

**COMPREHENSIVE  
REGIONAL  
PROTECTION &  
SOLUTIONS  
FRAMEWORK**



**MIRPS**

**REGIONAL ANNUAL  
REPORT 2017-2018**

## Notes:

All English translations of national institutions, laws, decisions and reports are not official translations, unless otherwise indicated.

## CREDITS:

MIRPS countries wish to acknowledge the contributions made by country teams and their partners for the elaboration of this report.

This report was prepared by the technical MIRPS Country Teams, the OAS and UNHCR.

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The maps and data in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion on behalf of any of the governments nor of their partners, with regards to the legal status of any country or territory, or the delimitation of borders.

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# OAS

More rights for more people

# INTRODUCTION BY THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

The protection of human rights of refugees and migrants, in conditions of equality among all citizens, is a responsibility of all. The respect for their dignity promotes their inclusion and, at the same time, contributions to the development of countries of origin and destination. This effect is highly positive and has an impact in both economic and social scopes, creating plural, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies. The intraregional management of human displacement while protecting everyone's human rights comes with significant challenges for the countries in the region, and calls upon the realization of the four pillars honed by the Organization of American States (OAS): development, security, human rights and democracy.

In July 2016, a milestone was recorded in our hemisphere with the adoption of the San Jose Declaration, fruit of the "Call to Action: Protection Needs in the Northern Triangle of Central America" Roundtable. The Declaration clearly provides responses and solutions to be implemented in countries of origin, transit and destination for displaced populations. A laudable element of this Declaration is the collaborative effort invested by countries, humanitarian actors and international agencies, the civil society and academia. After the San José meeting, the region managed to obtain an improved collective appreciation of the dimensions of its human mobility, and to know better the migratory and refugee dimensions not only in the Northern Triangle, but also in the region as a whole.

Nonetheless, and as documented by UNHCR in numerous occasions, a protection crisis persists. The increase in the index of violence in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras has forced thousands of women, men and children to leave their homes between 2015 and 2018, mainly to Mexico and the United States of America (USA). The number of refugees and asylum-seekers from the aforementioned countries and with pending cases passed from 20,900 in 2012 to 311,900 in 2018[1]. Even if there are other regions in the world that have larger displacement crisis from the quantitative viewpoint, the number of displaced persons from the Northern Triangle of Central America has nevertheless increased sevenfold in the last six years, reaching levels comparable to those of the 80s[2]. In the USA, asylum claims from nationals of northern Central American states have increased by 44% between 2016 and 2017, accounting for 43% of the country's total new asylum claims. This

is significant as the United States is the country with the largest numbers of new claims in the world, and where the increasing tendency is ongoing. Moreover, recent data shows that there has been an increase in the number of persons from Venezuela and Nicaragua fleeing across borders in the region, thus calling for readiness to address their needs in a comprehensive manner. Hence the pertinence of this comprehensive and cross-cutting call to action.

The San Pedro Sula Regional Conference, held on 26 and 27 October 2017, under the auspices of the Honduran government, sought to give continuance to these regional efforts in relation to the protection needs of people from the Northern Triangle. This scenario convened the governments of Belize, Honduras, Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Panama, with the support from other cooperating states, as well as national, regional and international human rights organizations, the civil society, academia and the private sector. Collaborators also included the General Secretariat of the OAS, UNHCR, the Central American Integration system (SICA), the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IAHR Court) and the United Nations System. These key actors adopted the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) as a regional contribution to the Global Compact on Refugees. Through the San Pedro Sula Declaration, the six countries also mandated the OAS and UNHCR to monitor the implementation of the MIRPS.

It was within this framework that on 5 June 2018, the 48th General Assembly of the OAS, the highest body of the inter-American system, approved the omnibus resolution on the "promotion and protection of human rights." On its section XXIII titled "strengthening protection and solutions mechanisms in the context of human rights of refugees," OAS member states acknowledge the San Pedro Sula Declaration, whereby Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama adopted the MIRPS, as a concrete example attesting for the relevance of regional mechanisms in guaranteeing that the protection needs of displaced populations are met, as provided by the Global Compact on Refugees. The Resolution also instructs the Commission on Juridical and Political Affairs (CJPA) of the OAS Permanent Council to

monitor the implementation of the resolution and to report on an annual basis on the progress, with the support from the General Secretariat of the OAS through its Department of Social Inclusion, and UNHCR. Moreover, in collaboration with UNHCR, the General Secretariat also decided to create a Joint Unit to support the MIRPS process, thus integrating the responses of the Inter-American System within refugee and displacement issues.

The OAS is the main political forum in the hemisphere, and since its foundation has been in charge promoting and defending of human rights. Hence, we reiterate our firm commitment to actively contribute to addressing the protection crisis faced by refugees, migrants and displaced people in the region, particularly following up on the MIRPS as a regional contribution to the Global Compact on Refugees. This pioneering model adopted through the MIRPS as a regional application of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) contained in the New York declaration surpasses its sub-regional nature, and may serve as a model and contribution to best practices in addressing displacement matters, be it in the hemisphere or in other regions.

Building on the benefits of cooperation schemes, the protection of refugees, migrants and displaced people

is an unsurpassable motive and opportunity to join efforts, and further an agenda for social inclusion and protection that would allow us to achieve more rights for more people.

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[1] See UNHCR, "UNHCR alarmed by sharp rise in Force Displacement in North of Central America", briefing note, 22 May 2018, accessed October 15, 2018. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/briefing/2018/5/5b03d89c4/unhcr-alarmed-sharp-rise-forced-displacement-north-central-america.html>, and also data from immigration authorities and the IOM.

[2] UNHCR (2018), Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017, accessed October 15, 2018. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/5b27be547>

[3]Ibid.





# INTRODUCTION BY THE OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Multiple humanitarian crises around the world have forced millions of people to flee their places of origin in search of safety. During the last decade, the number of displaced persons has risen to 68.5 million uprooted children, women and men who have left their homes, families and realities; a figure that once again surpasses any precedent. Today, one in 110 people is in a type of displacement situation, having fled as a result of persecution, conflicts or generalized violence.

In spite of the efforts made by the international community and host countries, the complexity of the world's displacement renders solidarity as insufficient. Often, the lack of solutions to conflicts and violence forces hundreds to leave everything behind. UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, estimates that the number of new displacements exceeds a daily rate of 44,000 uprooted people. 85% of them have found safe haven in developing countries.

The impact of the presence of displaced populations in host countries and communities – particularly those facing high poverty levels - cannot be underestimated. While countries maintain open borders to receive people in need of international protection, they must also address the needs of their own communities, giving all access to their basic rights. The solidarity shown by these countries over the last decades must be recognized and supported if solutions are to be durable.

Central America is not exempt from these dynamics, and to the end of 2017, more than 311,000 people from the region had claimed asylum or have been recognized as refugees; a 30% increase as compared to the previous year. This, added to the arrival and transit of people with different nationalities, to the internal displacement and returns to countries of origin, make addressing the full spectrum of protection needs an upmost priority, to be channelled through national plans and regional initiatives.

Against this global and regional backdrop, nations of the world have come together to establish a commitment of developing a new approach, through a lens whereby global displacement, and the attention and protection of displaced communities can be managed

by all countries, and where host communities receive support in a timely and comprehensive manner.

In 2016, the New York Declaration was unanimously adopted, recognizing the need to develop a fairer and more predictable global approach to large scale displacements, materialized as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).

Through the New York Declaration, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) urges UNHCR to develop a draft Global Compact on Refugees proposal within its 2018 annual report to the UNGA to be reviewed during its 73rd session. Within the proposal, UNHCR is to include examples of practical initiatives implemented within the framework of the CRRF between 2017 and 2018.

In October 2017, six countries in the region convened in San Pedro Sula and agreed upon joining forces to strengthen their national protection and solutions response, as well as to create south-south cooperation mechanisms through a regional version of the CRRF: the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS, for its acronym in Spanish). In this respect, the MIRPS seeks to promote new initiatives and operationalizing existing commitments that would allow countries of origin, transit and destination to address displacement situations from a regional perspective, and with the support of international and regional actors.

The MIRPS has been consolidated as a space to promote regional partnerships towards a comprehensive and operational response that would strengthen the protection of people in displacement and of the communities that host them, and promote durable solutions while countering the cycle of forced displacement in the region. It combines national arrangements and action plans developed by each of the six countries, with a regional approach led by the OAS, and supported by the Friends of the MIRPS as a Support Platform.

Hence, the MIRPS is the first concrete example of the application of the Global Compact on refugees and its responsibility-sharing mechanisms to address large scale movements while protecting the dignity, rights and fundamental freedoms of people forced flee.

As of October 2017, the six MIRPS countries have been honouring their commitments and national action plans, and have consolidated mechanisms to monitor progress and share the responsibility. This report attests of the achievements and challenges faced during the past twelve months, and provides the next steps for 2019.

