UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR MEXICO

External Operational Update

N. 1 | **JUNE 2022**

KEY FIGURES

ACCESS TO TERRITORY, INFORMATION AND ASYLUM PROCEDURES

48,913 asylum applications registered by 31 May 2022. This continues to represent an increase of almost 8,000 claims in comparison to those filed within the same period in 2021. The most represented nationalities among the asylum-seeking population are Honduras (11,159), Cuba (9,696), Haiti (7,327) and Venezuela (5,505).

RECEPTION CONDITIONS AND ACCESS TO SERVICES WITH ATTENTION TO SPECIFIC NEEDS

22,531 individuals have been assisted through cash-based interventions, through multi-purpose cash grants as part of UNHCR's Humanitarian Assistance Programme, or sectoral cash for protection and integration.

1,444 NFI items distributed across 92 shelters.

83 capacity building sessions were conducted in shelters ranging from protection, integration and livelihoods, psychosocial support and institutional strengthening and management enhancement.

ENSURING SUSTAINABLE INTEGRATION

6,322 people relocated in 2022 under UNHCR's Local Integration Programme. So far 22, 177 persons have been relocated since the relocation, job placement and local integration programme initiated in 2016.

141 people of Haitian nationality incorporated within the joint UNHCR – IOM labour mobility and local integration programme at San Luis Potosí.

FUNDING

22% of UNHCR's financial requirements for Mexico received by 31 May.

HUMAN MOBILITY AND ASYLUM TRENDS

Mounting frustration across southern Mexico due to delays in migratory proceedings continue to result in protests and in the congregation of hundreds – most recently thousands- of migrants and asylum seekers uniting to continue their journey northwards reportedly towards Mexico City or the northern border. Approximately ten groups have departed the border city of Tapachula (Chiapas) so far this year. Arrangements for what would be the largest group to depart Tapachula towards the U.S. were in progress at the end of May; though activists and media reports indicated

between 5,000 and 15,000 people joining this latest group, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimates that participation will be substantially lower. So far, the Mexican National Migration Institute (INM) has negotiated with the group leaders on every occasion, offering Humanitarian Visas (TVRH) which allow them to transit through Mexico, or remain for a period of up to one year. Activists indicate that more than 45,000 individuals remain across the southern border waiting to regularize their status. UNHCR teams have been monitoring the situation closely. **Meanwhile, refugees and asylum seekers in the state of Veracruz continue to report being targets of violence and, most recently, kidnappings.**

Throughout the month of May, Venezuela has become the country of origin of the majority of those requesting for appointments with the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR) in Tapachula. Even though the number of nationals from Venezuela entering Mexico through its southern land border has been on the rise since January 2022, May hit new records - almost 2,300 Venezuelan families (3,350 individuals) arrived from 2 to 18 May, requesting to be registered by COMAR. 75% of those requesting to be registered are single adults, most of whom are male.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security announcement of the termination on 23 May of expulsions under the public health order (otherwise known as Title 42), triggered movements of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers from other cities in Mexico where they were previously settled, towards the northern states of Baja California, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas. Though Title 42 remains in place as of today due to a Lousiana district court order, new arrivals continue to increase across Mexico's northern border due to rumours related to admission lists managed by various local shelters that allow potential asylum-seekers to cross into the U.S. UNHCR's Sub-Office in Monterrey has been leading monitoring visits and participating in interagency coordination efforts to develop a contingency plan for Monterrey and the Northeastern border. UNHCR´s offices in Tijuana and Juarez are also working at an interagency level to develop such plans for their respective geographic areas of coverage.

From a peak of approximately 560 Ukrainian nationals being hosted at a camp in Mexico City in the first week of May, the number of people staying at the premises adapted by the Government of Mexico to host Ukrainian nationals temporarily progressively decreased throughout the month, and officially closed on 30 June. During the month of May, UNHCR monitored the implementation of recommendations following previously identified gaps, particularly on the identification and case management of unaccompanied and separated children, as well as on the referral to shelters of persons with specific needs. UNHCR also conducted workshops for volunteers and local authorities on mental health and psychosocial support, prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse as well as to gender-based violence. With only 54 persons remaining in the premises, UNHR collaborated in their transfer to a UNHCR supported shelter and coordinated with partners HIAS and IRC, as well as with authorities to closely follow the progress of their application to enter the U.S. as some of these cases face challenges in their admission through the U.S. Government Uniting for Ukraine program.

UNHCR HIGHLIGHTS

Mexico welcomes six Afghan refugee students -their majority aspiring musicians and a female lawyer- part of the Complementary Pathways Program implemented by Habesha in Aguascalientes in close cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and UNHCR. The group is the first to arrive under the complementary pathway program formalized through the quadripartite Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, Habesha and UNHCR's High Commissioner – Mr. Filippo Grandi, during his visit to Mexico in November 2021. The Mexican Government provided a warm welcome through a ceremony hosted by the Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Martha Delgado.

