

2016

HUMANITARIAN NEEDS OVERVIEW

PEOPLE IN NEED

3.5M

DEC 2015



CENTRAL AMERICA SUB-REGIONAL ANALYSIS

EL SALVADOR • GUATEMALA • HONDURAS

This document is produced on behalf of the Humanitarian Country Team and partners.

This document provides the Humanitarian Country Team's shared understanding of the crisis, including the most pressing humanitarian need and the estimated number of people who need assistance. It represents a consolidated evidence base and helps inform joint strategic response planning.

The designations employed and the presentation of material in the report do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.



www.unocha.org/rolac

PART I: SUMMARY



 Humanitarian needs & key figures

 Impact of the crisis

PEOPLE IN NEED

3.5M



HUMANITARIAN

PRIORITY NEEDS

Central America, especially Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, is currently experiencing the worst drought in decades. Drought is affecting food insecurity for a second consecutive year. More than 3.5 million people are food insecure and need humanitarian assistance after suffering major crop losses due to these prolonged drought conditions.

HUMANITARIAN PRIORITY NEEDS



1

Nutrition

The drought has led to a reduction in dietary diversity and overall food consumption. In affected municipalities in Honduras the general acute malnutrition (wasting) rate for children under 5 is three times the national level. In Guatemala, inter-agency field assessments found that that acute malnutrition rates reach up to 10 per cent.



2

WASH

Water systems in rural areas are vulnerable to pollution through lack of treatment, while solid and liquid wastes are discharged into rivers. The prolonged dry spells have decreased water supply sources, hampering access to safe water for humanitarian consumption and for food security activities. The absence of adequate sanitation has a direct correlation to malnutrition and health problems.



3

Health

Dengue and chikungunya (both mosquito-borne viral diseases) are endemic in Central America and remain a public health problem, aggravated by water shortages caused by the prolonged dry spell.

03



HUMANITARIAN PRIORITY NEEDS



4

Protection

The region is characterized by high levels of social inequality. The UNODC 2013 global homicide study shows that the 20 most violent cities in the world were in Latin America¹: Honduras ranked first, El Salvador fifth and Guatemala sixth on the list.

Insecurity, drug trafficking, corruption and insufficient means to earn a living in areas hit by drought leave families to resort to migration as a coping mechanism. In the last three years there has been a sharp increase in people, including unaccompanied children, leaving El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to Mexico and the United States. Many of these people are in need of international protection.

20 of the most violent cities in the world were in Latin America



5

Gender-based violence

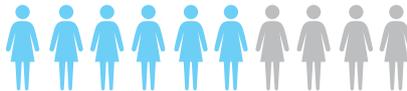
Violence in Central America disproportionately affects women: Six out of ten women who pass through Mexico experience some form of sexual violence².

Gender based Violence (GBV) is a driver of migration in Central America:

- 2 out of 3 murders of women in Central America are gender-related
- 1 in 4 women in the region have suffered at least one violent experience perpetrated by her partner

Of the 25 countries in the world with the highest rates of femicide, 14 are in Latin America and the Caribbean. El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras rank first, third and seventh respectively for rates of female homicide globally³.

60% of women who crossed the border through Mexico faced sexual abuse.



6

Food security

15 per cent of people in Honduras; 10 per cent of people in Guatemala; 11 per cent of people in El Salvador are suffering from moderate or severe food insecurity.

An epidemic of Coffee Rust, a fungus that attacks coffee plants, has decimated yearly harvests, affecting the livelihoods of many farmers in the region.



Photo: UNFPA



Photo: WFP/Phil Behan

Central America Dry Corridor

The “Dry Corridor” of Central America stretches through the low areas of the Pacific watershed in the foothills (0-800 meters) of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and parts of Costa Rica. It is a semi-arid region that covers nearly one-third of the Central American territory and is characterized by recurrent droughts.