Supporting the MIRPS means investing in the future of the Global Compact. Humanitarian responses on their own are no longer sufficient to address the increasing needs within the current mixed movement context. It is thus necessary to advance on this

comprehensive approach that generates common and creative responses, and that boosts synergies among the entire society. These and many more elements enshrined in the Global Compact are being materialized through the MIRPS.

UNHCR is pleased to be a partner in this process, and to continue supporting these states in the implementation of their efforts.



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# ACRONYMS

## General

**AECID:** Spanish Agency for International Cooperation

**UNHCR:** UN Refugee Agency

**IADB:** Inter-American Development Bank

**CBI:** Cash-Based Interventions

**CCPDH:** Central American Human Rights Ombudsmen Council

**CERF:** Central Emergency Response Fund

**CLAMOR:** Latin American and Caribbean Ecclesial Network for Migration, Displacement, Refuge and Trafficking in Persons

**CRRF:** Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework

**MIRPS:** Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework

**ECHO:** European Commission Humanitarian Assistance Office

**Great MIRPS:** Regional Academia Group

**IASC:** Inter-Agency Standing Committee

**LGBTI:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual, Intersex

**NCA:** North of Central America

**OAS:** Organization of American States

**IOM:** International Organization for Migration

**ILO:** International Labour Organization

**NGO:** Non-Governmental Organization

**PTA:** Protection Transfer Arrangement

**REDLAC:** Regional Working Group on Risk, Emergency and Disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean

**SICA:** Central American Integration System

**UNS:** United Nations System

**UNDG LAC:** United Nations Development Group for Latin American and the Caribbean



## **SGBV: Sexual and Gender-Based Violence**

### **Costa Rica**

**CATEM: Temporary Attention Centres for Migrants** (Centro de Atención Temporal a Migrantes)

**DGME: General Directorate of Migration and Foreign Affairs** (Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería)

**IMAS: Institute for Social Support** (Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social)

### **Honduras**

**AMHON: Association of Municipalities of Honduras** (Asociación de Municipios de Honduras)

**CAMI: Center for the Attention of Irregular Migrants** (Centro de Atención al Migrante Irregular)

**CENISS: National Center of Information on the Social Sector** (Centro Nacional de Información del Sector Social)

**DINAF: Childhood, Adolescence and Family Directorate** (Dirección de Niñez Adolescencia y Familia)

### **Mexico**

**COMAR: Mexican Commission for Refugees** (Comisión Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados)

**CNDH: National Human Rights Commission** (Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos)

**CURP: Unique Population Registry Key** (Clave Única de Registro de Población)

**INEA: National Institute for Adult Education** (Instituto Nacional para la Educación de los Adultos)

**INM: National Migration Institute** (Instituto Nacional de Migración)

**SNE: National Employment Service** (Servicio Nacional de Empleo)

**UPM: Migration Policy Unit** (Unidad de Política Migratoria)

### **Panama**

**CINAMUS: Center of the National Institute for Women** (Centro del Instituto Nacional de la Mujer)

**CONARE: National Refugee Commission** (Comisión Nacional para los Refugiados)

**ONPAR: National Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and Family** (Secretaría Nacional de Niñez, Adolescencia y Familia)

**SENNIAF: National Office for the Attention of Refugees** (Oficina Nacional para la Atención a Refugiados)



# INTRODUCTION

The situation of human mobility in the Americas is complex and responds to dynamics of diverse nature. Beyond regular migration processes that allow for a constant economic and cultural exchange, in the past year, asylum claims have increased across the entire region, including in Central America and Mexico. New displacement situations have risen, particularly of people coming from Venezuela and Nicaragua. Over 7,000 Venezuelans have sought refugee status in Panama, Mexico and Costa Rica in 2018. These are thousands of girls, boys, adolescents, women and men in search of international protection and a safe haven to live in dignity. In addition, more than 15,000 Nicaraguans sought for asylum in Costa Rica this year, while other MIRPS countries have been impacted by this situation.

And this is in addition to the persistent flux from and towards El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, where in spite of the efforts invested by local authorities and progress made within the countries, the current trend of displacement is wide, multi-causal and complex. These result from violence and insecurity, as well as socioeconomic factors that have forced people to leave their homes. The deportations of some of our citizens are coupled with this intricate situation,

citizens who in turn may have potential international protection needs. Hence, in the last year, the figures of refugees and asylum-seekers have increased by 30% in MIRPS countries.

Given the scale and nature of these movements of people with protection needs across the Americas region, it became necessary to complement existing legal frameworks that have thus far enabled us to respond to the movement of people. The Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS, for its acronym in Spanish) is precisely that: a bet placed on an improved coordination, and a comprehensive and predictable response that would allow us to act as one region to support those affected by forced displacement. Through the MIRPS, our state institutions, with the support from the civil society, the international community and other partners, have been able to facilitate access to protection, basic services and durable solutions.

The needs of refugees, displaced people, returnees and asylum-seekers have begun to be addressed through a comprehensive response based on the principles of international cooperation and of the



fair distribution of responsibilities among countries of origin, transit and destination across the region, thanks to the support from cooperating states and actors. With the MIRPS, the countries in the region are in more suitable conditions to protect and help people who are victims of forced displacement.

Our comprehensive response to displacement seeks to engage the participation of multiple stakeholders, including national and local authorities, international and regional organizations, international financial institutions, regional coordination mechanisms, the civil society – including faith-based organizations and the academia –, the private sector, the media and the displaced and host communities themselves.

### Monitoring and reporting system

Through the San Pedro Sula Declaration, the OAS was urged to follow-up on the progress made by the MIRPS, and to share them in an annual regional meeting hosted with the support from UNHCR.

Hence, we find it relevant to highlight that on 5 June 2018, the General Assembly of the OAS adopted Resolution AG/CG/doc.5/18 rev.2, commissioning the Commission for Judicial and Political Affairs (CJPA) to encourage the exchange of experiences and good practices implemented by member states, with the support and technical collaboration of the General Secretariat of the OAS and UNHCR.

In the spirit of the long-standing tradition of regional cooperation for displacement-related responses to protection challenges, we, the six countries that participate in the MIRPS, also agreed to establish a national and regional monitoring mechanism.

This monitoring component includes a two-fold follow-up mechanism, including a quantitative – the accomplishment of each individual commitment – and a qualitative aspect.

### Quantitative follow-up

The monitoring tool evaluates the state of implementation of each commitment made by the countries within their MIRPS national chapters. The tool presents the 180 commitments, linked to the four strategic pillars of i) Reception and admission; ii) immediate and persistent needs; iii) support to host countries; and iv) opportunities for durable solutions.

A simple traffic light system has been established, codified by six colours and a numeric value, indicating that the commitment has been:

- 5= completed (100%), dark green
- 4= being implemented (80%), light green
- 3= being implemented (60%), orange

- 2= being implemented (40%), yellow
- 1= started and being implemented (20%), cream
- 0= not started (0%), red

During the first year of implementation, we have registered – through the agreed matrix – the progress in accomplishing our commitments within all four intervention pillars. Worthy to note is that the commitments made through the support platform have yet to be incorporated in the matrix.

As seen bellow, we have made substantial progress in achieving our commitments. The average implementation across all pillars stands at 41%, registering the largest progress in pillar three or support to host countries and communities. This achievement, currently standing at 45% of implementation, is in line with one of the core CRRF and Global Compact goals. Nonetheless, it is relevant to note that the MIRPS countries have made progress in a somewhat equal manner across all pillars, registering 44% in pillar one, 39% in pillar two, and 36% in pillar four.

We hereby present our quantitative progress registered during the MIRPS' first year.

# REGIONAL MIRPS FOLLOW-UP MATRIX



Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework

**15** INDICATORS REPORTED IN THIS LEVEL | **IMPLEMENTATION COMPLETED**

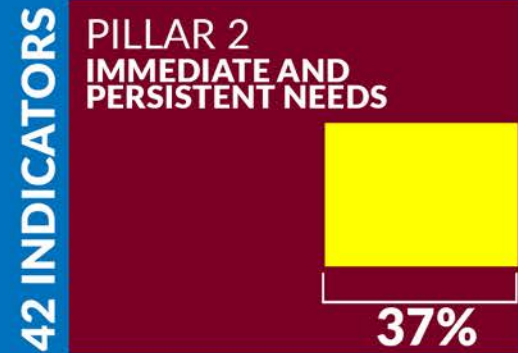
**ADVANCED IMPLEMENTATION** | **16** INDICATORS REPORTED IN THIS LEVEL

**41** INDICATORS REPORTED IN THIS LEVEL | **MEDIUM PROGRESS**

**63** INDICATORS REPORTED IN THIS LEVEL | **SUBSTANTIAL IMPLEMENTATION**

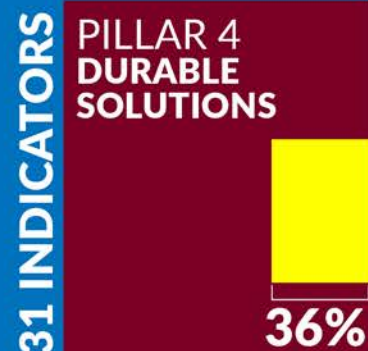
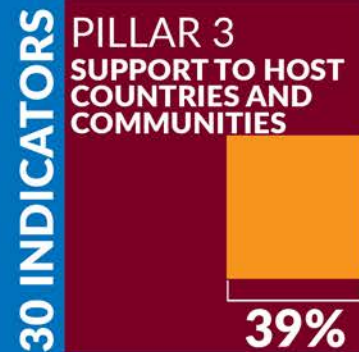
**LOW PROGRESS** | **49** INDICATORS REPORTED IN THIS LEVEL

**IMPLEMENTATION NOT STARTED** | **30** INDICATORS REPORTED IN THIS LEVEL



**38%**

**AVERAGE PROGRESS OF THE 4 PILLARS**



On the other hand, our monitoring mechanism includes a narrative report, which summarizes the efforts, progress, challenges and priorities each of our countries and partners have, including the Friends of the MIRPS and a Support Platform.

