

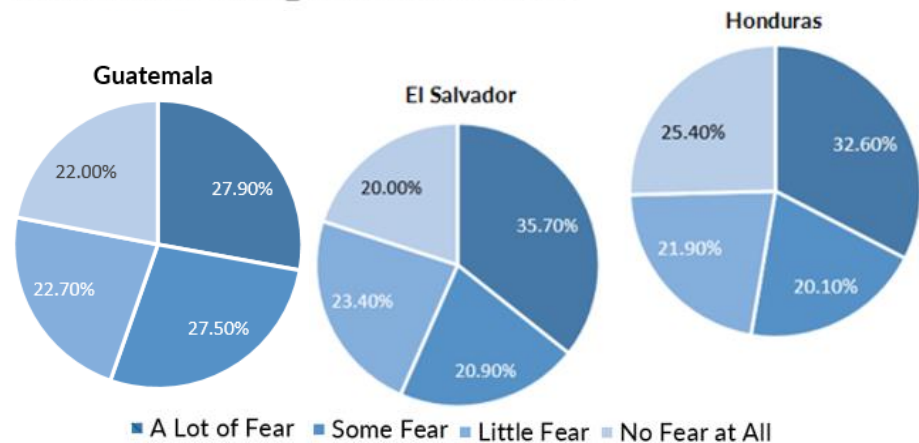
## Protection and Solutions in the North of Central America and Mexico: An appeal to Canada

### BACKGROUND

The North of Central America (NCA) region (El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala) continues to experience violence and insecurity caused by criminal groups, which has resulted in a growing number of individuals who are fleeing to surrounding countries. There are currently 311,900 refugees and asylum seekers from the NCA worldwide, representing a 30% increase this year alone. Mexico and Central America have seen a 1,000% increase since 2011, while the US has seen an increase of 2000%. 245,000 individuals are internally displaced.

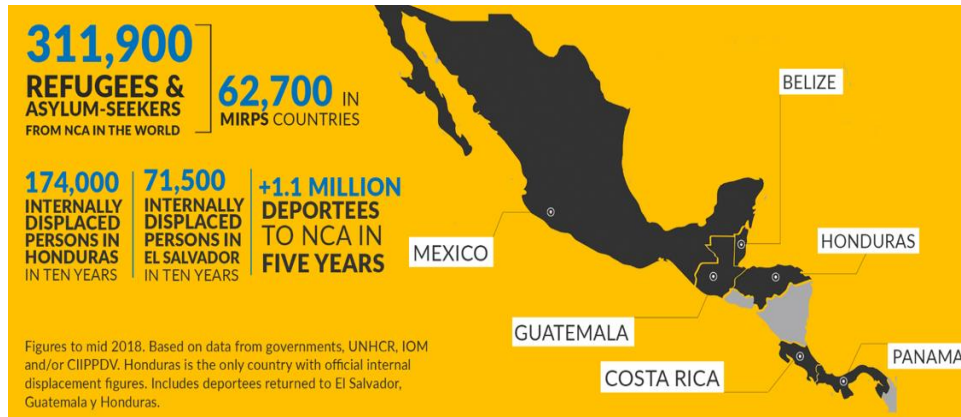
As a result, the surrounding states have been under strain and now require the support of Canada and the international community, in line with the commitments in the global compact on refugees.

Level of fear of being a victim of homicide



*The most vulnerable NCA nationals on the move are women, children and LGBTI individuals.*

Killings and death threats, forced recruitment into armed criminal gangs and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) at the hands of criminal groups, combined with dire economic situations and limited protection systems are some of the reasons so many decide to flee. In the NCA region, **women** are at a higher risk of femicide than any other region in the world, and **LGBTQ** individuals are particularly targeted.

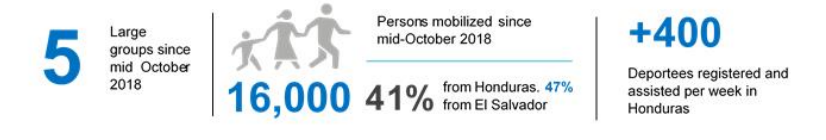
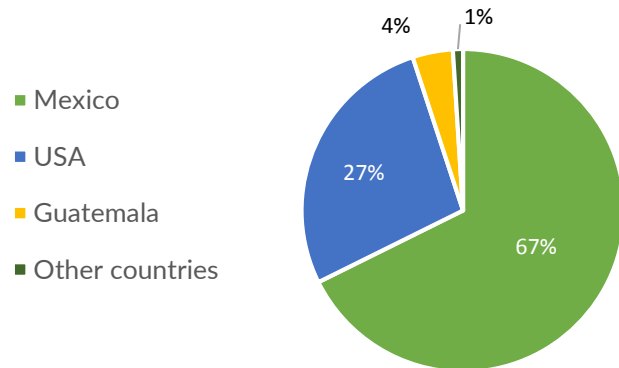


