



children first.



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# CHILDREN UPROOTED

*Responding to the Migrant Caravan in Central America and Mexico*

**A PROPOSAL PREPARED FOR UNICEF NEXT GENERATION**

**NOVEMBER 2018**

# Situation Overview

## THE MIGRANT CARAVAN

The migrant caravan, which started on October 13 in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, has continued its way through Guatemala and Mexico. This movement of people was followed by a second caravan of people who left Guatemala on October 20 heading towards Chiapas State, Mexico, on their way to the United States. Since then, other groups have joined, mostly from Honduras. On October 28, some 700 migrants departed from El Salvador.

To date, nearly 10,000 people have crossed into Mexico from Central America, including nearly 2,400 children. Although the number of people still transiting is hard to determine, it is estimated that close to 7,300 people remain part of the caravan.



Children and their families join the migrant caravan in Honduras.  
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The first stop of the caravan was Tapachula, Mexico. Authorities estimated that approximately 2,337 children were temporarily stationed in Tapachula as part of the caravan before it moved to Huixtla. Later, on October 24, the migrant caravan travelled over 40 miles (9 hours) from Huixtla to Mapastepec. The caravan arrived on October 25 in Pijijiapan, stopped there for a short rest and continued their journey. As observed by UNICEF staff in the field, some members of the caravan marched ahead of others to prepare for the arrival of the larger group while some were left behind due to medical conditions and fatigue.

Immediate humanitarian assistance is required to ensure that children and their families have access to water, nutrition, sanitation, healthcare and psychosocial support, temporary shelter and specialized protection services, such as family reunification. Families attempting to join the caravan need access to information on migratory requirements, required documentation and permits, the migratory route and inherent risks of irregular migration, and practices and instructions to ensure the protection of children.

In Honduras, nearly 50 percent of migrants from the original caravan are now returning. In Honduras and El Salvador, urgent efforts are required to ensure the reintegration of these groups and individuals in their communities of origin, otherwise new outflows are likely.

## THE SITUATION FOR CHILDREN

An estimated 2,400 children traveling with the migrant caravan, which is now in southern Mexico, need protection and access to essential services like healthcare, safe water and adequate sanitation. The long and arduous journey has left

children exposed to inclement weather, including dangerously hot temperatures, with limited access to proper shelter. Some have already fallen ill or suffered from dehydration, according to UNICEF teams on the ground.

Many of the children and families in the caravan are fleeing gang and gender-based violence, extortion, poverty and limited access to quality education and social services in their home countries of northern Central America – El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Sadly, these conditions are part of daily life for millions of children in the region. Each day, families facing these harsh conditions make the painful decision to leave their homes, communities and countries in search of safety and a more hopeful future.

Whether it is done freely or under duress, children and families base the decision to move on a range of factors about their present conditions and their future aspirations. Difficult conditions at home – conflict, poverty, violence, natural disasters, unemployment, among others – weigh heavily in the decision to move towards brighter prospects in other countries – security, family reunification, education, better living standards.