It is within this framework, and on the basis of the gathering of achievements, progress and challenges found through the implementation of our MIRPS national chapters, that we present this regional report. The progress is shown by pillar, which can be viewed independently and, at the same time, through a regional lens, given that the success of each pillar and the MIRPS as a whole depends on the synergies that to date we continue to forge.

This report aspires to provide a regional picture of the impact achieved, in the anniversary of the adoption of the San Pedro Sula Declaration.



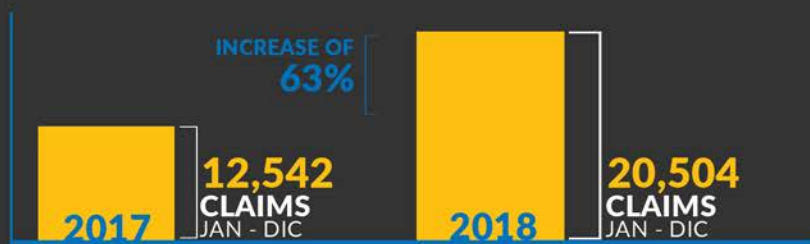
# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MIRPS IN THE REGION

## PILLAR 1 – RECEPTION AND ADMISSION

**20,500**  
NEW ASYLUM CLAIMS  
IN MIRPS COUNTRIES  
IN 2018

**9,000**  
REFUGEES &  
ASYLUM-SEEKERS  
RECEIVING LEGAL ASSISTANCE IN  
2018

**61,000**  
REFUGEES &  
ASYLUM - SEEKERS IN  
MIRPS COUNTRIES IN 2018



TRENDS OF ASYLUM CLAIMS IN MIRPS COUNTRIES

**120**  
REFUGEE STATUS  
DETERMINATION  
OFFICIALS TRAINED

As part of our MIRPS pledges, we are committed to guarantee, wherever feasible, the adoption of measures to identify people in need of protection, and to offer sufficient, safe and dignifying reception conditions, paying special attention to people with specific needs. We have also assumed the challenge of ensuring an efficient access to our national asylum systems, and of strengthening them with sufficient human and financial resources so that they can provide fair and efficient procedures.

Committed to develop a framework through with our state institutions, the civil society and other partners supporting the MIRPS process, the countries have made particular progress in materializing efforts on:

- Creating or strengthening laws, public policies, operational guidelines, regulations, protocols, specialized areas or institutions, on the asylum process and the attention to displaced and returned population, ensuring their implementation;
- Establishing safe spaces, like reception and community centers, for refugees, displaced people and returnees;

- Producing and disseminating content and relevant information on the asylum systems and assistance procedures for the attention of displaced or returned populations;

- Strengthening the capacity of state officials, the civil society and other partners involved in the comprehensive attention and reception of refugees, displaced people or returnees;

- Enhancing the capacity of state officials and their presence in border areas and other relevant locations, with the aim of furthering swift procedures;

- Facilitating the delivery of free documentation;

- Facilitating free legal assistance;

- Establishing registry and data collection systems.

In **Belize**, a technical MIRPS working group was established, which is currently finalizing an action modality for state institutions to adjust their operational procedures to identify and refer people with international protection needs. The working group has developed a basic dissemination and training plan, focusing on providing support to state institutions and civil society organizations in the performance of their duties. This will ultimately strengthen the country's asylum system. Additionally, a community center was built in Bella Vista – one of the communities hosting the largest number of people with protection needs. This center will allow the delivery of relevant information and of support.

In **Costa Rica**, the General Directorate for Migration and Foreign Affairs (DGME, for its acronym in Spanish) enhanced the capacity of the Refugee Unit through a memorandum of understanding with UNHCR so as to reduce the existing backlog that has risen due to the exponential increase of asylum claims from Nicaraguans. Hence, the number of professionals working in the Refugee Unit was expanded from four to 30, allowing for an expedited and orderly reception of claims, an improved access to the asylum system and the issuance of resolutions within the deadlines established by law. The Deputy Minister of Interior and the Police, through the Administrative Tribunal for Migration (TAM, for its acronym in Spanish) signed an agreement with the Costa Rican Bar Association with the aim of enhancing the free legal assistance available to refugees and asylum-seekers through the network of social defenders of the Bar across

the country. Moreover, agreements were signed with academic institutions to establish legal clinics specialized in providing legal counseling to refugees and asylum-seekers.

In complying with MIRPS commitments, the DGME has begun to issue a provisional identity document to asylum-seekers in accordance to the numeration of the migratory identity document for foreigners (DIMEX, for its acronym in Spanish), thus facilitating their access to government social services and the banking system. This has enabled the application of more efficient and proactive response mechanisms.

In **Guatemala**, training sessions have been carried out with state officials involved in the attention to refugee and/ or migrant boys, girls and adolescents, families and LGBTI people, on the issues of asylum, international protection, protocols, implementation of guidelines on the determination of the best interest of the child, the immigration code (44-2016[4]), the comprehensive law on the protection of children and adolescents, the inter-institutional attention route and on Agreement 056-2018[5], among others. As a result, priority has been enhanced for protection processes targeting boys, girls and adolescents repatriated to the country. Of at least 3,091 boys, girls and adolescents repatriated between January and July 2018[6], 12 protection processes have started, while an additional 25 have been referred to regional follow-up delegations. Moreover, the Guatemalan government has increased its awareness-raising efforts, kick-starting information campaigns through





social media [7].

In **Honduras**, officials from the National Migration Institute (INM) placed at the borders were trained so as to strengthen their response to international protection needs, while the Centre for the Attention of Irregular Migrants (CAMI) were endowed with information material on the asylum process. The first workshop was carried out to define the protocol for the refugee status determination process alongside the Eligibility Commission. In the same line, the Directorate for the Protection of Honduran Migrants is working on standardizing the instruments for the identification or returned migrants with protection needs within the three reception and attention centers. Within the framework of the elaboration of a Migration Profile coordinated by the SRECI and the National Statistics Institute, it will be possible to obtain solid information so to formulate comprehensive migration policies, optimize inter-institutional mechanisms, mainstream the topic of migration within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and adopt effective strategies for reintegration, particularly of those with protection needs.

In regards to the response to internally displaced people (IDP), the Directorate for the Protection of IDPs within the Human Rights Secretariat has led the process to raise awareness among and train its public officials, developing actions to encourage the active participation of municipalities within the response to displacement. In addition, the Inter-institutional Commission for the Protection of IDPs (CIPPDV) finalized the revision of the Draft Law on the protection of IDPs, and carried out the first consultation with the participation of displaced persons. The draft law will soon be presented before the Congress.

In **Mexico**, we have made progress in making available shelters for girls, boys and adolescents. This has included the construction and maintenance of shelters in Sonora and Tapachula, the creation of coordination groups to provide attention – including the revision of protocols and the consolidation of existing information on attention mechanisms. Similarly, the civil society has been key within the shelters, where girls, boys, adolescents, families, among others, are registered by the Federal Office of the Ombudsperson and the COMAR. Hence, over 250 girls, boys and adolescents have been registered, 20 of whom were found to have international protection needs, while an additional 133 were referred to social assistance programmes. Moreover, the COMAR has maintained periodic meetings to improve coordination among institutions working with asylum-seeking and migrant children and to ensure the full compliance with the

Protocol to identify international protection needs among children and adolescents.

As a result of inter-institutional coordination since July 2016, the INM, COMAR and UNHCR have been implementing a tripartite mechanism to allow asylum-seekers to exit migratory stations, benefiting – in prioritized order – families headed by a single parent, families, single women, LGBTI people and single men. Thus, almost 2,400 asylum-seekers – 54% of whom were families – have been able to find alternate accommodation within shelters run by the civil society during the MIRPS's first year. Moreover, so to develop the capacity of state institutions and to promote information sharing, training has been provided to over 1,000 public officials, while the presence of the COMAR has been increased at the borders.

