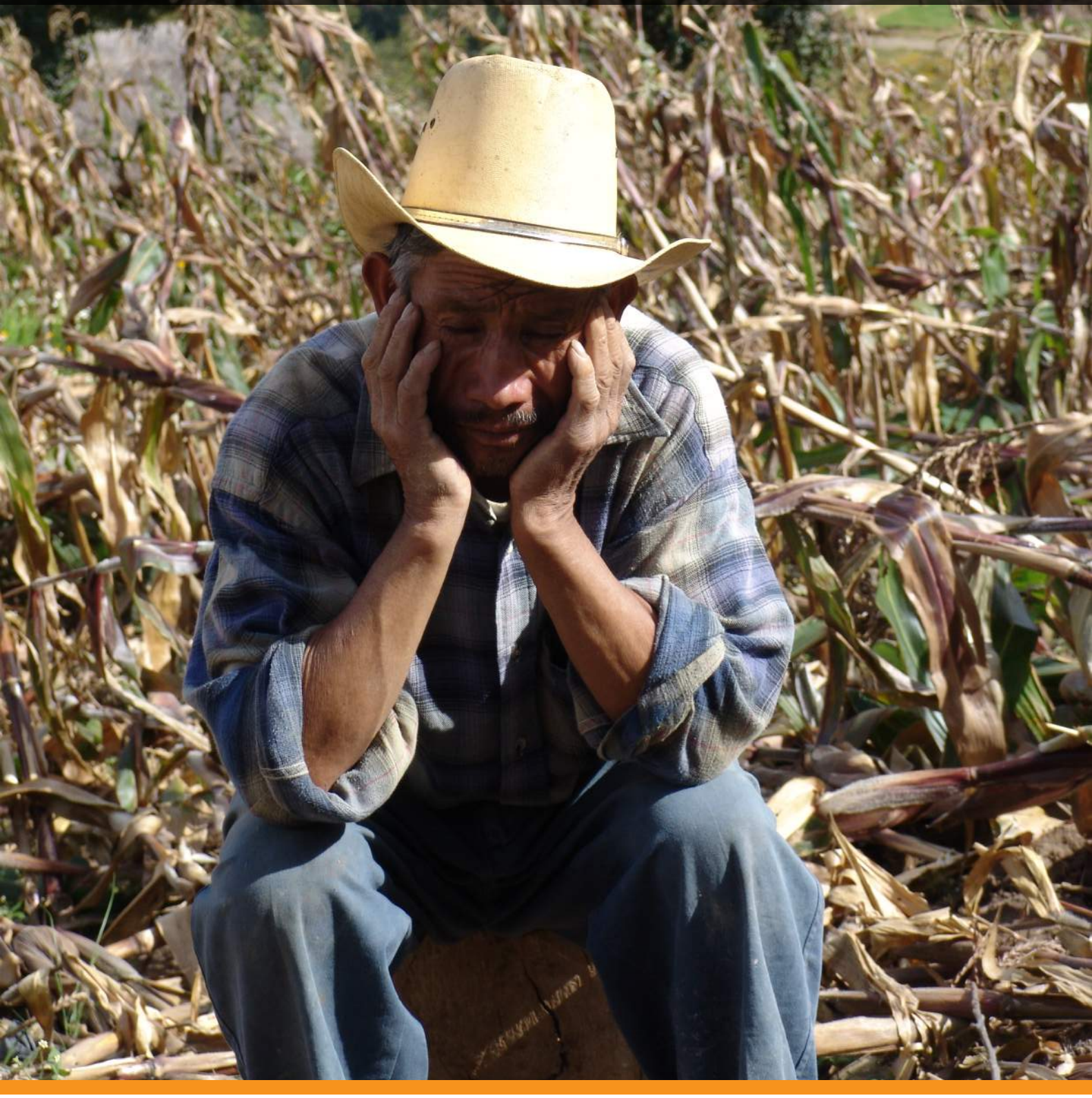
HUNGER WITHOUT BORDERS

The hidden links between Food Insecurity, Violence and Migration in the Northern Triangle of Central America

An exploratory study



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
Organisation internationale pour les migrations (OIM)
Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM)

LSE THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

Organization of American States

WFP World Food Programme wfp.org

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Acknowledgments

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Foreword

While it may seem obvious that food insecurity, violence and migration are interrelated phenomena, there is extremely limited academic research into how they relate to each other. Throughout history both food insecurity and violence have triggered mass migrations. However research and studies tend to focus on only one or two of these three related issues.

With the recent spike and changing dynamics in emigration from Central America's Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador) WFP and IOM partnered in order to increase the collective understanding of these issues.

Prior to this partnership, both organizations have regularly reviewed, assessed and analyzed the situation of these three countries through their individual areas of expertise and focus – food security in the case of WFP and migration in the case of IOM. This collaboration represents an important step in improving the body of evidence on how these two factors, along with violence, interrelate.

This exploratory study has come at a critical time with much of the region continuing to suffer the effects of prolonged dry spells or droughts for two consecutive years. In the Northern Triangle, this has negatively affected many of the most vulnerable segments of society that are largely dependent on one harvest per year and compounded by declining labour opportunities. With continued high levels of violence, one might expect increased migration. WFPs emergency food security assessments conducted in the 3rd quarter of 2014 highlighted an increased reliance on migration as a coping strategy.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, Guatemala has the highest rate of chronic undernutrition, at nearly 50 percent nationally, with significantly higher levels in some parts of the country. With over 90 homicides per 100,000 people, Honduras has the highest murder rate in the world. El Salvador has one of the highest rates of its population living outside its borders at over 18 percent.

These figures provide an indication of the magnitude that these phenomena play in the Northern Triangle, but most important of all is that food security, violence and migration have a human face as well. These factors impact individuals, families, communities and societies in profound ways.

While the most obvious is that hunger and violence push people out of their communities in search of better living conditions, the implications of this vary. Individuals or families may relocate within their own country, often from rural to urban areas, or externally to neighbouring countries or further north to the United States. The process of emigration across borders poses many risks and challenges, often putting households in debt and exposing those migrating to insecurity.

Although many people are deported upon reaching their destination or at points in between, many migrants do make it to and are able to 'succeed' in their adopted countries. They acquire jobs and send money back to their families. These remittances play a very important role in the economy of the countries back home.

There are still many unanswered questions and further research is required. This paper summarizes existing research conducted by WFP, including data collected through household assessments in the three countries, as well as WFP-commissioned research conducted by IOM and the Department of International Development at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

Although exploratory in nature, the report's findings are relevant for government policy. Especially with regards to the different interrelation of food insecurity, violence and migration among countries (as well as within each country). Solutions to address the negative side of migration need to include reinforcement of social protection systems and enhanced mechanisms to mitigate and offset the impact of shocks. The situation of unaccompanied children migrants is particularly concerning. Approaches need to be tailored to different contexts, including rural and urban populations and specific vulnerable groups.

Going into this research we knew that more must be done and the only way to address the underlying causes of these three phenomena is through comprehensive approaches led by national and local governments with strong community participation. Partnerships in support of these governments are critical and this initial collaboration between WFP and IOM in Latin America and the Caribbean represents a step in that direction.

We would like to thank all of those who have made this initial effort possible and we welcome further support from all relevant actors to ensure that our collective understanding – and response – to food insecurity, violence and migration is continuously improved.

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WFP Latin America and the Caribbean

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Executive Summary

This report presents evidence of the linkages (and lack thereof) between food security, violence and migration in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras also known as the Northern Triangle.

The research is part of a joint WFP/IOM effort to better understand how poverty, violence, shocks (both climatic and man-made) and food insecurity jointly affect migration patterns in Central America.

Among the primary motivators of this study is the realization that, though it is logical to presume that some connections exist between these dimensions, evidence is scarce, and the extent of these connections remains largely unknown. Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador share high levels of food insecurity, vulnerability to shocks, economic instability and violence, which are believed to have an effect on migration. Recognizing that food insecurity, violence and migration are multidimensional phenomena, with multiple causes and often deep historical and structural roots, the present report cannot provide an exhaustive account of the reality in the three countries. Instead, it focuses on some of the interrelations between these dimensions, by narrowing down their multiple manifestations and limiting the analysis to certain key aspects.

The original hypothesis that underpins this research is that a connection exists between food security, physical security, economic stability and migration in the countries of the Northern Triangle. The assumption is that migration is the result of a combination of push factors, among which food insecurity and violence, either combined or alone, do play a role. Specific consideration is given to both real or perceived insecurity, and its role in driving individuals and families to flee their villages or to move to another country in search for a better and safer life.

The present report consolidates the findings of two studies conducted during March to May 2015 by the London School of Economics (LSE) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), coupled with additional research and review of secondary data in an integrated analysis. It also incorporates findings of recent WFP-led Emergency Food Security Assessments (EFSA) following the onset of drought in 2014, during which household surveys identified a notable level of out-migration from drought affected areas.

Findings

Findings have been organized around three main streams. The first describes the state of knowledge and evidence on the connections between the variables under scrutiny. The second focuses on the main lessons that can be drawn by combining the results of the literature review, the findings of the IOM and LSE studies, and the research and analysis conducted for the present study. Finally, the third part consists of a description of major gaps, recommendations and next steps.

This research reveals that very limited analysis has been done that combines all the factors that are believed to drive outward migration and describes their interrelation. As pointed out by the IOM research, while there is a rich and varied bibliography on each of the individuals variable significantly less research has been conducted on the relationship between any two of them, and even less when considering at all three variables together.

Literature on the relationship between violence and food security is particularly scarce. Food security as an issue in its own right is also generally absent from the current debate on migration and development, which focuses on economic opportunities, remittance flows, and other issues. Violence is discussed more frequently in relation to migration. This literature places emphasis primarily on criminal activities such as transnational organized crime, street gangs and related violent crime, while other forms of violence such as domestic and institutional violence are analysed to a much lesser extent and usually not in the framework of migration. Whatever the type of violence, evidence on whether and to what extent violence forces people to migrate out of their country of origin remains rather weak.

Following is a summary of the lessons learned:

1. There is a positive correlation between food insecurity and migration in the three countries;
2. Across literature and informants alike, violence is variously mentioned as a driver of migration, though less consistently than economic reasons, and with less certainty;

3. Evidence or perception of a correlation with migratory patterns depends on the type of violence and groups affected;
4. Among the different forms of violence, common crime is the number one threat in most countries of Latin and Central America, including Guatemala, while street gangs violence seems to prevail in El Salvador and Honduras;[1]
5. Violence is not only a socially learned behavior, and widely accepted, but also commonly practiced as a survival and livelihood strategy. As a result, people accord to it less influence on decisions impacting their life, including whether to migrate or not.
6. Economic wellbeing, employment, and family reunification are the most commonly cited motives that induce people to migrate.[2]
7. Migration can be a highly lucrative phenomenon, and remittances represent a fundamental pillar of the GDP in the three countries.
8. Migration of females and children is on the rise as compared to previous years, and brings about an entire new set of concerns.