THE DRY CORRIDOR



Source: OCHA

HUMANITARIAN

KEY FIGURES

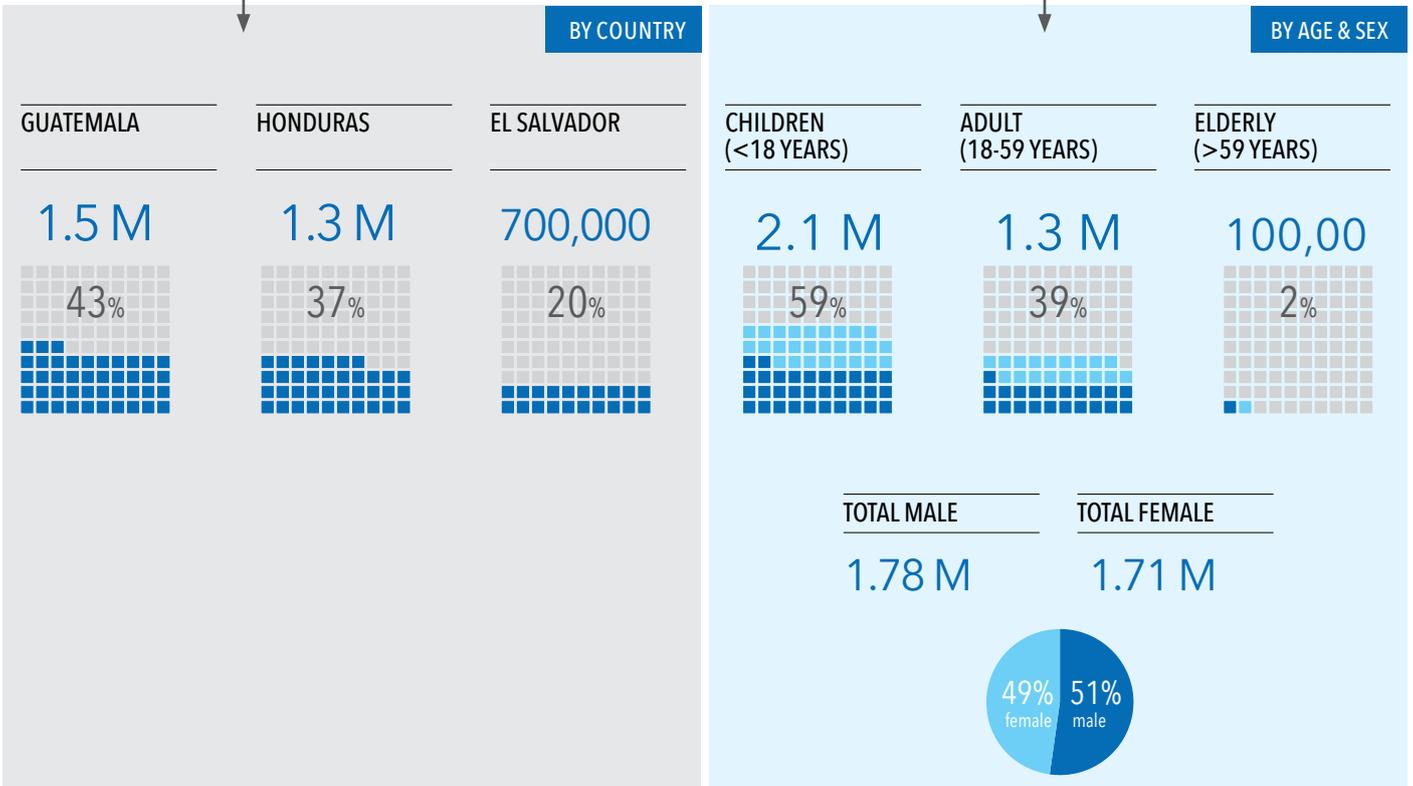
TOTAL POPULATION (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras)



NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN NEED OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE



06



IMPACT OF THE CRISIS

The worst drought in decades, compounded by the effects of El Niño, is creating an alarming humanitarian situation for people living in the Dry Corridor, where the most vulnerable have limited means of resilience. Food insecurity, high rates of stunting and wasting, and loss of livelihoods are compounded by high rates of violence and social insecurity which heavily compromises coping capacities.