In **Panama**, the reform to the national legal framework for the attention to refugees constitutes a milestone as it introduces positive modifications in benefit of the forcibly displaced. These include the introduction of a Chapter dedicated to basic protection principles, a title on the protection and attention for children and adolescents; the increase in the frequency of meetings held by the CONARE to a total of six, every year [8]; and the introduction of a title on guaranteeing the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees in detention. With the aim of strengthening the capacity of personnel at the borders, over 100 state officials were trained on International Refugee Law and the protection of children, under the leadership of the National Office for the Attention to Refugees (ONPAR), with the support from UNHCR.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Government and the SENNIAF, with the support from UNHCR, UNICEF and RET signed a Protocol for the identification, referral and attention to children and adolescents with international protection needs. This protocol, defines roles and responsibilities of each institution with the aim of providing a comprehensive response to girls, boys and adolescents and risk in Panamanian territory. Moreover, Panama, with the support from UNDP has implemented the Structured Regular Procedures System (TRE – ONPAR for its acronym in Spanish), which has enabled a systematic, transparent, controlled and quality asylum process. Similarly, the ONPAR now counts with ten new lawyers which will support to speed-up the reception and attention of asylum claims. The government has agreed to hire new technical and administrative personnel within the ONPAR's internal structure.

## Challenges in the implementation

In spite of the progress made in some legal reforms, and in the design of protocols and guidelines, their approval and implementation remain pending.

The constant turnover of government officials leading refugee matters continue to limit our capacity to 1) efficiently and effectively identify people with international protection needs; and 2) process asylum claims in a consistent and effective manner. These delays can have a grave impact in the time asylum-seekers can access fundamental rights, which often depends on the determination of their status.

On the other hand, given the complexity of providing attention to unaccompanied girls, boys and adolescents, it is necessary we enhance the capacity of our state institutions and the civil society to provide shelter to all asylum-seekers, as well as to strengthen our services programmes so that they guarantee a stay in dignity.

With the aim of guaranteeing access to agile processes, we must keep building the capacity of our government fora in terms of personnel, content and infrastructure, through which we provide services and attention to displaced people, refugees, asylum-seekers and returnees. This capacity is to be reinforced transversally and continuously, with special support during political changes that are the fruit of citizen participation and democratic processes that will gradually take place in our countries.

## Priorities for 2019

Considering the process made and challenges faced during the first year of MIRPS implementation, and to tackle new trends in our countries, we will focus in the following priorities in 2019:

- **Developing the capacity of all MIRPS countries to strengthen our asylum systems through constant trainings for government officials, and the regularization of their positions to avoid disruptive turnovers;**
- **Where necessary, develop protocols and mechanisms to ensure identification at the borders and referrals to authorities in charge of refugee status determination, with the means of guaranteeing a coherent and adequate response to protection needs;**
- **Enhance the availability of information material for people with international protection needs found in border areas, airports and along the main migration routes;**
- **Evaluate and increase the number of shelters and safe spaces where displaced people, such that they include psychosocial and legal support services as well as referral mechanisms to other support schemes.**

[4] See <http://www.acnur.org/fileadmin/Documentos/BDL/2017/10978.pdf> (available in Spanish).

[5] Regulation of the Office of the Procurator for Children and Adolescents, Attorney General's Office, available in Spanish at: <http://www.pgn.gob.gt/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Acuerdo-056-2018-Reglamento-de-NI%C3%B1ez.pdf>

[6] IOM, "Migration Management Information Initiative Launched in Central American Northern Triangle (NTMI)" January - August 2018 (OIM, "Iniciativa de Gestión de Información de Movilidad Humana en el Triángulo Norte (NTMI)", enero a agosto de 2018).

[7] See information video, available in Spanish: <https://www.facebook.com/PNGuatemalaOficial/videos/vb.737543059688929/1550191078424119/?type=2&theater>

[8] See Executive Decree N°5 of January 16, 2018, article 24



## PILLAR 2 & 3 – IMMEDIATE AND PERSISTENT NEEDS, AND SUPPORT TO HOST COUNTRIES AND COMMUNITIES

**65**   
SAFE SPACES  
SUPPORTED

**70**   
CIVIL SOCIETY  
ORGANIZATIONS  
ASSISTING  
DISPLACED PEOPLE

**1,260**  
OFFICIALS TRAINED ON  
SGBV & CHILD PROTECTION,  
& THEIR RIGHTS

**20,800**  
PEOPLE BENEFITTING FROM  
**COMMUNITY  
INTERVENTIONS**

**73,000**  
  
PEOPLE WITH  
PROTECTION  
NEEDS SUPPORTED  
THROUGH SAFE  
SPACES (JAN-JUNE 2018)

**2,400**  
HOUSEHOLDS  
SUPPORTED WITH  
**CASH - BASED  
INTERVENTIONS**

**12,000**  
GIRLS, BOYS &  
**ADOLESCENTS**  
RETURNED TO NCA

**14**  
CIVIL SOCIETY  
ORGANIZATIONS  
IMPLEMENTING  
PROJECTS IN NCA

The presence of large numbers of asylum-seekers, displaced persons or refugees exerts pressure over the social and public services in areas that often lack the sufficient capacity to absorb this new responsibility. This, at the same time, tends to create tensions with the host communities that expect a comprehensive response to all their needs. With the aim of responding in an effective manner, communities receiving displaced people must be supported so that all the population has access to basic services. The solidarity and openness of local populations must be complemented with the support from the international communities.

Seeking to address the intrinsic complexity of immediate and persistent needs – particularly in regards to education, health and protection – faced by refugees, displaced people, returnees and asylum-seekers, as well as to support host communities in responding to those needs, MIRPS countries have furthered efforts that promote a joint dynamic, including:

- **Increasing immediate assistance to displaced people and asylum-seekers;**
- **Better identifying the needs of host communities**
- **Analyzing the socioeconomic condition of refugees and asylum-seekers;**
- **Furthering studies to discern the investment made by states, and enhancing methodologies that would allow their systematic quantification for the allocation of resources;**
- **Establishing cooperation mechanisms among countries;**
- **Strengthening poverty reduction programmes, including those that support refugees;**
- **Establishing violence mitigation programmes in school.**



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In **Belize**, cooperation links have been established with the government of Costa Rica with the aim of exchanging experiences and exploring the possibility of replicating best practices.

On the other hand, a profiling exercise with some 6,000 people with international protection needs alongside their 60 host communities will allow us to better identify communities hosting large numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers, while assessing their common needs. This process will allow us to design and adapt the MIRPS to a community perspective, and it will be complemented with household interviews.

In **Costa Rica**, the IMAS signed an agreement with UNHCR allowing refugees and asylum-seekers to access social welfare and poverty reduction programmes through a Social Information Card. In this respect, four social workers were incorporated within the offices in San Jose, while an agreement was reached to incorporate an addition eight across the country to have national coverage. With the aim of ensuring the early identification and referral of vulnerable populations, the protocols for the attention of refugee women survivors of gender-based violence and the protocol for the comprehensive attention of underage people with international protection needs were updated. The Unique National Information and Registry System on State Beneficiaries is in the process of including the 'refugee' and 'asylum-seeker' categories within its data base in order to obtain detailed information on the type and quantity of

assistance provided by the state. These efforts are complemented by the design of a methodology to quantify the contributions of the government to the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers, currently being advanced by the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy (MIDEPLAN). These actions will allow the government to further better-informed public policies, to prioritize needs-based assistance programmes and to provide useful information to potential international donors.

Additionally, the Diverse Chamber of Commerce of Costa Rica has been actively working on the promotion of employability of LGBTI refugees and asylum-seekers through awareness-raising workshops for its associated enterprises. The Alcoholism and Drug Dependency Institute (IAFA) included refugees and asylum-seekers with addiction issues within its persons of concern through a Harm Reduction Model, and is currently progressing on designing a guideline for the referral of cases requiring treatment. The National Council for People with Disabilities (CONAPDIS) incorporated refugees and asylum-seekers within its services, and has developed the capacity of its personnel. On their hand, the civil society and the academia support the provision of assistance to refugees through research and professional internships from public and private universities.

In **Guatemala**, Ministerial Agreements 696-2017 and 2474-2018 have been approved, thereby strengthening the inclusion of children and adolescents within the national education system through the validation of their studies. Moreover, the information campaign 'Quédate' (stay), providing information to children and adolescents on risks associated to irregular migration, is being updated.