As anticipated, gaps are also many and range from paucity of data to the limited focus of the analysis of the connection between food security as a cause and migration as an effect, which is only one-way. Other limitations of this study concern the lack of analysis of the impacts of these variables on the indigenous population and other particularly vulnerable groups within the given societies; as well as the limited considerations of in-country mobility, return, and migration across the region and other phases of the migration process. Finally, an interesting aspect that would necessitate more attention is the issue of violence as a tool to migration, for example resorting to illicit activities to gain enough resources to migrate, or after return, either voluntary or forced to pay back the debt incurred to migrate.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- A relationship exists, especially between food security and migration, and migration and violence, and to a lesser degree also between food security and violence.
- In some aspects, available evidence is not conclusive. Existing sources are at times contradictory, methods of research are not comparable, and data sets vary greatly and are often not completely reliable.
- Where evidence of a relationship can reasonably be asserted, the extent, breadth and consistency of it across the countries under study is mostly unknown.
- Relationships between food security, violence and migration are not clearly defined. Food insecurity or physical insecurity should not necessarily be considered as the only, nor the most important, drivers of migration in any of the situations analysed.
- Whatever the nature and extent of the relationships, it is important to remember that it is not static, rather is likely to change over time, across countries and population groups, reflecting the variability that was found in relation to the single dimensions. Hence the need for more specific and regular in-country analysis.
- Within this framework, thus far analyses have been mainly focusing on security or economic-related factors of migration, while food security remains a largely neglected area.

This leads to the conclusion that ***once the linkages between food security, violence and migration are better understood and factored in into food security, protection and migration-related interventions in the countries of the Northern Triangle, this would allow for better prevention and mitigation of the negative effects of migration, and possibly also maximization of its benefits.***

Recommendations

Recommendations mirror the way the present report has been structured. Distinction is made between those aimed to advance the knowledge and evidence base; and those meant to inform policy and programme

[1] *UNDP (2013). op. cit. , p. 3.*
[2] *Jonathan Hiskey, Mary Malone, and Diana Orces (2014). op. cit.*

design and implementation.

A general consideration that pertains to the first category is that there is a need to ***build robust evidence on the relationships between food and physical security and migration.*** More specific recommendations are:

- Increase understanding of the differential impacts of violence and food security on migratory patterns of various population groups across the three countries, including more nuanced knowledge on the types of violence, people's vulnerabilities, food security challenges and opportunities and the gender roles and dynamics therein;
- Deepen the research and analysis of migratory patterns of particularly vulnerable groups such as indigenous, minorities and others, and the influence of food security and violence in this context;
- Further the analysis of the problems and opportunities created by migration with regards to food and human security in rural and urban settings in countries of origin;
- Understand the social implications of the recent surge in female migration, its causes and contributing factors;
- Deepen the analytical understanding of violence, to systematically address its forms and the aspects affecting different population groups;
- Further research on the differences between in-country and cross-border migration, and the role of food security and violence therein;
- Investigate further the impact of migration and remittances on the adoption of poor food habits by recipient households, with negative implications on the food and nutrition security of poor households in the countries of origin.

As for policies and programmes, recommended actions are to:

- Increase efforts to counter food insecurity and violence in the three countries in order to contribute to reducing migration of recent years and to mitigate the negative repercussions this is having on both migrants and families at home. This requires a sustained and predictable level of development assistance in vulnerable areas ensuring that livelihoods are viable and sustainable as is access to quality basic social services;
- WFP and IOM to continue to engage in a dialogue to identify each organization's comparative advantages and capacity gaps in addressing the problems and maximizing opportunities deriving from the interrelations between food security, violence and migration and how they can best be leveraged.
- Design activities specifically targeted to the youth and children whose parents have migrated or are planning to, in order to strengthen their resilience to crime and violence, particularly recruitment by gangs or reliance on illicit activities for survival or to facilitate migration;
- Design activities to support deportees and returnees in their process of re-integration, including psycho-social support and other types of assistance;
- Design actions to capitalize on existing opportunities and capabilities in-country and ensure investments are made to effectively and sustainably enhance them;
- Support livelihood strategies of migrants' and non-migrants' households, depending on their needs, with special emphasis on the opportunities and challenges of non-migrants, to ensure they are not left behind;
- Find ways to support the state to counter the various forms of crime and violence, in line with each organization's mandate and comparative advantages;
- Find ways to bridge between migration experts and frameworks, and food and human security researchers and practitioners to overcome the disconnect that currently exists between the three areas of investigation that have led to a lack of understanding and misleading practical approaches.
- Closely linked to the previous recommendation, strengthen capacity for a common advocacy strategy through enhanced dialogue and understanding among relevant UN agencies and other international organizations.
- Finally, adopt a progressive two-pronged approach that consists of: (1) Research, deepen understanding, and lay out a strategy to more systematically capture and integrate these aspects in food assistance and migratory interventions; (2) More in-depth analysis in the three countries of concern as the basis for specific recommendations for policy and programme interventions.

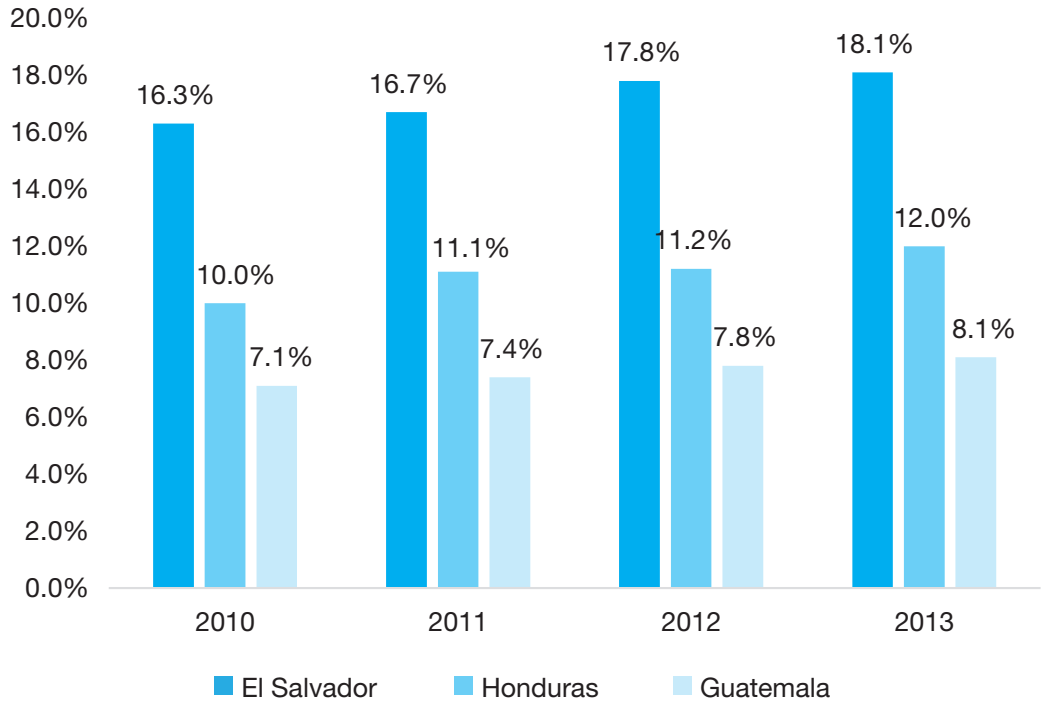
1 Introduction

This report presents evidence of the linkages (and lack thereof) between food security, violence and migration affecting Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, also known as the Northern Triangle.

Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador share high levels of food insecurity, vulnerability to shocks, economic instability and violence, which are all believed to have an effect on migration.[3]

Among the primary motivators of this study is the realization that, though it is logical to presume that **some connections exist between these dimensions, evidence is scarce, and the extent of the connection remains largely unknown.** Meanwhile, recent years have witnessed a sharp increase in the number of unaccompanied children from these countries, coupled with an increase in the already high number of adults, though to a lesser degree. As of today, millions of Central Americans reside abroad (see Graph 1 below), 80% of them live in the United States.[4]

Graph 1: Central American Migrants as a Percentage of Country Population



1.1 What are we talking about

Before even attempting any definition, it is paramount to recognize that food insecurity, violence and migration are multidimensional phenomena, with multiple causes and often deep historical and structural roots, whose dynamics cannot be fully captured by a study like the present one, which is by nature limited in time and scope.

This report therefore doesn't have the ambition to provide an exhaustive account of the reality in the three countries of concern with regards to violence, food security and migration, rather **it tries to better understand some of the possible interrelations between these different dimensions,** including by narrowing down their multiple manifestations and limiting the analysis to some key aspects, as it is more thoroughly explained in the section on the methodology.

[3]*Refer to the following sections for a more detailed definition of migration and the forms considered in this study.*
[4]*Manuel Orozco and Julia Yansura, (2014). Understanding Central American Migration: The Crisis of Central American Child Migrants in Context, Inter-American Dialogue, August 2014, Washington DC: Inter-American Dialogue. http://www.thedialogue.org/PublicationFiles/FinalDraft_ChildMigrants_81314.pdf Graph 1 reported in the current page was also taken from this publication.*

1.1.1 Food insecurity: Access, availability, utilization, and stability

The definition of food security considers *all time physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.*[5] Food security results from a combination of food availability, access, and utilization.

Food availability refers to the quantity of food, which should be sufficient and consistently available. Generally reference is made not only to local production, but also to the food made available through trade and aid.

Food access refers to the physical, social and economical ability to regularly acquire enough quantities of nutritious food.

Food utilization looks at how the food is stored, preserved, cooked and shared among family's and community's members to ensure its nutritional potential is maximized.

Finally, the use of the term 'regularly' suggests that stability over time is also relevant.[6]

So defined, food insecurity is a common feature in the countries under consideration and the hypothesis underpinning the study is that it could act as a driver of migration, i.e. migration could be one of the strategies used by households to cope with food insecurity.

1.1.2 Violence, its forms, settings, and motivators

WHO defines violence as *the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation.*[7] For the purpose of this study, we primarily consider violence as direct physical violence perpetrated by individuals or groups, against other individuals or groups. There is moreover the need to differentiate between different typologies of violence depending on the motivators behind it. Forms of economic violence are street crime, robbery, theft, drug trafficking, kidnapping, etc.; political-institutional violence includes civil war, terrorism, violence perpetrated by political institutions such as the army, the police, etc.; and social-interpersonal violence involves domestic violence, sexual assaults, and so on.

Violence directly affects individuals' and communities' wellbeing, undermines democracy and it represents a serious impediment to development. Certain forms are more common to domestic settings while others occur mostly in the public sphere. For example, though statistics are poorly descriptive of the motives behind homicides, many sources indicate that a significant portion of lethal violence against women takes place at the domestic level.[8]

Among the most commonly cited forms of violence in Central America are gang street violence, particularly by the youth; extortion; robbery;[9] violence related to drug trafficking and other transnational crimes; illegal violence by state agents; and intimate partner or family-related violence, including the so-called femicide, or gender-related killing of women. Two common terms that it is necessary to define in relation to violence in Central America are maras and pandillas. Maras is a term popular in Central America in the 80s and 90s with reference to street gangs. Pandillas on the other side, typically refers to a band of youth, which can qualify as maras only after participating in criminal violence.[10]

[5] *FAO, IFAD, WFP (2014). The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2014. Strengthening the Enabling Environment for Food Security and Nutrition. Rome: FAO, p. 50. http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4030e.pdf*

[6] *FAO (2006). Food Security, Policy Brief Issue 2, June 2006, Rome: FAO. http://www.fao.org/forestry/13128-0e6f36f27e0091055bec28ebe830f46b3.pdf.*

[7] *WHO, UNODC, UNDP (2014). Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014. Geneva: WHO, p. 84. http://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/crimeprevention/9789241564793_eng.pdf*

[8] *OHCHR, "Ending Impunity for Femicide across Latin America", 25 August 2014. http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/EndingImpunityLAC.aspx, accessed 14.05.2015. UNODC (2014). (2014). Global Study on Homicide 2013, Vienna: UNODC, p. 52. http://www.unodc.org/documents/gsh/pdfs/2014_GLOBAL_HOMICIDE_BOOK_web.pdf*

[9] *Robberies have tripled in the past 25 years becoming the most common crime in Latin America. UNDP (2013). Regional Human Development Report 2013-2014. Citizen Security with a Human Face: Evidence and Proposals for Latin America. New York City: UNDP, p. 1. http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/citizen_security_with_a_human_face_-executivesummary.pdf*

[10] *Jose Torres, "Masculinity in Salvadoran Gangs: the "Normalization" of Violence, in La Ceiba, Central America Studies Journal, 15 April 2015. http://laceibajournal.com/2015/04/15/masculinity-in-salvadoran-gangs-the-normalization-of-violence/*

Corruption, poor development, and the legacy of past conflict such as easy access to arms,[11] broken social and family ties, displacement, trauma, large youth populations all combine to maintain an elevated level of crime and violence in the countries studied. Beyond the suffering this creates, crime and violence also carry staggering economic costs for the countries affected. These primarily relate to investments in citizen security, law enforcement and health, but also result in dragging down economic growth.[12] High levels of impunity and corruption result in a paralysis in the ability of the State (police, judges, prosecutors, prisons, and so on) to ensure adherence to law and order, undermine citizens' trust in the state, and divert important resources that could have been used to promote economic activity to strengthen law enforcement.