With the enthusiastic participation of the Governor of Chiapas, Mr. Rutilio Escandón Cadenas, as well as UNHCR Mexico Representative and Deputy Representative – Mr. Giovanni Lepri and Ms. Renee Cuijpers, UNHCR inaugurated its suboffice in Tuxtla Gutierrez, the capital city of the state of Chiapas **on 4 May.** Mr. Escandón highlighted the State's unwavering compromise towards the defence of the rights of those forced to flee, emphasizing that as universal rights, these are not to be restricted by nationality, colour of skin or any other factor. The new office will seek to strengthen institutional ties with the state government in Chiapas, Tabasco, Veracruz and Oaxaca, and will also monitor UNHCR's operations across southern Mexico to support the adequate implementation of UNHCR's Strategy. The state of Chiapas registers over 70% of all asylum applications in the country; 29,135 of a total of 40,026 asylum applications filed in the first four months of 2022, were registered in Chiapas. UNHCR's office in Tuxtla Gutiérrez is the fourth UNHCR office in southern Mexico, together with its offices in Tapachula, Palenque (Chiapas) and Tenosique (Tabasco). UNHCR seeks to also have presence in Villahermosa (Tabasco) as of 2022.

Following social distancing restrictions during the pandemic which affected children significantly, UNHCR resumed its support for recreational and educational spaces where refugee and asylum seeking children have the opportunity to interact with the host community, thereby nurturing acceptance and peaceful coexistence from an early age. As such, UNHCR supported the Acayucan Municipal Library through a donation of children's books, toys and tables during the month of May.

Important breakthroughs boost UNHCR's efforts to support the integration of refugees in Mexico. As UNHCR celebrates an important milestone in the implementation of its Local Integration Programme (or PIL, following its acronym in Spanish) having relocated and provided integration support to over 20,000 since the beginning of the programme in 2016, some of its latest achievements contribute to smoother pathways for the future integration in Mexico of those forced to flee. **An important step forward in financial inclusion of refugees was made in early May through a public announcement, under the title** "Banorte joins UNHCR's campaign to support the financial inclusion of refugees in Mexico". This way, Banorte announced a new web-based product, which will be accessible for asylum seekers and refugees across Mexico. Refugees will now be able to seek employment with companies that process salaries through Banorte, as highlighted by national media outlets Milenio and El Economista. The Fundación Banorte further announced its intention to extend various support programs at no cost for refugees and asylum seekers. These include their Financial Education course, psychosocial support services for survivors of violence, and the link to their educational program BECALOS, which offers financial support to access education programs at the basic, secondary, and technical levels. Other important breakthroughs also include **the Mexican supermarket chain, Soriana, as it becomes a strong ally in the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers within its workforce with over 161 refugees employed within a period of two months in different cities across Mexico, including Monterrey, Queretaro, Guadalajara, and Tijuana.** The labour integration process has accelerated substantially after Soriana first expressed its interest in late March. Furthermore, another well-known company has joined as part of UNHCR's allies in the private sector - **Danish company Lego has given a green light to start the recruitment of refugees in Monterrey and its surroundings, where Lego operates its largest factory worldwide.** UNHCR and Lego are now in the process of standardizing the required documentation to materialize the first recruitment in the following weeks.

Mexico's national media has highlighted the PIL as being an innovative programme which has allowed up to 92% of those relocated to access

formal employment opportunities (La Razón, Chiapas Paralelo, El Orbe, Aristegui Noticias, among others). **The Executive Director of the Management Council for Femsa, José Antonio Fernández, highlighted during the BRAVO Leadership Conversation, that Oxxo -and other companies- could benefit from a 35% increase in value to their businesses** (FORBES). **The Femsa group, through its retail chain Oxxo, has become a strong ally for UNHCR's Local Integration Programme already hiring over 800 refugees.**

As part of joint efforts with COMAR to close the bridge among refugees and employers in Tijuana (Baja California), starting in May, an agreement was reached with COMAR to have enterprises invited each Tuesday so they can establish direct contact with refugees and asylum seekers and explain and offer their vacancies. Now known as "Tuesday jobs" activity carried out in collaboration with COMAR, several companies have participated in these events as there is interest in employing refugees and asylum seekers in the state of Baja California.

The shelter recently inaugurated by partner Casa Monarca in Monterrey (Nuevo León) with the support of UNHCR has kickstarted a series of 12 training sessions for shelter staff with the participation of civil society organizations and local authorities. The purpose of these trainings is to strengthen staff and volunteers' knowledge on international protection, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), the Age, Gender and Diversity Policy, Gender-Based Violence and the mainstreaming of a person-centred and rights-based approach. **Once open to asylum seekers and**

refugees, the Casa Monarca shelter will be able to host around 110 persons. UNHCR supported the construction of this shelter with the objective of expanding reception capacity in Monterrey. UNHCR's sub-office in Monterrey will continue to support Casa Monarca to ensure the shelter complies with protection standards.