Moreover, three working roundtables have been established - CONARE, Commission for the Comprehensive Attention to Migrant Children and Adolescents, and Labour Mobility - to comply with relevant MIRPS commitments. Among key achievements is the reduction of the time and requisites for the processing of work permits, having now the possibility of obtaining a work permit a week after delivery the copy of the refugee ID and a request form. Employment promotion services are available, supported notably by the civil society through religious organizations and other initiatives through social media. With the aim of having a database registering relevant information on skills and general profile, an information system is being piloted to complement labour inclusion programmes.

In **Honduras**, thanks to a participatory assessment, the needs of the refugee population in the country have been identified, while the increase in the number of lawyers and psychologists within the assistance teams at the CAMI, asylum-seekers and other people with international protection needs receive assistance and orientation. Similarly, the National Council for the Protection of Honduran Migrants (CONAPROHM) approved the project to deliver emergency humanitarian assistance to returned migrants with protection needs submitted by the Human Rights Secretariat, with the aim of developing a pilot experience to implement an Emergency Humanitarian Assistance Mechanism, tailor its content and contribute to the design of protection programmes. On the other hand, with the aim of providing social and legal assistance to nationals along migration routes, the Comprehensive Center for the Protection of Honduran Migrants (CIPROMH) was established in Mexico City, acting in tandem through the Honduran consular network. With the support from the IOM, an integrated consular protection system was created to follow-up on cases of Honduran asylum-seekers. On its part, the DINAFA has begun elaborating a protocol for the consular attention of girls and boys with protection needs abroad, focusing primarily on Mexico and the United States of America.

In relation to the IDPs, the DIPPDIV has progressed on defining an Emergency Humanitarian Assistance

Mechanisms, as well as on a protocol for targeted assistance with a psychosocial focus, with the participation of victims of displacement and international organizations. Similarly, the Human Rights Secretariat within the framework of the CIPPDV and with the support from UNHCR, has made progress in updating the characterization of the internally displaced population at the national level. The collection of quantitative data has been finalized by the National Statistics Institute, and data analysis is ongoing. On the other hand, prioritized municipalities have advanced the formulation of their public policies. Given the particular impact violence has within schools, the formulation of a prevention and protection strategy was finalized, focusing on the teaching personnel, while an intention letter was signed between the government of Honduras and international organizations to formulate a national response plan for the prevention of violence against children and adolescents. The aforementioned will allow for the creation of knowledge and experience as well as for the definition of comprehensive response mechanisms for populations with protection needs, as prioritized within the national MIRPS chapter.

In **Mexico**, the team works alongside UNHCR to review support materials and protocols to identify vulnerabilities. Similarly, the collaboration between the COMAR and the UPM has made it possible for us to gather statistical information on the population, their vulnerabilities and opportunities to access rights. With the aim of strengthening peaceful coexistence initiatives, the Mexican government, UNHCR and the civil society have kick-started projects benefitting over 30,000 refugees and members of the host communities. These include the renovation of public spaces, and events for cultural exchange, among others.

With the aim of consolidating coordinated efforts, in March 2018, the Inter-institutional Roundtable on Refugee and Complementary Protection was launched, led by the Sub-Secretariat on Population, Migration and Religious Affairs of the Government Secretariat (SEGOB) with the COMAR in charge of its Technical Secretariat. To date, three sessions have taken place through which it was possible to identify existing programmes, methodologies to detect and assist refugees and asylum-seekers with specific needs. In addition, a temporary Unique Population Registry Key (CURP) is being provided to asylum-seekers and refugees with an admission document issued by the COMAR and INM, as of 20 June 2018. Since then, 4,995 temporary CUPR have been provided.

In **Panama**, a socioeconomic study was carried out

with 240 refugees and asylum-seekers. Pending the delivery of the final report, we expect that the results of the study will inform future local integration programmes and partnerships with the private sector. In a prioritized and within determined time-frames, vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers receive assistance through the Panamanian Red Cross and other humanitarian agencies, with the support from UNHCR. On the other hand, refugees and asylum-seekers can access mental health programmes provided in government hospitals and health centers, disregarding their migratory status. This can be provided free of charge once inadequate financial capacity is demonstrated [9].

Panama has also created the national institutional and international cooperation platform CINAMUS (Center of the National Institute for Women), comprised of an interdisciplinary working group for prevention and protection of asylum-seekers and refugees, disregarding their migratory status. Inter-institutional agreements have been signed between the Ministry of Security and INAMU for the creation of a Police Force specialized on Gender Violence, in order to provide a gender-focused response to communities. Since its inception in June 2018, 500 women - including refugees and asylum-seekers - have been assisted with comprehensive, legal, social and psychological support [10].

### Challenges in the implementation

While durable solutions become available, the welfare of refugees, displaced people, returnees and asylum-seekers, as well as of their host communities, is fundamental. Promoting self-reliance of the displaced population and the resilience of host communities will not only allow them to remain protected but also prepares them for durable solutions.

However, refugees and asylum-seekers in MIRPS countries continue to face barriers in effectively accessing fundamental rights, including to health, education and employment, among others. This consequently hinders their possibility of contributing in a productive manner to their host communities.

Worthy to note is the significant increase in asylum claims, exceeding the capacity of our state institutions that strive to provide services across the region. Delays in undertaking assessments on the current situation implies that protocols to provide and improve the effective access to services become delayed. Similarly, the knowledge on the rights refugees have on the side of our government officials can and must improve, to prevent the denial of access to basic services

On another note, the turnover of our personnel increases the backlog in administrative processes that also slow both the asylum procedures and the access to public services and employment programmes available through our institutions.

As a result of the lack of work permits and due to the lengthy refugee status determination processes, asylum-seekers depend largely on humanitarian assistance that, in turn, is prioritized for the most vulnerable. In order to facilitate access to conditions of dignity, we need to explore the possibility of enhancing their inclusion in social programmes as well as increasing support to those initiative. It is likewise necessary to analyze the possibility of extending work permits to asylum-seekers, for whom sustaining their families during long periods of time is significantly difficult. This analysis can be carried out revising and exchanging existing best practices in the region.

Aware of the complexities implied in addressing immediate and persistent needs of refugees, displaced people, asylum-seekers and returnees, the progress made insofar set the basis to re-establish the rights of the population with protection needs. The guarantee of their rights will therefore allow them to regain control over their lives.

Regarding the need to establish mechanisms that reduce the pressure exerted over host communities, through which we may identify, predict and implement projects emanating humanity and solidarity, MIRPS countries still face barriers.

Among the main challenges is to follow-up on the commitments made at the institutional level. This, with the aim of quantifying the support host communities are providing and to design policies that allow for the reduction of the pressure over public services. On the other hand, actors facilitating cultural exchange among communities are limited.

The sustainable incorporation of action strategies on protection and solutions within our national development plans competes with each countries' investment needs and priorities. The lack of resources to enhance the capacity of our local governments makes it the more necessary to receive the support from the international community. Likewise, it is necessary to further efforts in the early and effective integration of the refugee population, complemented with safeguards that benefit the communities hosting them. This will ultimately help tackle xenophobia and contribute to peaceful coexistence.

It is necessary to take into account that several of

the MIRPS countries will start to experience political or electoral changes, that have the potential of destabilizing commenced processes. On the basis of our commitment, we will advocate for the stable continuity of our achievements.

## Priorities for 2019

Considering the process made and challenges faced during the first year of MIRPS implementation, and to tackle new trends in our countries, we will focus in the following priorities in 2019:

- Enhance and strengthen the capacity of safe spaces networks with the aim of strengthening the access to assistance for people in need of protection, including to protection services related to children, SGBV, legal support, health, psychosocial support, shelters and basic needs;
- Formulate plans and programmes related to the prevention of violence and protection of victims, notably for boys and girls;
- Promote lessons learned and exchange best practices among shelters in the region;
- Strengthen capacity development and awareness-raising efforts on SGBV and child protection to increase the response from local authorities through referral mechanisms;
- Include CBIs within a wider protection and solutions strategy;
- Work alongside UNHCR to build and strengthen strategic partnerships with the UN System, development banks and the private sector to provide support to host communities;
- Align CBI programmes with national protection and social security networks;
- Strengthen community spaces to improve the attention for vulnerable people, and strengthen the resilience of host communities.

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[9] See Note N°500-DVMS-18 of September 11, 2018

[10] See Response Note of the National Institute of Woman – INAMU.





## PILLAR 4- ENHANCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DURABLE SOLUTIONS

# 1,550

REFUGEES & ASYLUM-SEEKERS WHO RECEIVED GUIDANCE ON EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS

# 785

CASES OF PEOPLE PRESENTED TO COUNTRIES FOR PTA

# 2,600

ALLIANCES & PARTNERS IN LIVELIHOODS & ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMES



# 211

PEOPLE RESETTLED THROUGH PTA

# 1,200

REFUGEES & ASYLUM-SEEKERS WITH ACCESS TO **SKILLS TRAININGS** OR **JOB PLACEMENT** SERVICES

Thousands of people with international protection needs in the region do not have access to timely and durable solutions. In the contexts of our six MIRPS countries, local integration is the best solution available for refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as for displaced people and returnees. Although our governments remain open and willing, the success of local integration depends on the firm and sustained cooperation and support from the international community.

