World Vision®

Hope at Home:
Building Resilience in Central America

World Vision's framework to address the root causes of forced migration in Central America

April 2021

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, forced migration from Central America has become a crisis that needs to be urgently addressed. People, including unaccompanied children, are on the move to find opportunities to thrive outside their home countries. Addressing the root causes of forced migration is at the core of World Vision's work in Central America.

Forced migration results from various factors and interacting risks that place individuals at sudden or chronic status of high vulnerability, in which their life and well-being are at stake. Children and youth—especially girls and young women—are vulnerable to such fragility, putting them at high risk of violence and mistreatment.

To address these risks and vulnerabilities, **World Vision has designed the Hope at Home: Building Resilience in Central America framework, which aims to address the root causes of forced migration by building resilience at the individual, family, community, and societal levels.** It fortifies existing capabilities to help people in Central America adapt and transform their responses to shocks, enabling an ability to absorb them and recover. The framework proposes a different way to tackle root causes and risks that threaten years of development gains in the region.

In this document, you will learn about:

> How migration trends from Central America are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and hurricanes Eta and Iota

> A new perspective in addressing the root causes of forced migration

World Vision is thankful to all our volunteers, local partners, and frontline staff, who are the hidden heroes making all this work possible.

WHAT IS RESILIENCE? *It's "the ability of households, communities and nations to absorb and recover from shocks, whilst positively adapting and transforming their structures and means for living in the face of long-term stresses, change and uncertainty. Resilience is about addressing the root causes of crises while strengthening the capacities and resources of a system to cope with risks, stresses and shocks.*

"Helping societies to better manage risks and shocks will ensure that our development investments are not undermined or destroyed by crises. Because different types of risks (violence and conflict, natural hazards, economic shocks, etc.) and stressors … are complex and interlinked, humanitarian and development actors, along with states, must work together more closely to target vulnerability." [1]

[1]OECD - http://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/risk-resilience/

In 2014, the world witnessed more than 68,000 unaccompanied children arriving to the southern border of the United States, fleeing increased violence and vulnerability in their ailing communities.[2]

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees indicated that from 2011 to 2016, the number of people Central America (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador) who migrated to surrounding countries increased by 2,249%.[3] In 2016, 388,000 people left the region and more continued to leave in 2017 and 2018.[3]

According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the number of apprehensions of unaccompanied children on the U.S.-Mexico border increased by 586% between March 2020 and March 2021. Family unit apprehensions increased by 1,156% during the same period of time.[4] Most of the unaccompanied children are coming from Guatemala (42%) and the majority of families are coming from Honduras (46%). Sadly, these two countries were heavily impacted by hurricanes in November of 2020. If current migration trends continue, numbers will likely exceed those seen in 2014—despite country actions aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19 such as social distancing and the closure of borders.

[2]U.S. Customs and Border Protection - 2014 https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-border-unaccompanied-children/fy-2014
[3]UNHCR - https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/central-america/
[4]U.S. Customs and Border Protection - https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters
[5]The Washington Post - https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/immigration-border-arrests-surge/2020/07/09/6a1c85a6-c1f9-11ea-864a-0dd31b9d6917_story.html

THE CHALLENGE

The secondary impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated the vulnerabilities of people in Central America, making them prone to migrate despite the risks. Once the world finds a COVID-19 vaccine, we expect migration trends to increase in the pandemic's aftermath. This is affirmed in a recent report by the International Organization for Migration and the U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration: 84% of people who planned to migrate in the previous 12 months would consider resuming the journey when movement restrictions normalize.[6]

These interacting drivers will likely lead to an increase in forced migration in a post-pandemic context:

> **Unemployment and poverty will increase.** The Central American Bank for Economic Integration foresees a worst-case scenario where the region's GDP will decrease by 4.9% and public debt will increase by at least 7.6 percentage points of GDP.[7] Extreme poverty and inequality will increase.[8] The World Bank estimates an overall decline of remittances in the region of 19.3%.[9]

