM NCA (provided by governments as of 30 January 2019)



**12,600**  
PERSONS REGISTERED FOR THE HUMANITARIAN VISITOR CARD IN MEXICO. AT LEAST 300 OF THEM ARE UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN (UNICEF)



**+8,600**  
HUMANITARIAN VISITOR CARDS DELIVERED



**3,000**  
REMAIN IN TECUN UMAN, INCLUDING 300 CHILDREN. 3,000 SHELTERED BY INM IN MEXICO.



**+2,600**  
PEOPLE ARE IN SHELTERS IN MEXICO CITY. 671 ARE CHILDREN

### PERSONS ASSISTED

(provided by IOM, UNHCR and UNICEF as of 30 January 2019)



**IOM**  
UN MIGRATION



**UNHCR  
ACNUR**  
La Agencia de la ONU  
para los Refugiados




**726**  
SUPPORTED TO RETURN VOLUNTARILY



**+1,500** PEOPLE (AVERAGE) SHELTERED BY UNHCR PARTNERS & MUNICIPALITY IN TECUN UMAN & PETEN EVERY DAY



**739**  
SUPPORTED THROUGH CHILD FRIENDLY SPACES AND DAILY PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT IN SUCHIATE & TAPACHULA


**12,574** PEOPLE PROVIDED WITH MIGRATION INFORMATION AT THE INM CENTRE IN SUCHIATE AND THE BRIDGE



**2,500** PEOPLE INFORMED IN GUATEMALA ON ASYLUM PROCEDURES



**4,500** PEOPLE INFORMED IN MEXICO ON ASYLUM PROCEDURES




**2,500** BENEFIT DAILY FROM WATER & SANITATION INFRASTRUCTURE IN GUATEMALA



INFORMATION CARDS ON IMMIGRATION PROCEDURES DISTRIBUTED  
**15,000**



**360** PLASTIC SHEETS, **300** BLANKETS, **300** SOLAR LANTERNS & **100** HATS DONATED TO MUNICIPALITY IN TECUN UMAN.



**54,000** CHILD-FRIENDLY LEAFLETS ON THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN DISTRIBUTED IN EL SALVADOR

## BACKGROUND

Between 14 and 30 January, several small and large mixed groups from Honduras and El Salvador departed from different towns with the hope of reaching Mexico and the United States of America. Reasons for their flight vary. Among them are people fleeing violence and persecution in their countries of origin, as well as others looking to improve their economic situation, reunite with their families in the United States or solve their food security needs. Of particular concern is the vulnerability of those on the move, who might face risks related to smuggling or trafficking.

While mixed groups were departing their countries in large and visible scales in 2018 (an estimated 5,000 people per group), those departing in 2019 left in smaller groups, some crossing the borders through unofficial crossings points. A significant increase of people has been reported in Guatemala's department of Peten, through which relatively small groups have been crossing towards Mexico. Most visibly, however, between 15 and 30 January 2019, small groups of Salvadorians, Hondurans and Guatemalans made their way to the Tecun Uman border, accounting for around 12,600 people who either crossed borders, or residing irregularly in Guatemala or Mexico.

As a result of the mass arrivals from Central America, the Mexican Government began implementation on a pilot basis of a new entry procedure at the border in Ciudad Hidalgo under its new immigration policy. Under the new policy, the Government commits to a migratory regime based on human rights. Although many of the details of the policy remain to be defined, it is expected to have significant impact on the large movements of people from the NCA.

From 17 to 29 January (when the pilot closed), the Mexican National Institute for Migration (INM for its acronym in Spanish), registered 12,574 applicants for the Humanitarian Visitor Card at the border with Guatemala in Ciudad Hidalgo. The vast majority were from Central America. INM had issued over 8,600 Humanitarian Visitor's Cards to allow for entry and free movement in Mexico as well as access to the labour market. The Government announced on 28 January that registration under the pilot programme was ending, but that it would continue to issue cards to people who had registered. It stated that in the future it would issue the Humanitarian Visitor's Card to people in their countries of origin in the NCA. INM also announced that it would issue two forms of short term stay previously reserved for Guatemalans and Belizeans, the Regional Visitors Cards and Border Worker's Cards, to Salvadorans and Hondurans.

As at 30 January, the majority of new arrivals remained in the border region with some in Guatemala and most in Mexico, including upwards of 2,500 people in a temporary shelter in the INM border station. There were indications that a large number could begin moving north. Approximately 2,700 people were in the Mexico City "Palillo" Stadium and around 2,000 of them continued to move further north the next day.

