

Complex crises and migration in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua

CRISIS IMPACT OVERVIEW

A series of complex crises, including gang violence, poverty, natural disasters, socioeconomic crises, and food insecurity, have generated migration from countries in Central America, including El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In 2021, more than 307,000 people on the move, mainly from these four countries, were apprehended in Mexico and redirected to the authorities (IPI 15/11/2022). Some of the people migrating to Mexico from Central America do so in caravans. The term 'caravans' usually denotes the mobilisation of large groups of people on foot through Mexican territory to other Mexican states or the US (ACAPS 21/10/2022). During the journey, people in caravans face various risks, including kidnappings, assaults, rape, and murder, especially because of the high presence of armed gangs (IPI 15/11/2022; Prensa Libre 27/11/2022 and 08/07/2022).

Gang violence highly affects El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras and is a driver of mass migration (Prensa Libre 10/12/2022). In Nicaragua, political violence against opponents motivates migration (CIDH 08/09/2019; UNHCR accessed 09/12/2022). The lack of data makes it difficult to monitor trends in oppression and political violence (UN 30/08/2022).

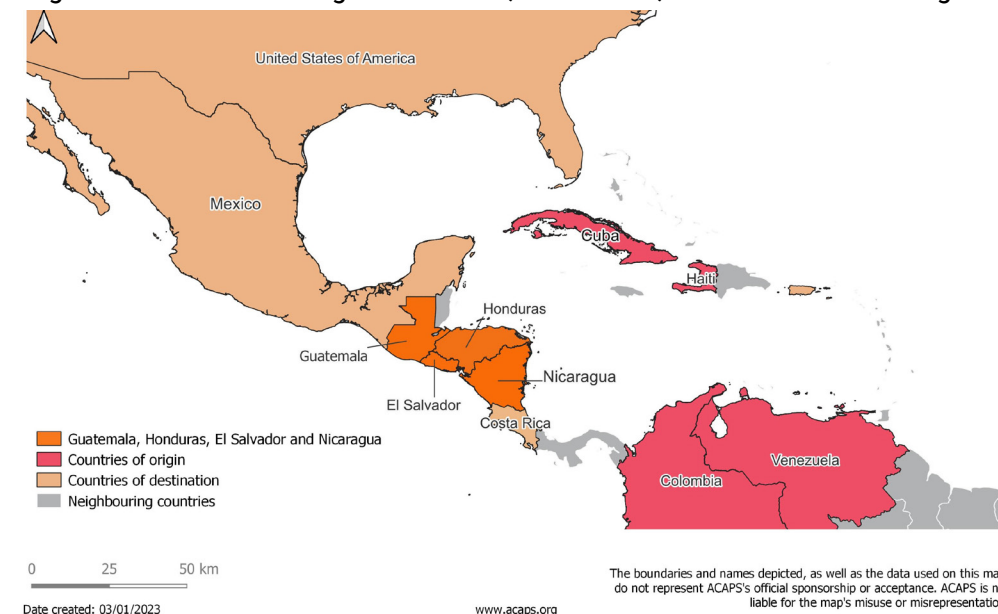
About this report

Aim: this report presents the key drivers of migration and highlights the risks faced while in transit in four countries of Central America: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Although there are commonalities in the four countries, such as vulnerability to natural hazards and the level of armed violence, the report highlights and provides some outlook into each country's specific situation in terms of humanitarian constraints and needs.

Methodology: this report uses secondary data review to explain the drivers of migration in four Central American countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

Limitations: although these countries have similar situations motivating migration, the available data comes from different sources and data collection methods, preventing comparison between countries. Information gaps limit the ability to assess and compare the severity of the crises.

Migration from and through El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua



See full map on page 10.

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KEY MESSAGES

In **El Salvador**, migratory movements towards Mexico and the US have been increasing. In 2022, the extension of gang-controlled territories and the increase in clashes between these gangs resulted in the Government putting into force a state of emergency, which began in mid-March and lasted for more than six months. It also led to human rights restrictions and the mass arrest of more than 53,000 people presumed to be involved in criminal gangs. Humanitarian needs have increased for people living in the neighbourhoods most affected by violence (WOLA 31/03/2022; IPS 29/07/2022; AI 31/05/2022).

COVID-19 has also resulted in increased poverty and a lack of access to livelihoods. In 2021, the Government of El Salvador adopted bitcoin as its official currency, and the downward trend of bitcoin has affected funding of programmes for people in need and made access to essential goods and services even more difficult (Forbes 23/05/2022; El Tiempo 13/05/2022; Expansión 21/06/2022). The impact of natural hazards has further affected access to food, safe drinking water and sanitation, and education (WFP 09/05/2022; The San Diego Union 22/09/2022).