Humanitarian action in northern Central America will be guided by Humanitarian Response Plans and aims to deliver coordinated and integrated life-saving assistance to people affected by drought, while providing a tailored response to address chronic vulnerabilities.

FOOD SECURITY

Insufficient and erratic rainfall since the appearance of El Niño conditions in March 2015 has resulted in the loss of staple grain crops and the death of thousands of cattle in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. This is the second consecutive year that the population in these areas is facing drought, destroying livelihoods and eroding their resilience. More than 3.5 million people in these three countries are food insecure and need immediate food assistance, health care, livelihood recovery, and activities that increase resilience.

The most vulnerable population are subsistence farmers, labourers and landless farmers. These low income households are dependent on rainfall as they work in farming without irrigation, have limited access to basic health services and education, and face difficulties accessing the basic food basket.

Despite mitigation measures implemented in the affected countries, food insecurity has deteriorated for thousands of families resulting in a serious humanitarian situation.

More than 65 per cent of households had no food stocks left at the start of the 2015 harvest season.

Food prices

Maize prices are above average in all three countries due to the prolonged dry spell. Compared to 2014, prices across the region are 14 to 20 per cent higher.

07



PEOPLE IN NEED OF
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

3.5 MILLION

Crop losses

At an estimated 3 million tons across the sub region, this year's maize harvest is expected to be far below average and some 8 per cent below last year's already compromised harvest. Losses range from 96 to 100 per cent in several areas of the Dry Corridor.

In El Salvador, the Ministry of Agriculture estimates that the total grain losses for 2015 will amount to US\$100 million, 30 per cent greater than in 2014. The harsh environmental conditions from 2012 to 2014 have resulted in agricultural losses and damages amounting to over US\$250.2 million. (loss of 25 per cent of local national production - maize losses at 19 per cent).

In Guatemala – EFSA assessments show a 50 – 100 per cent loss of maize and bean harvest which represents an economic loss around US\$44.5 million.

In Honduras – EFSA preliminary estimates point to losses in excess of 60 per cent and 80 per cent of the maize and beans areas, respectively.

Food consumption and coping strategies

Since May 2015, vulnerable affected families are reducing the number of meals eaten per day, reducing the size of meals, borrowing food, purchasing food on credit, consuming cheaper foods, selling breeding livestock and consuming seed stocks.

Other coping mechanisms include reducing health and education expenses (withdrawing children from schools) and fragmenting family nucleus due to migration.

In Honduras, 18 per cent of households visited in assessment do not have acceptable food consumption (7 per cent poor and 11 per cent limited consumption).

