



CENTRAL AMERICA

2023 IFRC network country plan

Funding Requirement **CHF 49.3M**

Appeal number **MAA43008**

In support of the Central American Red Cross National Societies



293

National Society branches



2,494

National Society staff



24,170

National Society volunteers

People to be reached



222,000

Ongoing emergency operations



15,000

Climate and environment



66,000

Disasters and crises



133,000

Health and wellbeing



118,000

Migration and displacement



6,000

Values, power and inclusion

IFRC network multiyear focus

Emergency response

- population movement

Longer term needs

- disaster risk management
- climate change adaptation
- violence prevention and protection
- epidemic preparedness and response

Capacity development

- humanitarian diplomacy and advocacy
- partnerships and resource mobilization
- quality and upgraded management systems

Population

Costa Rica	5.1M
El Salvador	6.5M
Guatemala	17.1M
Honduras	10.1M
Nicaragua	6.7M
Panama	4.4M



IFRC Country Cluster Delegation for Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua & Panama, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Hazards



Population movement



Hurricanes and cyclones



Floods



Drought



Epidemics



Poverty

Funding requirements

Total 49.3M CHF

Through the IFRC

14.1M CHF

Through Participating National Societies

→ **16.3M** CHF

Host National Society

→ **19.1M** CHF

IFRC Breakdown

7.6M CHF

Ongoing emergency operations

Longer term needs

245,000 CHF

Climate and environment

530,000 CHF

Disasters and crises

156,000 CHF

Health and wellbeing

3M CHF

Migration and displacement

370,000 CHF

Values, power and inclusion

2.2M CHF

Enabling local actors

Ongoing emergencies

MDR43008

Emergency Appeal: Mexico and Central America Migration Crisis
Population movement

Participating National Societies

American Red Cross*

British Red Cross*

The Canadian Red Cross Society*

German Red Cross*

Iraqi Red Crescent Society*

Italian Red Cross*

Japanese Red Cross Society*

The Netherlands Red Cross*

Swedish Red Cross*

Swiss Red Cross*



NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILES

	Costa Rica	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua	Panama
Number of branches	111	58	21	52	28	23
Number of staff	1,102	298	240	393	345	116
Number of volunteers	4,889	1,719	1,600	12,246	2,000	1,716

The Costa Rican Red Cross is a humanitarian institution that has been operating in Costa Rica for more than 130 years, having been founded in 1885. It serves as an auxiliary to the authorities, assisting them in their activities in coherence with its Strategic Plan 2021–2030. The National Society has three strategic axes. Firstly, the Humanitarian Red Cross axis exists to save lives and provide recovery support after disasters and crises, to build safe and resilient environments through risk management, emergency care, and attention to the most vulnerable populations, sectors and communities. The Inclusive Red Cross axis seeks to promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace, through intersectoral and voluntary action in all regions, with respect for the human rights of all people. Lastly, the Open and Transparent Red Cross axis works to contribute to an open and transparent governance model with strategies aimed at favouring internal and external projection, and the preservation of the National Society's strategic links for the fulfilment of its objectives and sustainability of operations.

The Guatemalan Red Cross was established in 1923 and fulfils a humanitarian mission at the national and international level. It is recognized as a voluntary, autonomous relief society and auxiliary to the authorities in its humanitarian activities. The National Society provides services in emergencies, disasters and crises that are a highlighted part of the response operations deployed in the country, along with permanent health care services. The implementation of projects and programmes developed within the framework of its Strategic Development Plan 2022–2025 are aimed at challenges related to disaster preparedness and response, climate change, community resilience with strong focus on livelihoods and food production, health, migration and social inclusion.

The Honduran Red Cross is recognized by the state as a voluntary, autonomous relief society, and was established in 1937. The National Society works with vulnerable people in its role as an auxiliary to the authorities, while supporting the humanitarian actions of the state to improve the situations of people affected by disasters, emergencies and crises. The Honduran Red Cross's National Development Plan 2021–2025 aims to strengthen the population's resilience to crises, disasters and emergencies; improve access to comprehensive, quality health care services; ensure that the most vulnerable communities receive protection services; and ensure that people are empowered through the National Society's development processes.

The Nicaraguan Red Cross is a first-response institution that exists as an auxiliary to the authorities, particularly to the country's health system. It was founded in 1934. The National Society is an integral part of the National System for Disaster Prevention (SINAPRED) in Nicaragua. In terms of disaster risk reduction and response management, the National Society seeks to strengthen capacities to respond to emergencies and natural disasters, focusing on prevention, mitigation and recovery, development of community capacities and resilience. Through its community health programme, the Nicaraguan Red Cross focuses on community health, sexual and reproductive education, psychosocial support, violence prevention, and humanitarian assistance during emergencies including water, sanitation and hygiene.

The Red Cross Society of Panama has existed in Panama since 1917. The National Society cooperates in the development of communities and is currently developing activities in the areas of relief, social welfare, training and outreach; community disaster preparedness; restoring family contacts; promoting

voluntary blood donation; care for migrants; children's homes; and shelter for the elderly. Its services include pre-hospital care (basic rescue units), first aid training, and training in water safety and rescue.

The Salvadorean Red Cross Society was granted legal status in El Salvador by executive decree in 1885, and works in an auxiliary role to the authorities in humanitarian areas. The National Society has prioritized three mission areas: crisis and disasters, health and social inclusion. In the area of disasters and crises, it has developed an integrated risk and disaster management system that is community-based, with an emphasis on

preparedness and recovery (including livelihoods), as well as response. Within the health programme, the National Society has established the basis for the expansion and diversification of emergency medical services that meet quality and safety standards, as well as the quality, quantity and sustainability of pre-hospital care. The priority area of social inclusion has grown steadily in importance and allocation of resources over the past years, working to increase assistance and protection for victims of violence and forced displacement in the areas of health, psychosocial support and livelihoods.