Guatemala has experienced increased insecurity since the beginning of 2022. Armed gangs have consolidated their presence in Guatemala city, Mixco, and Villa Nueva, and the Government is militarising the borders to stop the entry of gangs from neighbouring countries (Prensa Libre 27/11/2022, 08/09/2022, and 08/07/2022). The poverty rate in Guatemala is also increasing, with over 61% of the population in multidimensional poverty, an increase from 48% in 2019 and 52% in 2020. Approximately 56% of the Guatemalan population is facing food insecurity (Infosegura et al. 22/07/2022; FAO accessed 30/11/2022; WB 20/10/2022).

Malnutrition, a lack of access to services, ethnic discrimination, and frequent hurricanes and tropical storms that damage crops and infrastructure are other factors that push Guatemalans to migrate (MPI 03/2022).

In **Honduras**, violence, poverty, insecurity, and the scarcity of livelihoods are driving a crisis that has led to increased migratory movements to Mexico as a transit and host country (UNHCR accessed 27/12/2022). As at August 2022, around 52,000 Hondurans in an irregular migratory situation were apprehended at the Mexican border and redirected to the authorities (Gobernación de México 17/10/2022). Violence, the expansion of drug trafficking groups, extortion, and threats have resulted in a high number of IDPs in Honduras. Cases of violence are highest in the cities of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula. Some humanitarian organisations estimate that at least 247,000 people were displaced between 2008–2021, although this number varies between sources and is not government-approved or up to date (IDMC accessed 27/12/2022; PD 19/06/2022; UNHCR accessed 27/12/2022; ICRC 13/01/2021).

In **Nicaragua**, tensions between the Government and the opposition have increased since 2018, resulting in different episodes of large-scale civil unrest and arbitrary detentions (CIDH 21/06/2018; IACHR 18/03/2022). Both sides to the conflict use political and criminal violence, motivating the migration of Nicaraguans to Costa Rica and towards the US (CIDH 08/09/2019; Noria Research 27/10/2022 and 09/12/2022). By 2022, approximately 10% of the total population (680,000 people) had emigrated to Costa Rica in the south and to the US in the north. Since 2010, other nationalities have also used the country as a transit zone towards the US (M&R accessed 18/12/2022). Nicaragua experienced an economic recession in 2018–2019, followed by the COVID-19 crisis. The current socio-political crisis is limiting any economic recovery (WB accessed 04/10/2022 a).

MIGRATION CORRIDOR

Central America is a region of origin, transit, and destination for migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees. During their passage through Central American countries, people on the move face various obstacles. Smuggling networks transport people under risky conditions in overcrowded trucks, which are often involved in accidents (El Diario 13/11/2022; France 24 28/07/2022). Armed groups and even security forces attack buses transporting people to the border areas of Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua to extort or rob people or maintain control of migration routes (República 18/11/2022). For example, in Guatemala, some security forces stripped Venezuelan families of their belongings before they were allowed to continue their route towards Mexico (SWI 30/09/2022).

For migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers from around the world, the four countries are both points of origin and transit. Approximately one-quarter of the encounters recorded at the southern border of the US are with people of these four nationalities (CBP accessed 13/12/2022). Similarly, migrants and asylum seekers from countries such as Cuba, Haiti, Venezuela, or those outside of the Americas, often transit through one or all of these four countries before arriving in Mexico and then attempting to reach the US (Migration Data Portal 10/07/2021).

Migration among the Central American population affects children's access to education. A family member's migration discourages children and adolescents from continuing in the education system. Families with at least one member who has migrated are less likely to recognise education as a means to improve the quality of life, both in the country of origin and in the possible destination country (IOM 2022; El Universo 11/06/2022). During the COVID-19 pandemic, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras kept schools closed for up to 18 months. These closures resulted in loss of school content, increased sexual violence and general violence at home, and increased school dropouts (UNICEF 24/03/2021; IADB 23/06/2022; WB 17/03/2021).



The number of people passing through **El Salvador** is low. The country has only registered 245 Venezuelan refugees and there is little information about other nationalities (R4V accessed 27/12/2022). Most people prefer to pass through Honduras, possibly because of El Salvador's strict visa requirements and continuing violence.

In **Guatemala**, more than 15,000 people who entered without immigration requirements were expelled between January–November 2022. 77% of this number were Venezuelan. Between September and 10 November, the country expelled over 9,400 people (SWI 13/11/2022; W Radio 13/11/2022).

Over 154,000 people irregularly entered **Honduras** between January–November 2022. 40% of this number came from Cuba, 33% from Venezuela, 10% from Ecuador, and 5% from Haiti (El País 22/11/2022; SWI 17/11/2022).

In **Nicaragua**, the total number of migrants and asylum seekers passing through is unknown, but one source says that at least 28,000 Venezuelans crossed Nicaragua to reach Costa Rica between January–July 2022 (VOA 06/10/2022).

