



APRIL - JUNE 2021

APPLYING THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO

STRATEGIC SECTORS



Protection



Employment and
Livelihoods



Social Protection



Education



Health

MIRPS SOLIDARITY EVENT

A Solidarity Event for forcibly displaced persons and their host communities in Central America and Mexico, was held on June 10, in San José, Costa Rica, on the side lines of the 30th anniversary of the Central American Integration System (SICA). High-level representatives from twelve States, the European Union, financial institutions, United Nations agencies, regional organizations, the private sector, and civil society participated in the Event. The event was organized by the Government of Spain in its capacity as the Pro-Tempore Presidency of the Support Platform of the Comprehensive Regional Framework for Protection and Solutions (MIRPS) in collaboration with the Pro-Tempore Presidency of Guatemala of the MIRPS and Costa Rica, in its capacity Pro-Tempore Presidency of the Central American Integration System (SICA), with the support of UNHCR and the OAS, in their capacity as Technical Secretariat of the MIRPS.

During the event, participants highlighted that forced displacement in Central America and Mexico is the result of multiple factors that are interconnected, including the lack of economic opportunities and high rates of crime and violence. In addition, they noted that the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters have created additional difficulties and increased the vulnerability of the displaced population and the risk of displacement. Countries in the region spoke about the devastating effects of climate change on the region.

It was also highlighted that the regional response to forced displacement must incorporate a humanitarian and development dimension, including both immediate action and long-term planning, to promote progress in social inclusion, prosperity, and the reduction of violence to reduce high levels of human mobility and mitigate the humanitarian consequences. In this regard, the MIRPS is seen as an effective framework to promote a coordinated regional response to forced displacement, which brings together all relevant actors and promotes initiatives from the humanitarian and development sectors, as well as the public and private sectors. At the global level, the MIRPS and its Support Platform are a good model for other regions and a concrete example of shared responsibility envisaged in the Global Compact on Refugees.

During the Solidarity Event, new financial commitments totalling USD 110 million were announced by the European Union (22.5 million), Ireland (5M), Spain (7.6M), Switzerland (2.5M) and the United States (57 M), as well as the private sector and foundations. Canada also reaffirmed its commitment to assume the next Presidency of the Support Platform and to give continuity to the cooperation process between the MIRPS countries and the international community.

THE MIRPS IN ACTION: IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL PLANS

MÉXICO

PROTECTION - In response to the protection needs of girls, boys, and adolescents, COMAR prepared an Operational Guide for the attention of requests for recognition of the refugee status of accompanied, separated and unaccompanied girls, boys, and adolescents (NNA), which establishes the measures to be followed by COMAR staff in the care of children and adolescents. The Guide considers the principle of non-refoulement, the best interests of children, and the family unit, as addresses recent legislative reforms.

EDUCATION- In May, the Inter-institutional Roundtable on Educational Inclusion convened, to facilitate the coordination of government sectors, international organizations, and civil society, regarding the inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees in Basic Education. The Undersecretariat in charge of the issue undertook to make efforts to guarantee correct access to the educational system for displaced persons, identifying the causes that prevent access, and sensitizing staff.

EL SALVADOR

PROTECTION - The General Directorate of Migration and Foreigners (DGME) is leading the process of creating a protection module within the Single Migration Registry, used by the 11 institutions present in the Migrant Assistance Management (GAMI) group, to improve the registration of returnees with protection needs. The registry seeks to systematize and refer cases according to their specific protection needs under an age, gender, and diversity approach. The DGME has also initiated a process of capacity building for its staff and that of the GAMI, on issues including basic principles of international protection, interview techniques, a protection approach, internal forced displacement, amongst others. So far, four training sessions have been held and this process is expected to conclude at the end of October.

JOBS AND LIVELIHOODS - The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MTPS) has designed a strategy for youth labour inclusion called “My First Job”, through which young people without work experience will be incorporated into their first formal job, through a learning contract modality, and in coordination with the private sector. The MTPS will prioritize 324 forcibly displaced people within this strategy, including form LGBTI population, women, and heads of household.