As for the demographics of victims, globally 79 percent of homicide victims are male, which is almost four times the global average female rate.[13] According to UNHCR, unaccompanied minors, single women and women heads of household with young children are among those more vulnerable to organized crime activities. It is important to note that to date there is no unique definition that could help standardization and comparability of data on homicide and other crimes across countries, thus caution is needed when interpreting numbers and statistics.

As far as this study is concerned, violence is considered as a possible influencer of migration in and out of the countries of the Northern Triangle, and in its cause-effect relationship with food security. Importantly, emphasis is mostly on violence suffered by migrants prior to or during displacement, while a decision was made not to consider the potential violence migrants may suffer in the countries of destination.

1.1.3 Migration

This study adheres to the broader definition framework adopted by IOM that moves away from the traditional concept of migration to the so-called *human mobility,* which is more encompassing and also accounts for phenomena such as trafficking of human beings, refugees, and asylum. Mobility is considered as a process along a cycle composed by the phases of emigration, immigration and return, each with its own characteristics. Yet, within this framework, the emphasis of this research has been primarily on emigration, and to a lesser extent on mobility within the country of origin, immigration or return.

By defining the various phases of relevance to this study, it is moreover important to clarify that the perspective from which they are taken is that of the countries of origin. Further clarifications include, return can be either voluntary or forced, in which case is also commonly referred to as **deportation.** And finally, **forced displacement or migration**[15] caused by organized crime is not yet recognized as ground for international protection and assistance, thus victims are mostly treated as socio-economic migrants. This again could have important repercussions when considering data and information on migrants.

1.2 Linkages between the three variables: The initial hypothesis

The original hypothesis that underpins this research is that a connection exists between food and physical security and economic stability in the countries of the Northern Triangle, and the extent of migration of the populations in these countries. More specific, the assumption is that migration is the result of a combination of push factors, among which food insecurity and violence, either combined or alone, do play a role.

As far as the protection dimension is concerned, forms of violence such as extortion, homicide, and gang fight can negatively impact food security for example by weakening small businesses, causing rises in food prices and loss of income. Similarly, food insecurity could easily lead families and individuals to resort to negative coping mechanisms and risky behaviours such as illegal migration, incurring risks of abuses and

[11]Data seem to indicate that weapons intensify crime. According to the 2012 Organization of America States (OAS) report on Citizen Security in the Americas, 78% of the homicides in Central America and 83% in South America are committed with firearms. UNDP (2013). op. cit., p. 2.

[12]According to estimates by the World Bank, a 10% reduction in the violence levels of Central America countries could boost annual economic growth per capita by as much as a full one percent. World Bank (2011). Crime and Violence in Central America: A Development Challenge. Washington DC: World Bank. http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLAC/Resources/FINAL_VOLUME_I_ENGLISH_CrimeAndViolence.pdf

[13]UNODC, (2014). op. cit. , Vienna: UNODC, p. 28.

[14]Centro International para los Derechos Humanos de los Migrantes (CIDEHUM) UNHCR (2012). Forced Displacement and Protection Needs produced by new forms of Violence and Criminality in Central America. Document prepared at the request of UNHCR, p. 6. http://www.rcusa.org/uploads/pdfs/Violence%20in%20CA%20Final20%20July2012.pdf

[15]More details on key migration terms can be found in IOM Glossary on Migration, International Migration Law Series No. 25, 2011. http://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms, accessed 3.05.2015.

exploitation, and joining criminal gangs or indulging in criminal acts.[16]

Real or perceived insecurity, though probably not a primary motivator, certainly plays a role in driving individuals to flee their villages or to move to another country in search for a better and safer life. Though the relationship between violence and migration is not always straightforward, it is reasonable to think that spikes in violence and criminal activity could lead to a surge in human mobility. Migration itself is not without risks. Depending on the phase, these could take the form of unsafe and undignified travelling conditions, trafficking, sexual abuse, forms of slavery, for example to pay back the debt contracted to migrate, etc. How this reciprocal relationship manifests itself however is often unknown due to the incapacity of governments to track, and assist, and to the often-unlawful nature of these phenomena, which contributes to make them hidden.

As it stands, governments have few incentives to limit or regulate the migration flow as the earnings it carries are significant and are not limited to the individual migrant, and his or her family, but extend to the community and the economy of the country of origin as a whole.

1.3 Why the Northern Triangle?

Given the quasi-regional focus of this study, an analysis of specific contexts is needed to highlight similarities and differences between the three countries covered, and explain the reasons for choosing them.

While relying on the aforementioned studies by LSE and IOM for a detailed description of single country contexts, a brief comparative analysis is provided here in order to clarify the variables under study.

First and foremost, the geography and location as the bridge between South and North America, has traditionally made Central America a natural source of migrants, a transit for both intra-regional and transnational migrants, as well as a destination, including for returnees and deported people.[17] In the word of an author:

> *Somos un país – puente, corredor de tragedias, pasillo de ilusiones desesperadas, canal de esperanzas y frustraciones.*[18]

Of the three countries that constitute the Northern Triangle, Honduras is lowest ranking in the Human Development Index (HDI), 129 of 187, while Guatemala scores lowest (112) in the Gender Inequality Index (GII). Honduras also boasts the highest income inequality in the region,[19] with a further increase after the 2009 military coup.

Guatemala and El Salvador share a history of civil war and persistent violence, which over the years induced many citizens to migrate. Even without a history of internal conflict, Honduras follows suit, especially after the decimation of the political and police infrastructures that followed the coup in 2009.

In 2012, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon declared Central America the most violent region in the world. There the homicide rate rose to an epidemic level since 2000, in spite of the global decline of 16% registered globally.[20] Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala ranked the first, fourth and fifth highest in the world respectively with regards to homicide rates.[21] Honduras remains the most violent country in the world today, with a number of homicides that have tripled since 2003.[22]

Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala are also amongst the poorest and the most food insecure countries

[17]IOM (2015). Evaluando el relacionamiento entre la seguridad alimentaria como un factor de migración interna y externa dentro de un contexto de violencia y crimen en los países del triángulo norte: Guatemala, Honduras y El Salvador. Costa Rica: IOM.

[18]We are a country – a bridge, a corridor of tragedies, a passage for desperate illusions, a channel of hopes and frustrations. Victor Mexa (2005). Migracion y seguredad. Tegucigalpa: Centro de Documentacion de Honduras.

[19]The Human Development Index is a composite statistic comprised of life expectancy, education, and income indices. UNDP (2014). Human Development Report 2014: Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience. NYC: UNDP. http://www.pnud.org.br/arquivos/RDH2014.pdf. To illustrate income inequality, some additional data can be found in Annex 3.

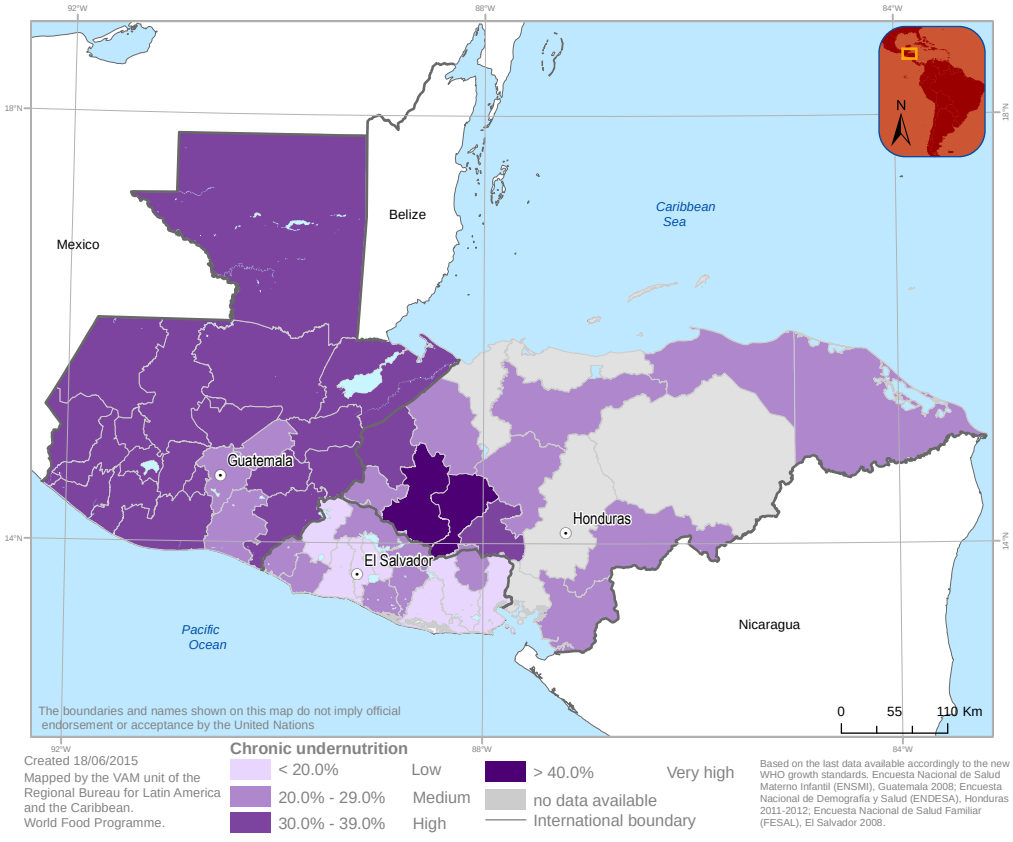
[20]Reference to this can be found in UNODC (2014), op. cit.; UNDP (2013). op. cit.; and Steven Dudley, "Criminal Evolution and Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean", Insightcrime, Thursday 26 June 2014, http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/evolution-crime-violence-latin-america-caribbean.

[21]UNODC (2014), op. cit. Data generally do not account for the unquantifiable number of un-reported deaths of missing people found in secret places. (UNODC, IUDPAS, IML, INACIF 2014).

[22]Steven Dudley, op. cit.

in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region.[23] Food insecurity particularly affects rural areas. Among the three, Guatemala has the highest prevalence of undernourishment for the period 2011-2013, 30.5% as compared to 11.9% of El Salvador and 8.7 for Honduras, as well as the highest prevalence of chronic under nutrition in children under five for the period 2004-2012 (see Annex 3).