Table 1. IDPs, asylum seekers, and refugees in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua as at the end of 2021¹

COUNTRY ¹	TOTAL POPULATION	IDPS PRODUCED BY VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT (CUMULATIVE FROM 2008)	IDPS PRODUCED BY NATURAL HAZARDS IN 2021 ²	ASYLUM SEEKERS/REFUGEES ACCORDING TO GOVERNMENT FIGURES AS AT THE END OF 2021	ASYLUM SEEKERS/REFUGEES REGISTERED WORLDWIDE ³ FROM EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, HONDURAS, AND NICARAGUA (AS AT MID-2022) ⁴
El Salvador	6,500,000	175,000	119,000	Over 160	130,600
Honduras	10,300,000	247,000	260	Over 240	74,100
Guatemala	18,700,000	242,000	15,600	Almost 2,000	91,000
Nicaragua	6,800,000	Not available	232,000	Over 440	4,200

Sources: IDMC (accessed 14/12/2022 a); UNHCR (accessed 14/12/2022); Worldometer (accessed 14/12/2022); Gobierno de México (07/11/2022)

¹ Figures are from government sources and only include people asking for asylum or granted refugee status, excluding migrants and asylum seekers in transit. For example, Guatemala expelled over 9,000 Venezuelans between January–October 2022, and over 5,000 were reported at the border with Honduras (Refugees International 31/10/2022; La Prensa Latina 22/10/2022). The exact number of people on the move is uncertain and likely much higher than official government figures.

² There is no information on the number of people still displaced as a result of pre-2021 natural hazards.

³ These figures include asylum seekers and refugees worldwide but mostly in Mexico and the US.

⁴ This column uses data available until mid-year 2022 on refugees and asylum seekers from the countries mentioned (UNHCR accessed 26/12/2022).



HUMANITARIAN OVERVIEW IN EL SALVADOR

Anticipated scope and scale

The El Salvadorian Government put in place a state of emergency with an indefinite extension in March 2022. This extension has led to an increase in the needs of people living in gang-affected neighbourhoods and to a humanitarian crisis in prisons because of the high number of detainees for alleged criminal gang activities. The gangs, though currently poorly organised, could potentially strike back to regain control (El Salvador 06/10/2022; DCA 13/09/2022; ICG 05/10/2022).

Mobility restrictions and militarisation will further limit humanitarian aid access. As at 3 December, more than 10,000 soldiers were stationed in Soyapango municipality, near the capital of San Salvador, with orders to detain any suspected gang members (France 24 04/12/2022; El Salvador 07/12/2022 a). The policy poses risks of stigmatisation and a lack of protection guarantees (LA Times 23/08/2022; Independent 15/10/2022; El Universo 19/07/2022). The deployment of these soldiers is also likely to increase the number of people on the move to Mexico and the US.

Humanitarian constraints

Government measures taken during the state of emergency have limited the mobility of people within areas categorised as 'gang hotspots' (WOLA 31/03/2022; IPS 29/07/2022; Diario Las Américas 18/08/2022; DPLF 14/06/2022). The Government has fenced off and militarised gang-affected cities, such as San Salvador and Soyapango (El Comercio 24/11/2022; EE 24/11/2022). As a result, people in need are unable to move out of besieged areas, and organisations are likely to face access restrictions in these areas (WOLA 31/03/2022; IPS 29/07/2022; Diario Las Américas 18/08/2022).

Humanitarian needs

Protection

The population frequently faces protection risks as a result of gang violence. People living in gang-controlled neighbourhoods face extortion, assaults, kidnappings, confinement, and crossfire (IPI 15/11/2022). The current crackdown on potential gang members compounds these effects, as the Government has categorised and stigmatised people with characteristics that are considered exclusively gang-related (such as tattoos) and denied assistance and protection to these individuals and groups (El Salvador 06/10/2022; DCA 13/09/2022; ICG 05/10/2022). Gang violence and a crackdown carried out under the state of emergency have also increased the number of IDPs in El Salvador (La Prensa Gráfica 06/10/2022; SWI 20/06/2022).

Food and nutrition

8.5% of the population is considered undernourished, while 47% are moderately or severely food-insecure, especially in rural areas where the rates of multidimensional poverty are highest (WFP 09/05/2022). March, April, and May were the months with the highest number of food-insecure people in 2022. Projections suggested that at least 907,000 people would face food insecurity between June–August; 846,000 would face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food insecurity levels while 61,000 would experience Emergency (IPC Phase 4) food insecurity. Strong climatic variations, such as droughts and floods, often affect the stability of harvests. Inflation, violence, and the economic effects of COVID-19 in 2022 have also increased food costs and reduced purchasing power (La Prensa Gráfica 25/11/2022; SICA 07/07/2022).

