



Little Amal in Tijuana.  
Photo credits: Rodrigo Dardon

## KEY FIGURES



### ASYLUM & ACCESS TO TERRITORY

A total of **140,982** people applied for asylum in Mexico in 2023 as of 31 December, including **44,239** individual asylum applications from **Haitians**, followed by **41,935** applications from **Hondurans**, **18,386** applications from **Cubans**, **6,117** from **Salvadorans**, and **5,517** applications from **Venezuelans**.



### PROTECTION & RECEPTION CONDITIONS

So far in 2023, **16,869** individuals have been assisted through cash-based interventions and multi-purpose cash grants as part of UNHCR's Humanitarian Assistance Programme.

UNHCR and partners distributed **563,134** non-food items across **89 shelters** in 2023 as of December 2023.

Between July to December 2023, **2,704** people in migratory detention received orientation on their right to request asylum.

During 2023, El Jaguar reached **4,638,394** Facebook users (a monthly average of **386,000** users), registered **7,428,296** visits to its page (a monthly average of **619,000** visits) and its publications generated **331,164** interactions (a monthly average of **28,000** interactions).



### ENSURING SUSTAINABLE INTEGRATION

UNHCR has been working closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to facilitate the access of refugees to the acquisition of Mexican nationality. Since 2022 to date, **846 refugees** have entered their naturalization process with the accompaniment of UNHCR, of which **65%** are Venezuelans, **16%** from El Salvador, **11%** from Honduras, **2%** from Guatemala, **2%** from Cuba, **1%** from Nicaragua and **3%** from other nationalities. Additionally, a significant number of people entered the process on their own. From January 2022 to December 2023, **more than 680 refugees** obtained their naturalization letters, of which **222** were accompanied by UNHCR and its partners.

In 2023, UNHCR conducted **26 relocations** as part of the Local Integration Program and has relocated **more than 35,000 people** since the program's inception in 2016.



### FUNDING

As of 31 October 2023, the Mexico Operation is **50%** funded with **59.85 million USD**.

## HUMAN MOBILITY AND ASYLUM TRENDS

The number of asylum applications in Mexico surpassed **140,982** since the beginning of the year as of 31 December, 2023. This figure exceeds the total number of claims filed during the same period in 2022 by nearly **19%**. The arrival of people on the move across **southern Mexico** was particularly noticeable at the main entry point into Mexico, the border town of Tapachula in Chiapas. As of October 2023, three southern states of Mexico (Chiapas, Tabasco, and Veracruz) accounted for **72.5% of all claims processed** in the country. In recent months, arrivals grew from **650 individuals** daily to over **1,500-3,000** per day in September and October. Most people from Cuba and Haiti are adults traveling alone (over **67%** for Cuba and more than **82%** for Haiti). On 30 October, more than **3,000 people**, mostly families and children, departed in a “**caravan**” from Tapachula. On 24 December, they moved 40 km over a period of three days, arriving in Huixtla, Chiapas. Most of the persons were Honduran (up to **80-90%**), followed by other Central Americans, Cubans, Venezuelans, and very few Haitians.

Between July and November 2023, **Mexico City** has seen an ever-growing number of asylum claims, Venezuelans being the main nationality, followed by Haitians and Hondurans. From July to December 2023, approximately **20.5 percent** of all asylum applications in the whole country were filed in Mexico City, which amounts to an estimation of **10,585** asylum claims. UNHCR supported COMAR to reinforce its capacity in Mexico City to implement simplified and more efficient processing measures, and coordinated efforts with local partners to reach the population with the information they need to make well-informed decisions to access protection, their rights or local integration perspectives. UNHCR and its partner Programa

Casa Refugiados (PCR) successfully established a **fast-track for pre-registration and priority reception** in collaboration with COMAR for asylum seekers staying in partner-shelters. This measure contributes to secure access and to reduce waiting time for the asylum procedure to persons in situations of high vulnerability and with specific needs. Shelters in Mexico City continue to be oversaturated at **500%** capacity at the main shelter in the city CAFEMIN and the government Shelter Tláhuac, hosting up to **3,000** people even if built for **150**.

