Prior to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, Mexico and countries in Central America were facing significant humanitarian needs related to migration flows, violence, internal displacement, food insecurity and poverty. The pandemic could push 10 million additional people into poverty, leaving millions of children dependent on humanitarian assistance.

UNICEF will address the specific needs of at least 251,000 people in the context of human mobility in border areas/routes/transit points, in communities of origin and return, and at final destinations; while ensuring that the most vulnerable children, families and communities are protected from exposure to and the impacts of COVID-19.

UNICEF is requesting US$59.7 million to expand its support to children and families in the context of human mobility and address COVID-19-related humanitarian needs. Anticipated results include the safe return to school; nutritional support; and the provision of sanitation and hygiene services and supplies.

In Baja California, Mexico, UNICEF, with authorities and private sector partners, delivers food assistance and key information to families affected by the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19.

Children on the move and COVID-19 in Mexico and Central America

HIGHLIGHTS

- Prior to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, Mexico and countries in Central America were facing significant humanitarian needs related to migration flows, violence, internal displacement, food insecurity and poverty. The pandemic could push 10 million additional people into poverty, leaving millions of children dependent on humanitarian assistance.

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KEY PLANNED TARGETS

- 183,400 primary caregivers receiving infant and young child feeding counselling
- 96,320 people reached with critical water, sanitation and hygiene supplies and services
- 37,988 children/caregivers accessing mental health and psychosocial support
- 1.1 million children accessing educational services

IN NEED

- 16.4 million people
- 6.8 million children

TO BE REACHED

- 2.8 million people
- 2.3 million children

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

- US$ 59.7 million

Figures are provisional and subject to change upon finalization of inter-agency planning documents and response plans.
HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND NEEDS

In parts of Central America, forced recruitment, gang violence and crime are daily realities for children. These issues are often compounded by poverty and limited access to quality education.

Irregular migration flows continue to affect the subregion, with thousands experiencing urgent needs, including 87,000 unaccompanied children and 446,000 family units apprehended/expelled at the southwestern border of the United States of America, between January 2019 and August 2020. Between 2018 and 2019, the number of apprehended families increased by 160 per cent. In Mexico, refugee applications increased 20-fold between 2015 and 2019. Over 470,000 people from northern Central America have sought asylum/refugee worldwide.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, 5,000 children (60 per cent unaccompanied) have been returned to El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico from the United States and Mexico. In Panama, there has been a six-fold increase in the number of extra-continental migrant children crossing the Darien Gap over the past two years, and 2,500 migrants were stranded at border sites due to COVID-19.

The rights of migrant women and children to basic services, including shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), food, protection, education and health care, are frequently violated in countries of origin, transit, destination and return. The policies adopted by some governments have also impacted children’s access to safety and international protection.

As of August 2020, the countries included in this appeal have recorded 895,000 COVID-19 cases and 72,000 deaths. The existing socio-economic dynamics in these countries, including poverty, social and gender inequalities, violence, displacement, food insecurity, and climate shocks, have increased vulnerability to the pandemic.

Children and families have been devastated by the humanitarian and socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, including the extended lockdowns, school closures, the cessation of essential economic activities, declining migrant remittances, and rising violence against children and women. As economies contract, an additional 10 million people could fall into poverty and thousands of families will rely on humanitarian assistance to cover basic needs. More than 42 million students have been affected by school closures and substantial investment is needed to ensure the safe reopening and operation of schools.

Children affected by human mobility are at heightened risk due to the impacts of COVID-19, with limited or no access to safe water, sanitation and essential services. The crisis has also restricted access to international protection and regular migration pathways.

SECTOR NEEDS

Nutrition
100,000 children under 5 years with acute malnutrition

Education
4.4 million children need education support

Population displacement
560,000 internally displaced persons

Refugee and migrant population
215,000 refugees and asylum seekers in the subregion

STORY FROM THE FIELD

Janete dreamt of pizza in the middle of the world’s most dangerous jungle.