In light of these mixed movements of asylum-seekers and migrants, the United Nations system and partners in the field have been deploying teams to the borders to support governments in the countries of origin, transit and destination in responding to the specific needs of these groups, according to the respective mandates.



Figure 1 Family waits to be registered in Tecún Umán. This family fled violence in Honduras. ©UNHCR/Pablo Villagrán

## RESPONSE AT THE FIELD LEVEL

**IOM**, the International Organization for Migration, is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As the leading international organization for migration, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to assist in meeting the growing operational challenges of migration management, advance understanding of migration issues, encourage social and economic development through migration and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

**UNHCR**, the UN Refugee Agency, supports States in providing international protection to asylum-seekers and refugees, those who have fled their countries of origin because their lives are at risk. UNHCR holds periodic discussions with governments, other UN agencies and NGOs at the field level with the aim of facilitating a coordinated response in terms of shelter, humanitarian assistance and basic services, as well as on finding durable solutions to the plight of asylum-seekers and refugees.

**UNICEF** works with local and national governments and civil society to protect the rights of refugee and migrant children, through addressing the root causes of forced and irregular migration and ensuring the integral protection of the rights of children in transit and destination. UNICEF works in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador where it provides immediate support to children and families in the context of migration and displacement, while also strengthening institutional capacities of different sectors working with this population.

In **Honduras**, between January 1 and 29 **IOM** aided 487 returnees. Of this figure, 116 are voluntary returns assisted from Guatemala and Mexico coordinated by the Western Hemisphere Program of the Organization. Between January 17 and 23, IOM staff traveled to the Agua Caliente border (Honduras-Guatemala) where the Permanent Commission of Contingencies of Honduras (COPECO) had previously installed a camp (mobile CAM-R) to give attention to returned migrant populations. During this period, IOM provided post-arrival assistance to returnees from caravans; 261 hygiene kits and 110 food kits were delivered, including assistance for 33 unaccompanied migrant returnee children. Deliveries were made at the mobile CAMR border facilities. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also coordinated the delivery of hygiene kits during the period in which there was no IOM staff. Likewise, information was given on the Assisted Voluntary Return Program of the Organization and the permanent installation of two informative banners about this program was coordinated with the INM.

As the lead of the Protection Working Group in the country, **UNHCR** has been coordinating the response from UN Agencies and NGOs, in close collaboration with the government institutions. UNHCR has been monitoring the borders and main departure points to identify the profiles of people joining the groups, as well as those with international protection needs who are either crossing the borders or who are unable to move onwards. In addition, the UN Refugee Agency has been providing support through its partners to unaccompanied children who are in dedicated shelters, and to people at the borders. This support includes the deployment of UNHCR and partner staff to key locations to provide psychological care and humanitarian assistance. UNHCR keeps coordinating with UNHCHR in order to provide close follow-up to the human rights situation in the country that is compelling people to move abroad. Moreover, UNHCR conducted a profiling exercise based on interviews with people crossing the borders. Results will be available soon.

**UNICEF** continues supporting the National Child Protection Authority (DINAF) efforts with seven dedicated DINAF Child Protection Officers deployed to border crossing sites for case management and nine officers working on reintegration of unaccompanied detained/returnee children. Through UNICEF-supported actions, 161 unaccompanied children received immediate protection services from DINAF Officers and are currently receiving reintegration services by case management workers. In addition, 400 units of diapers and sanitation items, food, water and medicines were distributed to returned families and children.

In **El Salvador**, **IOM**, through Western Hemisphere Program and the local promoter of the information window for migrants in Ahuachapán, visited the borders of La Hachadura, San Cristóbal and Las Chinamas, to monitor and give information on each caravan's departure date. Through the inter-institutional local networks in El Amatillo, IOM has monitored potential Honduran migrants entering through that border. In Ahuachapán, coordination meetings were held prior to receiving persons at the border of La Hachadura. At the time of the returns, IOM is coordinating with immigration authorities to monitor the buses that will enter La Hachadura, to facilitate access to Salvadoran territory. The Return and Reintegration Program (PRR) has also moved to border points when the number of migrants has required it. Between January 1 and 29, IOM provided post-arrival assistance to 206 returnees from caravans. In vulnerability cases that were identified, IOM coordinated with the relevant authorities through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. So far, 2 cases have been accompanied to the community of origin, and cases have been referred for follow-up in communities to the PRR.



