



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

MIRPS | COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL PROTECTION AND SOLUTIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO

PILLAR 2: IMMEDIATE AND PERSISTENT NEEDS

SGBV and child protection

Mid 2018

12,000

Number of children
returned to the NCA
(Jan-Jun 2018)

930

Number of persons
with known speci-
fic protection needs
supported in MIRPS
countries (Jan-Jun
2018)

500

Number of persons
trained on child pro-
tection and children's
rights (Jan-Jun 2018)

760

Number of persons
trained on SGBV pre-
vention and response
(Jan-Jun 2018)

The widespread violence in the region affects significantly women, children and LGBTI persons. Discrimination, forced recruitment and sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) run rampant. Fleeing such persecution, they face further risk and victimization along dangerous transit routes and are often victims of trafficking networks and criminal groups. The MIRPS has, since its conception, invested in prioritizing protection of these vulnerable groups, both in country of origin, transit and asylum.

States, with the support of UNHCR and its partners, work to ensure that refugees and other persons of concern are protected against SGBV. All MIRPS countries are committed to ending different forms of SGBV, targeting programmes to prevent SGBV as well as respond to the protection needs of the survivors.

Major highlights and achievements

All MIRPS countries have designed Standard Operation Procedures to deal with Child Protection and ensure the implementation of BIDs and BIAs for unaccompanied and separated children. State entities, child welfare authorities and Refugee Commissions were trained on child protection, SGBV, refugee law, case management, identification and response for high risk cases.

In **Costa Rica**, UNHCR Costa Rica leads the Multi-Functional Team on SGBV prevention and response, with the active participation of partner agencies, the National Children's Institute (PANI), the National Women's Institute (INAMU), the National Coalition against smuggling of irregular migrants and human trafficking (CONATT). National Protocols for the women and children's assistance have been revised and updated.

UNHCR **Costa Rica** has supported the establishment and maintenance of two shelters for SGBV survivors in capital San Jose and in the Northern areas in partnership with the NGO, CENDEROS. Costa Rica has been home to SGBV survivor and LGTBI asylum seekers who had been beneficiaries of the ad hoc evacuation programme.

The Civil Registry Office, with technical support of UNHCR, has advanced the Chiriticos' Model to allow late-birth registration and eradication of risk of statelessness among indigenous children and children to transnational workers.

In **El Salvador**, ISDEMU staff received training on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), psychosocial support first aid for survivors of SGBV, and self-care techniques to manage emotional stress from assisting SGBV survivors.

With support of UNHCR, World Vision has begun to remodel five departmental facilities of the Attorney-General's Office. The remodeling aims to provide safe, confidential, and adequate physical spaces for the attention of children.

UNHCR held workshops to identify and support LGBTI persons at heightened risk. The workshops aimed at public institutions working with LGBTI persons. Additionally, partner organization COMCAVIS received training on LGBTI rights, and they provided humanitarian assistance to 50 LGBTI persons in need of protection.

In **Guatemala**, the safe spaces network for SGBV survivors is being strengthened and expanded, reinforcing SGBV case management, legal aid, health care, psychosocial support, safety, shelter and basic needs.

Refugio de la Niñez and UNHCR, in collaboration with **Guatemala's** Judicial Body, delivered a series of workshops on "International Protection and Children in Transit" to a group juvenile judges in Guatemala between February and March of 2018.

To strengthen the protection of children in Petén, UNHCR supported the opening of an office for Refugio de la Niñez. The capacity of the Attorney General's Office's (AGO) to protect children has been strengthened through training and funding of three child protection officers who will be absorbed by the AGO after a nine-month period. A total of 1,575 children have been assisted by these three officers during the first half of the year.

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In **Honduras**, 12 community youth centres have been supported in high risk communities. Child protection institutions are developing referral routes for children with specific protection needs, including children at risk of recruitment.

125 children have been reached in 4 schools located in high risk communities in Tegucigalpa, through psychosocial activities to address school

drop-outs and mitigate risks of forced recruitment. A handbook on psychosocial interventions in high risk communities will be designed based on the good practices of this experience.

The Commission against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking in Persons (CICESCT) in Honduras, together with UNHCR, are working together in the area of sexual exploitation and child prevention.

Technical assistance was provided to the Municipal Office for Women in San Pedro Sula in order to map out SGBV and protection services at municipal level so as to ensure a more comprehensive response to the victims.

In **Mexico**, capacities of the Procurator's Offices for the protection of children were strengthened and technical assistance (BIDs and representation) provided to prevent immigration detention, stop deportation of children and adolescents with international protection needs, guarantee their access to the asylum system and legal representation during the RSD procedure and to promote their reunification with family members already living in the country.

Main challenges

Forced displacement due to violence in NCA is widespread, although data remains fragmented. The NCA countries demonstrate some of the highest rates of violence in the domestic environment, femicides and SGBV, particularly focused against young females.

Provision of psychosocial and legal support to individual and community mental health in high risk areas targeting vulnerable groups (youth, women at risk, teachers, etc.) remain a challenge. Medical services and specific programs for SGBV survivors, child friendly spaces and specific spaces for protection cases and LGTBI persons are unmet needs and require additional support.

IDP, refugee and asylum seeking women suffer additional risk and persecution based on their gender, during their flight and in almost all aspects of local integration.

During the first semester of 2018, 248 government officials, UNHCR and partner staff were trained and 258 PoC informed on SGBV prevention and response. Furthermore, 168 persons were trained on reproductive health and HIV. UNHCR also facilitated trainings to civil society and government actors on prevention and response of SGBV in Acayucan, Tenosique and Palenque. The training focused on a multi-sectoral response, and a main result of the session was the creation of referral pathways for SGBV survivors in these localities.

A total of 696 best interest assessment procedures were conducted by Mexican authorities so as to ensure identification of protection needs or access to the asylum procedure for children. In addition, 136 unaccompanied children had access to the asylum procedure during the reporting period.

In **Panama**, a protocol was signed between SENNIAF, the child protection institution, and the National Office for Refugee Assistance (ONPAR) for the identification and referral of unaccompanied minors with international protection needs. Training sessions to disseminate the protocol to relevant border authorities are currently ongoing.

There is still a need to enhance the age-gender diverse approach in all stages of flight (child protection, SGBV, LGTBI).

Registration and profiling of asylum and refugee cases is insufficient. There is rarely any consideration of cases with special needs or vulnerabilities, such as UASC, survivors of SGBV or violence related to sexual orientation or gender identity.

During participatory assessments in MIRPS countries, women reported widespread SGBV including domestic violence and sexual harassment. There are also high rates of intra-familial violence in the region, including violence against children.

Sustainability through shared responsibility

The UNDG LAC, along with the Resident Coordinators of NCA Countries, have been working to develop a comprehensive approach to significantly reduce levels of violence by 2030, with a focus on prevention, protection, law enforcement and access to justice. Work is now underway to develop a violence reduction index to measure progress, including indicators to monitor violence against women and children.

Next steps

Sensitization and capacity building on SGBV and Child Protection will continue to take place and increase engagement with authorities is foreseen for the next months.

Continue trainings and capacity building, implementation of referral mechanisms for SGBV survivors.

RELATED MIRPS PROJECT PROFILES

PROJECT 3: Safe spaces for SGBV survivors in Costa Rica.

PROJECT 5: Social protection for people with special needs in Costa Rica.

For more information visit: www.globalcrrf.org. Or contact Hugues Van Brabandt, Regional External Relations Officer, Panama, vanbraba@unhcr.org.

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UNHCR / Tito Herrera