“When I was in the jungle, I was very hungry. I still feel the pain of hunger. Not even eating ends it. I thought I was going to arrive at a city. I thought I was going to eat pizza and drink soda. But when I got here, there was nothing. It was a relief, but also a disappointment.”

Janete is a survivor of the Darien Gap, an inhospitable place at the Colombia/Panama border that has seen a dramatic increase of migrants in transit.

Read more about this story here

Janete, a 13-year-old Congolese girl, tells of her journey with her six cousins through the Darien Gap, one of the world’s most dangerous migratory routes.
UNICEF will respond to the needs of at least 251,000 people affected by human mobility in line with its Agenda for Action for Refugee and Migrant Children. Actions will be implemented to achieve the following strategic objectives, in coordination with humanitarian partners and governments: (1) promote and advocate for the rights of children and families; (2) ensure access to gender-sensitive services and protection for migrants, refugees and unaccompanied children (i.e., protection, gender-based violence, education, health, nutrition, safe water, sanitation and hygiene); and (3) promote social inclusion and integration through access to social services and humanitarian cash transfers; the regularization of children’s and their families’ legal status; strengthened social policies and national and local capacities; and strong linkages between humanitarian action and development programmes.

Actions will be delivered at strategic locations, including border areas/routes/transit points, communities of origin and return and final destinations. The needs of host communities will be taken into consideration in all interventions.

UNICEF’s COVID-19 response will be guided by the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action and global guidance on COVID-19. The response will focus on ensuring that 2.3 million vulnerable children and their families – including children affected by human mobility – are protected from exposure to and the impacts of COVID-19. This will include supporting a people-centred public health response for prevention, care and treatment (including supplies); strengthening and complementing government and partner efforts to maintain/restore scale up essential services, including for health, nutrition, WASH, child protection, gender-based violence, early childhood development, education and social protection; establishing effective coordination and collaboration with United Nations agencies, governments and humanitarian partners; disseminating key information to reduce disease transmission and its impact; and making materials and services equally accessible for people with disabilities and available in local languages. Given its long-term presence in the countries covered by this appeal, UNICEF will link its humanitarian action with development programmes aimed at strengthening policies and systems, including enhancing resilience.

UNICEF’s Grand Bargain commitments are mainstreamed across its strategies. For example, UNICEF will promote localization by strengthening government and local actors; reinforce mechanisms for accountability to affected populations; and boost the quality and impact of humanitarian cash transfers.

Robust emergency preparedness and response measures will also be established. UNICEF’s strategy will be grounded in country-level response plans and adjusted over time to reflect the evolution of the pandemic and humanitarian needs.

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**2021 PROGRAMME TARGETS**

**Nutrition**
- 183,400 primary caregivers of children aged 0 to 23 months receiving infant and young child feeding counselling
- 275,600 children aged 6 to 59 months screened for acute malnutrition

**Health**
- 506,000 children receiving the minimum set of vaccines
- 35,934 health workers reached with personal protective equipment

**Water, sanitation and hygiene**
- 66,398 people accessing a sufficient quantity of safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene
- 116,400 children accessing appropriate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and hygiene services in learning facilities and safe spaces
- 96,320 people reached with critical water, sanitation and hygiene supplies (including hygiene items) and services

**Child protection, GBViE and PSEA**
- 37,988 children and caregivers accessing mental health and psychosocial support
- 84,958 women, girls and boys accessing gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention or response interventions
- 14,620 unaccompanied and separated children reunified with their primary caregiver or provided with family-based care/alternative care services
- 49,625 children identified as in need of specialized services who are referred to health, social welfare and justice services

**Education**
- 1,119,030 children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning
- 197,100 children receiving learning materials
- 3,655 schools implementing safe school protocols (infection prevention and control)

**Social protection and cash transfers**
- 135,000 households reached with cash transfers through an existing government system where UNICEF provided technical assistance and funding

**C4D, community engagement and AAP**
- 2,009,000 people reached with messages on access to services

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This appeal is aligned with the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, which are based on global standards and norms for humanitarian action.