In this context, it becomes necessary to highlight the importance of regional responsibility-sharing mechanisms, not only to support local integration initiatives, but also to open alternatives for protection and solutions like resettlement, family reunification, humanitarian visas, the Protection Transfer Arrangement (PTA), labour mobility programmes, and other initiatives that promote a safe, orderly and regular migration.

The PTA, on its part, is a mechanism that provides people at high risk from El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala with an option that would fundamentally save their lives. Coordinated by UNHCR, IOM, the Republic of Costa Rica as a transit country, and resettlement countries, the PTA involves the civil society to identify high-risk cases and provide assistance during the transit period. Through the PTA, 211 people at heightened risk have found a durable solution in several third countries.

The MIRPS countries remain committed in facilitating solutions for displaced people, refugees and asylum-seekers, and in this spirit, we have made progress in the following:

- **Participatory and consultation processes with people with protection needs within the design and formulation of assistance and protection mechanisms, as a manner to guarantee the accomplishment of durables solutions;**
- **Multi-sectoral coordination processes that have enabled the access to rights and for the local integration of refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees and displaced persons within state social protection programmes.**
- **Access to technical training and employment for people with international protection needs;**
- **Promote access to work permits and job opportunities;**
- **Access to micro-credits and seed capital;**
- **Capacity building of public officials on the registry of abandoned goods;**
- **Campaigns against xenophobia and other awareness raising initiatives;**
- **Exceptional resettlement of people at high-risk through the PTA.**

In **Belize**, a first group of 20 people with international protection needs began intensive English courses offered by the University of Belize. Aiming at students reaching an intermediate B1 level, the course seeks to facilitate their integration within the social and economic spheres.

Additionally, the technical durable solutions multi-functional group has agreed upon furthering efforts on education, the development of technical capacities and livelihoods.

In **Costa Rica**, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security opened up the possibility for refugees and asylum-seekers with a work permit to access all their employment programmes. Hence, the Ministry in collaboration with UNHCR and Fundación Mujer (Women Foundation) undertakes awareness raising activities with companies, training programmes for refugees and asylum-seekers, market assessments and employment fairs. Similarly, thanks to a certification provided by the Ministry of Human Development and Social Inclusion to the Women Foundation, the latter received an endowment of computers that will allow refugees and asylum-seekers to develop language and technological skills.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Economy, Industry and Commerce promotes the early integration of refugees and asylum-seekers through entrepreneurship, facilitating training on the

formalization of their businesses and promoting their participation in fairs. This with the aim of enabling refugees to become self-reliant and contributing to the country's economy. On the other hand, refugees and asylum-seekers can have access to tuitions, scholarships and instruments to become part of the National Musical Education System.

In **Guatemala**, the three working groups established to give continuity to the government's MIRPS commitments has made progress in terms of durable solutions. The length and requirements to process work permits have been considerably reduced, making it possible to obtain a work permit within a week once a copy of the refugee ID and a request form have been filed. On the other hand, several working groups have been established to further efforts in establishing strategic partnerships with institutions working on migratory affairs.

Additionally, information campaigns are being implemented for the protection of labour rights for Guatemalan workers, and for the prevention of fraud.

In **Honduras**, the National Migration Institute continues to promote the reform of the new Law on Migration and Foreign Affairs to guarantee its harmonization with international human rights law. Similarly, the Secretariat for Governance, Justice and Decentralization and the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation alongside



the Association of Municipalities of Honduras (AMHON) conformed an Executive Committee for the reintegration of returned migrants, with special focus for those with international protection needs, as well as to promote actions to establish a national coordination and comprehensive response mechanism integrating all sectors, with special focus on the prevention of irregular and unsafe migration.

In relation to IDPs, and following advocacy efforts of the CIPPDV afore the National Congress, the category of causing internal displacement will be included within the draft of the new Penal Code of Honduras. The draft will include internal displacement within its chapter of “Crimes against the freedom of determination” (Article 248 Forced Displacement) punishable with six to nine years in prison. Similarly, the DIPPDIV is working in the design and implementation of a specialized internal displacement module alongside the CENISS. This aims to propose an electronic tool to register and facilitate access to displaced persons within state social programmes, and to become the method of implementation of an inter-institutional agreement between 13 public institutions. In terms of the protection of goods, the National Agrarian Council (CNA) and Institute (INA), the Property Institute, the Institute for Forest Conservation (ICF) and the AMHON, with the technical support from UNHCR conformed a working group with the aim of enhancing knowledge on the protection of land and housing in the context of internal forced displacement in Honduras, which was able to identify 129 abandoned goods to date.

In **Mexico**, the CURP has facilitated access for refugees and asylum-seekers to basic rights and to financial services - like credits and banking systems - and employment opportunities, while the document serves as a formal ID. On the other hand, programmes to access primary and secondary education have been comprehensively enhanced, from certification to promotion services. In the same line, the COMAR and the National Institute for Adult Education signed an agreement to guarantee access to schools for refugee and asylum-seeking adults.

Through the National Employment System (SNE), refugees have access to labour inclusion programmes and its scholarship programme to develop specific capacities required by employers. These services are also available at the COMAR’s office in Mexico City, where the SNE has established presence. Moreover, free legal assistance is being provided to refugees and asylum-seekers.

In **Panama**, and within the framework of partnerships with the private sector, an agreement was signed with

the recruitment company Manpower Panama S.A., kick-starting a process of training, capacity building and inclusion in the labour market for 90 refugees in the country. Similarly, the local letter of understanding with the financial credit entity Microserfin S.A. was renewed, increasing the reach of the loans provided to refugees and - for the first time - to asylum-seekers.

On the other hand, the guidelines to validate academic titles, certificates or credits were shared with relevant institutions so as to facilitate the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers within the academic sector[11]. Additionally, and with the aim of promoting peaceful coexistence among host communities with refugees and asylum-seekers, several awareness-raising activities and information material have been piloted, targeting the general public, state institutions, schools, companies and the media.

### Challenges in the implementation

We acknowledge that our countries face diverse needs, and that the profiles of vulnerable population that require specific responses on behalf of states do not escape our national priorities, within the limits of equality. Hence, MIRPS countries require the international support and solidarity to strengthen our response capacity for the comprehensive attention and protection of the population.

Having a job allows people to become self-reliant, independent from social assistance and it enhances their possibilities to contribute to their families and communities, while mitigating risks of exploitation. In spite of the generous and good practices developed in MIRPS countries, a significant number of refugees, displaced people, returnees and asylum-seekers remain without a solution to their plight nor opportunities to rebuild their lives.

Refugee status determination processes have unpredictable lengths and vary across the region. It is necessary to recognize the availability of education and training services in our countries. However, access to work permits or livelihoods can have waiting periods longer than the ideal. Additionally, start-ups created by refugees still lack the necessary support to contribute to our local economies and their host communities.

The absence of effective coordination mechanisms among relevant actors, limits the potential impact that the current initiatives may have in the lives of refugees, asylum-seekers and their host communities. This becomes increasingly difficult when faced with a potential resistance to provide services - in conditions of equality - to displaced populations and



local communities. This makes it the more necessary to constantly raise awareness among our government public officials.

The implementation of complementary durable solutions when relevant in each context – including voluntary repatriation, resettlement or relocation, and local integration, or other alternative admission routes to third countries – can provide additional opportunities. These must be reviewed taking into consideration whether they are feasible or relevant.

We recognize that the PTA – currently opening resettlement spaces in the United States of America, Uruguay, Australia and Canada- is an outstanding tool to resettle people at high risk in our region. Nonetheless, it must be enhanced and strengthened if its reach is to provide an effective solution to the increasing number of people with immediate protection needs.

## **Priorities for 2019**

Considering the process made and challenges faced during the first year of MIRPS implementation, and to tackle new trends in our countries, we will focus in the following priorities in 2019:

- **Fundraising for social protection and employment;**
- **Joint work with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to encourage labour inclusion programmes, advocacy and legal support;**
- **Document best practices related to job placement, work permits and the general inclusion of refugees;**
- **Enhance the effective access to public education;**
- **Strengthen and expand the PTA to ensure a durable solution for people at heightened risk in our region.**

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[11] See Response Note Ministry of Education, received on September 11, 2018. Executive decree No. 1225 of October 21, 2015.



# PILLAR 5 – INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

**+70**  
**STRATEGIC**  
**ALLIANCES**

DEVELOPMENT  
**47** **ACTORS**  
INVOLVED

**10** **PRIVATE**  
**SECTOR**  
INITIATIVES

## A- Cooperating States

The MIRPS has as one of its objectives to strengthen the south-south and international cooperation. Hence, several states and other relevant actors have manifested their commitment to enhancing their support to the region through the MIRPS. This cooperation has materialized through financial pledges and technical assistance to support one or more priority programmes at the national and/or regional levels. Certain countries have also become involved through specific resettlement programmes for people with protection needs, as well as through complementary protection and solutions initiatives like humanitarian visas, the PTA, family reunification and other means of promoting the regular, safe and orderly migration of people in the region.