NUTRITION

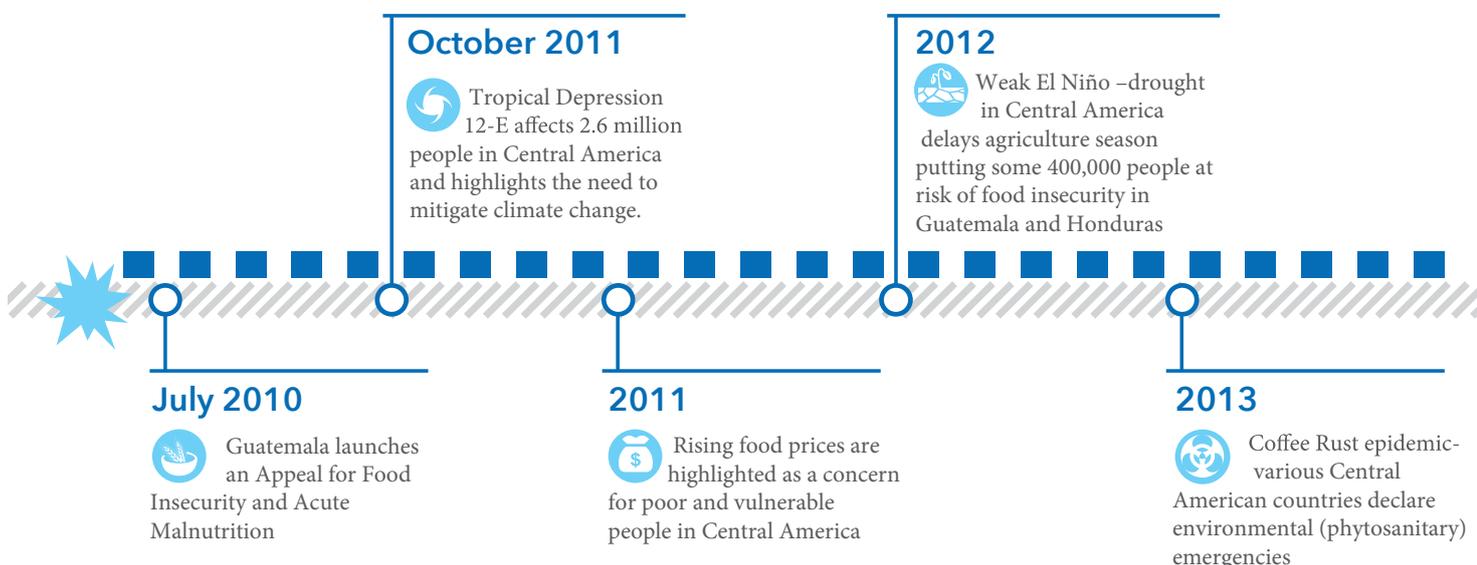
Lack of water and livelihoods have impacted food consumption and nutrition status of the population.

Malnourished children under 5 face the risk of dying due to protracted conditions of food insecurity because they consume few calories and protein foods. Other forms of malnutrition include micronutrient deficiencies, mainly anemia and iron deficiency, among most vulnerable such as infant, children under 5, childbearing, pregnant and lactating women.

Water shortages and inadequate sanitation increase the risk of illnesses, such as diarrhea or pneumonia.



TIMELINE - IMPORTANT DROUGHT-RELATED EVENTS



Malnutrition can be fatal for pregnant women and their babies, also affecting the health of young girls who years later may wish to have their own families.

Lack of registration and data sharing from local and remote rural health centers is hindering the ability to better estimate the situation of malnutrition in the region.

In affected areas in Guatemala, acute malnutrition or wasting rates range from 3.3 to 10 per cent. The Ministry of Health has reported 8,196 cases of acute severe malnutrition [SAM] in children under 5 and another 5,032 children at risk.

The general acute malnutrition rate (wasting) in affected municipalities in Honduras is 3.4 per cent in children under 5 (.4 per cent severe acute malnutrition [SAM] and 3.0 per cent moderate acute malnutrition [MAM]), which is three times the national average. A WFP regular monitor report shows that chronic malnutrition or stunting (low height for age) is as high as 48 per cent in two of the affected geographical areas and could be similar in other regions.

Stunting

A general lack of food security and sufficient levels of nutrition is a primary problem for a significant portion of the dry corridor, especially in Guatemala. An official census shows that current stunting rates in primary schools in rural zones is 41.7 per cent⁵.

As a result of chronic malnutrition, stunting has been identified as a prevalent problem in Guatemala since 1965⁶. Other negative results include limited physical and intellectual development, thereby limiting overall learning capacity and future productivity of this percentage of the overall population. Such consequences are irreversible and cannot be cured.

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

Water-delivery systems to rural areas are wells and water sources through pipes, risking water pollution due to lack of treatment. In Central America, maintenance costs are the users' responsibility, organized through committees. Solid and liquid wastes are discharged into rivers causing pollution. In rural areas, sanitary drainage is non-existent, so excreta and liquid waste are directly deposited into the fields. Rates of pollution, both sources and streams, increase generally.