WASH

At least 80% of the country is in a situation of water stress, and more than 60% of available water is contaminated. The indiscriminate use of water sources for oil and extractive mining activities have led to a shortage of drinking water (We Are Water 17/05/2022; Al Jazeera 01/07/2022). In rural areas, access to water and sanitation is more restricted, and at least 33% of households lack any or continuous access to drinking water at home (UNDP 25/03/2022).

Education

Poverty, gang violence, and migration are the main drivers of student dropouts (El Salvador 07/12/2022 b). Low family incomes force young people into work at an early age, aggravating the dropout situation before high school completion (El Salvador 18/09/2022). Low government investment in the education system (by 2022, only approximately 5.5% of the gross domestic product) does not allow for improvements. Public schools lack adequate facilities, including WASH services and internet access (YSUCA 08/01/2022).



HUMANITARIAN OVERVIEW IN GUATEMALA

Anticipated scope and scale

In Guatemala, around 3.8 million people (more than 20% of the population) are in need of urgent humanitarian aid; over 61% live in poverty; and violence continues to increase, with an average of eight homicides per day (MPPN accessed 09/12/2022; Infoseguro et al. 22/07/2022; OCHA 18/08/2021). Poverty and violence are likely to persist and keep driving migration. Guatemala is vulnerable to multiple natural disasters, such as floods, landslides, hurricanes, and earthquakes. At least 40% of the population is exposed to the risk of five or more natural hazards.

The country is most vulnerable to landslides and floods during the rainy season, which can last from May–October, and to severe droughts from November–March (WB accessed 27/12/2022). Further natural disasters are likely to occur in the coming years.

Humanitarian constraints

Natural hazards, such as hurricanes and tropical storms, are the main obstacles for humanitarian responders. These events cause landslides and damage bridges and roads, making communities inaccessible and limiting the humanitarian response (Radio Pichincha 13/10/2022; Prensa Libre 09/10/2022).

Humanitarian needs

Protection

Between January–June 2022, the number of homicides in the country increased by 1,500 (11%) from the same period in 2021 (Infoseguro et al. 22/07/2022). A variety of criminal groups involve active and retired members of the security forces, as well as experienced smugglers and human and drug traffickers. Corruption and a weak justice system have led to impunity in 90% of murder cases (SWI 08/05/2022; InSight Crime 28/02/2021).

Two Mexican cartels, Sinaloa and Jalisco, have expanded to Guatemala. This expansion has increased violence in the Guatemala-Mexico border areas, with regular clashes between drug traffickers over the control of routes and strategically located community land (Infobae 23/09/2022; Chiapas Paralello 16/07/2022; InSight Crime 18/05/2022). Fighting between communities has increased political violence in San Marcos department, such as conflict between the Ixchiguan and Tajumulco municipalities over municipal border demarcation (Prensa Libre 19/10/2022).

The Maras Salvatrucha and Barrio 18 gangs, which originated in Los Angeles (US) in the 1980s, are also present in Guatemala (Insight Crime 28/02/2021).

Food and nutrition

Between 2019–2021, 56% of the population faced moderate and severe food insecurity (FAO accessed 30/11/2022; WB 20/10/2022). From October 2022 to February 2023, an estimated 3.2 million people are at risk of food insecurity, including 1.2 million children and adolescents (Save the Children/ICEFI 16/11/2022). Until December 2022, the departments of Alta Verapaz, Chiquimula, Izabal, and Zacapa and some areas of Huehuetenango are experiencing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels of food insecurity. The rest of the country are facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity levels, meaning households have minimally adequate food consumption but are unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures (FEWS NET 23/11/2022).

WASH

87% of the population has water access, but 77% of the water is not safe to drink, and most people must treat the water for drinking. Over 60% of urban households and 48% of rural households have aqueduct access. 37% of Guatemalan households do not have sewage drains, making them vulnerable to waterborne diseases from contaminated water. In Huehuetenango department, most people must fetch water from wells and rivers, as only 4% have water pipeline access inside their houses (OLAS accessed 30/11/2022; Prensa Libre 27/01/2022).

Education

The latest available data is from 2019, when only 19% of the population had some level of schooling. 74% of the country's schools are primary and kindergarten, indicating a lack of access to higher education (UNATE accessed 30/11/2022). The national coverage of secondary education or high school is 49% but only 15% in rural areas. Many children and teenagers drop out of school and migrate. In 2021, over 2,000 minors were deported from Mexico and the US back to Guatemala, where they face difficulties reintegrating into the education system (UN 17/08/2021; El Faro 08/2021).



