

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-19-62](#), report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

In 2014, instability driven by insecurity, lack of economic opportunity, and weak governance led to a rapid increase of unaccompanied alien children (UAC) from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras arriving at the U.S. border. In fiscal year 2017, the Department of Homeland Security reported (DHS) apprehending more than 200,000 nationals from these countries and removed nearly 75,000 nationals, including UAC, of these countries from the United States and returned them to their home countries. Current estimates also indicate nearly 350,000 individuals may need to be reintegrated to El Salvador and Honduras over the next few years when their Temporary Protected Status in the United States expires.

GAO was asked to review U.S. efforts to support the reintegration of Central American migrants. This report describes (1) USAID efforts to assist reception and reintegration of migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras into their home countries since fiscal year 2014; and (2) what is known about the effectiveness of these efforts. GAO reviewed agency program documents and funding data; interviewed officials from U.S. government agencies, IOM, and host governments and beneficiaries; and conducted site visits in these countries.

GAO is not making any recommendations in this report. USAID and IAF provided formal comments, which are reproduced in this report, and all agencies provided technical comments, which were incorporated as appropriate.

View [GAO-19-62](#). For more information, contact Jennifer Grover at (202) 512-7141 or groverj@gao.gov.

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CENTRAL AMERICA

USAID Assists Migrants Returning to their Home Countries, but Effectiveness of Reintegration Efforts Remains to Be Determined

What GAO Found

Since fiscal year 2014, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has provided approximately \$27 million to the International Organization for Migration (IOM)—an intergovernmental organization focusing on migration—for assistance to migrants returning to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Assistance to migrants includes short-term reception services, such as food and transportation, renovating reception centers, and collecting data on returning migrants that are used to support their reintegration. Assistance also includes long-term reintegration efforts, such as counseling services and employment assistance to make it easier for migrants to readjust to and stay in their home countries. These various efforts are in different stages of development.

Location of Reception Centers and Shelters for Returning Migrants Supported by the International Organization for Migration



Source: GAO analysis based on International Organization for Migration documentation. | GAO-19-62

While reception services for migrants have improved, USAID has not yet assessed the effectiveness of reintegration efforts. USAID monitored and assessed reception services through site visits, meetings, and reports from IOM. IOM's early efforts improved the three host governments' capacity to provide reception services to returning migrants. For example, since fiscal year 2014, IOM renovated the seven reception centers and shelters being used in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Further, with IOM's assistance, the host governments have improved their capacity to collect data about returning migrants. According to USAID and IOM, host governments are using these data to design policies and develop programs to provide reintegration assistance. While USAID has not yet assessed the effectiveness of reintegration efforts, many of these programs are just beginning. USAID expects to sign a new agreement by the end of December 2018 that would involve, among other things, monitoring and evaluating reintegration efforts in the three countries.