

# Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework – Honduras and El Salvador

## LESS PROMISES, MORE SOLUTIONS

The increasing forced displacement in the Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA) requires new solutions, not a list of new empty promises. In the following report, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and displaced people in El Salvador and Honduras contend that a greater response is urgently needed to address the causes and consequences of forced displacement. Ahead of the adoption of a Global Compact on Refugees, states have a window of opportunity to act and fulfil their various

commitments. However, they must act now. Affected populations cannot wait any longer. This document summarises findings and recommendations taken from consultations with civil society and recently displaced persons, facilitated by the Norwegian Refugee Council in August and September 2017<sup>1</sup>. The report is intended to provide guidance for states as they implement the commitments made in the New York Declaration, and work to improve shared responsibility for displaced persons in the Northern Triangle of Central America.

### The Global Compact on Refugees and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework:

In 2015, as a response to the rise in numbers of refugees and internally displaced people fleeing due to conflict, violence and disasters, the United Nations Secretary General, Ban-Ki Moon, called for an improvement in the international response to forced displacement. This culminated in September 2016 with the adoption of the New York Declaration by states at the General Assembly, which launched an international political process to reach a Global Compact on Refugees.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has led this process to achieve a Global Compact on Refugees, with the intention of promoting coordinated and predictable responses to refugee crises, improving responsibility sharing for refugees between states and ensuring international solidarity. Several countries, including Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Panama, have committed to be case-study countries and roll-out the specific provisions laid out in the Annex 1 of the New York Declaration, known as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). The experiences from these pilot countries will be the basis for negotiations between states and UNHCR as they develop the text of the Global Compact, which should be adopted in September 2018 by the UN General Assembly.

In Central America, the process for countries piloting the CRRF is coordinated under the **Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework** (known as the Marco Integral Regional de Protección y Soluciones, or MIRPS, in Spanish). This framework highlights the importance of a regional approach to addressing forced displacement, and is the latest in a series of regional initiatives to improve state responses to internal and cross-border displacement. However, current state responses to displacement in the NTCA remain a long way from complying with the various commitments signed on paper. States still have a lot of work to do.

<sup>1</sup> The report was also compiled by the Norwegian Refugee Council.