HUMANITARIAN OVERVIEW IN HONDURAS

Anticipated scope and scale

Back-to-back violence and natural hazards significantly affect a growing number of people, limiting the national response capacity (La Prensa 29/09/2022; OCHA 26/09/2022). Flood-induced crop failures will likely increase the number of people facing food insecurity and decrease livelihoods, especially for people living in Yoro and Gracias a Dios departments, respectively located in the centre-north and northeast of the country (PD 29/09/2022). Poor government responsiveness, violence, and the impacts of natural disasters will continue to fuel Honduran migration to Mexico and the US. A persistent lack of employment, a reduction of food reserves, rising food prices, and international supply chain crises resulting from the war in Ukraine are expected to increase food insecurity in Honduras (IPC 24/01/2022).

Humanitarian constraints

The presence of gangs in urban areas, especially in the peripheries, restricts mobility and impedes humanitarian aid access. Increased violence and confinement by armed gangs and drug traffickers limit mobility for rural indigenous and Afro-Honduran communities (Protection Cluster 12/09/2022; La Prensa 15/08/2022). Restrictions imposed on people transiting through Honduras and the payment of high fines for irregular entry make it difficult for people in need to move to areas with better organisational presence and humanitarian aid access (Criterio.hn 17/06/2022; Expediente Público 17/05/2022; 14ymedio 27/09/2022). In November 2020, hurricanes Eta and Iota further reduced the Government's capacity to address humanitarian needs.

Humanitarian needs

Protection

The high homicide rate in Honduras makes it the world's fourth most dangerous country (Statista 05/2022). The annual homicide rate in 2021 was 42 per 100,000 inhabitants. From January–June 2022, the homicide rate decreased to 40 per 100,000 inhabitants, but the violence remained despite this small decline. The main victims of homicide are young people between the ages of 18–30 (UNDP 04/08/2022 and 17/06/2022). As in El Salvador, the Honduran Government has declared a "state of exception", which suspends six constitutional rights, including freedom of movement and the rights of association and assembly (WOLA 07/12/2022; Infobae 04/12/2022).

Food and nutrition

As at February 2022, over 2.2 million people (24% of the analysed population) were facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse levels of food insecurity. Among this number, 241,000 were experiencing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) food security outcomes. For June–August 2022, about 2.6 million people were expected to face IPC 3 outcomes or worse. Gracias a Dios (43% facing IPC 3 or worse), La Paz (30%), and Lempira (32%) were the most affected departments. 23% of children under five were experiencing chronic malnutrition (WFP 27/09/2022).

WASH

61% of urban households and only 27% of rural households have access to a water aqueduct or pipeline system. Only 36% of people have access to sewage drains. Areas lacking proper water treatments have a high risk of contracting waterborne diseases (OLAS accessed 02/12/2022). In October 2022, hurricane Julia damaged 80 water systems, reducing access to water in the departments of Atlántida, Colón, Cortés, Islas de la Bahía, and Yoro (OCHA 13/10/2022).

Education

More than 700,000 children (30% of all children) aged 5–17 are currently out of school. High school coverage is at only 17%. The COVID-19 pandemic made several obstacles more visible, with 40% of families lacking internet access, less than 20% owning a computer at home, and 13% lacking even a radio device in 2020 during confinement. These constraints limited access to education in times of confinement. Many children aged 12–15 enrolled in basic education say they are already thinking about emigrating, which is one of the main reasons children drop out of school (Transformemos Honduras 21/06/2022; PD 07/06/2022).



HUMANITARIAN OVERVIEW IN NICARAGUA

Anticipated scope and scale

Journalists, NGO members, human rights defenders, and government opponents have reported immigration authorities withholding their passports, expelling them from the country, and/or preventing them from returning (La Prensa Gráfica 05/12/2022). Some people are unable to leave the country; at the same time, people who fear they may be subject to document detention may decide to leave the country. In November 2022, the Nicaraguan Government outlawed 88 national NGOs and 12 INGOs (Artículo 66 10/11/2022). In the past, after waves of NGO and politician persecutions, displacement to Costa Rica or the US increased (UNHCR 25/03/2022).

Humanitarian constraints

Since 2018, the Government has increased vigilance and control over national and international NGOs, restricting humanitarian access. In this time, the Nicaraguan Government has shut down close to 3,000 organisations, including more than 100 NGOs and several social, religious, and political groups (Diario Libre 23/11/2022). In March 2022, the Nicaraguan Congress passed a law increasing the President's oversight of NGO finances; in October, it passed another law requiring several NGOs to change their legal status from non-profit to commercial, arguing that they provide financial services (Nicaraguan National Assembly 30/03/2022; Artículo 66 09/11/2022).

Humanitarian needs

Protection

In 2022, the UN Committee against Torture affirmed that the Nicaraguan police has exercised arbitrary detentions, torture, and forced disappearances against government opponents (UN 29/07/2022). The committee reported that the Government refused to cooperate in providing information for the investigations (OHCHR 29/11/2022).

No official homicide data is publicly available for 2021 and 2022. The Nicaraguan Government has granted widespread pardons to minor offenders, which could increase violence rates in the medium term (La Prensa 14/10/2022; NI 10/05/2022).