### *Technical Cooperation and Assistance*

Considering its historical expertise in matters of forced displacement as well as in the restitution of land and rights, the government of Colombia participated in an exchange mechanism whereby officials from the Land Restitution Unit and UNHCR Colombia carried out a mission to Honduras. In general terms, the collaboration between the governments of Colombia and Honduras has supported the protection and restitution of land process in such a way that we are now prioritizing demographic characterizations and the incorporation of relevant information within our national registry system. On the other hand, we are able to identify an increased sensitivity within our municipalities and government entities towards displacement issues.

Moreover, **Colombia** supported a workshop to

exchange best practices among constitutional judges from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala on judicial issues related to forced displacement. This will allow for countries to adapt these best practices within their contexts.

As part of the support to MIRPS, **AECID – the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation** – has financed a study on the LGBTI population in Central America and Mexico, with a special focus on refugees and asylum-seekers. Having started in Guatemala and Mexico, the study – led by the University of Deusto – seeks to enhance the available information on the protection needs and challenges faced by LGBTI people that flee through Mexico or transit through the sub-region. The investigation missions took place during the first semester of 2018, and the results have been compiled in a report that includes political and operational recommendations. In large, the report will help strengthen the protection and durable solution response, with a particular focus on the local integration of LGBTI people with international protection needs.

The **Swiss Cooperation** supported with the secondment of two experts to UNHCR who kick-started a platform and procedures to implement CBIs in Mexico. As a result, we have been able to pilot the transition from a cash distribution system to the provision of bank cards and transfers, making the process more transparent and effective. Similarly, these interventions allow us to mitigate protection risks, facilitate solutions and contribute to local economies, while refugees and host communities thrive side-by-side.



# LLAMADO A LA ACCIÓN

## Necesidades de protección en el Triángulo Norte de Centroamérica

### Propuesta para una respuesta regional

San José, Costa Rica, 6 y 7 de julio de 2016



#### *Financial Contributions*

MIRPS countries have bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements established with different international donors. Nonetheless, one of our 2019 priorities is to carry out a quantification exercise to determine the financial contribution to be destined for the MIRPS.

This exercise will allow us to determine the contribution from MIRPS countries through their national budgets, and from the international community through a Solidarity Conference. UNHCR has provided support to begin internal discussions with different donors.

The MIRPS has received the direct financial contribution from several countries that have enabled us to implement diverse actions across the region. AECID has supported the expansion of national protection networks in Mexico and Guatemala, as well as community-based protection initiatives in Honduras. Switzerland and España Con ACNUR (Spanish association fundraising for UNHCR) have supported the development of protection activities that benefit displaced people in Central America and Mexico. The MIRPS countries are likewise grateful for other indirect contributions from, *inter alia*, Denmark, European Commission/ECHO, UN Peacebuilding Funds, the United States of America and the private sector.

#### *Cooperation through resettlement and other complementary protection mechanisms*

Several countries have contributed to the PTA through resettlement places for people at high risk. We are grateful to Australia, Canada, the United States of America and Uruguay for their solidarity and generosity.

#### **B- Contributions from Regional and International Organizations, and Regional Cooperation Mechanisms**

To strengthen this comprehensive dynamic, different regional and international organizations have become partners in the development of multilateral proposals that support the existing national plans, as well as the regional states and civil society initiatives. These proposals include support programmes in matters of prevention, protection, attention and solutions being implemented by MIRPS countries.

Similarly, relevant actors have joined the MIRPS within the framework of regional networks. These networks have developed projects on protection and attention to refugees, asylum-seekers, displaced people, deportees with protection needs, as well as to other affected populations. These projects have a regional coverage and are being implemented in countries of origin, transit, destination and of return.

Through these fora – particularly the OAS, REDLAC, CCPDH (alongside the Mexican CNDH), UNDG LAC, SICA and the CLAMOR Network – we have been able to:

- **Obtain a common vision on the situation of violence and international protection needs in the region;**
- **Activate our Human Rights Institutions to mitigate protection risks along migration routes and improve the response of states;**
- **Strengthen safe spaces along these migration routes;**
- **Create synergies among organizations, state institutions, the academia and communities for an effective response to needs;**
- **Provide a structured and coordinated support to the national response to violence and forced displacement;**
- **Channel funds to tackle violence;**
- **Map interventions of the United Nations System in reducing structural violence.**

Upon the creation of the MIRPS, we have urged the **Organization of American States (OAS)** to lead the development and implementation of a monitoring mechanism of the process in the region. This mechanism will be led by its Commission on Judicial and Political Affairs. The support received by the OAS has been fundamental not only in receiving its regional support but also in creating new synergies through its catalytic role. By establishing the group “MIRPS Friends” comprised of MIRPS countries, cooperating and observer states, we have been able to converge a support platform. Moreover, the OAS has created its own Refugees Unit that has at the same time strengthened the MIRPS Secretariat. We hope that the collaboration with the OAS will enable the creation of a joint unit within the Department for Social Inclusion that will harmonize the MIRPS process and allow for the exchange of progress, best practices and guide actions in line with the regional priorities.

The **Inter-American Development Bank (IADB)** has named a focal point to work with UNHCR in the implementation of the MIRPS. This support has been key in creating a technical support platform to quantify the investment our countries have made in responding to forced displacement. We hope that the result of this association will allow us to better identify the resources we require in guaranteeing the success of the MIRPS in the region.

**Through the Central American Integration System (SICA** for its acronym in Spanish) we have received support to monitor the situation of deportees, people in transit with international protection needs and

displaced people. This has allowed the development of a workshop, with the support from UNHCR, held to identify synergies to enhance the project “Inclusive Territories”, to prevent violence at the municipal level. At the same time, training sessions have taken place for public officials as well as monitoring missions to locations with high affluence of people in transit. We hope that the consultations and joint work will result in the reactivation of SICA’s Displacement Observatory that would allow for an ongoing monitoring in the region, at the leadership of our countries, and that will enable us to strengthen the response to vulnerabilities and the dissemination of information on the humanitarian response to displaced populations in the region.

Among the future initiatives, SICA and UNHCR will conduct an additional training for our national refugee commissions, that aim at strengthening our capacity to respond to forced displacement.

The regional **United Nations Development Group (UNDG LAC)** in tandem with Resident Coordinators of the United Nations System in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, have created a space through which the UN can work on reducing structural violence in the region and, hence, address the root causes of displacement. The group has achieved in developing a common and multidimensional index to measure violence, that includes an index on asylum claims, among others. Through spaces such as this, we have been able to channel funding from the Peacebuilding Funds for sub-regional and national projects.

The MIRPS countries are grateful with the Regional

IASC Working Group – Risk, Emergency and Disaster (REDLAC) which is strengthening mechanisms of information sharing and coordination, and produces periodic and dynamic reports on trends of violence, displacement and protection in the North of Central America. The results of these reports will contribute to operational decision-making by humanitarian organizations with presence in the region to provide an improved humanitarian response.

The work undertaken by the **Central American Human Rights Ombudsmen Council (CCPDH)** for its acronym in Spanish) in coordination with the Mexican National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH) has facilitated the investigative analysis on the situation at countries of origin of refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as on the verification of their access to rights at destination countries. With two visits to the main migration routes planned for 2018, this mechanism hopes to elaborate recommendations to our states and information campaigns that will facilitate protection actions. On the other hand, the CCPDH is carrying out a study on our laws and public policies issued for the protection of asylum-seekers and refugees as well as on returnees, with the aim of reviewing their compliance with international and regional instruments.

The religious **CLAMOR Network**, comprised of churches with presence across the region from Honduras all the way to the border between Mexico and the United States of America, has been key in providing assistance to people in transit and with international protection needs. This work has enabled displaced communities to access temporary shelters, information and safe houses along the migration routes. Through this Network, we have been able to provide immediate assistance to people with protection needs. These spaces have been fundamental in countries like Honduras, where Caritas has opened a shelter for people displaced by violence in Colonia Los Pinos, Tegucigalpa. In Mexico, civil society shelters allow us to identify protection needs and provide medical, psychosocial and legal support. In Guatemala, a new Shelter for the Migrant was opened in Petén, one of the main border areas with Mexico where shelters and water and sanitation services are available. To strengthen this safe spaces network, CLAMOR is carrying out a regional meeting to enhance the number of churches that can provide support, as well as to review their intervention and prioritize attention.

