



A Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework for Central America

WHAT IS A CRRF?

The CRRF is the first of two Annexes to the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants adopted in September 2016 at a High-level meeting of the UN General Assembly. It is a comprehensive set of commitments to be implemented in situations involving large-scale movements of refugees. It lists a number of actions and best practices in four areas: reception and admission measures; support for immediate and ongoing needs; support for host countries; and enhanced opportunities for durable solutions. The CRRF will in all situations be tailored to local circumstances and respective operational contexts.

The CRRF eschews short term responses in favor of a sustainable approach linking humanitarian action with development assistance. This new approach is based on the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, including but not limited to national and local authorities, international and regional organizations, international financial institutions, civil society, private sector, and refugee and host communities themselves. Finally, whilst the CRRF is aimed at refugees, the New York Declaration states that there are a number of similar commitments that apply equally to migrants and refugees¹. States have pledged to consider the development of non-binding guiding principles for migrants in vulnerable situations; and engage in intergovernmental negotiations for the adoption of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in 2018

WHO DECIDES WHETHER A CRRF SHOULD BE APPLIED IN A SPECIFIC SITUATION?

Whether a CRRF applies in any given situation is a matter for UNHCR to determine, in close coordination with Member States and in consultation with other stakeholders. The agreement and active engagement of the relevant States in applying a CRRF to a specific situation is a determinant factor.

WHY IS CENTRAL AMERICA A GOOD SITUATION FOR A PILOT CRRF?

¹ These include those aimed at saving lives; addressing specific needs; countering racism and xenophobia, combatting human trafficking; ensuring equal recognition and protection before the law; and ensuring inclusion in national development plans.

Central America presents a unique emerging situation: the countries of the Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA) are experiencing socio-economic turmoil and high levels of violence resulting in a multi-causal large movement of IDPs, refugees and migrants throughout the region. Host countries are being confronted with a growing number of displaced persons, creating pressure at a national and regional level.

Addressing this complex situation requires a mixture of humanitarian and security measures, socio-economic incentives and macro-economic support. Such a comprehensive approach would aim at enhancing immediate protection whilst working for tangible improvements in local conditions, eventually allowing for the return in safety and dignity of those displaced, which would ultimately reduce the pressure on host countries. In addition, host countries would benefit from targeted assistance to support their reception mechanisms and asylum system, and to enhance opportunities for local integration. As such, a pilot CRRF in the region would present an excellent opportunity to combine humanitarian and development approaches, and further contribute to making progress in the four objectives set out in Annex 1 of the New York Declaration.

In the San Jose Action Statement, States in the region have already acknowledged the need for comprehensive actions to enhance protection and respond to the most urgent needs of asylum seekers, refugees, IDPs, migrants and returnees in the NTCA, and made a number of commitments to this end. The Declaration, which further builds on earlier commitments made in the Brazil Plan of Action, highlights that the region is well disposed to facing the current situation through cooperation and responsibility sharing mechanisms. Further, a wide range of active stakeholders from international organizations and financial institutions, civil society, private sector and academia are actively engaged with these mechanisms. The region is therefore fertile ground for a CRRF to take root.

WHAT WOULD A CRRF BRING TO THE REGION?

The formulation and adoption of a CRRF for Central America would be an excellent opportunity to operationalize the political commitments made in the San Jose Action Statement, and to develop a comprehensive resource mobilization plan, as well as new responsibility sharing and cooperation modalities.

Addressing the root causes of violence, as well as the multiplicity of factors that are forcing persons to move from the NTCA is a complex task requiring both short term humanitarian action to bring protection to persons at risk, as well as long term development work to change underlying socio-economic conditions. It needs a variety of stakeholders to be actively engaged in both aspects, each bringing their expertise and resources to the table. The NTCA countries, however, are middle-income countries and therefore cannot access the level of international assistance that they may need, nor can they access subsidised loans from international financial institutions. A dedicated Concessional Financing Facility could be created to support them.

HOW DOES THE CRRF RELATE TO EXISTING COORDINATION MECHANISMS AND FRAMEWORKS?

The regional application of the CRRF is intended to build upon existing coordination mechanisms and frameworks such as the Brazil Plan of Action, San Jose Action Statement and national development plans and UNDAFs. The CRRF will not subsume any of these mechanisms, but rather complement and strengthen them by bringing more interested stakeholders, and more resources, to the table, which will add depth and sustainability to the responses being implemented. The CRRF would thus act as a broad frame, which will be developed, implemented and monitored through the existing mechanisms and frameworks.

HOW WOULD A CRRF FOR CENTRAL AMERICA BE DEVELOPED AND IMPLEMENTED?

A regional meeting to follow-up of the San Jose Action statement is foreseen to take place in summer 2017. A number of countries have demonstrated interest to host the meeting, and UNHCR is in the process of defining the date and location of the meeting with concerned States and organizations in the region. The purpose is to develop and agree a Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (CRPSF) focusing on protection responses and solutions under the leadership of the

countries in the region. It would aim to secure the support of different stakeholders to address the specific and quantified needs identified in the CRPSF, including through innovative responsibility sharing arrangements. As a regional process and taking into consideration the specific context in Central America, the CRPSF would be regional application of a CRRF.

The CRPSF for Central America would use and build upon the commitments made by each State collectively and individually in the San Jose Action Statement, to build a comprehensive and action oriented response to the displacement crisis stemming from the NTCA. The commitments made already cover many of the areas identified in the CRRF, but could focus especially on meeting the *immediate and ongoing needs* in countries of origin, supporting *reception and admission measures* to relieve pressure from host states, and deepening regional responsibility sharing through a gradual and differentiated approach to *durable solutions*.

UNHCR would support each country in using the CRPSF as a means of defining specific actions in order to further focus attention and resources on these, in generating more commitments and looking to galvanize a wider engagement with non-traditional actors to unlock resources. The actions detailed in the CRPSF would be pegged by indicators, allowing their implementation by stakeholders to be regularly reviewed and monitored through existing coordination mechanisms. Progress and lessons learnt would be periodically reviewed and used in the development of a Global Compact on Refugees.

ARE ANY COUNTRIES FROM CENTRAL AMERICA PARTICIPATING IN THE CRRF?

So far, the Government of Honduras has officially confirmed its interest in participating in the CRRF as a pilot country. Furthermore, Brazil and Ecuador have also expressed interest in this process and will serve as valuable case studies contributing good practices to the Global Compact on Refugees. UNHCR welcomes this announcement and hopes that other States in the region will be able to join Honduras. Discussions with other States who may be interested in the region namely Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Mexico are going to take place in the form of national consultations aiming to identify a methodology for 1) measuring progress toward the commitment and identifying gaps in implementation and 2) put forward the possible elements of a CRPSF.