Of additional concern is the large proportion of **unaccompanied children**. Since 2011, the number of unaccompanied children from the NCA making their way to the U.S. has doubled each year, reaching a total of 60,000 unaccompanied minors in 2016. While these displacement numbers have been observed for several years, they have made headlines again recently with the “caravans” of NCA nationals crossing into Mexico.

*“Last year the gang members told everyone in my colonia that the gang was in control and everyone had to get out. My entire family left because they knew it was dangerous. They try to make boys join the gang. It’s dangerous for girls, too...” (Honduran boy, 16 yo ; #ChildrenOnTheRun)*

**86%** of displaced NCA nationals have expressed **intent to seek asylum**. Of those, the majority hope to claim asylum in Mexico, and a smaller proportion hope to reach the U.S., Guatemala or other countries.

Country of destination indicated by asylum seekers and refugees from the North of Central America (NCA)



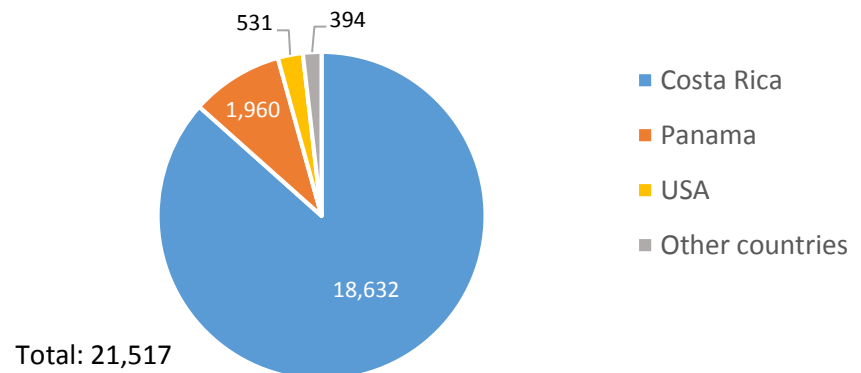
ACCORDING TO INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED IN GUATEMALA\*, APPROXIMATELY



\*Preliminary data gathered between 29 October and 21 November 2018

The rapid deterioration of the situation in **Nicaragua** since April 2018 has also contributed to high volumes of asylum applications from Nicaraguans in Central America, including in NCA countries and Mexico. Refugee producing countries are also receiving asylum applications, further straining asylum systems and highlighting the need for an urgent regional response.

Asylum applications from Nicaraguans in 2018 by Country of Asylum



## UNHCR'S WORK IN THE NCA COUNTRIES

UNHCR's activities in the region aim to provide immediate and long-term solutions to forcible displacements. Efforts are being made to assist internally displaced people, to support refugees and asylum seekers who are in transit, to strengthen reception conditions and to reintegrate returnees. This is being accomplished by improving laws and policies, providing opportunities for education and entrepreneurship, and establishing safe spaces for those in transit.

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



### Populations of concern assisted in the North of Central America (NCA)



-  Individual / family assistance
-  Legal counselling and advice
-  Psychosocial support
-  Material assistance (shelter, food, etc)
-  Protection monitoring / registration
-  PTA
-  Vocational training
-  Community-based assistance
-  Awareness, capacity building and empowerment sessions
-  Community mobilization activities
-  Construction of community infrastructure
-  Participatory and needs assessments

UNHCR has provided essential support to individuals, families and communities in the NCA region. This support has included the provision of basic material needs, legal guidance, job training, and assistance to host communities for better integration of displaced people.