Map 1: Chronic undernutrition in children under five at department level in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.



Food insecurity and hunger are closely associated with extreme poverty. According to recent data, Honduras has the highest percentage of persons living in poverty and indigence in the whole of the Latin America and Caribbean region.[24] In 2012, two of the three concerned countries (Honduras and Guatemala) registered the highest levels of multidimensional poverty in the entire region, with 70.5% and 70.3% respectively, following only Nicaragua (see Graph 2 below).[25] El Salvador registered the highest percentage of its population living abroad. Another of the region's distinguishing features is inequality in the distribution of resources and the exercise of rights.[26]

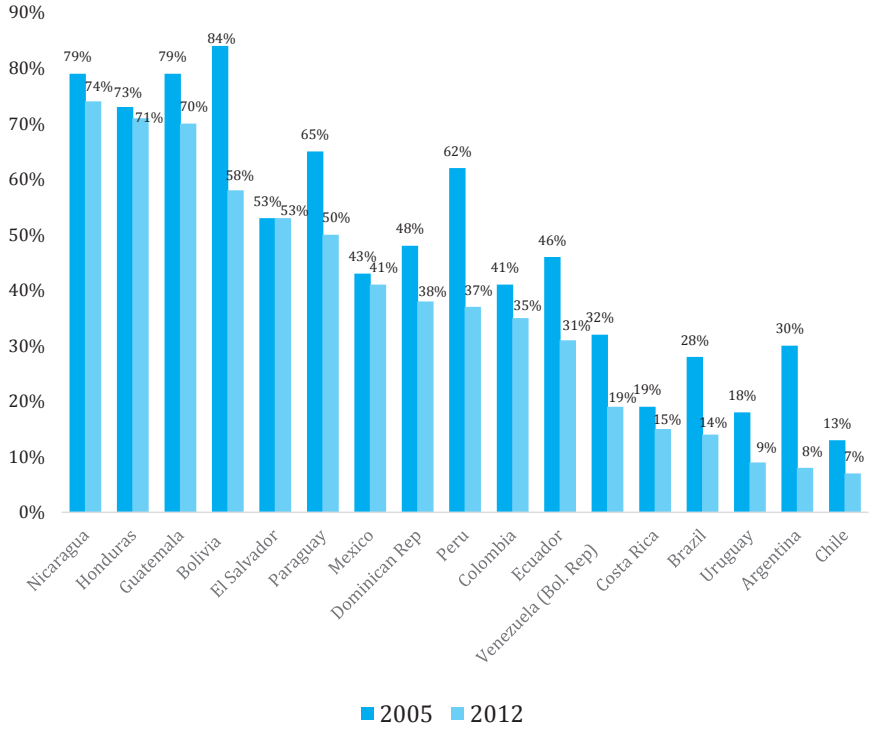
[23] *FAO (2015). Panorama de la Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional en Centroamerica y Republica Dominicana 2014. Panama: FAO. http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4349s.pdf*

[24] *Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (2014). Social Panorama of Latin America. Santiago del Chile: ECLAC, p. 17. http://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/37627/S1420728_en.pdf?sequence=4 See also Annex 3: Key Regional Social Economic Statistics of Selected Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean*

[25] *Multidimensional poverty is a composite of different dimensions and thresholds of poverty that aggregates non-monetary and monetary dimensions, and considers deprivation in employment, social protection, and low educational achievement. For more details on construction of the index, see ECLAC (2014). op. cit. p. 17.*

[26] *While Latin America is not the poorest region in the world, it stands out as the most unequal. ECLAC (2014), op. cit, p. 21.*

Graph 2: Latin America (17 countries): multidimensional poverty, around 2005 and 2012[27]



At the time of writing this report, in addition to the coffee rust plaque, a prolonged dry spell that hit Central America in 2014 has further deteriorated the food security status of over a million of people in the three countries. According to estimates, more than 1.5 million people are now suffering from severe or moderate food insecurity. This equates to 25 percent of households in Guatemala, 36 percent in Honduras, and 13 percent in El Salvador.[28]

Movement within and out of these countries has become an important emergency strategy adopted by the population to cope with the dire economic and security situations.[29] Among the three countries, Honduras has the most recent and Guatemala the longest standing tradition of international migration. Despite this, Honduras boasts a higher percentage of its population abroad as compared to Guatemala (see graph in the introductory section above).[30]

Finally, though not necessarily less important, natural hazards and the effects of climate change are also variously analysed as common features affecting the three countries. Guatemala and Honduras for example are amongst the countries mostly affected by natural hazards in the Central America region.[31]

All of the above combine to explain the rationale behind the choice to make these countries the focus of this study.

1.4 Methodology

The present report intends to consolidate and present in a coherent manner the findings of two studies conducted by LSE and IOM respectively over the period March-May 2015. The studies were undertaken

[27]Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), (2014) on the basis of special tabulations of data from household surveys conducted in the respective countries. a Data for Nicaragua refer to 2005 and 2009. b Data for Honduras refer to 2006 and 2010. c Data for Guatemala refer to 2000 and 2006. d Data for the Plurinational State of Bolivia refer to 2003 and 2011. e Data for El Salvador refer to 2004 and 2012. f Data for Paraguay refer to 2005 and 2011. g Data for Mexico refer to 2004 and 2012. h Data for the Dominican Republic refer to 2006 and 2012. i Data for Peru refer to 2003 and 2012. j Data for Colombia refer to 2008 and 2012 k Data for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for 2005 and 2012 refer to urban areas. l Data for Uruguay for 2005 refer to urban areas. m Data for Argentina for 2005 and 2012 refer to urban areas. n Data for Chile refer to 2003 and 2011.

[28]WFP (2015), Global Food Security Update, Issue 17, March 2015, Rome: WFP. http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp272750.pdf

[29]Others include begging, selling livestock and land. WFP (2015). op.cit.; IOM (2015). op. cit.

[30]Manuel Orozco and Julia Yansura, op. cit., p. 3.

[31]Examples of recent disasters are the tropical storm Agatha, and the eruption of the volcano Pacaya in 2010; the tropical storm E-12 and the earthquake in Santa Rosa in 2011; and another earthquake in the Department of San Marco in 2012. IOM (2015). op. cit.

in order to ascertain the connections between food insecurity, violence and migration in the countries that compose the Northern Triangle, namely Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador.

Though focusing on the same dimensions, the two studies varied in scope and methodology. The study conducted by LSE explored the correlation between economic, food and physical insecurity, and migration out of the concerned countries through the development of a statistical model. To do so, it used consistently available data on food availability, poverty, unemployment, climate shocks, conflict and net migration as a proxy due to lack of information on outward migration. The study also included a literature review and quantitative analysis of time-series country level data from 1980 to 2013. As per the statistical model, migration was taken as the (only) dependent variable, while the others were treated as independent. This means that food security and violence were considered only for their potential to impact on migration, and not as resulting from it.

IOM on the other hand, relied on a mix of desk review, statistical analysis, field-based key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The statistical analysis relied on data from national census, Human Development Reports, agricultural production, health and democratic security indicators of the three countries under analysis. The IOM study maintained the broader perspective that was initially proposed in the concept note, which looks at the variables in a reciprocal cause-effect relationship.

Interestingly, in both researches the relationships between food security and migration is prioritized over violence, also due to the greater difficulties associated with investigating in areas with high rates of insecurity. Finally, it is important to mention that the present report also benefits from some additional research and revision of secondary sources, as well as from a thorough analysis and consolidation of the results of the two original studies. In this respect, it should not be seen as a mere compilation of findings, rather it developed to become a contribution to the debate on international migration and its influencing factors by itself.

2 Findings

2.1 State of the evidence and knowledge base

This section provides an overview of the state of knowledge and thinking on the connections between food security, violence and migration that emerge from the review of secondary sources. For clarity, it is important to note that the considerations that follow only reflect what could be found in the existing literature and do not integrate the results of the LSE and IOM studies, which will be analysed in the section on lessons learned below.

Though most sources recognize that migration is a multidimensional and multi-layered phenomenon, t**here is hardly any analysis that combines all the factors that are believed to drive it and how they possibly interrelate.** As rightly pointed out by the IOM study, while there is a rich and varied bibliography on each of the variable taken alone, numbers diminish significantly when considering the relationship between two of them, and drop to close to zero when considering all the three variables together.[32] This was further corroborated by the additional research conducted in preparation for the present report.

Another interesting finding is that for the most part existing literature does not elaborate much on the relationship between violence and food security; rather it tends to focus on one or the other dimension and their implications on the migration process. This is inevitably reflected in the two studies that form the basis of the present report.

As far as food security is concerned, a review of existing literature reveals that it is generally absent from the current debate on migration and development, which prioritizes issues such as economic opportunities, remittance flows, and so on. There is an apparent disconnect between food security and migration, which is also exemplified by the way the two issues are generally identified as problematic. Migration is either seen as a means through which providing remittances, therefore contributing to the consumption of those who stay behind, or conversely as a loss in terms of (agricultural) productivity and labour force. Food insecurity

[32] *IOM (2015), op. cit.*

on the other hand is primarily seen as an issue affecting the rural poor, who are in no way representative of the whole range of migrants, nor exemplify the range of impacts food security could have on migration and vice versa. This perception also largely discounts urban food insecurity, which is also a concern given the levels of urbanization in the region.

Differently from what was found for food security, violence is discussed more frequently in relation to migration. Emphasis however is primarily on criminal activities such as transnational organized crime, street gangs and related violent crime, while other forms such as domestic, and institutional violence are analysed to a much lesser extent and usually not in the framework of migration. As a proof of this is the fact homicide rate is the most frequent proxy used to measure violence in a given setting and interestingly, inter-family and inter-couple homicides, femicide and homicide linked to sexual crimes are usually considered separately from those linked to other criminal activities.[33] Whatever the type of violence, evidence of whether and how much it forces people to migrate remain rather weak. An indication of this can be found in the analysis of recent statistics that shows correspondence between a steady increase in violent crime in the past ten years and an equally significant rise in migration rates for many of the same countries, despite the natural drop in the number of migrants caused by the global financial crisis.[34]

All the above points to the need for a more consistent and integrated analysis of the three dimensions of violence, food security and migration altogether to make sense of all the possible implications in the countries of the Northern Triangle. The studies by IOM and LSE, as well as the present report are in this respect ground-breaking.

2.2 Migration trends

Before entering into the substance of the analysis, another aspect that deserves to be discussed is how migration is characterized in the countries under analysis.

As already mentioned, the vast majority of migrants from the Northern Triangle live in the United States. Also, most of those who migrate do so without regular documentation. According to estimates, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras are respectively the second, third, and fourth-largest countries of origin for unauthorized migrants to the US. This status, coupled with the precariousness and the absence of any protection mechanisms, make them particularly vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and other protection concerns across all the phases of the migration cycle, from the moment they leave their home to deportation. In the case of Honduras for example, official data indicate that an impressive 80,951 women, men and minors were deported in 2014.[36] For the same year, the US[35] Department of Homeland Security reported that of all the deported people, 54,423 were from Guatemala, 40,695 from Honduras and 27,180 from El Salvador. For all three countries, this represented an increase compared to 2013.[37]

Unlawful migration also has important implications on the relatives who want to join, including minors, as those who already migrated are unable to sponsor and regular family reunification regulations do not apply. Two of the main reasons to migrate reported more frequently include: (1) Escape poor economic conditions, and seeking a better life; (2) Reconnect with family members.[38]

Both the IOM and LSE studies reveal that while the majority of migrants are men, recent data indicate a rise in the number of female migrants.[39] Behind the surge is the fact that issues such as violence and unemployment are increasingly affecting women as much as men.