In **Northern Mexico**, several hundred persons arrived by train to Piedras Negras and Ciudad Juarez during September and October to cross the border to the U.S. When numbers peaked and **1,500 people** were waiting for the trains in Coahuila state, the train company Ferromex temporarily suspended the service of trains for several days. As winter approaches, low temperatures are expected to become an increasing challenge for individuals currently living in informal settlements and shelters across the northern border. UNHCR is supporting shelters to improve their reception standards with the delivery of non-food items, such as sleeping mats.

In recent months, Mexico has also experienced an increase in **internal displacement**, generated by a rise in violence perpetrated by criminal groups and land disputes in at least seven states. According to the Mexican Commission for the Defence and Promotion of Human Rights (CMDPDH), over **379,000 people** were displaced in Mexico due to incidents of violence from 2006 to 2021. Based on the NGO’s figures, an estimated **30,000 more individuals** are expected to be internally displaced by the end of 2023.

Four refugee children participated in the protocol entrance holding hands with FC Barcelona and Tigres players. Photo credits: Club Tigres



## OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS



UNHCR team in Tapachula, © UNHCR/File



On 22 November, **UNHCR, COMAR and the Mexican Foreign Ministry organized a meeting** to preview the governmental commitments that were to be presented at the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) a few weeks later. Some **30 members** of the diplomatic corps and UN agencies, as well as representatives from Guanajuato, Baja California, Monterrey and Tapachula attended to present the commitments at the state and municipal levels.

At the second GRF in Geneva from 13-15 December, **more than 4,000 participants**, including **300 refugees**, gathered. The Mexican delegation announced **eight commitments at the federal and local levels**. Mexico had a strong presence in nine events, including the participation from the company FEMSA, which has hired **2,800 refugees**. COMAR was represented at events on inclusion and MIRPS, respectively. Representatives from Nuevo León, Guanajuato and the Undersecretary for Migratory Affairs also participated as speakers.



To support young refugees to access higher education in Mexico, UNHCR has implemented **tertiary education program** since more than five years. So far in 2023, UNHCR supported another 120 students, including 32 students who were referred to university programmes by partner DIME. Under the Global **DAFI Programme, 62 students** are being supported in 2023. In September 2023, **ten new scholarships** were granted and during 2023, already **16 DAFI students** have graduated.



**Shelters** across all Mexico continue to operate near or at full capacity, although occupancy rates are constantly in flux. **Informal settlements are widespread**, particularly in cities like Matamoros and Reynosa. Informal settlements raise **grave protection concerns** for the people living there,

including security, access to WASH, overall living conditions, and risk of infectious disease. **UNHCR has contributed to strengthening and improving reception conditions in shelters** by delivering core relief and other non-food items, as well as infrastructure projects. From January to December 2023, UNHCR and partners distributed a total of **9,017** mattresses, bunk beds and mats, **125,401** cleaning and **358,060** personal cleaning/hygiene items, **5,029** kitchen and office equipment and **1,530** clothing items to **89** shelters across the country this year.



UNHCR implemented **the stoplight protection tool in 102 shelters**. Covering more than **14** key protection areas such as Protection, WASH, Health, PSEA, among others, the tool categorizes shelters in green, yellow and red. The results showed that **86.27%** of the shelters were classified as “yellow” or “green” which means they have adequate or optimal protection conditions. **13.73%** of all shelters reviewed have been classified under the “red light” indicating that protection standards need to be worked on. UNHCR prioritizes shelters with yellow or red results to improve their overall reception and protection conditions.



UNHCR continues to provide **capacity-building regarding refugee protection**. Between July-November 2023, UNHCR and partner Scalabrini International Migration Network, delivered **specialized training** for Human Rights Defenders to **36 shelters across the country**, in which shelter personnel received tools to mitigate security risks. To assure a **coordinated response** and jointly strengthen accommodation spaces for persons on the move in Mexico, UNHCR shelters team coordinates a working group with civil society and other UN agencies working with shelters across the country.