Programme targets are provisional and subject to change upon finalization of response plans.
UNICEF requests US$59.7 million to meet the humanitarian and resilience needs of children and families in the context of human mobility and the COVID-19 response in Mexico and Central America. Thirty per cent of this requirement will be dedicated to scaling up support to children and families in the context of human mobility, including in response to COVID-19; and 70 per cent will address the COVID-19-related humanitarian needs of other affected populations.

This funding will enable UNICEF to maintain and expand programme capacities in the field through pre-existing and new partnerships. As UNICEF’s strategy is strongly linked with its regular development programming, it will address the urgent needs of the most disadvantaged, while also contributing to building more resilient and shock-responsive systems. In addition to country-level requirements, a regional funding requirement is included to cover coordination and technical and quality assurance support for country offices.

In line with the Grand Bargain commitments, UNICEF is advocating for flexible and multi-year funding, which will be critical to ensuring a swift response to urgent needs, and helping UNICEF build more responsive programming, particularly in Mexico and Central America, where humanitarian needs are protracted and recurrent.

*This includes costs from other sectors/interventions: Regional office technical capacity (4.5%), Health (4.4%), C4D, community engagement and AAP (2.7%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sectors</th>
<th>2021 total requirement (US$)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>14,144,979</td>
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<td>Health</td>
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<td>Water, Sanitation and Hygiene</td>
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<td>Education</td>
<td>11,388,482</td>
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<td>Social protection and cash transfers</td>
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<td>C4D, community engagement and AAP</td>
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<td>Regional office technical capacity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>59,687,450</td>
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### Sectors

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<th>Sector</th>
<th>Belize</th>
<th>Costa Rica</th>
<th>El Salvador</th>
<th>Guatemala</th>
<th>Honduras</th>
<th>Panama</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Regional Support</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Water, Sanitation and Hygiene</td>
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<td>720,769</td>
<td>706,107</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>1,915,187</td>
<td>524,537</td>
<td>1,991,518</td>
<td>2,020,339</td>
<td>4,292,352</td>
<td>382,797</td>
<td>494,242</td>
<td>4,245,696</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>1,959,759</td>
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### Regional Support

- 2.680.000
- 2.680.000
- 1.047.576
- 1.047.576
- 1.047.576
- 1.047.576
- 1.047.576

### Countries

- Costa Rica
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Honduras
- Panama
- Mexico

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**Sectors:**

- Belize
- Costa Rica
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Honduras
- Panama
- Mexico

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**Regional Support:**

- 2021 total
- Regional Support
- 2021 total
- Regional Support
- 2021 total
- Regional Support
- 2021 total
- Regional Support
- 2021 total
- Regional Support
- 2021 total
This appeal covers the following countries: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama. It covers the humanitarian needs of populations on the move in these countries, including those affected by COVID-19, as well as the COVID-19-related needs of the vulnerable non-migrant populations in these countries.


This includes 682,000 people in the context of human mobility. This is a UNICEF estimate based on country-level analysis and previous or preliminary inter-agency calculations.

This includes 192,000 children in the context of human mobility. This is a UNICEF estimate based on country-level analysis and previous or preliminary inter-agency calculations.

Ninety-one per cent of the total is people affected by the impacts of COVID-19; and 9 per cent is people affected by human mobility. The total includes 80,100 people to be reached in Belize; 67,250 in Costa Rica; 256,600 in El Salvador; 983,380 in Guatemala; 80,937 in Honduras; 1,231,000 in Mexico; and 65,661 in Panama. Women and girls represent 50 per cent of the total number of people to be reached. UNICEF is committed to needs-based targeting, which means covering the unmet needs of children; and will serve as the provider of last resort where it has cluster coordination responsibilities.