While female migration can be empowering for women, it undoubtedly yields important social and family

[33]Though not necessarily describing the specific reality in the countries of concern, this distinction reflects a generically accepted classification of intentional homicide. UNODC (2014). op. cit. p. 39-40.

[34]Jonathan Hiskey, Mary Malone, and Diana Orces (2014), Violence and Migration in Central America, AmericasBarometer Insights: 2014, Number 101, Nashville: Vanderbilt University. http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/IO901en.pdf

[35]MPI, "Profile of Unauthorized Population: United States", http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/US, accessed 05.05.2015.

[36]Data from the Centro de Anetncion al Migrante Retornado en Honduras (CAMR); IOM (2015), op. cit.

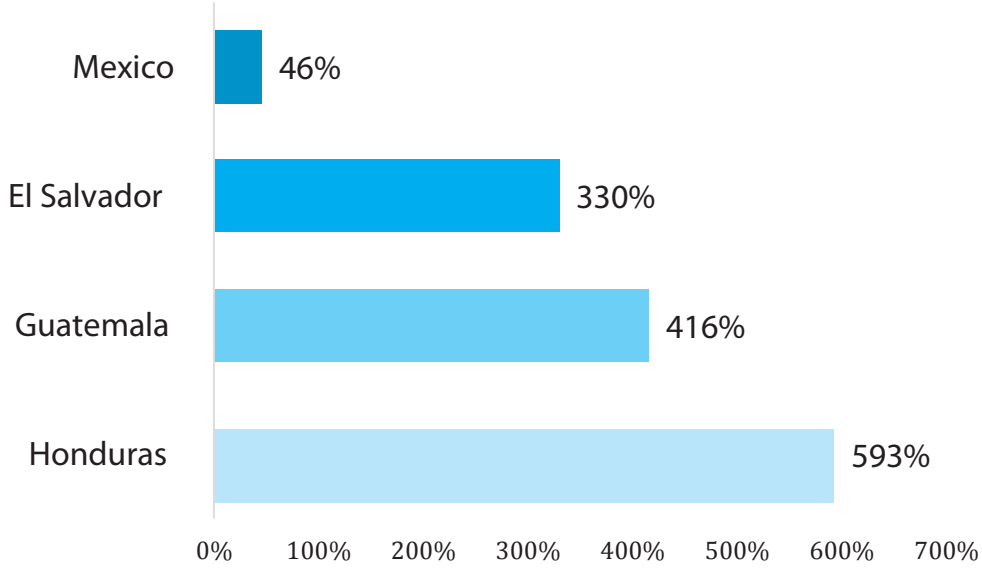
[37]US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (2014). ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations Report. Fiscal Year 2014. US Department of Homeland Security, p. 4. https://www.ice.gov/doclib/about/offices/ero/pdf/2014-ice-immigration-removals.pdf

[38]Marc R. Rosenblum (2015). Unaccompanied Child Migration to the United States: The Tension between Protection and Prevention. Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute. Similar reasons were variously reported in the IOM report as well as in other documents.

[39]According to data, in 2011 Central America immigrants men outnumbered women (53% versus 47%). Sierra Stoney, Jeanne Batalova (2013). Mexican Immigrants in the United States. MPI; UNDP (2013). op. cit., p. 2.

implications, especially for the children who are left behind. Recent data indicate that the three countries of the Northern Triangle are among the highest-ranking nations of minors migrating to the US. Past years (2009-2014) showed a significant increase in the number of children from these countries apprehended while attempting to cross the border between Mexico and the United States.[40] In 2014 alone, an estimated 90,000 children entered the USA. Among them, 29% were from Honduras, 24% from Guatemala, and 23% from El Salvador.[41] As for Honduras, despite the fact that international migration is still a relatively new phenomenon, in 2014 the number of children migrant registered a record increase of 70% as compared to 2013.[42] The majority of them are boys in their teens, with at least half escaping harm and other protection-related risks.[43] In the past two years, the proportion of children below 12 and of girls also increased.[44]

Graph 3: Increase in Unaccompanied Alien Children Encountered (UAC) border apprehensions, by country of origin. Fiscal Year 2011-13



Some other interesting features of migrants from Central America are that they are more likely to be of working age (below 40 years old); one-third have good English skills; and they are less likely to hold a university degree compared to those coming from other countries. [45]

As for the 'how', the majority seems to rely on coyotes or middle-men to migrate. Those who cannot afford to pay these middle-men, but still want to move, often end up following individuals who are familiar with the route and the mechanisms.

The table below (Graph 4) compiles information from various sources in order to provide a general overview of aspects relevant to this study in each of the three countries.

[40]*The number increased from 3,304 to 51,705. Stephanie L. Canizales (2015). Unaccompanied Migrant Children: A Humanitarian Crisis at the US Border and Beyond. Policy Brief, Center for Poverty Research, Volume 3, Number 4. Davis: University of California. http://poverty.ucdavis.edu/sites/main/files/file-attachments/canizales_migrant_youth_brief.pdf*

[41]*OCHA (2104). Central America and Mexico Unaccompanied Child Migration. Situation Report No. 1 (as of 29 July 2014). http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA_Situation_Report_Migration_29July_2014_EN.pdf*

[42]*IOM (2015), op. cit.*

[43]*UNHCR Regional Office for the United States and the Caribbean (2014). Children on the Run. Unaccompanied children leaving Central America and Mexico, and the need for international protection. Washington DC: UNHCR.*

[44]*Jens Manuel Krogstad, Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, and Mark Hugo Lopez (2014). Children 12 and Under are Fastest Growing Group of Unaccompanied Minors at U.S. Border, Pew Research Center, July 22, 2014. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/07/22/children-12-and-under-are-fastest-growing-group-of-unaccompanied-minors-at-u-s-border/; and (2014). At the Border, a Sharp Rise in Unaccompanied Girls Fleeing Honduras, Pew Research Center, July 25, 2014. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/07/25/at-the-border-a-sharp-rise-in-unaccompanied-girls-fleeing-honduras/*

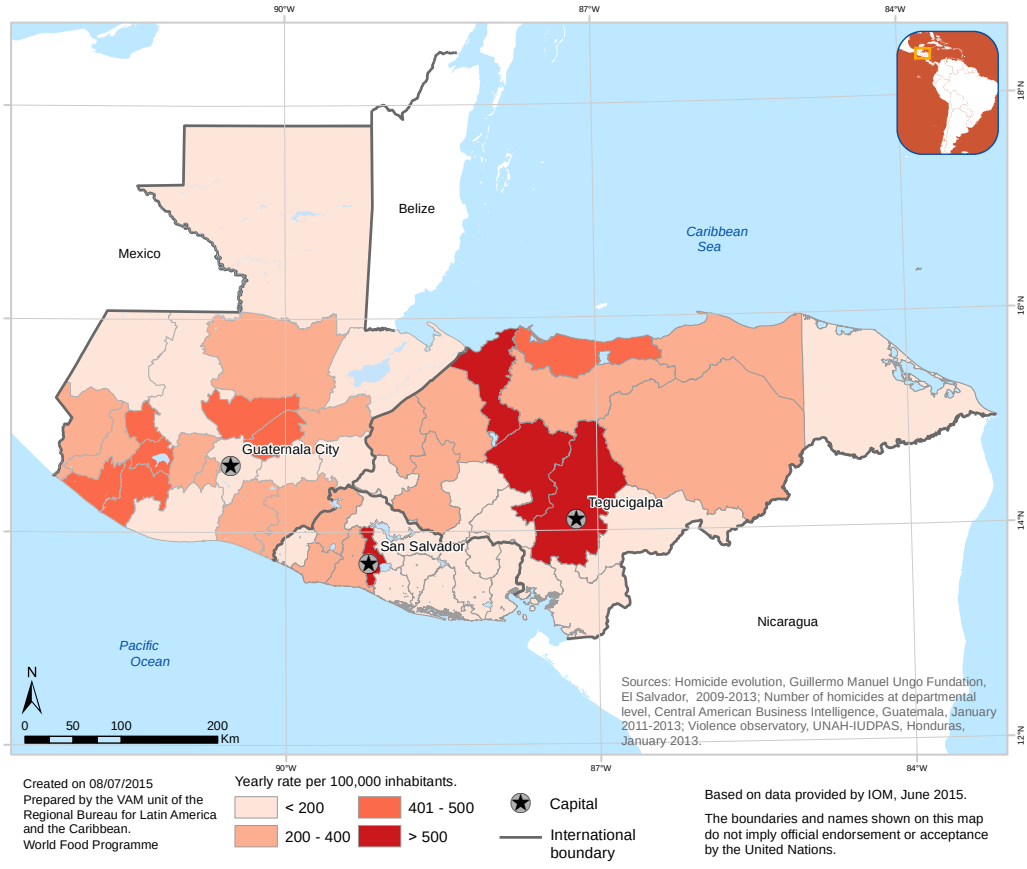
[45]*Sierra Stoney, Jeanne Batalova (2013), op. cit.*

Gráfica 4: Panorámica general de aspectos releventes a este estudio

Variable/Country	Guatemala	Honduras	El Salvador
Migration	Who: men, women, unaccompanied minors Why: security and upward mobility, exclusion from political and economic life Main destination: US and Mexico Long tradition	Who: men, women of young age (18-25), unaccompanied minors, including a sharp rise in girls Why: (1) employment and other opportunities; (2) Violence: (3) Natural disasters; and (4) Regular migration[46] Main destination: US, Canada, Spain Migration started in the 90s, but fast growing	Who: young men, and women, unaccompanied minors Why: employment, family reunification, upward mobility Main destination: US Long tradition
Violence	Civil war: 1960-1996 Drug trafficking, organized crime, and occult powers Impunity, high level of acceptance	Coup in 2009 The most violent in the world, highest homicide rates (68x100,000)	Civil war: 1980-1992 Gangs, maras, and pandillas, trafficking, ect.
Food insecurity[47]	Highest chronic undernutrition in the world at 49.8% (2004-2012) GINI coefficient 0.59 (2006-2012) Climate change, single-crop farming, and poor access to land, particularly for	Chronic undernutrition at 22.6% (2004-2012) GINI coefficient 0.57 (2006-2012) Climate change, single-crop farming, and poor access to land, particularly for women	Chronic undernutrition at 19.2% (2004-2012) GINI coefficient 0.44 (2006-2012) Poor availability and access to food, plus low quality diet Climate change, single-crop farming, and poor access to land, particularly for women

[46] *IOM (2015), op. cit.*
[47] *Data are taken from Annex 3, while other information are variously collected from other sources.*

Map 2: Homicide rate at departmental level in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, 2013.



Created on 08/07/2015
Prepared by the VAM unit of the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean.
World Food Programme

Yearly rate per 100,000 inhabitants.