In 2021, Nicaragua had the highest per capita murder rate against "land and environmental defenders"¹ (Global Witness 13/09/2021; BBC 29/09/2022)

Food and nutrition

As at 2021, Nicaragua had made progress in overcoming hunger through local food production, as domestic agriculture produced 80% of its food, but approximately 17% of children under five still suffered from chronic malnutrition (Peoples Dispatch 27/06/2021). In rural zones, this figure reached 29% (WFP 31/10/2022). Natural disasters, including hurricanes and droughts, regularly affect the country. Along with the economic instability resulting from the sociopolitical crisis, these disasters place the rural population at risk of food insecurity (WFP 31/10/2022; AAH accessed 09/12/2022). Disrupted livelihoods in the agricultural sector would severely affect food security (WFP 31/10/2022). Food insecurity is a main driver of migration and internal displacement in the country (IOM et al. 17/09/2015).

WASH

31% of the rural population does not have continuous access to drinking water (RASNIC accessed 19/12/2022; ECODES accessed 09/12/2022). Access to drinking water is unequal across Nicaragua's departments, with up to 82% of families without daily water access. Even in areas with continuous water access, it is only available between four and 22 hours per day (La Prensa 22/03/2022). 40% of the rural population lacks basic facilities for the evacuation and disposal of human waste (RASNIC accessed 19/12/2022; AECID accessed 09/12/2022). Natural disasters often restrict access to water, sanitation, and hygiene. For instance, in October 2022, hurricane Julia left more than 200,000 Nicaraguan families without potable water access for several days (SWI 11/10/2022).

Education

Although the Government kept schools open during the COVID-19 pandemic, school attendance dropped by up to 60% during 2020, in part because families used child labour to cope with income loss during the pandemic (El País 25/03/2021; UNICEF 11/06/2022).

1. Global Witness defines land and environmental defenders as "people who take a stand and carry out peaceful action against the unjust, discriminatory, corrupt, or damaging exploitation of natural resources or the environment. Land and environmental defenders are a specific type of human rights defender – and are often the most targeted for their work" (Global Witness 13/09/2021).



AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Internal displacement

As at the end of 2021 in **El Salvador**, conflict had displaced an estimated 175,000 people, and natural hazards had displaced over 550 people (IDMC accessed 14/12/2022 b; IDMC accessed 16/12/2022 c). Since July 2022, floods, storms, and October's hurricane Julia have displaced at least 3,000 people (CCCM Cluster et al. 17/10/2022; FloodList 21/09/2022; ECHO 04/07/2022).

At the end of 2021, conflict in **Guatemala** had resulted in over 240,000 IDPs. This figure includes IDPs from Guatemala's 36-year-long civil war, which ended in 1996, and IDPs displaced in 2021. A lack of systematic monitoring of displacements and a lack of trust for people to disclose their situation as IDPs mean that numbers are likely higher. In 2021, Guatemala reported over 15,600 new displacements from natural hazards, mostly floods (IDMC accessed 14/12/2022 c). In October–November 2022, hurricane Julia and tropical storm Lisa caused the evacuation of over 50,000 people because of severe damage to houses (France 24 03/11/2022; IFRC 21/10/2022). After tropical storms, the lack of a home to return to is the next most often cited reason people give for displacing to other regions of the country.

Honduras reports that conflict resulted in over 247,000 IDPs between 2004–2021, but this figure is likely to be an underestimate as there is no up-to-date information and incidents of violence continue (IDMC accessed 14/12/2022 a). In 2021, the Internal Forced Displacement Unit in Honduras received 917 complaints from 2,529 people, among whom 942 (37%) were victims of forced displacement resulting from violence and 1,587 (63%) were at risk of displacement (CONADEH 25/10/2022; SWI 24/10/2022). According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, natural hazards, usually storms, have resulted in over one million IDPs since 2008. From September–October 2022, hurricane Julia resulted in the evacuation of more than 23,000 people across Honduras (IDMC accessed 14/12/2022 a; COPECO/Govt. Honduras 11/10/2022).

There are no up-to-date figures about violence resulting in IDPs in Nicaragua. As at the end of 2021, natural hazards had displaced around 231,000 people internally. In October 2022 alone, hurricane Julia displaced at least 13,000 people (IDMC accessed 14/12/2022 d; La Nación 09/10/2022).

Environmental hazards

The Central American region is prone to hurricanes and tropical storms. In October 2022, hurricane Julia hit the region, killing at least 54 people and affecting nearly one million people across northern Central America. The rainy season and tropical storms affect people attempting to reach Mexico or the US. One child had died and two people were reported missing trying to reach Honduras by boat (Noti Mérica 30/09/2022; PD 22/09/2022).