IFRC NETWORK ACTION IN 2023

Joint situational analysis

	Costa Rica	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua	Panama
INFORM Severity rating	Medium	High	High	High		Medium
Climate ND-GAIN index rank	96	30	83	45	52	92
Human Development Index rank	62	124	127	132	128	57
Population below poverty line	30.0%	26.2%	59.3%	48.0%	24.9%	21.5%

COVID-19 accentuated existing socio-economic issues including high levels of inequality, informal labour, lack of social protection and poverty. Latin America and the Caribbean region are characterized by weak health and social protection systems with expanding marginalized urban settlements that lack access to essential services. In 2020, inequality contributed to the highest rise in hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean among different regions of the world, with more than 30 per cent affected on average. The increase in severe food insecurity represented a setback of at least a decade, while it is estimated that in the first year of the pandemic, 60 million people suffered from hunger in the region, almost 14 million more than in 2019.

Since the beginning of 2022, there has been a massive increase in the number of refugees, migrants and returnees in transit by land in a northerly direction

through Central America. In addition to the complexity of transiting difficult routes, migrants are exposed to assault, physical and sexual violence and other protection risks, and cases of sexual violence have gone unprosecuted. According to the IOM's Missing Migrants Project, the approximately 4,000 deaths at the Mexico-US border are nearly five times as many as the combined death tolls on all other routes recorded. The leading cause of death is drowning (1,750 people), after accidental deaths, vehicle accidents, sickness and lack of access to adequate health care, violence, and lack of shelter and food.

Conditions during migration also pose severe risks to the physical and mental health of migrants. Exposure to hazards or risks including adverse weather, diseases transmitted by vectors, infectious diseases common when there is no safe water or adequate sanitation and

unhealthy living conditions, are all common. There is a clear risk of psychological trauma from stress, anxiety and uncertainty for both migrant populations and host communities.

Central America is prone to climate-related hazards and disasters, and emergencies are likely to exacerbate the current migrant situation. In the Eastern Pacific, the hurricane season officially began on 15 May 2022, and

on 1 June in the Atlantic. Initial forecasts for the 2022 season show that between 14 and 21 named storms (with winds of 39 miles per hour (mph) or higher) are likely. Of these, between six and 10 could become hurricanes (with winds of 74 mph or higher), including three to six potential major hurricanes (Category 3, 4 or 5, with winds of 111 mph or higher).

Ongoing emergency response

For real-time information on emergencies, see [IFRC GO page Americas](#)

- Appeal number: [MDR43008 Mexico and Central America migration crisis](#)
- Appeal launch date: 15 July 2022
- Appeal end date: 31 July 2023
- People affected: 500,000 people
- People to be assisted: 210,000 people

The increase in people on the move across Central America since early 2022 has been significant:

Costa Rica: There has been a steady increase in the number of migrants identified on the southern border of Costa Rica. As of April 2022, this had increased by 269 per cent compared with December 2021 when the monitoring of flows began. According to data from the General Directorate of Migration and Foreigners, between May 2021 and May 2022, 5,509 rejections were reported in the border city of Paso Canoas. According to the IOM, most of the migrants entering Costa Rica in May 2022 came from Venezuela, Haiti and Senegal, and are heading to the United States.

El Salvador: In 2022, 6,471 Salvadoran migrant returnees from the United States and Mexico were reported, an increase of 254 per cent compared with the previous year. In addition, according to a report by the United States Customs and Border Protection Agency, 8,387 Salvadorans were prevented from entering the country irregularly in March 2022, an increase from the 7,146 in February 2021. There was a 209 per cent increase in deportations from the United States and Mexico in 2022, compared with the same period in 2021, according to official records.

Guatemala: The entry of 41,179 Guatemalan migrant returnees, mainly from the United States and Mexico, was registered from January to May 2022. According

to the Guatemalan Red Cross, during May 2022, an average of 160 people per day used the humanitarian service points at the border points of El Corinto and Agua Caliente. According to information provided by Médicos del Mundo Guatemala, in the Migrant House of Esquipulas, 450 migrants in transit were supported in May 2022, and an average of 230 migrants were sheltered each day on the migratory route from Agua Caliente.

Honduras: Reports by the Honduran Red Cross show that at least 300 Hondurans migrate daily, not including the flow of people belonging to migrant caravans. In 2022, at least two caravans convened and travelled in January and April. The National Institute of Migration reports that 54,275 people entered Honduras irregularly in June 2022, primarily through the Honduras-Nicaragua border. Cubans continue to represent the most significant number of irregular migrants entering the country, accounting for 60 per cent of all entries. There has also been an increase in the number of migrants from Venezuela, who accounted for 20 per cent of all entries in June 2022. The situation of returnees is another concern in Honduras. From January to 17 July 2022, 56,392 Hondurans returned to the country – 65 per cent were men, 19 per cent women, nine per cent boys and seven per cent girls.

Panama: The Darién crossing on the border between Colombia and Panama is one of the most dangerous migration routes in the world. People arrive in Panama after walking seven to 14 days in the Darién jungle, where they face violence, wild animals, lack of food and water, and hostile weather conditions. Upon arrival, migrants require medical care, hydration, and psychosocial support. According to the latest official data, from January to June 2022, 48,430 have people crossed the Darién Gap, an increase of 85 per cent compared with the same period in 2021. People of many nationalities cross the Darién Gap, but about 58 per cent are from Venezuela. The number of minors has doubled to more

than 5,000 since the beginning of 2022, according to UNICEF. Nearly 170 children travelled unaccompanied or separated from their families.