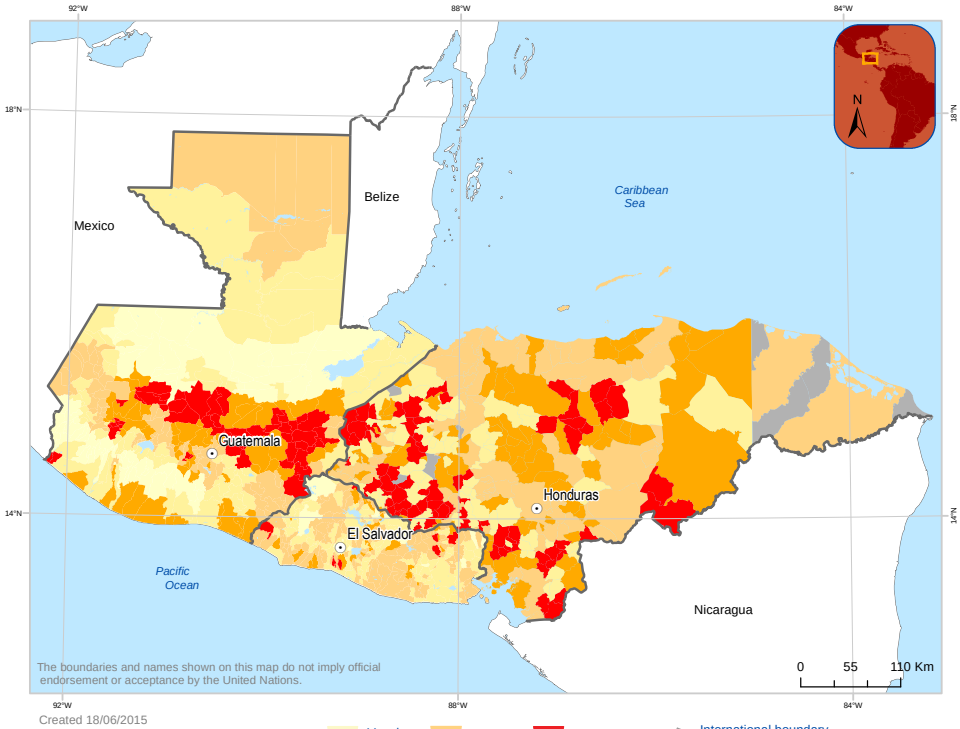
< 200 | 401 - 500
200 - 400 | > 500

Capital
International boundary

Based on data provided by IOM, June 2015.

The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Map 3: Levels of Food Insecurity in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras

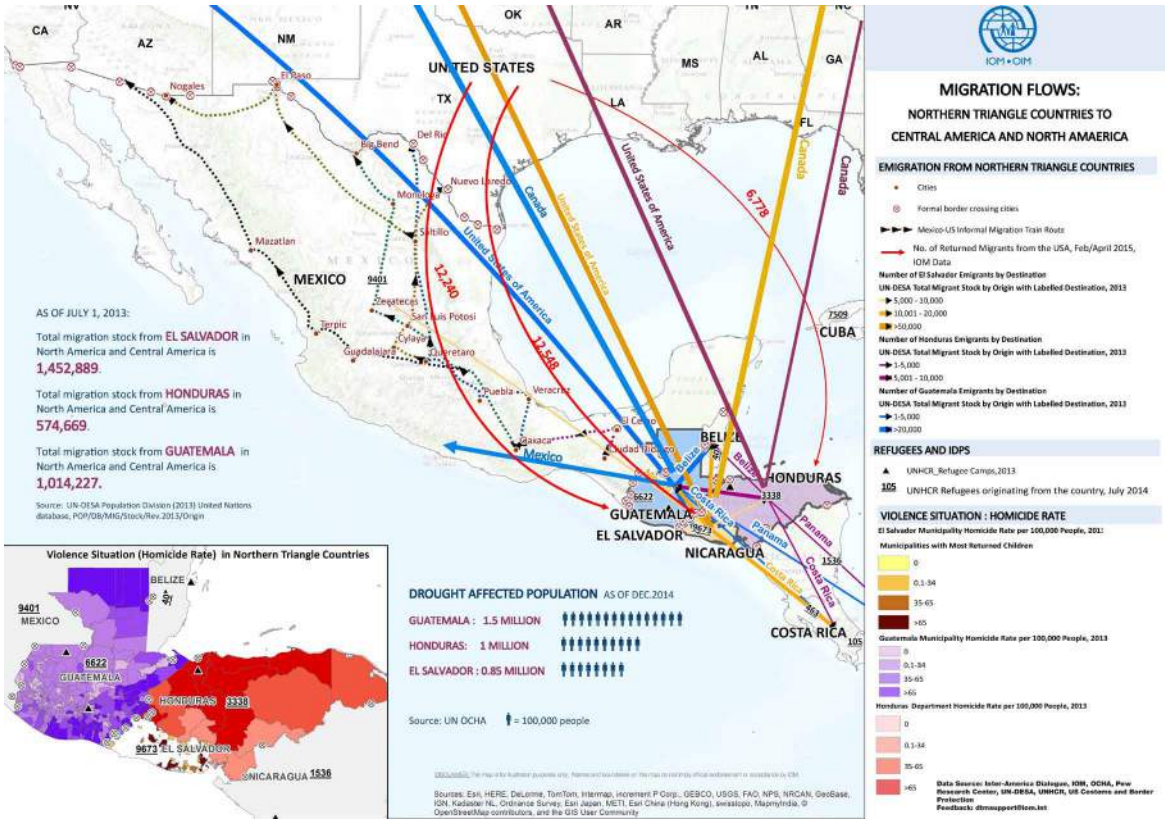


Created 18/06/2015
Website: http://es.wfp.org/
Mapped by the VAM unit of the Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Bureau
World Food Programme.

Very low | Medium | Very high | International boundary
Low | High | Capital

Sources: *El Salvador Small Area Estimation (SAE) based on FESAL 2008; Guatemala VAM 2012; and Honduras VAM 2003.

Map 4: Migration Flows



2.3 Lessons learned

A number of lessons and recurring themes can be drawn from the exploration and the analysis made.

The first lesson relates to the existence of a **positive correlation between food insecurity and migration in the three countries considered,** meaning that the higher the food insecurity, the greater the chances that people migrate in search of better conditions. According to findings from LSE, this relationship is also a significant one. The main assumption behind the LSE study was that migration is not just a function of the economy, rather it can also result from physical and food insecurity. Similarly, WFP-led assessments conducted in drought-affected areas in 2014 also highlighted important levels of migration as a coping strategy to deteriorating food security. Survey results highlighted between 5 and 12 percent of households had one or more member of their household migrate within the month prior to the survey due to the prolonged dry spell (12, 10 and 5 percent in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador respectively).

Second, **violence is variously mentioned across literature and informants alike as a driver of migration, though less consistently than economic-related reasons, and with an apparent less certainty.** This may also be due to the fact that while economic indicators do exist and are generally quite reliable, data on crime are estimates at best and do not account for the whole range of violent acts that go unpunished or hidden. This makes it difficult to establish a cause-effect relationship between migration and violence.

According to LSE, violence is a push factor for outward migration in Guatemala and Honduras, while a similar relationship cannot be established for El Salvador.[48] This despite the extremely high homicide rate in the country, which registered a record 481 murders by street gangs in March 2015 only, quickly forcing the country back to the murder rate of some years ago.[49]

Findings on this however differ. According to a memo of the Inter-America Dialogue, not only are migrants coming from some of the most populous and violent municipalities in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, but it also emerges that violence, measured by the number of homicides, is a more powerful driver of international migration than human development.[50]

[48] *LSE Consulting (2015). Migration study, London: LSE, p. 1.*
[49] *A truce between the biggest gangs in 2012 almost halved the number of homicides in the country, until March 2014 when it was declared officially over by the police. The Guardian, "El Salvador sees most deadly month in 10 years as violence overwhelms nation", accessed 30.04.2015, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/06/el-salvador-violence-end-to-gang-truce-proves-deadly.*
[50] *Hometowns are analyzed in relation to human development, violence, and education. Manuel Orozco and Julia Yansura (2014), op. cit., pp. 2-3.*

The study conducted by IOM as well seems to suggest the existence of a consistent, though not necessarily significant, connection between both food security and violence on one side, and migration on the other. There, literature and informants alike agree that food insecurity and violence, or the sum of both, depending on the geographic area considered, directly contribute to migration. Evidence of the extent to which these variables affect migration however varies. For example, participants of some focus group discussions identify food insecurity as the second most important reason to migrate after lack of employment. According to them, at the roots of food insecurity are poor civic participation, limited education, natural hazards, and lack of employment and development opportunities. Evidence of these connections however remains scarce.

Another lesson on violence is that **while it is widely recognized as a long-standing reality in all the countries of the Northern Triangle, evidence or perception of a correlation with migratory patterns varies depending on the type of violence and groups affected.**[52] Just to give an example, domestic violence or violence in the home is variously mentioned as a push factor for migration of women, while violence by organized criminal groups or gangs seems to be mostly associated with youth or adult male migration.[53] Threats also vary. According to a study on child migration in El Salvador, crime, gang threats and violence are the key reasons for migration by the majority of children (59% boys, and 61% girls respectively). Among them, males mostly feared assault or death for not joining gangs or interacting with corrupt government officials, while females mostly feared rape or disappearances by the same groups.[54]

Among the different forms of violence, common crime is the number one threat in most of the countries in Latin and Central America, including Guatemala, while street gangs' violence seems to prevail in El Salvador and Honduras.[55] This is further confirmed by the IOM study. In the case of Guatemala for example, drug trafficking, organized crime, and street gangs are listed as the three most common criminal realities.[56] Organized crime is so institutionalized in some areas that it took over regular institutions to gain political and social capital with the local populations.

There is now wide recognition in Guatemala that the influence of illegal groups within the State is one of the cornerstones of impunity and a major impediment to strengthening the rule of law with negative implications on the citizens' protection and well-being. Guatemala is the only country that necessitated the establishment of an International Commission against Impunity (*Comisión Internacional contra la Impunidad en Guatemala,* CICIG) to promote accountability, and strengthen the rule of law, but most importantly to disband infiltration of organized crime into the institutional structures.

Another recurring theme is that violence has become normalized into the reality of daily life in Central America. Nowadays, violence is not only socially learned, and widely accepted, but also commonly practiced as a survival and livelihood strategy. Indications of a progressive normalization of violence can also be found in the growing discrepancy between the reality of crime, which remains severe, and the at times decreasing perceptions of insecurity by the population. This, among other things, may suggest that **people have become more accustomed to violence, and accord to it less influence into the decisions impacting their life, including whether to migrate or not.**[58] This may explain why the connection between violence and migration was not consistent and significant across the three countries of the Northern Triangle in the study conducted by LSE.

The evidence base suggests that the key causal factors underpinning violence in Central America include: (1) The legacy of political violence and conflict; (2) easy access to and diffusion of arms, resulting in a heavily armed population; and (3) the level of poverty, inequality and exclusion in the distribution of resources.[59] An elusive state presence and ineffective law enforcement complete the picture. All the above certainly have a role in pushing people to migrate out of these countries.