The **Regional Academia Group working in supporting the Protection and Solutions response (Great MIRPS)** has created legal clinics in two universities in Guatemala and Mexico, through which at least 20

paralegals provide free legal support to refugees and asylum-seekers along migration routes, border areas and within shelter networks. On the other hand, the team in Guatemala has progressed in undertaking an assessment with girls, boys and adolescents to identify their access, enjoyment and certifications available for inclusion within the education system. A photography workshop with 30 of them will be conducted by a photography institute that will enable them to narrate their own stories and experiences in the 'Roots of Love' shelter.

### Challenges in the implementation

Without international cooperation mechanisms, the sustainable implementation of the MIRPS along with the systematic protection of refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees and displaced people result impossible. We believe that strengthening the complementarity of humanitarian, political and development efforts increase the possibilities of materializing an effective collaboration.

The absence of funding is, however, a limiting the development of initiatives in the field. It is necessary, nonetheless, that MIRPS countries are able to identify what are the financial requirements to face these challenges. For this, we will consider requesting the support from the IADB.

Similarly, protection and solutions mechanisms like the PTA accommodate a minimum percentage. We see necessary that this programme is expanded as well as to develop other options for those who have not found opportunities to rebuild their lives.

Often, financing mechanisms within cooperation schemes are emergency funds with restrictive cycles that do not adjust to the realities in the field. We must explore further funding methods that are more flexible and that can be implemented during longer periods.

## **Priorities for 2019**

Considering the process made and challenges faced during the first year of MIRPS implementation, and to tackle new trends in our countries, we will focus in the following priorities in 2019:

- **Develop a common strategy to address the structural violence in the region;**
- **Strengthen investigation, permanent monitoring and verification actions related to displacement in the region that reinforces the humanitarian response;**
- **Carry out quantification exercises to identify which of the MIRPS actions and commitments can be included within our national budgets, and to point out the support we require from the international community;**
- **Once the financial needs are identified, carry out a fundraising exercise for the MIRPS;**
- **Guarantee a systematic support from development actors for the implementation of the MIRPS and to address the root causes of displacement;**
- **Strengthen the international and regional cooperation, with a special focus on south-south mechanisms.**



# CONCLUSIONS

Following the first anniversary of the San Pedro Sula Declaration, giving way to the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS), our efforts in defending the human rights of displaced people, asylum-seekers, refugees and returnees with protection needs do not cease. Our work in establishing mechanisms to deliver protection and responses, and to expedite solutions processes, make our countries a model of response foreseen through the Global Compact on Refugees and in the creation of a strong support network to address protection and solutions needs. Our work has allowed the MIRPS to set roots across the region, to provide support in addressing the protection and solutions needs..

Since the adoption of the MIRPS, and thanks to the extraordinary support from national, regional and international partners, we have been able to strengthen our protection mechanisms allowing us to provide a more efficient response from the borders, facilitate access to our asylum procedures and through our accompaniment towards durable solutions. Hence, upon the establishment of our commitments, we have immediately passed to the implementation of our national plans to strengthen protection and facilitate solutions for those forced to flee in our countries. This includes applying practical initiatives like decentralization of our asylum systems to the borders, the construction of shelters and other

safe spaces, and local integration initiatives like the enrolment of refugees in language courses and other technical skills, and the provision of work permits, among others.

At the regional level, we have established a monitoring mechanism led by the OAS, where we can discuss among ourselves the progress summarized in this report. These achievements would not have been possible without the regional and continental synergies established during the past year.

In spite of honoring the commitments made through the MIRPS, this process is not exempt of challenges. It is necessary to redouble our efforts in the matters of protection and integration of refugees and asylum-seekers so that they align with the challenges each country faces on fiscal, security and employment affairs. On the other hand, while some countries have made tremendous progress on addressing legal barriers, others have road to travel to appropriate policies that have just been adopted.

Further efforts must be invested in solidifying legal and public policies to recognize and integrate refugees, displaced people, returnees and asylum-seekers within educational and labour spheres, as well as to strengthen their access to livelihoods. This, aiming to encourage processes that will allow the population of concern to be independent and to contribute to their host communities as active members of society.



We must progress on quantifying the resources required for the implementation of the 180 MIRPS commitments. This, with the aim of prioritizing the inclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees within existing government programmes, allowing them to thrive alongside their hosts. Once these financial needs are identified, a Solidarity Conference will be carried out to set the basis the creation of a resource mobilization strategy for the MIRPS that responds to the needs of each country and the region as a whole.

This Solidarity Conference, as foreseen by the Global Compact on Refugees, is considered as a strategic driver to obtain a wider support, comprising of States, development actors, the civil society, host communities and the private sector, that we hope results in financial, material and technical contributions, as well as of resettlement and complementary protection and admission pathways.

Similarly, MIRPS countries and the international community must enhance best practices and explore new responses in line with international law and national legal frameworks. Strengthening the capacity of public institutions in charge of providing direct assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers is at the center of an effective response. These priorities can only be accomplished with the decisive support from the international community, development actors, the UN System, in the spirit of the principle of shared responsibility.

We must, however, acknowledge that each country and their partners at the local level continue to work tirelessly so that ongoing processes materialize in the compliance with our commitments. MIRPS countries will venture in political changes during the coming years. This, added to the increasing instability in some of the countries in the region, must be taken into consideration within future MIRPS planning. Among outstanding reflexions is that we must seize the opportunities brought about by the MIRPS to continue prioritizing this process within our response to forced displacement. This, through time, has been our leading flag and characteristic at the global level.

For this, the establishment of efficient and effective monitoring mechanisms will be fundamental, not only to quantify the resources invested by all partners, but also to identify challenges and the way forward in a more predictable and opportune manner.

In spite of the challenges, we are pleased to be able to contribute our best practices to the region and the world. What we have achieved through the MIRPS and its Support Platform has enabled us to embody the practical implementation of the New York Declaration

and the CRRF, being the reflection and realization of the components foreseen within the Global Compact on Refugees.

The coming years and the support from the international community to processes begun through MIRPS will be key to continue consolidating us as a sub-region, encouraging shared responsibility and promoting the strengthening of our Support Platform, with the expectation that all countries, organizations and entities in the region and beyond all become Friends of the MIRPS.



## WORDS BY THE RESIDENT COORDINATORS OF THE UN SYSTEM IN HONDURAS, GUATEMALA AND EL SALVADOR

The United Nations Resident Coordinators in Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Belize wish to express their support to the strategies and actions identified by the participants of the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS).

We are pleased to ascertain the important achievements and lessons learned through the implementation of the MIRPS, as well as to note the contribution that this pioneer regional initiative represents in the implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), as provided for by Annex I of the New York Declaration and the Global Compact on Refugees.

The process to formulate the global compacts on refugees and migrants reflect the increasing relevance of both phenomena within the global agenda and the United Nations.

The lessons learned through our cooperation with the Central American countries portray the importance of promoting a comprehensive approach towards the achievement of security at the long term. This approach must include specific components that prevent violence and provide attention and protection to victims, with a special focus on the protection of women, children and adolescents.

In 2017, upon the request from Resident Coordinators in Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Belize, the United Nations Development Group for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNDG-LAC) established a joint initiative to support the states' response to challenges on security, to address urgent protection needs and realize the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind. Co-chaired by UNDP and UNICEF, this joint initiative – endorsed by the UN Secretary General and its Executive Committee in 2017 – has defined an approach and results at the regional level, as well as regional, sub-regional and national initiatives. Through spaces such as the UNDG-LAC, we have been able to channel specific funds for sub-regional and national funds, including Peacebuilding Funds.

Currently, UN country teams in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador cooperate with governments and the civil society in the implementation of programmes aiming to:

- i) The coordinated design and implementation of security plans and policies with a comprehensive and evidence-based vision;
- ii) The expansion of attention and protection services for victims of violence;
- iii) The promotion of economic and social opportunities for the reintegration of returnees;
- iv) The strengthening of mechanisms for the protection of human rights;
- v) The protection, prevention and reduction of all forms of violence against women and girls;
- vi) Support to the democratic dialogue for the search of national agreements on critical areas of sustainable development.

Our cooperation with the countries in the North of Central America reflects lessons learned and opportunities of joint work that could provide alternatives to potentiate the implementation of the MIRPS.

On the one side, the implementation of sub-regional initiatives in collaboration with the governments demonstrates the important synergies that can be developed on the attention to critical factors for the consolidation of peace across borders. As of January 2018, the UN Country Teams in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador are implementing a “tri-national programme for resilience and social cohesion in the North of Central America”, which includes important components for the protection of victims of violence.

On the other hand, the implementation of joint programmes in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Belize shines a light on the possibility of establishing work initiatives that would establish bridges between



humanitarian and development efforts to reach common goals. This through a 'new way of working', as foreseen during the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.

The Resident Coordinators remain committed to expanding our cooperation in support of national priorities within these areas.

**COMPREHENSIVE  
REGIONAL  
PROTECTION &  
SOLUTIONS  
FRAMEWORK**

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