> **The number of people suffering food insecurity will grow as result of unemployment and loss of livelihoods.** Quarantines and physical distancing measures, which are needed to stop the rapid spread of the coronavirus and save lives, are leading to job losses. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 11.6 million more people were unemployed in 2020, compared to 2019.[10] COVID-19 is also reducing personal and household labor income in addition to the environmental hazards impacting the already-stressed region.[11]

> **The number of children out of school and of *ninis*—youth who are neither in school nor in work—will increase given the lack of access to technology and appropriate methodologies for remote learning, as well as school closures.** Education is a key driver for strengthening resilience against adversity and helps families stay in their home countries.[12]

> **Countries have reported increased violence against women, girls, and children, including femicide.** In a context of confinement, school closures, and the need for care should one or more family members become infected, there's been a significant increase in unpaid domestic work assumed by women and girls in addition to violence against them. El Salvador has reported an unprecedented number of cases of violence, including femicides, against women during the COVID-19 pandemic.[13,14] Increasing evidence shows that violence against women and girls is linked to migration trends, especially in Central America.[15]

> **Social protection systems have no impact or limited impact on hard-to-reach populations.** Countries have opted for implementing cash transfers and in-kind transfers like food, medicine, and provision for the cost of basic services. However, inequality and hard-to-reach areas make it difficult for the most vulnerable populations to access these social protection measures.

"84% of people who planned to migrate in the previous 12 months would consider resuming the journey when movement restrictions normalize versus 16% who would not resume the journey even when restrictions normalize."

—International Organization for Migration (IOM)

[6]Effects of COVID-19 on Migrants Main Findings Survey in Central America and Mexico - https://kmhub.iom.int/sites/default/files/publicaciones/surveyeffects_of_covid-19_june_2020_final.pdf

[7]Central American Bank for Economic Integration - https://www.bcie.org/fileadmin/bcie/english/files/news-and-media/publications/conjuncture_report/Economic_Impact_of_COVID-19_Central_America_Argentina_Colombia_and_Mexico.pdf

[8]ECLAC - file:///C:/Users/mgonzale/Downloads/CEPALEI%20desaf%C3%ADo%20social%20en%20tiempos%20del%20COVID19.pdf

[9]World Bank - https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/22/world-bank-predicts-sharpest-decline-of-remittances-in-recent-history

[10]ECLAC - https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/45544-social-challenge-times-covid-19

[11]FEWSNET - https://fews.net/central-america-and-caribbean

[12]Prensa Libre - https://www.prensalibre.com/guatemala/comunitario/desercion-escolar-en-preprimaria-alcanza-el-40-en-los-colegios/

[13]ARPAS - https://arpas.org.sv/2020/04/alarmante-aumento-de-feminicidios-en-el-salvador-durante-cuarentena-denuncian-organizaciones/

[14]United Nations Development Program in El Salvador - https://www.sv.undp.org/content/el_salvador/es/home/presscenter/articles/2020/06/feminicidio-y-violencia-contra-las-mujeres--la-otra-pandemia-que.html

[15]The Dialogue: Leadership for the Americas - https://www.thedialogue.org/analysis/nowhere-to-turn-gender-based-violence-in-the-northern-triangle-and-its-impact-on-migration/

WORLD VISION'S APPROACH

Addressing the root causes of forced migration is at the core of World Vision's work in Central America.

World Vision understands that forced migration is the result of an array of factors and interacting risks that place individuals at sudden or chronic status of high vulnerability, in which their life and well-being are at stake. The COVID-19 pandemic and hurricanes Eta and Iota have intensified such vulnerabilities. Children and youths—especially girls and women—are at extreme vulnerability and at risk of violence and mistreatment.

Using the OECD States of Fragility Framework,[16] World Vision has deepened its understanding of the interacting risks and vulnerabilities driving forced migration that threaten to set back years of developmental gains. The COVID-19 pandemic pinpoints the need to consider the high vulnerability to such interacting risks, and to strengthen the civil and government capacities to adapt and respond.