Migrants, returnees and refugees mostly move through irregular channels. Along the routes, many of them face bureaucratic barriers, suffer accidents and injuries, face extortion and sexual violence, and are separated from their families. Tragically, others are killed or die from disease or harsh environmental conditions and weather. The majority of migrants and refugees in transit through Central America come from Cuba, Venezuela and Haiti. The situation is especially serious for the most vulnerable groups such as children, young people and women; indigenous communities; people living with disabilities; the LGBTI+ community and the elderly population.

As expressed by migrants themselves in the information collected by National Societies, the main reasons for migrating include improving their incomes, escaping violence, reuniting with family members, and recovering from the impact of recurring disasters and extreme weather events. The devastating socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and continuing political crises are also factors and will continue to increase population movements and exacerbate existing vulnerabilities

People on the move require significant assistance, in particular those with health problems. This high demand for assistance can be hampered by the exhaustion of personnel or the limited availability of food, water, facilities and first aid supplies. The impact of migration on children is of increasing concern as they face the threat of drowning, violence, sexual violence, human trafficking, exploitation and health risks, including mental health. Sixteen of every 100 migrants crossing the Darién Gap in 2022 are minors.

The IFRC's network of humanitarian service points and community engagement and accountability approach, combined with several years of working on migration flows, have enabled the National Societies to identify the needs expressed by migrants. These range from protection and health care to accessing specific information that allows them to make informed decisions along the route and at their destination. The most vulnerable migrants need access to medical care, mental health support, basic humanitarian assistance, connectivity and legal information.

Short description of emergency operational strategy

In July 2022, the IFRC launched an CHF18 million Emergency Appeal aiming to increase the reach of the National Societies of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama. This will scale up assistance and protection for 210,000 people along migratory routes, including through more effective preparedness and response, as well as strengthening capacities and risk reduction. Due to the urgency of the situation, immediate assistance started in Costa Rica and Panama. Out of the 210,000 people expected to be reached, 175,000 are migrants in transit, 25,000 are returnees and 10,000 are people in host and origin communities.

The Emergency Appeal focuses on integrated assistance in terms of: shelter, livelihoods and multi-purpose cash support; health and care with special focus on mental health and psychosocial support, and community health. It also addresses the protection needs of migrants and displaced people, with strong focus on gender and inclusion, and through a community, engagement and accountability approach. Key activities include the following:

Integrated assistance: shelter, livelihoods and multi-purpose cash

Health and care including water, sanitation and hygiene: mental health and psychosocial support, primary and pre-hospital health care and community health

Protection and prevention: protection, gender and inclusion; community engagement and accountability; migration; environmental sustainability; risk reduction; and climate adaptation and recovery

Humanitarian service points are the cornerstone of this operation, existing to provide comprehensive and integrated assistance and protection services to migrants based on need. Humanitarian service points sit along migratory routes to provide a neutral, welcoming and safe environment for migrants to access essential services that might otherwise be inaccessible. Services include psychological first aid, drinking water and hygiene supplies, and primary health care, first aid, food and non-food distribution, support to restore family links, accurate information on service points along the route and, in some cases, legal advice. Thus far, with the support of donors, the National Societies of Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama are operating 20 humanitarian service points. With this

Emergency Appeal, the aim is to increase the regional response capacity, with 30 more humanitarian service points in different locations, to achieve a total of 50.

The IFRC network will recognize and value all members of communities that access the humanitarian service points by incorporating community, engagement and accountability, as well as protection, gender and inclusion approaches into operations. This will also create opportunities to adapt services to accommodate diverse and evolving migration needs, and support efforts to improve the quality of services based on feedback from service users.

The Mexico and Central American Migration Crisis Emergency Appeal was launched to urgently address

the growing humanitarian needs of migrants, returnees and host communities in the region. This Emergency Appeal complements the Americas pillar of the IFRC [Global Route-Based Migration Programme](#), a multi-year programme that addresses the ongoing assistance and protection needs of people on the move, irrespective of their status.

Once the Emergency Appeal is completed, the operation and response activities of the National Societies will continue in accordance with their three-year programmes and strategic plans (with the exception of Nicaragua). These plans include responding to the migration situation through a medium- and long-term approach, and facing a prolonged crisis.

Strategic priorities

Climate and environment

Climate change and extreme weather-related events in Central America have become a significant threat to health conditions, food security, access to safe water and environmental security of people, especially for the most vulnerable and remote communities with low response, coping and recovery capacities.

These events are increasingly recurrent, some of them becoming chronic, and have transboundary effects such as the drought of the Central American Dry Corridor. The intense hurricane season placed the region among the most challenged by extreme hydro-meteorological events, as highlighted in 2020 by the death and devastation caused by Hurricanes Eta and Iota in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. These unprecedented hurricanes affected more than eight million people in Central America.

In Guatemala, the impacts of the 2021 rainy season affected 1.5 million people. Hurricanes Eta and Iota affected 3.3 million people in Honduras, with nearly 450,000 people displaced from their homes and an estimated 70 per cent of Honduras's crops and grains affected. In Nicaragua, Hurricanes Eta and Iota affected 60 per cent of the national territory, and 1.8 million people were directly affected.