On 16 May, under the "Un Solo Equipo" or "One Team" campaign which seeks to promote inclusion and in partnership with the Club de Fútbol Monterrey (Nuevo León), 50 refugees attended the semi-final of the Mexican Women's Soccer League between the Rayadas de Monterrey and Tuzas del Pachuca. The "Un Solo Equipo" campaign was launched during the World Refugee Day celebrations of 2021 and seeks to demonstrate, through sport, that a team that opens its doors, is a stronger team. The Club Unión of Nuevo León -which is joint team composed of Nuevo León's sports clubs Fuerza Regia, Rayados and Tigres y Sultanes with support from UNHCR- is a team that transcends nationalities, sport of choice, gender, and even rivalries, and which seeks to focus on solidarity.

On 4, 5, and 6 May, **the international congress on "Migration Crisis in Europe and America in the Light of International Human Rights Law" was held, co-convened by the UNAM, the Universidad Iberoamericana and UNHCR.** The Representative of UNHCR Mexico was present during the inauguration and the Assistant Representative for Protection participated in a discussion on "Measures and policies promoted by Mexico and the United States against migrants". The event featured high-level government, civil society, and academic profiles.

The Manual on Internal Displacement of the Supreme Court of Justice coordinated jointly by UNHCR and ICRC, will be launched in a virtual event on the 27 of June. The opening is planned to be attended by high-level representatives of the Supreme Court, UNHCR and ICRC.

UNHCR submitted comments to the state of Michoacan's bill on internal displacement to the Consejo Consultivo de Politica Migratoria and Michoacan authorities as part of a joint UN effort from IOM, UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP, OHCHR, UNODC, and OCHA. This joint effort reflects the commitment to support the development of a response to internal displacement at the federal and local levels. This process is expected to strengthen the State's technical capacity by supporting the development of response pathways to internal displacement, monitoring bill approvals, and capacity building for authorities and civil society organizations. Besides Michoacán, **UNHCR has been contacted to provide comments on the bill on internal displacement for the State of México; comments are being coordinated with other UN agencies.**

UNHCR organizes a Photo Gallery entitled "Todos los sueños cuentan" ("Every dream counts") in San Luis Potosí, portraying the context of the COVID-19 health crisis and reflecting on how Mexico has increasingly become a destination for those seeking international protection. The photo exhibition was launched on 12 May 2022 in collaboration with the Municipality of San Luis Potosí and the Family Welfare System. The gallery aims to raise awareness of Mexico as a country that provides integration opportunities for refugees. **The photo gallery is on display until 1 June at the Morales Park in San Luis Potosí, where members of the public will be able to see the winners of this year's photo contest.**

CALENDARIO DE ACTIVIDADES DÍA MUNDIAL DEL REFUGIADO

JUNIO

DOMINGO	LUNES	MARTES	MIÉRCOLES	JUEVES	VIERNES	SÁBADO
19 Feria Gastronómica Intercultural: Abriendo Puertas para el encuentro y la celebración. 11:00 a 17:00 horas Casa Tlalpan (Casa Refugiados)	**20** Evento Protocolario COMAR 10:00 horas Museo de Memoria y Tolerancia		**22** Charla Coordinador General 18:00 horas Casa Refugio Citlaltépetl		**17** Inauguración Exposición fotografica "Niños de paz" 15:00 horas Casa Refugio Citlaltépetl	**18** Segundo Torneo de ajedrez 10:00 horas Casa Refugio Citlaltépetl
26 Rodada por las personas refugiadas 8:30 horas Inicio de rodada en Casa Espacio Refugiados, Ruta en el Paseo Dominical Muévete en Bici en Reforma	**20** Concierto de música afgana 18:00 horas Casa Refugio Citlaltépetl		**22** Palomazo por los Refugiados 20:00 horas Facebook, Youtube y Twitter ACNUR México		**17** Simultáneas de ajedrez a cargo del Maestro Internacional, Kenneth Frey Hora: 16:00 horas Casa Refugio Citlaltépetl	**18** Programa Especial Día Mundial del Refugiado 19:00 horas W Radio
			22 Sant'Egidio: Abriendo Puertas para el Encuentro y la Colaboración 17:00 a 21:00 Casa Espacio Refugiados			**25** Palomazo por los Refugiados 19:00 horas W Radio
						25 Encuentro Deportivo de FutVal (Fútbol con valores) 00:00 Casa Espacio Refugiados

On World Refugee Day, we celebrate the strength and courage of people who have been forced to flee their country to escape violence, conflict or persecution. Please join us in this celebration this month of June through some of the activities outlined in the calendar below.

UNHCR is grateful for the generous support of:

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