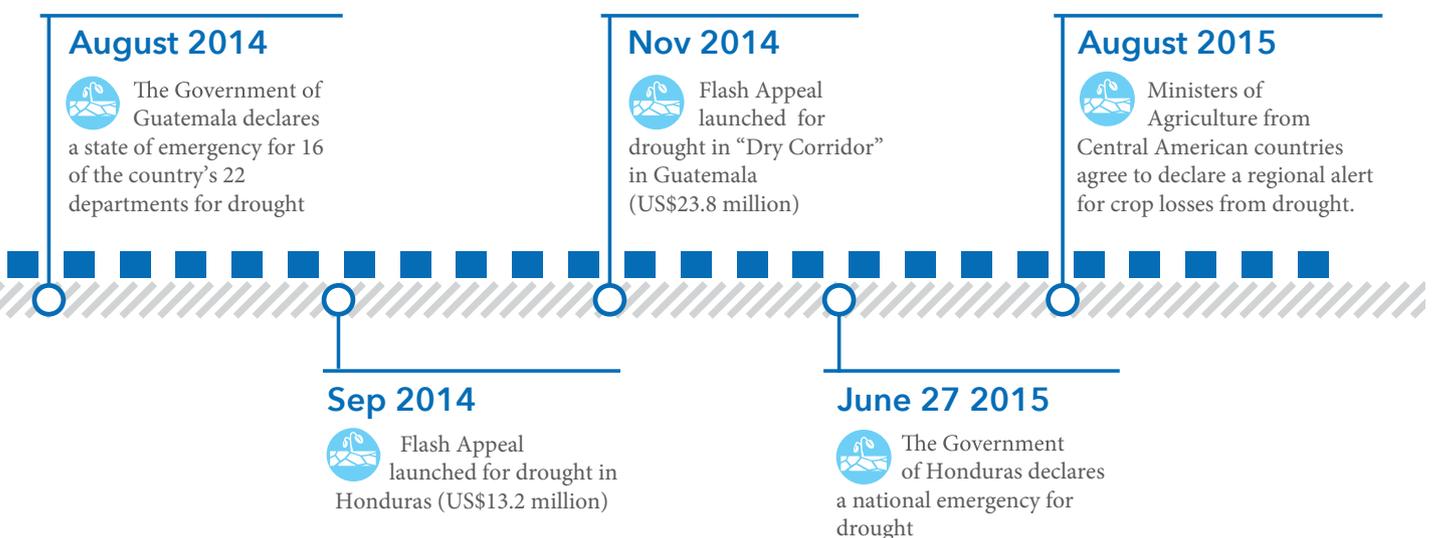
The environmental situation, with recurrence of prolonged dry spells, has caused the communities' water supply sources to decrease. This affects not only access to water for human consumption, but access to water for other uses, in particular to ensure food security. The absence of adequate sanitation and open defecation has direct correlation to diarrhea, a key cause of malnutrition.

LIVELIHOODS

Coffee Rust

Two million people in Central America and the Caribbean depend on coffee production as their principal source of income. The majority are small-scale producers or temporary workers in rural areas.

In 2013, Central America experienced its worst coffee-rust crisis since the fungus was first detected in the 1970s. The epidemic caused losses of 33 and 100 per cent of the harvests in more than half of the region's coffee plantations and an estimated \$550 million in total losses in Central America between 2012 and 2013.



Jobs losses due to coffee rust (which continues to affect harvest) has been significant – figures from 2013 show that in Guatemala, 115,000 small-scale farmers and workers lost their jobs; in Honduras some 100,000 labourers and in El Salvador 90,000. 0,000. In 2014, some 373,580 labourers were forced to migrate to find work⁷.

HEALTH AND EPIDEMICS

Cases of dengue and chikungunya in the Dry Corridor along with other health issues related to poor hygiene and poor quality or lack of water continue to increase.

In Guatemala the capacity of Ministry of Health is low due to suspension of many primary health care outreach services. Some 4 million people in rural areas have do not have access to primary health care and hundreds of thousands of children have not been vaccinated.