## NORTHERN MEXICO

On 6 November, **Little Amal** crossed the border from the U.S. to Mexico through Tijuana, with the support of UNHCR and other UN agencies. Amal was welcomed in Baja California and Tijuana by the Governor of the State and the Mayor of the City. The commitment of State authorities to continue working on the protection and integration of asylum seekers, refugees and IDPs in Baja California, was reflected in the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding with UNHCR, having Amal and refugee children as witnesses of the event. The events allowed a large-scale sensitization on refugee and migrant issues in Baja California. Amal travelled through Mexico for two weeks during the month of November, visiting **Mexico City, Oaxaca, Tapachula and Ciudad Hidalgo**. Her journey was accompanied by UNHCR throughout and broadly covered by the local press.



Little Amal in Tijuana, Photo credits to: Rodrigo Darlón



Four refugee children participated in the protocol entrance holding hands with FC Barcelona and Tigres players. Photo credits: Mayumi Kimura Meguro

## FC BARCELONA AND TIGRES MATCH WITH PARTICIPATION OF REFUGEE CHILDREN

On 1 September, the FC Barcelona and Tigres women’s football teams played a match in Monterrey attended by more than **39,500 people** (about twice the seating capacity of Madison Square Garden) – **a historical record in Mexico’s women’s football**. In collaboration with the FC Barcelona and Tigres football teams, UNHCR coordinated the **participation of four refugee children** during the initial protocol ceremony when both teams entered the field holding hands with the children. All four participants had previously shared with UNHCR they were huge fans of football and both teams. One of the kids even shared that he would not wash his hand for a whole month after receiving this honor. Thanks to a donation of tickets by Tigres, UNHCR also facilitated the **attendance of 80 refugees**, including **26 refugees** who had just relocated to Monterrey through UNHCR local integration program. Throughout the match, the Tigres football players wore UNHCR’s blue ribbons in solidarity with refugees, FC Barcelona players had their jerseys with the UNHCR logo, and a UNHCR video was played at the football stadium screen.

## SOUTHERN MEXICO

The UNHCR Registration team has conducted numerous activities between July and December 2023 to **provide support to the Mexican authorities**. For example, in July, UNHCR **supported the COMAR office in Tenosique** to enable biometric registration, to enhance capacity and train personnel in biometric registration standards. These efforts allowed COMAR to secure the population registration for all asylum seekers to obtain a unique population number (CURP) and their biometric data, easing their access to public services and local integration.



UNHCR supports COMAR piloting new technologies in Tapachula. For example, through **COMAR Digital's platform** through which pre-registrations and appointments are digitalized which saves valuable time and resources. Also, **COMAR's unique case management and database system (SIRE)** simplifies reception and processing of asylum claims. Migration authorities will be able to access the database in the future, to prevent possible refoulement of asylum-seekers.



UNHCR and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) have trained staff from OXXO, Veterinaria Santa Cruz, Farmacias Yireh, Concesionaria COMEX, Bodega Aurrera, Megacable and other companies in the private sector regarding the possible **labour Inclusion of refugees**.



In Tapachula, UNHCR held **5 workshops for 169 social workers, nurses and doctors** from health centers and hospitals and staff from Health District VII and Health City Hospital to increase knowledge and improve care for refugees, asylum-seekers and the local community.



As a result of collaboration with the municipality to improve peaceful coexistence in Tapachula, UNHCR inaugurated a **cinema in Territorio Joven Tapachula with a capacity to receive 40 people**. In Cine Joven, as the community has named it, movie forums are held to address issues of forced displacement with an awareness-raising approach to mitigate conflict in a community with a high presence of people on the move. So far, UNHCR and the municipality organized **4 movie forums** attended by **117** local and refugee youth.