Six per cent of the total is children to be reached in the context of human mobility. The total was calculated using the highest coverage programme targets at the country level, accounting for the potential double counting, as a child can be reached, aiming one or more services. This includes 76,200 children to be reached in Belize; 53,076 in Costa Rica; 205,200 in El Salvador; 795,450 in Guatemala; 42,625 in Honduras; 1,044,000 in Mexico; and 52,660 in Panama.

Some of the world’s most violent countries that are not engaged in active warfare are in Central America. According to the InSight Crime foundation, in 2017 there were homicide rates of 60 per 100,000 people in El Salvador; 42.8 per 100,000 in Honduras; 26.1 per 100,000 in Guatemala; and 22.5 per 100,000 in Mexico. Some children are forcibly recruited or join gangs in an attempt to protect themselves from violence. Thousands of children have dropped out of school to get away from gang threats and harassment. United Nations Children’s Fund, ‘Uprooted in Central America and Mexico: Migrant and refugee children face a vicious cycle of hardship and danger’, UNICEF Child Alert, UNICEF, August 2018.

At least 2.8 million people, including 1.1 million children, are facing crisis/emergency levels of food insecurity in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. This is a UNICEF estimate based on Integrated Food Security Phase Classification reports on these countries from 2019 and 2020.

In some parts of northern Central America, school enrolment rates are very poor, particularly as children reach adolescence. In Honduras, for instance, just 46.7 per cent of adolescents aged 12 to 14 – and only 28.1 per cent of adolescents aged 15 to 17 – were in school in 2017. United Nations Children’s Fund, ‘Uprooted in Central America and Mexico: Migrant and refugee children face a vicious cycle of hardship and danger’, UNICEF Child Alert, UNICEF, August 2018.


3. Estimated by UNICEF country offices based on data from national protection authorities.


7. Between January and August 2020, over 557,000 people, including 206,000 children, were affected by mid-/large-scale disasters in these countries. Based on data from: UNICEF and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, ‘EM-DAT: The International Disaster Database’, 6 September 2020.


12. Pre-COVID-19 data. As the impact on the nutritional status of children is not immediate, the situation is expected to deteriorate. United Nations Children’s Fund, ‘Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Latin America and the Caribbean 2021’ (unpublished).


16. The Grand Bargain is a unique agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organizations, who have committed to getting more means into the hands of people in need and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action.

17. This includes Guatemala (275,000) and Panama (600). In UNICEF, UNICEF plans to support the treatment of at least 865 children with SAM and 5,227 children with moderate acute malnutrition.

18. This includes El Salvador (100,000), Guatemala (400,000) and Honduras (6,000). Depending on context, the minimum set of vaccines includes bacille Calmette-Guérin, diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis, polio and measles, with some countries adding additional vaccines, such as haemophilus influenza type B and hepatitis B, as related to their context.

19. Due to space constraints, the following acronyms appear in the appeal: GBViE (gender-based violence in emergencies); PSEA (prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse); C4D (communication for development); and AAP (accountability to affected populations).

20. This includes Belize (4,000), Costa Rica (5,000), El Salvador (2,000), Guatemala (60,000), Honduras (11,558), Mexico (2,000) and Panama (400).

21. This includes Costa Rica (39,000), El Salvador (330), Honduras (10,000), Mexico (1,020,000) and Panama (49,700).

22. Cross-sectoral costs (i.e., monitoring and evaluation, communications and others) are embedded in sectoral funding needs.

23. This includes US$9 million for child protection and US$4.2 million for gender, gender-based violence in emergencies interventions and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, aiming one or more services.

24. This includes US$750,000 for cash transfers in Costa Rica, El Salvador and Panama.

25. Regional Office requirements are spread across all multi-country appeals for the region (children on the move from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the regional appeal and this appeal). The Regional Office requirement in this appeal comprises technical assistance and coordination support (US$880,000), preparedness and resilience efforts (US$1,000,000) and response to a sudden deterioration of needs at the country level (US$800,000).