UNHCR is coordinating with the Resident Coordinator and UN Agencies in order to provide support to the Directorate for Migration, who is leading the overall response to people on the move. UNHCR maintained presence at key locations in San Salvador and the border in order to monitor the situation, and to support the Directorate in the identification of people with international protection needs. Further coordination structures have been established with additional government institutions, the Red Cross and NGOs. Moreover, UNHCR conducted a profiling exercise based on interviews with people crossing the borders. Results can be found in the following link.

UNICEF works in coordination with UNHCR, IOM and UN Women to provide assistance addressing the most pressing needs of migrants, refugees and returnees. UNICEF is supporting the only existing reception centre of returnees directed by the National Direction of Migration (DGME), with additional staff to reinforce capacities for situation monitoring and service provision. UNICEF continues supporting Child Protection authorities (in particular CONNA and ISNA), in the dissemination of information about the rights and protection of migrant and refugee children throughout the transit route, as well as providing information on safe return. More than 54,000 child-friendly leaflets on the protection of children have been distributed through migration authorities, local authorities and partners, and radio spots on key migration and child protection issues continue being broadcasted via community radio network. In addition, 263 kits for children, in particular returnees, with essential goods and articles for different age groups, have been distributed.

In **Guatemala**, IOM assists migrants who wish to return voluntarily to their country of origin with transportation, food and medical attention before boarding the bus, if necessary. All the attention is given in "Casa del Migrante", Tecun Uman. Monitoring has been carried out at the borders between Petén and Tabasco to learn about migratory dynamics as a result of recent caravans. Any request for voluntary return received by IOM is made through coordination of the corresponding Consulate (HN or SV), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala and various relevant institutions. Through an interview, the Organization ensures that the person has the will to return to their country and is not taking the decision forced by third parties. Between the 1st and the 29th of January, eight returnees received post-arrival assistance. IOM is also supporting the Social Welfare Secretariat (SBS) in the care of minors in the "Casa Nuestras Raíces" shelter in Quetzaltenango, with clothing, hygiene and transport kits. As they are children, the SBS applies its reception protocol and the IOM accompanies with the identification of the basic needs of this population. Cases of unaccompanied children, health, mental health, disability and pregnant children have been attended, which are reported to the consulate to provide differentiated care.

As lead of the Protection Working Group, UNHCR has been coordinating the response across the country thanks to the Early Warning and Response Plan developed among partners and activated as of 15 January. The UN Refugee Agency has been providing support to the Municipality of Ayutla in coordinating the humanitarian response for the thousands of people who have remained in Tecun Uman since mid- January, hoping to obtain the Mexican Humanitarian Visitor Card. At the leadership of religious organizations, the protection and safe spaces network and through its partners, UNHCR has been providing shelter, food, water and sanitation, in addition to making a donation of 360 plastic sheets, 300 blankets, 300 solar lanterns and 300 hats. Additionally, and in response to the increase of people moving through the Department of Peten, UNHCR has been conducting interviews and providing support through access to shelters and humanitarian assistance. In order to support the identification of people with protection needs and those intending to seek asylum, UNHCR maintains presence at the borders with El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico. Moreover, UNHCR conducted a profiling exercise in Tecun Uman and Peten based on interviews with people crossing the borders.



Figure 2 Response in Tecún Umán. UNHCR/Pablo Villagran

UNICEF, in order to ensure that migrants and refugees have access to sanitation services, has installed mobile toilets and showers in a shelter located in Tecún Umán (15 toilets, 5 showers), on the Suchiate River border crossing bridge (10 toilets) and in the Casa del Migrante centre in Guatemala City (10 toilets), around 2,500 persons can benefit daily from this infrastructure. A team has been deployed to Tecún Umán to provide psychosocial support to children, and disseminate messages on child protection. On average 60 children / 20 families are reached daily. UNICEF continues supporting the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office and the Social Welfare Secretariat (SBS) with additional staff deployed to Tecún Umán to monitor the situation. In addition, UNICEF is supporting the distribution of meals (breakfast and dinners) being provided daily at the Tecún Umán shelter (800 meals per service, approx. 250 children per day).