## 1. CONTEXT

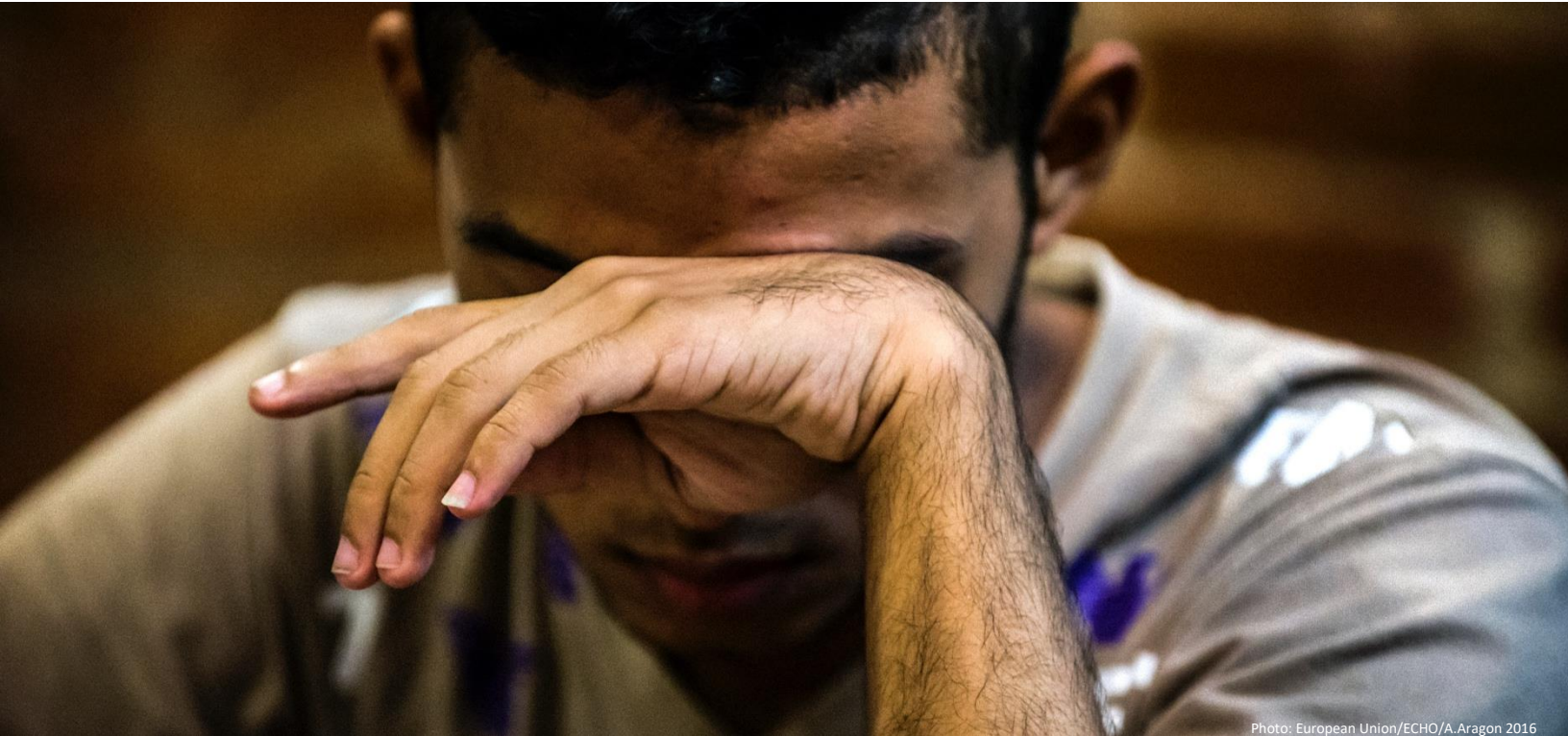


Photo: European Union/ECHO/A. Aragon 2016

Internal and cross-border displacement generated by **grave and systematic violations of human rights** is on the rise in El Salvador and Honduras. Certain areas, especially urban and disadvantaged regions, in both countries are dominated by criminal armed groups who exercise a total control over inhabitants. In these areas, extortion, mobility restrictions, threats and intimidation, kidnapping, torture, forced recruitment, coercion of minors, sexual violence and homicides are common, and the right to life is constantly threatened. In rural areas, crimes related to drug trafficking, conflicts over land dispossession and the impact of extractive industries affect and displace people, in particular ethnic minorities, smallholders and farmers.

Due to the limited capacities of the governments of El Salvador and Honduras to assist and protect their citizens from criminal violence, together with the obvious **mistrust** of citizens towards government institutions, displaced people avoid reporting human rights abuses to authorities,

and, consequently, avoid interaction with security forces and other institutions which could provide protection and assistance. This distance between the state and citizens has direct effects on the protection of displaced people and their access to fundamental rights. **Corruption and impunity** in government institutions are also barriers to the enforcement of rights. According to various reports, government institutions and the armed forces have been directly associated with criminal groups, human rights violations and other events generating forced displacement.

According to the testimonies of displaced persons, **internal displacement** is often the starting point for a series of journeys with no end and no return in sight. Without adequate assistance and protection in their countries of origin, today's IDPs become tomorrow's refugees, asylum seekers or migrants. As a result of this significant flow of people crossing borders and in need of international protection, the humanitarian crises of Honduras and El Salvador have acquired a regional dimension.

In transit and destination countries, especially Mexico and the United States, the disrespect of fundamental legal rights is seriously jeopardising the safety of displaced persons. According to interviews with displaced people, the guarantee of *non-refoulement*, alternatives to detention for asylum-seekers and refugees, access to legal advice, due process, humanitarian assistance and psychosocial support, are granted or applied inconsistently, or in many cases completely ignored. Reports of **deportees in situations of extreme difficulty** are regular, with many cases of people being deported back to their places of origin where their lives are under threat<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, deportees often spend all of their economic resources in their attempts to leave the country, and face economic destitution upon return. As a result, many fear returning to their neighbourhoods still under the control of armed groups, but they also lack the necessary financial resources to settle in other regions in their countries of origin.

As states are not complying with their obligations to protect and assist displaced people and prevent displacement, the **burden is disproportionately falling on CSOs**. Gaps in state responses to displacement are currently being filled to a certain extent by CSOs, in particular with emergency humanitarian assistance: shelter, housing, education, health and food. However, CSOs recognize that they currently do not have the means or capacities to ensure a comprehensive response.