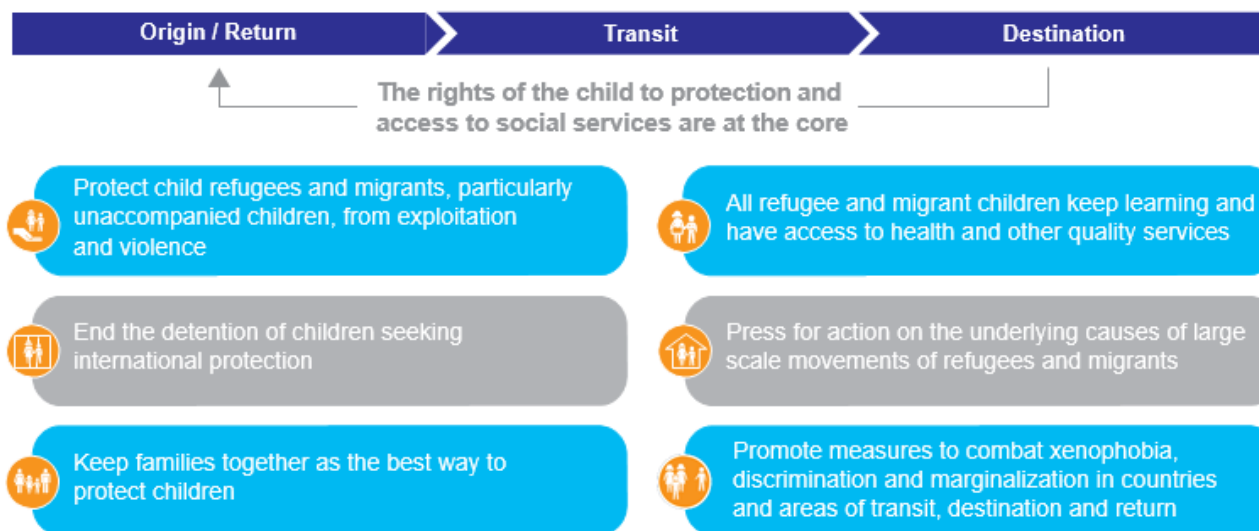
While those traveling with the caravan hope for safety in numbers, the perils of using irregular migration routes remain significant, especially for children. The journey is long, uncertain and full of danger, including the risk of exploitation, violence and abuse. Migrating and displaced children are at risk of some of the worst forms of abuse and harm. They often fall victim to traffickers, and other criminals. Many are subjected to extreme forms of abuse and deprivation during their journeys.

When, and if, these children reach their destination countries, they encounter new threats. Despite extraordinary and generous actions in many places and by many people and organizations, children and their families struggle to gain a foothold.



## UNICEF in Action

UNICEF has had a longstanding presence in Central America and, in recent years, has accelerated efforts to help make sure migrant children in the region are protected and that their rights are respected. Based on findings from the UNICEF report, *Uprooted: the Growing Crisis for Refugee and Migrant Children*, and its work in the field, UNICEF developed six goals and practical suggestions to protect migrants and refugees around the world and provide them with hope for the future.



Today, UNICEF is working with governments in Central America and other partners to ensure that children in the migrant caravan are provided with the support and services they need and that their rights are upheld. This includes providing technical assistance to authorities on nutrition and child protection and expanding access to psychosocial support. UNICEF and its partners are also providing children and families in the caravan with more than 20,000 liters of safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation packs, oral rehydration salts, sunscreen and soap.

Throughout northern Central America and Mexico, UNICEF continues to provide psychosocial counselling for children and families who have endured violence, exploitation and abuse at different stages of the migration journey. UNICEF is also developing models for alternative care to detention and strengthening consular protection for uprooted children.

UNICEF reiterates its call on all governments to prioritize the best interests of children in the application of immigration laws and procedures, to keep families together, and to find alternatives to immigration detention of children.

## The Impact of Your Investment

UNICEF is requesting your support to address the urgent needs of children travelling with the migrant caravan in Central America and Mexico. With your support, UNICEF can deliver much needed humanitarian support – including protection, healthcare, nutrition, safe water and sanitation – to ensure the protection and wellbeing of migrant children and their families.

Detailed below are the activities that UNICEF will implement to respond to the needs of children and their families in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

### MEXICO

In Mexico, UNICEF has identified the need to protect children from two target groups: a) those who are stationed in Tapachula waiting for their asylum request with their families and b) those who are in transit with their families heading to the United States. Following a rapid assessment conducted by UNICEF, the most urgent needs include: 1) spaces to rest and stay out of the rain and other weather conditions – children in the caravan are tired; 2) medical attention and first aid: some of the children are sick and experiencing fever, vomiting and diarrhea; and 3) safe drinking water, which is the main request among migrants in the caravan.

