



Emergency Relief and Recovery

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



Migrants are served a hot meal at La Casa del Migrante shelter in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico. Photo by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS

CONTEXT

In Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador—as in many places around the world—the impact of COVID-19 is severely affecting people who are already struggling to make ends meet and keep their families safe. At the same time, the increasing number of migrants seeking safety and asylum in Mexico and the United States has led to escalating humanitarian needs, as well as risks for those deported back to their countries.

Humanitarian aid organizations are doing their best to support the rising numbers of migrants, while addressing the root issues that cause them to flee their home countries. Providers are overwhelmed as the demand for services escalates due to an increasing number of people moving in both directions. There are those moving toward the border with the United States—such as waves of Haitian migrants—and those who have been forced to return, but are still far from home. COVID-19 and other health crises, such as chickenpox, have added to the risks and complexities in shelters with limited infrastructure as they work to expand and adapt their services.

In the last weeks of September, many Haitian migrants, tired of waiting for appointments to evaluate their asylum opportunities at the southern border of Mexico, traveled to the northern border where they were forced back by U.S. authorities and faced regulatory barriers by the Mexican government, leading to a crisis at the border with Texas.

127,928

MIGRANTS HAVE RECEIVED ACCOMMODATION, A PLACE TO BATHE AND EAT, MEDICAL CARE AND OTHER SERVICES, THROUGH CRS SUPPORT TO 31 PARTNER SHELTERS SINCE JANUARY 2021.

Handprints of migrant children at a shelter in Mexico. Photo by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS



“The fragility that communities faced before the pandemic has increased, and now there are many families seeking a better life. The Church continues to be the good Samaritan along the road, offering care and support.”

Cecilia Suarez
Head of Office
CRS Mexico

Increased deportations to the Mexico–Guatemala border have exacerbated the region’s humanitarian crisis. In many cases, people are being deported to locations where there are no government or civil society organizations to provide support. Small pastoral-run shelters like those that CRS supports have had to scale up services, food, medicine and provision of basic information to four times their normal capacity.

CRS AND PARTNER RESPONSE

Even before COVID-19, migrant shelters on the route from Guatemala to Mexico had been in a perpetual state of emergency since October 2018, when the first caravan of migrants made its way to the United States. Since then, more migrants have fled violence. They show signs of post-traumatic stress and many are in need of counseling and psychosocial support.

Local faith-based shelters continue to be the first responders to this crisis. They have been working tirelessly for decades to protect and promote the dignity of vulnerable people traveling migrant routes. With limited financial resources, and with support from volunteers, parishes and local communities, these shelters offer migrants a place to sleep, bathe, eat, and receive medical care and other services.

For years, CRS has been supporting migrant shelters along the Mexico–Guatemala corridor, providing critical help to migrants and their families.

We are ramping up support for these partners, providing urgent, quality social services in this rapidly changing context. Since January 2021, CRS has supported 31 partner shelters to serve 127,928 migrants.

Current priority needs for migrants, and the partner shelters who support them, include:

- Food.
- Shelter.
- Psychosocial care and support.
- Legal advice.
- Information about COVID-19 prevention, hygiene supplies, and COVID-19 tests.

CRS has organized training for our partners on migration trends and communication strategies to guide migrants safely on their journey. CRS has also strengthened partner capacity to design and manage small projects. This has led to improvements in shelter facilities, including water, sanitation and hygiene, ramps and infrastructure for the disabled, supplies like kitchen equipment and bedding, and utility upgrades like solar panels, to offer services of the quality required to protect and preserve the dignity of families on the move.

HOW TO HELP

- Donate online: support.crs.org/migration-crisis
- Donate by phone: 1-877-HELP-CRS
- Donate by check: Central America Response, Catholic Relief Services, P.O. Box 17090, Baltimore, Maryland 21297-0303