## LEGAL ASSISTANCE

This year, UNHCR has initiated new partnerships with **17 Law Clinics of Mexican universities**. In October, the first national meeting of all legal clinics countrywide and UNHCR was held in the facilities of the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City. This has been a groundbreaking momentum, activating a huge network of legal aid for asylum-seekers and refugees and founding a working group of legal clinics for the first time. Between July and November 2023, **1,516 asylum-seekers** were represented by UNHCR's network of lawyers and **73,110** asylum-seekers and persons with international protection needs received legal advice, orientation or assistance by lawyers and paralegals cooperating with UNHCR.



Regional Judgement Award. Photo credits to: S Uriel Salas  
PREMIO SENTENCIAS



Nationwide first meeting of all law clinics.  
Photo credits to: Tiffany Tinoco, Ibero Law Clinic

**On 20 October, UNHCR legal unit participated in the eighth edition of the Regional Judgements Award.** The National Supreme Court of Justice of Mexico won the award with the writ of constitutional protection (amparo) stating the maximum time persons on the move could be held in detention centers. The Court concluded that the established deadlines in the Law for maintaining persons under detention contradicted the maximum constitutional time limit for deprivation of liberty for administrative reasons.



Participation of the Special Rapporteur for IDPs in the International Meeting on Human Mobility 2023, Photo credits to: Ministry of the Interior of Mexico, 2023.

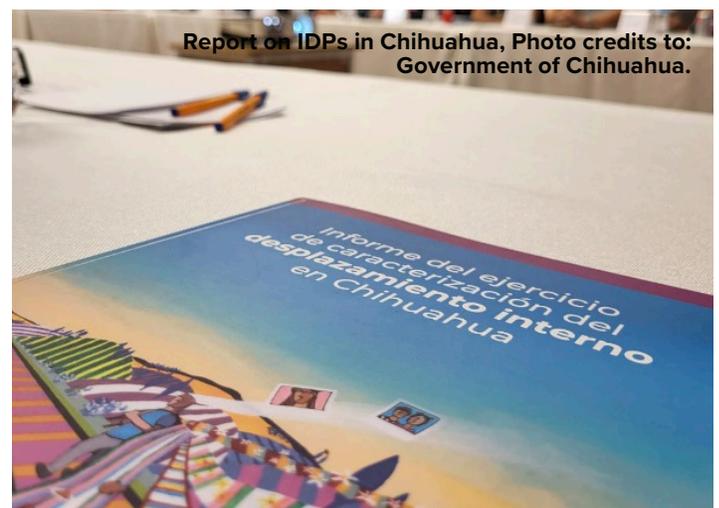
## INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

Between July and December 2023, UNHCR provided **technical assistance on registration of IDPs to the authorities and four federal states of Mexico**. In the state of **Michoacán**, an emergency response was required due to the displacement of around **800 persons** due to clashes between organised crime groups. UNHCR facilitated a training and presented a rapid registration tool allowing for the quick identification of heightened risks. The tool was accepted in September 2023 by the authorities. On the request of the state of **Tamaulipas**, from 11-12 October, UNHCR facilitated a training regarding international standards for the protection of IDPs, including the Protection Information Management Principles and registration standards. The state of **Sinaloa** intends to initiate a registration system of IDPs, a process which UNHCR has been supporting. In the reporting period, the new system could already be implemented in several IDP communities. UNHCR facilitated a training for government officials who will conduct the IDP registration interviews. Technical assistance was also provided to the state of **Chihuahua** to improve the registration process and define the data sets according to their needs and capabilities to respond. The government of Chihuahua aims at having their own registration software, as they are currently using KOBO under a Data Sharing Agreement with UNHCR.