While **general recognition is growing** of the extent and severity of human rights violations and forced displacement, the governments of El Salvador and Honduras have yet to respond in the timely and robust manner that the situation demands. Honduras and El Salvador need to move beyond the limited legislative, administrative or budgetary measures currently

in place to prevent displacement, and adopt comprehensive and coordinated action plans supported by increased budgets. Some of the required measures have been included in several regional instruments, such as the Brazil Action Plan or the San José Action Statement. However, **the implementation of these commitments must be accelerated**.

The lack of coordination between national and regional institutions is another key issue. Due to this lack of coordination, the implementation of current programming to assist and protect displaced people is **neither comprehensive nor effective**. Different levels of institutional buy-in have also led to patchy government responses. For example, despite recent progress in improving deportee centres in Honduras in terms of first aid and emergency assistance, government authorities lack the capacity to protect and monitor people who arrive in Honduras and need protection.

One of the key priorities of displaced people and civil society is that states fulfil their existing commitments to provide inclusive care, with a particular emphasis on socio-economic development, access to education and opportunities for livelihoods. This also involves addressing the **high rates of inequality and poverty** generating additional challenges to the response in a responsible and innovative manner.

The implementation of additional prevention measures through the strengthening of state institutions, ensuring the rule of law, improving justice systems and fighting against impunity is urgent. **Creating a protection space for displaced people, guaranteeing a full respect for human rights** and taking into account age, gender and diversity within the approach, will be fundamental for fulfilling State obligations.

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<sup>2</sup> According to a recent report by Médecins sans Frontières, 'Forced to Flee Central America's Northern Triangle: A Neglected Humanitarian Crisis' (2017), 39,2% of displaced people from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador

interviewed on route to the USA, mentioned having suffered directly, or a family member having suffered, direct attacks, threats or extortion, or forcible recruitment by armed criminals, as the principle reason for their displacement.



## 2. FINDINGS



### 2.1. 99% uncertainty: perspectives from displaced people

- According to consultations with displaced people, the main **human rights violations** causing displacement within and out of Honduras and El Salvador are homicide, extortion, threats and intimidation, kidnapping and torture, the use and coercion of minors and sexual violence.
- **Distrust** of government institutions, and in particular the justice system and armed forces, was a recurring finding in 86% of the cases consulted. While some interviewees reported positive interactions with the police, mainly in cases where they had personal contacts within the force, as a general finding, the police force was seen as the public institution generating the lowest confidence.
- Many interviewees highlighted their fear of being identified by a member of an armed group or gang infiltrated in government institutions. The distance between citizens and government institutions is further increased by the lack of special and expedited procedures for people who have submitted reports and need immediate protection. As a result, many interviewees reported lacking the confidence necessary to submit a complaint, request help and follow up on administrative procedures. 47% of the cases consulted had not reported violent acts to the police nor requested government assistance.

*"When they kidnapped my daughter, I asked the military for help, but they are also involved with the criminals. I tried to make an official complaint at the human rights commission, but as I had fled the municipality of origin where the kidnapping happened, they did not accept my complaint for processing and told me to go back to where I came from to make it".*

*"The situation would be much worse if we told the authorities".*

*"I called the police, but since they could not identify the criminals, they asked me to take a picture of their faces. Who actually has the courage to take a picture of the person who wants to kill you?"*

*"I spoke with a friend of mine, a policeman, and he told me not to report the issue because the gang members would kill me if I did".*

- The particular circumstances of displacement, and a widespread lack of knowledge of rights, displaced people fleeing from place of residence, jobs and education are exposed to high levels of vulnerability. It is therefore urgent that national and regional authorities grant special attention to displaced persons. On average, according to consultations, people are usually displaced at least twice, suggesting that **internal displacement is not an effective protection mechanism**. Without adequate assistance and protection in their own country, displaced people indicated that fleeing to a safe country is their highest priority (according to 86% of the consulted population), despite the barriers they may face to entry and legal stay in host countries.
- In poor neighbourhoods affected by violence, criminal gangs establish borders around areas under their control. Residents say that houses, streets, recreation spaces and businesses are taken over and used to demarcate boundaries. These imposed borders restrict mobility within neighbourhoods and between the different territories controlled by organized criminal gangs. As these boundaries change, and new spaces are under threat, minors and young people remain hidden and isolated in **confinement** in their own homes to protect themselves. Children and young people require urgent assistance and protection.
- Although proportions vary according to geographical location, 1 in 5 cases consulted in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, Honduras, **are currently considering fleeing the country as a result of fear and widespread violence**. When discussing the possibility of leaving the country, in 100% of the testimonies obtained, respondents agreed that the reach of criminal gangs goes beyond their own country and can be found across the region. As a result, the persons consulted do not consider these countries as an option for safe refuge. Furthermore, the lack of legal protection, assistance and opportunities in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala are perceived as obstacles to seeking refuge in neighbouring countries.
- As a result of impunity and distrust in public institutions, **support and protection networks** of displaced people are usually limited to family ties. Those interviewed stated that it is vital that more information is provided about the help on offer from public institutions and CSOs. Occasionally, adults (residing in the neighbourhoods controlled by armed groups) establish direct dialogue with gang members to secure protection of family members. However, the risk of homicide is particularly