Interestingly, the third factor suggests the existence of a linkage between food insecurity and violence, for which evidence remains scarce. Few exceptions to this can be found at the end of the IOM report. There,

[52] *IOM (2015). op.cit.*
[53] *UNHCR Regional Office for the United States and the Caribbean (2014). op.cit.. p. 6; and IOM (2015), op. cit.*
[54] *Elizabeth Kennedy (2014). No Childhood here. Why central American Children are Fleeing their Homes. In Perspectives, American Immigration Council. http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/perspectives/no-childhood-here-why-central-american-children-are-fleeing-their-homes*
[55] *UNDP (2013). op. cit. , p. 3.*
[56] *IOM (2015). op.cit. p. 40-42.*
[57] *More information on the Commission Against Impunity can be found at: http://www.cicig.org/index.php?page=sobre.*
[58] *Jonathan Hiskey, Mary Malone, and Diana Orces (2014). op. cit.*
[59] *Caroline Moser, Ailsa Winton (2002). Violence in the Central America Region: Towards an Integrated Framework for Violence Reduction. Working Paper 171, London: ODI. http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/1826.pdf*

informants referred to real-case examples of linkages between food security and violence, which include assaults to women recipients of the *bolsa solidaria* or of the *bono materno* infantile escolar (food stamps for pregnant mothers and school-age children); extortion against consumers and sellers in markets and other public spaces with the effect of jeopardizing the food security of families and communities; and food insecure people who resort to illicit activities for survival.[60]

Economic wellbeing, employment, and family reunification are the most commonly cited motives that induce people to migrate.[61] This was consistently reiterated across all sources, from researches to focus group discussions, and key informants' interviews. According to some informants in Guatemala, *"people do not choose to migrate, they do so because they do not have anything to eat, land to cultivate, employment, and they sell their lands to big plantations."*[62] However, gang and cartel violence, which disproportionately affects children and young people is increasingly being indicated as reasons for fleeing the country.

Migration, whatever its causes and forms (whether lawful or unlawful), can be a highly lucrative phenomenon. In the absence of effective development policies at the national level, remittances represent a very fundamental pillar of the GDP in each of the country under consideration.[63] Studies however provide mixed evidence of the development potential of migration for migrant households and the countries of origin as a whole. Some look at remittances as non-developmental assuming that receiving households generally use them to cover basic needs, and to a much lesser extent to make major investment or to promote upward mobility. Yet, their value in sustaining the economy of families and societies is recognized by all sources consulted and should not be underestimated, including for its effect on perpetuating the overall inaction of governments vis-à-vis migration.

Some gains seem also to come from migration of unaccompanied children that gained notable momentum in recent years. Informants from the Ministry of Social Development in Guatemala maintain that it is the *new form* of the irregular business of migration. With the perception that minors have more chances of being granted asylum than adults, *coyotes* have been increasingly promoting it as a way to regularize migration of parents as well.[64]

This leads us to another important lesson, **which is that migration of female and children are on the rise as compared to past years.** This probably results from a combination of the increase in the level and forms of violence affecting women and children, the lack of economic and employment opportunities as whole in the country of origin, which is forcing more people to flee in search of employment elsewhere, and the consequent break down in families and communities.

One last consideration relates to the perceptions surrounding migration to the north, which more often than not does not consider the potentially poor conditions upon arrival. In other words, the normalization of migration has created a culture whereby going north and moving to cities is the goal for many. This aspect should be taken into consideration when assessing the reasons behind migration.

2.4 Identified gaps

Drawing on the analysis of the previous sections, important gaps in the knowledge base regarding the dimensions of food security and violence, and how they intersect to affect migration emerged and are highlighted below.

One already mentioned limitation relates to the paucity of data. Data gaps were found in relation to specific themes, for example reliable data on violence and illicit crimes are particularly rare due to limited efficient, accessible or transparent justice and security systems, limited statistics or for political reasons.[65] Country-wise, Honduras is reportedly poorly studied as compared to the other two countries.[66] Finally, content-wise there is apparently no study that combines all three variables in one analysis.[67]

[60] *IOM (2015), op. cit.*
[61] *Jonathan Hiskey, Mary Malone, and Diana Orces (2014). op. cit.*
[62] *IOM (2015), op. cit.*
[63] *According to 2012 data from the Pew Research Center, remittances as a share of GDP are at 16.5% for El Salvador, 15.7% for Honduras, and 10% for Guatemala http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/11/15/remittances-to-latin-america-recover-but-not-to-mexico/ph-remittances-11-2013-1-03/; IOM (2015). op. cit..*
[64] *IOM (2015), op. cit.*
[65] *Peter Imbusch, Michel Misse, and Fernando Carrion, "Violence Research in Latin America and the Caribbean: a Literature Review", in Interantional Journal of Conflict and Violence, Vol. 5 (1) 2011, pp 87-154. http://www.ijcv.org/index.php/ijcv/article/view/141*
[66] *IOM (2015). op. cit.*
[67] *IOM (2015). op. cit.*

As anticipated, while one could argue that food insecurity is closely linked to economic variables such as poverty, unemployment and so on, it is still important to mark the absence of a specific reflection on it as a variable per se. One possible reason for this is the flawed assumption that since migration necessitates money, the extremely poor and food insecure people living in rural areas generally cannot afford to migrate, or they do it in the most risky conditions. In the words of some informants, *it is people from medium, medium-low class that make the efforts to collect money to migrate.*[68]

Another identified gap is that the relationship between these two variables is often unidirectional, namely the extent to which food insecurity in the country of origin can generate migration. In the few cases where the inverse connection is made, analysis is often limited to the impact of remittances on production (food availability) and daily consumption affecting the poorest households in rural areas, with no due consideration to the other dimensions of food security such as for example food access, or to other population groups such as urban food insecure.[69] In the absence of a specific study however, even the impact of remittances received by migrant households on daily food consumption is difficult to assess.[70]

Serious limitations are also found on the evidence of the effects of food insecurity and violence on migration patterns of indigenous population and other particularly vulnerable groups within the given societies. While other characteristics such as age and sex of migrants and the differential impact of some variables on the migration patterns of some groups are at times reflected in the analysis, ethnicity is mostly disregarded. Highly dependent on the environment and its resources for survival and cultural identity, indigenous groups are often particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and natural hazards. Both violence and food insecurity may affect indigenous and other marginal groups differently from the rest of the population, and could result in different migratory patterns. All this points to the need for a more specific analysis of the differences and challenges faced by the indigenous peoples prior to, during and after internal and international migration. The below table (Graph 5), provides an example of the differential impact of different forms of violence on indigenous and non-indigenous population in Guatemala.[71]

Graph 5: Reasons for Leaving Home Country, Guatemala

	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous
Organized Violence	20%	25%
Abuse in the Home	23%	30%
Deprivation	29%	55%

Though recognizing that migration is a cycle composed of different phases, the emphasis of studies and informants alike seems to be primarily on outward migration, while in-country mobility and return, and regional migration have undoubtedly received less attention. This may be partly due to lack of information, as it is the case for in-country mobility, which is certainly less visible and less monitored than outward migration, and for deportation, whose registers are mere approximations.[72] Partly it is also due to the lack of interest by governments for return and deportation, also due to their incapacity to sustain and address the challenges that returned migrants bring back with them. An exception to this is Honduras, where migration started relatively recently and more attention seems to be granted to all the relevant phases, including return. As for the other two countries, when return[73] is discussed (IOM study only), reference is to the

[68] *IOM (2015). op. cit.*

[69] *Jonathan Crush (2013). "Linking Food Security, Migration and Development", in International Migration, Vol. 51 (5) 2013, ISSN 0020-7985. Though using evidence from Southern Africa, the article provides an interesting analysis of how and to what extent the two issues of food security and migration are linked as well as the reasons why food security as a variable in its own right is rarely integrated in the debate on migration.*

[70] *Yet, some studies for example reveal that the impact of remittances on the quality and quantity of food intakes are more significant in poorer areas and less so in urban settings. Thomas Lacroix (2011). Migration, rural development, poverty and food security: a comparative perspective. International Migration Institute, Oxford: University of Oxford. http://www.imi.ox.ac.uk/pdfs/reports/fao-migration.pdf*

[71] *Britnae Purdy, "Increasing Number of Unaccompanied Indigenous Children Fleeing to the United States", 02 September 2014, http://firstpeoples.org/wp/increasing-numbers-of-unaccompanied-maya-children-fleeing-to-the-united-states/.*

[72] *IOM (2015), op. cit.*

[73] *A sign of this was the declaration by the President of the Republic of the Humanitarian Emergency in relation to the significant amount of families, as well as children and adolescents who remained in detention centers in the US and Mexico in 2014. Decreto ejecutivo N°PCM-033-2014, IOM (2015), op. cit., p. 66.*

difficulties of reintegration in societies where little or no attention is paid to returnees and to the trauma they may suffer during or after migration, and the violence they may have interiorized. In the case of Honduras for example, IOM discusses the injection of new (bad) habits by those who return such as alcohol and drug abuse, and common crime.

Finally, an interesting aspect that would necessitate more attention is the issue of violence as functional to migration. Examples of this are those who resort to illicit activities to gain enough resources to migrate, as well as violence after deportation, for example to pay back the debt incurred in order to migrate. IOM briefly touches upon this with reference to Guatemala and Honduras, yet more analysis would be needed to understand the magnitude of this phenomenon and how much is contributing to the amount of and perpetration of violence in relation to migration.

3 Conclusions and recommendations

3.1 Conclusions

Migration from the Northern Triangle has been increasing significantly in recent years. Evidence also shows that it underwent some significant changes over the years and across concerned countries, including the recent surge in female and children migration. This exploratory study was an attempt to understand to what degree the heightened mobility that characterizes Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, could be related to problems of food security, crime and violence, and the impact of migration on them in a mutually influential relationship.

Drawing on the lessons and gaps described above, the following conclusions can be made:

- Both literature and informants suggest that a relationship exists, especially between food security and migration, and migration and violence, and to a less degree also between food security and violence.
- Available evidence however is not conclusive. Existing sources are at times contradictory, methods of research are not comparable and statistics and data sets vary greatly and are often not completely reliable.
- Where evidence of a relationship can reasonably be asserted, the extent, breadth and consistency of it across the countries under study is mostly unknown.
- Drawing on the above, it is crucial not to indulge in unqualified overgeneralizations. Though some connections are clear, both the IOM and LSE studies reiterate the need to also consider other factors as influencing the migration process to and from the Northern Triangle. In other words, not only are the relationships between food security, violence and migration is not clear-cut, but also neither food nor physical insecurity should be taken as the only, nor the most important drivers of migration in any of the situations analysed. If any pattern is clear, it is that, despite the obvious similarities, both violence and food security vary greatly across the three countries and even areas within them.
- Whatever the nature and extent of the relationships, it is important to remember that it is not static, rather it is likely to change over time, and across countries, and population groups, reflecting the variability that was found in relation to the single variables. Hence the need for more specific and regular in-country analysis.
- Within this framework, the consideration still holds that thus far analyses have been mainly focusing on the security or economic-related factors of migration, while food security remains a largely neglected area.

This leads to the concluding hypothesis that **should the linkages between food security, violence and migration be better understood and factored into food security, protection and migration-related interventions in the countries of the Northern Triangle, this would certainly contribute to better prevention and mitigation of the negative effects of migration, and maximization of its benefits.**

3.2 Recommendations

To seek theoretical and practical evidence in support of this final hypothesis and to further understanding as well WFP's and IOM's ability to intervene in this area, a set of recommendations is provided below.

Recommendations are primarily directed to WFP at both regional and country-levels as the organization that commissioned the study and primary coordinator of the present research, though it is clear that concerted efforts are needed, as no single agency acting alone can address these issues in a comprehensive and effective manner.

In general, improved and more nuanced knowledge and understanding of all the possible interplays between food security, violence and migration, is expected to shape more effective interventions and contribute to more lasting results.

Given the limitations encountered by the present study, and the paucity of analysis of this kind that currently exists, recommendations are also oriented to better define the scope and key research questions for further investigations in this area.

Recommendations are organized along two main streams: **(1) knowledge and evidence building, and (2) implications for policies and programmes.** The second stream in particular will further benefit from the suggestions and revisions of WFP staff at the country-level, who contributed their knowledge and expertise in better defining opportunities for policies and programming.