2020 was also among the warmest in the last 40 years, while intense rainfall events brought landslides, floods and flash floods to rural and urban areas. The intensification of these extreme climate events is having a severe impact on the region, including water shortages, agricultural losses, displacement and

compromised health and safety. Above all, climate change is affecting the livelihoods of the most vulnerable people, reducing crop yields and food production, leading to worsening food insecurity in many areas, and exacerbating the effects of economic shocks, COVID-19 restrictions, violence and political instability.

Changes in rainfalls, droughts and floods have cost more than US\$2.2 billion in lost productivity in El Salvador.

Main actions and areas of support

All six National Societies are part of the IFRC [Global Climate Resilience Programme](#), which aims to foster an unprecedented scale-up in locally led climate-smart disaster risk reduction and adaptation efforts to prevent and reduce climate-related disaster impacts, and build community-level climate resilience. The programme aims to support 500 million people in 100 of the most climate-vulnerable countries, focusing on the least supported and marginalized communities. This holistic, multi-year programmatic approach consists of four operational pillars: (1) scaling up climate-smart disaster risk reduction, anticipatory action and preparedness; (2) reducing the public health impacts of climate change; (3) addressing climate displacement; and (4) enabling climate-resilient livelihoods and ecosystem services.

The National Societies lead locally owned actions to support communities and authorities in their efforts to adapt to climate change and build resilience to extreme weather events. Adaptation requires a collective effort to improve knowledge of climate trends and

their impacts, preparation techniques, and adaptation strategies to fight the impact on food production and livelihoods.

The IFRC network will support the National Societies to:

- Develop the National Societies' environment policies and climate change adaptation strategies, based on evidence, and through mapping and risk scenarios
- Conduct climate-related capacity building with National Societies to enable them to conduct better planning and finance forecasting
- Define operational guidelines and internal procedures to reduce the environmental impact of IFRC operations, and improve dissemination within the organizations to staff and volunteers, with emphasis on Red Cross Youth
- Develop the National Societies' information and dissemination actions on climate change and its impacts, oriented within the organizations involving staff and volunteers, with emphasis on Red Cross youth
- Develop the National Societies' communication, education and information strategies on climate change and its impacts, targeting community behavioural transformation and aimed at informing local policy-making
- Promote community-led climate-smart solutions and plans that address challenges, improve behaviours and promote mitigation and adaptation strategies for climate change
- Offer technical support for climate-smart livelihoods, especially those based on food production and agriculture

Disasters and crises

People in Central America are highly exposed to multiple hazards that combine to produce high levels of vulnerability.

The recurrent impacts of weather and climate-related events present natural hazards, including hurricanes, floods and droughts. Other geological, sudden-onset and high-impact events include volcanos and earthquakes.

Guatemala ranks 10th in the countries most at risk of disaster, according to the Global Risk Index 2021. 70 per cent of the territory has a very high vulnerability condition and more than 50 per cent of the municipalities are at very high and high risk. In Honduras, the events that registered the greatest loss of life were floods and

tropical storms (90%), also causing more than 80% of the losses in housing. 45% of the municipalities (135 out of 298) are very vulnerable to the impact of natural disasters. In El Salvador, ranked 28th in the Global Climate Risk Index 2021, evolving crises and disasters have severe consequences on the food production of smallholder farmers, resulting in an increase in malnutrition among children under five to 14%. In Nicaragua, Eta and Iota generated humanitarian needs for more than 730,000 people, limiting access to drinking water and sanitation facilities for some 500,000 people. As a result, up to 500,000 people are expected to experience levels of acute food insecurity in Nicaragua until January 2023.

Man-made hazards include widespread violence perpetrated by non-state armed groups, social unrest, and political and economic crises. These are further aggravated by the high impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on health conditions in the region. This has led to a worsening of living and welfare conditions and a deepening of the migration and displacement crisis in the region, as well as protection problems.

In Guatemala, the economic impact of the pandemic and the 2021 hurricanes is combined with a permanent food insecurity crisis affecting not only vulnerable families in the Dry Corridor, but also impoverished families in the central-western highlands, specifically indigenous people. According to the Food Security Assessments and the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), there has been a steady increase in food insecurity since 2014 among the affected population in need, from 600,000 people in 2013 to 3.5 million in 2021. In Nicaragua, up to 500,000 people are expected to experience levels of acute food insecurity until January 2023, due to compounded impacts of the pandemic, Eta and Iota hurricanes, and droughts.

However, the capacities for improving preparedness, response, recovery, coping and resilience are not sufficiently developed at community, local and national levels. Regional coordination mechanisms have also not reached an adequate level of operational capacity to address these high levels of vulnerability.

Based on lessons learned from the IFRC's long-term presence in the region, supporting the capacity building of the six National Societies, community and national civil protection systems and the regional Coordination Centre for Disaster Preparedness, and based on the most recent regional response in the aftermath of the impact of Hurricanes Eta and Iota, the IFRC network focuses on two common challenges in Central America.

The first of these is high risk and multiple hazards scenarios, in particular, recurrent climatic threats including storms and floods, but also combined with man-made risks such as displacement and violence. The second challenge is low resilience and response capacities at community level, with weak links to disaster management systems and hindered access to humanitarian assistance.

Main actions and areas of support

The IFRC network will work to build the National Societies' capacities to adapt to increasingly complex humanitarian environments, and to develop preparedness and readiness to respond to shocks by strengthening community resilience. This includes early warning, early action, and anticipation to mitigate risks from multiple hazards that affect the livelihoods, homes and living conditions of vulnerable communities and the most disadvantaged people. Supporting the National Societies ensures appropriate targeting that places affected people and communities at the centre of preparedness and response activities. The IFRC will promote ethical and people-led approaches such as cash and livelihood transfer programmes, and support the shift to response models that promote localized and regional action.