high for adults attempting this type of mediation, especially due to the lack of institutional mechanisms to prevent violence or protect citizens.

- Displacement in rural areas is primarily linked to land conflicts, and affects

### 2.1.2 Not just commitments, we demand solutions

- The **lack of systematic actions** specifically aimed at protecting displaced people, and ensuring their access to the right to dignity, physical, psychological and moral integrity and family, clearly demonstrates the necessity of establishing procedures for prioritising state attention on those in urgent need.
- Currently no efforts are being made to provide displaced people with help to reintegrate into the labour market, nor with financial support to start up a small business. States must work to better identify and profile individual skills of displaced persons, and facilitate the creation of livelihood opportunities based on the labour supply. This should be incorporated into public policy and development plans. Without access to **livelihood opportunities**, displaced people affirm that displacement will continue indefinitely.
- **Access to education** should be considered a high priority for all states hosting and receiving displaced persons in need of international protection, especially to ensure stability and durable solutions. All of the displaced persons interviewed considered education as a key issue. In many cases, children, young people and adults have had to abandon education as a result of fleeing violence. Promoting education for all strengthens access to other fundamental rights for displaced people.
- States must also put into place actions to ensure the **security of tenure**, especially as displaced persons often have to abandon their homes and assets in flight. 3 out of 10 people consulted reported having left their

communities established in areas of interest to extractive industries. Community leaders opposing exploitative projects are in particular danger. Displacement of these populations is the ultimate goal of strategies to counteract community opposition.

real estate behind. Many of these people have no information on the state of their homes, nor are they able to return to recover or check on their property. Protecting these abandoned assets is a key protection concern which must be addressed.

- The physical distance between countries and regions of origin and places of international protection poses a series of difficulties and extreme risks for those embarking on a journey to safety. Regional coordination efforts must be made to improve safety for people on the move. **Information, priority treatment in administrative procedures, and transportation assistance** are first steps in ensuring protection and preventing risks across the migration routes. Where transportation is unavailable, displaced people are often forced to walk long distances, use illegal routes and smugglers and take high-risk journeys. These situations increase the risk of trafficking, extortion, forced labour, sexual violence and other abuses.
- Along the **migratory route** to Mexico and the United States, displaced people are currently provided with very basic and short-term help and services in specific places (for example in the Casas del migrante). However, rather than receiving impartial humanitarian aid, some interviewees reported that some of this help from certain religious groups was provided based on religious affiliation. Governmental institutions in transit countries do not provide support on these migratory routes, and the humanitarian institutions present, such as the Red Cross, are only able to offer temporary and short-term refuge.

*“We had to walk all night. There were many children walking with us”*

*“For me, the trip to the USA was very difficult and sad. The coyotes [smugglers] had no interest in our lives”*

*“One night I tried to jump a wall to get into the US and fell in a river. As a result, I caught pneumonia. When I finally managed to cross the border into Texas, I hid in a house for about 10 days with 45 other people. Finally, immigration authorities came to the house and arrested me.”*

*“I encountered problems in several places because I was travelling illegally without documents. On the route, there are coyotes that extort you. If you don’t pay them, they will sell you to the police. If the coyotes or the police don’t find you, the narcos [drug traffickers] will. The narcos captured me and beat me. My identity documents were stolen. I ran away and spent 6 days in the desert without water or food. At the border, I gave myself up to the immigration authorities and they took me to a detention centre.”*