## A REGIONAL SOLUTION

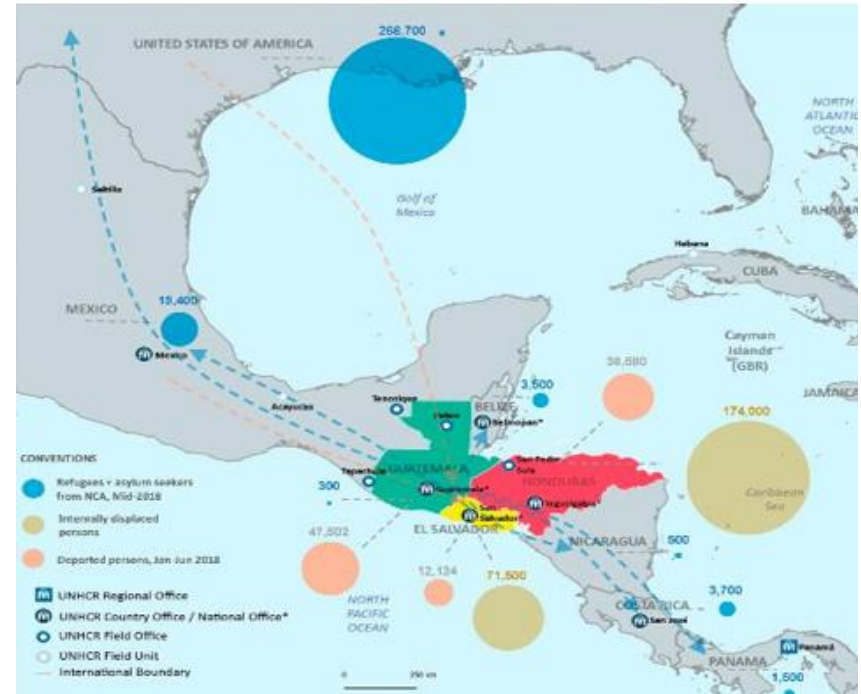
To further address these issues, **The Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS in its Spanish acronym)** for Central America and Mexico was developed in 2017 as a regional application of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) that works to better respond to refugees.

The **MIRPS** is a government-led initiative which coordinates civil society groups, local governments and international organizations in origin, transit and destination countries to strengthen their capacity to respond to the needs of vulnerable individuals.

At the October 2017 high-level meeting in Honduras, **six countries** (Honduras, Guatemala, Panama, Costa Rica, Belize, and Mexico) pledged to strengthen support for refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons through their inclusion in three-year national action plans. As a MIRPS cooperating state, **Canada committed** to continue its support for the region by strengthening the Mexican asylum system through its partnership with the U.S., and providing technical and financial assistance to indigenous women and youth in Guatemala. **Thirty projects** were also developed, aiming to strengthen the reception of asylum seekers, provide for immediate and basic needs, support host countries and communities, and ensure durable solutions, based on each country's needs and priorities. These projects have been implemented and will continue operating in 2019.

