



Emergency Relief in Central and South America

Catholic Relief Services and our partners are already at work helping families across Central and South America who are facing compounding emergencies that threaten their lives, safety and stability.



A victim of domestic abuse, "Gabriela" is living in a shelter in Tijuana, Mexico, waiting for asylum to enter the United States to provide a better life for her three children. Photo by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS

OVERVIEW

Across Central and South America, rising numbers of families are fleeing their homes out of fear and desperation. In Central America—particularly in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala—escalating gang violence and organized crime have caused tens of thousands of families to flee north since 2018. Families have also been reeling from chronic poverty, lack of job opportunities and failed harvests due to climate change. Thousands of people have crossed into Guatemala and have arrived in Mexico seeking humanitarian visas, shelter, asylum or transit permits to reach the U.S. border. As they migrate, they travel with limited access to food, water and safe shelter, as well as accurate, trusted sources of information.

Further south in the region, people are fleeing a country in political collapse. Venezuela has been in a social and economic crisis for years. As much as 87% of Venezuela's population has been pushed below the poverty line and thousands of children are experiencing malnutrition. More than 5.6 million Venezuelans have fled into neighboring countries to provide for their families.

CRS is working across the region with Catholic partners to help displaced people who face extreme vulnerability—both in their countries of origin so they have opportunities and the means to stay, as well as in countries of refuge so they can find relief and safety.

87%

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Ángel López is the director of a shelter providing a range of care and support for women and children in Tijuana, Mexico. CRS supports the shelter with voucher assistance and training to provide food, first aid, clean water and sanitation. "Without [CRS] ties of support, our program would not exist. It would end."

Photo by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS



CRS AND PARTNER RESPONSE

Across the region, CRS Catholic partners continue to be first responders to this rising humanitarian crisis. In Mexico and Guatemala, local faith-based shelters have been working tirelessly for decades to protect and promote the dignity of vulnerable people traveling migrant routes. With limited financial resources, their shelters offer migrants a place to sleep, bathe, eat, and receive medical care and other services. While these shelters typically served 200 people daily, they are having to double or even triple their capacity.

Caritas agencies are providing a range of services within Venezuela and across neighboring countries, including Brazil, Colombia, Trinidad and Tobago, Chile and Peru.

CRS continues to support our partners in their capacity to lead in these critical services. Activities include the following:

Mexico-Guatemala Corridor

- Assisting 31 partners in Mexico and Guatemala to provide hot meals, safe shelter, hygiene and living supplies, legal assistance, health care, and counseling to heal from grief, distress and trauma.
- Supporting shelter partners to strengthen their capacity for operations, human resources, finance, admin, logistics, governance, and technical programming.
- Strengthening coordination mechanisms among partners to promote peer learning and enhanced impact of joint advocacy initiatives.
- Building coordination of local, regional and national responders at the front lines.
- Providing training and field visits for partners to share technical guidance, best practices and develop policies and procedures.

“Faith and hope are the only two things that migrants fleeing their homes are able to carry with them: Faith to be able to build a better future for their children, and hope that they will be able to arrive to a safer place to restart their lives.”

Cecilia Suarez, CRS head of office, Mexico

Honduras

- Providing emergency relief to meet the needs of returned migrants who often have limited belongings.
- Working with local Catholic partners to develop an initiative that will help migrants stay in their communities and prevent forced migrations. We are supporting efforts that help returned migrants in Honduras have stability in their home communities, so as to prevent forced migration again.
- Conducting a deep-dive evaluation with families and community members on the key reasons people are leaving their homes and country—so that we can address those root causes through relevant, meaningful programming that helps them have the safety and means to stay.
- Supporting our partners to target the needs of specific groups, like single mothers with young children or young adults, so that it is not a one-size-fits-all approach.

In Venezuela, and for Venezuelan refugees across the region (Colombia, Brazil, Chile, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago)

- Providing supplies and equipment for hospitals.
- Providing/assisting with medicine for malnourished children and pregnant or new mothers.
- Distributing hygiene kits, mosquito nets and water, sanitation and hygiene supplies to families.
- Providing food and support for refugees who are homeless and living outside shelters.
- Ensuring safe shelter for refugees and those in transit.
- Providing cash assistance, legal guidance, and capacity support for partner organizations providing lifesaving services.

HOW TO HELP

- Donate online:
 - [Support.crs.org/migration-crisis](https://support.crs.org/migration-crisis)
 - <https://support.crs.org/donate/crisis-venezuela>
- Donate by phone: 1-877-HELP-CRS
- Donate by check: Central America Migrant Crisis, Catholic Relief Services, P.O. Box 17090, Baltimore, Maryland 21297-0303