With the goal of contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals agenda, World Vision has developed the **Hope at Home: Building Resilience in Central America** framework, which seeks to nurture hope at home in countries and reduce vulnerability by advancing a **resilient approach** (risk-informed development). This approach contributes to the well-being of children, youth, families, and local societies through actions in partnership with local communities, local and national governments, faith-based organizations, and civil society. The framework seeks to build resilience at individual, family, community, and societal levels, as well as advocate for more, and more efficient, social investment. It uses World Vision's community-based Early Warning System for Migration to identify the most vulnerable communities and families to inform action and policy change.

[16]OECD Fragility and Resilience - https://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/conflict-fragility/

World Vision's framework to address the root causes of forced migration in Central America

© 2021 World Vision, Inc.

Pillars of the Hope at Home: Building Resilience in Central America framework

Resilient individuals

- Early childhood development
- Holistic nurture of children and youth
- Food security
- Women and girls empowerment
- Youth empowerment
- Market approach to livelihoods
- TIC and digital inclusion
- Civic engagement and participation
- Roots and community identity
- Empowered worldview

Resilient families

- Domestic violence prevention
- Values-based positive parenting
- Food security and nutrition
- Gender equality and inclusion
- Roots and community identity
- Empowered worldview

Resilient communities

- Violence prevention and culture of peace
- Resilient livelihoods
- Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)
- Disaster risk reduction and preparedness
- Social accountability and strengthening governance at local and national levels
- Roots and community identity
- Empowered worldview

Resilient societies

- Strengthening of social capital
- Gender equality and inclusion
- Communication for transformation and hope
- System strengthening at local and country levels
- Engagement of government entities for impactful public investment

Macro context risk monitoring and Early Warning System for Migration (EWS-M)
Scenario-based planning: adaptive management strengthening for individual and collective resilience
Partnerships and collaborations with key sectors, including faith-based organizations

Why Resilience? A call for resilient and sustainable development

Central America is continuously exposed to multidimensional and dynamic risks. Such vulnerabilities have the potential to fracture people's lives—once their response mechanisms are exhausted they are highly vulnerable to migrate as a last resort.

By building resilience capacities at individual, family, community, and societal levels, we aim to reduce vulnerability by enabling people to withstand crises by adopting response mechanisms or transforming structures to fully diminish vulnerabilities—advancing our contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Risks and Vulnerabilities in Central America

Economic	Environmental	Security	Political	Societal
• Low access to services and safety nets to withstand shocks due to remoteness • Lack of opportunities for Youth-at-Risk • Low Human Development & deprivation • Food insecurity • Low digital inclusion	• Disaster risk, especially in the Dry Corridor • Food insecurity • Prevalence of infectious diseases	• Violence against women • Homicides • Violent crime	• Lack of mechanism for exerting citizenship to inform public policy	• Social exclusion among most vulnerable groups (youth, women, indigenous populations) • Uprooted people due to lack of opportunities and low access to services and safety nets

What does it mean to "build resilience"? *Tropical trees bend, not break*

Our work builds resilience by strengthening the ability of individuals, households, communities, and societies to absorb and recover from shocks, while positively adapting and transforming their structures and means for living in the face of long-term stresses, change, and uncertainty. Resilience is about addressing the root causes of crises while strengthening the capacities and resources of a system to cope with risks, stresses, and shocks. Helping societies to better manage risks and shocks will ensure that our development investments are not undermined or destroyed by crises. Because different types of risks (violence and conflict, natural hazards, economic shocks, etc.) and stressors are complex and interlinked, humanitarian and development actors, along with states, must work together more closely to target vulnerability.

Types of Resilience Capacities

> **Absorptive capacity:** The ability of a system to prepare for, mitigate, or prevent negative impacts, using predetermined coping responses to preserve and restore essential basic structures and functions. This includes coping mechanisms used during periods of shock. Examples of absorptive capacity include cash transfers and delaying debt repayments.