### North of Central America (NCA) Situation:

*Key population figures in the region during the first half of 2018*



**24,900**

Persons assisted in Honduras this year



**21,300**

Persons assisted in Guatemala this year



**16,000**

Persons assisted in El Salvador this year

**20**

Victims' offices opened in El Salvador

**37**

Safe spaces established in the NCA

**11** In Guatemala

**78%**

More people assisted than in 2017

**288**

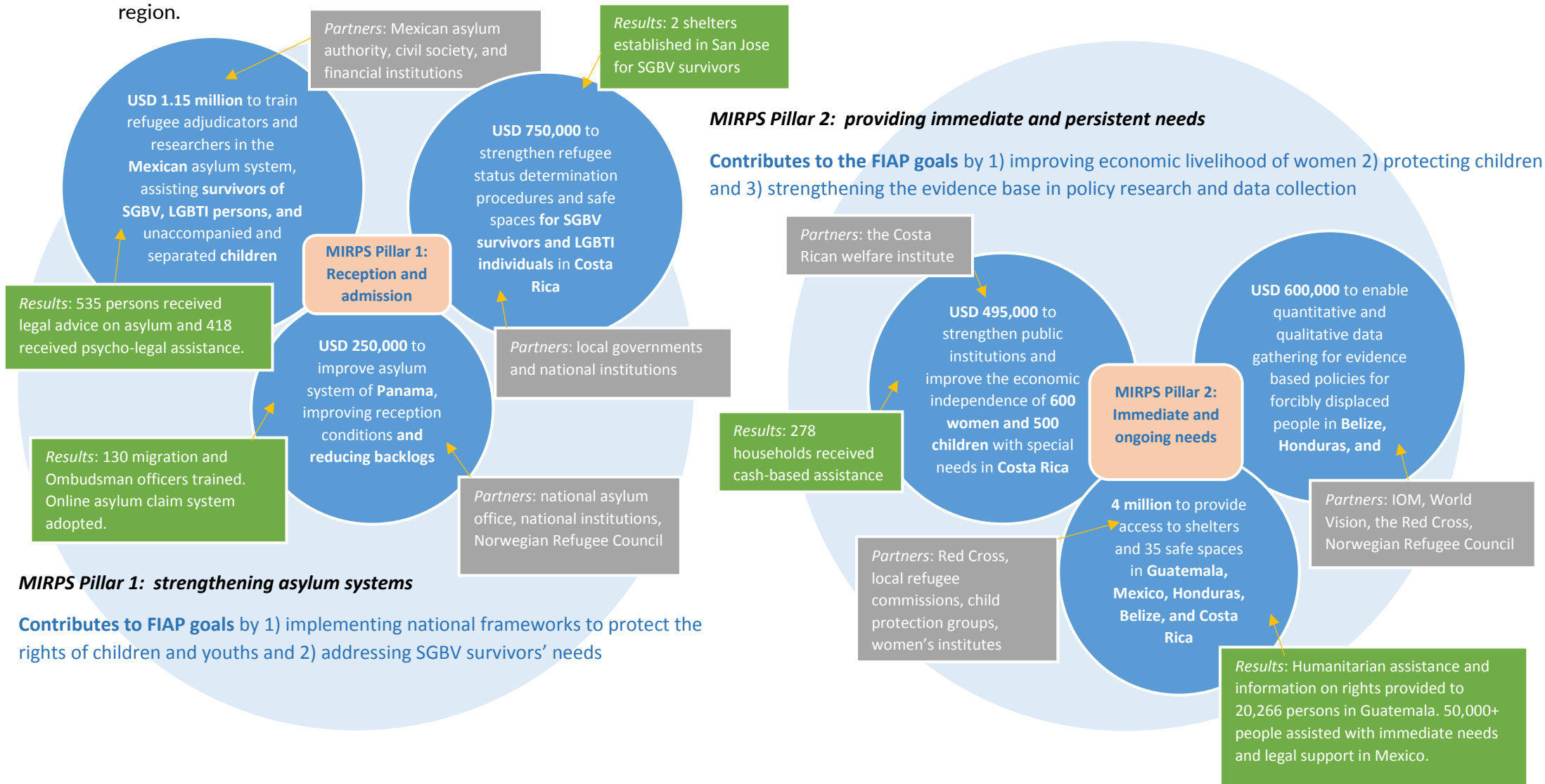
Persons resettled through the Protection Transfer Agreement (PTA)