In Honduras, rates of diarrhea in children under one is 450 per 100,000. However there some departments in the dry corridor that are showing a rise since 2014. There is also a rise in dengue and chinkingunya during 2015.

In El Salvador, the Ministry of Health has reported in the media that the increase in temperatures has been a factor to increase the presence of dengue and chikungunya (suspected and confirmed) cases. The cumulative number of suspected and confirmed dengue cases stands at 39,669 and 39,721 cases of chikungunya⁸.

PROTECTION

Violence

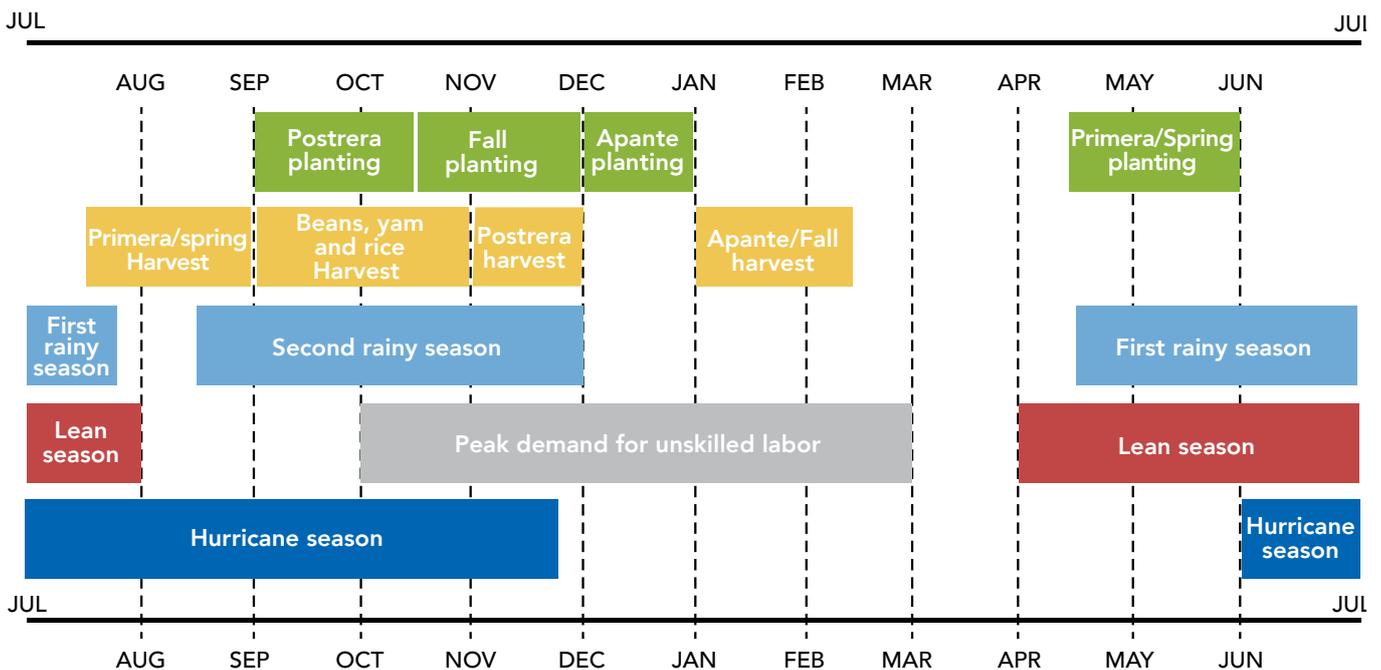
The homicide rate in the region exceeds the world average, placing Latin America and the Caribbean as the most violent region of the world in times of peace. The number of deaths related to drug trafficking and organized crime exceeds the rate considered as epidemic for the World Health Organization (WHO) which is 10/100,000 inhabitants.

