

El Salvador

October 2020

- **71,500** internally displaced people in the country.
- **41,850** Salvadoran refugees worldwide at the end of 2019.
- **7,783** Salvadorans have been returned, mainly from the United States and Mexico, up to July 2020. **15.9%** of the adults and **19.5%** of children reported leaving the country due to **insecurity and violence**.
- **During the pandemic, violence continues unabated.** In the first half of 2020, El Salvador registered **1,475** personal injury crimes, **609** cases of extortion **759** reports of sexual violence (the majority against women) and **587** homicides.
- **136,292** Salvadoran asylum seekers with pending cases at the end of 2019.
- More than **13,000** internally displaced people and/or at risk of displacement assisted by UNHCR and partners.

CONTEXT

The COVID-19 emergency has exacerbated the needs of internally displaced persons and those at risk in El Salvador by impacting their access to protection options and the ability to carry out livelihood activities. Through protection monitoring efforts, UNHCR has verified that gang violence in communities continues during the pandemic. UNHCR has provided orientation, counselling and humanitarian assistance to forcefully displaced persons.

Gang violence and lack of protection has forced tens of thousands to flee internally since 2006. In July 2018, the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice ordered the official recognition of internal forced displacement in El Salvador through ruling 411/2017.

In 2019, the Salvadoran government joined five Central American countries and Mexico in a regional comprehensive framework to respond to forced displacement in the region (**MIRPS** in Spanish), and later became the second President Pro-tempore of this regional application of the **Global Compact on Refugees**.

Committed to addressing the root causes of displacement, in January 2020, El Salvador passed a **legislation to protect, aid and offer durable solutions to people internally displaced due to violence** from organized crime and criminal gangs, as well as those who may be at risk of displacement.

MAIN RISKS AND PROTECTION CONCERNS IN EL SALVADOR

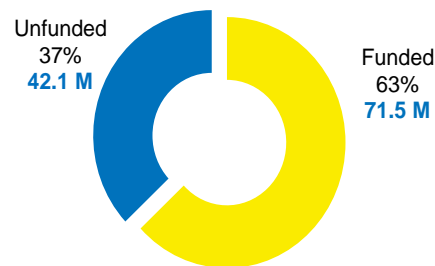
Communities in El Salvador are severely affected by gang violence. Among the main risks faced by people in El Salvador are:

- Extortions and threats to life
- Physical violence and homicides
- Sexual violence and feminicides
- Recruitment of children and youth
- Violence against LGBTI populations
- Lack of basic and adequate emergency assistance
- Lack of access to effective protection measures
- Lack of livelihoods and durable solutions

FUNDING (AS OF 29 SEPTEMBER 2020)

US\$ 113.6 M

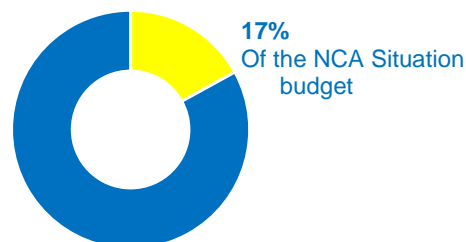
Requested for the **NCA situation**



The financial requirements for the North of Central America situation include requirements in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama MCO.

US\$ 19.7M

Needed for operation in **El Salvador** for 2020 (within the total requirements for the NCA Situation)



UNHCR PRESENCE

Total staff: 36*

22 National
14 International

Office:

1 Country office in San Salvador

Working with partners

UNHCR works in close coordination with the Salvadoran State, civil society organizations, UN Agencies, Funds and Programs, regional bodies, and persons of concern to provide a comprehensive for, among others, internally displaced persons, communities at risk of displacement and deported persons with protection needs. In response to protection needs, UNHCR has expanded its presence across the country to strengthen communities and the State response, by undertaking prevention, protection and solutions activities in El Salvador. Moreover, UNHCR supports the State to implement its national plan under the Regional Comprehensive Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS).