GUATEMALA

PROTECTION - The Guatemalan Migration Institute (IGM), organized a workshop for public officials on the administrative function and international protection of the State of Guatemala in the care of refugees and asylum seekers. The workshop was attended by institutions including the National Registry of Persons, of the Judicial Branch, the National Civil Police, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance. The Secretariat of Social Welfare of the Presidency of the Republic (SBS), as coordinator of the National Technical Team also launched the “Protocol of Attention to Unaccompanied or Separated Girls, Boys and Adolescents in Context of Human Mobility, Refugee Seekers, Refugees and others with International Protection Needs, integrated in Temporary Foster Families”, which will support the provision of specialized and differentiated care for unaccompanied or separated children and adolescents, and provide alternatives to institutionalization.

JOBS AND LIVELIHOODS - In May, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MINTRAB), in conjunction with the National Association of Municipal Mayors (ANAM), the National Network of Management Groups (AGEXPORT), ManPower Group and the Foundation for Ecodesarrollo y la Conservación (FUNDAECO), held a roundtable to share lessons learned and good practices on the labour inclusion of refugees, asylum seekers, and returnees with protection needs. This public-private initiative seeks to contribute to the development of strategies to promote livelihoods and economic inclusion.

COSTA RICA

PROTECTION - Costa Rica approved the incorporation of the commitment to digitize the refugee process within its National Action Plan. This related project will digitize the physical files of refugee applicants, which will streamline the documentation delivery process. A team of 12 people has been established to support the Refugee Unit of the General Directorate of Migration and Foreigners, in reducing waiting times for the issuance of individual documents, as well as the expansion of its business hours. These changes have allowed the rescheduling of appointments and the prioritization of cases of people in situations of vulnerability or in need of specific protection. So far, 7,062 requests have been processed for the renewal of documents or the registration of persons.

THE MIRPS IN ACTION: IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL PLANS

BELIZE

PROTECTION - During the last 6 months, 51 cases, comprising of 80 people were registered as asylum seekers. While the land borders have remained formally closed, new cases have included new arrivals with international protection needs. In addition, the 14-day deadline for registering asylum applications is no longer in effect as of January 6, 2021. Finally, 23 additionally registered asylum-seekers have been granted refugee status, raising the total number of recognized refugees to 51.

HEALTH - Since the start of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, some 72,000 people have received their first dose, including some 16,000 who are fully vaccinated. Refugees and asylum seekers have full access to receive the vaccine when it is their turn, according to the vaccination plan. It is estimated that 20% of this group have received a first dose.

JOBS AND LIVELIHOODS - Presently, temporary work permits are granted to all asylum seekers, who are over 18 years of age, and whose asylum application has been evaluated positively. It is estimated that some 300 eligible asylum seekers will benefit, who today have the opportunity to formally enter the labour market.

HONDURAS

PROTECTION - In order to strengthen reception conditions, the Directorate for the Protection of Returned Honduran Migrants updated the Protocol of Attention to Returned Hondurans in Need of Protection. Likewise, the National Migration Institute activated a scheme to identify people in need of international protection, through the application of a vulnerability assessment tool. Within this framework, during the month of April 120 evaluations were undertaken in the Trojes and El Paraíso. In turn, a procedures unit was created to prepare instructions for border officials and Centres for the Care of Irregular Migrants. Spaces have been prepared and equipped in the Choluteca delegation, for the care of people seeking refugee status, and migrants in transit with international protection needs.

The National Migration Institute carried out field missions to prioritize the delivery of assistance (hygiene kits, food, clothing, among others) in remote border areas. During the second quarter of the year, at least 120 kits were delivered in Trojes and 500 in Choluteca, to respond to urgent humanitarian needs. Additionally, 100 bales of water were delivered, and during the month of May, nine emergency cases were assisted.

JOBS AND LIVELIHOODS - Progress has continued in the implementation of pilot projects for humanitarian assistance and protection. Honduras's goal is to attend 90 cases by the end of the year. To date, 34 cases have been attended, representing 89 people. Of the 34 cases, 8 have benefited from seed capital for productive initiatives, 4 are in the development stage of their business plan, and 14 have received technical assistance and guidance to support their employability. Additionally, the “I Undertake on My Land” Project is being implemented between the National Service for Entrepreneurship and Small Businesses (SENPRENDE), which aims to promote economic development for Honduran returnees. To date, 133 Honduran returnees have benefited from the 500 projected for this year.