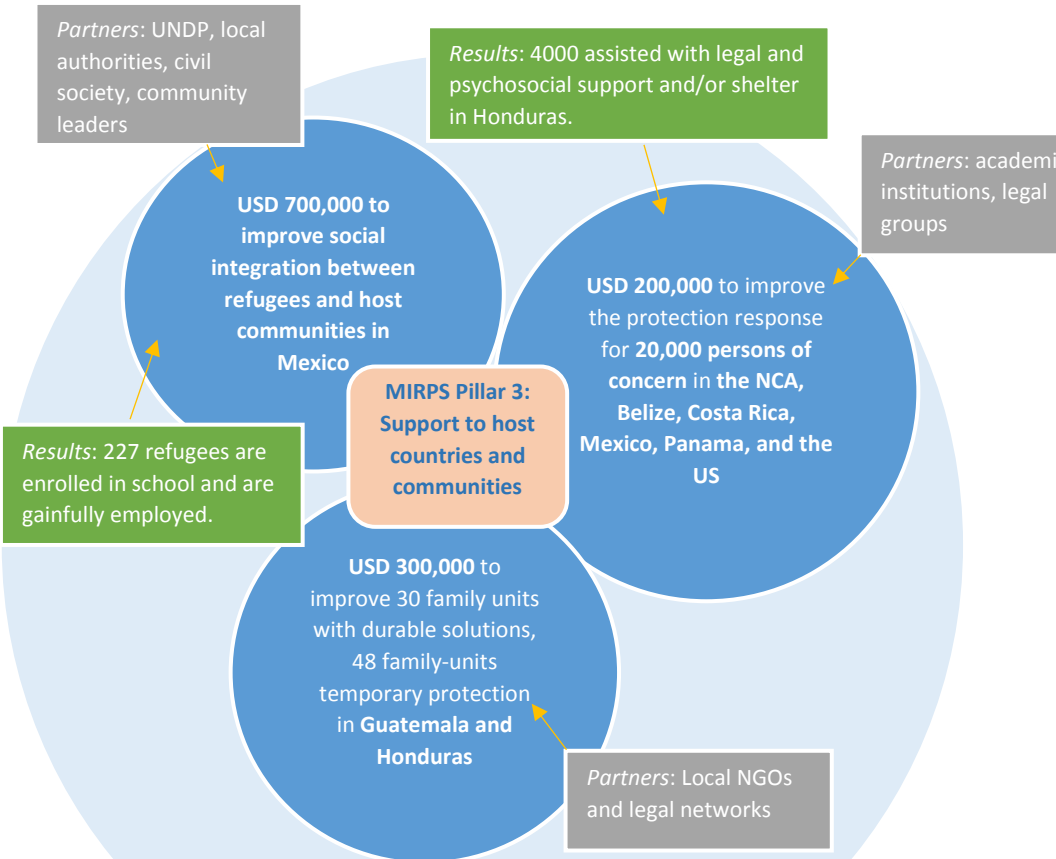
**11** Resettled in Canada

As part of the MIRPS effort to provide durable solutions, the **Protection Transfer Agreement (PTA)** was developed to ensure individuals from the NCA, identified in their own country as facing extreme risks, are resettled in a third country via a country of transit. Since 2016, 288 individuals have been resettled through the PTA, including 11 in Canada in 2017.

## REQUIREMENTS

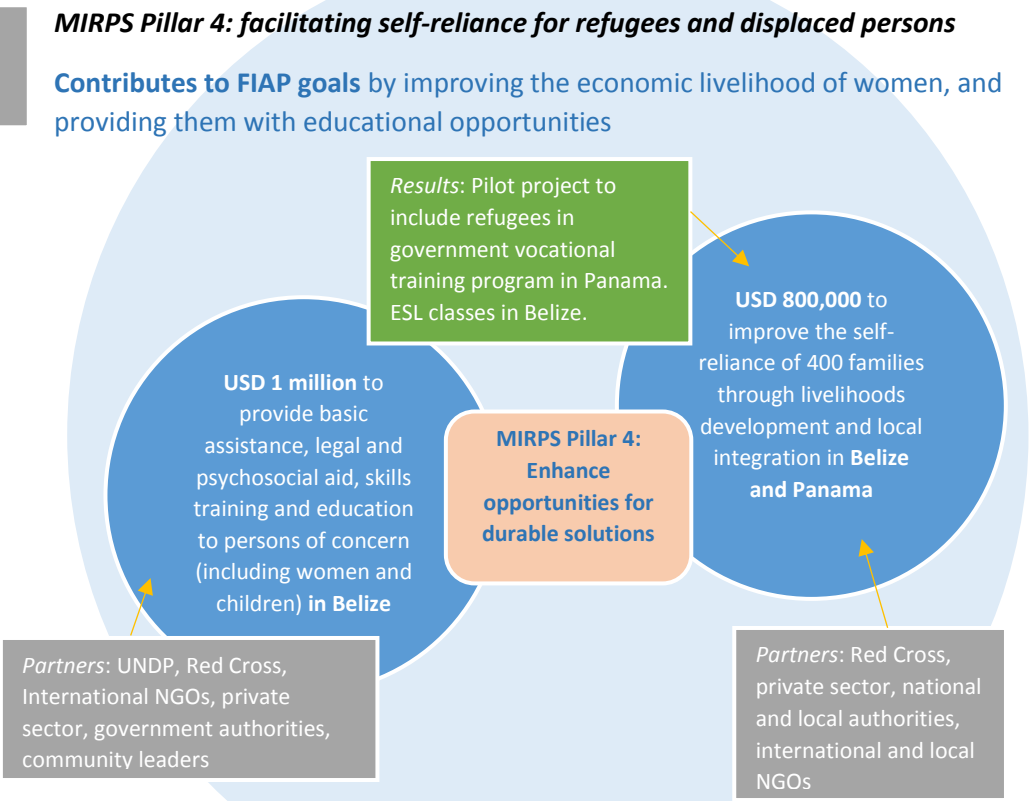
The 30 MIRPS projects remain critically underfunded and under-supported. **In 2018, only 23 per cent of the USD 36.2 million required by the UNHCR for the NCA region was received.** As a MIRPS cooperating state and in line with its commitments to women and girls, Canada's financial and technical support for the following projects would provide much needed solutions, and promote gender equality and empowerment in the region.





**MIRPS Pillar 3: Strengthening policies and institutional response in host communities**

Contributes to FIAP goals by helping government to address the needs of women through responsive policies and services



**MIRPS Pillar 4: facilitating self-reliance for refugees and displaced persons**

Contributes to FIAP goals by improving the economic livelihood of women, and providing them with educational opportunities