UNICEF's response plan will focus on: 1) protecting children from violence, exploitation and abuse in shelters and public spaces of temporary refuge, as well as providing safe spaces and psychosocial support; and 2) ensuring access to adequate hand-washing and sanitation facilities, as well as hygiene supplies. Key activities include:

- **Provision of Supplies:** UNICEF will provide blankets for children, adolescents and pregnant and lactating mothers to prepare them as they make their way on the northern route during the early weeks of winter. UNICEF is also providing hygiene kits and portable, reusable water bottles to ensure daily access to water.
- **Psychosocial Support:** UNICEF will extend psychosocial support for children, adolescents and their families throughout the application for asylum processes in Mexico's southern and northern borders. For children on the move, UNICEF will organize mobile psychosocial first aid brigades within the migrant caravan in destination or transit cities.
- **Technical Assistance:** UNICEF will provide technical assistance to the National Child Protection System (SIPINNA) to effectively coordinate services for children and adolescents on the move. Assistance will also be provided to child protection attorneys to help them identify and respond to child protection needs of children and adolescents on the move
- **Communication for Development:** UNICEF will disseminate messages to support families in an effort to prevent separation.
- **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene:** The provision of safe drinking water will be provided through water points in each resting point of the caravan and through the installation of portable water purifiers. Currently there is almost no provision of sanitation services. Emergency mobile sanitation facilities will be installed at each transit point.

These activities are also expected to be implemented in the migrant settlements once the caravan arrives in the north of the country, as it is expected that they will be there for a longer period of time.

## GUATEMALA

UNICEF has identified several actions to be carried out that allow the protection of children, adolescents and their families in the migratory transit through Guatemala:

- **Provision of Supplies:** UNICEF will provide migrant families with food, mats, clothing, early childhood development kits and hygiene kits.
- **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene:** To facilitate the appropriate provision of water, sanitation and hygiene services to migrant families, UNICEF will deliver safe water and portable hygiene kits. UNICEF will also work on the installation of toilets, sinks and mobile showers.
- **Psychosocial Support:** UNICEF will expand psychosocial support services for children, adolescents and their families and organize mobile psychosocial opportunities for children and adolescents who move within the caravan of migrants.
- **Communication for Development:** To prevent family separation and violence against children and adolescents, UNICEF will develop communication materials to raise awareness about their particular vulnerabilities. Given the increased risks faced by migrant children, information will be disseminated on ways of preventing sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking of children.
- **Technical Assistance:** UNICEF will provide technical assistance to government institutions in charge of care for children and adolescents on the move. Technical assistance will also be provided to Human Rights Ombudsman for the timely inspection of government actions in the area of protection of children and adolescents in the context of migration.

## EL SALVADOR

In El Salvador, UNICEF aims to provide immediate humanitarian assistance to returned migrant children and adolescents. Key activities include:

- **Provision of specialized kits:** UNICEF will acquire and distribute age-appropriate supplies to returning children. Supplies will include additional clothing, shoes, backpacks and hygiene items.
- **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene:** UNICEF will establish safe water points and provide reusable water bottles to migrant families.
- **Child Protection:** To prevent trafficking of children and other forms of exploitation, UNICEF will print and disseminate communication materials, such as posters and brochures on safe migration and emergency contacts. UNICEF will also produce communication materials for radio and TV on the protection of children in the context of migration, including the prevention of trafficking.