PANAMÁ

PROTECTION - To strengthen national capacities on international protection issues, a training programme was developed for 70 officials from the National Migration Service focused on concepts on international protection, the definition of a refugee, the procedure for the recognition of the refugee status in Panama and, in particular, State responsibilities and obligations as the receiving authority.

SOCIAL PROTECTION - On June 23, the official launch of “La Liga de Todos 2021” was held, which was attended by the Vice Minister of Education, authorities of the Ministry of Education and the scholastic community. For the second consecutive year, the promotion of values, leadership development and the social inclusion of refugee children and adolescents will continue to be promoted in the country's public schools together with the local population, adding an additional 500 beneficiaries to the currently programme.

JOBS AND LIVELIHOODS - The “Talent without Borders” Employability Programme began its 2021 activities, with 32 participants, including refugees, asylum seekers and the host community, taking part in a first online workshop, focusing on issues related to the promotion of self-esteem and self-direction in the search for employment, building an impactful resume and how to prepare for a job interview.

THE MIRPS IN ACTION: THE MIRPS IN THE REGION

Approach to the private sector

On April 27, the Virtual Business Roundtable on Opportunities, and Positive Effects of the Inclusion of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons with Protection Needs was held with participants from across Central America and Mexico.

During the Roundtable, the crucial role of the private sector was emphasized, and its contribution to addressing the structural causes of forced displacement, generating alternatives for the economic inclusion of people who have been displaced. Successful business initiatives and programmes were highlighted to foster the economic inclusion of displaced persons, allowing them to build their livelihoods in local economies as well as build solid ties support their inclusion within their host communities. Key actions were identified in which more attention is required, to improve and galvanize the opportunities for inclusion of these populations, as well as explore additional areas in which the private sector can complement State actions to strengthen collective responses for the generation of durable solutions for all people who have been forcibly displaced in MIRPS countries.

Upcoming events: the MIRPS and Support Platform

MIRPS Working Groups on:

Access to the Labour Market and Vocational Training

With the aim of strengthening the capacities of key government actors involved in the socio-economic inclusion of refugees and displaced persons in the labour market and professional training, the Working Group on Access to the Labour Market and Professional Training has been established with the support of a Panel of Advisors, made up of ILO, UNDP, UNESCO and UNHCR. The Working Group is made up of the seven MIRPS countries, and the sessions will focus on: (1) Legal frameworks for labour inclusion and approaches for understanding national regulatory frameworks; (2) The recognition of studies and educational trajectories; (3) The recognition of qualifications and competencies, and job profiles; and (4) Linking and supporting refugees and displaced persons to contribute to local development from an integrated perspective.

Local Governance

The Working Group on Local Governance aims to provide a common platform for local authorities to share their experiences, good practices and knowledge in the inclusion and care of internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, refugees and returnees with protection needs. The Working Group is made up of nine municipalities from Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama, and is accompanied by a Panel of Advisors, made up of UNHCR, UNDP and UNICEF. Sessions will review the following topics: (1) Legal frameworks and people with specific needs; (2) Multi-stakeholder coordination and partner and service mapping; (3) Local development planning and multisectoral needs; and (4) Community consultations and the validation of local development plans.

Internal Displacement

In order to provide a platform where government officials can share their experiences and knowledge in the prevention and care of internal displacement, in 2020, the Working Group on Internal Displacement was established, with the participation of Mexico, El Salvador and Honduras, and with the support of experts from Colombia and Italy. During this year, the Working Group will review during its sessions regulatory frameworks, information systems and statistics, prevention, and community-based approaches, and differentiated approaches to solutions.

The sessions of the Working Groups on Access to the Labour Market and Vocational Training and Local Governance will be held in July, while the sessions of the Working Group on Internal Displacement are held between April and August. The participating countries will report the results in plenary to the MIRPS countries