The IFRC network will:

- Support knowledge sharing and development of assessment and needs analysis tools, including digitalization efforts, to produce evidence-based preparedness and response planning
- Enable the National Societies to use preparedness for effective response to better prepare for the increasing frequency of disasters and crises
- Provide technical support to National Societies in cash and voucher assistance preparedness, and promote the integration of organizational tools, systems, procedures and learning opportunities
- Promote training and learning opportunities to enable National Societies to set up community engagement and accountability strategies mainstreamed in all actions
- Support National Societies to improve anticipatory and early action planning and implementation, so they can react in a timely manner to the possible impact of catastrophic events

- Strengthen National Societies' local preparedness and response capacities, and promote proper coordination with local civil protection structures and with national systems
- Integrate an early recovery and community resilience approach from the start of emergency response actions, which will in turn promote linkage with longer-term actions
- Develop content and media coverage that will catalyse social conversations about the IFRC's role in responding to, and enabling recovery from, hurricanes in Central America
- Support National Societies to collaborate with state agencies in order to coordinate their responses to disasters and crises
- Support the National Societies to implement strategies to advocate for international disaster response laws

Health and wellbeing

The COVID-19 pandemic has had diverse and compounded negative impacts on people in Central America. The crisis contributed to a deterioration in people's health conditions, including those not related to COVID-19, as public systems were overwhelmed by the pandemic. The pandemic hindered access to basic services, including education, as school classes for a whole year were suspended as part of the governments' containment measures. It has also had a major impact on family income and has even affected the situation of rights protection. These combined impacts resulted in a deterioration of mental health, especially in children, adolescents and women, and in an increase on gender-based violence risks, with victims of violence being forced to stay in confinement with their aggressor.

In Honduras, there are 16 health professionals for every 10,000 inhabitants, well below the 25/10,000 ratio established by international standards. In the first semester of 2022, Honduras registered a 74% increase in the incidence of Dengue compared to 2021.

Main actions and areas of support

The main focus of the IFRC network is aimed at improving, promoting and increasing access to health services and disease prevention at community level, with comprehensive community health programmes directed towards the most vulnerable and remote populations. Efforts have been channelled into increasing capacity for health services, and the improvement of coordination with public health systems.

The IFRC network will:

- Support the development of National Societies' capacities, in terms of knowledge and health information management for evidence-based strategies, staff and volunteer training, and organizational development
- Support National Societies to develop their position on relevant health policy-making spaces, and in their role as an auxiliary to Ministries of Health
- Improve the social, institutional and financial viability and sustainability of National Society health programmes and departments, including blood donor recruitment plans, and improve dissemination of service information
- Strengthen National Societies' community-based health programmes to improve access to affordable, quality, needs-appropriate and comprehensive health services, including improved referral pathways
- Strengthen National Societies' community-based health programmes to promote disease prevention and care, through information, education and risk communication strategies and through the provision of care services including water, sanitation and hygiene, maternal and child health, sexual and reproductive health, food and nutrition, mental health and psychosocial support services, and protection, gender and inclusion
- Develop National Societies' emergency health preparedness, response and recovery actions to ensure timely access to health care services during emergencies
- Increase National Societies' capacities to prepare and respond to epidemics, including the setting up of community-based epidemiological surveillance systems, in coordination with health systems, and the development of standard operating procedures
- Support the development and standardization of mental health and psychosocial support services provided by National Societies

Migration and displacement

Migration has become a priority pillar for all the National Societies in the region. In some countries, social-political crises have generated internal displacement or migration processes, while in others, a massive influx of migrant or displaced populations has overwhelmed the assistance capacities of existing public systems. Since the beginning of 2022, there has been a massive increase in the number of refugees, migrants and returnees in transit by land, northwards through Central America, compared with previous years.

In Guatemala, according to the Guatemalan Red Cross, during May 2022, an average of 160 people per day used the humanitarian service points at the border points of El Corinto and Agua Caliente.

In Honduras, from January to 17 July 2022 a total of 56,392 Hondurans returned to the country (65% men, 19% women, 9% boys, and 7% girls).

In El Salvador, there has been a 209% increase in deportations from the United States and Mexico in the first semester of 2022 compared to the same period in 2021. According to the exercise led by the Government published in 2018, there are 71,500 internally displaced persons in El Salvador.

In Costa Rica, a steady increase in the number of migrants was identified on the southern border of Costa Rica in 2022. As of April 2022, it had increased by 269% compared to December 2021 when the monitoring of flows began.

In Panama, according to the latest official data, from January to June 2022, 48,430 have people crossed the Darien crossing gap, an increase of 85% in comparison to the same period in 2021.

Main actions and areas of support

National Societies in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama are part of the IFRC three-year [Global Route-Based Migration Programme](#), which aims to improve the safety and dignity of people on the move along deadly and dangerous land and sea-based migration routes. The programme aims to support 4.7 million people annually across the world who are either on the move or living in host communities. It will do so through three operational pillars: (1) improving access to assistance and protection, including through humanitarian service points; (2) strengthening National Society capacities; and (3) local to global humanitarian diplomacy.