### 2.1.3 2.1.3 After displacement: deportation

- Interviews with deportees reported that the **conditions in the detention centres** in the US and Mexico were undignified and that they were regularly exposed to unfair and discriminatory treatment. Some mentioned the lack of basic services (food and basic hygiene necessities). They also reported a worrying lack of attention to basic needs of displaced people. Financial costs, especially bail costs enabling asylum seekers to leave the detention centres while their claim is being processed are often astronomical and beyond the reach of those in need of international protection.
- Interviewees also reported that access to **legal services and counselling was highly restricted**. Some displaced persons who had spent time in detention centres felt as if they were treated as criminals in prison. Some deportees reported abuse and mistreatment by authorities, especially when they complained about the imposed conditions of forced labour.
- The **international right to non-refoulement** for displaced people who are in need of protection is constantly not respected, and asylum seekers are often deported to their countries of origin without due process.
- Deported persons interviewed mentioned that US judges only agree to process asylum requests after the payment of a bond of thousands of dollars (from \$ 2,000 to \$ 24,000 USD) and if a family member or acquaintance agrees to host them. Those interviewed did not have the necessary resources to pay the bail and were forced to borrow money, remain in custody for months on end, or sign their deportation documents.
- **Honduran deportees** are provided with some basic services in reception centres upon arrival in their country of origin, but these centres do not always have the capacity to identify and monitor deported persons in need of protection. Displaced persons report a general lack of legal information and reintegration services into return communities or to new host communities.

*“They just want to deport you. They do not give you information, they do not give you legal support. They make you sign your own deportation documents, even if you do not want to.”*

*“I didn’t have a lawyer because it cost too much. I asked for support from a pro bono lawyer, but he never came.”*

*“I felt very bad in the centre, locked up. I had psychological problems, headaches. They told me they were going to give me asylum, but I could not wait there anymore, locked up. I asked the judge to deport me. Now I do not know where to go.”*

*“I contacted the Honduran consulate in the US, but they did not help me.”*

*“I was in the detention centre for several months and during that time I was allowed a 3 minute call.”*

*“It was very hard, like a prison.”*

*“I was separated from my family, and they transferred me from jail to jail in handcuffs.”*

*“My asylum interview with the authorities was done over the phone because the judge wasn’t there.”*

*“I asked why they did not want to grant me asylum, the judge told me that he didn’t have to give a reason.”*

- Consultations carried out by the Norwegian Refugee Council showed that displaced people generally do not have a specific destination in mind or a preference in terms of host countries they would like to go to. On the contrary, their fundamental reasons for traveling are two-fold: **the search for protection and security, and the possibility of self-sufficiency and economic autonomy** in the place of arrival. Their main priorities range from the right to work and legal status, to access to education, depending on the displaced person or family. However, all the individuals interviewed considered safety and dignity to be the basis for achieving lasting solutions.
- For the displaced persons consulted, neighbouring countries in the Northern Triangle and Mexico, are perceived to be insecure, and access to safety is considered limited within the four countries. Due to this, combined with a general lack of information, most people see North America as their only option. As a result, it is urgent and necessary that governments provide information on options for international protection, so that displaced people can make an informed decision on a safe route to request asylum outside their countries of origin, and avoid clandestine and dangerous routes.



*"I don't dream of living in another country. The only reason I would leave would be if I fled for my life."*

## 2.2. Durable solutions must be the first priority: The Perspective of Civil Society

CSOs acknowledge the progress made by the government of Honduras to respond to displacement, and the steps forward taken by the government of El Salvador. However, CSOs note the **worrying gap between the severity of the displacement crisis and the limited human and financial resources** dedicated by states to ensure the protection of displaced people and the promotion of durable solutions.

Despite good intentions, increased good will and new commitments, CSOs do not consider that any of the provisions of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework are currently being implemented in El Salvador and Honduras. CSOs call for the urgent design of a response that goes beyond emergency humanitarian assistance, with durable solutions as the main priority. This response must include the support of the international community and international financial institutions.