In **Mexico**, Suchiate, Chiapas, since January 25, IOM has applied a survey, with the objective of collecting quantitative and qualitative information on the demographic profiles of the mixed migratory movements of North Central America. There, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE, by its initials in Spanish), the distribution of bottled water is prepared in the Delegation of the National Institute of Migration (INM), where mats were previously provided, and 762 food rations for babies and children will be delivered. A care module was also installed to guide migrants about legal options for their regularization in the country and printed informative materials from MigApp were distributed. The same action is repeated on the "Rodolfo Robles" border bridge, where the monitoring of the situation and mobility of migrants continues, and at the information window in Ciudad Hidalgo. IOM also distributed bottled water in the "Miguel Hidalgo" Central Park in Tapachula, Chiapas. In addition, through interviews of a psychosocial nature, the detection of the needs of migrant children was achieved, with the collaboration of the Procurator's Office for Protection. Additionally, IOM participates in the round table "Migratory Control and Humanitarian Assistance", where agreements and actions are established with federal and state institutions, with organized civil society, UNHCR and UNICEF.



Figure 3 Migrants from North Central America participated in IOM monitoring in Chiapas, Mexico. OIM

Likewise, in collaboration with the information windows in Arriaga, Ciudad Hidalgo and Huixtla, the situation and needs of migrants who transit through these areas are monitored. Finally, through the Assisted Voluntary Return Program, IOM has supported a total of 585 returns from November 2018 to January 29, 2019.

Beginning on 16 January, UNHCR surged staffing in Tapachula to over 40, including a team in Ciudad Hidalgo. A mobile team was also on hand at the temporary shelter in "Palillo" Stadium in Ciudad Mexico once the first large group arrived there. UNHCR provides print-material and has informed since 17 January over 4,500 people face-to-face about the Mexican asylum procedure. UNHCR had 38 contractors on secondment to COMAR, mainly for registration. COMAR data show that since 17 January over 400 people registered with INM or who traveled with the large group in Mexico City sought asylum. Content of the online Jaguar Facebook help page reached 41,081 users in January. Through the direct message function of the page, the operation responded to 109 consultations. UNHCR established protection and service desks along strategic locations of the routes and established referral mechanisms for people with specific needs. Since 17 January, 247 people have been registered with UNHCR, provided with specific counselling and referred to specialized services as necessary. To counter the limitation on freedom of movement of asylum-seekers that might enhance the formation of new groups, UNHCR is scaling up its internal relocation and local integration programme with new cities currently being prioritized to allow people to settle in parts of Mexico with strong local integration prospects, including access to education, health services and job opportunities. On 26 January, 37 people were relocated from Tapachula to Saltillo and Guadalajara, and an additional 43 people were registered to be relocated on 2 February. According to the Protection Monitoring conducted by UNHCR Mexico, 70% of the people who registered with INM fear return to their countries on account of violence and persecution and may be in need of international protection.

Others are looking to improve their economic situation, reunite with their families (especially in the United States), or solve their food security needs. Among those registered with INM, at least 99 unaccompanied children were identified.

UNICEF maintains presence in both borders in Chiapa state (Ciudad Hidalgo Suchiate and Tapachula), Tijuana and Mexico City.



Figure 4 Refugee and migrant children awaiting their humanitarian visas draw pictures of the homes they fled at the UNICEF-supported child friendly space at the Mexico-Guatemala border in Ciudad Hidalgo, Mexico. ©UNICEF/Tanya Bindra/Mexico/2019.

In Chiapas, UNICEF maintains constant presence at the migratory station to provide support to authorities and arriving children and families, including direct technical assistance to authorities to ensure that cases of unaccompanied children are duly processed and receive appropriate care; information materials are distributed to children and families regarding migratory options (i.e. visitors card, asylum request or voluntary return). UNICEF has established child friendly spaces and provides psychosocial on a daily basis in shelters and at the migratory station in Suchiate. As of 15 January, 739 children had been reached with this support in Suchiate and Tapachula. In addition, UNICEF continues monitoring the situation to prevent the detention of children due to their migratory status. In Tijuana (Baja California state), UNICEF - through partners - is present with activities in four shelters through mobile teams conducting psychosocial support and therapeutic activities, hygiene kits are also distributed when/where necessary. At least 205 children have been reached by these activities since 17

January. UNICEF is also providing psychosocial support for first line responders from Civil Society Organizations, UN Agencies and authorities. Moreover, UNICEF provides technical assistance to local Child Protection authorities for management of unaccompanied children cases.

In Mexico City, UNICEF provides technical assistance to authorities to ensure a child-centered response, including the operation of a Child Services Pavilion at el 'Palillo' Stadium. With UNICEF support, 10 toilets and handwashing facilities have been installed, benefiting at least 671 children currently attending the Children Pavilion.

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