3.2.1 Knowledge and evidence building

There is a need to **build robust evidence on the relationships between food and physical security and migration.** Literature review and the analysis conducted in the framework of this study have provided hints on the multiple interplays that could occur between these variables, how they could change over time, and across and within countries. However, all of these issues require much further research before definitive conclusions can be drawn. Also, limited information could be found on how the food security and violence variables interact to influence migration and vice versa, as well as on the full range of protection concerns that could accompany the migration cycle. A more integrated approach is needed that links the two variables in a logical and holistic manner, and mutually to migration.

Specific recommendations on this include:

- Increase understanding of the differential impacts of violence and food security on migratory patterns of various population groups across the three countries, including more nuanced knowledge on the type of violence, people's vulnerabilities and food security challenges and opportunities, and the gender roles and dynamics therein;
- Strictly related to the above is also the need to deepen the research and analysis on the migratory patterns of particularly vulnerable groups such as indigenous, minorities, and others, and the influence of food security and violence in this context. Given the high likelihood of marginalized groups to become dependent on or vulnerable to illicit economies, the history of discrimination and exclusion in countries such as Guatemala,[74] where the percentage of indigenous population is at the highest, as well as the high levels of inequality that characterizes Central America, a more articulated analysis would be needed to understand how all these variables intersect and the impact they have on different groups within the population;
- Further the analysis of the problems and opportunities created by migration with regards to food and human security through, for example, a better analysis of the impact of remittances on food insecure households and vulnerability to crime and violence in both rural and urban settings, as well as the overall developmental impact migration could have on the countries of origin;
- Better understand the implications on families and communities of the recent surge in female migration on one side, and the causes and contributing factors of such a surge, including the constraints women face, for example in terms of access to and control over resources such as land, employment, credit, information decision-making processes, and so on;
- There is also a need for a more analytical understanding of violence, not just its' history, to address more systematically its forms and the aspects affecting different population groups;
- Similarly, more research is needed on the differences between internal and cross-border migration, and the role of the food security and violence therein;
- Finally, another interesting, though still poorly analysed aspect of the relationship between food

[74] *Guatemala is characterized by a multicultural society with a large number of indigenous groups and afro-descendant communities (more than half of the total population). These are disproportionately affected by slow development, inequality in the distribution of resources, violence and poverty.*

security and migration is the impact of migration and remittances on the adoption of bad food habits by recipient households, thus further worsening the food and nutrition security of poor households in the countries of origin.

3.2.2 Implications for policies and programmes and next steps

The following are some suggested actions that could guide organizations in the development of policies and programmes that better take into account the interconnections among the three variables under analysis. These recommendations also need to be incorporated into both direct actions by organizations, but also more importantly in support of governments in the three countries.

- Efforts should be made to counter food insecurity and violence in the three countries in order to yield positive effects on reducing migration of recent years and the negative repercussions this is having on both migrants and families at home. In the case of food insecurity, this will require a sustained and predictable level of assistance in vulnerable areas through a variety of interventions targeted effectively and appropriate to the specific population and season. A one off intervention will not adequately address the underlying causes of food insecurity.
- Engage in a dialogue with IOM to identify each organization's comparative advantages and capacity gaps in addressing the problems and maximizing opportunities deriving from the interrelations between food security, violence and migration and how they can be best leveraged. Ensure greater consideration into what is needed for the benefits of interventions to become sustainable.
- Design activities specifically targeted to the youth and children whose parents have migrated or are at risk of migrating, in order to strengthen their resilience to crime and violence, particularly recruitment by gangs or reliance on illicit activities for survival or to migrate.
- Design activities to support deportees and returnees in their process of re-integration, including psycho-social support and other types of assistance that may be need to heal the trauma they may have suffered during and after migration, and alternative employment and livelihood options to avoid backlashes on communities and families.
- Design actions to capitalize on existing opportunities and capabilities in-country and ensure investments are made to effectively and sustainably enhance them. For example, given that the majority of migrants are men, how can women's diverse capacities and roles in-country be harnessed to improve food security outcomes at home?
- Drawing on a careful situation analysis, support livelihood strategies of migrants' and non-migrants' households, depending on the needs, with special emphasis on the opportunities and challenges of non-migrants, to ensure they are not left behind.
- Find ways to support the state in countering the various forms of crime and violence, in line with each organization's mandate and comparative advantages.
- Find ways to bridge between migration experts and frameworks, and food and human security researchers and practitioners to overcome the disconnect that currently exists between the three areas of investigation that led to lack of understanding and misleading practical approaches.
- Closely linked to the previous recommendation, strengthened capacity for a common advocacy strategy through enhanced dialogue and understanding among relevant UN agencies and other international organizations.

On a practical note, a progressive approach is recommended that consists of a first phase in which the research that started with this exploratory study could continue to deepen understanding and lay out a strategy to more systematically capture and integrate these aspects in food assistance and migratory interventions. Phase two could start in parallel, and consist of a more in-depth analysis in the three countries of concern as the basis for specific recommendations for policy and programme interventions.

Finally, it is important to note that WFP comparative advantages particularly in the areas of needs assessment and vulnerability analysis in support of targeted food assistance and nutrition interventions and safety nets makes it the ideal agency to continue investigation in this area, and follow up on the recommendations acting as a catalysts with other agencies to come up with specific actions. For this potential to be realized however, certain knowledge gaps will first need to be addressed for example through the systematic integration of protection concerns in context and vulnerability analysis in relation to food security.

Annexes

Annex 1: Acronyms

CAMR	Centro de Atención al Migrante Retornado en Honduras
CIDEHUM	Centro Internacional para los Derechos Humanos de los Migrantes
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index
INACIF	Instituto Nacional de Ciencias Forenses de Guatemala
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IUDPAS	Instituto Universitario en Democracia, Paz y Seguridad
LSE	London School of Economics
MPI	Migration Policy Institute
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNODC	United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Annex 2:

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Annex 3: Key Regional Social Economic Statistics of Selected Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean

Country	Income group[1] (2014)	Distribution of National Income[2] (2006-2012)		GINI coefficient[2] (2006-2012)			GDP per capita[3] (2012)	GDP per capita growth, annual[3] (2012)	Population living in poverty[2] (2006-2012)			Population living in extreme poverty[2] (2006-2012)			Human Development Index[4] (2012)	Prevalence of undernourishment[5] (2011-2013)	Prevalence of chronic undernutrition in children under five[6] (2004-2012)						Total public spending[7] (2008-2011)	Public social spending[7] (2008-2011)
		Quintile 1 (poorest)	Quintile 5 (richest)	National	Urban	Rural	US$	%	National	Urban	Rural	National	Urban	Rural	Value	%	National	Urban	Rural	Indigenous areas	in department with highest	in department with lowest	As percentage of GDP	As percentage of GDP
Mesoamerica																								
El Salvador	Lower middle income	5.0	49.6	0.44	0.41	0.39	3,790	1.9	45.3	41.0	52.6	13.5	10.1	19.3	0.7	11.9	19.2	11.5	21.9	...	27.1	11.6	33.1	13.0
Guatemala	Lower middle income	2.8	62.6	0.59	0.55	0.53	3,331	3.0	54.8	42.0	66.5	29.1	14.8	42.2	0.6	30.5	49.8	34.3	58.6	65.9	82.2	25.3	14.5	8.1
Honduras	Lower middle income	2.4	60.2	0.57	0.49	0.56	2,323	3.9	67.4	56.3	76.5	42.8	26.0	56.8	0.6	8.7	22.6	14.6	28.8	...	48.5	6.6	23	10.6
Mexico	Upper middle income	4.4	54.8	0.49	0.47	0.45	9,749	3.8	37.1	33.2	43.5	14.2	9.8	21.5	0.8	<5	13.6	11.1	20.9	33.1	...	...	20.2	11.5
Nicaragua	Lower middle income	4.2	52.6	0.48	0.44	0.46	1,754	5.2	58.3	52.9	65.4	29.5	20.9	40.9	0.6	21.7	17.3	12.8	21.6	...	29.5	9.1	22.6	12.4
Panama	Upper middle income	3.0	56.2	0.53	0.49	0.53	9,534	10.7	25.3	15.5	43.6	12.4	4.7	26.8	0.8	8.7	21.2	7.4	17.8	66.9	...	...	22.3	10.9
Caribbean																								
Cuba	Upper middle income	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	0.8	<5	5.0	...	...	...	...	...	67.4	36.2
Dominican Republic	Upper middle income	3.4	56.0	0.52	0.52	0.48	5,746	3.9	41.2	39.2	45.2	20.9	17.8	27.2	0.7	15.6	9.8	8.4	12.5	...	22.7	7.1	16.4	7.3
Haiti	Low income	...	...	...	...	...	771	2.8	...	...	...	...	...	...	0.5	49.8	23.8	15.1	28.1	...	37.3	12.5	...	...
South America																								
Bolivia	Lower middle income	3.4	51.2	0.47	0.41	0.54	2,576	5.2	36.3	26.9	55.4	18.7	9.2	38.1	0.7	21.3	27.2	17.2	38.6	...	43.7	12.0	45.1	18.4
Colombia	Upper middle income	3.2	57.8	0.54	0.51	0.46	7,748	4.2	32.9	28.5	46.9	10.4	6.6	22.8	0.7	10.6	13.2	11.6	17.0	29.5	34.7	3.8	18.1	12.4
Ecuador	Upper middle income	4.2	52.0	0.47	0.44	0.43	5,425	5.1	32.2	28.8	38.9	12.9	9.9	18.9	0.7	16.3	23.2	17.0	30.7	46.7	40.1	14.1	37.9	9.3
Paraguay	Lower middle income	2.8	58.4	0.55	0.49	0.60	3,813	-1.2	49.6	42.9	59.3	28.0	18.2	42.1	0.7	22.3	14.1[a]	12.1[a]	16.6[a]	...	22.2[a]	6.6[a]	19.5	9.8
Peru	Upper middle income	4.2	49.6	0.45	0.40	0.43	6,796	6.3	23.7	14.5	50.8	5.5	1.0	19.0	0.7	11.8	13.5	7.3	24.6	...	43.8	2.3	19.8	9.2

Sources:

[1]List of economies, World Bank, October 2014.

[2]Statistical Yearbook, Economic Commision for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2013.

[3]Data extracted from the World Bank online database.

[4]Data extracted from the Human Develepment Report, United Nations Development Programme, 2013.

[5]Data extracted from the latest State of Food Insecurity (SOFI), FAO, 2013.

[6]Based on the last data available accordingly to the new WHO growth standards. Encuesta de Demografíay de Saludo (ENDESA), Dominican Republic 2007; Encuesta Nacional de Salud Materno Infantil (ENSMI), Guatemala 2008; Encuesta Nacional de Demografía y Salud (ENDESA), Honduras 2011-2012; Enuesta Nicaraguense de Demografía y Salud (ENDESA), Nicaragua 2011-2012; Encuesta Nacional de Salud Familiar (FESAL), El Salvador 2008; Encuesta Nacional de Demografía y Salud (ENDSA), Bolivia 2008; Encuesta Nacional de la Situación Nutricional en Colombia (ENSIN), Colombia 2010; Encuesta Demográfica y de Salud Materna Infantil (ENDEMAIN), Ecuador 2004; Encuesta Demográfica y de Salud Familiar (ENDES), Peru 2012; Encuesta de Niveles de Vida (ENV), Panamá 2008; Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (EIH), Paraguay 2001; Encuesta Nacional de Salud y Nutrición (ENSANUT), Mexico 2012.

[7]Social Panorama, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2013.

Notes:

[a]Using the NCHS growth standard.

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