From 11-13 July, the current **Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs**, Paula Gaviria Betancur, did an academic visit to Mexico at the request of the Ministry of the Interior of Mexico. The Special Rapporteur participated in the International Meeting on Human Mobility 2023, where she presented the country report derived from her predecessor's 2022 official visit. The Special Rapporteur highlighted that the causes of internal displacement in Mexico are diverse and multifactorial, often caused by organised crime, development

projects, including mining and illegal logging, community and land conflicts as well as climate change and natural disasters. She highlighted that the most affected were indigenous communities and that there was a differentiated impact on women and girls, children and adolescents, relatives of disappeared persons, human rights defenders and journalists, and LGBTIQ+ persons.

On 13 October, UNHCR participated in the session of the **Inter-Institutional Committee for Attention to Forced Displacement in Michoacán**. The local law Initiative on IDPs, a result of seven working groups co-chaired by UNHCR and the Secretariat for Migrants of the State of Michoacán, was approved and will be presented to the State Congress. UNHCR has continuously provided technical assistance to ensure that this initiative is in line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and other relevant international standards.



Report on IDPs in Chihuahua, Photo credits to: Government of Chihuahua.

From 24 - 26 October, **UNHCR participated in a learning encounter for the Internal Displacement Working Group within the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) and the Government of Colombia**, held in Bogotá, Colombia with authorities from Mexico, Honduras and El Salvador. The event aimed at exchanging and challenges in protecting internally displaced persons and persons in confinement were shared; experiences and dialogues were also exchanged and will continue in the framework of the MIRPS Working Group on Internal Displacement.

## COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITIES (CWC)

Another ongoing challenge for UNHCR is the **provision of information to ensure that individuals can make informed decisions**. **UNHCR's Communications with Communities** team has produced informative materials about asylum procedures in Mexico to give persons on the move the best possibilities to inform themselves. The Helpdesk team handled **35,152** queries from January to December 2023. During 2023, El Jaguar reached **4,638,394** Facebook users (a monthly average of **386,000** users), registered **7,428,296** visits to its page (a monthly average of **619,000** visits) and its publications generated **331,164** interactions (a monthly average of **28,000** interactions).

With the objective of informing and mobilizing the refugee community so that persons on the move can make informed decisions, the **Outreach Volunteers** Program was re-initiated during the reporting period. Refugee volunteers of diverse backgrounds serve as an inter-phase between UNHCR and the communities and help for example to identify protection risks informing mitigation strategies for UNHCR and partners.

**3,200** refugee children and adults laughed with **Payasos sin Fronteras (PSF)**. As part of the Communication with Communities strategy, PSF performed the “Mexico 2023 Tour” comprising **20** shows in shelters, schools and other community spaces in Mexico City and Tapachula from 9-20 October. The initiative aims at bringing joy to refugee children and adults as well to build resilience.

**The peaceful coexistence project** ‘Let’s host the opera’ seeks to raise awareness about the reality of refugees among the Mexican host community through a musical. The piece they present features forced displacement has reached more than **400** people in its first three presentations.



Clown performance for children in Tlahuac, Mexico City, Photo credits to Juan Sotomayor

# GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND PREVENTION OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE



All UNHCR staff in Mexico City, Tapachula, Tijuana, Tenosique, Villahermosa, and Guanajuato, participated in a Training of Trainers workshop on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the reporting period. There are upcoming sessions for staff in Monterrey, Saltillo and Aguascalientes. The “I act” strategy was designed for UNHCR personnel to raise awareness of the commitment and obligation to prevent, act and report sexual exploitation and abuse. UNHCR is contributing to disseminating the “All Voices” campaign within the framework of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence.

UNHCR is grateful for the support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds. As of 31 October 2023, UNHCR Mexico is **50%** funded having required **US\$119.7 million** to respond to the needs of thousands of asylum-seekers, refugees and those internally displaced in Mexico. Timely funding is urgent to ensure the continuity of our activities. UNHCR’s humanitarian and durable solutions response in Mexico is made possible thanks to the generous support of major donors who have contributed unrestricted funding to UNHCR’s global operations, and to donors who have generously contributed directly to UNHCR operations in Mexico.



## SPECIAL THANKS ALL OUR DONORS IN 2023

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