> **Adaptive capacity:** The ability of a system to adjust, modify, or change its characteristics and actions to moderate potential future damage and to take advantage of opportunities so that it can continue to function without major qualitative changes in function or structural identity. Examples of adaptive capacity include diversification of livelihoods, involvement of the private sector in delivering basic services, and introducing drought resistant seed.

> **Transformative capacity:** The ability to create a fundamentally new system so that the shock will no longer have any impact. This can be necessary when ecological, economic, or social structures make the existing system untenable. Examples of transformative capacity include the introduction of conflict resolution mechanisms, urban planning measures, and actions to stamp out corruption.

Theory of Change

According to the **Hope at Home: Building Resilience in Central America** framework if we strengthen resilience at the individual, family, community, and societal levels in dimensions where people are highly vulnerable, then people will be more capable to recover from shocks, while positively absorbing, adapting, and transforming their structures and means for living in the face of long-term stresses, change, and uncertainty. Thus, they will be less prone to migrate.

Such efforts need to be holistic, tailored to local context, and built upon existing local and national resources and capacities that advance the priorities of the country, promoting growth, social inclusion, and governance at different levels of society.

OUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

World Vision defines success as the extent to which children and families have hope for a better future and thrive in their own communities. This is reflected when children enjoy good health, are educated for life, experience the love of God and their neighbors, and are cared for, protected, and participating in their communities.

RELEVANCE OF FRAMEWORK

Our framework is informed by promising practices and approaches, and lessons learned from World Vision's work in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.[17]

We recognize that contexts are constantly changing and that unique solutions are required, especially in countries with subnational fragility. World Vision hopes that we may contribute to the learning agenda by sharing what we have seen to be successful in addressing the push factors of vulnerability on forced migration in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.

In summary, we have learned that in order to address the root causes of migration, it is crucial to:

> take action to address the immediate and emerging needs of the most vulnerable population, while also addressing the more structural and cultural root causes of forced migration—done by building resilient capacities at individual, family, community, and societal levels

> address the multidimensional and interacting risks in the root causes of migration in order to create sustainable environments for people to thrive in their home countries, promoting social inclusion and equality

> engage churches, faith-based organizations, and leaders whose unique contributions position them to help shape human worldviews and mindsets, behaviors, and actions, as well as gain access to the most violent and hardest-to-reach communities

> build resilience in youth-at-risk by building and strengthening the life skills and character that will help them thrive (in addition to creating opportunities in the job market)

> empower women and indigenous populations through tailored and targeted approaches—so that they can unleash their full potential

> work with families and communities, as well as local and national governments, to bring about systemic change

> work with country media outlets to foster a culture of peace and hope by creating transformational messages of a better future in one's home country

A full report of lessons learned is available at worldvision.org

---

[17]With the objective of identifying how the context changes, World Vision engaged internal experts to analyze our diversity of programming in the countries to capture the learnings and promising practices in the proposed solutions in addressing the root causes of forced migration. The analysis included programming across different funding sources, in which we can mention programs funded by the government of United States and private donors from the United States, Canada, and Spain. The programs reviewed covered rural, semi-urban, and urban areas where most community members face limited economic opportunities, low education rates, violence, and limited access to suitable entry-level and quality jobs. The programs considered in this analysis spanned between three and 15 years of life of activity.

While there is still much to learn about the context dynamics in Central America, it is World Vision's expectation that the **Hope at Home: Building Resilience in Central America** framework will help different actors of the Central American society work together in building resilience so people can thrive in their home countries.

World Vision invites organizations and entities to join this effort. We're bringing local governments, communities, faith-based organizations, schools, families, and children together with the same goal in mind: increased resilience for the people of Central America, so they can cope with and recover from shocks and experience life in all its fullness.

For further information, contact:

Michele Gonzalez-Mendia
World Vision Senior Regional Engagement Manager — Latin America and the Caribbean
mgonzale@worldvision.org

worldvision.org

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. Motivated by our faith in Jesus Christ, we serve alongside the poor and oppressed as a demonstration of God's unconditional love for all people. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender. RDU15759_1020 © 2021 World Vision, Inc.