The 'dry corridor' is a geographical area comprising parts of **El Salvador**, **Guatemala**, **Honduras**, and **Nicaragua** that tends to face extreme weather events every year. Seasonal or transitory food insecurity is common in this area during drought months, as shortages of water for irrigation reduce food availability (SICA 07/07/2022). This zone also experiences long droughts, and the presence of torrential rains and hurricanes is a risk factor for drinking water and sanitation access (Hábitat accessed 16/12/2022). About 20% of households in the dry corridor lack access to safe drinking water (Hábitat accessed 16/12/2022; El Economista 10/02/2022). Water scarcity affects sanitation, health, food production, and resilience to poor harvests. The lack of sewerage systems and access to sanitation increases the risk of waterborne diseases and exposes women and girls in particular to health and protection risks (EFE 30/11/2022).

In **El Salvador**, heavy rains have caused flooding and landslides between September and December 2022. These events have affected different areas, including gang-controlled zones, such as San Salvador, Santa Tecla, and Soyapango (La Prensa Gráfica 25/09/2022; The San Diego Union-Tribune 22/09/2022; Infobae 06/07/2022; El Mundo 10/10/2022).

In **Guatemala**, hurricane Julia affected over 850,000 people, adding to the more than five million already affected by the rainy season. The floods and landslides damaged homes, schools, health centres, and road infrastructure (OCHA 14/10/2022).

In **Honduras**, heavy rains and tropical storms resulted in a government-declared state of emergency in September 2022, and the passage of hurricane Julia affected over 144,000 people (OCHA 14/10/2022; ECHO 26/09/2022). 162 municipalities in 15 departments reported damage to basic and critical infrastructure, including over 3,500 damaged or destroyed houses (COPECO/Govt. Honduras 11/10/2022). Honduras also experienced consecutive droughts between 2016–2020 (IOM 11/05/2021). Communities experiencing recurrent and multiple climate-related disasters in recent years have not been able to fully recover and rebuild (ACT Alliance 27/09/2022).

Nicaragua is also prone to flooding, tropical storms, hurricanes, and landslides, especially in the May–November rainy season. After hurricane Julia, the Government declared a "state of calamity" and evacuated at least 13,000 people. Nearly one million residents along Nicaragua's coastal region lost power and internet for more than three days (COH 15/10/2022; Reuters 10/10/2022; La Nación 09/10/2022).



Inflation and economic crisis

Since 2021, the international price of oil, the war in Ukraine, and the passage of tropical storm Ian and hurricane Julia have driven inflation in the Central American region (Bloomberg 14/11/2022).

In **El Salvador**, the economic crisis has deteriorated after the adoption of bitcoin as the official currency in 2021. The downward trend and instability of bitcoin have affected the funding of care programmes and public service budgets for people in need. The situation has worsened living conditions and access to basic services and goods (Forbes 23/05/2022; El Tiempo 13/05/2022; Expansión 21/06/2022; El País 09/05/2022).

Guatemala is facing the highest inflation since 2008 at 9.7%. The prices of staple foods, such as maize, onion, potatoes, and bread, have increased by 15% (Bloomberg 08/11/2022; DatosMacro accessed 23/12/2022 b).

Honduras is facing a cumulative inflation of 83%, and the annual inflation is expected to be 10%. Staple foods and transportation are the main affected products (La Prensa 28/11/2022; DatosMacro accessed 23/12/2022 a).

As at October 2022, **Nicaragua** had the highest year-on-year inflation (12.2%) of all Central American countries (SECMCA accessed 09/12/2022). Increased food prices have caused about 75% of Nicaragua's inflation (La Prensa 23/12/2022; Artículo 66 15/11/2022). According to World Bank projections, the Nicaraguan economy is expected to grow faster than other economies in the region in 2022 (WB accessed 04/10/2022 a). Despite this projection, the impact of the war in Ukraine on fertiliser prices and the potential reduction in remittances resulting from the economic slowdown in countries receiving Nicaraguan economic migrants mean that the economy remains at a high level of risk (El Economista 18/11/2022).