## HONDURAS

In Honduras, UNICEF is collaborating with the Honduran government to provide immediate humanitarian assistance to the 2,200 returned migrant children and adolescents, with a particular focus on unaccompanied children. Key activities include:

- **Immediate Humanitarian Assistance:** UNICEF is working to supply lifesaving humanitarian assistance – including water, nutrition, shelter and medical assistance for approximately 1,000 migrant children, adolescents, and 500 families.
- **Support for Separated and Unaccompanied Children:** For children who have been separated from their families during the journey, UNICEF is working to establish a temporary protection center where they can access specialized protection services. An estimated 300 unaccompanied children will be supported with family reunification services. Protection services will also be provided for returned migrants fleeing violence in their home communities, including relocation and facilitating asylum claims when warranted.
- **Psychosocial Support:** Emergency psychosocial assistance will be provided to help children cope with the emotional trauma from the migratory route (stress, anxiety, lack of sleep, violence, family separation).
- **Reintegration Support:** UNICEF will disseminate information materials for children and parents to ensure the protection of children and availability of services during the reintegration phase. Community-based reintegration support will be provided to returned migrants.
- **Case Management Services:** UNICEF will train social workers and roll-out a standardized case management system to facilitate reintegration of children and their families into their communities of origin, improve monitoring to ensure successful reintegration and to reduce incidence of repeat migration. An estimated 400 returned child migrants will receive case management services and ongoing psychosocial support.
- **Education Support:** Non-formal learning opportunities will be provided to 400 returned migrant children facilitating reintegration into formal educational programs.
- **Social Protection:** UNICEF will provide social protection services and reintegration assistance for returned children, including scholarships, internships for adolescents, housing, skills and workforce development for adolescents and parents.

## THE UNITED STATES

In the United States, UNICEF has identified the need to protect children who arrive with their families, seeking protection and a better life, once they are released from government processing and in the immediate months while their asylum or other legal case proceeds. UNICEF will work with partners to provide:

- **Immediate Humanitarian Assistance:** UNICEF is working to supply nutrition, shelter, basic needs, medical assistance, and transportation to facilitate family reunification at respite centers on the border for their initial few days in the U.S.
- **Case Management Services and Coordination:** UNICEF will support the community-based agencies providing case management services that help families access essential services and understand their legal rights and responsibilities to comply with immigration requirements. In addition, national coordination will help

facilitate these services continue for children and families as they transit from the border to other U.S. destinations or back to Central America.

- **Psychosocial Support:** Emergency psychosocial assistance will be provided to help children cope with the emotional trauma from the migratory route (stress, anxiety, lack of sleep, violence, family separation) through mobile mental health crisis teams.

## The Way Forward

Based on the reports we have received to date, migrant children and their families in Central America are in dire need of essential supplies – clothing, water, shoes, temporary shelter. Furthermore, they are exposed to multiple dangers and vulnerabilities including dangerous terrain, organized crime, corrupt or oppressive officials, and absence of care, or legal representation.

With your support, UNICEF can ensure that uprooted children are provided with the support and services they need during their perilous journey and upon their return.

In addition to meeting the urgent humanitarian needs of children travelling in the caravan, UNICEF will continue to expand and strengthen its work in the region, addressing the root causes of migration and protecting children every step of the way – at home, along their journey and at their destination. Specifically, UNICEF will focus on four priority intervention areas: 1) reducing violence in communities and schools; 2) strengthening child protection systems; 3) protecting children in transit and destination; and 4) reintegrating returning migrant children.

For the thousands of uprooted children who are travelling in the caravan, the future is unclear. What remains certain is UNICEF’s presence in the region and steadfast commitment to protecting and defending the rights of vulnerable children.



## Budget

DESCRIPTION	COST
Mexico	\$500,000
Honduras	\$250,000
El Salvador	\$150,000
Guatemala	\$210,000
Subtotal	\$1,110,000
Administrative costs	\$113,265

Total Costs	\$1,223,265
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**The United Nations Children's Fund** (UNICEF) works in more than 190 countries and territories to put children first. UNICEF has helped save more children's lives than any other humanitarian organization by providing health care and immunizations, safe water and sanitation, nutrition, education, emergency relief and more. UNICEF USA supports UNICEF's work through fundraising, advocacy and education in the United States. Together, we are working toward the day when no children die from preventable causes and every child has a safe and healthy childhood. For more information, visit [unicefusa.org](http://unicefusa.org).

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