The IFRC network will:

- Support the National Societies to roll out their migration strategies, fostering regional coordination to address the cross-border migration phenomena in Central America
- Build the capacities of National Societies in this field by developing tools and training, and providing technical support, including the development and proper maintenance of national and regional information management systems for migratory flows
- Enable National Societies to establish and expand the range of services available at humanitarian services points in key locations along migratory routes, to support migrants' access to comprehensive needs-appropriate assistance
- Ensure that assistance and protection services are provided and promoted through engagement with local and national authorities, host communities and affected people, as well as with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), other organizations and donors
- Promote the use of discrimination-free culturally appropriate information that builds in the National Societies' assistance and protection services, promotes voluntary access to comprehensive services, and ensures migrants receive proper information on their legal rights
- Provide global, regional and local analysis on current and emerging trends, anticipating population movement when possible, in order to support National Societies' information-based programming
- Conduct humanitarian diplomacy with national and international actors regarding migration and host community interventions, based on evidence

Values, power and inclusion

Central America continues to be considered highly violent. Although there has been some reduction in crimes affecting life and property, organized crime and gangs, including human trafficking organizations and other non-state armed groups, are still a major concern for many people. Opportunities to break out of these violent environments are few, because of high levels of structural inequality. These circumstances hinder equitable access to basic services and livelihoods that would allow for a standard of living above that of survival.

These compounded risk and vulnerability factors have a disproportionate impact on women, children, the LGBTI+ community and people living with disabilities, and are not addressed by the state. Vulnerable groups suffer not only differential impacts of compounded crises, but they face additional barriers to access adequate assistance and protection mechanisms. Gender inequalities are aggravated in rural communities, partly due to the traditions of indigenous populations, where inequalities are established at the moment of birth. This translates into limited access to basic services, resources, economic opportunities and livelihoods, as well as high vulnerability to violence, especially sexual and gender-based violence. There continues to be a gender gap in organizational and political participation.

In Guatemala, the Gini coefficient, stands at 44.50, one of the highest indices in the world. Some 59.3% of the population is in general poverty, and of these, 23.4% is in extreme poverty. Regarding education rights, 18.5% of the Guatemalan population over 7 years of age is illiterate. Almost 60,000 women reported being victims of violence in 2021, including psychological, physical and economic violence.

In Honduras, 3.3 million people (56% of working age population) were unemployed and/or underemployed in the country.

In El Salvador, about 60% of the population works in the informal sector, mostly women and many of them mothers, including young mothers, who are heads of households.

In Nicaragua, The Nicaraguan Institute of Legal Medicine reported 8,823 cases of domestic violence in 2015, of which 15 percent of victims were children and adolescents.

In Panama, in terms of educational access, three out of five children have no access to middle school where almost seven out of ten students do not achieve basic competencies (PISA 2018 test).

Main actions and areas of support

The IFRC network will:

- Support National Societies to develop information, education and communication strategies to raise awareness on rights, protection, gender and inclusion values
- Support National Societies to fight against social barriers to equal access to information, assistance and protection services

- Increase institutional capacities for social inclusion and gender, supporting the development of protection, gender and inclusion policies and operational protocols, monitoring and reporting tools, and training for staff and volunteers
- Improve decision-making processes aimed at promoting inclusion, diversity and equal participation both within the National Societies, among their volunteers and in the communities in which they serve
- Support National Societies to develop operational and referral protocols addressing the specific inclusion, protection and assistance needs of women, children, the LGBTI+ community and people living with disabilities
- Support National Societies to develop community engagement and accountability policies and plans that use performance indicators to monitor community satisfaction within protection, gender and inclusion activities and programmes

Enabling local actors

The National Societies in Central America are committed to pursue their institutional strengthening. They have all carried out the self-assessment part of the Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) process in one or more years:

- Costa Rica in 2012, 2013 and 2015
- El Salvador in 2013 and 2016
- Guatemala in 2012 and 2016
- Honduras in 2013 and 2019
- Nicaragua in 2014
- Panama in 2016 and 2020

The self-assessment part of the OCAC process is intended to capture the strengths and weaknesses of National Societies as a whole in relation to a wide range of organizational capacities. They are also committed to the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) process, and are all at the action and accountability phase. The PER Approach is a continuous and flexible process that enables National Societies to assess, measure and analyse the strengths and gaps of its preparedness and response mechanism, and ultimately take necessary action to improve it.

The IFRC network is committed to support the National Societies in their development, according to their priorities.

Engaged

- Prepare, maintain and update advocacy strategies that promote the humanitarian diplomacy capacities of the National Societies, and enable them to maximize their privileged position as an auxiliary to the authorities

- Support the generation and consolidation of alliances, partnerships and inter-institutional coordination outside the IFRC network, with government institutions, humanitarian-relevant actors and civil society organizations, academia, social influencers, media and alternative distribution platforms
- Promote the innovation of structures, processes and competencies to develop and implement a communications incubator and accelerator for National Societies to create, test and run innovative formats and strategies that increase their impact and build public trust and understanding of their roles
- Provide technical support in the development of business continuity plans to respond efficiently when services and functions are affected by crises and disasters
- Strengthen institutional capacities on information management, with a focus on improving anticipation to high-impact events, not only climate and non-weather-related but also including large population movements
- Support National Societies to increase technological capabilities and digitalization for services at headquarters and branch offices including data collection, information management and planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Accountable

- Develop a resource mobilization strategy for Central America based on peer-to-peer learning and good practices exchange, that builds on improved capacities through technical assistance and training on financial sustainability, proposal development, outreach and donor relations

- Support National Societies in the identification and generation of new funding sources through innovative sustainability initiatives
- Support the implementation of quality management systems, incorporating a service user approach
- Strengthen volunteer programmes by promoting peer learning, setting up motivational and benefit plans for volunteers, and implementing institutional training curricula to ensure meaningful, timely and relevant participation of volunteers