### 2.2.1 Designing a lasting response to change the situation:

- The current limited response to displacement has resulted in significant unmet needs and left many without access to fundamental rights. In Honduras, the ongoing profiling of displaced persons must be updated, strengthened and completed, in order to promote an effective, dignified and timely state response. In El Salvador, it is essential that forced displacement is officially recognized.
- The lack of legislative measures promoting and ensuring state responsibility for displacement has negatively affected budgetary and administrative commitments to providing timely and effective assistance for people fleeing their place of origin due to violence.
- Displaced people frequently complain about the **inconsistency and lack of clarity on where they can access aid**, which administrative procedures to take to access help, which documents they need, where they should go to process claims, which criteria are used for decisions, why their claims are rejected, and which institutions are responsible for processing administrative requests. Governments must therefore provide clear information and be transparent about their commitments and obligations towards displaced people.
- These gaps in information, especially on what kind of assistance is on offer, increases and **amplifies the uncertainty** that displaced people are already faced with, and prevents them from having clear expectations for their journeys and destinations. This in turn prevents them from making decisions with full knowledge of their rights. Furthermore, this uncertainty **increases the risks of the migration route**, especially when people decide to take clandestine and dangerous migration routes, for lack of better information and options.
- Being displaced often makes people more vulnerable to having their fundamental human rights violated, yet states are currently not providing special and differential treatment to displaced people in the region. By moving regions, displaced people lack access to administrative procedures and documentation. In addition, many are prevented from reporting crimes to the authorities due to being far away from the place where the crime took place. This aggravates the problem of impunity in Honduras and El Salvador.

- Displaced people often are not able to get access to documentation, nor do they receive **differential treatment from health services**, in order to guarantee their effective access to care. Emotional and psychological attention and treatment is especially urgent in the current context of extreme violence.
- Current efforts to guarantee the right of displaced people to be protected against **discriminatory practices** are inadequate. Some examples of this include: the persistence of coordination problems between government institutions; the lack of knowledge and recognition of displacement and asylum by civil and military authorities; the lack of a differential approach taking into account age groups, ethnic groups, LGBTI people and women; the lack of adequate training by government institutions to correct discriminatory practices; the lack of financial and material resources dedicated to responding to displacement; and the implementation of actions that fail to take into account displaced people and their needs.
- Cultural factors such as **shame, isolation and social stigmatization** of being displaced or being a refugee directly prevents people from reporting crimes or human rights violations. These factors also affect where people choose to flee to, and can limit their integration in their new surroundings. Increasing information and promoting community solutions to integrate displaced people is fundamental to ensuring rights and local solutions.
- Currently governments in the region do not see it as their responsibility to provide essential foods, drinking water, shelter and housing, adequate clothing and essential medical and sanitary services in emergency situations. **Access to these essential services** is not recognized as a right, but as a favour provided by the government. Some organizations criticized one-time-only government aid deliveries, such as the solidarity bags in Honduras, especially as these deliveries coincide directly with political campaigns and are highly publicised.
- According to CSOs, there are no government policies aimed at promoting **access to livelihoods** for displaced people. The current isolated and disjointed efforts are aimed at making some of the existing programmes for overcoming poverty more flexible and promoting initiatives for the generation of livelihoods. These do not however take into account low educational levels, gaps in documentation and the relative capacity of displaced people to recover from the impacts of violence. Likewise, there are no specific programs for displaced people who are unable to work and support themselves, in particular children without caregivers, some LGBTI people, people with chronic diseases, the elderly or single-parent families.
- Currently, there is no system for **registering individuals or families as internally displaced people**. Although there are positive precedents in Honduras, where IDPs can make a statement of the facts (through a complaint) at the offices of the Ombudsman, this document does not imply binding state obligations and responsibilities. Furthermore, CSOs highlight that while making a complaint is possible, further work needs to be done to establish trust between citizens and state institutions so that this registration is promoted. Without this, the fear that sensitive information will fall into the hands of criminal groups will continue to be a barrier stopping displaced people from reporting their displacement.
- The lack of coordination between institutions and the low levels of registration of displaced people makes it difficult to implement **effective monitoring mechanisms**, evaluate the results of any regional approach to responding to displacement, adopt the pertinent corrective measures and facilitate the accelerated and long-term development of an adequate response. In addition, there is a notable **absence of the participation of displaced people in the design of the response** to forced displacement. This is particularly the case in decision-making spaces on legislative, administrative or budgetary matters; as well as for actions that

concern their assistance and protection, and achievement of durable solutions.