Pre-existing poverty

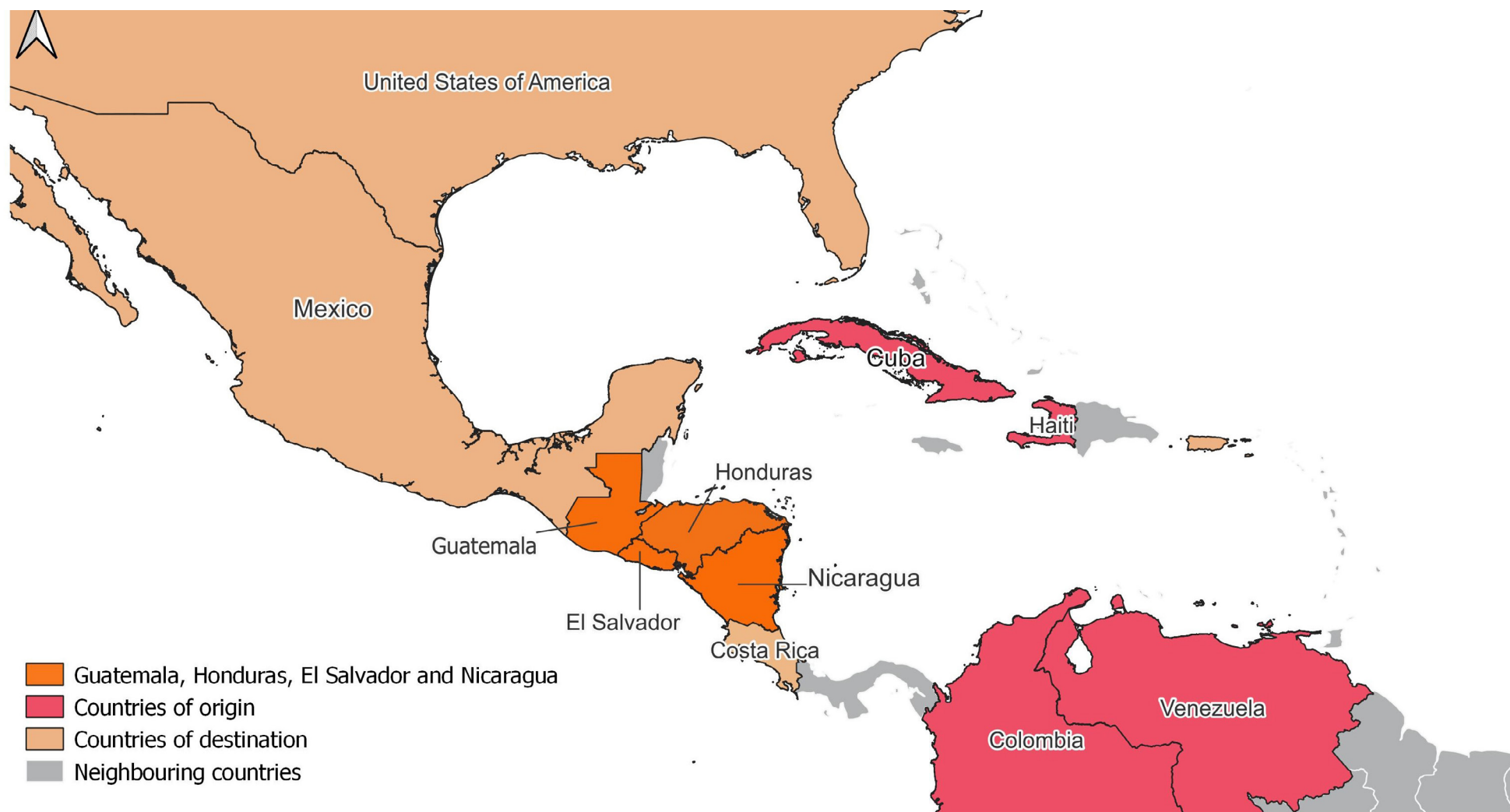
The poverty rate varies in Central American countries. In Honduras, 74% of households are in poverty and 54% are in extreme poverty. The poverty rate in Guatemala is 60%. In El Salvador, it is 23% (WB accessed 04/10/2022 b; SWI 19/07/2022; INE 11/07/2022). In Nicaragua, 30% of the population lives in poverty and 8% in extreme poverty; 50% of the rural population lives below the poverty line, and 11.5% lives in extreme poverty (The Borgen Project 09/07/2020). Poverty rates increased during COVID-19 and are likely to increase further because of climate hazards, armed violence, and the increasing number of people in need and on the move.

INFORMATION GAPS

People on the move: there is uncertainty about the exact number of people on the move in the region. Figures are from government sources and only include people asking for asylum or granted refugee status, excluding migrants and asylum seekers in transit. Regarding internal displacements, there are no up-to-date figures on people moving as a result of violence in Honduras. Existing estimations have not been updated since 2018 (IDMC accessed 15/12/2021).

Nicaragua: there are important information gaps in Nicaragua. The Government does not publish updated IDP figures, and people are also reluctant to disclaim their status. The Humanitarian Needs Overview is only partial as several sectors in Nicaragua, including health and education, have denounced that the Government is taking measures against COVID-19 crisis management critics and those who question official figures (El País 25/03/2021; DW 23/07/2021). These denouncements, coupled with the lack of official data on health, security, and various other sectors, mean that there are large information gaps about people's situations (EE 30/11/2022; Expediente Público 02/07/2020).

MIGRATION FROM AND THROUGH EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, HONDURAS AND NICARAGUA



0 25 50 km

Date created: 03/01/2023
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