Trusted

- Provide technical support for the development of monitoring systems for programmes and projects, including information management in emergency operations through the development of information tools, training and technical support
- Review and update the accounting and administrative systems, to be extended within the branch network to improve financial controls and reporting to authorities
- Develop and implement a strategy on proactive and reactive communication to mitigate the risk of fraud and corruption
- Standardize and apply accountability mechanisms internally and externally to the National Societies through the community engagement and accountability methodology
- Promote volunteer recruitment programmes, mainstreaming a gender and inclusion approach to ensure the incorporation of diverse profiles, paying special attention to the management of youth volunteers
- Develop and implement the operational internal security strategy, reviewing communication mechanisms and flows related to security incidents, and the capacity of the security liaison network in terms of recruitment, awareness raising, equipment and training
- Ensure all of the IFRC network present in respective countries adheres to the framework for joint planning and priority setting, using the common action strategy as the basis for unified country planning

THE IFRC NETWORK

The IFRC

The IFRC is represented by its Country Cluster Delegation for Central America in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, and operates with an extended team of specialists in different areas in all Central American countries. This enables close support, coordination and constant communication with the National Societies of Central America and the participating National Societies that support them. The IFRC support centres on strategic and operational coordination, National Society development, and humanitarian diplomacy. It also supports accountability as a cross-cutting theme.

The IFRC Americas Regional Office and the regional logistics unit are in Panama. El Salvador hosts the Reference Centre for Disaster Preparedness, with its country focal points providing direct support to all six National Societies. Communications and coordination channels across the region are available and open for information sharing regarding operational activities and different contextual analysis, with meetings being held periodically.

In recent years, the IFRC has supported the National Societies in Central America through a number of Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) and Emergency Appeals operations in relation to a variety of hazards. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IFRC, through its global Appeal, has supported the National Societies in their COVID-19 response.

IFRC membership coordination

The IFRC coordination involves working with member National Societies to assess the humanitarian context, humanitarian situations and needs; agreeing common priorities; co-developing common strategies to address issues such as obtaining greater humanitarian access, acceptance and space; mobilizing funding and other resources; clarifying consistent public messaging; and monitoring progress. This also means ensuring that strategies and programmes in support of people in need incorporate clarity of humanitarian action, development assistance, and the auxiliary role efforts to reinforce the role of National Societies in their respective countries.

The Central American National Societies lead their partnerships with sister National Societies in the six countries. The combined experience, technical capacities and field knowledge within the IFRC network constitute a solid basis for achieving the expected outcomes in the region, in terms of disasters and crises (both man-made and caused by natural hazards), primary health care, the prevention and response to epidemics (COVID-19 and others), longer-term resilience building programmes including livelihoods and protection, and responding to unmet humanitarian and protection needs of migrants and displaced people.

The Honduran Red Cross is part of the IFRC network New Way of Working initiative, which is piloted in 14 countries. It aims at establishing a new model of membership coordination, working over multiple years to instill a thorough change management in the ways the IFRC network works together and placing the National Society of the country at the centre. This includes prioritizing effective coordination for much greater gains, optimizing the power of working as one IFRC network by sharing resources, learnings and common standards, and to ultimately achieve greater impact. Particular attention is given to collective planning to ensure that partner National Society present in country participate in one multi-year country plan, which will ensure that the resources and expertise of the network in country are used in a complementary and efficient way.

The National Societies in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama are part of the global [Pilot](#)

[Programmatic Partnership](#) between DG ECHO and the IFRC, benefitting from the support of EU National Societies and the IFRC for the implementation of activities in the areas of disaster risk management, epidemic and pandemic preparedness and response, humanitarian assistance and protection for people on the move, cash and voucher assistance and risk communication, and community engagement and accountability.

Participating National Societies have prioritized their support to Central American National Societies as follows:

American Red Cross: El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras

Canadian Red Cross: Honduras

German Red Cross: Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama

Italian Red Cross: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama

Norwegian Red Cross: El Salvador and Honduras

Spanish Red Cross: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama

Swedish Red Cross: El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras

Swiss Red Cross: El Salvador and Honduras

Movement coordination

The IFRC leads regular coordination meetings between the different International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement actors, including participating National Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), through established national and regional mechanisms. It also coordinates humanitarian assistance during emergency responses. This is carried out in line with the Strengthening Movement Coordination and Cooperation (SMCC) principles, and the newly adopted [Seville Agreement 2.0](#).

The ICRC contributes to the protection element of the National Societies' work, including minimum standards,

restoring family links, self-care messages for migrants, health and first aid, and it supports the National Societies in humanitarian diplomacy. The ICRC also specifically supports:

- The Guatemalan Red Cross with health, water, sanitation and hygiene, and education
- The Honduran Red Cross with shelter, multi-purpose cash, water, sanitation and hygiene
- The Nicaraguan Red Cross with health
- The Salvadorean Red Cross with shelter, livelihoods and multi-purpose cash

Coordination with other actors

The IFRC participates in national and regional coordination spaces with external partners, to stay informed about the humanitarian context and contribute to the IFRC network's perspective and work.

The Central American National Societies work in close collaboration with local and national authorities and other humanitarian organizations for a coordinated response. They are members of the national civil protection systems that have permanent representation, and coordinate with their branch networks in response to emergencies. Local and departmental government authorities are actively involved in all operations undertaken by the National Societies to ensure they complement and work in alignment with public policies and response plans in emergencies. As first responders to natural disasters and extreme weather events, the National Societies play a key role in the coordination of other humanitarian actors acting at the local level in the territories, and coordination with national levels of civil protection.