- **Displacement is not providing protection for people fleeing violence, in particular for young people.** In response to this situation, CSO programmes and projects currently target women and children, but agree that young people and LGBTI communities receive the least attention and urgently require programmes adapted to their needs and contexts. Countries of origin must not watch passively as new generations leave their countries and the cycle of family separations repeats itself.
- Although not explicitly mentioned in the provisions of the CRRF, CSOs consider that **guaranteeing security must be a priority** for the governments of Honduras and El

Salvador. Displacement entails specific, personal, and serious risks, which require a comprehensive approach. The current approach to national and regional security, which mainly focuses on strengthening armed forces and the police, has not been able to stop forced displacement. It is vital that the civil institutions of states are strengthened to promote the security of citizens.

- El Salvador and Honduras are also **transit countries, with mixed population flows crossing their territories.** However, there is no official recognition of this situation and no national system of care that promotes access to rights for people in need of international protection. Neither CSOs nor governments are prepared to provide assistance and protection to a massive arrival of displaced people into Honduras and El Salvador.

## 2.2.2 Ensuring adequate coordination

- CSOs have a frontline role in the implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, especially due to their access, legitimacy and the trust that displaced people have in them. Together with Church networks, CSOs promote the protection of displaced people and those with international protection needs. However, this protection work requires better coordination and support from governments. The Compact provides an opportunity for **greater collaboration among civil society**, and it is necessary for states to promote and facilitate this coordination.
- According to CSOs, the main priorities for **migrants** in the NTCA region are shelter (temporary and permanent) and health. Documentation is also a basic need to ensure the access to rights. **Displaced persons and refugees**, on the other hand, need protection and food security as a first priority. These priorities must be taken into account in the allocation of resources for the response.
- CSOs express the need for **greater information and data** on the displacement situation in the NTCA, and specifically call for greater information sharing mechanisms between governments, international institutions, and CSOs on: the profiles of displaced people, the volume of resources allocated to the humanitarian response, protection concerns and humanitarian needs, and infrastructure available to guarantee the rights of displaced people. This data will improve coordination between actors, and the complementarity of actions.
- Concerns were also raised that governments often impose limitations and obstacles to the work of CSOs, for example by blocking access to reception centres. Not only does this effectively block organisations from providing assistance, it limits opportunities for coordination and complementarity of the response. The lack of information-sharing between governments and CSOs is, in part, linked to mutual distrust. It is essential to establish common platforms to improve these relationships and collaboration.

- While CSOs try to respond to the urgency of the humanitarian needs in the region, they admit that their organisations are not always trained for the specificities of displacement and humanitarian crises. They therefore call for greater investment in training on humanitarian work, in order to provide an

adequate response to the problem of displacement in the Northern Triangle of Central America. There is also a need for increased **coordination and collaboration among the various organizations** involved in the response, to avoid duplication of efforts and to ensure that the response is inter sectorial.

### 2.2.3 Achieving concrete results

- Setting goals at the local, national and regional levels to care for displaced people continues to be a pending task for states. Specific **short, medium and long-term goals** to prevent displacement, ensure rights and measure programme impacts are necessary so that each government institution is aware of its responsibilities.
- The increased humanitarian response must be complementary and contribute towards ongoing efforts on **sustainable development** and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Normative frameworks and policies on displacement should promote the strengthening of the local capacity of public institutions and CSOs to work on the governance, accountability, design and implementation of inclusive policies for promoting sustainable development, and access to decent work for displaced people. Private companies and other non-traditional actors in the humanitarian field should be encouraged to contribute to the reduction of root causes of displacement, and increase the scope of durable solutions. **The private sector must to reflect on its own role and responsibility in responding to the displacement crisis.** For example, changing hiring practices is a first step that is highly

necessary, especially as current practices promote discrimination against displaced people. In particular, people with tattoos or living in places controlled by armed gangs are often unable to find a job due to employers assuming they are affiliated to criminal gangs.

- Donors should also revise policies and strategies in order to **prioritise the NTCA region and increase resources** to responding to displacement due to gang violence. Donors and United Nations agencies should also recognize the humanitarian nature of the displacement crisis in the region, and ensure that there is sufficient humanitarian funding and resources to provide durable solutions to displaced people.
- CSOs warn that there are currently no **international mechanisms such as disciplinary, economic or political sanctions**, to ensure the speedy and effective implementation of international commitments. Because of this, it is especially important that civil society is actively included in the follow-up process to the Global Compact and is able to ensure the monitoring of its implementation.



### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS



1. Governments must ensure that **displaced people have access to differential treatment when necessary, and humanitarian assistance** based on their needs. Legislative, administrative and budgetary measures must be put in place to respond to humanitarian needs, and prevent and respond to human rights violations.

2. Disciplinary, economic or political sanctions must be considered to ensure that states implement their national and international commitments on displacement and migration **in a timely and effective manner**. Civil society must be actively involved in the follow-up processes to the Compact.
3. The commitments made in regional non-binding instruments, such as the Brazil Plan of Action or the San José Action Statement, **require financial resources and the implementation of concrete actions** beyond what is already being done. Goals and financial targets must be agreed upon in the follow-up to the Brazil Plan of Action.
4. Action towards achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals** should also include quantifiable goals related to reducing and responding to displacement. This Global Compact on Refugees must propose and promote greater state commitment towards the SDGs.
5. Other **methods of measuring state performance** on forced displacement could also be considered. The indicators of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) could include references to durable solutions for displaced people, and the performance of host states and countries of origin could be measured accordingly.
6. **Countries outside the NTCA region must recognise and address the need for shared responsibility to address the situation of displacement and violence**. In El Salvador, some displaced persons expressed the wish to be resettled to countries in Asia, as the distance from home implied increased protection from gang violence. Language, cultural familiarity and family ties were seen as secondary priorities for the interviewees. Asian states (and other non-traditional resettlement states) should offer resettlement and complementary pathways



for refugees affected by violence in the Northern Triangle.

7. It is urgent to work on **building trust** between government institutions and affected populations. Focus should be placed on mechanisms and pathways to ensure that displaced people receive expedited assistance in state administrative processes, and on guaranteeing confidentiality of information especially when reporting abuses and violence, during asylum claims and in other processes for accessing humanitarian aid, protection and durable solutions.
8. The **causes of displacement** (i.e. gang violence) must be addressed from a national security perspective, but also from a social perspective. Increasing resources for education and employment opportunities, strengthening state institutions against impunity, and promoting permanent and durable programmes to improve trust between state institutions and the population are vital for preventing internal displacement and refugee movements.
9. Better coordination is needed between national and regional institutions. Together, all actors must work together to provide a **comprehensive, shared and effective response** to displacement in countries of origin, transit and destination. The first step to this is for all actors and states to accept the regional aspect and severity of the displacement crisis, and secondly for all states to accept their responsibility in the face of this crisis.
10. The current sporadic "case by case" approach to displacement limits planning and prevention, and affects the effective and timely overall state response. It is urgent that this approach is adjusted to a **systematic, generalized response that guarantees the access to rights for displaced people and ensures predictable inter-institutional coordination**. A mapping of institutional capacities and available government resources must be carried out.
11. It is necessary to put into place mechanisms and regional agreements for protecting the rights of displaced people related to their **land, assets and homes** that have been abandoned as a result of forced displacement.
12. Better data is necessary on who is displaced (and their profiles) and who is best placed to respond and offer livelihood opportunities and durable solutions in line with their education and skills. Mapping exercises which match job opportunities to identified skill sets of the displaced can also strengthen this process. States should also promote **labour migration opportunities**.
13. **Information on assistance and protection on offer** should be clear and coherent. Displaced persons should not be in the dark about who to approach, what type of support they can access, which procedures to follow or which documents they need. Furthermore, greater transparency is needed on the status of administrative procedures. When claims for assistance or protection are rejected, transparent explanations must be communicated.
14. Governments must gather timely **public information on displacement**, which is systematically updated to have an overview of who is displaced and which resources and services are available for responding to the situation at the national and regional levels.
15. The role of the media is key in the response to displacement. Beyond guaranteeing the right to life and freedom of expression, the media should **promote solidarity towards displaced people, and reduce stigmatisation and xenophobia** towards IDPs and refugees.
16. There is also a need for **public campaigns to reduce shame, stigma and isolation** associated with displacement, as these often prevent people from making reports to the police or seeking protection. These campaigns should inform displaced people of their rights and options. Practices to ensure the **protection, dignity, security and**

**confidentiality** of people affected by violence should be encouraged.

17. The international community must **prioritise the region and increase funding** for people at risk or who have fled their homes as a result of violence. Donors and the international

community must recognise the humanitarian character of the crisis, and must significantly increase the offer of durable solutions. Strengthening and listening to civil society will be a key aspect in guaranteeing an effective and timely response.

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