Honduras has a homicide rate of 68/10,000 inhabitants, the highest in Central America. This complex crisis has increased in recent years without signs of reaching any solutions, according to the international community. According to a recent study in Honduras, the rate of insecurity perception topped 70.5% in December 2014.

Women suffer sexual and domestic violence. Children between the age of 10 and 14 years old as well as girls between the age of 15 and 19 are more at risk of suffering sexual violence.

If the high rates of urban violence persist, the negative impact on the population will increase and force external displacement. In 2014, the number of unaccompanied minor migrants held at the U.S southern border increased to 66,200 and is expected to reach 90,000 by 2015.

PLANTING SEASONS



Source: FewsNet

Migration

Assessments in vulnerable areas in the Dry Corridor identifies high migration rates. The recent study “El Hambre sin Fronteras” (Hunger without Borders)⁹ highlights the importance of food insecurity due to drought as a trigger for the migration of people living in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. The report also highlights the need to invest in food security as a survival mechanism to prevent migration.

In Honduras 17 per cent of households report the migration of a family member in 2015. The main reasons for migration are directly related to current drought conditions: 8 per cent crop losses, 3 per cent non-availability of water, and 79 per cent reduction in employment. Migration destinations are 3 per cent to Central America, 33 per cent outside Central America, 25 per cent to the capital city, 17 per cent other departments.

Other motives for an increase in migration is persecution or people feeling that their life, integrity and/or security is at risk. Many of these people, especially children, may become refugees. The UNHCR study “Children on the Run” notes that 48 per cent of unaccompanied children interviewed at the US border could require international protection.

GENDER

Women, children, people with disabilities, indigenous people and the elderly are particularly vulnerable during disasters. In times of emergency, the burden of women as caregivers multiplies, being more exposed and vulnerable to violence. Women, especially young girls, are vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence, coercion and sexual exploitation and abuse.

In the Northern Triangle (Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador), women are victims of violence inside and outside the home as shown below:

- Femicide accounts for 1,506 of the deaths in 2013, with women and girls between 15 and 29 years old as the most affected.

- Sexual violence in 2013 led to a total of 12,252 medical-legal evaluations with the most affected group being girls and adolescents between 10 and 19 years old.
- The number of registered cases of domestic violence is higher than the general homicide rate and the cases of sexual violence.
- Women and girls are also the main victims of trafficking for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation; in Guatemala 570 victims were registered in 2013 (according to UNODC, only one in thirty victims are detected annually).
- Without counting friends, girlfriends and wives, in Honduras the estimated number of active female gang members is of 872; their roles go from committing crimes without calling so much attention (extortion, transporting drugs, messengers) to doing ‘sexual favors’ to members in prison.
- Transgender women in particular, and the LGTBI population at large, are affected by other situations of violence as it aggravates the discrimination against them, their limited access to their rights and the invisibility of their needs. This often leads them to informal work in the streets and sex work, where they are highly vulnerable.
- Boys, primarily between the ages of 10 and 14, are also exposed to sexual violence and trafficking for purposes of commercial sexual exploitation or pornography.

Fearing violence, gang pressure, rape and insecurity, many women and children living in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras flee through Mexico up to the United States. This migration exposes them to more violence and insecurity.



Photo: UNHCR

END NOTES

- 1 UNODC Global Study on Homicide 2013
- 2 Amnestia Internacional Mexico
- 3 Women on the Run: a first-hand account of refugees fleeing El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico. A study conducted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. October 2015.
- 4 <http://www.fews.net/central-america-and-caribbean/alert/october-16-2015>
- 5 <http://www.sica.int/consulta/noticia.aspx?idn=101104&idm=1>
- 6 Encuesta Nacional de Salud Materno Infantil del Ministerio de Salud Pública 2008-2009.
- 7 OCHA Reporte de Situación No. 1 por roya (al 09 de julio de 2014)
- 8 Boletín Epidemiológico, Semana 42 (18-24 Octubre 2015), Ministerio de Salud, 30 Octubre 2015.
- 9 International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Food Programme (WFP),