The National Societies play a key role as auxiliaries to the public health systems in the areas of primary health, outreach to vulnerable communities and pre-hospital care. During the operations to prevent and respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Societies coordinated with the Ministries of Health to implement and follow up on prevention measures against the virus. The emergency operation centres that were leading the response – along with government departments, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and World Health Organization (WHO) – were assisted by the IFRC in making recommendations to ensure an appropriate response and coordinate actions undertaken in the various territories. To ensure adequate communication and collaboration with all key stakeholders involved in the response to COVID-19, the National Societies held regular technical coordination meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Health, WHO and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) at the national level.

The situation of migrants and displaced people in the region has become an increasingly challenging priority for government authorities and the organizations that make up the Humanitarian Country Teams. The cross-border phenomenon of migration and displacement requires coordination both within and between countries to maintain the humanitarian chain of

assistance that delivers urgent protection services to migrants, people in transit, returnees and displaced persons. This in-country and regional coordination involves international organizations including the UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNHCR, UNICEF and other humanitarian organizations such as Médecins Sans Frontières, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Doctors of the World and Save the Children. Some National Societies, such as those in El Salvador and Honduras, are also part of national civil society coordination fora to coordinate protection and assistance mechanisms.

The six National Societies coordinate with other actors in the following ways:

The **Costa Rican Red Cross** is meeting with actors involved in the migration response to ensure good coordination. The IOM in Costa Rica is currently implementing human security projects for migrants, labour migration, linkages with the diaspora, migration and development, and protection and assistance to vulnerable migrants. UNHCR's operations in Costa Rica focus on displacement caused by conditions in northern Central America, Nicaragua and Venezuela. The IOM, UNICEF and UNHCR also help strengthen the Government's capacity to determine refugee status, through technical cooperation and dedicated staff at the refugee unit, in addition to supporting government child protection and sexual and gender violence prevention and response initiatives.

The **Guatemalan Red Cross** is part of the Humanitarian Country Team and implements a harmonized response. It participates in the different clusters activated in each emergency including health, nutrition, protection and food security, as well as water, sanitation and hygiene. It also participates in the cash and voucher assistance working group, as well as the community engagement and accountability working group linked to the protection group and focused on developing an accountability mechanism for migrants. The National Society works closely with agencies in the United Nations, including the IOM (accommodation group), PAHO (health group), UNICEF (health and protection group) and UNHCR (protection group). It also participates in civil society coordination spaces with international non-governmental organizations such as Doctors of the World, Médecins Sans Frontières, Save the Children, Plan International and Oxfam, as well as organizations

specializing in health and protection issues such as New Land, Human Mobility Pastoral, LAMBDA Association, Child Shelter, Foundation for Ecodevelopment and Conservation, and Migrants' House.

The **Honduran Red Cross** plays an essential role in the National Roundtable of Protection, led by the Ministry of Human Rights, where the ICRC and international NGOs participate. The National Society and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish the Honduran Red Cross as the organization in charge of managing the Centre for Assistance to Returned Migrants in the town of Omoa. In the health sector, the National Society coordinates with the Ministry of Health to prioritize intervention zones and implement health guidelines and actions in communities, in addition to sensitization campaigns for the protection of health personnel.

In **Nicaragua**, all response actions are coordinated with the National System for Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Response, which coordinates with other actors, such as private sector companies, international donors, embassies, and UN agencies, strengthening the Nicaraguan Red Cross's response to communities. International donors such as ECHO, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, World Vision and the Embassies of Japan and Germany, as well as private companies that are familiar with the work of the National Society, have a strong interest in providing support when a humanitarian response is planned. These organizations maintain strong communication with the Nicaraguan Red Cross so that they can be ready to activate their cooperation funds to support the National Society's humanitarian response to emergencies.

The **Red Cross Society of Panama** holds weekly inter-agency coordination meetings with humanitarian actors in Darién and Chiriqui, such as Médecins Sans Frontières, IOM, UNICEF and UNHCR. The National Society also regularly coordinates with the state, including the National Civil Protection System, National Border Service, National Migration Service, National Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and Family Affairs, and the Ministry of Health. The state leads a large part of the humanitarian response through SENAFRONT.

The **Salvadorean Red Cross** coordinates with the Management for the Attention to Migrants to provide timely humanitarian assistance to returned migrants. The National Society works closely with many agencies in the United Nations system: IOM (shelter cluster), PAHO (health cluster), UNICEF (health and protection cluster) and UNHCR (protection cluster). In addition, the National Society participates in civil society coordination spaces with Doctors of the World, Médecins Sans Frontières, Save the Children, Plan International, Oxfam, and many Salvadoran civil society organizations linked to health and protection issues. In recent years, the Salvadorean Red Cross has positioned itself as a key stakeholder in the protection sector, thanks to the support of the IFRC, taking leadership roles in cluster coordination and reaching partnership agreements with UNICEF and UNHCR. The Food and Agriculture Organization and UNICEF work closely with all IFRC network members through the Humanitarian Country Team coordination and partnership, in actions related to livelihoods, food security, child protection, and water, sanitation and hygiene.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- [IFRC Global Plan and Country Plans](#)
- [Subscribe for updates](#)
- [Donor response](#) on IFRC website
- [Live Disaster Response Emergency Fund \(DREF\)](#) data
- Operational information: [IFRC GO platform](#)
- National Society data: [IFRC Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System](#)



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network, with **192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** and around **14 million volunteers**. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

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Red Cross Society of Panama

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