Community-based protection

UNHCR undertakes community-based interventions to help **mitigate protection risks**, particularly those impacting girls and boys, youth, SGBV survivors, LGBTI persons, among others. Through a **protection-by-presence** approach, UNHCR and partners implement concrete and visible projects that strengthen the protection of communities as well as their resilience. During the COVID-19 emergency, UNHCR continues to engage with communities through digital means. In 2020, UNHCR has provided **humanitarian assistance through cash-based interventions to 778 families**. In addition, UNHCR has expanded its presence to **45 prioritized communities in 2020** to strengthen leadership processes, community structures and the development of protection networks and solutions. UNHCR **strengthens community structures** and promotes dialogue with state and government institutions. UNHCR currently provides support to **a network of 16 parishes, 7 LGBTI community groups** and more than **80 families in 8 communities**. UNHCR alongside the Ombudsperson's Office provide a comprehensive protection response to internally displaced persons through the identification of cases and the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Law and policy development

The Legislative Assembly passed a bill addressing internal displacement, drafted with technical support from UNHCR, aligned with the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and with other international standards. UNHCR provides **technical and financial assistance** to the Ministry of Justice and Public Security to strengthen the Local Offices for the Assistance to Victims. Similarly, UNHCR supports the efforts of the Office of the Prosecutor (PGR) to assess the best interest of children affected by forced displacement. UNHCR has **designed a Protection Module** through the Directorate of Attention to Migrants for the identification and documentation of deported persons with protection needs. UNHCR maintains presence at the reception center to provide support and progressively assists the Government of El Salvador in the efforts to implement actions on the approved law on internal displacement.

Durable solutions and livelihoods

Livelihood opportunities for displaced persons allow them to support themselves and their families, while helping their host communities thrive. UNHCR supports **small-scale entrepreneurship initiatives** to support, IDPs, deportees with protection needs and their hosts in becoming self-reliant. To date, **94 people** have benefitted from these initiatives. UNHCR supports an accelerated learning programme jointly with the Ministry of Education for internally displaced people and community-based interventions to promote community integration.

Comprehensive responses

UNHCR has led the **Protection Cluster**, where at least **28 organizations** converge to coordinate the response to vulnerable people affected by different risks including forced displacement, which is needed more than ever in response to the COVID-19 emergency. The response comprises in the delivery of **humanitarian assistance** – food, hygiene kits and psychosocial support—as well as the provision protection services to persons at risk. UNHCR has distributed at least **4,000 hygiene kits and 2,000 food kits** through state and government institutions to respond to the COVID-19 emergency and more than 2,000 hygiene kits through **municipalities** in El Salvador to support to communities affected by tropical storms Amanda and Cristóbal. UNHCR also distributed **892 food baskets** to respond to the emergency. UNHCR has also provided humanitarian assistance to families in the departments of Usulután, Chalatenango, San Salvador, La Unión, Cuscatlán, San Miguel, La Libertad, La Paz, Morazán and Santa Ana. In the framework of **Global Compact on Refugees** and the MIRPS, UNHCR supports the implementation of the national action plan in coordination with the government, civil society organizations, UN agencies and displaced communities in the country.

Providing safe spaces and shelter

UNHCR works together with faith-based organizations and other partners to provide **safe spaces**, shelter and basic humanitarian assistance to persons in need of protection. UNHCR and partner Cáritas have inaugurated four safe houses and two shelters to strengthen the identification and referral of IDPs and deported persons with protection needs. UNHCR has also supported safe spaces in coordination with the Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women for **SGBV survivors and displaced women**.



In El Salvador, COVID-19 represents an additional threat to people affected by forced displacement

Ruth*, 26, learned from experience what it means to be threatened by gangs in El Salvador.

© Cortesía of Ruth*

*Name changed for protection reasons.

Thanks to donors in 2020: UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have provided generous and timely support to the Coronavirus Emergency Situation globally, and countries in Central America, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked funding: Canada | Denmark | European Union | France | Germany | Italy | Netherlands | Norway | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | United States of America and to our private donors: Australia | Italy | Japan | Korea, Republic of | Spain | UN Covid-19 MPTF | Unilever (UK) | US